PIPPA'S PONY TALES

Samson the Stallion



PIPPA FUNNELL

OLYMPIC MEDALLIST

PIPPA'S PONY TALES

Samson the Stallion



PIPPA FUNNELL

Illustrated by Jennifer Miles

ZEPHYR

An imprint of Head of Zeus

This is a Zephyr book, first published in the UK by Head of Zeus,
part of Bloomsbury Plc

Text © Pippa Funnell, 2023

Illustrations © Jennifer Miles, 2023

The moral right of Pippa Funnell to be identified as the author and of Jennifer Miles to be identified as the illustrator of this work have been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

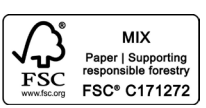
9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN (PB): 9781804542934
ISBN (E): 9781804542910

Designed by Nicky Borowiec

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY



Head of Zeus
5–8 Hardwick Street
London EC1R 4RG

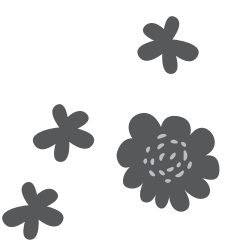


WWW.HEADOFZEUS.COM



One

It was a chilly winter's day but Tilly Redbrow didn't mind what the weather was like – rain, wind, sleet or snow. As long as she got to ride and spend time with the horses at Silver Shoe Farm, she was happy. Tilly was horse mad, and now that she shared her own pony, Rosie, with her friend, Mia, there was always an opportunity to ride, groom, feed, clean or simply be around the animals she loved. Tilly had taken on Rosie when Cally, the third member of their pony-mad gang, had gone to boarding school.



Today Tilly was particularly excited about her weekly riding lesson because Angela, who ran Silver Shoe Farm, and also did most of the teaching, had suggested she was ready to have her first jump. Over the months, Tilly had worked hard on the basics of walk, trot and canter. She had good natural balance and the ponies responded well to her aids.

Tilly was excited, and a bit nervous. After years of dreaming about riding, it felt great to actually be doing it and she couldn't believe she was ready for her first jump.

Tilly led Rosie into the large sand arena to meet Angela. Her tummy turned as she noticed all sorts of exercises which Angela and Duncan had laid out earlier



that morning. On one side of the arena there were five poles evenly spaced, each about a metre apart. Then across both diagonal lines, there were a couple of little cross poles. On the other side of the school three poles were lying on the ground as if dividing the arena into three.

'The idea,' Angela explained, 'is that these exercises over the poles and cross poles will help you learn to balance, maintain the



correct speed and rhythm and assist you with keeping straight. At this stage it's not about how high you can jump, it's about perfecting the basics to boost you and your pony's confidence.'

Tilly gulped.

'Most people go wrong because they see a jump and get excited and just use speed. It's not about speed. Don't look so worried, Tilly – you're ready for this!'

Tilly studied the exercises in front of her. The poles were only on the ground and the cross poles were small. She had watched Mia and Cally jump much bigger fences hundreds of times. *It'll be fine*, she told herself.

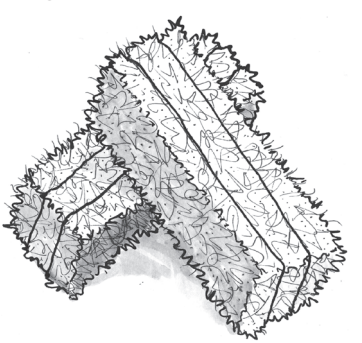
'Before you get on Rosie, try walking the distances between the cross poles so you can get a sense of your horse's stride pattern. I'll explain. Four of your strides is about equal to one horse stride. Then allow two of your strides for the distance from the fence to

where she's going to land, and two more in front of the next fence for where she'll take off. If you watch at shows and events, you'll see all the riders do this so they know how many strides there will be between fences. Even the most experienced riders do it.'

Tilly handed Rosie's reins to Angela, and walked over to the cross poles, which had been built across the diagonals of the arena. She paced out the distances between the cross poles on one diagonal and counted on her fingers as she took large strides.

'I'm ready,' she said. 'I walked it as four strides between the crosses.'

'I'll help you mount,' said Angela, offering her a leg up.



Riding Rosie always felt amazing. There was very little that upset her, and Mia said she

loved jumping and would try her hardest to leave the fences up. Tilly knew it wasn't like that with every horse. She remembered how she'd struggled with Bunny, the pony she had learned to ride on, whom she'd had to nudge on endlessly with her legs because she was so lazy.

Of course, the horse Tilly really wanted to jump was Magic Spirit. He was the reason she had come to Silver Shoe Farm in the first place, and he held a special place in her heart. Ever since Tilly had helped Angela rescue him from a busy roadside, the bond between Magic and Tilly had grown and strengthened. And even though she had an affinity with all the horses at the farm, he was her very special favourite.

Tilly thought of him, while she was warming up Rosie. Briefly, she touched her lucky horsehair bracelets. She believed they made her more confident, as she concentrated hard

on what Angela was saying.

'Okay, Tilly, we're going to start by trotting over some of the poles, allowing Rosie to work out her footwork and giving her a chance to place her feet carefully, in a nice rhythm without going too fast.'



Rosie had done pole work many times before. Tilly felt as though she was on springs, as Rosie picked her little legs up higher, elevating over the poles.

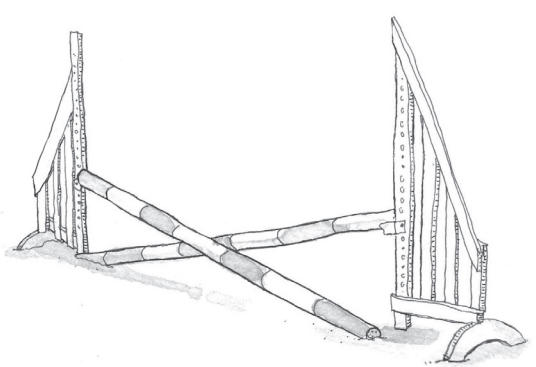
'Excellent, Tilly, let's move on and try a similar exercise in canter over the poles that are evenly spaced out on a circle, like a clock, so you can see there's a rail at 12 o'clock, 3 o'clock, 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock. I want

you to concentrate on maintaining a constant rhythm.'

Using Angela's measuring system, Tilly guessed that the poles were placed around five horse strides apart.

'You should meet both poles on an even stride – and by that I mean Rosie should not have to suddenly take a great long stride before the poles, or a very short one. That's it,' Angela said encouragingly. 'Heels firmly down. Relax your knees.'

It took several goes before Tilly got the hang of it, and when she was doing the exercise smoothly and consistently, Angela said she was ready to move on to the cross poles.



'Now I want you to do exactly the same over the first cross pole as you've just done. Keep straight, then jump it in the middle,' called Angela.

Feeling nervous, Tilly immediately grabbed the reins more tightly, and her body tensed.

Rosie, sensing Tilly's unease, quickened her pace at the cross pole, met it on an awkward stride, but jumped nevertheless. And though Tilly was delighted to have left the ground for the first time, she felt annoyed with herself. She had done everything Angela had told her not to do!

'Don't worry, Tilly, try again!' said Angela. 'The more you practice, the better you'll get.'

When Tilly had successfully jumped the first cross pole and met it on the correct stride, Angela suggested she try two in a row, aiming for four strides between each.

Confident now, Tilly met the first cross pole perfectly but then, excited by her success, she

forgot to sit up straight on landing. As she approached the second cross, she realised too late that she was perched too far forward and so Rosie added in a stride on take off.

Disaster!

As soon as Rosie was in the air, Tilly felt her upper body thrust forward. She lost her balance and fell from the saddle as soon as they landed.

'Ow!' she cried, tumbling on to her front. Luckily, Rosie seemed to know what to do and nimbly stepped away from where Tilly had landed.

Angela ran forward.

'Tilly! Are you okay?'

Tilly had landed with a hefty thud, even though she hadn't had far to fall off Rosie. She sat up slowly, smiling with embarrassment that she had plopped off over such a tiny fence. Angela held out her hand to pull Tilly up off the ground.

'Don't worry, we all fall off, there's no lasting damage, just a little hurt pride.'

Tilly remounted, determined. 'I want to have another go. I know what I did wrong… I didn't keep my legs secure for the second jump… I forgot about my balance… this time I'll get it right…'





Glancing confidently at her bracelet, Tilly thought, *I'm putting that behind me. I need to concentrate on what I need to do now and not what just happened*.

Picking up a good canter rhythm she met the first cross pole on an even stride and on landing, counted in her head, *one, two, three, four*. Rosie took off perfectly for the second, Tilly sitting lightly, but making sure she didn't get unseated again.

'Bravo,' said an excited Angela to a beaming Tilly.

'That was fantastic, so much fun,' said Tilly, smiling from ear to ear. 'Please, please, Angela, let me have another go.'

Tilly linked the exercises together, trotting over the trot poles, then her canter circle as if she was riding the clock face, followed by

the diagonal of crosses.

As they walked back to the stable yard, Angela said, 'I will let you into a little secret, the same thing happened to me when I tried my first jump.'

'You fell off?'

'I sure did! Still have the scar to prove it.'

Angela lifted her sleeve, and showed Tilly her arm. There was a mark running down the middle of it.

'Broken in two places! I didn't have such a soft landing as you did.'

'Ouch!' said Tilly.

'But as soon as I was ready, I got back on. You'll have more falls, Tilly, even the best riders in the world have falls. It's very important to look at why you fell and do everything to stay safe by



working hard on your position and balance and making sure if you, or your horse or pony, lose confidence, you go back to the basics – jump small until you're ready to build up again.

