

National Steinbeck Center's Young Authors Contest 2008 Jody Award, second place

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To Mr. Carl Tiflin:

As recent events have shown, the pony that you had so generously purchased for Jody's use and enjoyment died. Jody was crushed by the sudden extinguishment of his care of Gabilan. The bond forged between Jody and his pony was strong, and Jody's responsibility had grown, because of the pony's entrance into his life. All in all, I believe that, because of the things stated above, Jody should have a replacement horse for the pony he lost.

Jody Tiflin was like any other boy; getting dirty, playing pranks, and going to school. As relayed in the story, or "The Gift", "Jody started his journey. He filled his pockets with little pieces of white quartz that lay in the road, and every so often he took a shot at a bird or at some rabbit that had stayed sunning itself in the road too long." Then, Gabilan came, shooting across the sky like a meteor, making everything clear and worthwhile. Suddenly, something was more important than free time and playing. Jody picked up all of the new responsibilities happily. He took care of Gabilan so carefully and with a joy that could be seen. He cared about the pony. In a lot of ways, during that brief time Jody cared for Gabilan, he crossed over from a child to a more mature person. You only cross that bridge once, and I think Gabilan helped him.

Through out the time that Gabilan was in Jody's care and possession, the pony was well looked after. As said in the story, "Jody curried and brushed until a pile of dead hair lay

in the stall and until the pony's coat had taken on a deep red shine." Jody's care of Gabilan was thorough and concise, never forgetting to do even the most minute things. Even when the pony got sick; even when it was fairly obvious that Gabilan may not recover, Jody stuck with the young horse, always caring for him. When the buzzard started to bear down on the newly dead pony, Jody fought for Gabilan with a fervor so strong he killed the buzzard. That showed true love for the pony, and a dedication so strong no one could have done a better job. Could you possibly refuse giving a boy with so much dedication and willingness to work hard the chance to care for another pony?

Through no fault of his own, except entrusting his job of caring for Gabilan to Billy Buck, Jody had no hand in Gabilan's death. As you well know, Jody was constantly at the pony's side, trying to help the dying animal. Jody, with Billy's help, tried everything to save Gabilan. There was nothing else Jody could have done. The only thing Jody could have done to prevent Gabilan's death is not having trusted Billy Buck, but instead gone with his instincts. Jody had no reason to not trust Billy, and so he tried his best to save the pony, and that is all you can ask for.

I am well aware of the places where fault could fall, one being Jody. If Jody had gone with his instincts and not left Gabilan out, and not shouldered the care of his pony to Billy, the pony may not have gotten sick and died. But, all in all, everyone shares the blame of Gabilan's demise, just as no one person could really be blamed. Jody's biggest fault was trusting a grown up who is usually right. How could you possibly blame him for that, and why should Jody have to suffer? It is not right.

Jody needs this. He needs something to love and care for, something to fill the hole left behind after the pony's departure. Jody would do a fantastic job, and would put just as much effort into a new horse as he did the old one. He tried his best, worked really hard, and grew into a more responsible person. He deserves a new horse. Please consider and look at everything.

Sincerely,
Katharine Hargrave