

The Midnight Horse



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著者:Fleischman, Sid/ Sis, Peter (ILT)

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It is raining bullfrogs. Inside the coach to Cricklewood sit a blacksmith, a thief, and an orphan boy named Touch. "The haunt, lad!" shouts the blacksmith suddenly. "If you want to see a live ghost, stick your head out the window. He's on the roof." That is Touch's first glimpse of the roguish ghost of The Great Chaffalo, a magician once celebrated for his trick of turning straw into horses. They meet again when Touch, fleeing from his wicked great-uncle, gathers an armload of straw and seeks out the phantom. The Great Chaffalo obliges the runaway boy with a high-legged stallion with a golden mane and "a hide as fine as China silk." But Touch discovers that not even this bedazzling horse can put him beyond reach of the troubles pursuing him. He is forced to confront rascals and wrongdoers with imagination and courage--and a ghostly word now and then from his new friend, The Great Chaffalo. With his gift for comedy and robust storytelling, Sid Fleischman tells a tale of innocence in a world of high villainy and low, of things seen and not what they seem, of mystery, suspense, and wonder.

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