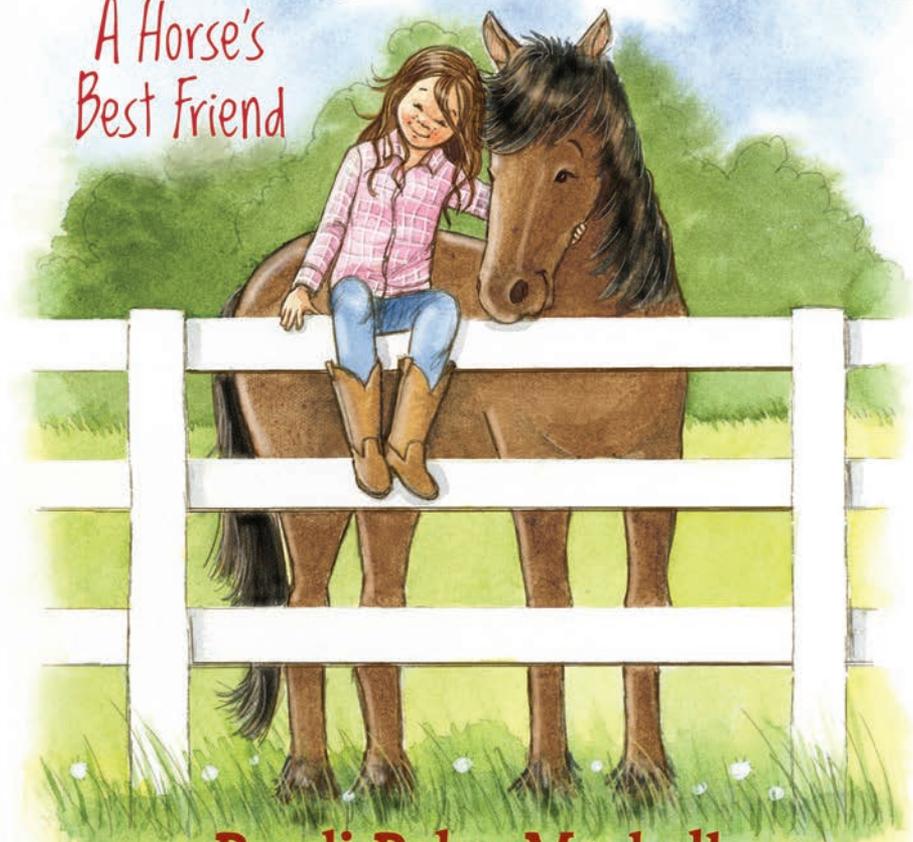


Winnie

The Early Years 

A Horse's
Best Friend



Dandi Daley Mackall

Author of the Bestselling Winnie the Horse Gender Series

illustrated by Phyllis Harris

A Horse's Best Friend





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A Horse’s Best Friend

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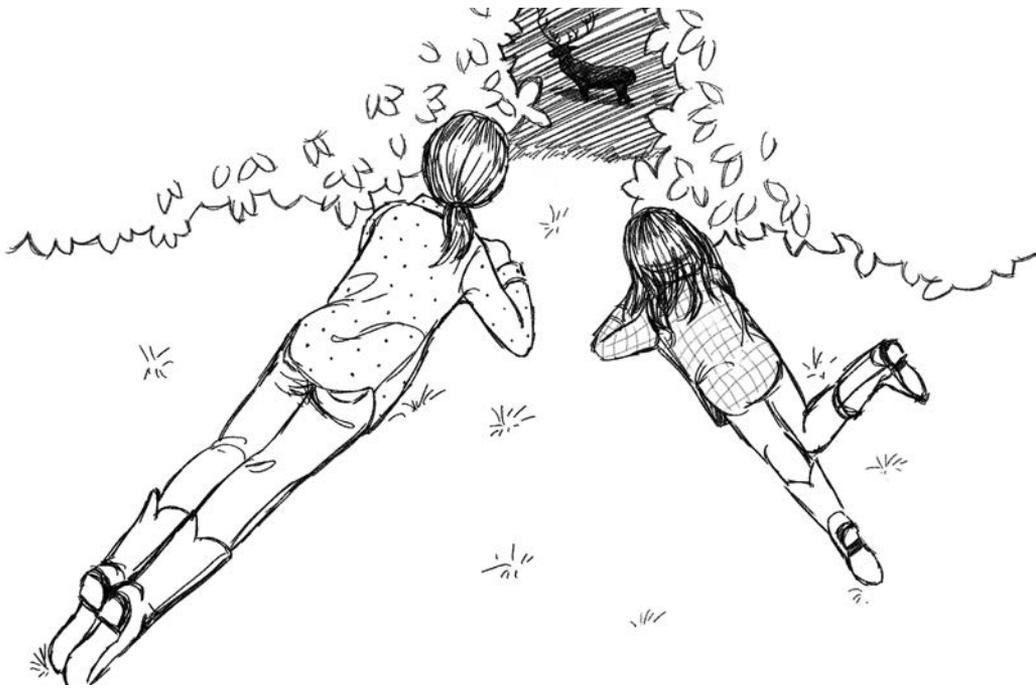
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Mustang Madness

“Where are they?” I ask, trying not to whine. And failing.

Mom and I are lying on our bellies behind some bushes. We’ve been waiting over an hour to see Mustangs. Wind rips across the hillside. Shadows move on the purple mountains.



“Be patient, Winnie,” Mom says. “It was your idea to come with me.”

Every year Mom comes here to watch wild horses. And every year I beg to come along. This is the first year she’s said okay. We drove our trailer because sometimes Mom brings back a horse to gentle. She trains it, then sells it. The money goes to the wild horse refuge in Laramie.

So far, we've seen only three deer and an antelope. No Mustangs. And now I can't get that song out of my head: *Home, home on the range, where the deer and the antelope play . . .*

"So, Winnie, how are you getting along at school?" Mom asks.

Now I get it. Mom let me tag along because she already knows the answer to her question: I'm *not* getting along at school.

"Okay," I mutter.

She waits me out. Mom is the most patient human in the world. She can train any horse because she doesn't rush or lose her temper. She's the best horse gentler in Wyoming. And she's pretty good with daughters, too.

Finally, I give in. "Well, maybe not so great." Tamson invited all of the popular girls in my class for a sleepover birthday party. Not me. No surprise. At recess, Tamson tells

us what to play. Lately, it's jail tag. I'm not invited to do that either, so I swing or sit by myself—jail without the tag.

I'd do anything to be invited to Tamson's sleepover.

Mom stares at the crest of the hill. "What's not great?" she asks.

Tamson's face pops into my mind. "Mom, did you ever have a bossy girl in your class who ruined everything?"

Mom sighs. "I did. Stephanie. That girl thought she owned the school. I think she had parties just to leave me out."

I can't believe this. Everybody likes my mom. "What did you do?"

"I let her boss me around for almost a whole year because I wanted her to like me. Then I decided to ignore her. As soon as I did, I got to know Laurie."

Laurie is my mom's best friend. "But how did—"

"Shh!" Mom whispers. "They're coming. Feel it?"

"I don't feel any—" I stop. I *do* feel it. The ground shakes. The sound of hooves grows louder. I peek.

At the top of the hill, two horses rush at each other. The bay rears and strikes a hoof to the black stallion's neck. The black rears and twists, then bites the bay's belly.

"Mom!" I cry. "Stop them!"

"It's all right," she says. "The black stallion is keeping the younger stallion in line."

In seconds, the bay drops back to the other horses, who were watching from the top of the hill. The black stallion arches his neck and whinnies his victory. He rears. When his hooves strike the ground, he breaks into a gallop.

More horses appear over the hill.
A Buckskin. A paint. A pinto. A dozen bays.
They follow the stallion at high speed. The
whole herd thunders down the hill . . .
And straight at us.