PIPPA'S PONY TALES

Autumn Glory the New Horse



PIPPA FUNNELL
OLYMPIC MEDALLIST

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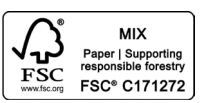
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One

It was a pleasant spring evening and Tilly Redbrow was in the outdoor arena at Silver Shoe Farm, helping Angela with a group of young children having a lesson. It was the first time Angela had asked Tilly to give her a hand and Tilly was pleased Angela thought she was good enough to help. Some of the riders seemed quite nervous, but Tilly was doing her best to make them feel at ease.

She knew the riding school ponies well, particularly Rosie, the sweet-natured strawberry roan, whom she'd learned to ride on herself. There was also Aladdin, and

Nimrod, the ex-circus pony. Each had their own personality but they all looked after their riders and walked calmly round the arena.

By the end of the session, everyone was smiling and looking more confident. Tilly loved to see this. It reminded her of how far she'd come. When she'd first started at Silver



Shoe Farm, she'd only ever dreamed about riding a horse. Now, with help from Angela, Silver Shoe's owner, and Duncan, their head boy, Tilly was a talented young rider. And the horse she rode, of course, was Magic Spirit.



Tilly and Magic had been inseparable since the day they'd met. Tilly had helped rescue him from a busy roadside, and from that moment, they'd bonded. Every day, she mucked out his stable, fed and groomed him, and, best of all, exercised him. When she wasn't at the stables or out riding, she was thinking about Magic.

Tilly wore a bracelet made of Magic's tail hairs, which matched the one her birth mother had given her before she was adopted. That way Tilly always felt close to Magic, even when they were apart. She liked to make tail-hair bracelets from all the wonderful horses she met and give them to her friends.

Just then, Tilly spotted Mia walking towards her, arms folded. Unusually for Mia, she looked glum. Tilly was puzzled, and tried to work out what was wrong.

'Hey, Mia,' she called. 'How about a Silver Shoe special in the club room – hot chocolate with extra marshmallows?'

‘Here you go,’ said Tilly, stirring the three pink blobs that were floating in Mia’s favourite Pony Club mug. ‘Drink this, then tell me what’s up.’

‘I’m fine,’ said Mia quietly.

They sat down on the squishy sofas.

‘Come on, Mia,’ said Tilly. ‘It’s not like you to be so down. What’s on your mind?’

‘Oh, I just wish I could find the right horse.’

Tilly had suspected as much. Mia had been trying to find her perfect horse ever since she’d grown too tall for her pony, Rosie. So far, she’d had no luck. The closest she’d come was with Nimrod, the ex-circus pony, who was lively and had lots of spirit to match Mia’s own. But he was too small. She needed a horse she could grow in to.



'It feels as if I've been looking forever. I'm so fed up of borrowing rides or having to ask around to see which horse is available. I want a horse that will be my best friend, like you and Magic.'

Mia looked as though she was about to cry. Tilly put an arm around her friend and, sure enough, Mia started to sob. Tears rolled down her cheeks. It was horrible to see her so upset, but Tilly understood. All Mia's friends had their special horses – she had Magic, Cally had Mr Fudge, Brook had Solo, Cynthia had Pickle. Angela had her event horse, Pride and Joy, and Duncan, had the super-speedy racehorse, Red Admiral.

'Hey,' said Tilly. 'I think the only way we're going to make you feel better is by making a plan. This weekend, let's do it! We'll make it our mission to find you the perfect horse. We'll look at every horse



in the area if we have to.'

'My parents are busy. They won't be able to drive us anywhere. Besides, they're getting tired of taking me all around the country looking at horses.'

'Maybe Angela could help? She'll know what you should look for in a horse.'

Tilly gathered a big pile of horse and pony magazines.



'Let's start with these. There are always loads of good adverts in the back. If Angela's up for it, we can make some viewing appointments.'

'Hello. Up for what?'

The girls swung round. Angela was standing in the doorway, holding some bridles.

'We were wondering perhaps if you might be able to help us find Mia a new horse this weekend? With all your expertise – and your driving licence!'

Angela laughed.

'Do you know what? I'd love to. Sounds like a nice change from riding lessons. I'll ask Duncan to cover them. I'd much rather be looking at new horses. Are there any good ones in those?'

She nodded towards the magazines.

'We've just started looking,' said Mia.

'And we're determined,' added Tilly. 'Somewhere out there, Mia, your ideal horse is waiting for you. Look at this one. Dark bay,

named Toffee Pop, excellent temperament, natural mover.'

Mia smiled.

'He sounds nice. Thanks for doing this, Tilly. You're such a good friend.'

