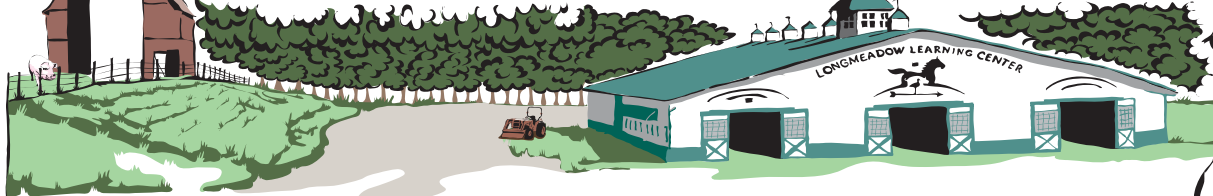


TWIST OF FATE

THE MIRACLE COLT AND HIS FRIENDS



CHAPTER EIGHT

BY CHRIS STUCKENSCHNEIDER

The name's Norton, known for snortin' and story tellin'. Yep, I'm the Yoda to Twister, taught the Jedi colt all he knows. These days, Twister's tied up in knots tighter than my tail. Earlene's substituting work for pleasure, taking his free time away so he can learn a thing or three.

It's a pleasure to take over the reins on this "cereal" story. Whoops! Food's always on my mind, folks. I'd love to make a pig of myself, but the ranch staff won't allow it. Tipping the scales at 1,000 pounds, I'm right where I should be for a Yorkshire/Hampshire pig my age.

If you ask me, the Longmeadow staff doesn't dole out enough grain to fit in a pig's eye. They tell me extra weight might be bad for my feet and knees, so it's 4 cups of chow in the a.m., 4 in the p.m. Oh, for a Twinkie, a handful of raisins, or a pail of swimmy-slop with corn cob croutons.

Not much to beef about, really. No abuse in my background—I was an owner turn over. This little piggie wasn't going to market, and got too biggie. My owner couldn't care for me any longer, and Longmeadow became my new home.

I'm hog-wild about my accommodations, first floor in the old red barn at the top of the hill. Other pigs might live in houses of brick,

but I've got location, location, location—a hillside frame with a view. From my stoop, I look out over the ranch, but never down on my friends. They've had a hard way to go, as Twister's told you.

A complicated series of events took them down a slippery slope. If fate hadn't intervened, they'd have hit a dead end at the slaughterhouse. Strange, isn't it? Most of the horses probably didn't have a bad beginning. Early on, like a cuddly puppy, someone wanted them—but maybe the person didn't understand the responsibilities of owning a horse. It happens all the time with pets.

Horses have certain requirements to keep them healthy and happy. They can eat grass, but they have to have supplemental food too: hay, alfalfa, special formulas of grain to keep their pipes and joints running smoothly. And water, of course, not to waddle in like the ducks or make mud pies like me, but enough to sufficiently wet their whistles.

Shelter is necessary, as is medical care. There's always something when you're talking animals. My tusks—yes, I have a set—need regular trimming, just like a horse's hooves. The cost of having a farrier come to call makes the price of a pair of Nike Airs seem like chicken feed.

Just like dogs and pigs, horses require attention. They need people to talk to them, pet, groom and love them, and take them for rides several times a week. If horses are left to roam the fields, they'll turn as wild as chimps in a china shop. Then, when humans are ready to saddle up, their would-be mounts turn tail and run, making their owners want to throw in the horse blanket. Horses need training and plenty of "atta boys" to put giddy-up in their steps.

Because of neglect, some of the horses from the accident formed bad habits and the downward spiral began; a journey that ended for some on a lonesome stretch of highway.

Glory be, some of the horses lived, another, yet unborn, became as wondrous as a shooting star, a star that left a trail of good will that continues to glow. Twister is a miracle, no doubt about, but the change in all the horses, in so many animals that come to Longmeadow, is miraculous to witness.

Twister said it earlier: good things come from bad. The accident brought about a wild ride of birth and rebirth, a story that Twister and I have been pleased as horse feathers to share with you, a tale about a wonderful place where animals get a second chance, a valley retreat, our sometime home, Longmeadow Rescue Ranch.

SNORTIN' NORTON



Many things have changed since the animals in our story found refuge at Longmeadow. You can learn more at www.longmeadowrescueranch.org. And you can read a new version of this story in a picture book, "Twist Of Fate: The Miracle Colt and His Friends," released by Reedy Press in April 2009.

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