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Opening extract from

# Little Treasures

Written by

## Katie Price

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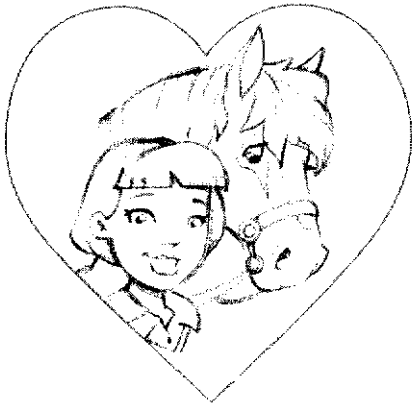
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# Vicki's Riding School

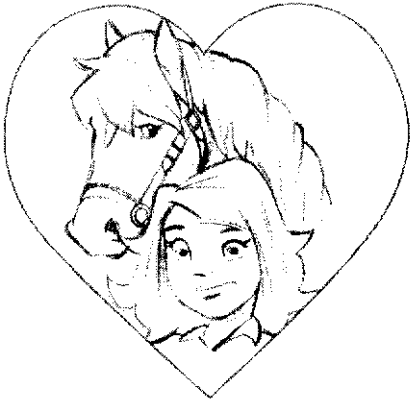
*Vicki*



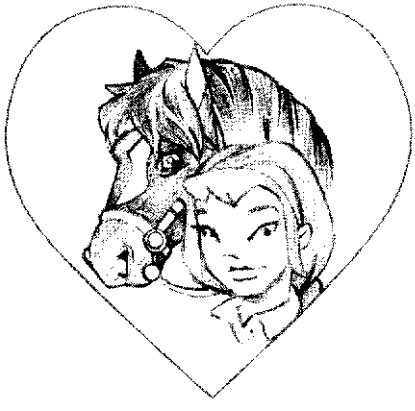
*Jess and Rose*



*Cara and Taffy*



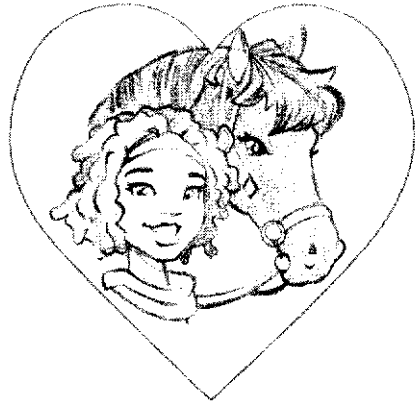
*Amber and Stella*



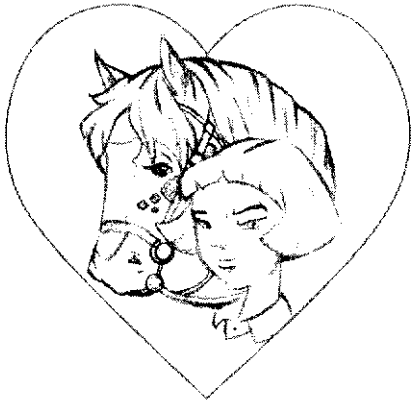
*Sam and Beanz*



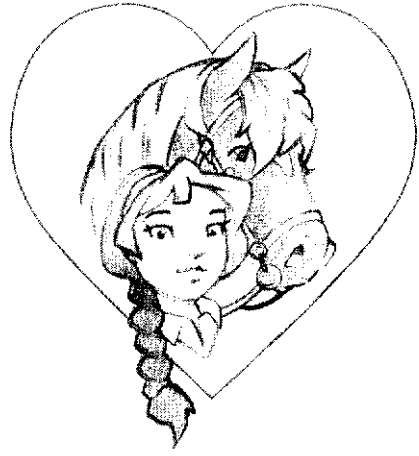
*Mel and Candy*

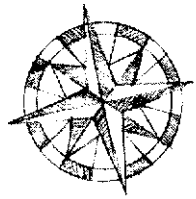


*Henrietta and President*



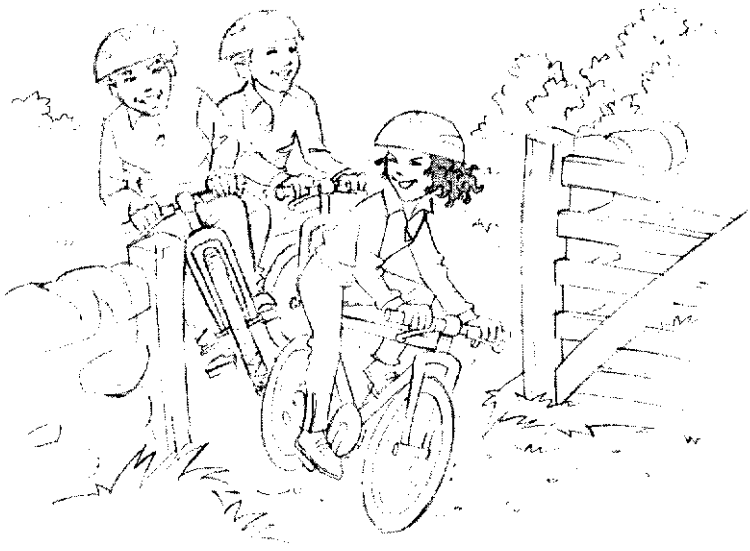
*Darcy and Duke*





# Chapter 1

Mel came charging into the stable yard on her bike. Her brothers were just behind her but she beat them to the five-bar gate by about half a metre. "I won!" she screamed.



Kalvin and Kyle grinned at their little sister. "Carry on like that and you could do the next triathlon with us," said Kyle, who'd just completed the New York marathon and was already lining up his next big challenge.

Mel shook her dark curly hair and grinned at him. "Thanks, but I'd rather go show-jumping any day. Anyway, somebody's got to stay at home and look after Dad."

Kalvin, who was the eldest of the brothers, laughed. "Dad's a six-foot copper – he doesn't exactly need looking after," he said.

Mel smiled. She adored her dad. "I just like making a fuss of him," she said.

Kyle rang his bike bell. "Come on, Kal, we'll be late for the gym."

Kalvin winked. "Want to come with us instead, sis?"

Mel shook her head. "No thanks. I've got a lovely girl called Candy waiting for me," she said.

"Wow! Wish I had," joked Kalvin.

Smiling to herself, Mel wheeled her bike into the yard. She was lucky to have such great brothers who always looked out for her. They might be tough and strong but they were really gentle with her, and they always encouraged her never to be afraid of anything.



A voice in her ear made Mel jump. "What you thinking about?" asked Amber.

Mel grinned. "I was just thinking about my brothers," she told her friend.

Amber giggled at her. "Everyone thinks about *your* brothers Mel."

The girls linked arms and hurried towards the stables, where their friends Jess, Sam and Cara were getting the ponies ready before their session in the indoor riding school. This was the highlight of the week for all of them: a riding lesson with Vicki, the owner of the stables.

This was the moment Mel dreamed of, but her stomach always lurched when she and her chestnut Arab, Candice (who everybody called Candy), entered the indoor jumping ring. Her pulse raced, her cheeks went red and her heart felt like it was beating as loud as a drum! Candy was even more excited than Mel was. The second she saw the jumps and smelled the sawdust on the floor of the jumping ring, she tossed her head and neighed excitedly.

Mel gave her full attention to the cross bar that was coming up. Of all five yard

girls Mel was the most talented rider and a fearless jumper; she perfectly matched spirited Candy, who loved to jump. Sitting firmly in her saddle, Mel smiled as Candy pricked her delicate ears forward. Then, on a perfect stride, the pony took the jump and cleared it easily.

Sam punched the air and let out a loud whoop. "Wow! Fantastic! Way to go, Mel!" she yelled.



Vicki smiled, revealing her perfect white teeth. With her slim figure, thick dark hair, tanned skin and stunning silver-grey eyes, their teacher was living proof that you could be glam and still be a brilliant horsewoman. Only last year, when all the girls were new to the yard, she had qualified for Badminton on Jelly, her fabulous Irish-cross thoroughbred. The girls who helped out at the yard completely hero-worshipped Vicki, who worked long hours taking care of her beloved ponies and horses. In return for the girls' hard work she gave them a free riding lesson every week. But she'd also given them something more



precious. Each of them was responsible for one of her ponies. The happiest day of Mel's life had been when Vicki told her, "I'd like you to look after Candy, Mel."

Mel's dark eyes had filled with tears. Candy, the little Arab with the velvet-soft nose and the floating chestnut mane and tail, had always been her special favourite. "Oh, thank you!" she had gasped.

Vicki had grinned at her excited face. "It'll be hard work, Mel," she'd warned. "I expect you to muck out Candy's stable, see to her bedding, clean her tack, groom her and prepare her food."

Mel had been on cloud nine and had laughed happily. "I love doing all those things for Candy," she'd said.

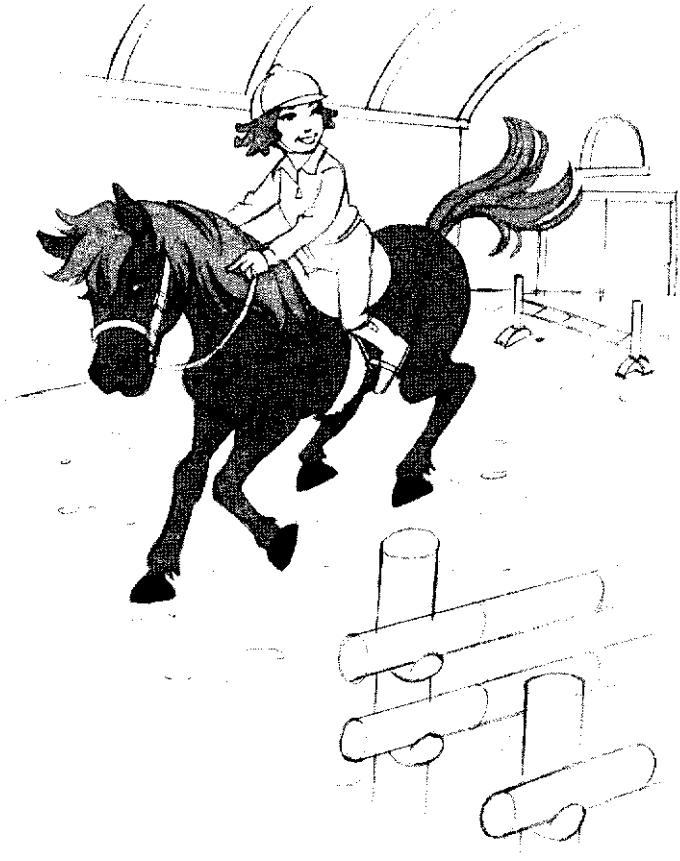
Mel's friends had also been given ponies to look after. Lively Jess, who was the leader of their group, looked after Rose, a good-natured grey Connemara pony with a

stunning silver mane and tail. Amber, who was the cleverest of the girls and the one who always seemed to understand what the ponies wanted, was responsible for gentle Stella, a black Highland pony with a white blaze. Sam, the joker, was responsible for Beanz, a skewbald New Forest cross, who she loved to bits. And Cara, the youngest of the girls and the most timid, looked after sweet, sturdy Taffy, a palomino Welsh pony with a creamy blond mane and tail.

None of the girls could ever have afforded a pony of their own, so being given a pony to take care of was like having a dream come true for all of them.

Mel tightened her reins and trotted towards the next jump, which was a parallel bar. Moving with grace and speed, Candy soared straight over the centre of the jump, landing lightly, then quickly recovering her stride. The girls watched in admiration as

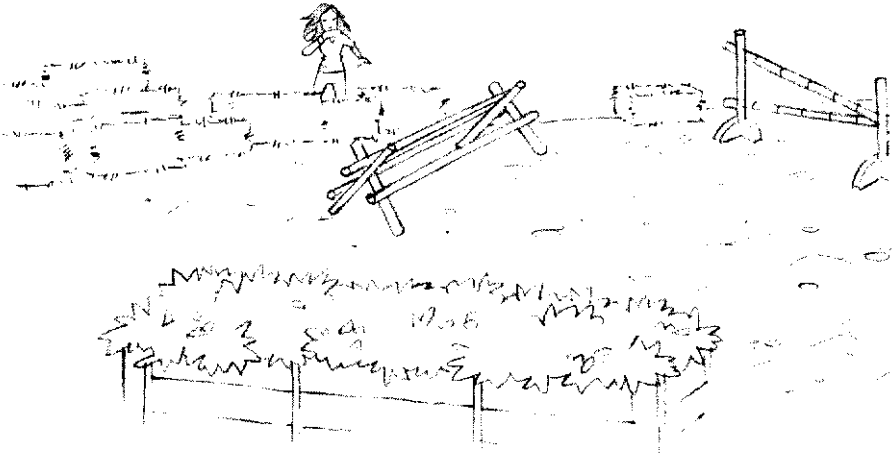
Mel completed her perfect round and circled the course at an easy canter.



"Well done, Mel," said Vicki. "That was great." Then she turned to Jess, who was next in line. "OK, your turn now."

Jess patted pretty Rose gently on the neck, then cantered into the ring. Vicki watched her with an eagle eye. "Correct your position, Jess. Remember to bend at the hips," she called out.

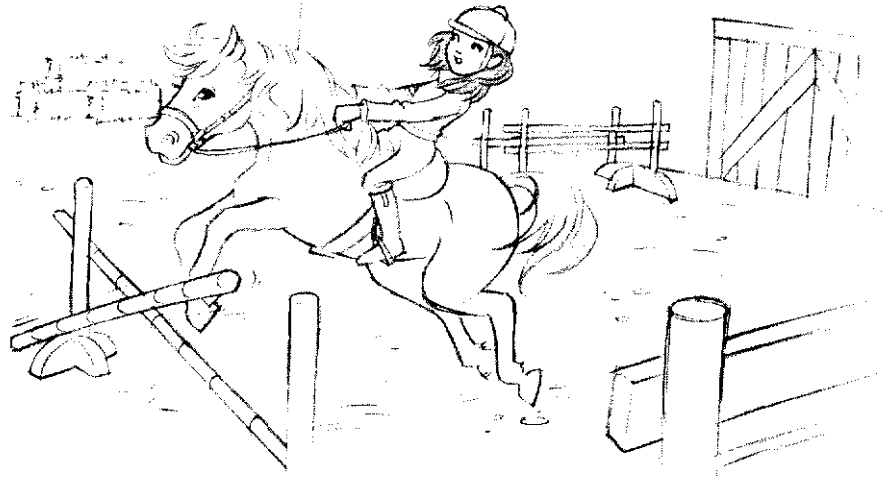
Jess's hip muscles ached as she sat deep in her saddle, then she pressed her heels into Rose's sides. As the pony moved smoothly towards the cross bar, Jess leaned forward so that she could take all her weight on her thighs and knees. As she did so, Rose flew over, landing lightly on the other side.



"Brilliant!" Jess said, but then she made a silly mistake: she turned round to check the jump behind her.

"Don't look back!" Vicki called out. "Look forward, through Rose's ears."

But Vicki's warning came too late. In turning round, Jess had lost her timing and couldn't collect Rose in fast enough for the parallel bar. The pony knocked it down, then, startled by the noise of the falling bar, shied and tried to run out. Jess held her reins tightly and talked to Rose softly.



"Whoa there, girl, it's not your fault. It's me that was stupid," she said gently. Patting Rose's silky neck, Jess calmed her and they completed the course without any more mishaps.

As Jess trotted up, Vicky said, "Every time you look behind, you lose your timing for the next jump."

Annoyed with herself, Jess rolled her eyes. "Sorry. I'm an idiot. It was just so stupid – I know it really upsets Rose," she groaned.

"Don't worry – as you get more confident, you'll stop doing it," Vicki assured her. She turned to Sam, who was struggling to hold Beanz back. "I think you'd better go next," she laughed.

Sam didn't need to be told twice. She cantered off on Beanz, who was rushing headlong towards the first jump.

"Slow down, Sam!" Vicki called out. But it was too late. Beanz was so excited he just

threw himself at the cross bar. He cleared it clumsily but nearly unseated Sam, who was clinging on desperately. Vicki frowned as she watched the pony and rider storm towards the next jump.

"Hold him back, Sam! Get into your stride," she called out.

Sam tightened her reins but there was no holding Beanz back – he galloped towards the jump, realized too late he couldn't make it and stopped dead in his tracks. Luckily Sam just slid off and landed in an untidy heap by Beanz's feet. She leaped up and grabbed his reins before he trod on her.



"Well, I made a right mess of that," she said with a giggle.

Vicki agreed. "Beanz is a headstrong boy – you've got to be one step ahead of him all the time," she said.

Sam quickly mounted up. "Now we're going to do things properly," she said to her frisky pony. Beanz seemed to hear the firm tone in Sam's voice, and instead of tossing his head and trying to do his own thing, he did what she asked. Sitting deep in her saddle with a tight hold on his outside rein, Sam turned Beanz towards the third jump, which he popped over without any fuss.

"Good one!" Vicki called out. "That's loads better."

After Sam had completed her round, Amber trotted into the ring on Stella. The pair of them were perfect together. They weren't exciting and breathtaking like Mel and Candy, nor were they wild and funny

like Sam and Beanz; they were just steady. Amber understood Stella and Stella totally trusted Amber. When Stella seemed nervous – and you could always tell when she was because her ears went flat back – Amber just patted her and talked to her gently. They took each jump at an even pace and completed a clear round without any mistakes.



"Excellent," said Vicki. She turned to Cara, who was the last to jump. "Your turn, babe."

Cara was gripping her reins so tightly her knuckles stuck out white and bony. But Taffy didn't seem bothered at all. His nostrils were flared with excitement and he pawed the ground impatiently.

"Taffy can do this round with his eyes shut," Vicki assured Cara, who took a deep breath then pressed her heels into her pony's sides.

Taffy set off at a smart trot and popped over every jump without a single problem. Afterwards Cara cantered him around the school with a big proud smile on her face.



"I didn't do anything," she told her friends when she joined them.

"You stayed on, which is a lot more than I did," laughed Sam.

At the end of the lesson Vicki looked along the line of girls on their ponies. Mel on spirited Candy, Jess on steady Rose, Amber on gentle Stella, Sam on skittish Beanz and Cara on sturdy Taffy.