

Winnie

The Early Years 



Horse Gentler
in Training

Dandi Daley Mackall

Author of the Bestselling Winnie the Horse Gentler Series

illustrated by Phyllis Harris

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Horse Gentler in Training

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Chapter 1



How Not to Catch a Princess

“Hang on, Winnie!” Mom shouts into the wind as Chief, our sleepy plow horse, plods on.

I wrap my arms around Mom’s waist. We’re riding double. Bareback. I know what’s coming.

Chief trots, making us bounce on his broad back. Then he breaks into a slow canter. He’s

the oldest horse on the Willis Wyoming Ranch. I love our ranch, so I can't stop thinking about the argument I overheard last night:

“Jack, we can't lose the ranch!” Mom said.

“We need to hold on and pray.”

“Prayer won't pay the bills, Emily,” Dad said.

We board horses, and Mom gentles them.



Other trainers “break” horses, sometimes in cruel ways. Not Mom. She is so good with horses you’d think she was one. It’s their owners we have trouble with.

More than anything on earth, I want to be a horse gentler like Mom.

“Uh-oh.” Mom eases Chief to a walk.

Mr. Green and his son Austin are in our pasture. Mr. Green is wearing green pants and a green shirt. I’ve never seen him in any other color. Austin is eight, like his twin, Simon. And me.

Mr. Green runs toward Royal Princess, their new champion Thoroughbred. The mare’s deep-brown coat shines in the sunlight. Princess keeps munching grass until Mr. Green is a horse’s tail away. Then she trots to the far end of the pasture. “Come back here!” he cries.

“I’ll get that horse!” Austin shouts.

Mom slides off Chief and whispers, “Winnie Willis, in the beginning God created heaven and earth and horses. And sometimes I have to wonder if the good Lord shouldn’t have quit while he was ahead.”