PIPPA'S PONY TALES

Lucky Chance the New Foal



PIPPA FUNNELL
OLYMPIC MEDALLIST

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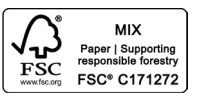
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Hello Everyone,

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



It was nearly the end of the Easter holidays which, for Tilly Redbrow and her friends at Silver Shoe Farm, meant one thing: the countdown to Pony Club camp had started. Tilly was keen to get as much riding practice as possible before her first camp, so she'd asked Angela, her instructor and the owner of Silver Shoe Farm, to give her extra lessons.

That evening they were working on her canter. Angela was reminding Tilly to use her legs and voice to instruct Rosie, the strawberry roan pony she shared with Mia.

'You're looking more confident, Tilly,' Angela called. 'Keep sending her forward with the leg, and avoid the temptation to pull on the reins. Soften both arms a bit more.'



Tilly relaxed her arms, and gave a little nudge with both heels.

'Come on, Rosie,' she said. 'Come on, girl.'

Rosie followed Tilly's instruction without hesitation, and they completed two circuits of the sand school, as Angela watched.

'That's it! Grow a little taller. Keep those shoulders back and try not to drive with your seat!'

Tilly immediately straightened up, but when she caught sight of Mia waving frantically from the fence, she lost concentration.

'Hey, guys! Come quick. Duncan thinks Sarafina is going to give birth soon!'

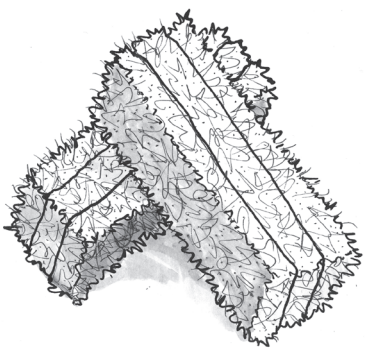
This was exciting news because the vet had said it was unlikely she would be able to have a foal. Sarafina was a Welsh-bred mare who had been sent to Silver Shoe Farm two years ago by the charitable organisation, World Horse Welfare. She had been the worst of five horses Angela had found in a terrible

condition on a remote farm. Sarafina wasn't the first horse Angela had re-homed, and she certainly wouldn't be the last.

'I'd better go and see what's happening,' said Angela. 'Why don't you and Mia take Rosie back to the stables and then come and join us. Hopefully the vet's already on his way.'

Mia waited patiently while Tilly walked Rosie off to cool her down. Then they went back to the yard together.

'I can't believe it's happening,' said Mia, breathless with excitement as she walked beside Tilly and Rosie. 'A new foal, here at Silver Shoe Farm!'



'What's happened so far?' asked Tilly.

'Duncan's been checking on her every half hour for the last twenty-four hours – he looks

really tired. He said he thought she was about to foal because she was producing lots of milk and she didn't want to be near any of the other horses. They're in the back barn, where it's nice and quiet.'

Tilly glanced at her watch.

'But it's nearly seven. My dad's coming to pick me up in ten minutes.'

'Phone him and tell him he can't!' said Mia. 'He'll have to come later.'

Tilly called her dad straightaway. She pleaded with him to let her stay to watch the birth. He was worried about homework and late nights making Tilly too tired for starting back at school.

'But this is *like* being at school, Dad,' she explained. 'It's educational!'

In the end, he agreed.

'Phew!' said Tilly.



The girls knew they had to be quiet when they approached the barn. Duncan and Angela were watching from the door.

'Where's the foal then?' whispered Mia impatiently.

'Her waters haven't broken yet,' said Duncan. 'But it's going to happen soon. Foaling usually happens any time between 10pm and 4am, so it could be a long night. If you girls want to help, a flask of tea would be great…'

Tilly and Mia went over to the club room. They made enough tea for everyone and poured it into a thermos flask.

'Do you think the foal will be male or female?' asked Mia, opening a packet of biscuits.

'Hmm… I think it's going to be a filly,' said Tilly. 'I don't know why, I've just got a hunch.'

'We'll see. There's so much happening – a foal for Easter, and then camp next holidays.



Are you looking forward to it?'

'I can't wait.'

'It's going to be the best ever. We'll get to spend the week with Cally – she's taking Mr Fudge. We'll have a good laugh.'

Just thinking about it made Tilly's stomach flutter with excitement. She was looking forward to seeing Cally too. Cally used to ride at Silver Shoe Farm until she moved to Cavendish Hall, the exclusive boarding school near North Cosford. The camp was going to bring them back together again.

'Let's go and see how Sarafina is getting on,' said Mia.



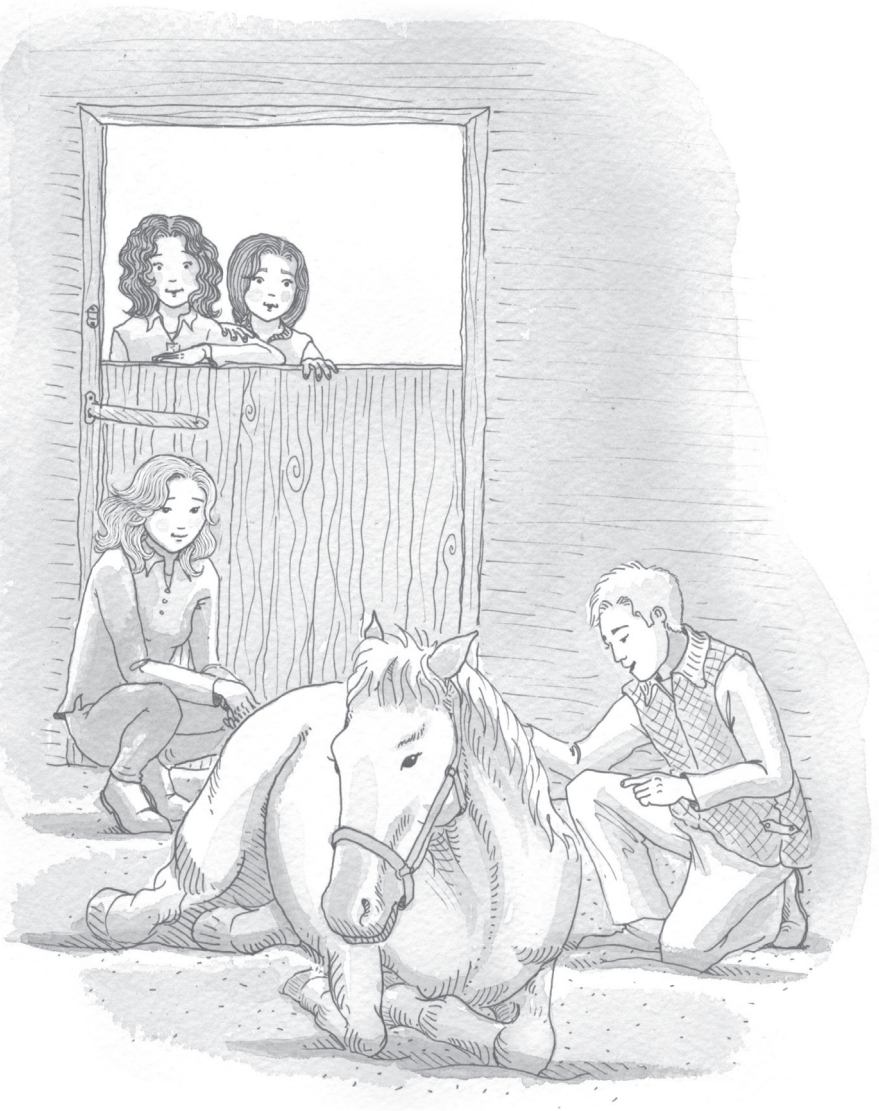
The girls carried the flask and biscuits to the barn. As they got near, Duncan beckoned them over and whispered,

'Her placenta has ruptured!'

'Oh no!' said Mia, alarmed.

'No, no. It's a good thing,' he said. 'It's supposed to happen. It means labour has started. Come and look.'

Tilly shivered with anticipation. She crept up to the door of the barn and peered over. Sarafina was lying on her side, on a bed of straw. The air inside seemed perfectly still and quiet, as though something magical was about to happen. Sarafina didn't seem to mind that people were watching. In fact, she hardly seemed aware of them. She looked peaceful. Tilly imagined she was thinking



about meeting her baby. Nothing else mattered.

'Do we need to do anything?' she asked.

'We aren't going to interfere if we can help it,' said Angela. 'Hopefully nature will do its thing, and Sarafina can deliver her foal all by herself. The vet's not far away if we need him.'

Twenty minutes later, Sarafina began to push. She groaned a little, and as she did, a smooth, thin white sac appeared. Within the sac was the first glimpse of the foal. Its front hooves came out, one slightly ahead of the other, and then gradually the nose and head were pushed out.

Tilly stared, open-mouthed. She'd never seen anything like it before.

After a little rest, Sarafina continued pushing. Next came the shoulders and body, followed by the hips and back legs. At last, the foal was out in the world. It rested with its mother for fifteen minutes or so, and during that time, no

one said a word. Everyone was happy just to watch.

Eventually, Sarafina stood up, breaking the umbilical cord, and although it caused some bleeding, Duncan assured the girls that this was fine. It took a number of very wobbly attempts before the newborn finally stood up, but Tilly couldn't quite believe how quickly the foal was able to get to its feet.

At this point, Duncan stepped in to take a closer look and help guide it towards its mother to encourage it to feed.

'I think we've got ourselves a filly!' he said proudly.

Tilly studied the helpless little creature – she had weak bandy legs and a scrawny body. She could barely keep herself upright.



It seemed strange to think that one day she'd be big and strong, like Magic Spirit. But of course she would be.

'What shall we call her?' asked Angela.

Tilly thought about this for a moment. She knew that Sarafina had been lucky to spend time at Silver Shoe, overcoming her neglect and poor condition. And it had only been by chance that Angela happened to have a smart stallion in for schooling at the same time Sarafina was in season.

'Lucky Chance,' she said smiling.

'Perfect!' said Angela, and everyone agreed.

