

## Jane Cameron – Bimbi

The gates of the horse box opened and a furious donkey hurtled down the lowered ramp, ears back, teeth bared, braying at the top of her voice.

She charged round the farmyard leaving the welcoming committee of four children and two farmhands staring silently after her. So this was Bambi. ('Who on earth named her Bambi?' asked the children's mother.)

They had hoped for a pony. The two huge shire horses their grandfather had so loved were gentle and friendly and never minded them riding on their broad backs. But ponies they were not. The donkey had belonged to family friends whose children had grown up and left home. So when it was suggested the farm children might like her they thought, Why not? A donkey could be fun.

But fun was not on Bambi's mind as she galloped back round the yard. The children scattered; two jumped over a wall into a pig pen, much to the surprise of a sow and her piglets. One leapt over a gate and the fourth took refuge behind the horse box.

Eventually the children's father managed to catch hold of the donkey's halter and calm her down, but not before she'd managed to give one of the farmhands a nasty nip.

Despite the inauspicious start Bambi soon became a very spoilt member of the family. She had the very best stable where she could retreat on cold winter days and where her straw bed was always thick and clean and the hay net and water tank always fresh. She was regularly groomed and her smart saddle and bridle hung from hooks in her stable.

She also had the attentions of the local blacksmith who regularly came to the farm to cut her hooves and replace her shoes. He was amused that Bambi was his only donkey client and usually the most difficult.

In the summer her little shoes could be heard clip-clopping up the lane as she went with the children, their mother and assorted dogs on picnic excursions to the nearby woods.

She learned how to open the gate into the back garden and the children's mother would answer a knock at the kitchen door to find Bambi standing there expecting a treat.

However, she remained feisty and a show of temper soon warned everyone things were not to her liking.