

Shelby Parker

Cary, IL

Promises

She was never my dream horse, or the horse I thought I would end up with, but she was what saved me.

Bindi came into my life just like any other horse. The barn I rode at was a sale barn so new horses were always coming and going. Even though she was a flashy bay paint with an incredible show background, Bindi remained in the shadow of the other horses.

My life outside of the barn took a turn for the worst shortly after Bindi came in. My 12 week old puppy had turned out to be a little too much to handle for our family. He went through mood swings that varied from extremely nice to dangerously vicious. My parents had talked about getting rid of him. I couldn't even think about doing that to him. But then he started to become more vicious and tried to attack a lot more people. I was always nervous about taking him out. Eventually I knew I solely would have to make the decision. Even though it hurt me, I knew he would be better off with our dog trainer because she knew how to control him. After he left, I became seriously depressed.

My life felt out of control and I felt like everyone else was steering me to my future. I could only escape at the barn. It was like a safe haven that let me feel like I was in control again. My parents saw the change in me every time I came home from the barn. Soon they made the decision to buy a horse for me.

The best part about riding at a sale barn is there is never a limit to one's options of horses. I tried many different horses but none of them were ever more than a good ride.

Then Bindi came up. She was a completely different horse then when she came in. They had taken her to a show to test her talent and she utterly failed. She had reared and freaked out with one of the best trainers. It was a complete mystery why she did any of it as well.

“I’m gonna tell it to you straight,” she said, “That mare isn’t what she should be. She is horseshow sour. Some horses shown as young as her develop it after a while when they are allowed to get away with bad habits.”

“Is there any way to get over it?” I asked.

“There’s only one way to figure that out. Give it a chance,” she replied. Then she walked off.

When I rode her, I could tell there was a certain hesitation in her gaits. It didn’t affect her completely but you could tell it was there. She had the smoothest gaits of any of the horses I had ridden. Instantly I felt a connection under saddle. After I got off, I had decided that she was the horse for me. I had gone against all of the advice people had given me. In my heart though, I knew we were supposed to be together. I promised her that I would try to fix her and help her through it all.

The first months I owned Bindi, she was a major pain in my butt. She would try to test me at every opportunity. It was a constant battle of who was in charge and usually Bindi would win. During those months, I didn’t feel like we had accomplished much at all. There were definitely a lot of tears, sweat, and eating dirt at that time. Sometimes I wondered if I made the right choice. I didn’t feel qualified enough to ride her, let alone retrain her.

Our test of how our training was going came up at a schooling show at my barn.

Since we are a bigger barn, there are always a lot of students and spectators. I was really nervous that we weren't ready. I had only owned her for six months. The morning of the show, I was sick to my stomach. I usually didn't get nervous for the schooling shows because I knew that they were just for fun. But I knew this was our test and we could totally end up failing. I broke down as soon as we got to the barn. I feared we would prove everyone right and disappoint the handful of people who believed in us.

So I sat in Bindi's stall for a while going through the past six months in my head. We steadily had gotten better. Bindi came over and started snuffling me for a treat. I laughed. To me it was her way of saying she thought we could do it. So I got up and brushed myself off and started to get ready for our first class.

We went through the show with ease and I was definitely surprised. We placed in western pleasure, egg & spoon, flags, costume, and poles. The greatest thing though was that she didn't even try to freak out at all. She was anxious in western pleasure but that's as far as she took it. At the end of the show, we even got the High Point award for our division. I could not have been prouder of Bindi.

Since that show we have been able to compete in bigger competitions. Bindi still has issues that we have to work out but with each show we get better. I know that eventually we will be able to go onto national shows. I have goals for us and I know that we will be able to reach them.

I realized that Bindi and I needed each other. We were both broken when we met and were kind of lost in life. But we beat the odds and made something of ourselves. So I did end up keeping my promise and so did she.