PIPPA'S PONY TALES

Parkview Pickle the Show Pony



PIPPA FUNNELL
OLYMPIC MEDALLIST

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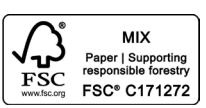
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A normal day for Tilly Redbrow involved getting up early to feed, muck out and groom her favourite horse, Magic Spirit, before taking him for an early morning ride across the fields. When she got back there was usually time for a slice of toast in the Silver Shoe Farm club room, then it was off to school.

After school, Tilly was back at Silver Shoe. She would help Angela, the owner, with whatever needed doing. This could be exercising the other horses, sweeping the yard, or cleaning the tack.



Tilly didn't mind as long as it was horse related. After that there was more feeding and grooming, and perhaps a lesson if she was lucky. At the end of the day, Tilly always enjoyed spending some quiet time with Magic before going home to homework and tea. She was exhausted from the long days, but it was worth it to do what she loved.

Tilly had been fascinated by horses and ponies for as long as she could remember. She'd read countless copies of *Pony* magazine and played dozens of pony-themed computer games, but it wasn't until she'd got involved with Silver Shoe Farm that she'd experienced the real thing. And the real thing was great.



'I can't wait to find out more,' said Mia, as she and Tilly sat outside the tack room, rubbing soap into their saddles. It was a mild early

autumn evening and the sun was beginning to set. They were talking about the horsehair bracelets that Tilly and her brother, Brook, wore. They'd both been given them as babies, before they were adopted.



'Apparently there's a Native American community who wear horsehair bracelets because horses are such an important part of their lives,' said Tilly. 'The owner of Tregenny

Farm, where Brook and I went on holiday, told us about it. We've googled it, of course, but we don't know whether there's a connection between their bracelets and ours.'



'It would be cool if there is.'

'Definitely.'

'I wish something exciting like that would happen to me,' said Mia, sighing. 'I can't even find a new horse. I'm fed up of borrowing rides from different people. It's just not the same.'

It had been a while since Mia had grown out of her pony, Rosie. Luckily, Rosie was being kept on at Silver Shoe to help other children, though Mia had yet to get a new horse of her own.

'My parents say I'm being too fussy,' she said. 'They don't seem to understand. I don't want any old horse. I want the right horse. I want to have that special bond, like you and Magic.'

'I understand,' said Tilly, smiling. She knew all about special bonds. She wouldn't swap Magic for anything.

She looked up and saw Angela coming towards them.

'Hi, girls.'

'Hi, Angela.'

Angela was holding a plan of the stable yard and looking a bit confused.

'I'm trying to work out where I'm going to fit all the horses. This is the busiest Silver Shoe's ever been, what with the thoroughbreds we've been bringing on, and we've got a new pony arriving tomorrow.'

'Who?' asked Tilly.

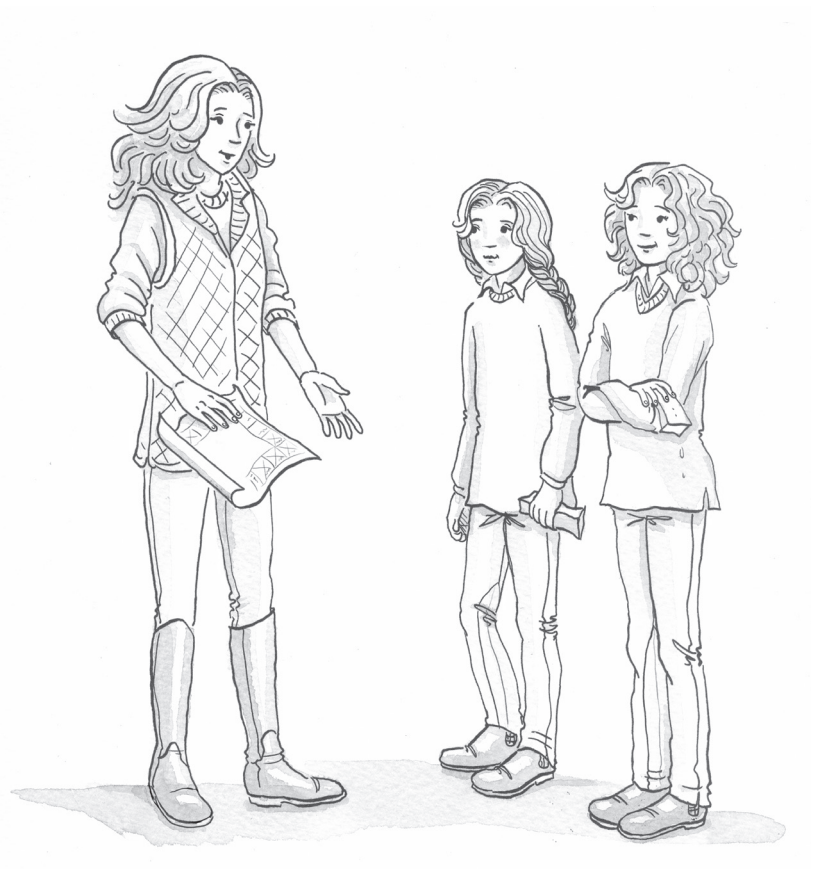
'Her name's Parkview Pickle, Pickle for short. She belongs to a girl called Cynthia, who's very into showing. Takes it really seriously. I met her and her mum last week, and her mum's already given me a long

list of dos and don'ts. I hope Pickle isn't as fussy.'

'Where are you putting her?'

'I thought one of the quieter areas near Magic Spirit would be good. Maybe you two could help settle Pickle and Cynthia in?'

Tilly and Mia nodded.



'Great. I'd like both of you to get more involved in helping me around the riding school this year. You're good role models for the younger students. You can show them the ropes and encourage them to be responsible around the yard. Maybe help out with a few riding lessons. Make sure they clean their tack and keep the place tidy, that sort of thing. Hopefully then they'll all become as hard-working and committed as you two. Is that okay?'

'Absolutely,' said Tilly.

It was better than okay. It was an honour.

When Angela had gone, Tilly and Mia carefully put their saddles back onto the saddle racks before starting on their bridles. They took the bits off and placed them in a bucket of water to soak off the dried slobber while they washed and soaped the leather.

Angela's words, it seemed, were highly motivating.