Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

# Samson the Stallion
## (Tilly's Pony Tails No. 4)

written by

## Pippa Funnell

published by

**Orion Publishing Co.**

All text is copyright © of the author/ illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk



# *One*

It was a chilly winter's day but Tilly Redbrow didn't mind what the weather was like – rain, wind, sleet or snow. As long as she got to ride and spend time with the horses at Silver Shoe Farm, she was happy. Tilly was horse mad, and now that she shared her own pony, Rosie, with her friend, Mia, there was always an opportunity to ride, groom, feed, clean or simply be



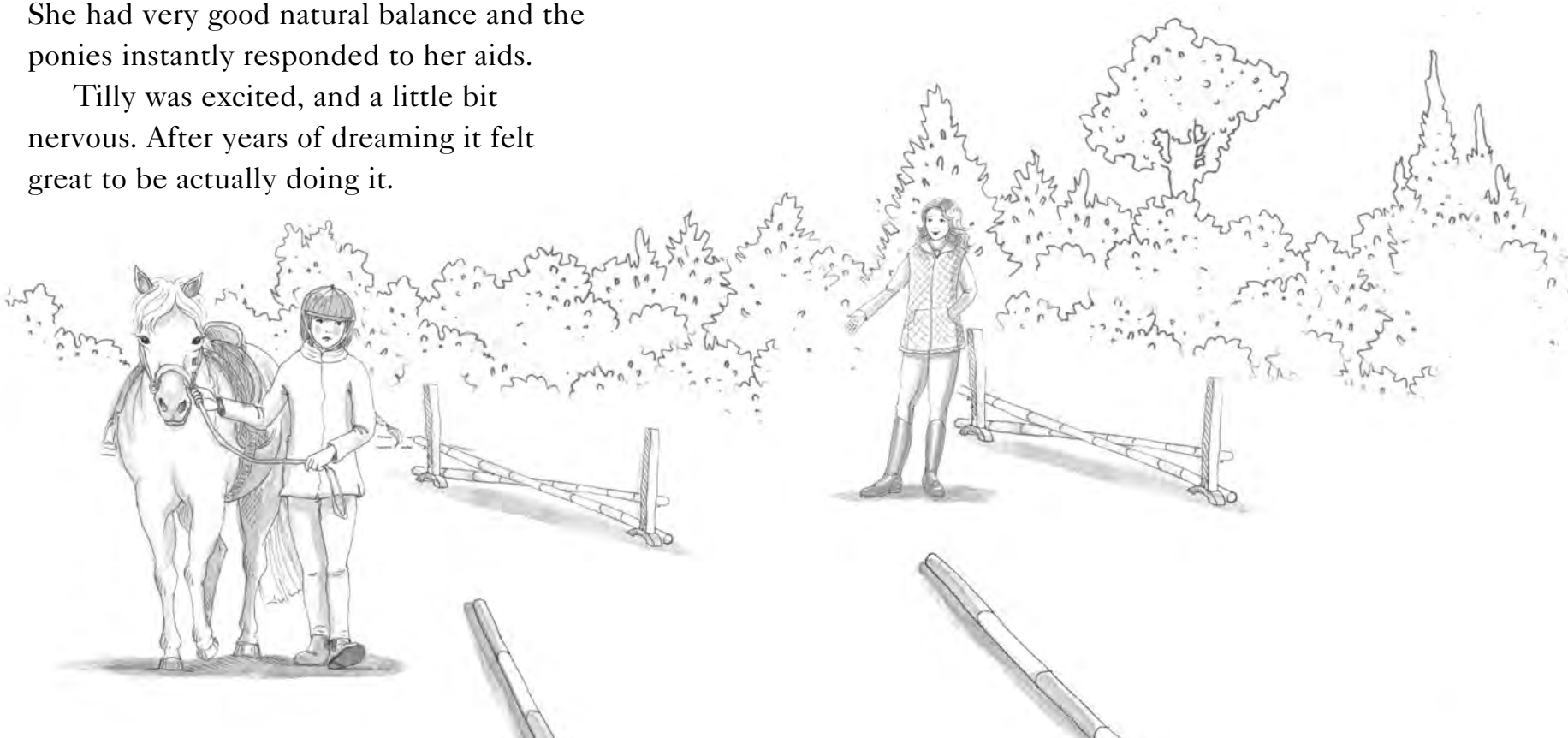
around the animals she loved. Tilly had taken on Rosie after Cally, the third member of their pony-mad gang, had gone to boarding school.

Today Tilly was particularly excited about her weekly riding lesson because Angela, her instructor, had suggested she was ready to start jumping. Over the months, Tilly had worked hard trying to perfect the basics of walk, trot and canter. She had very good natural balance and the ponies instantly responded to her aids.

Tilly was excited, and a little bit nervous. After years of dreaming it felt great to be actually doing it.

Angela had laid a few poles on the ground and placed several cross poles around the arena.

"The idea," Angela explained, as Tilly led Rosie into the enclosed area, "is that these exercises over the poles and cross poles will help you learn to judge your stride, maintain a rhythm and assist you with keeping straight. At this stage it's not about how high you can jump, it's about



perfecting the basics to boost you and your pony's confidence."

Tilly gulped.

"Don't look so worried, Tilly – you're ready for this!"

Tilly studied the challenge in front of her. The poles were very low, and she had watched her friends, Mia and Cally, jump much bigger obstacles hundreds of times before. It would be fine, she told herself.

"Before you tackle it with Rosie, try walking it yourself, so you can get a sense of the distance up to the jump. Four of your strides is about equal to one horse stride. Then allow two of your strides for the distance from the fence to where she's going to land, and two more in front of the next fence for where she'll take off. If you watch at the shows and events, you'll see all the riders do this to judge how many strides there will be between fences. Even top class riders do it."

Tilly handed Rosie's reins to Angela, and walked over to the cross pole. She



paced around, thinking very hard about where she would have to take off in order to clear it. She walked round one more time, checking the height, and then returned to Rosie.

"I'm ready," she said.

"I'll help you mount then," said Angela, offering her a leg up.

Riding Rosie always felt good. There was very little that upset her, and Mia said she had a natural impulsion to get herself over any obstacle in front of her. Tilly knew it wasn't like that with every horse. She remembered how she'd struggled with Bunny, the pony she had learned to ride on, whom she'd had to kick endlessly because she was so lazy.



Of course, the one horse Tilly really wanted to jump was Magic Spirit. He was the reason she had come to Silver Shoe

Farm in the first place, so he held a special place in her heart. Ever since Tilly had helped Angela rescue him from a busy roadside, the bond between them had grown and strengthened. And even though she had an affinity with all the horses at the farm, he was her number one.

As Tilly thought of him, while warming up Rosie, she briefly touched her horsehair bracelets: one contained tail hairs from Magic, and the other she'd had since she was adopted as a baby. The feel of them made her more confident, and she concentrated hard on what Angela was saying.



"Okay, Tilly, when you're ready, start working over the poles in a canter.

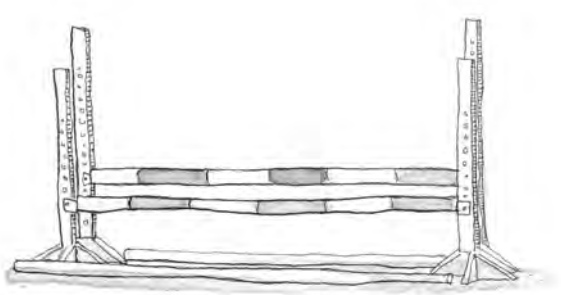


I want you to concentrate on maintaining a constant rhythm."

Using Angela's measuring system, Tilly guessed that the poles were placed around five horse strides apart.

"You should meet both poles on an even stride – and by that I mean Rosie should not have to suddenly take a great long stride just before the poles, or a very short one. That's it," Angela said encouragingly. "Heels firmly down. Relax your knees."

It took several goes before Tilly got the hang of it, and when she was doing the exercise smoothly and consistently, Angela said she was ready to move on to the cross poles.



"Now I want you to do exactly the same over the first cross pole as you've just done. Keep very straight, then jump it in the middle," called Angela.

Feeling nervous, Tilly immediately grabbed the reins more tightly, and her whole body tensed.

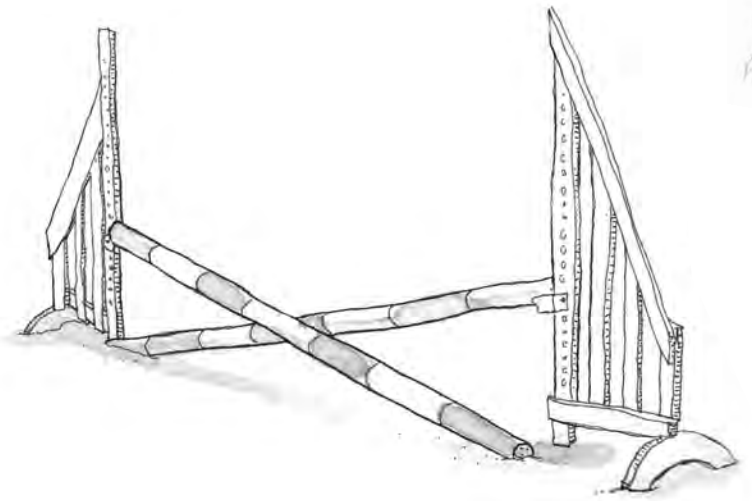
Rosie, sensing Tilly's unease, quickened her pace at the cross, met it on an awkward stride, but jumped it nevertheless. And though Tilly was delighted to have left the ground for the first time, she felt annoyed with herself. She had done everything Angela had told her not to do!

"Don't worry, Tilly, try again!" said Angela. "The more you practise, the better you'll get."

When Tilly had successfully jumped the first cross and met it on the correct stride, Angela suggested she try two in a row, aiming for four strides between each.

Confident now, Tilly met the first cross perfectly but then, excited by her success, she forgot to sit up straight on landing. As





she approached the second cross, she realised too late that she was perched too far forward and so Rosie added in a stride on take off.

Disaster!

As soon as Rosie was in the air, Tilly felt her upper body thrust forward. She lost her balance, and fell from the saddle as soon as they landed.

"Ow!" she cried, tumbling on to her front. Luckily, Rosie seemed to know just what to do and stepped aside safely.

Angela ran forward.

"Tilly! Are you okay?"

It felt as though someone had punched her in the ribs. She sat up slowly, and gasped for air. Angela crouched beside her, using her first-aid skills to check Tilly over.

"I think you've winded yourself a little bit, Tilly. Don't worry, there's no lasting damage. But maybe you should take it easy for the rest of the day."

"But what about the cross pole?" cried Tilly, determined. "I didn't make it. I want to have another go. I know what I did wrong ... I didn't keep my legs secure for the second jump ... I forgot about my balance ... this time I'll get it right..."

"There's plenty of time for you to try it again," soothed Angela. "Let's just make sure you're okay first. We'll get you a drink in the club room."

Tilly sighed and with Angela's help, gradually stood up.

"Did it look really messy?" she asked, embarrassed by her disastrous jump.

"Well, it wasn't the neatest attempt in the world, but I tell you what, I did exactly

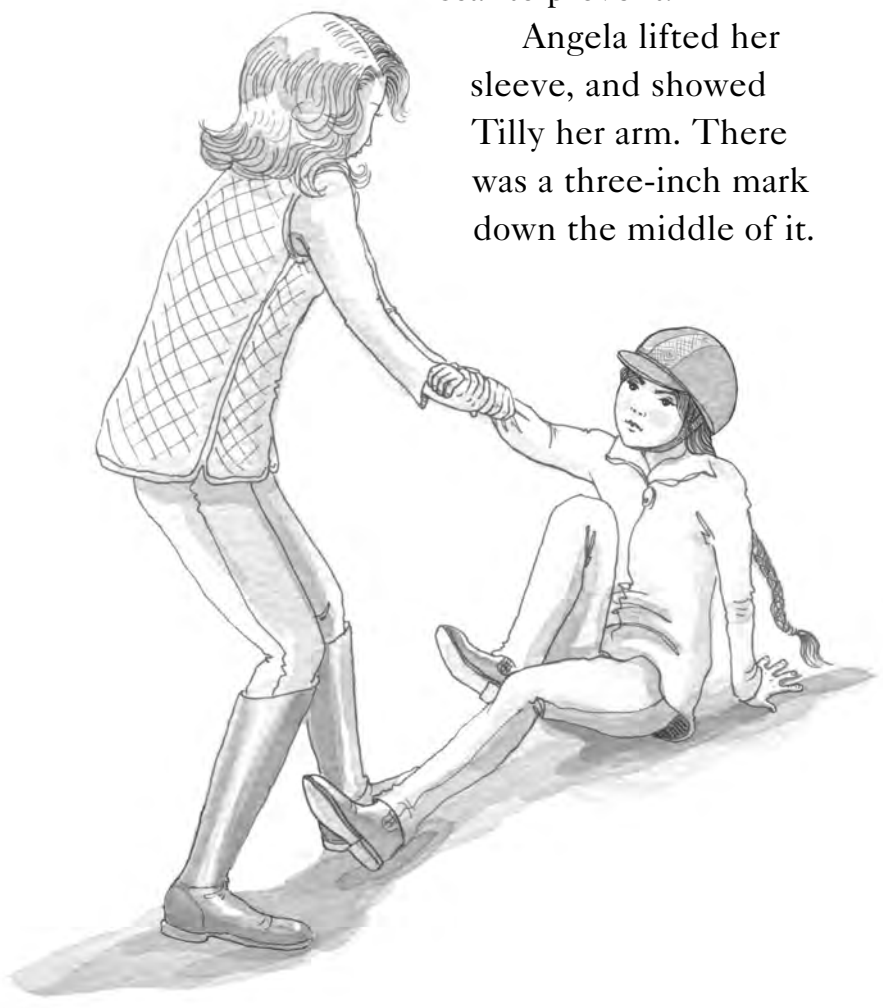


the same thing when I tried my first jump."

"And you fell off?"

"I sure did! Still got the scar to prove it."

Angela lifted her sleeve, and showed Tilly her arm. There was a three-inch mark down the middle of it.





“Broken in two places!”

“Ew!” said Tilly.

“But as soon as I was ready, I got straight back on, and I know you will too, Tilly. You’re like me – determined.”