



MOLBERRY

FOR SALE

A collection of grey stars of various sizes scattered across the page, primarily concentrated around the text.

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Che Golden

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For India and Maya,
who always get back
in the saddle





Chapter 1

Sam took a deep breath and held it before peering over the top of the stable door. It was as bad as she thought. Mulberry had managed to make soup out of her bedding overnight. What had been golden shavings smelling of fresh cut wood were now brown and soggy. Sam sighed. It would be a nightmare to clean up. Mulberry munched her hay and watched Sam closely, her black eyes gleaming with mischief.

'You might as well take a breath and start working, two-legs,' she said. 'This mess isn't going to clear itself up.'

Sam pulled a face at her. 'You did this deliberately,' she said.

'Did not!' Mulberry said, a look of mock innocence on her face.

'Then how come the corner of the stable where you sleep is nice and clean?' Sam asked.

Mulberry stopped chewing and looked down her long nose at Sam. 'Well, I'm hardly going to lie in my own poo, am I?' she said. 'Do I look like a pig to you?'

'Comparing you with pigs is insulting to pigs,' Sam said. 'You are much, much worse.'

Mulberry lifted her top lip to bare her teeth in a grin and shook her mane. 'Well, right now, you are like a sheep: bleat, bleat, bleat,' Mulberry said. 'Or perhaps a dog, constantly whining. Either way, it's not

getting this stable mucked out and that's what you're here for, so get to it.'

Sam slid back the bolts on the stable door and pushed her wheelbarrow into the opening to block Mulberry in case she decided to make a run for it. Not that there was much chance of that when the greedy little mare still had hay to guzzle down. Sam dug her shavings fork into the flattened poo and groaned as she strained to lever it off the floor.

'What did your last slave die of?' she asked Mulberry.

'Don't give me that,' scoffed the jet-black pony. 'You lot could leave us alone, roaming fields and woods to our hearts' content, skipping around the countryside. But no, you have to stick a saddle on our backs and an iron bit between our teeth

and make us do stuff for your pleasure. The least you can do in return is clean up a bit of poo. I don't like being stuck in a stable, you know, it plays havoc with my asthma.'

Sam paused from forking shavings into the wheelbarrow, her jaw dropping in disbelief. 'You don't have asthma!'

Mulberry stuck her nose up in the air. 'I cough from time to time,' she said. 'That's a sure sign that something is going wrong with my lungs.'

'Oh, rubbish,' Sam said, sweat beginning to shine on her forehead with the effort of clearing up Mulberry's mess. 'You make this stuff up to get out of doing any work!'

'I'm telling you, keeping me in this stable is bad for my health,' Mulberry insisted.

'Your health is fine,' Sam said. 'As far as

we know. If you behaved better for the vets, they wouldn't want danger money to go anywhere near you and you might get check-ups more often. Look what you did to the last one!

'He shouldn't sneak up on people with needles then, should he?' Mulberry grumbled.

'He was trying to give you a vaccination,' Sam said. 'He needed stitches for that bite you gave him!'

'He only needed two or three from what I heard,' Mulberry said.

'Two or three still counts as STITCHES!' Sam said.

'Oh, hush!' Mulberry said, pulling a mouthful of hay from her hay net and pushing it against Sam's lips. 'You're wasting away, have some breakfast.'

'Get off!' Sam said, pushing at Mulberry's chest and giggling.

'Yum, yum,' Mulberry said, rubbing the hay against Sam's face making her shriek with laughter. 'This is good stuff, part of your five a day. Plenty of roughage for nice, healthy droppings.'

They went quiet at the sound of leather-booted footsteps approaching Mulberry's

