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Opening extract from

Mozart's Banana

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Chapter 1
A Crazy Horse

He was called Mozart's Banana – a crazy name for a crazy horse.

Most of the time, he had the sweetest temper in the world. You could rub his nose and pull his ears and he was as gentle as a kitten. But try to get on his back, and – POWAKAZOOM!

He went mad. He bucked. He reared. He bolted round the field and scraped himself against every tree.

Of course, at first we all tried to tame him.

Every child in the village had a go – until Sammy Foster tore his arm on the barbed wire. Then our mothers all marched up to see old Mrs Clausen, who owned the horse. Mrs Clausen said, "NO MORE." She said that if we went into the field again she'd call the police.

After that, no one bothered with Mozart's Banana. Not until Alice Brett came.

Alice Brett had never been near a horse in her life. She was a skinny little thing with wispy hair and big eyes, like a Yorkshire terrier, and she had lived in the middle of



a town until then. She looked as if she'd be scared stiff of anything bigger than a hamster, let alone a horse like Mozart's Banana.

Sammy Foster warned Alice about Mozart's Banana, the way he warned all the new kids. On her first day at school, he pulled up his sleeve and waved his arm in her face.

"See that?" he said. "What d'you think did that?"

Sammy had a fantastic scar from the barbed wire. It was long and ragged and dark purple. Most kids pulled faces and edged away when they saw it, but Alice Brett hardly gave it a glance.

"Been fighting?" she said.

"Fighting?" Sammy pushed the scar right under her nose. "How would anyone get *that* in a fight, Mouse Brain? 69 stitches, I needed."



Alice Brett looked at him with pity, as if he hadn't got a clue. Sammy went red in the face and grabbed her by the collar.

"You think that's nothing?" he said. "Well, you try and ride that flaming horse, if you're so tough. I bet you £10 you break your neck."

He gave her a shake and stamped off.

Alice pulled her collar straight, as cool as a choc-ice. That evening she was up at the Church Field, staring over the gate.

