

Winnie

The Early Years 

Lucky for
Winnie

A watercolor illustration of a young girl with long brown hair, wearing a pink plaid shirt, blue jeans, and yellow boots. She is standing in a green field with small white flowers, holding the lead rope of a white horse. To her left stands a dark brown horse. The background is a bright blue sky with white clouds and a few birds flying.

Dandi Daley Mackall

Author of the Bestselling Winnie the Horse Gentler Series

illustrated by Phyllis Harris

Winnie: The Early Years Series

Horse Gentler in Training

A Horse's Best Friend

Lucky for Winnie

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Gift Horse

Friendly Foal

Buckskin Bandit

Lucky
for Winnie





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illustrated by Phyllis Harris



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Lucky for Winnie

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*For Madison Mackall:
Thanks for being my delightful granddaughter!
Love, Nee*

*May the LORD smile on you and
be gracious to you.*

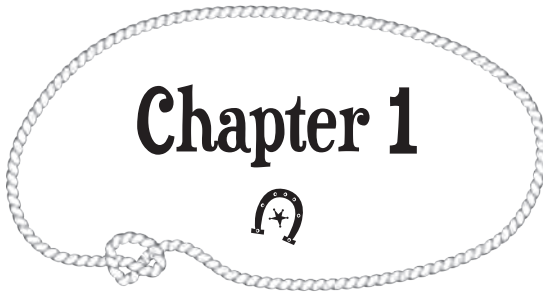
Numbers 6:25

Let your face smile on us, LORD.

Psalm 4:6

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A Big Help?

“That’s the most beautiful horse I’ve ever seen!” I watch as Mom backs the new black mare out of the shiny trailer—it’s definitely a purebred Arabian. I take in the four white stockings. One rises over the hock, or knee, ending in a jagged line.

When Mom turns the Arabian, I see a white

spotch on her muzzle, a half-blaze. “That coloring is Sabino, isn’t it, Mom?”

My mother grins at me. “Good for you, Winnie. The color pattern isn’t the easiest to identify. She’d be registered as a black, though.”

I’ve read every horse book in the library more than once. Only the newest one on colors and breeds explained Sabino markings.

The woman next to the trailer must be the horse’s lucky owner. She’s tall and slim, with straight black hair that looks like it’s never been out of place. I smooth my crazy brown hairs as best I can.

I try to imagine that this Arabian is a birthday present from Mom. But even I don’t have that great of an imagination. So I imagine that *I’m* the one the owner wants to gentle her horse. And Mom is my helper.

Mom shifts the Arabian's lead rope so she can shake the woman's hand. "Ms. Hendren, welcome to the Willis Wyoming Ranch. We'll do our best to help Nafka feel at home here."

"Nafka?" I didn't mean to say it out loud. But what kind of a name is *Nafka* for such a beautiful horse?

Instead of getting mad, our new client smiles at me. "I'm told Nafka means 'wind' or 'breeze' in Arabic. Nafka runs like the wind. But she can float like a gentle breeze."

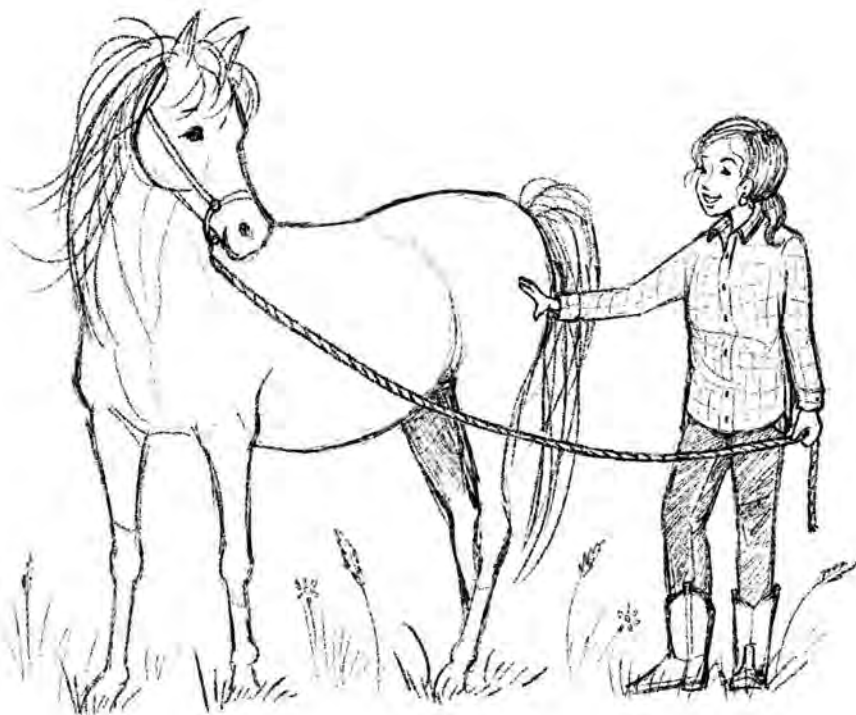
Mom is scratching Nafka on her rump, and the mare settles down. Mom the Horse Gentler has already found Nafka's special scratching spot.

"Ms. Hendren," Mom begins.

"*Jen*, please."

Mom smiles. "Jen, this is my daughter Winnie."

Ms. Hendren shakes my hand. “I’ve heard such good things about your mom. That’s why I’ve driven here from California. Nafka deserves the best. Hopefully, when I return in two weeks, your mother can give me riding instructions. Nafka deserves a better rider than she has now.”



“Two weeks? You won’t even see your horse for two whole weeks?” I’d never want to be away from this horse for two days. Two hours. Two minutes.

Mom puts a hand on my arm. “Two weeks should be long enough for us to wear off the rough edges. I’m sure Nafka will fit right in with our other horses. I’ll walk her up the lane and back. She’s probably stiff after that long ride. Winnie, show Ms. Hendren around the ranch.”

I lead Ms. Hendren to the pasture gate, but I’d much rather be leading Nafka. Horses are easy to talk to. People, not so much.

I know I should be saying something to our new client. From the woods I hear the *thunk, thunk, thunk* of a woodpecker pounding a cottonwood. A cardinal chimes in

with *birdy-birdy-birdy*. Nafka's hoofbeats echo from the lane.

And I still can't think of anything to say.

I want the Arabian's owner to know we take care of other classy horses. I point to our boarding horses. "We're training those show horses grazing together," I explain. "We've got a Hanoverian, a Paso Fino, and a champion Thoroughbred. The Buckskin is Mom's." Maybe Ms. Hendren will see that Mom and I both are horse gentlers to the best horses.

Ms. Hendren clears her throat. "Well, I'll bet you're a big help to your mom, Winnie."

I try my best not to sigh.

Note to self: That's me—Winnie the Big Help.