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

Tilly's Pony Tails 15: Rusty the Trustworthy Pony

Written by

Pippa Funnell

Published by

Orion Children's Books

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk



One

It was late September, and though the sun was shining, early signs of autumn were beginning to show. As Tilly and Mia rode their horses along the bridle path, a scattering of golden-brown leaves fluttered in front of them.

'I love this time of year,' said Tilly.

'Me too,' said Mia.

She leaned forward and patted her chestnut horse.

'And it suits you perfectly.'

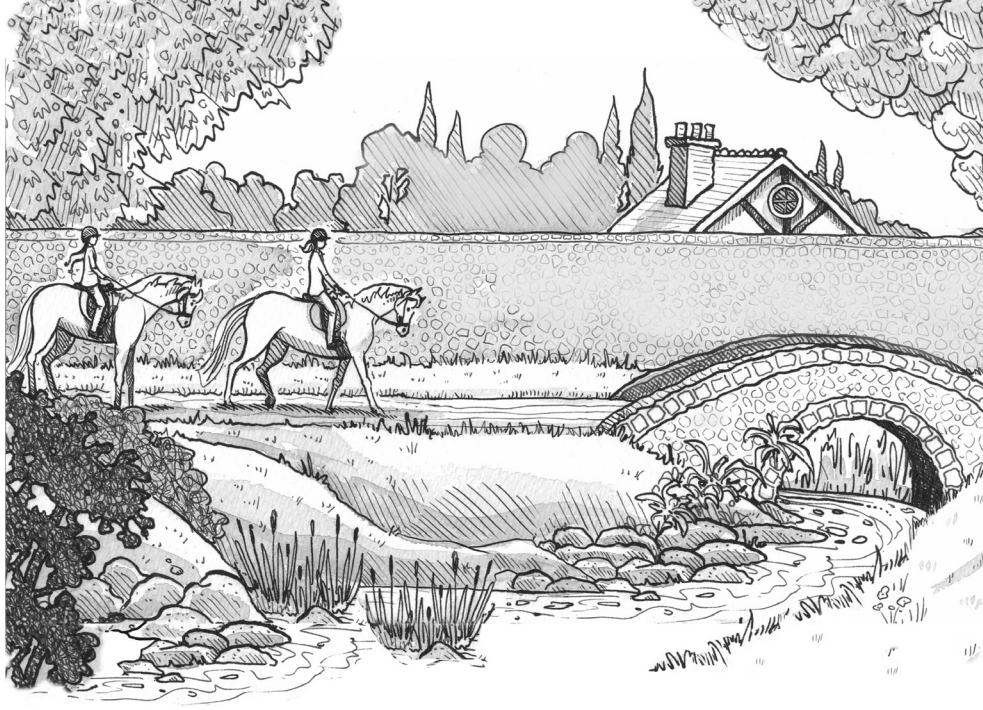
Mia's horse was called Autumn Glory. He was the colour of reddening leaves. Tilly's horse, Magic Sprit, was a grey, and his coat shone beautifully in the sunlight. They looked great together, walking side by side, while the girls chatted about next year's Pony Club camp.

After stopping for a rest at a small clearing, it was time to return to Silver Shoe Farm.

'Let's take the long route, around the back of the village,' suggested Tilly.

This was one of their favourite off-road tracks – a small lane that ran along the edge of North Cosford, with its big gardens and chestnut trees. Soon, they were out of the forest and on their way.

At the end of the track there was a little hump-backed bridge which crossed a stream. The horses could sometimes be nervous about the bridge, so Tilly and Mia paused to give them time to get used to it, then urged them forward. Autumn Glory crossed the bridge with no fuss,



but Magic remained reluctant.

'Come on, boy,' said Tilly. 'It's only a little stream. You've been over it a hundred times. We won't get home if you don't.'

She nudged with her leg, but he still wouldn't move. Magic could be stubborn with other people, but to refuse an instruction from Tilly was unusual.

'Is there something on the other side of the bridge, something that might be bothering him?' Tilly called.

Mia looked around.

'I can't see anything. It's just the same as always.'

Mia could sense Autumn growing impatient to move on. She patted his neck soothingly.

Tilly nudged Magic again, but he remained where he was. Then she heard a small whinny.

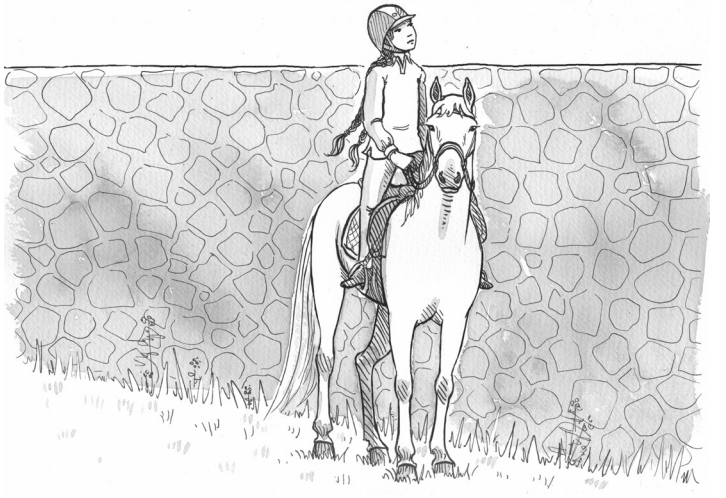
'What was that?' she said, puzzled. 'That wasn't you, was it, boy?'

Tilly kicked Magic with her leg one more time and finally he walked on. But as they approached the bridge, she heard the whinny again. It wasn't Magic, and Autumn was too far away for her to be able to hear him. So where was it coming from?

Intrigued, she moved Magic closer to the cobbled wall that backed onto the big gardens. She tried to peer over, but couldn't see any sign of a horse.

'It's Mrs Pollinger's garden,' said Tilly. 'That couldn't have been Rusty, could it?'

Mrs Pollinger was an old lady.



She lived at the house and kept a pony called Rusty. She'd once been a rider, but years ago she'd had an accident and had to give it up. She'd never lost her love of horses and ponies though, and she often stopped by Silver Shoe Farm to say hello. She kept Rusty in a small paddock at the bottom of her garden. Sometimes the girls would stop to lean over the wall and watch him.

They hadn't taken this route for a while and today the wall was overgrown with brambles. The garden – usually immaculate – was messy and wild with weeds.

'That doesn't look good,' said Tilly.

Magic gave another snort. Mia and Autumn Glory came back over the bridge to see what was going on.

'What's up?'

'Take a look.'

Mia peered over the wall too.

'What am I supposed to be looking at? An overgrown hedge?'

Then the whinnying noise came again.

Autumn Glory and Magic pricked their ears.

'Where did that come from?' said Mia. 'It sounds as if it's right beside us.'

'I can't see Rusty in his field,' said Tilly, straining again to look over the wall.

They looked back along the path to see if any other riders were coming. It was quiet and empty.

'Maybe it was a ghost horse?' said Mia, pulling a silly face.

'Hang on a minute,' said Tilly.

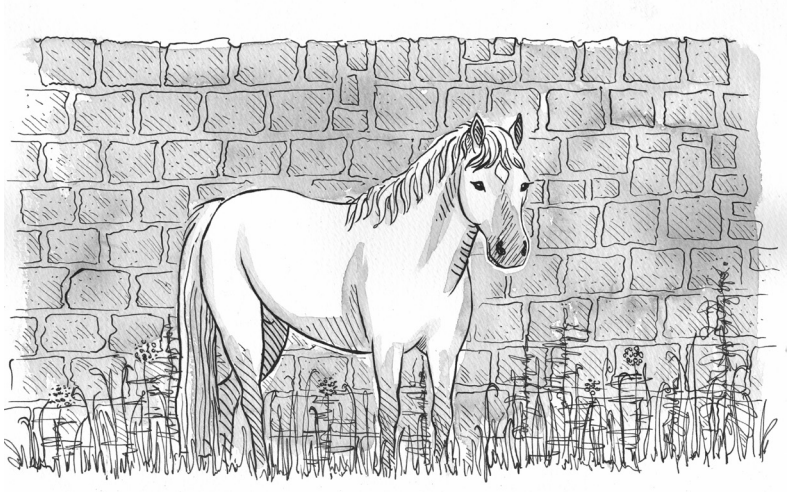
She leaned up and forward in her saddle, hoping Magic would stay still long

enough for her to balance. She wanted to get enough height to see over the wall properly. Luckily, Magic obliged, and sure enough, directly below, on the other side, Tilly caught a glimpse of a dun-coloured pony.

She sat back and stared at Mia.

'It *is* Rusty. He's right on the other side of the wall.'

Rusty let out another whinny. Magic made a wickering noise, as though he was trying to let Rusty know they were close by. Rusty whinnied again.





‘Do you think he’s okay?’ said Mia.

‘I don’t know,’ said Tilly.

‘What’s he doing in the garden?’ said Mia. ‘He must have got out of his paddock.’

‘But did you see? Everything in the garden is a mess. I know it’s been a while since we’ve been here, but something doesn’t feel right.’

‘What should we do?’

‘Let’s go round the front and see if Mrs Pollinger is in. She might not realise what’s happened.’

Mia nodded. ‘Sounds like a plan.’

‘Come on then.’

Tilly nudged with her leg, and this time Magic walked straight over the bridge with no trouble. She leaned forward and gave him a pat.

‘Thank you, boy. That’s much more helpful.’



Two

Tilly and Mia made their way to the front of the house. They tied their horses where it was safe, away from the roadside, then rang Mrs Pollinger’s doorbell. There was no response.

They rang again and waited. But still nobody came.

‘Maybe she’s out?’ said Tilly.

‘I’ll have a look through the window,’ said Mia.

She pressed her face against the glass.

‘Oh!’ she said, pulling back. ‘It doesn’t