

Chloe's Pony

Tongue peeking from the corner of her mouth, Chloe sat at the table; head bowed and long fair hair hanging at either side of her pale face. Carefully, she finished shading in and sat back to admire her handiwork. She'd drawn what she always drew, a pony.

For as long as she could remember she'd wanted a pony and from the day she was old enough to hold a pencil, all she'd ever drawn were ponies. At first they resembled nothing more than a potato with four matchsticks for legs, with another matchstick at one end, supporting a smaller potato head. But the drawing she'd done today was nothing like that; through constant practice she had developed an artistic talent far beyond her eleven years.

'Put that away and get off to school, or you'll be late again,' said her mum as she came in from the garden.

'I'll just--,'

'No you won't, you'll put that sketch away and get off to school, now.'

'OK, Ok, I'm going,' she said as she finished attaching the blobs of Blue Tack, stuck the drawing on the fridge and headed for the back door.

'Hold it!' You'd forget your head if it wasn't screwed on,' said mum holding out her school bag.

Chloe grinned and held out her hand for the bag; she knew what was coming, mum gave the same speech every morning, only the content of the sandwiches and the fruit varied. She recited them in her head as her mum spoke. 'Have you got a clean hanky, are you sure two sandwiches are enough? They're Ham and cheese, you favourite. Make sure you eat your apple and banana and take care on the main road it's busy this time of the morning.'

Chloe nodded in all the right places and still grinning, pecked her mum on the cheek and was out the door in a flash. She didn't have far to go, the school was only around the corner and while the road was busy, she didn't have to cross it because the school was on this side.

'Hi, Chloe,' her friend Matilda called as she approached the corner.

Hi, Tilly what time is it?'

'Five to,'

'Good, we're on time then.'

Chloe had a thing about wearing a watch, she had a perfectly good watch in her bedroom, but she never wore it. She said that time didn't matter, yet like now, she would ask her friend the time.

‘Liked your drawing, it’s brilliant,’ said Tilly.

Chloe looked at her friend, wondering if she had gone loopy, ‘but you haven’t seen it yet.’

‘Yes I have, I saw it yesterday.’

‘But you can’t have, I only finished it this morning.’

Now it was Tilly’s turn to look puzzled, then it dawned on her, they were talking about two different drawings and she began to laugh, ‘The drawing you did in art class, Mrs Wilson’s put it up in the gallery, come on I’ll show you.’

The gallery was large pin board that ran the whole length of the main school corridor and it was where the teachers displayed the best of their pupils work. There were boards in all the corridors, but only the very best work made it to the main one.

Chloe was stunned and pleased at the same time, she knew she was good at drawing, but didn’t think she was good enough to go on display to the whole school.

‘Hurry, we’ve just got time before the bell rings,’ said Tilly, pulling her towards the main entrance. But the bell rang before they even reached the bottom of the steps leading to the doors.

‘I’ll have a look at break,’ said Chloe, turning away from the entrance.

‘Just a quick look, come on.’

‘No, I’m heading straight for the annex, I’ve got Mr Topper for maths and I’ll catch it if I’m late again.’

‘Ok, see you at break,’ called Tilly.

Chloe, who was already halfway to the annex, just raised her hand and hurried on. She was only a little late and managed to slide into her seat without Mr Topper noticing, or she would have if the boy at the next desk hadn’t let out a loud neigh. Mr Topper who was busy jotting figures on the blackboard turned and peering over his glasses said, ‘Pleased you could join us miss Sampson and nearly on time too.’

As all eyes in the class turned to her she gave a weak smile and wished that the floor would open and swallow her up. That spotty Dwain was such a stupid dork, if only he’d kept his mouth shut. However the feeling of complete embarrassment eased as Mr Topper’s gaze shifted to the right. ‘Ah, Forester as much as I enjoyed your impression of a, Hyena was it? I would request that you desist.’

Serves him right thought Chloe, as the class burst out laughing and Dwain turned a rather pretty shade of pink. The rest of the lesson continued without incident and she even began to feel sorry for Dwain.

She needn't have bothered; he was waiting for her outside at break. 'I'm going to get you Sampson for making a fool of me in there.'

God, he is such a Dork, she thought, he did it to himself, but she could give as good as she got, 'Listen, Dwain, why don't you go and boil your head?'

'Donkey girl,' was the only insult he could come out with, as she pushed past and walked across the yard to Tilly.

'I see Dwain's being a pain as usual,' said her friend. 'Can you believe it, he tries to get me into trouble with Mr Topper and when it comes back on him, he blames me, the dork.'

'Never mind that loser, come and see, you'll never believe where they've put your sketch.'

'Oh,' was all Chloe could manage when she saw the location, not only was it on show in the gallery, but it shared pride of place with Dwain's landscape. Right in the centre, straight opposite the entrance to assembly, where everyone, coming or going, could see. 'This is so embarrassing, why couldn't Mrs Wilson have found somewhere out of the way to hang it?'

'Why would she do that? It's fantastic, so get over your embarrassment, and enjoy your fame,' said Tilly.

'Cool drawing, Chloe,' called an older girl from a group that were passing by.

'Yeah, really outstanding,' called another.

Despite what Tilly had just said to her, Chloe couldn't help blushing, but she did manage to stammer, a quick, 'Th, thank you,' before dragging Tilly off in the other direction.

After break they made their way to Mrs Wilson's class, art was one of the few classes that the girls took together; unfortunately it was also one of the classes that Dwain took.

Dwain the pain was the nickname they'd given him, sat luckily for them, at the far side of the class and apart from making faces at them as they entered, he was too far away to cause any trouble.

Not that he ever caused trouble during Mrs Wilson's class he was her blue-eyed boy, and not for nothing, he had talent for sketching that none of his classmates could match. None that is until Chloe joined the class and that was the problem, Dwain seemed to feel that she was the competition and went out of his way to be nasty. 'Today we are going to concentrate on working with charcoal and erasers,' announced Mrs Wilson, 'so pick an animal from your sketch pads and we'll begin.'

Chloe and Tilly took out the small pads they had used on last week's field trip to the zoo and flicked through them. Chloe chose an elephant for her subject, and Tilly a

Tiger. Heads bowed as the class set to work and the only sound to be heard was the scratch of charcoal and the soft murmuring voice of Mrs Wilson as she gave encouragement, help and advice to those in need.

Chloe had work with charcoal before but not the soft eraser and was pleasantly surprised at how it could be used in creating highlights. In fact she was so immersed in the drawing that she was surprised when Mrs Wilson called the class to attention before the bell rang.

‘OK, everyone every one put away your sketches and materials, I want to have a word with you about entries into this years Gaired arts festival.

At this announcement an excited buzz ran through the class and cupboard doors clattered as work and materials were hurriedly put away.

The Gaired Arts Festival took place each year in June and Mrs Wilson always picked two pieces of work from her class and entered them in the under twelve’s competition. In the ten years the competition had been running her class had managed two runners-ups and three forth places, but none of her pupils had managed to take first place and win the £10,000 prize money. ‘Alright, settled down and return to your seats,’ called Mrs Wilson as the last cupboard clicked shut. Finally, silence reigned and she began, ‘Firstly I would like to commend every one of you, the standard of work this term has been exceptional and has made the job of selecting the two entries for the festival extremely hard. However after a lot of deliberation I can now announce the pieces selected, they are, ‘Summer Dawn’ by Dwain Forester and ‘Star Girl’ by Chloe Sampson.’

‘Brilliant,’ cried Tilly flinging her arms around her friend, ‘you deserve it.’

Just then the bell rang and Chloe felt as if she was floating as she left the class arm in arm with Tilly. It was a dream come true that only got better as they were surrounded by classmates, all of them offering congratulations. All of them, that is, with one exception, Dwain the pain, who pushed his way past the crowd with a frown on his face. Chloe and several of the others called out to congratulate him, but he ignored them and stomped off down the corridor.

‘Ignore him, Chloe you know what he’s like, he’s jealous,’ said Tilly.

But that was just it, thought Chloe; he had no reason to be jealous, his work is excellent; turning to Tilly she said, ‘He can’t be jealous, he stands a much better chance of winning the competition than me.’

‘No chance, you can beat him any day,’ said Tilly.

While Chloe was pleased by Tilly’s support she wished that she wouldn’t go on about being in competition with Dwain. She drew because she enjoyed drawing and she drew ponies because she loved them and longed for one of her very own. Still it was a fantastic honour to be picked and she spent the rest of week in a daze.

It was Friday that disaster struck. At morning break Chloe and Tilly went down to take one last look the sketch and found an empty space on the wall. At first Chloe thought that Mrs Wilson had removed it to send off to the competition. Then she realised that Dwain the pain's sketch was still on show.

'It's been stolen,' cried Tilly.

'Who would steal a sketch?' said Chloe.

'Dwain the pain that's who,' said Tilly.

'Why?'

'To have a better chance at winning the competition.'

'He wouldn't do that.'

'Oh, Chloe you always think the best of people, of course he would, he would do anything to beat you.'

'You don't know that for certain.'

'Duh, Hello, Chloe, I'm telling you it'll be him, come on let's go find him.'

Neither of them had classes with Dwain on a Friday, so they searched the playground. But if Dwain was about he was keeping well out of the way. Unable to find him they made their way to the art class to let Mrs Wilson know that the sketch was missing. Tilly was all for telling Mrs Wilson that Dwain had stolen the sketch, but Chloe talked her out of it since they couldn't prove it.

Mrs Wilson was in the classroom; busy setting up for the next class and when they knocked she called out, 'Come in.'

Chloe popped her head around the door, Mrs Wilson looked up, smiled and asked, 'Can I help, Chloe?'

Up until then Chloe had been quite calm, but as soon as Mrs Wilson spoke she burst into tears, 'My sketch it's gone,' she wailed.

'What do you mean, gone?'

'She means it has been stolen, Mrs Wilson,' said Tilly butting in.

'What are we going to do? I need to send the entries off by Tuesday.'

'If we don't find it before then can I enter another sketch?' a tearful Chloe asked.

'You can, but I'm afraid your other class work isn't as good and I don't think you'd stand much chance of getting anywhere in the competition with them.'

Crestfallen Chloe turned to leave.

‘Wait,’ called Mrs Wilson, ‘Do you have some more of your work at home?’

‘Yes, Mrs Wilson.’

‘Good, why don’t you bring them in on Monday so that I can check them out.’

Chloe cheered up a bit at that, besides they were still going to search for Dwain and if he did steal the sketch, maybe they’d get it back. At lunch break they hardly ate at all, they were too busy searching, not that it did them any good Dwain seemed to have turned into the invisible man, or boy, or whatever. When they were still unsuccessful at afternoon break they decided to catch him on his way home.

As soon as the final bell rang they shot out of the class, grabbed their packs and were first out of the gate. Halfway along the street they slipped behind the overgrown hedge of an empty house and peered through the bushes. They didn’t have to wait long, Dwain was the first one to come along the street; obviously he had dashed out hoping to avoid them. As he reached the open gate Tilly grabbed him by the arm, dragged him inside and trapped him in the corner, ‘OK, Dwain where’s Chloe’s sketch.’

‘I don’t know what you’re on about,’ he said, but he couldn’t look her in the eye.

‘Don’t give me that, Pain, you know exactly what I’m on about, now where is it?’

‘I haven’t got it.’ he said, eyes darting in every direction, but there was no escape, Tilly had him trapped in the corner.

‘But you had it didn’t you?’

‘No, I never touched her stupid sketch.’

‘You’re lying, Pain, I know you took it.’

‘If you know it, prove it then,’ he said a smirk on his face.

‘Why you lying toad, I’ve a good mind to...’

‘Let him go, Tilly, he’s not worth getting into trouble for, he’s right we can’t prove a thing,’ said Chloe.

As Tilly dropped the fist she had been threatening him with, Dwain was out of the corner and through the gate in an instant. Once he was far enough away he shouted, ‘You’ll never find your stupid donkey sketch.’

‘You should have let me belt him one,’ said Tilly.

‘And that would have got my sketch back?’

‘No, but I would have enjoyed giving the little toad a clout.’

‘Come on Let’s go home and forget all about him,’ said Chloe.

Chloe met Tilly early on Monday morning and they handed in a folder of sketches to Mrs Wilson, who promised to look through them and let them know the outcome. When she hadn’t been in touch by lunch break, Chloe was so upset with worrying that Tilly dragged around to the art class saying there was no harm in seeing if Mrs Wilson had come to a decision yet. But when they reached the door it was locked, which was strange since Mrs Wilson had class straight after lunch and would normally spend part of her break setting things up.

‘Can I hep you, girls,’ asked Miss Twedle the school secretary as she came down the corridor.

‘No, miss we’re waiting for Mrs Wilson,’ chorused the girls.

‘I’m afraid you’ll have a long wait, Mrs Wilson’s mother has been taken ill and she has had to take the afternoon off to look after her.’

Chloe was crestfallen, there was no chance now, she might as well forget all about the competition. There was no way now that Mrs Wilson would be able to check her work in time for tomorrows deadline. Despite the disappointment, somehow with Tilly’s help she managed to get through the afternoon. But on reaching home she went straight to her room, put on her CD’s lay on the bed and cried into her pillow, it was so unfair.

She must have cried herself to sleep because the next thing she knew her sister Bethany was shaking her awake, ‘Chloe, mum wants you to come down.’

‘Go away, Beth leave me alone.’

‘But you have to come down now, there is someone here to see you.’

Reluctantly Chloe followed her sister down to the lounge, where she was surprised to see Mrs Wilson sitting talking to mum. ‘Ah, Chloe I’m sorry I had to dash off this afternoon without letting you know about the sketches, but it was an emergency.’

‘Yes, Miss Twedle told us your mother was ill, how is she?’

‘She’s fine now thank you, and once I got her settled, I had time to look through your work and I though it is very good, I feel it’s not good enough for the competition, sorry. I suppose you given me everything, you haven’t any more in the house.’

‘No I’ve given you them all,’ said Chloe.

‘Mum, mum,’ cried Bethany.

‘Shh, don’t interrupt while people are talking.’

‘But, Mum, what about Chloe’s Drawing on the fridge?’

Mum smiled, ‘Why are you still standing there, Chloe? Go and get it.’

Needless to say the drawing was good enough, maybe not to win the competition. But certainly to take the second prize of £6,000 pounds, enough for Chloe to buy her very own pony called Star Girl.

As to Dwain the Pain, his sketch came nowhere, serves him right.

Fred Watson