Maddy and Apple save the day: Julie Ward

Maddy lived on a farm with her mum and dad, John and Meg, and a horse named Apple. Maddy rode Apple every day, not just to school but every afternoon, galloping across the paddocks.

One night, as Maddy lay in bed she overheard her parents talking and they sounded worried. Her dad kept repeating, ‘We just can’t do it, the money isn’t there. It looks like we will lose the farm.’

Next morning her parents were very quiet until Maddy asked if they would be going to the town’s Carnival Day in two weeks. This was a day of fun, rides, cake stalls and the famous horse race which attracted riders from far and wide. ‘Yes, said her mum in a firm voice. ‘Of course we will be going.’

Maddy was very busy the next two weeks, telling her parents she had a special project to complete.

Carnival Day arrived. Maddy had saved her birthday money to pay for rides, and fairy floss, her once a year treat. After lunch, everyone went to the dusty racecourse to watch the Gold Cup race and see who won the prize money that went with it.

As race time approached Maddy’s parents looked for her but she was nowhere to be found. Not wanting to miss the big race, they made their way to the grandstand taking the last seats as the horses lined up for the start.

‘They’re racing.’ came the cry as the horses thundered past the grandstand.

One horse stood out - the only grey in a field of browns. ‘Who is that?’ people asked each other. John and Meg sat shocked. It was Maddy riding Apple in the big race.

Maddy crouched on her beloved mare, quietly murmuring. ‘Not yet Apple. Not yet Apple.’ Then, ‘NOW Apple.’ and off they sped, overtaking one horse after the other till they hit the lead and then - First! First in the big race, the Gold Cup and the prize money was theirs.

The crowd cheered. A local girl, John and Meg’s girl, Maddy, had won the big race. What a day for their little town. When finally her parents reached her they hugged and hugged and Maddy said, ‘I hope my prize will save our farm.’ And it did!

Apple and Maddy were the toast of the town. They had saved the farm.