

Hooked on Horses



Chapter Five by Kay Hively

It rained all weekend so Suzanne and her grandfather could not ride. They worked instead. Suzanne cleaned and brushed Babe's coat a dozen times. She helped her grandfather repair the best set of reins and his favorite halter. Suzanne rubbed a bright shine on the halter brass. Then she spread goeey, sticky stuff over all the leather. This made the halter and the saddle supple and dark.

Grandfather said everything must be perfect. Everything must shine.

On Monday morning, Suzanne and her grandfather rode into town and stopped at the stables of Tom Bass. Grandfather dismounted and went into the big barn. When he returned, a little man came with him. The man seemed very fragile and very thin.

Grandfather introduced Suzanne to Tom Bass, saying that he had agreed to have a look at her and Babe.

Mr. Bass opened the corral gate and motioned for Suzanne to come inside.

Without a word, he motioned for her to ride around the corral. Suzanne held tight on Babe's reins and nudged her into a trot. Around and around she rode, trying to stare straight ahead. Out of the corner of her eye she could see the little man in the center of the corral. He stood in one spot, turning only to watch the horse and rider.

After many trips around the corral, the little man motioned for Suzanne to run the horse in the opposite direction. Again, nothing was said and the little man never moved from his spot.

Then, without a word, Tom Bass turned, walked out of the corral and stood beside Suzanne's grandfather. Suzanne was not sure what to do, so she brought Babe to a stop while the men talked. At last they shook hands and Mr. Bass walked back into the barn.

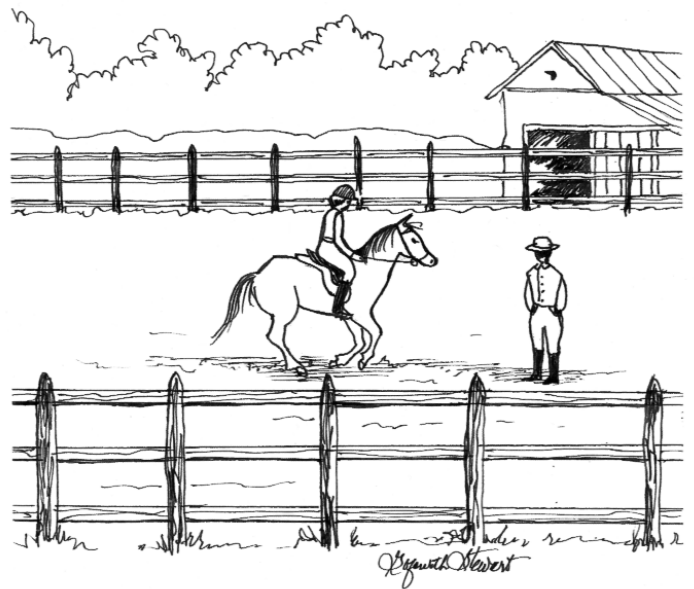
Suzanne's grandfather motioned for her to join him. She nudged Babe through the gate, then bent over to lock it firmly.

Suzanne was worried. She was afraid that Tom Bass had refused to help her train for the show. Bursting with curiosity, she asked what Mr. Bass had said. Grandfather smiled a little smile. Then he said that Mr. Bass thought she might make a horse woman some day.

But would he give lessons? Suzanne pleaded.

As they rode along the dirt path, Grandfather explained that Mr. Bass was a busy man with a very bad heart. His doctor didn't want him to work, but he promised to help if he could. Mr. Bass had said that Suzanne must ride into town every day, and if he had time he would work with her and Babe. If she did not find him at the barn, however, she should just go back home.

He also said that Suzanne should relax the reins and give Babe more freedom. Freedom, Mr. Bass said, was the most important thing in the world.



Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do -

- Suzanne is working to get Babe's gear ready for the show. She will need nice clothes for the show, too. Where do you think Suzanne will get her fancy outfit? What kind of clothes do you think she will need?
- Draw a picture of a saddle and label all the parts.

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Next Week: Chapter Six – The Story of Tom Bass