PIPPA'S PONY TALES

Stripy the Zebra Foal



PIPPA FUNNELL
OLYMPIC MEDALLIST

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One

Tilly Redbrow couldn't believe how fast the summer had passed. She'd loved every minute of it. Every day she learned something new at Silver Shoe Farm, or simply enjoyed hacking out on long, sunny rides with Magic Spirit and her friends Cally and Mia, and her brother, Brook. But now the summer was over. The leaves and branches glistened with an early frost. Tilly could hardly feel her fingers and toes, despite the warm silk boot liners and fleecy gloves she was wearing, but she didn't mind.



She enjoyed wintery rides along the forest tracks just as much.

Tilly nudged Magic Spirit, with both heels.

'Come on, boy!' she said. 'Let's pick up the pace!'

Immediately Magic lurched excitedly into a canter.



'No, Mister, you know we don't do transitions like that,' Tilly said disapprovingly to Magic. She repeated the aid to canter. Tilly had been told by Angela that she had to be consistent at all times, whether in the arena or out hacking.

So she and Brook, with his stunning, black thoroughbred, Solo, were being strict about making sure all their transitions were good. They made it fun by having a friendly competition between the two of them.

Suddenly, she felt her phone buzz from inside her waterproof riding jacket. Tilly knew that when she was out riding, her phone was only to be used in the case of an emergency. It was a big no-no at Silver Shoe Farm. For safety reasons, no one was allowed to look at their phones when on a horse or pony.

'I'm sure it was just my mum wanting to know what time I need a lift home,' said Tilly. 'I should probably get Magic back to the stables.'

'Okay,' said Brook. 'I've got to go and do some studying anyway. More exams! I wish I could be on holiday right now. I've had enough of school.'

'A holiday somewhere hot?' Tilly said, as she breathed warmth into her fingertips.

'If only,' said Brook. 'Remember how it felt in the summer to go riding wearing just a t-shirt?'

Tilly's phone buzzed several more times on the ride home. In the end, concerned about breaking the rules, she came to a standstill. She took one glove off and undid her zip, but she didn't get to her phone before it stopped. 'Missed call' read the screen. The number wasn't one she recognised.

'Oh,' she said. 'It's not my mum, after all.'

'Well, whoever it is, they obviously want to talk to you,' said Brook.

Tilly shrugged.

She was about to put her phone away when

it began to ring yet again. This time she answered it.

'Hello?'

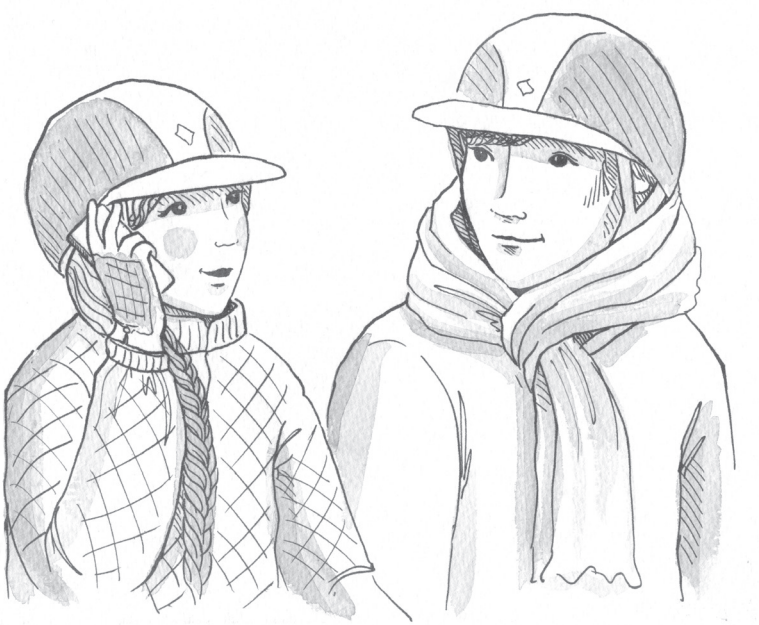
'Hi. Is this Tilly Redbrow's phone?'

It was a friendly voice, a young woman.

'Er, yes.'

'I'm calling from *Pony* magazine.'

Tilly gasped and glanced at Brook. She couldn't think what the call was about, but if it was something to do with *Pony* magazine it had to be good.



'A few months ago,' said the woman, 'you sent us a picture of your beautiful horse, Magic Spirit. It was for our horse safari competition.'

'I remember,' said Tilly, her eyes getting wider.



'Well, I'm really pleased to tell you…'

Tilly held her breath.

'What? What is it?'

'You've won!'

'Really?'

'Yes! Congratulations, Tilly! Magic Spirit's photograph was the one drawn out of hundreds of entries. You're going on safari. How do you feel?'

'I – I – I don't believe it! It's brilliant!'

Tilly was so surprised that she could hardly speak. Brook smiled, but she could tell he had no idea why she was so excited.

'Well, I'll let the good news sink in,' the woman continued, 'then I'll call back later with the details. I'm sure you already know that the trip is for three people. You'll have to take an adult, of course, but you can bring a friend too.'

Tilly didn't need to think about who that would be. As she said goodbye, she knew instantly.

'Who was that then?' Brook asked. 'What's made you so happy?'

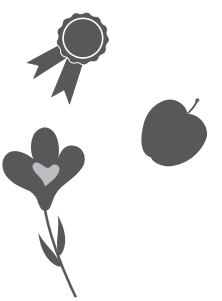
'That holiday…' said Tilly. It was hard to get the words out. 'The sunny one we were just talking about, away from all your exam stress…'

'Yes?'

'Pack your suitcase! We're going!'

'Huh?'

'I've just won a horse safari trip to Africa! Thanks to *Pony* magazine – and a photograph of Magic Spirit! Do you remember the competition I entered ages ago?'



'Wow!' said Brook. 'Thanks! That's amazing! And congratulations! I've always wanted to go on safari. It's a good job you finally got to answer your phone!'

They both laughed, then Tilly leaned forward and gave Magic a hug. She stroked his neck and whispered in his ear.

'Well done, boy. Because of you, or at least, because of a photo of you, I've won a holiday.'

Soothed by Tilly's affectionate touch, Magic gave a nicker.

'I always thought I was lucky to have you in my life. Now, this proves it! I can't wait to tell everyone at Silver Shoe.'

'Come on,' said Brook. 'Let's go.'

Tilly and Brook trotted back to the end of the track, then walked up the lane, towards the gates of Silver Shoe Farm. Tilly smiled the whole way.