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Tilly's Pony Tails 10: Nimrod the Circus Pony

Written by

Pippa Funnell

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TILLY'S PONY TAILS

Nimrod the circus pony

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TILLY'S PONY TAILS

Nimrod the circus pony



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For Viceroy,
the inspiration behind the bracelet



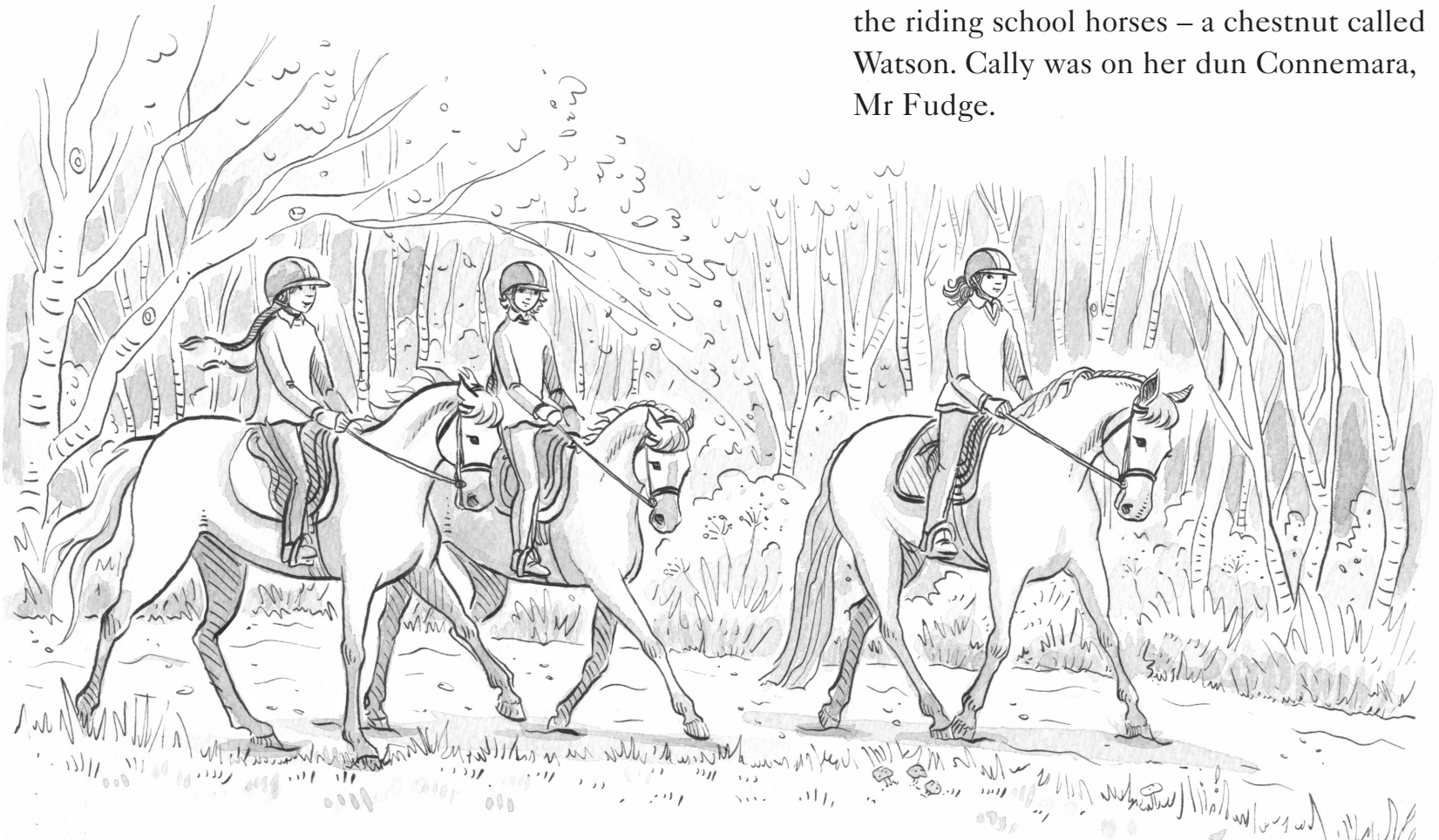


One

Tilly Redbrow loved anything and everything to do with horses. She spent every spare minute at Silver Shoe Farm, where her dream horse, Magic Spirit, was stabled. Tilly and Magic had a special bond. Angela, Silver Shoe's owner, said it was rare to see such a natural affinity between a horse and a rider. Her father, Jack Fisher, was sure that one day Tilly and Magic would achieve amazing things together.

Tilly and Magic had joined Silver Shoe after Tilly helped to rescue him from a busy roadside in the town. Back then, Magic had been malnourished and neglected, and though Tilly had always adored horses, she'd never had the chance to ride. Now they were transformed. Magic was a stunning 16hh grey with top class potential. And Tilly was a dedicated and talented rider.

This was how, on a wintery day, Tilly came to be riding Magic Spirit through one of the local countryside tracks, with her friends, Mia and Cally. Mia, who still hadn't got a horse of her own since growing out of her pony, Rosie, was exercising one of the riding school horses – a chestnut called Watson. Cally was on her dun Connemara, Mr Fudge.



They were working on their paces, getting their horses to trot and canter. Magic was wearing a new bit and was very responsive to Tilly's commands. She had to make sure her hands stayed relaxed, as he seemed to notice every tiny bit of tension.

'Watch out for that signpost up ahead,' warned Cally, as they turned the corner on to Cobbin's End Lane. 'That wasn't there a few weeks ago.'

Tilly looked up and saw a large rectangular sign staked into the ground. She knew unexpected or unfamiliar objects could sometimes spook horses, so she made sure Magic walked calmly, by nudging him gently with her heel and reassuring him in a soft voice. Even though she understood him well, his difficult past meant he could be cautious.

Luckily, neither Magic, Watson nor Mr Fudge seemed bothered by the sign. As they passed it, the girls took a closer look. It showed silhouettes of clowns, trapeze

artists and performing horses, against a bright candy-striped background.

'Lyons' Circus Has Arrived,' read Tilly. 'Cool. We should go and see it.'

'Oh no,' said Mia. 'We're probably too late. Look what it says . . .'

Someone had stuck a sticker across the bottom: 'Last ever show tonight. Don't miss out!'

'Shame,' said Tilly. 'That sticker could be days old. I would've liked to have seen their horses. Never mind. I suppose there's always next year.'

'Doesn't sound like there'll *be* a next year,' said Cally. 'Last ever show. It must be closing down.'

Disappointed, the girls rode on. Tilly thought of the horses she'd seen at a circus when she was little. Beautiful Palominos, flying round the ring, with flowing manes and plumes of feathers attached to their saddles. She was disappointed she'd missed the chance to see more of them.

Suddenly through the trees, in the

large field beyond, she caught a glimpse of colour. Red and yellow stripes.

'What's that?' she whispered, slowing so as not to alarm Magic. Cally and Mia slowed with her.

'Looks like a tent,' said Cally.

'Not just a tent,' said Mia. 'That's the Big Top! Which means the circus is still in town!'

Tilly gasped. Magic felt the tension in her muscles and began to side-step, as though he was excited too.

'What do you think?' said Tilly, patting his neck. 'Shall we go to the circus and see those clever performing horses? I wish you could see them too. Maybe they could teach you a few tricks!'

Magic stamped his front hoof.

'Let's go tonight,' said Mia. 'Last chance ever, remember?'

'Good idea,' said Tilly. 'I'll check with my mum. We could make it a Silver Shoe Farm outing!'

'Plus me,' said Cally. 'I can be an honorary member, can't I?'



Cally had shared Rosie at Silver Shoe Farm with Mia, until her parents had moved to Dubai, and Tilly had taken over. Now Cally went to Cavendish Hall, the local boarding school where Tilly's brother, Brook, also attended. Cally visited Silver Shoe as often as she could because, like Tilly and Mia, it was the place she felt happiest.



'Do you think they'll have acrobats? And performing dogs? And people on stilts? I love the circus!' said Mia gleefully.

The girls turned their horses round and headed back towards the stables. They talked for the entire journey, non-stop chatter about Lyons' performing horses.

'What tricks do you think they do?' asked Tilly.

'Amazing stuff,' said Mia. 'I once saw a circus horse jump through a flaming hoop!'

'I bet they have fancy bridles,' said Cally. 'I can't wait to see them.'



Two

That evening, Tilly, her parents and her younger brother, Adam, took their seats in the Big Top. When Tilly had asked about the circus, they'd all wanted to come. Next to them sat Cally, Mia, and Mia's parents, and on the other side were Angela and Duncan. They shared bags of toffee popcorn and candy floss while they

