



Mishka the Rottweiler saves the day!

By Diane Richardson & Sallie Shibley



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Riasha von den Dreibergeren - Mishka

Mishka (Riasha von den Dreibergeren) is an almost four-year-old Rottweiler owned by my friend Sallie. Below in Sallie's words is the harrowing story of how Mishka saved her life when a horseback ride went terribly wrong.

Diane

On December 3, 2013, I headed out for what I thought would be a regular routine trail ride—just me, my horse Maverick, and my dog Mishka.

The weather was so nice for a ride this day. All too soon, I knew our rides would be on harder, colder ground. Maverick, my horse, would occasionally startle at a chipmunk or squirrel or just a leaf blowing. This afternoon, though, it would be different. His startle turned into the all-out dead run of a runaway horse. I tried to regain control as we were coming upon the corner. The next thing I knew I was off the side of the saddle and in line with a tree. I hit the tree with the side of my face, and somehow managed to stay in the saddle. The rest of what happened has yet to come back to me fully. I have a vague memory of my dog Mishka barking, and thinking, "You're not helping, girl."

About six hours later, I woke to find myself in the hospital. I had no recollection of how I got there, or why I was there. I was very confused and very sick, with vomiting and full body tremors.

Little by little, it came back to me. My horse had spooked. I was somehow sideways in the saddle, and there's the tree. Nothing

else would come to me. I was immediately distressed—where's Mishka? My husband reassured me that I had put Mishka away. I had? What about Maverick—where is he? My husband again reassured me, "Oh, I'm sure you took care of him before you came and got me."

I just could not accept that I had put Mishka in the house, nor could I believe I had taken care of the horse. The last memory I had was of hitting the tree. Why was I sideways? That thought kept crossing my mind.

Hubby finally went home to check things out and later he came back to the hospital to inform me that Mishka was in the house. I had taken her gear (collar and orange hunting vest) off her. Maverick was in his stall and my saddle and equipment were on the floor in the aisleway of the barn.

He also informed me that the Chicago screw that held the bridle together had broken, which means when it broke, the bit was ripped through and out of the horse's mouth. Hence, me ending up sideways in the saddle, like in a tug of war, and someone lets go.

When I returned home the following day, I could see where the horse and I had come out of the woods. His tracks were clear, and alongside and all around his tracks were Mishka's. As they went down the drive towards the barn, you could see several times where Maverick started to pick up speed again. Then you'd see Mishka's paw prints directly in front of his, as if she was saying "slow down." Each time where Maverick appeared to be turning away from going back to the barn, there were Mishka's prints again, herding him and saying "NO, go back."

After walking along these tracks, I realized just how far out in the woods we had been and that we were heading away from home when it happened. Then the realization came to me that Mishka's paw prints were in front of Maverick's, stopping him on his runaway. It was Mishka's prints that followed and herded Maverick back to the barn. At the barn is where you could see my prints when I dismounted. I know my girl Mishka saved my life that day, and in doing so, she put herself in serious danger of being trampled by Maverick (a full sized horse) in an effort to stop him and turn him home. I also believe it was her barking that kept me conscious enough to hold on and get home without falling off.

I suffered a concussion as well as a break to my cheekbone, pressing it in and causing a "buckle break" on the side near the ear, and three line fractures from the break to the eye socket, one to the nasal cavity, and one to the jawline. I owe my life to my girl Mishka.

*Sallie Shibley
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