# TONI, THE PARTY PONY

Story by John Carr
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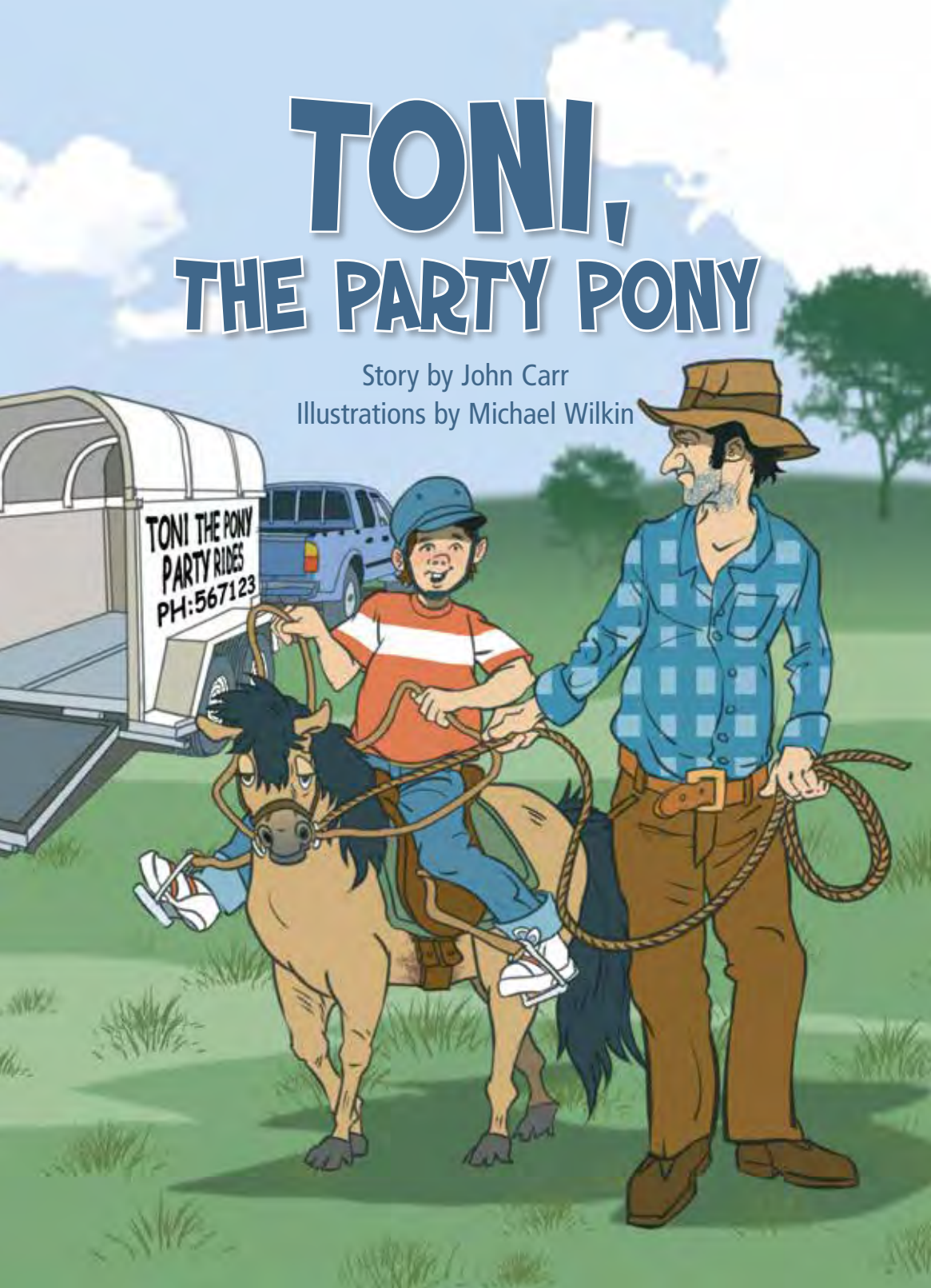

Toni, the Party Pony

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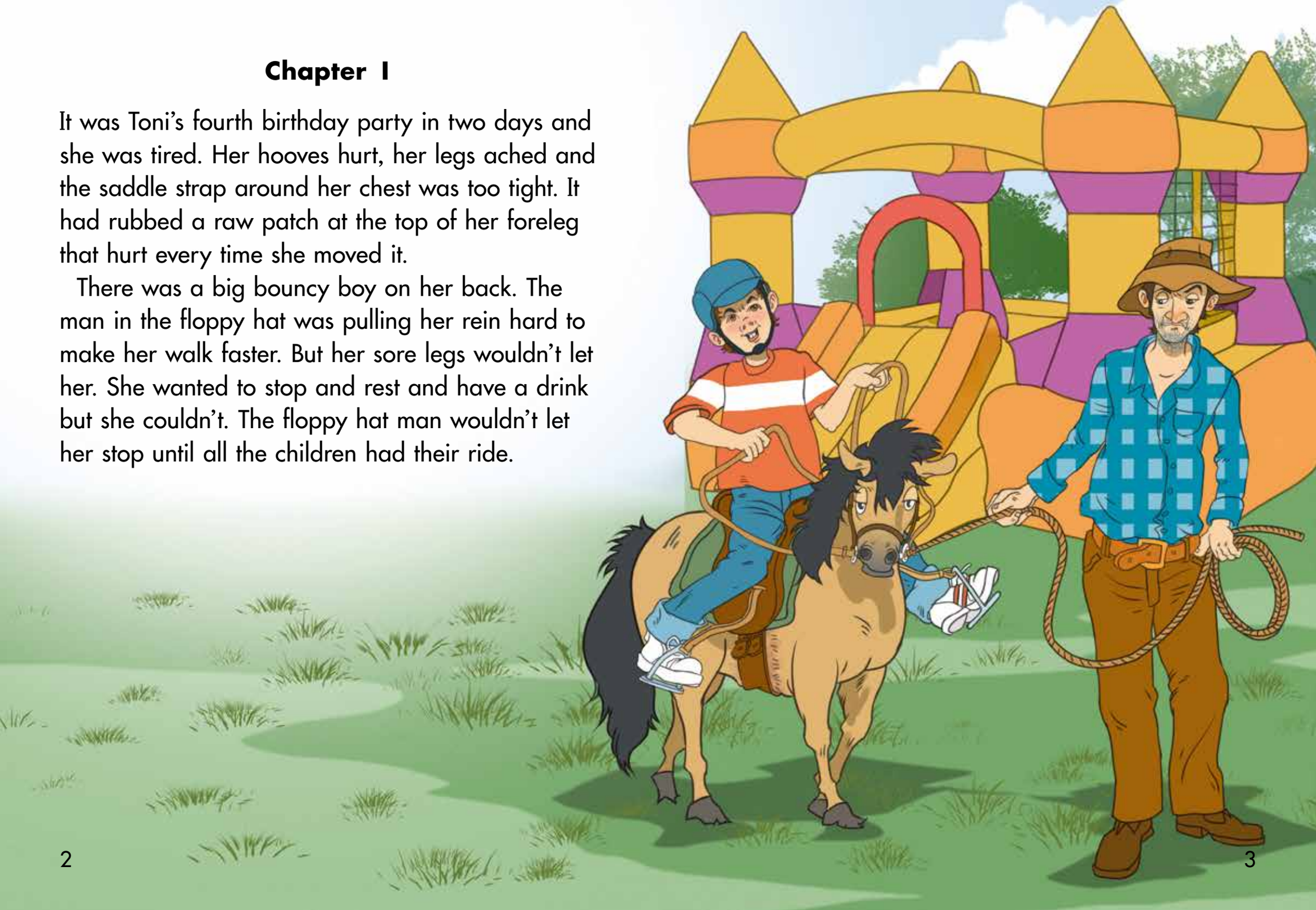
# Toni, the Party Pony

## Chapter 1

It was Toni's fourth birthday party in two days and she was tired. Her hooves hurt, her legs ached and the saddle strap around her chest was too tight. It had rubbed a raw patch at the top of her foreleg that hurt every time she moved it.

There was a big bouncy boy on her back. The man in the floppy hat was pulling her rein hard to make her walk faster. But her sore legs wouldn't let her. She wanted to stop and rest and have a drink but she couldn't. The floppy hat man wouldn't let her stop until all the children had their ride.



## Chapter 2

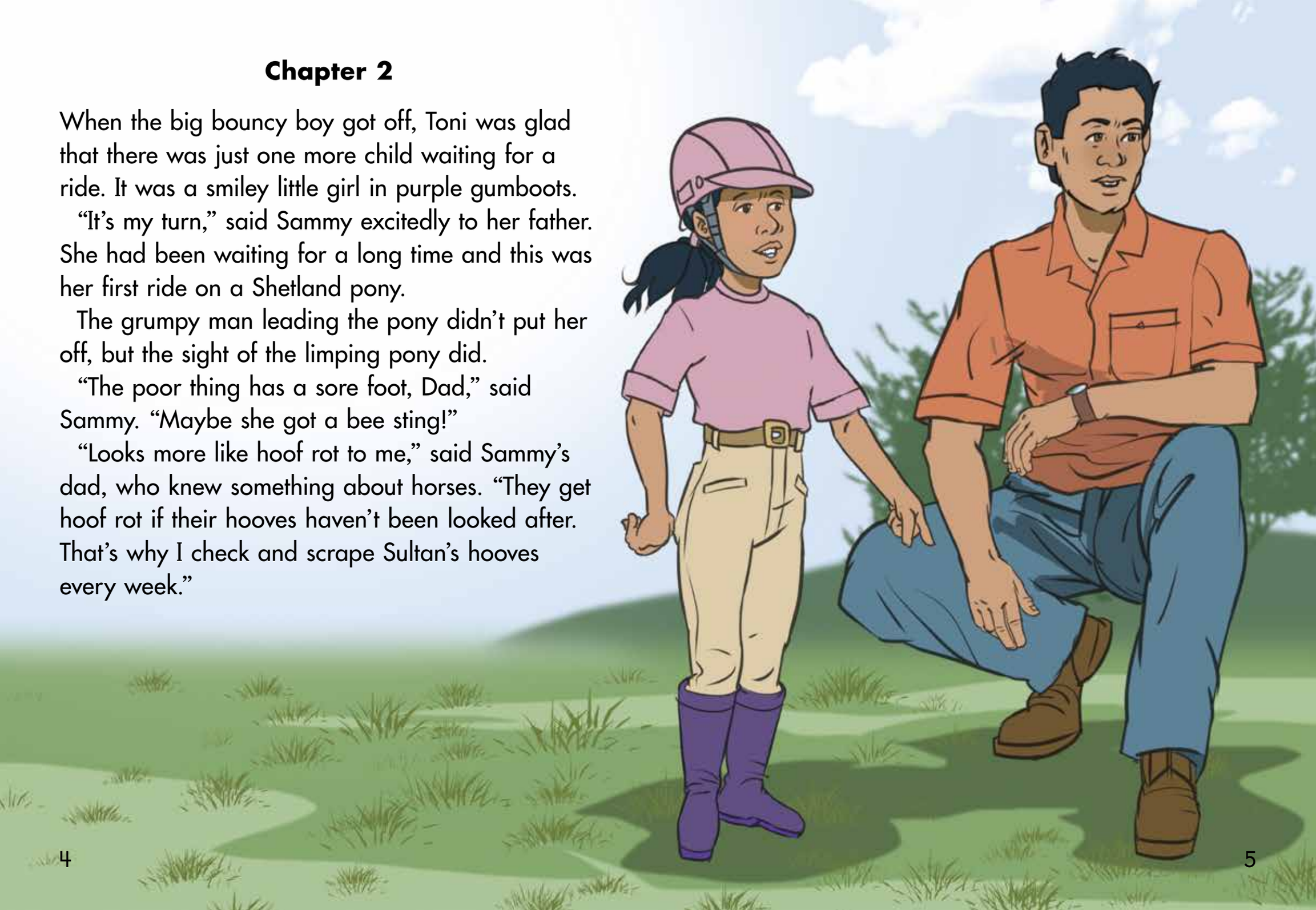
When the big bouncy boy got off, Toni was glad that there was just one more child waiting for a ride. It was a smiley little girl in purple gumboots.

"It's my turn," said Sammy excitedly to her father. She had been waiting for a long time and this was her first ride on a Shetland pony.

The grumpy man leading the pony didn't put her off, but the sight of the limping pony did.

"The poor thing has a sore foot, Dad," said Sammy. "Maybe she got a bee sting!"

"Looks more like hoof rot to me," said Sammy's dad, who knew something about horses. "They get hoof rot if their hooves haven't been looked after. That's why I check and scrape Sultan's hooves every week."



"Hurry up and get on," said the man. "I haven't got all day. It's hard enough making money with a slow pony without having to put up with slow kids as well."

"I can't ride her if she's got a sore foot," said Sammy. "That would be cruel."

"Fine by me," said the man. "I can get out of here early."

Sammy felt sorry for the pony. She patted the pony gently on her side. Without warning the pony whinnied and pulled away.

Sammy's dad quickly moved Sammy out of the way. He was as surprised as Sammy by the pony's reaction. Then he saw the raw skin on the pony's side and he understood.

"This pony needs attention," Sammy's dad said to the man. "She's in pain and she needs a vet."

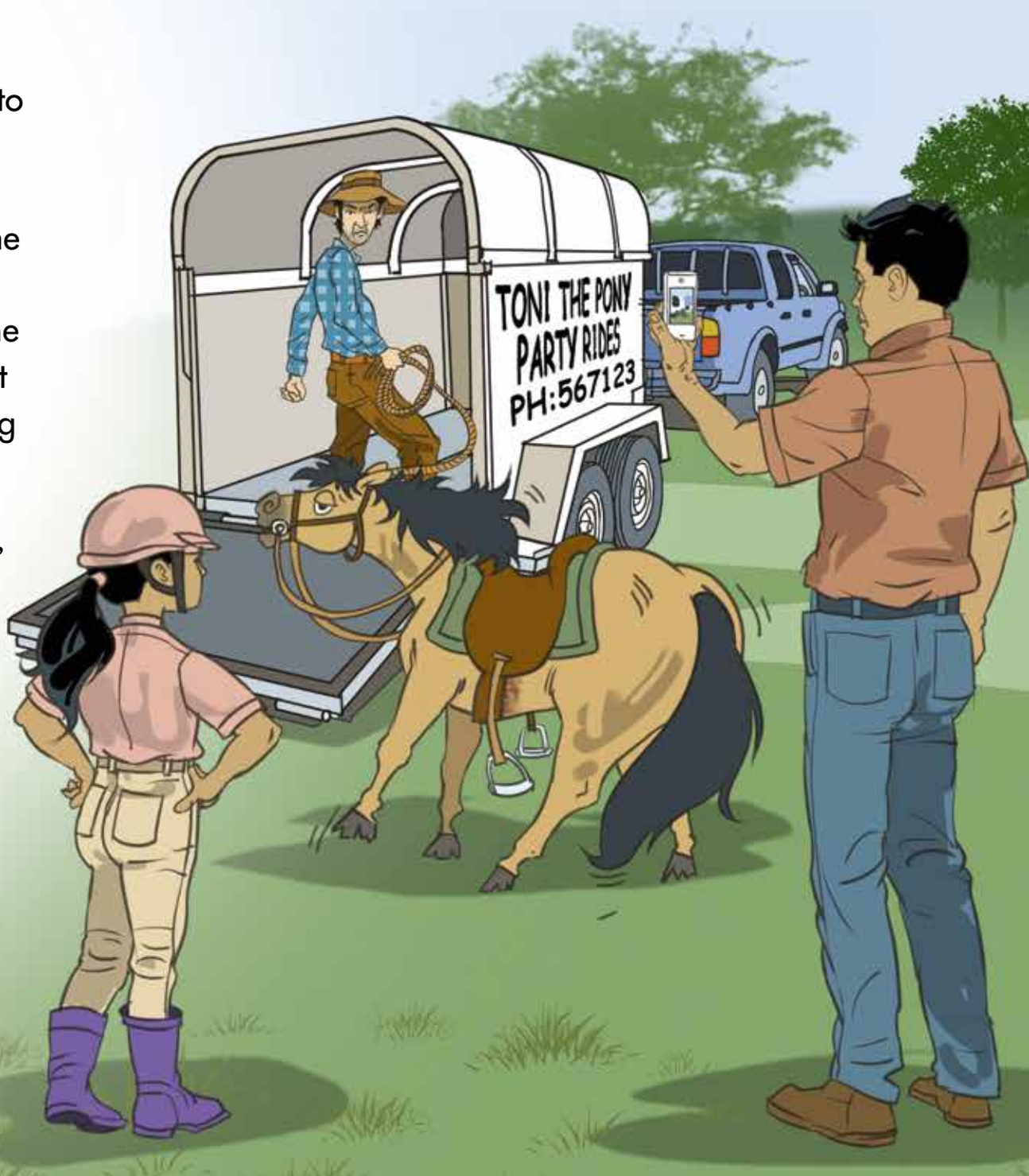
"She's not in pain, she **is** a pain," said the man. "Don't worry, she'll get plenty of attention from me if she does that again!"

Sammy and her dad watched as the man led the pony back to the horse float. He drove off without even giving the pony a drink of water or removing her saddle.

Sammy was sad and scared.

"That poor pony," she said, "What can we do?"

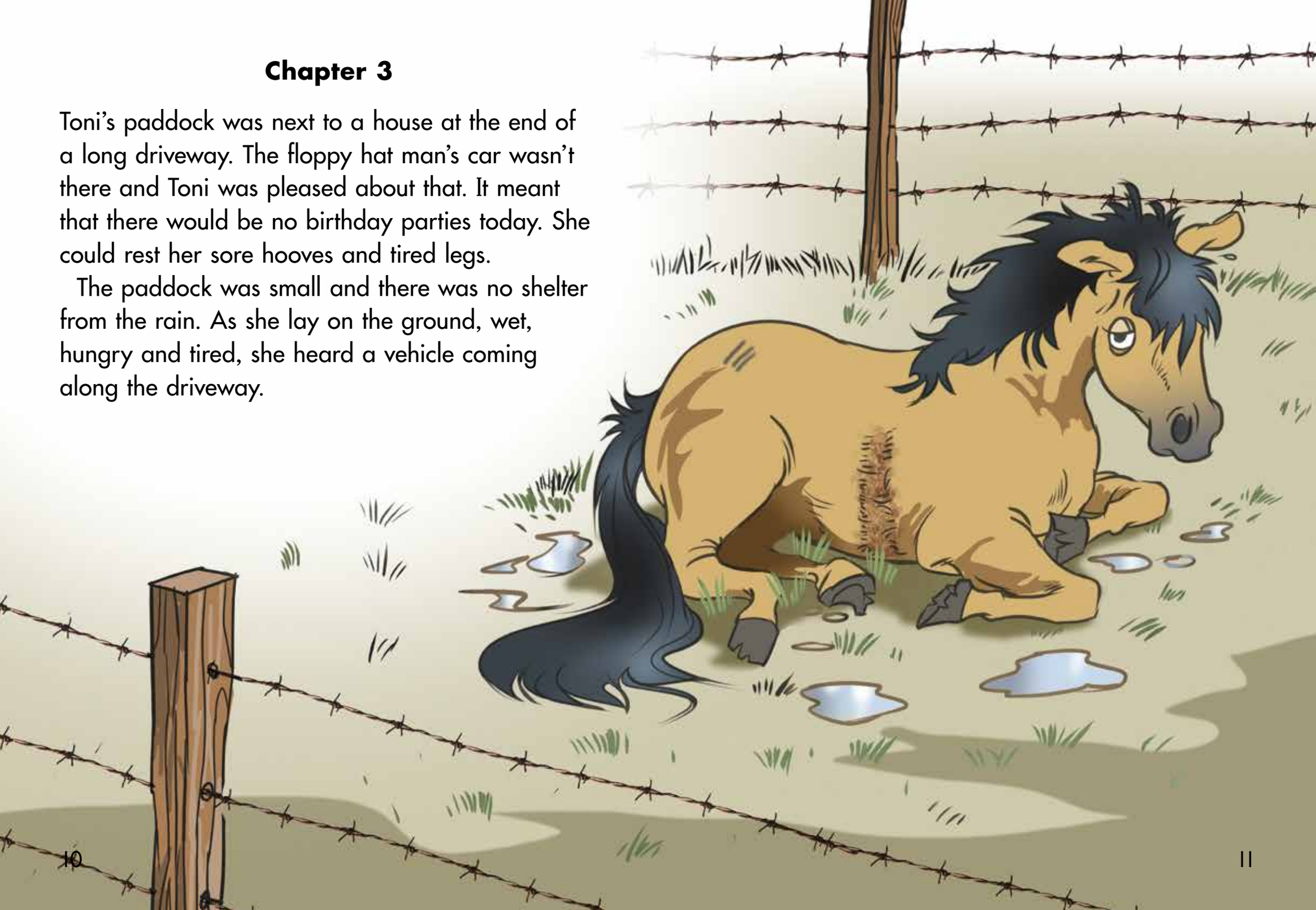
"Don't worry, I took a photo of the horse float," said Dad.



## Chapter 3

Toni's paddock was next to a house at the end of a long driveway. The floppy hat man's car wasn't there and Toni was pleased about that. It meant that there would be no birthday parties today. She could rest her sore hooves and tired legs.

The paddock was small and there was no shelter from the rain. As she lay on the ground, wet, hungry and tired, she heard a vehicle coming along the driveway.



Toni didn't recognise the driver, but she could tell by the smile and the friendly voice that it wasn't the floppy hat man. She staggered to her feet. She had never seen this person before and was surprised when she heard her name.

"Hello Toni, I'm Becky from the SPCA," said the person. "I've had a phone call from some local people who were worried about you and I'd like to help you out."

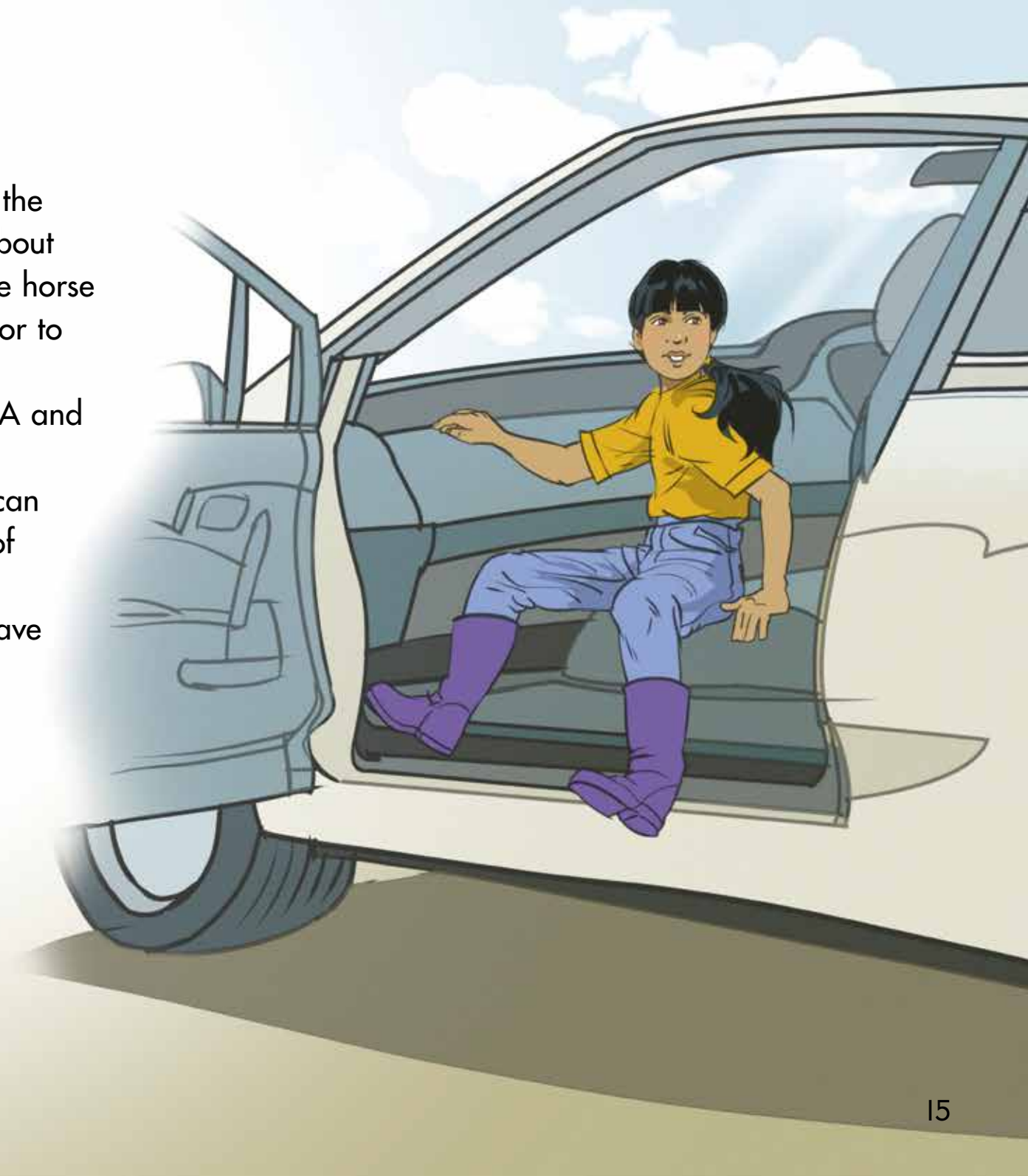
## Chapter 4

Sammy had never been to the SPCA before and she was excited. She was going to visit the Shetland pony her dad had phoned them about several months ago. The photo he sent of the horse float had made it easy for the SPCA inspector to track the pony down.

Now Toni was being cared for by the SPCA and she was waiting for a new home.

"I'm wearing my purple gumboots so she can recognise me," said Sammy as she got out of the car.

"Good," said Dad, "I thought you might have trouble recognising her."

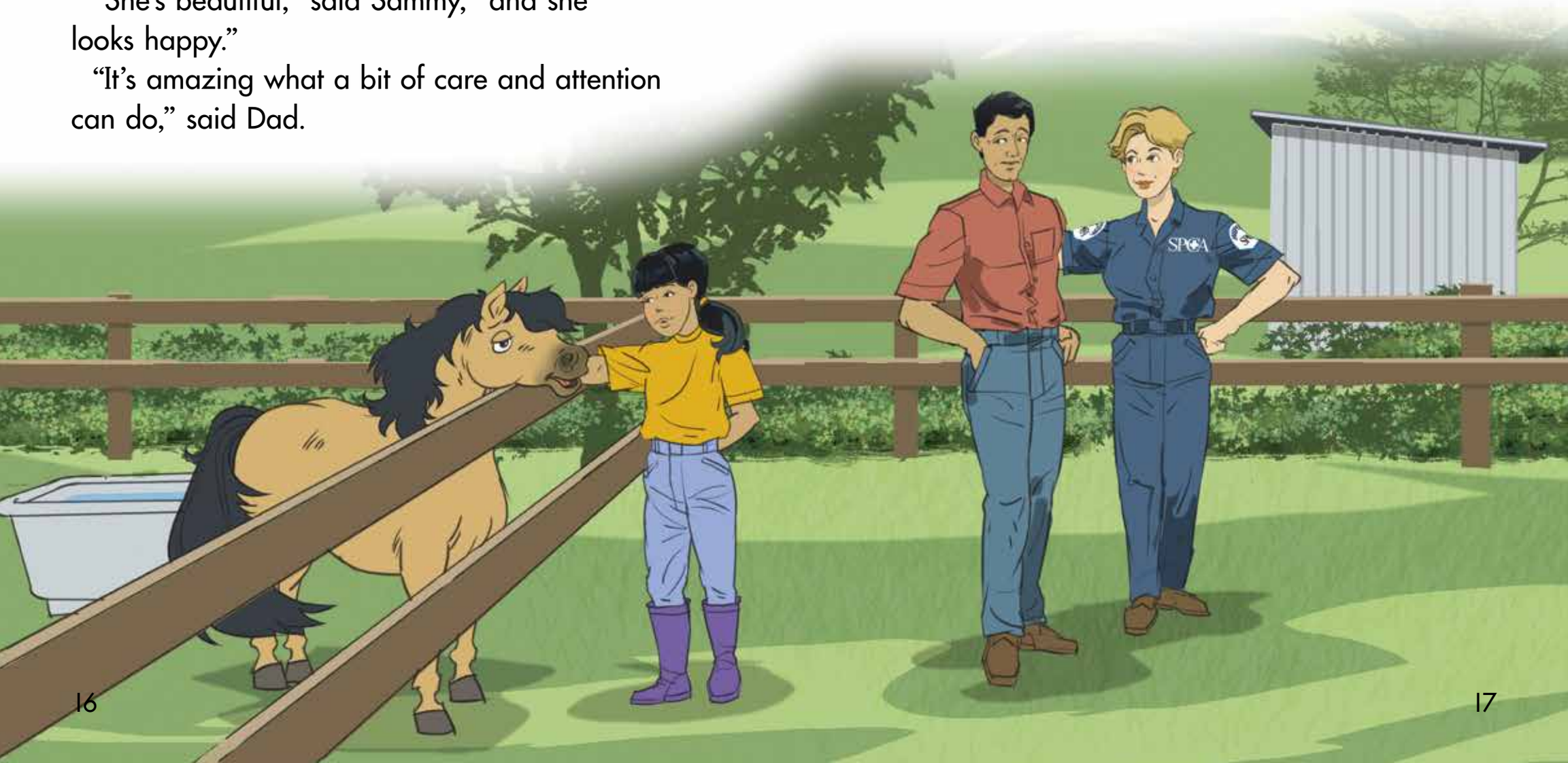


Dad was right. As they followed Becky to the paddock, Sammy was surprised at how different Toni looked. Her coat was clean and shiny, her limp was gone, the raw patch on her side had healed and she had a sparkle in her eyes that Sammy hadn't seen before.

"She's beautiful," said Sammy, "and she looks happy."

"It's amazing what a bit of care and attention can do," said Dad.

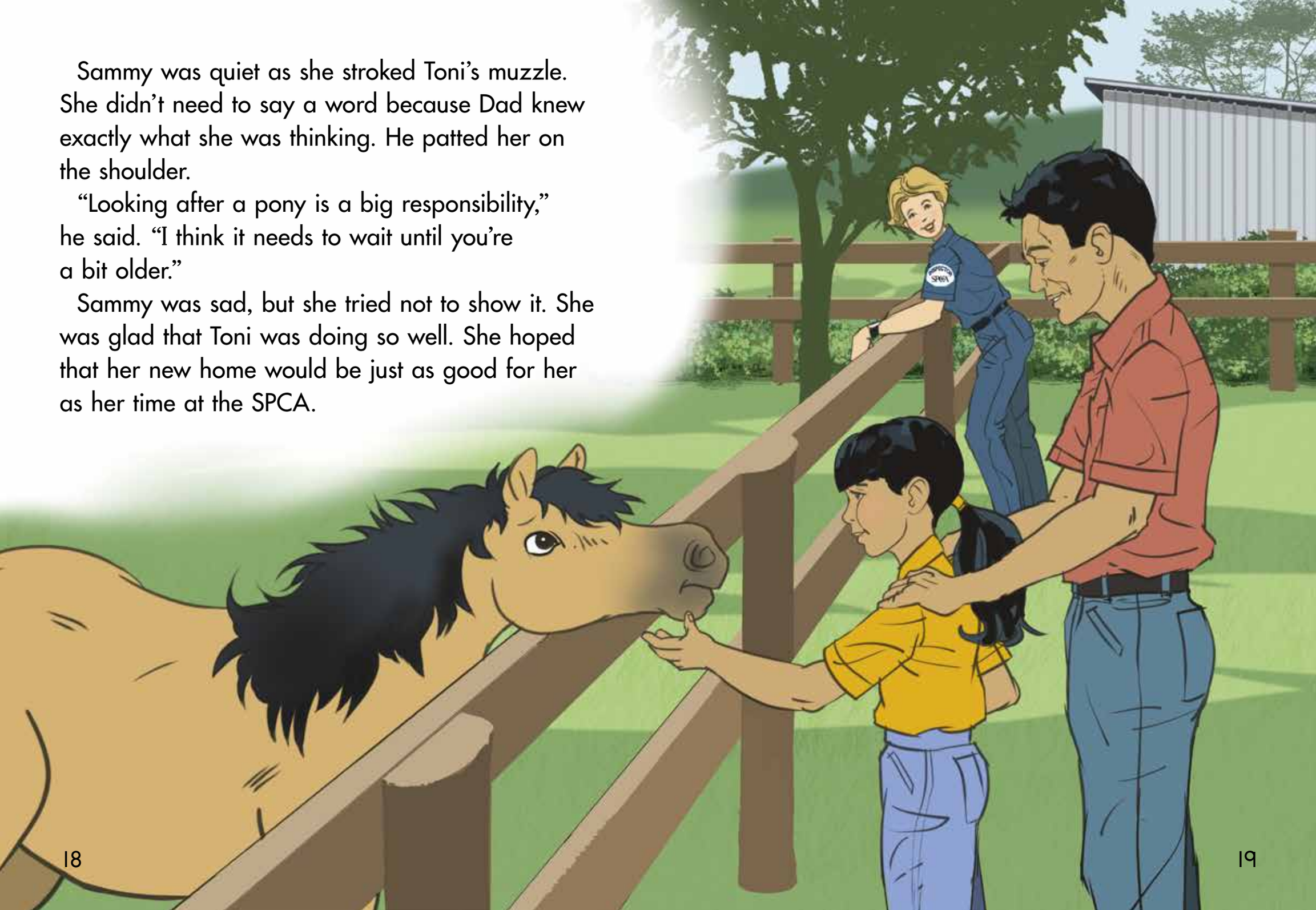
"We clipped her hooves and treated the hoof rot," said Becky. "She now has plenty of clean water, good food and some shelter. Her teeth were bothering her, but the vet has sorted them out as well. She looks like a new pony. All she needs now is a good home."



Sammy was quiet as she stroked Toni's muzzle. She didn't need to say a word because Dad knew exactly what she was thinking. He patted her on the shoulder.

"Looking after a pony is a big responsibility," he said. "I think it needs to wait until you're a bit older."

Sammy was sad, but she tried not to show it. She was glad that Toni was doing so well. She hoped that her new home would be just as good for her as her time at the SPCA.



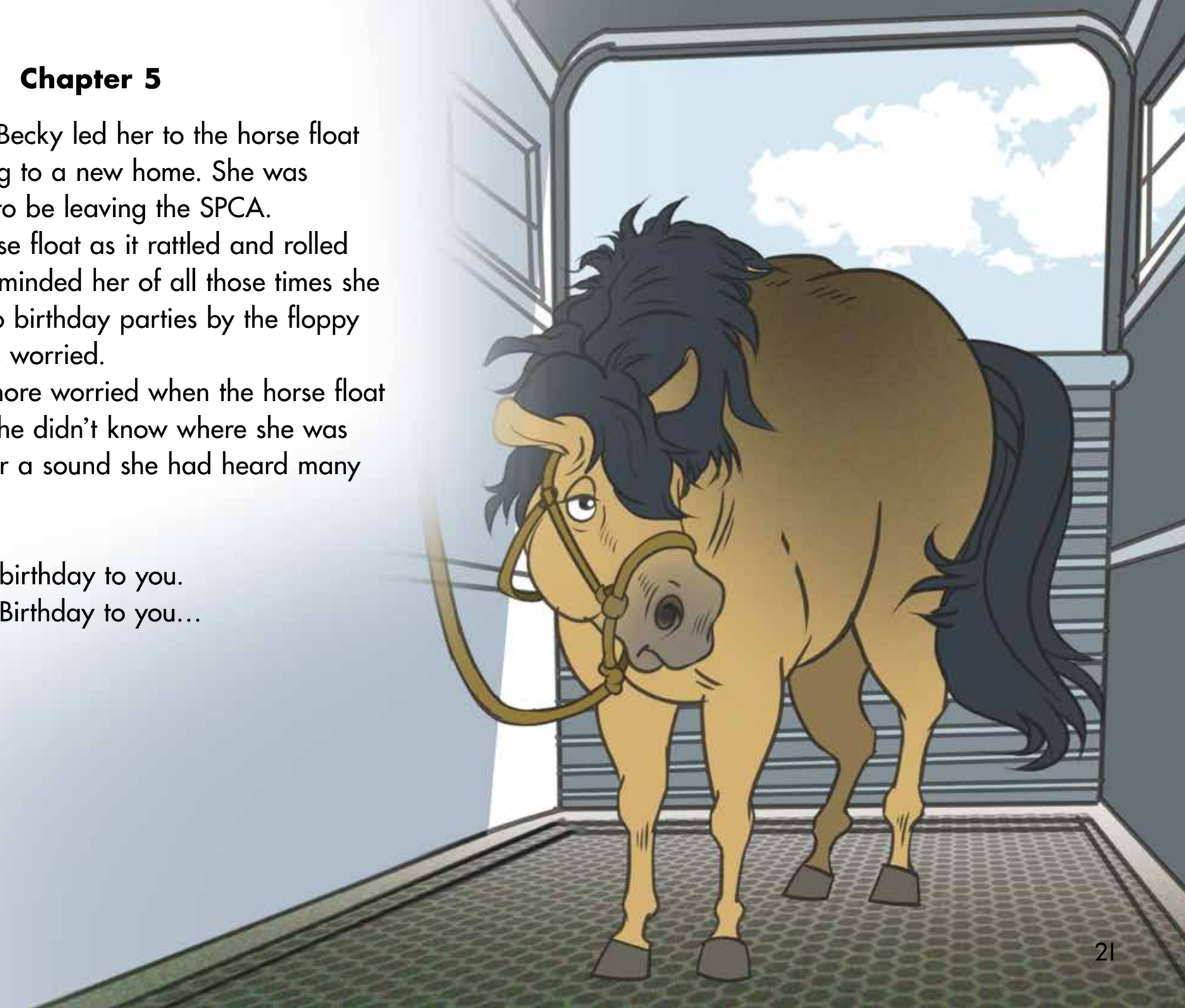
## Chapter 5

Toni could tell as Becky led her to the horse float that she was going to a new home. She was nervous and sad to be leaving the SPCA.

Being in the horse float as it rattled and rolled along the road reminded her of all those times she had been taken to birthday parties by the floppy hat man. She was worried.

Toni was even more worried when the horse float came to a stop. She didn't know where she was but she could hear a sound she had heard many times before.

Happy birthday to you.
Happy Birthday to you…



As Toni was led down the horse float ramp she saw the little girl in the purple gumboots. Sammy was as surprised as Toni was, although her friends seemed to know what was going on.

"Surprise!" they said.

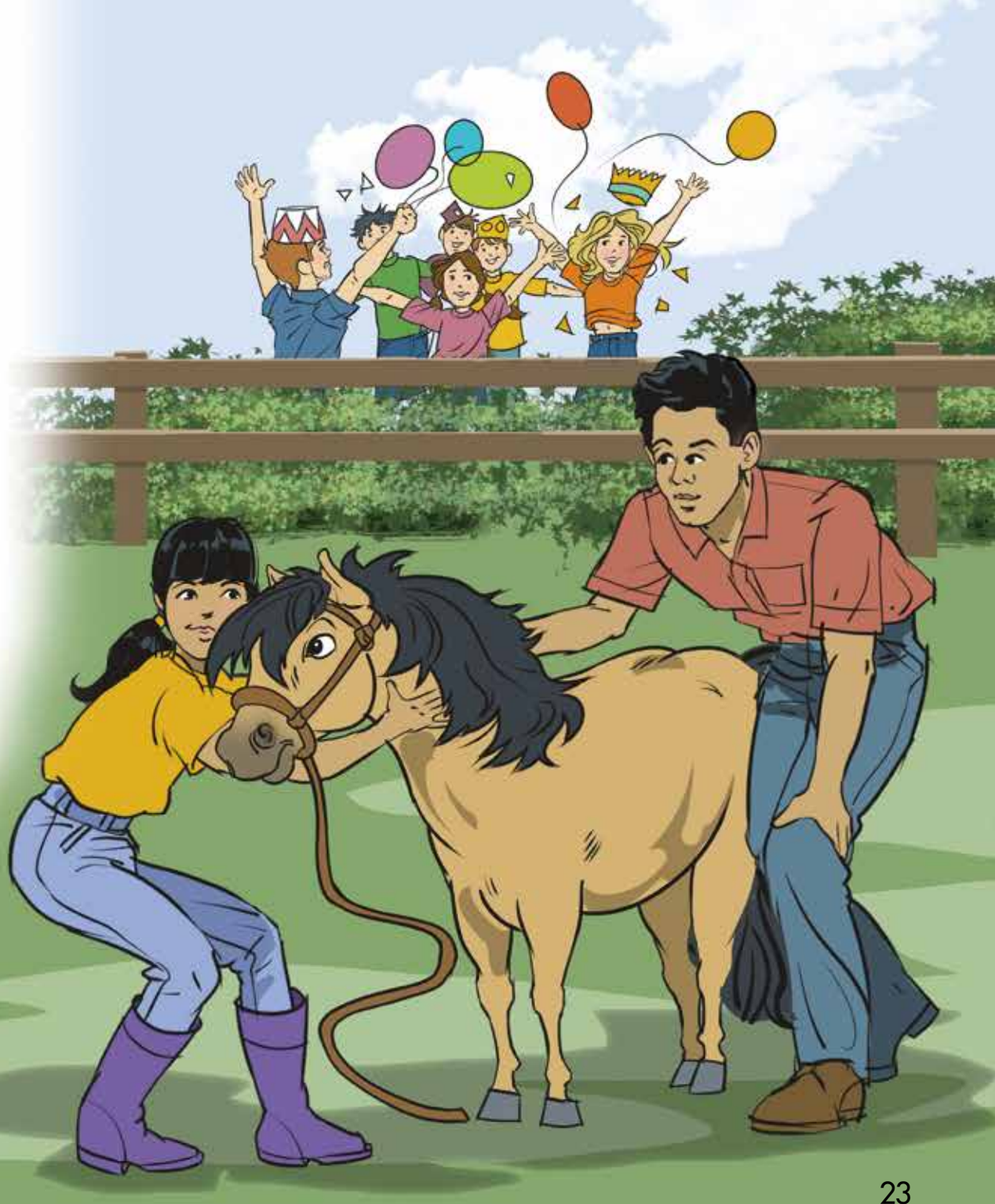
Sammy walked over to Toni and hugged her.

"Dad, does this mean that Toni is my pony?" she asked.

"That's right," said Dad, "as long as you take good care of her. She can share the top paddock with Sultan and there's room for another stable in the barn."

"But yesterday you said I would have to wait till I was a bit older."

"That's right," laughed Dad, "but yesterday you were a year younger."



# Care of Ponies

- Ponies need care and attention from people, and they usually enjoy it. They do need time to build trust though.
- Ponies need to be kept in a well-fenced paddock with fresh grass, fresh water and lots of shade and protection from the wind. They also need plenty of hay and a rack to keep it in so it doesn't get trodden into the ground.
- Ponies like to be groomed. This helps to remove dirt and dust, helps with circulation and removes dry, dead skin. Some ponies like to be hosed down in summer when it is really hot. In winter, they may need a blanket for protection from the cold.
- Ponies can snooze standing up, but they still need to lie down to rest and sleep some of the time.
- Ponies need their teeth checked regularly because their teeth are always growing!

**Visit kids.spcaeducation.org.nz to learn more about caring for ponies**