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Riley Arrives

‘Nick! Nick!’

Nick looked past the corral fence to where his mum called to him from the Jeep.

‘Hurry up! Your father’s waiting for you. You’ve got a lot of fence to mend’, she called.

‘Okay!’ he shouted. He waved at her. She waved back and drove away down the dirt road.

FIREWATCH

Dust billowed after the Jeep. The hot, dry summer had already baked Wells Valley to a dusty brown. Even the creek just barely trickled through the valley.

Nick threw the saddle over his horse, Cab. ‘A lot of fence to mend’, he grumbled aloud. He buckled the girth under Cab. ‘Summer’s almost more work than school!’ he said to her.

Nick patted her neck. ‘Yeah, Cab’, he said. ‘You don’t know how lucky you are to be a horse. No mending fences for you. And you don’t have to put up with Riley Preston all summer, either’. Nick frowned.

Riley’s grandparents owned the next farm over. But Riley was a city kid. That wasn’t the problem, though. Other city kids visited relatives in the valley all the time. They were all fine. It was just Riley who wasn’t.

When Riley’s parents couldn’t handle him, they’d send him to his grandparents. That was most of the last two summers. And Riley was due to arrive today. The rest of Nick’s summer would be ruined for sure.

Nick wondered what it would be like to have your parents not want you around. He shook his head. Well, he complained about some of his parents’ rules and the chores he had to do. But he’d hate to get sent away. And by his own parents too.

Cab shifted her weight. She set a hoof down near Nick’s boot.

‘Whoa, girl’, Nick said, quickly stepping out of the way. ‘Watch where you’re stepping, will ya?’ He grinned.