



CHAPTER 4

LITTLE JOE GREEN TOOK JAMES' PLACE AS THE NEW STABLE BOY at Birtwick Park. He was only fourteen years old but was a very quick learner. He loved horses and tried hard to learn about us. Even so, he nearly killed me one night.

It was dark outside when John rode me as fast as he could to Doctor White's house because our mistress was very sick. 'Can I ride your horse?' asked Doctor White. 'Mine is tired and slow.'

'Black Beauty is tired too,' said John. 'But you won't find a faster and more willing horse.'

Doctor White was a heavy man and not a good rider. Still, I ran as fast as I could because I knew that Mrs Gordon needed the doctor as quickly as possible.

When we came to Birtwick Park, Joe was waiting at the gate. The doctor jumped off and rushed to my mistress.

My legs were shaking and I was sweating. Joe took me to the stables. 'Let me give you a rub,' he said and rubbed my legs and chest. Then he gave me some fresh hay and cold water. 'You're so hot. I won't put a rug on you tonight,' he said and left.

A little while later, I felt very cold without a rug on my back so I lay down and tried to sleep on the hay. In the morning I was very ill and couldn't stand up.

'You silly boy!' said John. 'You gave Beauty cold water and didn't put a rug on his back, even though he was sweating.'

Joe felt very bad and he tried hard to make me well again. With warm food, medicine and lots of love I soon got better. Unfortunately, Mrs Gordon's health was getting worse.

One morning, Merrylegs came to the stables with some sad news after a ride with the children. 'Mrs Gordon is very ill again,' he said. 'The doctor says she should move to a warmer country. Squire Gordon is going to sell all the horses and they are going to leave.'

Not long after that, Merrylegs went to live with a friend of Squire Gordon, and Ginger and I were sold to Lord Westerly of Earlsall Park.

John took us to our new home. It was larger than Birtwick but not as pleasant as our old home. Mr York, the coachman, led us to the stables and put us together with the other horses. We each had a stall and the stables were nice and clean.

Mr York rubbed us down and fed us. 'Tell me about these horses, John,' said Mr York.

'Well, they are the best horses in the land, but they are different in character,' said John. 'The black one is calm, gentle and will do anything you ask. The brown one is quite stubborn. I think she was treated badly when she was younger. She was happy at Birtwick Park and learnt to work well with us. We treat our horses with kindness, you see, and we never use bearing reins.'

'Well, they must both wear a bearing rein now,' said Mr York. 'Fashion is very important to Lady Westerly. She wants the horses to look good and hold their heads up high with a bearing rein.' John shook his head and said nothing, but I could see that he wasn't happy.

The next morning, we were tied to Lady Westerly's carriage. Mr York used a bearing rein but he did not put it on too tight. When Lady Westerly came to the carriage she did not look very happy. 'Those horses!' she said. 'They are different colours! And why is the bearing rein not tight?'

'This is the first time with a bearing rein for them,' said Mr York.