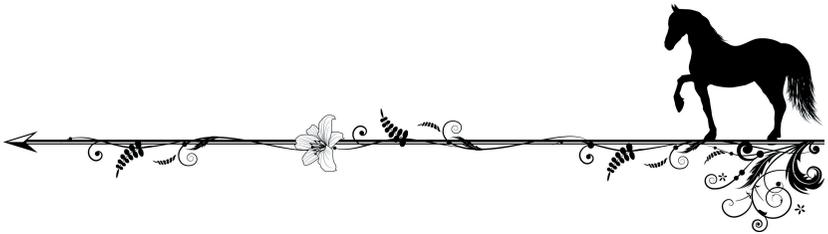


The Gift



WRITTEN BY
REBECCA J. HUBBARD

ILLUSTRATED BY
KRICKETT KING

THE GIFT

by

Rebecca J. Hubbard

Copyright © Rebecca J. Hubbard 2015

Illustration Copyright © Krickett King 2015

Cover Copyright © Krickett King 2015

Published by Sunquills

(An Imprint of Ravenswood Publishing)



Names, characters and incidents depicted in this book are products of the author's imagination, or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and beyond the intent of the author or the publisher.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means whatsoever, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher and/or author.

Ravenswood Publishing
6296 Philippi Church Rd.
Raeford, NC 28376

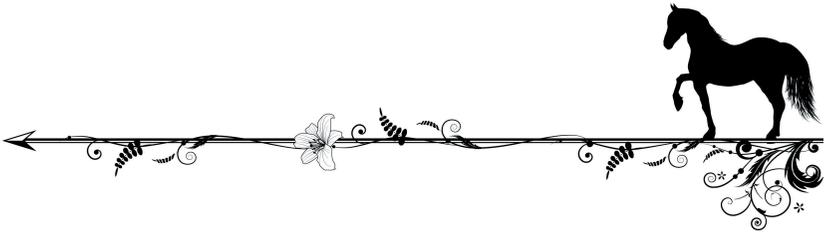
<http://www.ravenswoodpublishing.com>

Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN-13: 978-1515181835

ISBN-10: 1515181839

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Pip.....	1
Buck.....	26

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I want to thank for helping this book become a reality: my editor, Laine Cunningham, who magically aligned my meaning with my writing. It was a joy to work with you. Publisher, Kitty Honeycutt, who loved this story from the moment she read it. Thank you for taking a chance on me and this book. Illustrator, Krickett King, who brought this story to life with her considerable talent and eye for detail. You are amazing! Ali and Libbey who painstakingly reviewed this manuscript again and again and answered my endless questions. Alicia — thank you for believing in this project, reading multiple versions, and helping me find the voice of Buck. Thanks for the “leg up.” O for reminding me of the heart break you felt when the friend you wanted did not see you and the joy you felt when he finally did. And Kelly and Holden for reminding me of the important relationship between text and illustrations — your advice was so valuable.

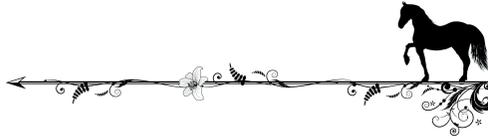
Thank you to all the people in my life who have actively encouraged me to write — my papa, my aunts, Nancy and Joni, Uncle Richard, and my cousin Laurie, who read my work and encouraged me over and over to keep writing. Your support means the world to me. To Melissa, my first editor-in-chief, who spent countless hours reading every draft without complaint and was a constant source of reassurance and strength. Lastly, I want to thank Ms. Gambs and Mrs. Gates. I am grateful to both of you for seeing a diamond in the rough and constantly challenging me to improve my work.

And finally I want to thank my mom who fed my dream of doing equine-assisted psychotherapy by purchasing my horse, Cash. He has brought so much joy not only to my life, but also to the lives of the children and young adults he guides. The love all of us have for him is the seed from which this story grew.

To all of you, I am so grateful you saw potential where I did not, and I will be ever thankful for your belief in me and this project.

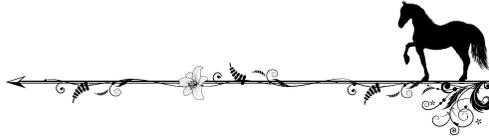
~Rebecca

DEDICATION



Dedicated to Tim Jobe and Bettina Shultz-Jobe
Thank you for opening up a whole new world.

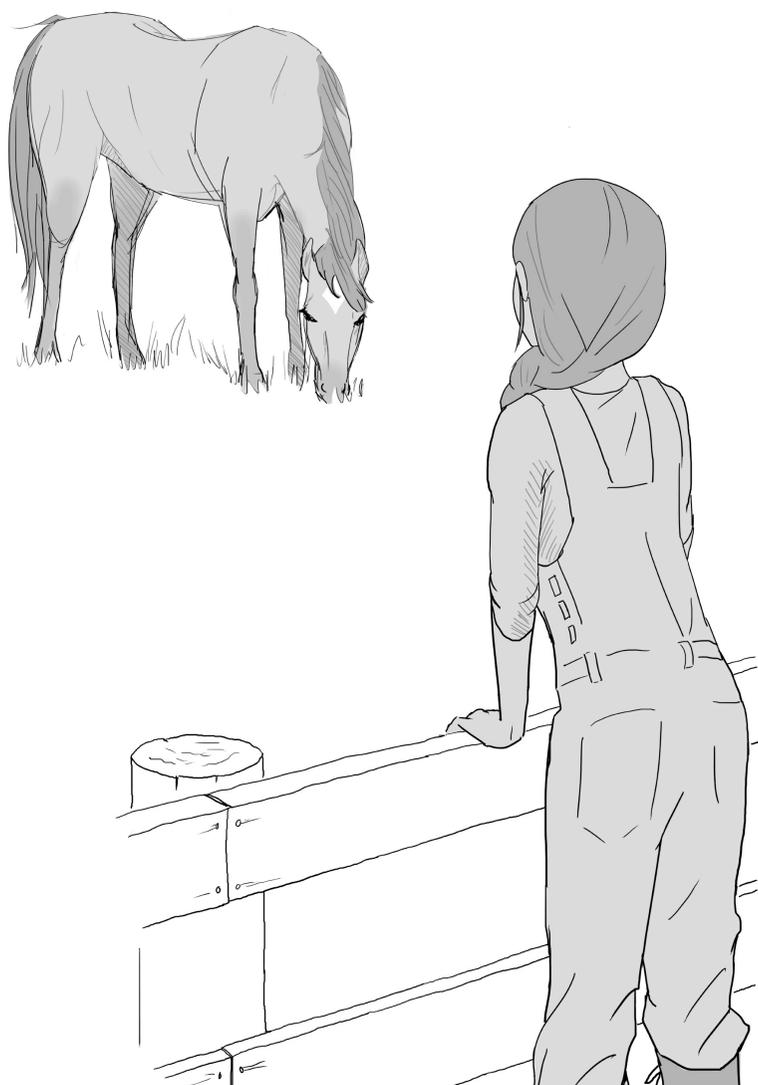
Pip's Story



On my eleventh birthday, I got the coolest gift in the whole world...a horse! The horse was a scrawny, brown colt with a black mane. His tail was so long it nearly brushed the ground. Each of his legs had a black mark that looked like a sock. A white star on his forehead peeked out from under his long forelock.

I climbed up onto the pasture fence. “Hey, little guy!” I called. “Come here!”

His ears swiveled toward me, and he gave me a quick look, but he didn’t stop nibbling on the grass. He acted like I was just a beetle crawling by! If only he would raise his head to



look at me, I was sure he would come over to say hello. But he just turned away, nibbling on juicy grass the whole time.

I wanted a horse more than anything in the world! I also wanted a friend. A best friend. If this horse wouldn't be my friend, he wasn't much of a gift. I was so upset I went back inside the house.

"Hey, Pip," said Dad. "How's the horse?"

When I shrugged, he put his arm around me. "What's wrong?" asked Dad.

"The horse doesn't like me!" I said. "He won't even look at me."

"Well," said Dad, "if you want a friend, you have to build a friendship."

"I just thought he'd like me right away," I sighed.

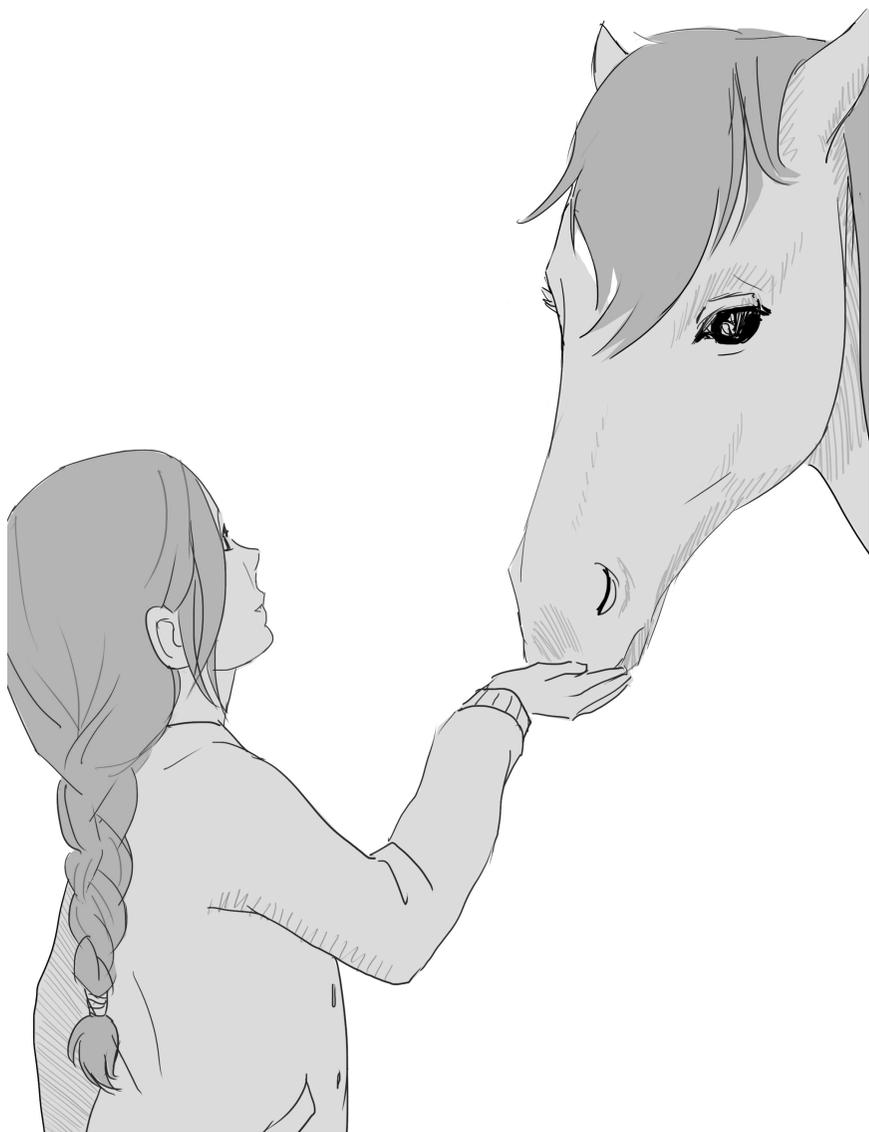
"Friendships always take work," said Dad.

Later that day I filled my pockets with peppermint candy and headed to the pasture. The scrawny colt looked up and walked toward me. As soon as he got close enough, he

nosed my jacket. He frisked my pockets and found the candy. I was so happy!

I took a few peppermints out of my pocket and opened my hand. He sniffed them, then scooped them up with his lips. He ate them and looked for more. Each peppermint I gave him he gently took from my hand. I was delighted! He liked me! Now we could be friends. After he crunched up the last peppermint, he walked away. Not just a few steps, either. He walked almost to the fence on the far side of the pasture. That's when I got angry. He wouldn't even hang around! I went back inside.

“That horse,” I told Dad, “ate all the peppermint candy, then walked away. He doesn't care about me!”



Dad gave me a funny look, the one he got before he told me something he thought I should already know. He said, “You can’t buy friendship, Pip.”