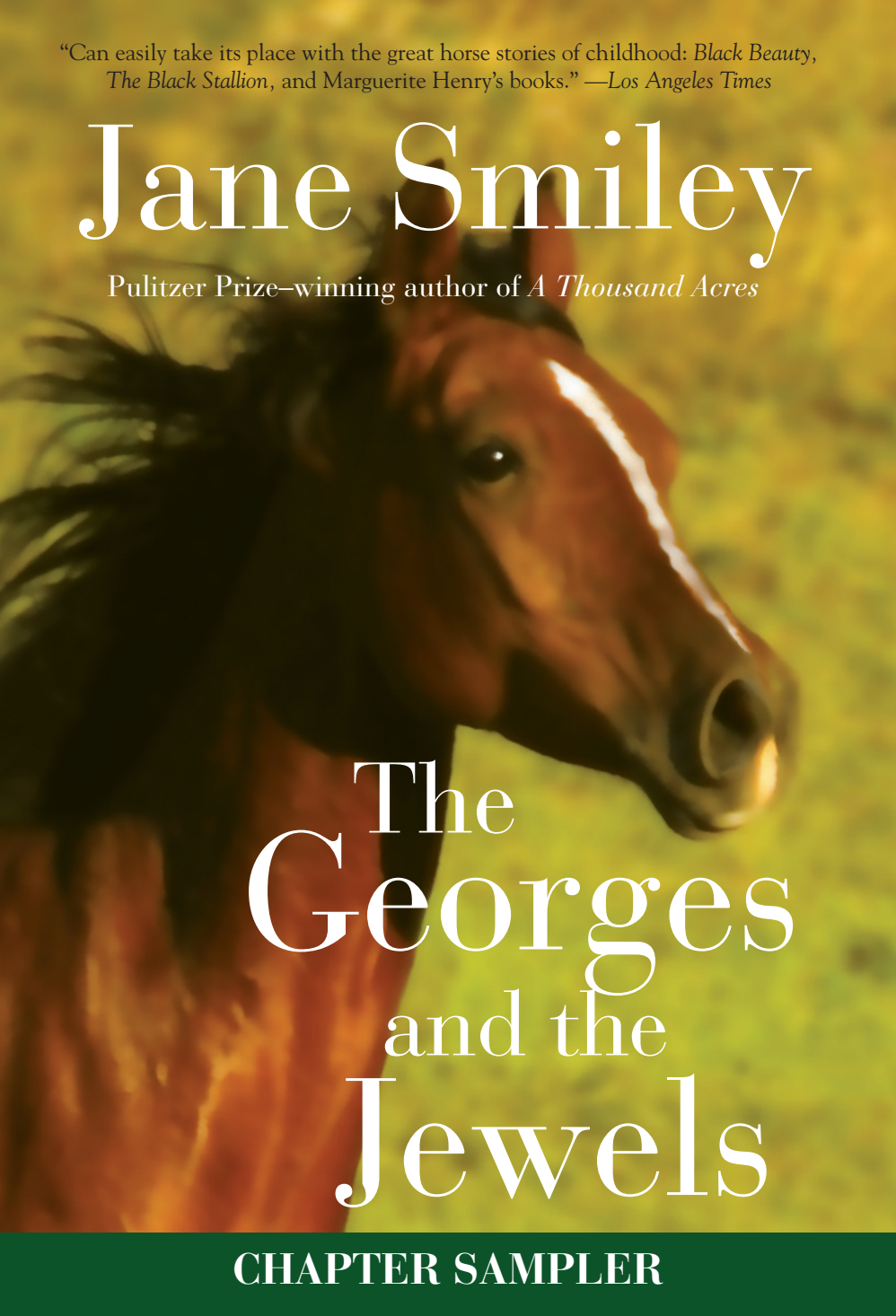


"Can easily take its place with the great horse stories of childhood: *Black Beauty*,
The Black Stallion, and Marguerite Henry's books." —*Los Angeles Times*

Jane Smiley

Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *A Thousand Acres*



The Georges and the Jewels

CHAPTER SAMPLER

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—*Los Angeles Times*



Due to her parents’ strict religious views (no TV or rock music), Abby often feels like an outcast in her small seventh-grade class and she is often subjected to ridicule by the popular girls. She has always been more at ease with horses than with people.

However, there’s one gelding on her family’s farm that gives her no end of trouble: the horse who won’t meet her gaze, the horse who bucks her right off every chance he gets, the horse her father makes her ride and train, every day. She calls him the Ornerly George.

Keep reading for a sneak peek. . .

The
Georges
and the
Jewels



Jane Smiley

with illustrations by
Elaine Clayton

A YEARLING BOOK

Chapter 1

SOMETIMES WHEN YOU FALL OFF YOUR HORSE, YOU JUST DON'T want to get right back on. Let's say he started bucking and you did all the things you knew to do, like pull his head up from between his knees and make him go forward, then use a pulley rein on the left to stop him. Most horses would settle at that point and come down to a walk. Then you could turn him again and trot off—it's always harder for the horse to buck at the trot than at the lope. But if, right when you let up on the reins, your horse put his head between his knees again and took off bucking, kicking higher and higher until he finally dropped you and went tearing off to the other end of the ring, well, you might lie there, as I did, with the wind knocked out of you and think about how nice it would be not to get back on, because that horse is just dedicated to bucking you off.

So I did lie there, looking up at the branches of the oak tree that grew beside the ring, and I did wait for Daddy to come trotting over with that horse by the bridle, and I did stare up at both their faces, the face of that horse flicking his ears back and forth and snorting a little bit, and the face of my father, red-cheeked and blue-eyed, and I did listen to him say, “Abby? You okay, honey? Sure you are. I saw you bounce! Get up, now.”

I sighed.

“How am I going to tell those folks who are looking to buy these horses that a little girl can ride them, if you don’t get up and ride them?”

I sat up. I said, “I don’t know, Daddy.” My elbow hurt, but not too badly. Otherwise I was okay.

“Well, then.”

I stood up, and he brushed off the back of my jeans. Then he tossed me on the horse again.

Some horses buck you off. Some horses spook you off—they see something scary and drop a shoulder and spin and run away. Some horses stop all of a sudden, and there you are, head over heels and sitting on the ground. I had a horse rear so high once that I just slid down over her tail and landed in the grass easy as you please, watching her run back to the barn. I started riding when I was three. I started training horses for my dad when I was eight. I wasn’t the only one—my brother, Danny, was thirteen at the time, and he did most of the riding (Kid’s Horse for Sale), but I’m the only one now.

Which is not to say that there aren’t good horses and fun horses. I ride plenty of those, too. But they don’t last, because Daddy turns those over fast. I had one a year ago, a sweet bay mare. We got her because her owner had died and Daddy

picked her up for a song from the bank. I rode her every day, and she never put a foot wrong. Her lope was as easy as flying. One of the days she was with us, I had a twenty-four-hour virus, so when I went out to ride, I tacked her up and took her down to the crick at the bottom of the pasture, out of sight of the house.

I knew Daddy had to go into town and would be gone for the afternoon, so when I got down there, I just took off the saddle and hung it over a tree limb, and the bridle, too, and I lay down in the grass and fell asleep. I knew she would graze, and she did for a while, I suppose. But when I woke up (and feeling much better, thank you), there she was, curled up next to me like a dog, kind of pressed against me but sweet and large and soft. I lay there feeling how warm she was and smelling her fragrance, and I thought, I never heard of this before. I don't know why she did that, but now when Daddy tells me that horses only know two things, the carrot and the stick, and not to fill my head with silly ideas about them, I just remember that mare (she had a star shaped like a triangle and a little snip down by her left nostril). We sold her for a nice piece of change within a month, and I wish I knew where she was.

But Daddy names all the mares Jewel and all the geldings George, and I can hardly remember which was which after a while.

The particular George who bucked me off had a hard mouth. I did the best I could with him for another twenty minutes, but Daddy said that probably he was going to have to get on him himself, which meant that we weren't going to turn this one over fast, because a little girl couldn't ride him yet. Which meant that Daddy was in a bad mood for the rest of the day.

We took the George back up to the barn, and while Daddy threw out the hay, I brushed the George off. He didn't mind, but he didn't love it like some of them do. Then I picked out his feet and took him out and put him into one of the big corrals. We didn't keep horses in stalls unless we had to, because Daddy said that they did better outside anyway, and if you kept them in stalls, well, then, you spent your life cleaning stalls rather than riding. Was that what I wanted?

I always said, "No, Daddy," and he ruffled my hair.

In the winter, though, it bothered me to think of them huddled out in the rain, their tails into the wind and their heads down. Of course that was what horses were meant to do, and ours had heavy coats, but I would lie awake when it rained in the night, wishing for it to stop.

It was worse in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma was where we came from, where Daddy and Mom grew up and had Danny, then me. We moved to California in 1957, when I was four and a half. I could barely remember living there, though we went back once or twice a year to see my grandparents and buy some horses. In Oklahoma, there could be real rain, and real snow, and real ice. Daddy had seen a horse slide right down a hill once, just couldn't stop himself, went down like he was on skis and right over the edge of a crick, fell on the ice, and had to be pulled out with a tractor. Couldn't be saved. At least in California we didn't have ice.

It was only five when we got into the house, not even supper-time, but it was January and the days were short. Christmas was over and school would start again on Monday, which meant I could ride two horses in the afternoon at most. Now that my shoulder and my arm were starting to hurt from my fall, I didn't

mind a break from the riding. It was just that I was sorry to be going back to school. Seventh grade. I've never heard anyone who had a single nice thing to say about seventh grade.

The next day was church. We went to church twice on Sundays—from nine to twelve in the morning and from two to four in the afternoon—and also Wednesday evening. Daddy was an elder in the church, and the place we had found, that we called our chapel, was really just a big room in a strip mall, with a cleaners on one side and a Longs drugstore on the other. Daddy and Mr. Hazen were looking for another place, maybe a church that was for sale (you'd be surprised at how many churches get sold when the congregation decides it needs more room), but they hadn't found one yet, so between noon and two, we kids wandered around that strip mall and went into Longs and looked at the comic books (until we got caught) or the toys or the makeup or the medical supplies, whatever there was that might be interesting. Sometimes Daddy drove me home to check on the horses, and sometimes he went by himself. Mom always offered, but Daddy said she had enough to do, setting up the lunch for the brothers and sisters.

The brothers and sisters were mostly fairly old—older than Daddy and Mom. Only three families had kids, us and the Hollingsworths and the Greeleys. We had me, the Hollingsworths had Carlie, Erica, and Bobby, who were all younger than Danny and older than I. The Greeley kids were four, two, and one. Sometimes, on a really unlucky day, Carlie Hollingsworth and I would be told to watch the Greeleys, and then our hands were full, because those Greeleys, even the baby, could run. What Mom said, if I made a face, was "Sally and Sam need a break, so you can do your share."

The only thing I liked about church, though I didn't say this to Daddy or Mom, was the singing. To tell the truth, I never knew what songs were really hymns, because Daddy, Mom, Mrs. Greeley, and Mr. Hazen were ready to sing anything, and some Sundays we would sing for an hour at a time, more like a songfest than a church service. On those days, Daddy always came home happy. We sang "Farther Along" and "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder, I'll Be There," "Abide with Me," and "Amazing Grace." We didn't have hymnals—Daddy said we might get those next year—but someone always knew the words anyway and would teach the others. It wasn't right that the singing would push into the preaching of the Gospel, but sometimes it did and I didn't mind. On the days when there was more preaching and less singing, Daddy came home in a worse mood.

That Sunday after I fell off, I was still a little stiff, so rather than wander around Longs, I stayed with Mom and helped her serve the food. She had macaroni and cheese, baked beans, some broccoli and carrots, a loaf of bread, and a wedge of cheese. For dessert, Mrs. Greeley had made an applesauce cake, which I liked very much. The younger women always made a lot of food, because, Mom said, for some of the old people, this was the biggest meal they got all week. "You know you are going home to a nice supper, Abby, so you watch what you eat, because Mrs. Larkin doesn't have that, and neither does Mrs. Lodge." I watched what I ate, but I especially watched myself eat a piece of that applesauce cake.

The second service was more like Sunday school. The grown-ups went to one side of the room and studied the Bible, and the kids went to another side of the room and did things like read Bible stories and color Bible coloring books. There was also a felt

board that Mrs. Larkin sometimes brought, on which she did felt shows. There would be a cutout of Joseph, say, made of white felt, and then a bunch of cutouts of his brothers, and some felt palm trees that represented Egypt and a felt house that represented Israel, and she moved the felt pieces around on the board while telling us the story. I think she had pieces for six or eight different stories. For the most part, everyone at church was nice.

This was not true of seventh grade. Monday morning, I got on the bus. Because we had horses to feed and water before school, I was always the last person on the bus, and fairly often the driver had to stop after he had already started and open the door again for me. The impossible thing was deciding whether to get dressed first and then do the work or to get dressed, do the work, and change again before going to school. If I slept in, even a little, I could not get dressed twice, and so my shoes would be a little dirty when I got on the bus. Sometimes the other kids started yelling, "Hey! What's that smell? Hey, what smells so bad in here?" and sometimes they didn't, but I always expected them to. I didn't have any friends on the bus, so I tried to read a book or look out the window.

The best thing that can happen to you in seventh grade, really, is that you float from one classroom to another like a ghost or a spirit, undetected by the humans. I thought maybe it would be possible to do that at one of those big schools in a big town, but our school was small, the seventh grade had forty kids divided into two classes, and everyone had a slot. My homeroom teacher was Mr. Jepsen, the math teacher. It did not help that numbers made my head hurt. If I could sit by myself at night and work out my homework problems, I almost always got them all right, but Mr. Jepsen was the kind of teacher who likes

to interrupt. "So, Abby, what's the square root of sixty-four?" and then, just when you are opening your mouth to say, "Eight," he says, "Cat got your tongue today? Are you thinking?" And then when you open your mouth again, he says, "Well, what's the square root of sixteen?" and now you're in this rhythm—every time you have the answer, he asks you another question, until he gives up on you and finally says, "Billy Russell?" and of course, Billy Russell has been sitting there for five minutes, thinking about the answer, and he pipes up, "Eight!" as bright as he can be, and Mr. Jepsen says, "Good boy!"

Or, if you happened to look out the window, as soon as your eyes went in that direction, Mr. Jepsen would say, "Abby, is the great outdoors that much more fascinating than this classroom?" and of course you couldn't say yes, you had to keep your mouth shut. Most of the other kids seemed to like Mr. Jepsen, at least they laughed at all of his jokes. Even so, I had a B in math—A on homework and tests, C on class participation—and that was good enough for Daddy, who didn't expect me to be going to college anyway.

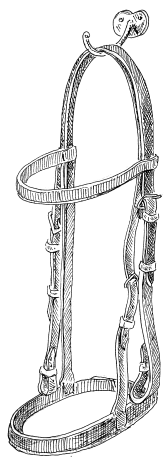
In our seventh grade, there were only thirteen girls. Eight of them were in the other section. The four girls I liked least—the Big Four was what they had called themselves since fifth grade—were all in my section, and Gloria, who had been my friend since kindergarten, was in the other section and I didn't see her much. All day I wondered if, at the end of the day, she would still be my friend or whether those seven girls in the other section would finally capture her. We had one new girl this year, Stella Kerkhoff, who had come into seventh grade from another school in the district. She had tried to be friends with almost everyone in the class and discovered what we all

knew—that there was no room in the Big Four for a fifth wheel, that Maria, Fatima, and Lucia kept to themselves, that Debbie Perkins (who I was friends with in third and fourth grade) was not only amazingly quiet, but also lived on a ranch at the furthest end of the school district and could never come over or have guests, and that the Goldman twins, even though they were friendly, really were twins—it was hard to tell them apart (and they didn't mind playing tricks about that), they didn't really need another friend, and anyway, they were so smart they took half their classes with the eighth graders.

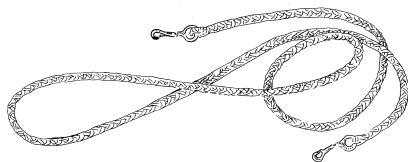
So Stella had decided before Christmas that Gloria was the one—Gloria's backpack was always filled with folded-up little notes from Stella, and at lunch Stella made it her business to sit between Gloria and me whenever I didn't get there first. For the month between Thanksgiving and Christmas, I did what Mom told me and pretended not to know what was going on. Gloria did, too, so it was impossible to tell who was winning. That Monday, I was so stiff from my fall (you're always more stiff the second day than the first) that of course Stella got in there, no problem. And then they went to the girls' room together, and I was just sitting there until the bell for sixth period rang. So, it was a bad day.

And then the bus broke down on the way home and was stuck for an hour while it was getting darker and darker, and so I knew we weren't going to get any training in, and Daddy was going to say, "Well, the hay was wasted today, since the horses don't know a single thing that they didn't know yesterday."

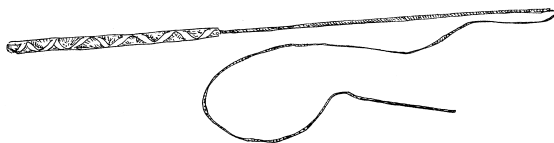
All of this is just a prologue to the thing that happened next.



Bridle Without Reins



Braided Rope Reins



Whip

Chapter 2

THE NEXT MORNING, TUESDAY, OF COURSE, I HAD MADE UP MY mind not to get caught by the school bus, so I got up really early. It was dark and pretty cold. Even by the time I was dressed and ready to go out and start with the hay, Daddy and Mom were still in bed. I didn't mind that—I did the morning work by myself fairly often, and I liked hearing the horses nicker to me, seeing them standing by the gate looking for something to eat. Even horses who don't know you or don't like you are happy to see you if you have an armload of alfalfa.

I hayed the Georges first, the littler George (chestnut), the George who had dumped me (named, as far as I was concerned, Ornery George), and the pony George. Then I went back in the barn and came out with hay for the Jewels. We only had

two mares at the time—Daddy had just sold two to a ranch up in the valley, nice horses and pretty enough so that he could get a little extra for them. He always said, “Even the most dried-up old cowboy will pay for a good-looker, and don’t you let them tell you different. You could have the greatest horse in the world, and if it had a head like a bathtub, I couldn’t sell it for beans.”

But only one of the Jewels was standing by the gate. That was a bad sign, and I was glad that it was starting to get light in case there was something out there in the paddock that I had to look for and report back. I threw down the hay in three piles, the way you’re supposed to, one more than the number of horses so they won’t fight over it, and then I climbed the gate. Most of the mares’ pasture wasn’t visible from the gate—it ran in a gentle slope down to the crick. For a while I didn’t see anything. Then, over to one side, I saw the second mare, standing under a tree. She turned her head toward me. She wasn’t down and she didn’t look like she was in trouble. When I got a little closer, I saw that she had something with her, and then, when I got closer than that, I saw that that something was a foal. The foal was standing next to the mare, and when it saw me, it skittered around to the other side of her and peeked at me under the mare’s neck. When I got even closer, I could just see its legs and its nose.

You never know with a mare, no matter how friendly she is on her own, how she will react to you when she has a foal at her side, so I stopped and stood there. After a minute or two, the foal came around the mare again, gave me a look, and then began to nurse, his back end to me and his little tail switching

back and forth. He looked to me to be at least six or eight hours old, which meant that maybe he was born before we went to bed and we just missed the mare in the dark. When you don't know a mare is pregnant, I guess it never occurs to you to wonder whether she is having a foal.

This Jewel was one of three horses Daddy had bought right after Thanksgiving. One he had sold already, and the ornery George was the third one. What with Christmas and all, we hadn't done a lot with her or even paid much attention to her, though I thought she was nice, and I always gave her a few extra pats. She was pretty without being distinctive—no white on her at all, not too big, not too small, good head, decent feet.

Now it was getting to be day. I took one step toward the mare, watching her, and then another and another. She looked at me, but she didn't pin her ears and start switching her tail, and so I took another step. The foal kept nursing, his tail turned to me. He didn't have any white stockings that I could see. I took another step. The foal's head popped up and he ran around the mare again, so that she was between the foal and me. Now I was fairly close, close enough to lean forward, stretch out my hand, and touch the mare on the neck. I watched her, though, before I tried. She still gave no warning signs, so I stretched out my hand, leaned forward from my hips, and touched her, then I touched her again, just a little stroke, down her neck. I took one step closer. Then I was very still. The mare's tail moved slowly back and forth, and the face of the foal appeared. Its little dark ears were pricked and its nostrils wide, and it was staring at me. No white on the face. Prominent forehead. "Hey, baby," I said softly.

And now there was a shout from up the hill—"Abby! AAABBYYY!" Daddy's voice. "Ruth Abigail! You out there?" He only calls me by my full name when he's worried or mad.

I was backing slowly away from the mare and foal, not wanting to shout and startle them.

Daddy appeared on the brow of the hill. I could see him out of the corner of my eye. Surely from there he could take it all in—me, mare, foal. I backed up two more steps. There was a silence. Then I heard him say, "What the—" He never finished this sentence, because he never spoke the name of the Lord in an idle fashion, but sometimes he came close.

I turned and ran up the hill.

He said, "Is that a foal?"

"It is, Daddy. It's so big and pretty."

We stood there for a minute, and Daddy said, "Well, I'll be—" And then, "It's always one trial or another."

"Should we bring them in?"

"And put her where? Those stalls aren't clean enough for a foal. They're better off out here."

"But it's cold."

"Well, she should have thought of that before foaling out, don't you think?"

I looked at him. We were walking up the hill, almost to the gate by now.

"Mares can wait, you know, not like humans. You ask your mom about it. I've heard of mares going three hundred eighty days, just because the weather's no good." With every word he said, I sensed him getting less and less happy.

I said, "It's so cute, Daddy. It doesn't have a speck of white on it. It's got a pretty head."

“What can I do with a foal? What can I do with a mare who has a foal? Can’t wean it for five months, then it’ll take another two months or so to get her in shape. That’s seven months of burning hay before we can even begin to sell her. That’s probably why they sold her to us in the first place—they knew she was in foal and they didn’t want to deal with it. Woke up one morning and one of the stallions was out with the mares, or something like that, so they crossed their fingers behind their back and threw her in with the others just to get rid of her.”

Mom was at the door. “What? What is it? Is everyone okay?”

“Got a foal is all,” said Daddy as he went past her into the kitchen.

“A foal!” She put her hands on my shoulders. “Do they look okay?”

I said, “It looks great, Mom!”

“Should we call the vet?”

Daddy said, “First, we’ll call the Lord. The Lord will decide.”

I kind of did not like that, because in my experience, the Lord didn’t always decide as I would have.

Daddy said, “Abby can help me outside. She’s already missed the school bus.”

Mom looked at the clock and said, “Well, she has.”

That was the second good thing to happen that day, and it was only seven a.m.

We had some toast and went back out. The first thing we had to do was clean the biggest stall and put all new straw in, and lots of it. I was happy to think that the Jewel and her foal would be able to snuggle down into the bedding and stay

warm. Then we took a halter down to where the mare was. We approached her carefully, but she was friendly, just the way she had been before she foaled. After I put the halter on her, Daddy stood looking at the baby. It was now full day, and even I could see that he was a colt, and a nice one—strong, with a well-set neck and an alert look about him. He wasn't crowding against the mare, either—he already had a mind of his own ("Not a good sign," said Daddy).

The colt would turn away from the mare and stare out over the crick or up the hill, then leap into the air and kick out or trot around in a little circle, and she would nicker at him, but not sounding as though she was worried. More of an "I'm here" than a "Watch out!" In the end, we didn't try to touch him, we just walked the mare slowly up the hill, letting her stop and call him anytime she wanted to. He came along, but not without jumping and frolicking. I couldn't stand the idea that we might name him George, but Daddy was strict about the names because he said I already got too attached to some of them. If he let me name them, then I would pine for them after they were gone. So I didn't say anything.

When we got to the top of the hill, Daddy held the other mare so that she wouldn't try anything, and we went through the gate. The Georges were all eyes and ears, too. Every one of the horses was whinnying.

The hardest thing was getting the colt into the stall. The way we did that was, I held open the stall door as wide as it would go, Mom stood inside with Jewel, and Daddy ranged around behind the foal, not driving it, but being a barrier if it wanted to go away. The key was to let the mare call him and

let him find her. Even though it took a few minutes for him to make up his mind to go through that scary doorway, and even though her nickers got just a little louder and more nervous, neither one did panic, and pretty soon we had them locked in the stall. If you ask me, the mare looked relieved. She had a nice clean bucket of water and she drank about half of it. The colt gave us a stare and then started to nurse.

Mom said, "Did you look around down there?"

Daddy shook his head, then said, "You two should do that. It's time she learned."

"What?" I asked.

Mom said, "We've got to go down the hill and look around for the bag and placenta. We've got to see if all the placenta came out."

"I guess you'll tell me what that is when we get there."

"You know what that is. It's what feeds the baby through the umbilical cord when it's inside the mother. If any of it stays inside the mare, she can die."

"Let's go!"

But the placenta was there, lying crumpled in the grass. Mom carefully laid it out, fitting together the pieces we could find the way you would a jigsaw puzzle. "Seems complete," she said. "We had a mare once—" But then she decided not to tell me that story, and so I knew it was a bad one.

"Daddy doesn't like the foal."

"A foal is a lot of work. And a colt is more work. A big lively colt is the most work."

When we got back up the hill, Daddy said, "Well, I guess if you aren't going to school today, you'd better start riding."

I rode the pony George first. Daddy said that there usually wasn't much market for a pony, but when someone needed one, then a pony was exactly what they needed and the only thing. Our pony was medium-sized—he came up about to my chin (all the horses were taller than I was by at least an inch or two). Once the spring rolled around, Daddy thought he could sell that pony to some people who had an English riding school out on the coast. In the meantime, no pony burned much hay—in fact, you had to be really careful about giving a pony too much feed or it would founder, which is when a horse's feet get hot and swell inside the wall of the hoof, except there's nowhere for the feet to swell to but down through the sole, so the horse (or pony) can get crippled and die.

I rode the pony around the ring with the English saddle, walk, trot, canter, turn right, turn left, back up, go in a big circle, go in a little circle. Three days a week of this was enough for the pony. Once I had untacked him and picked his feet and put him back with the other Georges, I went and peeked in the stall.

The foal was lying down, his back legs folded underneath him and his front legs stretched out. He had his nose on his knees and his eyes closed, but then he lifted his head and looked at me, his ears flicking back and forth. The mare nickered to him, a low ruffling sound, and he put his nose up to her. She touched it with her own, then took another bite of her hay. Behind me, Mom said, "Now, it's okay to look at them, but you let him and her get to know each other for three or four days before you introduce yourself. Sometimes if you get between a mare and a foal and get your smell on the foal, she'll

reject him.” The foal flopped over and stretched out in the straw. His legs looked incredibly long and thin, loose, like noodles. If I hadn’t seen him jump around on them, I wouldn’t have thought such a thing was possible.

After the pony, I rode the other Jewel, then the chestnut George. They were little girl material all the way. Then Daddy said, “Okay, Abby, get up on that one again.” He tossed his head toward Ornery George.

“I thought you were going to ride him a couple of times.”

“My back hurts. My feet hurt.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“I think you’ll do fine. I don’t want him to get used to me. Sometimes when a strong man pushes a horse around and makes him do what he’s supposed to, then he’s worse when the girl gets back on him. You rode him fine before. Let’s just try it.”

I knew better than to say I didn’t want to try it.

But in spite of how nice the pony had been and the other two horses, it made me nervous to put my foot in the stirrup, and then when he stepped away from me and pinned his ears, I felt my mouth get dry. That was a new one for me. Daddy came up behind me and threw me into the saddle and said, “Now go forward. Don’t give him a chance to think about it.”

I kicked his sides and he squirted forward, then went off at a trot. I tried to remember what my goal was—Daddy said I was to have a goal every time I got on. After thinking hard about my goal for a few seconds, I decided that it was only to be less nervous. I took some deep breaths.

“What are you all stiffening up for? You look like you’re riding a pogo stick.”

I made my hips loosen up and I straightened the small of my back so that I sat more deeply in the saddle. He said, "That's better."

When we got to the end of the ring, we trotted back, then did a few circles in both directions. George seemed half asleep. Daddy said, "Stir him up. He's ignoring you."

I slapped his sides with my legs, and there he was, kicking out. He kicked out so high that he nearly tossed me over the front. As it was, I got the saddle horn in my stomach. He stopped, I kicked him on, he kicked up again, I pulled him up.

"Now he's got you," said Daddy. "He's got your number and he's dialing it. He's saying, 'Abby, I don't want to go and you can't make me.'"

"I can't."

"You can."

"I can't."

"You have to. *You* have to. It doesn't matter if I do. It's your number he's got, not mine."

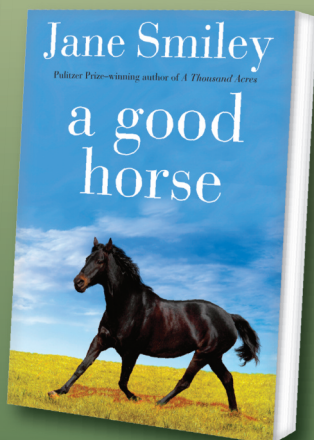
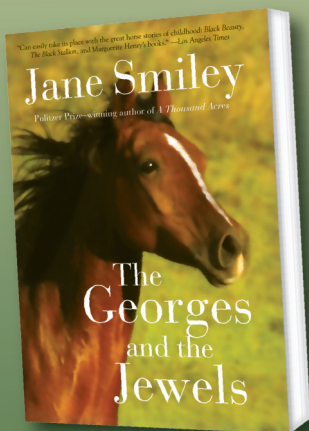
While we were talking, he'd come over to me, and now he was standing, looking up at me, his hand on the pommel of the saddle. I could feel that I was shaking now, both because Daddy was giving me his sternest look and because I could feel George beneath me, ready to take off again. I took some more deep breaths and said, "I can't." Then I said something I hadn't ever said before: "And I'm not going to."

Daddy wasn't always as strict about sassing as he thought he was—you could say, "I would rather not," or, "No, thanks," and sometimes he would give in. But I had used "a tone" with him, so now I looked down, so as not to have him stare at me

anymore, and jumped off. I handed him the reins, then walked away, back toward the barn, where I couldn't resist peeking at the colt. But then I went out the other end of the barn and around into the house without letting Daddy see me. I went up to my room and closed the door. There was always homework.

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