



Northward to the Moon

Polly Horvath

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Jane and her family have moved to Canada - but not for long. When her stepfather, Ned, is fired from his job as a high school French teacher (seems he doesn't speak French), the family packs up and Jane embarks on a series of new adventures.

Northward to the Moon Details

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From Reader Review Northward to the Moon for online ebook

Canadian Children's Book Centre says

Reviewed by Rachel Seigel

Picking up one year after *My One Hundred Adventures*, author Polly Horvath revisits Jane Fielding and her family, now living in Saskatchewan, where her stepfather Ned is teaching French. When Ned gets fired from his job (for not actually knowing French), Jane's imagination runs wild with all of the possibilities for adventure. She also senses Ned's restlessness and sees him as a kindred spirit. The family leaves Saskatchewan and sets off on a quest that takes them from a First Nations village to Ned's mother's horse ranch until they finally land back where they belong — their beloved beach home in Cape Cod.

As with its companion book, Jane's voice carries this novel. She is funny, insightful and intelligent, and a truly likeable character. Jane is now 13 and she's an interesting mix of adult and child. At times, her insights are profound and mature, but as her first humiliating crush teaches her, she has a lot to learn about people and relationships. Jane does a great deal of learning and growing in this book, and family is at the heart of the story. This time, the adventures are not solely Jane's, and as she gets to know her new grandmother and aunts, she begins to understand that her search for adventure is different from Ned's own wandering spirit.

The book is beautifully written. The language is vivid and descriptive, and Horvath writes with humour and integrity. The characters are well-drawn, with unique personalities, and readers will be easily pulled into caring about them, and will leave anxious to read the next chapter in Jane's adventures.

Canadian Children's Book News (Summer 2010, Vol. 33, No. 3)

Ryan says

I think I liked it - it was very strange. On the one hand, I enjoyed Jane's adventurous spirit, her desire for new and different, her concern for her siblings even though they were often annoying. I liked her mother's tolerance and patience. Then there were bizarre scenes with Ned, the stepfather, who was clearly a wanderer, but who appeared devoted to his new wife and family. Who seemed very conscious of needing to consider them in his wandering plans, but who was fated, perhaps, to make horrid decisions. I was glad they all got home to the beach where they clearly needed to be - there were a few moments when I was worried they would not. Glad Maya found a friend - both in her new grandmother and through that grandmother.

I think Jane's evaluation of the differences between her wandering spirit and her stepfather's sums up the book and provides the appropriate foreshadowing: she wanted to go to places; he wanted to run away from them.

Erin says

Overall disappointing follow up. It had none of the charm of the first book. The narrator had vocal fry and used an affected tone of voice. The protagonist is a teenager so perhaps that's why but it was distracting. I

liked the narration of the first book much better.

Tracy says

Great book. Again, this author created realistic characters who were engaging, funny, and believable. I was enthralled until the end of the story.

Jackie says

Jane and her family high-tail it out of Saskatchewan after her step-father loses his job teaching French at the local school. They head out on the road, but along the way, they come across a bag full of money supposedly left for Ned by his long lost brother, John. Apparently, Ned's mom, Dorothy, has some knowledge of John's doings and they head out to Nevada to talk with her. When the family finally reaches Nevada at Ned's mother's ranch, they find that John's left their mother quite a tidy sum of money, too...enough to buy this sprawling ranch, hire ranch-hands, and board horses. Nobody knows what to make of this money...is it stolen?, was it some sort of illegal activity that John made money on?, or is it legit?

Tragedy strikes and Ned's mom, Dorothy falls off a horse and breaks her hip. The rest of the extended family shows up to 'help' mom, sell the ranch, and move her into an assisted living facility. Never mind that she doesn't want any of this to happen. A series of seemingly unrelated events occur just as Ned, Felicity, Jane, Maya, Max and Herschel are about to leave the ranch and head back to their original home in Massachusetts. They decide Dorothy needs to be with them and take her along.

Jane and the siblings learn of the Ned's family's dysfunction during their childhood years, and sense a restlessness in Ned. During this time, however, they've grown fond of Dorothy. Can Ned handle all this family togetherness? Or will he, once again, high-tail it *Northward to the Moon*?

Jeffer says

The description is very confusing, but once you get to understand the story it makes more sense. The plot was not very exciting and doesn't have any suspense. I recommend this book to people who are bored and needed to read something. Because this book has a lot of description, it makes the book more detailed. Almost like a detailed diary of a person.

Bobby Simic says

There's something about Horvath's more dramatic books that I just love. Quirky, observant, sometimes acid-tongued, and always cerebral. There's a calming, hushed wisdom to her beautiful way with words, but she's also wickedly funny too(a scene with a magician's assistant had me laughing aloud on the subway train).

In this follow-up to 2008's "My One Hundred Adventures," (I had no idea it was a sequel when I started it by-the-way), we find Jane and her family moving from Saskatchewan after her stepfather is fired from his

teaching job (he didn't know how to speak French even though his job was to teach the language to students). They stumble upon a bag of money that leads them to the stepfather's estranged family on a horse ranch in Nevada. There, lust begins to stir for Jane when she encounters a ranch hand, and she also learns of the dynamics of family, where sometimes their actions have no reason.

I think the ending may frustrate some readers (not sure if there will be another sequel), but I thought it cleverly brought the reader into Jane's dilemma and the theme of unexplainable behavior from a loved one.

Josiah says

"Sometimes it is good to have things happen to you outside of your control. There are parts of yourself you would never discover otherwise."

—*Northward to the Moon*, PP. 53-54

That quote encapsulates much of what *Northward to the Moon* is about. The plot is a series of almost random events coming together to make up the childhood of Jane and her three siblings, as life takes them on the kind of wild ride that could only happen in a story.

After the ending of *My One Hundred Adventures*, to which this book is a direct sequel, life does not settle down for Jane and her newly shaped family that had come together seemingly from leftover odds and ends to unexpectedly form a real family structure. Her stepfather, Ned, has now been let go from his job as a French teacher at the local school, for the very practical reason that he does not speak French. Ned always had been a wanderer before agreeing to settle down with Jane's family in the previous book and give a go at this "normal lifestyle" thing, and now his itchy feet are returning, and he takes his family off on a new adventure to unknown parts.

Adventure finds Jane, Ned and the others before very long, of course; when one is looking so hard for it, I think that adventure has no choice but to eventually acquiesce. Ned's unconventional, spread-out-across-the-country family takes center stage in the narrative as Ned gets caught up in some kind of a money scheme involving his brother, John. Following this trail takes Ned to the ranch house where his mother lives, and the two are reunited for the first time in more than twenty years. Ned's siblings come, too, and before long it's real chaos, stirred up by the cramped presence of so many eccentric family members all dropped into the same location after so many years spent completely on their own. Within the madness, though, are some lessons for Jane to come to realize, about dealing with whatever happens to oneself no matter what that may be, and understanding that so often the "bad" things that people do to us are more a misunderstanding on our part of their true intentions, rather than any purposeful motives of malfeasance. Just because we can't understand what someone is saying doesn't mean that they're not making sense.

As usual for her books, Polly Horvath weaves some moments of wisdom into the text that made me just stop and really think on a couple of occasions. You can always count on her for that, and for stories filled with wild characters and sharp humor. Readers who liked *My One Hundred Adventures* will want to read *Northward to the Moon* to find out what happened next.

Monica Edinger says

I delighted in *My One Hundred Adventures* and so went into this sequel a bit wary. So far I don't think of Polly Horvath as staying with characters beyond one book. But here she is sticking with Jane, her unflappable-poet mother, her younger sister, and brothers. And, let me tell you, she makes it work. This book is definitely as good, if not better, than the first one.

Jane and her family have just spent a year in Canada and, as the book begins, are setting off on a road trip due to various circumstances related to their newish step-father Ned. Away from their beloved beach home in Massachusetts, Jane has to pay more attention to her younger sister Maya with mixed results. As is often the case with a Horvath title, the book is somewhat episodic -- peculiar and quirky people and circumstances move things along. And then there is the utterly original Horvath writing. I think I'd pick it out a mile a way! For example:

"Besides," says Ned, "the children can hardly go back to the school that fired me. Think of the stigma. There's gonna be some stigma!"

"Oh, major stigma!" I say.

"The stigma," murmurs my mother looking abstract.

Horvath uses words, ones her child readers probably don't know, as words should be used --- for their oddity and lovely sounds. For humor. For wit.

Besides the delicious words and writing there is a mystery bag, a dying Mary, a mysterious brother, Vegas, and lots more. Say a cliffhanger ending! So I'm guessing we will be hearing from Jane again -- soon, I very much hope.

B says

I normally love Polly Horvath's stories for their quirkiness but this one was too disjointed..where was the story going? I still loved the humor and the characters but when I recommend her, it will be for Everything on a Waffle or The trolls.

Rick Stuckwisch says

I enjoyed this sequel to *My One Hundred Adventures*, perhaps a bit more than the first book. The writing is a

bit choppy than Polly Horvath's usual style, but I think that was deliberate, to capture and express the thinking and perspective of the character narrating the story. It bounces around somewhat, but still moves forward in an engaging trajectory. The language is occasionally a little colorful for what is ostensibly a children's book, and the subject matter is at times a bit much for a child to grapple with, but overall it is enjoyable and interesting for readers and listeners of any age.

Angie says

Maybe three and a half, even, just for the lovely, lovely description.

This book continues the story of Jane (My One Hundred Adventures) and her family. First they're in Canada and then they head south. Why? You'll have to read to find out.

Some Favorite Quotes

"Let me tell you something, Jane, everyone is responsible for his own education. You can't teach anyone who doesn't want to learn and you can't stop a person who does." (14)

"I regard it as being like reading a good fantasy novel without having to go the trouble of remembering endless ridiculous boring made-up names." (20--and FYI this is actually MUCH funnier if you read the little plot point snippet it applies to)

"It is one thing to have adventures and recklessly take what comes. I am all for that but at the end of the day I want fresh linens." (52)

"In the close warm dark, with the sound of the fire, the crackling logs, the wind that whooshes through the pines and down the chimney, the spray of rain and ice against the roof in gust, the sound of movement outside, human or animal, impossible to tell, we lie content." (53)

"The whole back of the station wagon window shows a sky resplendent with constellations. The universe goes out forever. Night covers the desert like a blanket. There is nothing like a sky full of stars to make you lose track of your thoughts." (99-actually goes on but this is already getting to be a long list of quotes!)

PS Dear Author,
Endings like that? MEAN!

Eva Mitnick says

This is the sequel to My One Hundred Adventures, which was one of my favorite books of 2008. Jane is now 13 years old or so, and is at the tail-end of a so-so year up in Canada, where her step-dad Ned has just been fired from his job as a French teacher (it took the school almost an entire school year to figure out that Ned can't speak any French) and in general, no one is very happy.

Therefore, it's excellent timing when Ned gets a phone call from some folks he knew for a brief time 20 years ago, setting the family off on a road trip that leads them to a mysterious bag of money and then to

Ned's mom's horse ranch in Nevada. After Ned's mom has an accident, a bunch of Ned's sisters descend upon the ranch as well, and soon Jane is happily surrounded by new and strange relatives - and one alluring, if elusive, ranch hand named Ben.

Although it starts out as a road trip novel, the real meat of the story occurs at the ranch and is mostly about the mysterious and ever-fascinating nature of people and relationships. There is the frustrating riddle of her sister Maya's depression, the intriguing puzzle of how Ned's family functions (or doesn't), and of course the engrossing question of what goes on in Ben's mind and heart - since Ben doesn't ever say a word to Jane or even seem to notice her, Jane's imagination has full rein in this case.

Some main characters stay in the background (like Jane's mom and her two little brothers), while others receive much avid attention, and I think this reflects who Jane herself is thinking about. For example, her feelings about her step-dad keep changing as she goes from feeling like his side-kick (because they both love adventures) to feeling patronized and belittled when Ned offhandedly reveals Jane's feelings to Ben - and so we hear lots about Ned. Ned's sisters and mother are mostly vividly portrayed, and of course Jane worries quite a bit about her difficult sister Maya.

Although this didn't resonate with me in the same strong way that *My One Hundred Adventures* did, the strong writing, the novel but not too offbeat situation, and the imperfect, cranky, unpredictable characters make this book a pleasure to read.

And though none of Jane's questions (most notably who her father is) get answered, no matter. There will be a third book, as the last two sentences make clear. Jubilation!

Darlene Foster says

An enjoyable read. I loved the main character with her unique voice and quirky personality. The story centres around family dynamics and how kids deal with things out of their control. It is at times funny and sometimes sad. Filled with interesting characters and wonderful landscapes, I can see that kids would enjoy it as much as I did.

Catherine says

I didn't know this was a sequel to "*My One Hundred Adventures*" when I picked it up. I did not care much for the first book. I found it a misstep from an otherwise reliable author (and before you raise the specter of "*The Pepins and Their Problems*", I liked that one, so there). "*Northward to the Moon*" resonated more with me. Jane's introspective streak is compelling, and it's always difficult to read about child characters who are called upon to stand in for the adults in their lives. I also felt enormous sympathy for Maya's weariness at being dragged along, and with being stuck in the middle--between Jane's going-along because it's all an outlaw-adventure and her brothers being too young to complain. Finally, I once went to a workshop where the presenter said you can always count on Canadian authors to write beautiful landscape scenes, because there's so much of it up there, and with this book Horvath proves that generalization.
