



Sorrel & Storm's Story

Written by Sorrel Griffiths and Vicki Jayne Yates

When I (Vicki) met Storm he was 11 years old. A stunning 17.2hh old grey gelding. Sorrel purchased him knowing he had a troubled past. She asked me to help her with Storm.

Here we want to share Storm and Sorrel's inspiring story.

Storm was advertised as a sold as seen project from the field. The seller said he was sold to her as a happy hack. However she discovered he was highly anxious.

He had bolted and the experience scared her. She sent Storm for retraining with a local professional who reported Storm was difficult but manageable. However the problem still persisted and the owner decided she wasn't the person for him.

Sorrel immediately felt she needed take Storm. She recalls she did an unadvised thing purchasing him from a field on the first viewing.

Sorrel's aim was to help Storm. "I got a vet to check Storm over. Started Storm just like a youngster. He did everything I asked lunging, long reining, he was perfect in hand.

However he would shake when tack was put on. A local instructor told me if he didn't want it on, he wouldn't stand still. Naively I continued. I did manage to ride him but he was extremely tense.

One day he exploded, he bolted, threw himself at the arena walls and bronzed until I was on the floor. The fall put me out of action with a cracked coccyx.

The instructor carried on the work. Her methods were harsh including using a gum line. To an extent Storm appeared ride-able. However he seemed unhappy. I also felt sad and didn't know why.

Storm threw the instructor off, it was another nasty fall. The instructor blamed me for my dangerous horse. I decided to leave the yard, just to have some time out."

Sorrel decided a new approach and a fresh start were needed. "I was at my wits end. I didn't know what to do. Why was Storm so terrified of me riding him? Why suddenly explode when by nature he is a gentle calm horse? I was on the verge of parting with Storm to a rescue or as a companion. I just couldn't let him go. It was on recommendation from a friend, who told me Vicki had helped her tremendously, I approached Vicki." states Sorrel.

Vicki recalls "I had seen Storm on the livery yard where one of my other clients kept her horse. I could see he was deeply troubled and emotionally shut down. He communicated to me he wanted help. I knew from watching him he would allow things he hated to be done, like saddling up. I didn't like what I saw one bit. However I was not invited for my opinion or involved professionally so I couldn't stop the chain of events. The trainer used a gum line / buck stop on him. I could sense trouble ahead, big time trouble. I left that day sick to my stomach with a very heavy heart. All I could do was hope one day I could help him."

"The first session with Storm and Sorrel was an assessment. He needed help physically and mentally.

He wasn't able to stand or move correctly, he was physically uncomfortable. I suggested to Sorrel she made an appointment with Kathryn Welland from Oaklands Physiotherapy.

Mentally and emotionally Storm wasn't in great shape either. When he was troubled Storm would disappear inwards. This shutting down was extreme. I had witnessed how he allowed things he hated to be done, but it didn't diminish his anguish, anxiety and fear. It was simmering away inside. He became a primed unexploded bomb."

"Sorrel and I blended Kathryn's physiotherapy with gentle horsemanship groundwork to build up Storm physically, mentally and emotionally. His trust and bond with Sorrel grew.

Sorrel learnt to read Storm and see the very early warning signs of what troubled him. The key was to encourage him not to disappear inwards. To encourage him to communicate to Sorrel, so she could help him. Gradually he learnt Sorrel would listen, that she understood, things would be ok, there is nothing to fear and it would be fun.

We used positive reinforcement to help Storm with all the things that troubled him. Rewarding even the smallest try. In the early days a huge try from Storm was not disappearing inwards, for this was his mental place of safety. Asking a horse to face what emotionally troubles them is a huge ask.

It was clear that Storm had a huge heart and he was willing to try. Rewarding this was essential in moving Storm forward, to help him gain the courage to face his fears. To think, to process and to realise he had nothing to fear."



Sorrel concludes "Storm is an amazing animal. The work with Vicki and Kathryn, saw him change, he gained confidence and started enjoying his work.

I hadn't known that he was freezing up like a zombie through anxiety and fear. With help I learnt to read his signals. We helped Storm overcome his anxiety.

I could tack him up with his permission. He learnt to stand by the mounting block while I leaned on his back and all so relaxed. It was like another horse!



Storm then gave me permission to ride him. He stays relaxed. I can mount and riding is now two way communication, I listen to his signals whether he wants to stop or walk. We gradually warm up and can do anything! I never thought I'd be able to ride him and him be happy. I get emotional every time.



I feel privileged I know how much he trusts me. Storm still has the occasional off day but he lets me know outwardly instead of freezing up. I have a range of skills and tactics so I can adapt the work. I'm so happy that he's happy. I don't know what would have happened to us if it wasn't for Vicki's understanding approach."

Storm and Sorrel's story was published in Horsemanship Magazine. You can read the article for FREE along with lots of other published articles and resources. My gift with love.

To access these FREE gifts here is the link
<https://www.vickijayneyates.co.uk/free-resources-a-gift-with-love>