


# Magic Spirit the Dream Horse

PIPPA'S PONY TALES

# Magic Spirit the Dream Horse



PIPPA FUNNELL

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ZEPHYR

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For my dear father,
George Nolan

Hello Everyone,

The idea for my stories grew while I was out on long rides and driving to various competitions. I found my imagination full of characters and storylines. So Tilly and her horsehair bracelets, based around a simple bracelet that was made out of the tail hairs of a wonderful horse I once rode, were created.

I wrote the series to help us all understand the responsibilities we have when involved with horses and ponies, whether looking after them, riding them or even dreaming about them – building those partnerships based on trust and mutual respect.

I love the saying 'If you want to have a good friend, you need to be a good friend'. This is how we should all be to both horses and humans!

More than anything, I want you to realise how wonderfully special our four legged friends are. I have been so very lucky and privileged to have had many, many great moments with them. They are absolutely my whole life and it's thanks to them these stories about Tilly following her passions came into being.

I hope you enjoy them –









# One

'When I was a girl, about your age,' said Tilly's mum, as she ran the brush through her daughter's long dark hair, 'I was mad, absolutely mad, about ice skating.'

Tilly turned her head, curious to know more.

'Ice skating?'

She tried to picture it: her mum at an ice rink, gliding gracefully on a pair of blades.

Doing turns and jumps.

'Oh yes. I loved it,' said Tilly's mum. 'Almost as much as you love horses, Tilly.'

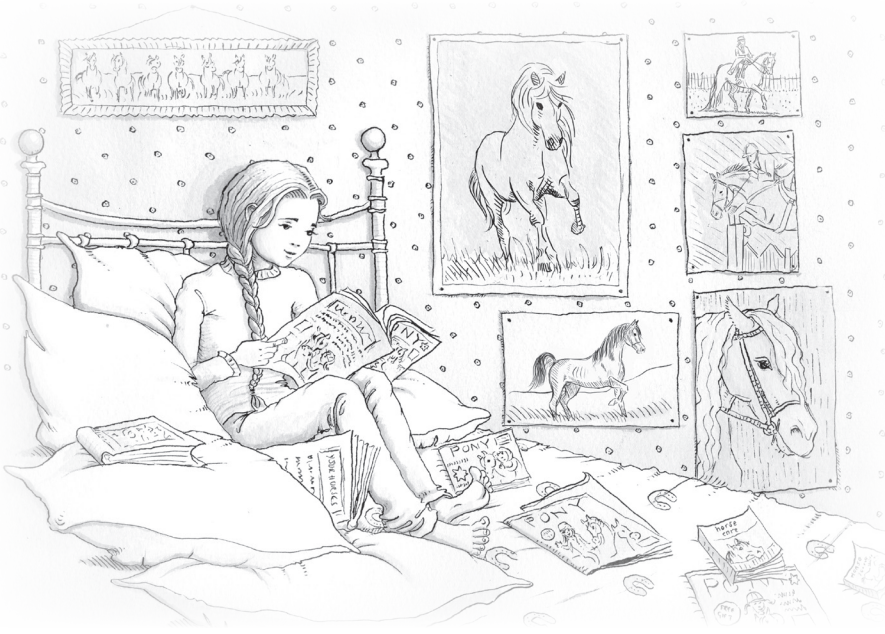


To say that Tilly Redbrow loved horses was perhaps a bit of an understatement – desperately, wildly crazy about them more like. You only had to take a peep in her bedroom to see that she was horse and pony mad. Every inch of wall space was covered in posters of the best breeds from around the world. She spent as much time as she could exploring websites. Her favourites were www.girlshorseclub.com and www.ponybox.com. Here, she could read blogs and manage her own online equestrian team, losing herself in a world of horses that was all hers.

Scattered over the floor of her room were copies of her favourite magazine, *Pony*, which her dad bought for her once a month, from the big newsagent in the next village.

Tilly liked to gaze at the photographs of other *Pony* readers. These were girls who really did have their own ponies: Helen Davis from Somerset and her dappled grey

Connemara, Prince, jumping a water ditch; Ezme Jackson from Oxford jumping clear on her 13hh pony, Featherboy. Tilly wished it could be her in the photos.




At night, when she lay in bed, just before falling asleep, she would imagine galloping across the open prairie, or through the

countryside, being carried away by her favourite fantasy horse: a mysterious black stallion called Magic Spirit.

'Tilly! *Tilly*!' said her mum, bringing her back to reality. 'Do you want a pony tail or plaits?'

'Plaits, please.'

'Always plaits,' said her mum, as she started weaving sections of Tilly's hair, which was too long for Tilly to do herself. She refused to get it cut. It had been long ever since she could remember. It reached all the way down her back, and it was a pain to wash and look after, but she liked it.

'So did you have your own ice-skates then?' Tilly asked, when her mum had finished.

'Goodness, no. Far too expensive. Nanny Gwen and Grandpa Pete couldn't afford luxuries like that, so I had to make do with watching it on television. All those lovely fluttering outfits and sequins… so pretty.



And I had lots of books and posters – like you. I used to sit for hours looking at pictures of figure skaters and thinking to myself, why can't that be *me*? Oh well, too late now, I suppose. Silly ideas, eh?'

But in her heart, Tilly's mum knew they weren't just silly ideas.

She looked at Tilly's thoughtful reflection in the mirror, and knew how much her horse daydreams meant to her. She wondered how she could make these daydreams come true.

'How about some breakfast?' she said. 'I've got some croissants from the bakers'. Maybe later we can make a cosy nest in the lounge, with blankets and cushions, and watch *Black Beauty* for the tenth time!' she said jokingly.

'Okay,' said Tilly. 'But I'd better take Scruff for a walk first.' Scruff was the Redbrow family's dog, a



long-haired Jack Russell, and he was full of energy. The more exercise he got, the better. As soon as he heard the door opening he scampered towards Tilly, wagging his stubby tail.



Lower Norbury was a small place – a pub, a village hall and a post office, surrounded by a few stone cottages. It was much quieter than the nearby town of North Cosford, and Tilly loved living in the village. She always enjoyed taking Scruff for walks down the main street on a sunny afternoon, smelling the flowers and listening to the birds.

Sometimes riders passed through, usually from Cavendish Hall, which was the exclusive boarding school where pupils were able to have their own ponies and horses on the outskirts of North Cosford. Tilly had driven past it many times, stared up at its grand iron

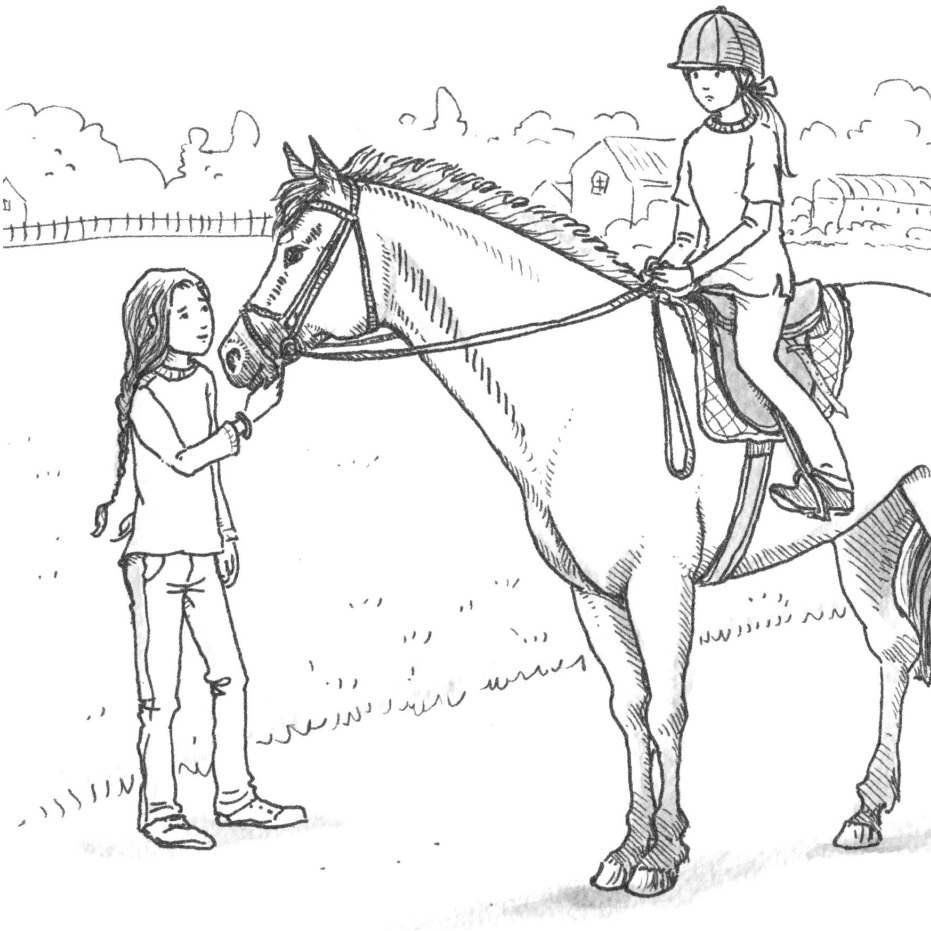
gates, longing to know what it was like inside. She'd heard that the pupils who went there were able to ride every day.

No one from *her* school, Cosford High – where her dad taught – no one from there, as far as Tilly knew, was remotely interested in riding.

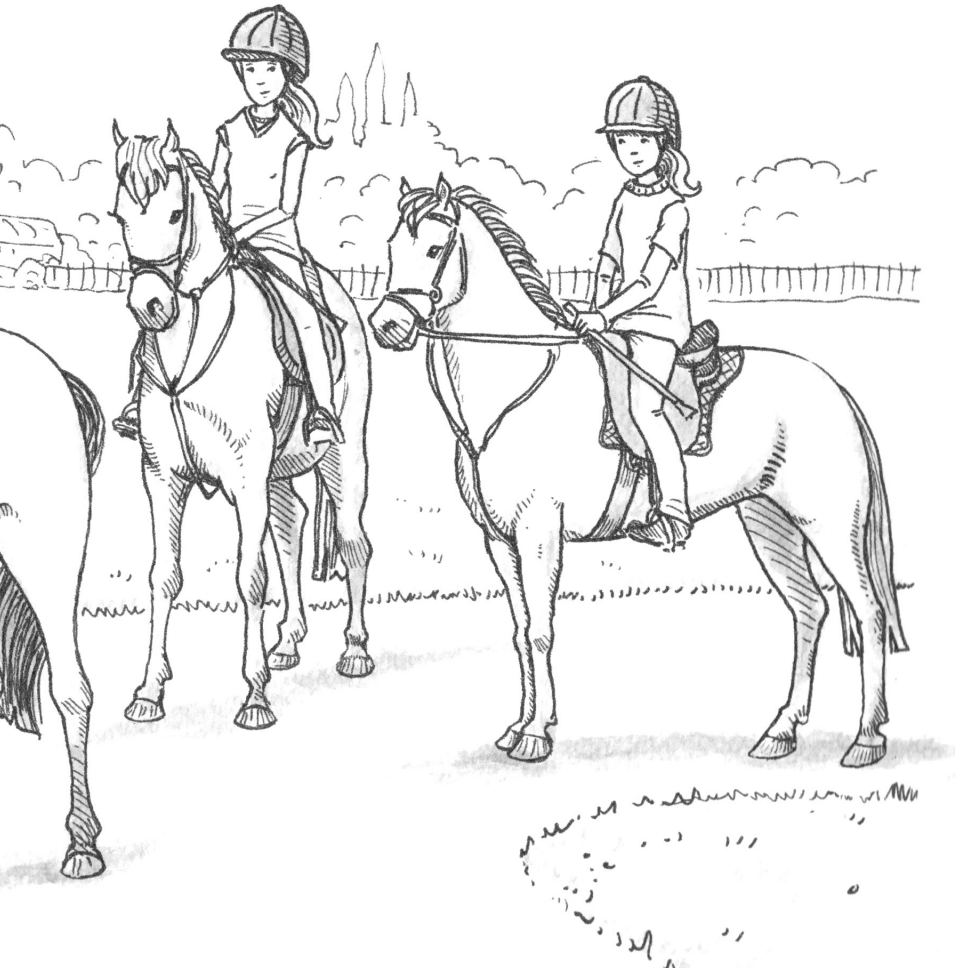
*If only*, she thought.



Suddenly three ponies emerged from the lane: two chestnuts and a bay. Their riders were all girls, about Tilly's age, dressed in neat riding leggings and designer t-shirts, with sleek blonde ponytails flowing from under their riding hats. They were definitely Cavendish Hall girls.



Tilly and Scruff stopped to admire the ponies. The bay, in particular, moved gracefully and his silky coat glistened in the sunlight. *What a beautiful, magnificent creature*, she thought.



As the pony passed by, he stopped and leaned his nose towards her, gently sniffing at the bracelet around her wrist. The rider immediately apologised:

'Sorry. Don't worry – he's usually very good-natured. He won't hurt you or anything.'

'I know,' said Tilly, smiling. She reached out to the pony and stroked the white star on his forehead. He moved even closer to her and started nuzzling her hand, hoping she might have a treat for him.

'What's got into you, Blaze?' said the rider impatiently. 'He doesn't normally fuss over strangers. I *am* sorry.'

The other two ponies came up behind them, their riders whispering together.

'What's she doing?' said one of them, loud enough for Tilly to hear. 'Come on. Let's go, or we'll be late for our dressage lesson.'

With that, the group trotted on, leaving Tilly

alone at the roadside. *How lucky they are*, she thought, as she watched them disappear round the corner. As she and Scruff ambled home, she kept asking herself, why can't that be me?

'So what's up, Tiger Lil'?' asked Mr Redbrow. He was the only person who called Tilly by her real name, Tiger Lily. He always knew when she was upset, because she would go very quiet and sit playing with her special bracelet.

'That old thing will break if you're not careful,' he said, watching her twist it round and round her finger. It was strange-looking, made from woven horsehair – black, plaited like Tilly's hair, and linked with a small silver clasp. Tilly had worn the bracelet all her life. She'd had it since birth, but no one knew where it came from – and there was little chance of finding out, because when she was very young, Tilly had been adopted.



For as long as Tilly could remember, she'd been a Redbrow, and was happy to be so; but that didn't stop her from sometimes wondering who her mother and father were. And who *she* really was. The horsehair bracelet was her only link to the past, but it couldn't tell her anything.

Despite being happy with the Redbrow family, Tilly knew she was different. For a start, her thick, dark hair and olive skin made her stand out.



Everyone in her adoptive family was fair and freckly, with tall, solid figures. Tilly was small and delicate. Her brother, Adam, who was born three years after the Redbrows had adopted Tilly, was taller than her already.

Tilly loved Adam, but he got on her nerves too in the way that brothers do. He was noisy and messy, and always hogged the family iPad. He would spend hours playing *various games* when Tilly wanted to look up new pony websites. And he had an annoying habit of rushing to grab the iPad first, just when he thought Tilly might do the same.

Tilly's dad sat next to her on the stairs and began tickling Scruff's ears.

'Did you see those three lovely ponies go through the village today?' he asked, hoping that would cheer her up.

Tilly just stared at her trainers and nodded.

'I was talking to Tom Cracknell from the post office earlier. He said that the girls who ride them were all on the winning team at the National Schools Championship which was held at the famous Hickstead showground. They go to Cavendish Hall and practise every day after school. There's been quite a lot of chatter about them in the local paper. Perhaps we should go along one day and watch them?'

'Everyone always goes on about the Cavendish Hall girls,' said Tilly sulkily. 'Are they really that good?'

'Oh, come on, Tiger Lil', don't be like that – what have they got that you haven't, eh?'

*Their own ponies, for a start*, thought Tilly.