



## Irish Hearts: Irish Thoroughbred Irish Rose

By Nora Roberts

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From #1 New York Times and USA TODAY bestselling author Nora Roberts

comes a pair of beloved stories about seeking your destiny...and finding love along the way

#### IRISH THOROUGHBRED

Irish lass Adelia Cunnane has entered a fairy tale. Working at the world-renowned Royal Meadows stables is a dream come true. She's determined to prove her worth, especially to the stables' owner—the very opinionated and ruggedly handsome Travis Grant. Princesses aren't the only ones who can have a happily-ever-after!

#### IRISH ROSE

Erin McKinnon follows her cousin Adelia to America and is immediately captivated by the charm of Royal Meadows. But she is not nearly as impressed with Burke Logan, owner of the neighboring property. A womanizing, cigar-smoking gambler, he's exactly the type of man her mind tells her to stay away from. But her heart isn't nearly so practical...

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## Irish Hearts: Irish Thoroughbred Irish Rose By Nora Roberts Bibliography

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"With clear-eyed, concise vision and a sure pen, Roberts nails her characters and settings with awesome precision, drawing readers into a vividly rendered world of family-centered warmth and unquestionable magic."

-Library Journal

"Her stories have fueled the dreams of twenty-five million readers."

-Chicago Tribune

"Roberts' bestselling novels are some of the best in the romance genre. They are thoughtfully plotted, well-written stories featuring fascinating characters."

-USA TODAY

"A superb author...Ms. Roberts is an enormously gifted writer whose incredible range and intensity guarantee the very best of reading."

-Rave Reviews

"A consistently entertaining writer."

-USA TODAY

"The publishing world might be hard-pressed to find an author with a more diverse style or fertile imagination than Roberts."

-Publishers Weekly

### About the Author

Nora Roberts is a bestselling author of more than 209 romance novels. She was the first author to be inducted into the Romance Writers of America Hall of Fame. As of 2011, her novels had spent a combined 861 weeks on the *New York Times* Bestseller List, including 176 weeks in the number-one spot. Over 280 million copies of her books are in print, including 12 million copies sold in 2005 alone.

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Adelia Cunnane stared out the window without seeing the magic layer of clouds. Some formed into mountains, others glaciers, flattening and thinning into an ice-encrusted lake; but, for one experiencing her first air journey, she found the view uninspiring. Her mind was crowded with doubts and uncertainties that merged with a strong pang of homesickness for a small farm in Ireland. But both farm and Ireland were now very far away, and every minute that crawled by brought her closer to America and strangers. She knew, with a sigh of frustration, that nothing in her life had ever prepared her properly to cope with either.

Her parents had been killed in a lorry accident, leaving her an orphan at the tender age of ten. In the weeks that followed her parents' death, Adelia had drifted through a fog of shock, turning inward to ward off the agony of separation, the strange and terrifying feeling of desertion. Slowly, a wall had been constructed

around the pain, and she had thrown herself into the work of the farm with an adult's dedication.

Her father's sister, Lettie Cunnane, had taken over both child and farm, running both with a firm hand. Although never unkind, neither had she been affectionate: she had possessed little patience or understanding for the unpredictable, often tempestuous child.

The farm had been the only common ground between them, and woman and child had built their relationship with the dark, fertile soil and the hours of labor it required. They had lived and worked together for nearly thirteen years; then Lettie had suffered a paralyzing stroke, and Adelia had been forced to divide her time between the duties of the farm and caring for an invalid's needs. Days and nights had merged together as she waged the determined battle to shoulder the increasing responsibility.

Her enemies had been the lack of time and the lack of money. When, after six long months, she was again left alone, Adelia was near the point of exhausted desperation. Her aunt was gone, and though she had worked unceasingly, the farm had had to be sold for taxes.

She had written to her only remaining relative, her father's elder brother, Padrick, who had emigrated to America twenty years previously, informing him of his sister's death. His answer had been immediate, the letter warm and loving, asking her to join him. The last sentence of the missive was a simple, gentle command: "Come to America; your home is with me now."

So she had packed her few belongings; sold or given away what could not be taken with her, and said goodbye to Skibbereen and the only home she had ever known....

A sudden movement of the plane jolted Adelia back from memory. She sat back against the cushions of her seat, fingering the small gold cross she always wore around her neck. There was nothing left for her in Ireland, she told herself, fighting against the flutters of her stomach. Everything she had loved there was dead, and Padrick Cunnane was the only family she had left, the only link with what she had once had. She pushed back a surge of sudden, unaccustomed fear. America, Ireland--what difference did it make? Her shoulders moved restlessly. She would manage. Hadn't she always managed? She was determined not to be a burden to her uncle, the vague, shadowy man she knew only from letters, whom she had last seen when barely three. There would be work for her, she reasoned, perhaps on the horse farm her uncle had written of so often over the years. Her ability to work with animals was innate, and she had absorbed a varied knowledge of medicine through her experiences, her skill being such that she had often been called on to aid in a difficult calving or stitch up a rent hide. She was strong, despite her diminutive stature--and, she reminded herself with an unconscious squaring of shoulders, she was a Cunnane.

Surely, she told herself with more confidence, there would be a place for her at Royal Meadows where her uncle worked as trainer for the Thoroughbred racing stock. There'd be no fields needing plowing, no cows needing milking, but she'd earn her bread and butter if she had to work as a scullery maid. She wondered suddenly, with a small frown, if they had scullery maids in America.

The plane touched down, and Adelia disembarked and entered the Dulles terminal in Virginia, where she found herself gaping in confusion, fascinated by the scene, confused by the babble of foreign tongues, the

odd mixture of people. Her eyes lingered over an East Indian family in full native dress. She turned to observe two teenagers in faded denims strolling by hand in hand, followed by a scurrying middle-aged businessman clutching a leather briefcase.

Later, standing in the lobby, she looked around hoping to see a familiar face. Everyone rushing and hurrying, she thought. A body could be trampled and never seen again....

"Dee, little Dee!" A man hurried toward her, a stockily built, compact man with a full thatch of curling gray hair, and she caught a glimpse of eyes as bright and blue as her father's before she was enveloped in a warm, crushing hug. The thought occurred to her that it had been a lifetime since anyone had held her so close.

"Little Dee, I would have known you anywhere." He pulled back and studied her face, eyes misty, smile tender. "It's like looking into Kate's face again--it's the image of your mother you are."

He continued to stare at her while she searched for her voice, his gaze taking in the deep, rich auburn hair falling in gleaming waves to her shoulders, the large, deep green of thickly lashed eyes, the tip-tilted nose and full mouth which Aunt Lettie had described as impudent, the face now of a startled pixie.

"What a beautiful sight you are," he said at last on a sigh of pure pleasure.

"Uncle Padrick?" she asked, finding a multitude of questions and emotions racing through her. "And who else would you be thinking I might be?" He looked down at her with those well-remembered eyes, filled with love and laughter, and doubts, fears, and questions vanished in a wave of joy.

"Uncle Paddy," she whispered as she flung her arms around his neck.

As they drove along the highway from the airport, Adelia stared about her in fresh amazement. Never had she seen so many cars, and all flying by at an outrageous speed. Everything moved so fast, and the noise, she marveled silently, the noise was enough to wake the dead. Shaking her head, she began to bombard her uncle with questions.

How far was it they were going? Did everyone drive so fast in America? How many horses were at Royal Meadows? When could she see them? Questions buzzed in her mind and through her lips, and Paddy answered them tolerantly, finding the soft lilt of her voice as sweet as a summer breeze.

"Where is it I'll be working?"

He removed his eyes from the road a moment and glanced at her. "There's no need for you to be working, Dee."

"Oh, but Uncle Paddy, I must," she disagreed, turning to face him. "I could work with the horses; I've a way

with animals."

Thick gray brows drew together in a doubtful frown. "I didn't bring you all this way to be putting you to work." Before she could protest, he went on. "And I don't know what Travis would be thinking about me hiring my own niece."

"Oh, but I'd do anything." She brushed back masses of chestnut hair. "Groom the horses, muck out the stalls, cart hay--it doesn't matter." Unknowingly, she used her eyes in an outrageous manner. "Please, Uncle Paddy, it's crazy I'd be in a week, not having some sort of work to do."

Her eyes won the small battle, and Paddy squeezed her hand. "We'll see."

So engrossed had she been in their conversation and the fascinating stream of traffic that she had lost all track of time. When Paddy pulled into a drive and halted the car, Adelia gazed about her with new wonder.

"Royal Meadows, Dee," he announced with a sweeping gesture of his hand. "Your new home."

The entrance to the long, winding drive was flanked by two tall stone pillars, and bushes studded with the promise of flowering buds continued along its path as far as she could see. The grass was brilliantly green over softly rolling hills, and horses grazed lazily in the distance.

"The finest horse farm in all of Maryland, sure as faith," Paddy added with possessive pride as he proceeded along the curving drive. "And--in Padrick Cunnane's opinion--the finest in the whole of America."

The car rounded a bend in the drive, and Adelia caught her breath as the main house came into view. An immense structure, or so it seemed to her, with three magnificent stories of old and muted stone. Dozens of windows winked in the gleaming sun like large, clear eyes. Wide and boldly glistening, they were a sharp contrast to the stone's mellowness. Skirting the top two stories were balconies, the design of wrought iron as intricate and delicate as the finest lace. The house stood on a gently sloping lawn of close-cropped green, graced with bushes and stately trees just awakening from their winter sleep.

"Beautiful, isn't it, Dee?"

"Aye," she agreed, awed by its size and elegance. "The grandest house I've ever seen."

"Well, our house isn't so grand as this." He turned the car left as the drive forked past the stone building. "But it's a fine place, and I hope you'll be happy there."

Adelia turned her attention to her uncle with a smile that transformed her face into a work of art. "I'll be happy, Uncle Paddy, as long as you're with me." Letting impulse guide her movements, she leaned over and kissed his cheek.

"Ah, Dee, I'm glad you're here." He took her hand in a firm grip. "You've brought the spring with you."

The car came to a halt, and Adelia turned to look out the front window, her mouth falling open at what greeted her eyes. An oval track commanded her view, and across from it stood a large white building, which Paddy identified as the stables. Fences and paddocks checkerboarded the area and the scent of hay and horses drifted through the air.

In solemn amazement she gazed abo...

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

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