

# My North Star

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As I was walking through the forest, I thought about what I had just abandoned. The safety of the little log cabin, the warm blanket of comfort on my oak bed, the smell of delicious, warm food baking in the fiery gas oven. I glanced over my shoulder at the comforting oak cabin, with smoke swirling gracefully out of the tall, brick chimney into the deep blue sky. A pang of regret filled me, but was quickly replaced with the feeling of loneliness and abandonment that was associated with the sight of the two-story building. I quickly turned away before my emotion could overtake me, and ignored the pinch of warm tears burning in the back of my eyes.

I turned and swiftly broke into a run towards the depths of the dark forest. My legs burned like fire, my body anxiously urging me to stop, but I knew it wasn't possible. Memories flashed throughout my head as fast as the blur of trees in my peripheral vision. Memories of not being wanted and ignored because I was different. Different in every way imaginable. I had never truly been a part of the family nestled around the cozy fireplace in that little wooden cabin, and I knew I never would be.

According to the family I had just left behind, I had been placed on their doorstep approximately 12 years ago on a stormy, foggy night with nothing but a note and a thin blue blanket wrapped around my shivering body. The note had

been scrawled in my mother's elegant handwriting, explaining that she could no longer properly take care of me, and had felt that I would be better off living at the little log cabin. But to me it had felt like words of abandonment. I had first been shown the note at the age of eight and had realized the people who I had called Mom and Dad numerous times weren't really mine. The two girls who I had called sisters since I could speak were fakes. And like a crumbling brick wall, my world came crumbling down on top of me.

The rest of my early childhood I shut my self out. I closed the door to my heart and didn't let anything in and didn't allow anything out. I didn't want anything to do with the nice, quiet family who had so generously taken me in. I felt like an outsider, never quite fitting in, and then the day came I realized I never would.

I snuck out in the late evening one night with food, water, and the faded note from my mother tucked safely in the front pocket of my zippered backpack. I headed out into the woods until I was too far away to even see the smoke swirling into the deep blue sky. I had no clue where I was going, just that I had to leave.

As I walked, I found a small, cozy clearing of trees. The sky was randomly dotted with sparkling stars, and the moon glowed like a lantern. I sat down on the thick layer of browning pine needles and leaned my back against a tall, pine tree on the edge of the small clearing. After shifting into a comfortable position, I gently pulled the worn, frayed note from my mother out of the front, zippered pocket of my pack. I carefully opened the soft paper, and ran my fingers over the worn creases I had created in the cream colored paper. I scanned the words I had read numerous times, even though they had been seared into my memory years ago. I closed my

tired eyes with the letter still clutched in my sweaty palm, and felt myself slowly drift off to sleep.

Halfway through the night a loud noise broke into my dreams. I immediately jumped to my feet, pack strapped on my back, ready to flee if the need came. The sound of crunching leaves filled my ears, and I instinctively took a quiet step backwards.

Suddenly the sound of a gentle whinny filled the air, and a gorgeous, tri-colored paint foal stepped into view. The sight astonished me, as she stood there still as a statue, ears pricked for the smallest of sounds. We locked eyes, and just watched each other for a long while, until I took the initiative and took a step towards her. She immediately stepped backwards, showing no sign of wanting anything to do with the stranger trying to approach her.

I was determined to get near the tiny filly and was able to cover roughly half the distance between us. Her eyes suddenly widened and she slowly started towards me. She stretched her head out as far as she could and I slowly raised my arm to touch her delicate muzzle. As my fingertips came into contact with her soft, velvety skin I felt a connection. I gazed into her gentle, beautiful eyes and felt the one thing I had never allowed in -- love.

To my surprise the cute little paint filly never tried to run from me, but rather laid down near me as I settled into my cushy bed of pine needles. Her eyes fluttered shut, and her breathing slowed as she slowly drifted off to sleep. I inched my hand over to where she slept and gently stroked her fuzzy, velvety neck. That's how we slept. Her with her legs neatly tucked under her tiny body with her gentle

pretty head resting on the forest floor. And then me with my hand gently resting on her neck finally feeling a sense of love.

As I woke to the bright sunlight splashing across my face, I looked down and came face to face with those loving eyes. As I searched those cute, carefree eyes, I realized she was beginning to trust me.

I gently came to my feet and the little paint filly scrambled to her feet to follow me. The sound of gurgling water filled my ears and I followed it to the edge of the clearing, where I found a small, clear stream. I bent down to splash some of the inviting water on my face, but suddenly felt an insistent push on my lower back. Next thing I knew I was face-first in the cold swirling water. I pushed myself up and swiftly turned around to look at the culprit. And there was the cute baby with a seemingly innocent expression in her eye. My face broke into a grin and I splashed a handful of water towards her. She scrambled away, but immediately came back and sent a stream of water towards me with her nose. I laughed and played with her for a long while, until we both grew tired and collapsed on the side of the creek. She sprawled out on the ground with her legs in all directions, and I laughed as she sighed in pleasure.

We played in the woods for hours, and I taught her to trust me. She would follow me around with her nose on my back, her hot breath warming my back and tickling my neck. Towards the evening, we both grew tired and laid down in the clearing of pine needles. She rested her head in my lap and I gently stroked her tiny head.

"You need a name", I told her. She looked up as I talked to her, and I

scoured my brain for the perfect name. And then it came to me.

"Star", I whispered.

She was my north star. She had lead me out of my sadness and despair, and shown me what love and happiness was. Her eyes lit up as I said her name, and she whinnied softly.

As we sat together, and gazed into each others eyes, I came to a sudden realization. The family in the little log cabin had never abandoned me. They had tried to love me, but I had never let it in. And the tiny, baby filly had broken down the wall surrounding my heart. I jumped up and Star scrambled to her feet to follow me. We ran through the dense woods, until the sight of the comforting cabin came into view. Star came to a halt next to me, and nuzzled my hand. I was finally home.

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Sitting on top of Star's back, I felt like a princess in a fairytale. The announcer called our name, and my heart beat like a drum.

"Ok Star, Let's do this!" I whispered into her ear, "I love you". Star's ears twitched as I whispered to her.

The gate to the arena swung open and I nudged her forward. The bell went off, and we cantered a circle. I aimed Star towards the first jump and I could feel her excitement. We flew towards the brightly painted jump, and seemed to fly over it. My heart soared, and I felt like shouting out of pure joy. We seemed to never touch the ground as we flew over the rest of the course. Trotting out of the gate, I was ecstatic to hear the announcer declare our round clean. I slid off Star's back and

wrapped my arms around her. Our pure love for each other flowed off of us like a river.

I waited anxiously for the results. If we won, we would be named the Top Hunter Jumper of the Year. Yet even if we didn't, I would always be proud of my Star. We had come so far, farther than anybody could have ever expected.

The announcer's voice came over the speaker and he paused before announcing the winner. I was sure everyone could here my heart beating. The winner's name came, and I held my breath as they announced it. I gave a shriek of joy as I realized it was ours . I gave Star a kiss on the nose, and she nuzzled me back.

"We did it", I whispered into her ear.

.The loving look in her eye melted my heart. My family surrounded me, giving Star and me hug after hug.

I swung onto Star's back and we trotted to the center of the arena. Tears streamed down my face as I accepted the gold trophy with our names on it. I leaned down and gave Star a hug, knowing without her my life would have never been so full of joy, and none of this would have ever happened. She would always be my Star.