



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.

'They must get used to it.'

Lady Westerly said nothing but she looked angry.

The bearing rein hurt my neck as it kept my head held up high and didn't let me stretch. When we went uphill, we couldn't put our head down and the strain on our neck and legs was awful. It was difficult for both Ginger and I but we tried to do a good job.

The next day, Mr York pulled the bearing rein even tighter. 'They are cruel!' said Ginger. 'They will be sorry if they make the bearing rein any tighter!'

Lady Westerly came to see us the next day. 'Their heads must be higher. I want you to make the bearing reign tighter! Do it at once!' she said.

Mr York pulled my bearing rein so much that it hurt me. It was very painful but I stood still. When they tried to do the same to Ginger she jumped up, kicked her legs and then she kicked over the carriage and fell down. York and two grooms jumped on her to hold her still.

They untied us from the carriage, and took us back to the stables. 'Why do some people insist on using bearing reins when they do more harm than good?' whispered Mr York under his breath as he walked us to the stables.

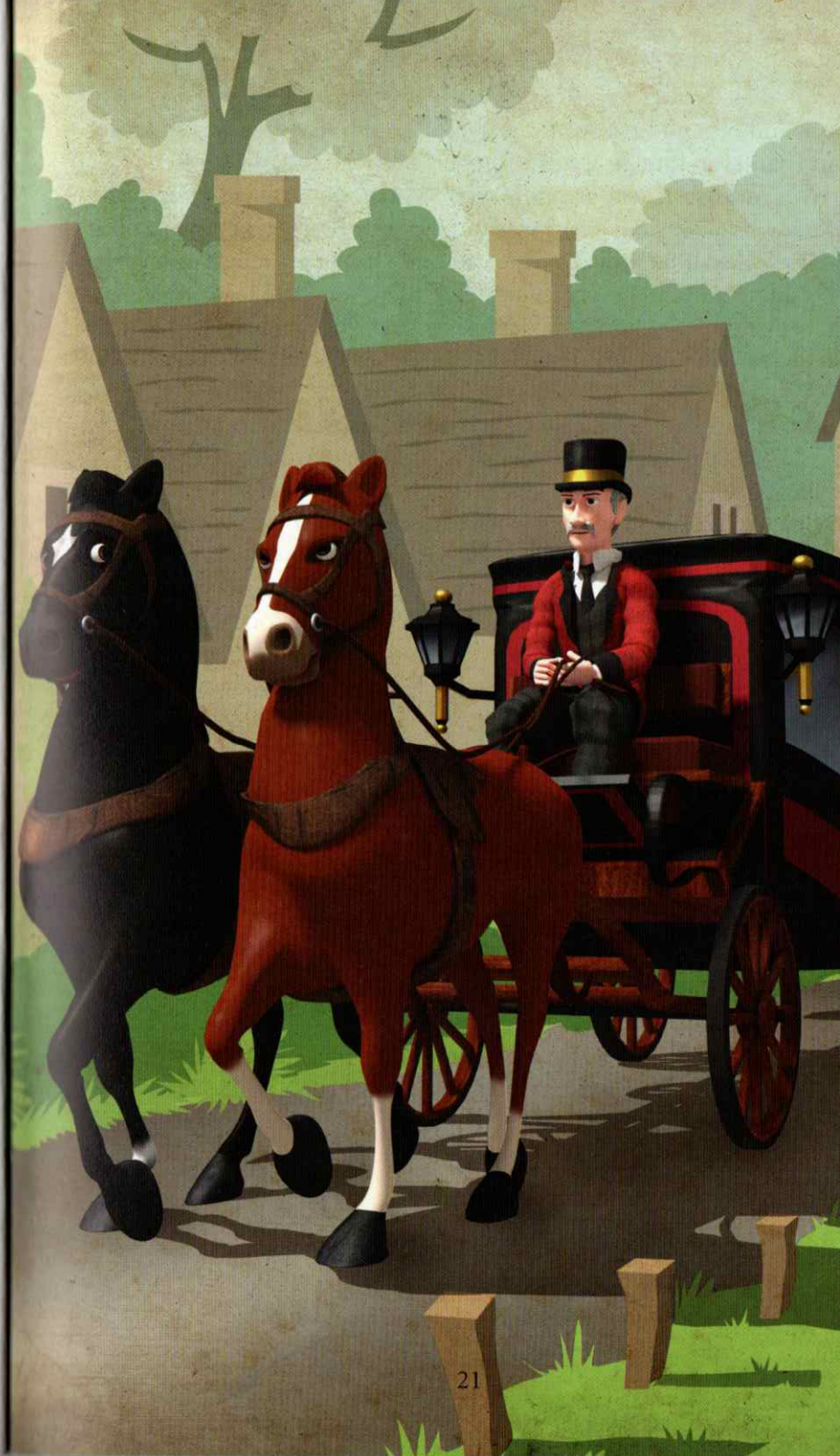
Ginger never pulled Lady Westerly's carriage again. Instead, they brought a new horse to work with me. Together, Max and I pulled Lady Westerly's carriage with the bearing reins. It was very difficult and painful, but Max and I accepted it quietly.

Ginger became Lord George's horse. He was a bad rider and careless with his horse. 'It's better than wearing a bearing rein,' said Ginger.

At some point, Mr York went to London for some work. While he was away, Reuben Smith looked after the stables. Reuben was a good man and careful with the horses, but every now and then he would spend time with some friends at the inn and change his behaviour.

One day Lord Westerly asked Reuben to take the carriage to town to be painted. I had a loose shoe and the carriage maker noticed it too. 'I'll take Beauty to the blacksmith later,' said Reuben. 'Just take care of him for me while I go to see some friends. I won't be long.'

He came back to pick me up very late at night. He jumped on my



back and began to ride me as fast as he could. My shoe was so loose, but I ran even though it hurt. Reuben whipped me to go faster.

We rode on rough ground covered in stones and my shoe came off. My hoof was cut and I was in pain, but Reuben kept whipping me to go faster. I tripped and we both fell to the ground. For a while I could hear Reuben breathing, then there was silence.

In the morning, some people found us. 'It's Reuben,' said one of them. 'He isn't moving!'

'He is dead,' said someone else.

I was shocked to hear that, but the pain made me think of myself more. The men carried Reuben's body away and took me home.

'Poor horse,' they said. 'His knees are ruined.'

It took a long time for my hoof and legs to get better. My owner decided that I should get some rest in the fields.

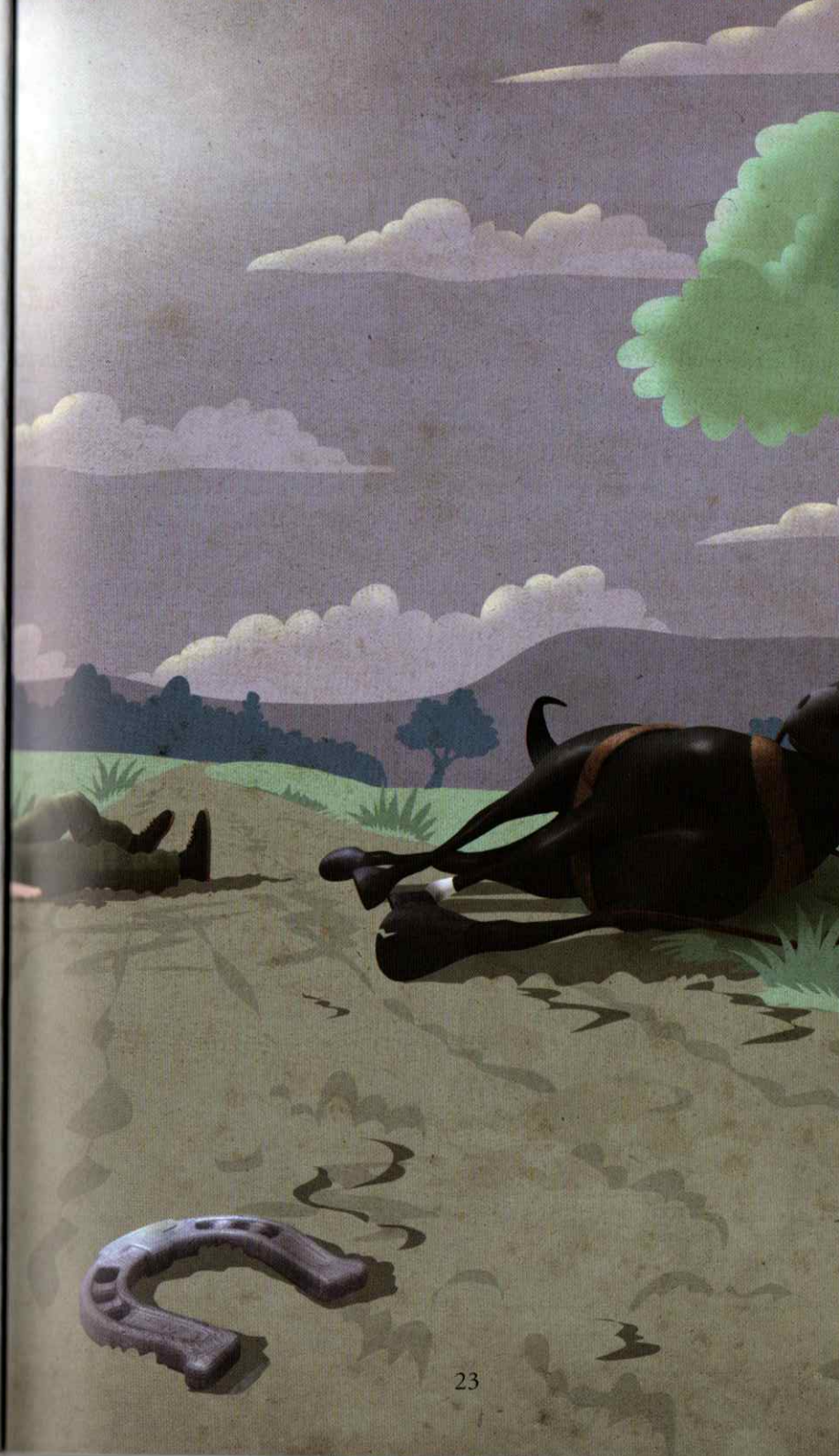
There, I saw Ginger. 'What are you doing here?' I asked.

'Lord George is a very bad rider,' she said. 'He rode so hard that he ruined my back and they brought me to the field for some rest!'

Ginger and I enjoyed lying in the fields and eating sweet grass all day.

'Look at us!' she said one day. 'We are both ruined! You have been destroyed by a careless man and I by a fool.' She was right. It was very hard, but there was nothing we could do.

One day, Lord Westerly came to see us. 'My friend Squire Gordon thought these two healthy horses would find a good home here, but instead they are ruined,' he said to Mr York. 'The brown one may be healthy again after a year, but the black one will be sold. I can't have knees like that in my stables.'



CHAPTER 4

Comprehension

- 1** Read Chapter 4 and match the two halves of the sentences.
Write a-f in the boxes.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Black Beauty was tired when he returned to Birtwick Park because | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Black Beauty had to wear a bearing rein. |
| 2. John rode Black Beauty to the doctor because | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. the horses were not the same colour. |
| 3. Black Beauty became ill because | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. he had to run very fast. |
| 4. Squire Gordon is going to sell Black Beauty because | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. someone at home was ill. |
| 5. John was not happy because | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. the stable boy did not know he had to keep him warm. |
| 6. The wife of Black Beauty's new owner was not happy because | <input type="checkbox"/> | f. he and his wife are going to leave the country. |

- 2** Choose a, b or c to complete the following sentences.

- Doctor White wanted to ride Black Beauty as _____.
a. his own horse was sick
b. he didn't have a horse
c. his horse was tired and slow
- Black Beauty was sweating because _____.
a. he didn't have a rug on his back
b. the ride from the doctor's house was long and hard
c. he tried to sleep on the hay
- When Merrylegs came to the stables _____.
a. he had bad news about the children
b. he told Black Beauty that he was going to live at Earls Hall Park
c. he said that all their lives would change
- Reuben went to town with Black Beauty because _____.
a. Lord Westerly told him to go there
b. Black Beauty had a loose shoe
c. he was going to meet some friends
- Lord Westerly decided that _____.
a. he did not want to keep Black Beauty
b. both Ginger and Black Beauty were too unhealthy to keep
c. Black Beauty must go to a better home

- 3** Find words in Chapter 4 which mean the same as:

- | | | |
|---|---------|-----------|
| 1. wanting to do something | w _____ | (page 18) |
| 2. very nice and comfortable | p _____ | (page 19) |
| 3. the way somebody thinks and behaves; personality | c _____ | (page 19) |
| 4. hurting very much | p _____ | (page 20) |
| 5. not smooth | r _____ | (page 22) |
| 6. correct | r _____ | (page 22) |

- 4** Choose a, b or c to complete the sentences below.

- Why are you _____? Are you cold?
a. sweating b. stretching c. shaking
- It was very _____ of you to forget your house keys.
a. loose b. careless c. dark
- There's a branch there; be careful or you'll _____.
a. move b. paint c. trip
- My shoes are very _____. They're hurting my feet.
a. quick b. stubborn c. tight
- We're late! We'll have to _____ to get our train.
a. rush b. ruin c. insist
- Please don't _____, girls. It's not good manners.
a. notice b. whisper c. accept

Follow-up activities

- 5** Discuss.

- Black Beauty became sick after he got back to Birtwick Park. Have you ever been sick? What was wrong with you and what happened? Who or what helped you get better?
- How do you think Black Beauty felt when he learnt that he was going to a new home? How would you feel in his place? Why?
- Mr York says that fashion is very important to Lady Westerly. Is fashion important to you? Why/Why not?
- Squire Gordon and his wife are going to move to another country. Would you like to live in a different country? Where, and why?

- 6** Imagine that you are Squire Gordon. Write a letter to a friend of yours, telling him about your decision to move to another country. (80-100 words)