

Erin Lunteigen was looking for a horse. She was already frustrated, having tried at least 30 horses in a two hour radius.



When she saw an advertisement posted for a mare, she booked an appointment the very next day. Erin and her trainers drove into the Okotoks farm and she remembers seeing Sisha. “There stood before me a beautiful and fiery red chestnut Canadian Warmblood mare,” Erin says. “I could barely take my eyes off of her, she was breathtaking, with a face as kind as an innocent child's. Secretly inside I was jumping up and down and knew she was the one. Within five minutes of the drive home my two trainers and I have decided that we would purchase this lovely mare.”

Erin purchased Sisha, a Canadian Warmblood in May 2010 from Herman Amberger. The last two and a half years have been a roller coaster of highs and lows.

Sisha was bred and trained by Dagmar Fortmuller, an Equine Canada Level 3 dressage coach, in Priddis, Alberta. Born in 2003, Sisha was sired by a Trakehner, Sir Eric, and out of a Thoroughbred, Doc's Irish.

Dagmar remembers having Sisha at a Dressage show and the young mare took a nap in her stall and proceeded to make very loud groaning noises. “When we came back for night check, someone had called the vet, concerned she was colicking,” remembers Dagmar, “but she was only sleeping and she groans and sounds like she is dying when sleeping. The vet couldn't diagnose anything!”

It is this quirky mare that Erin fell in love with.



Immediately after purchasing Sisha, Erin began to train her for Hunter. Erin says, “Sisha had a niche for jumping, she was good at it, and quite obviously enjoyed it. She powered forward to each and every jump with heart and determination.”

They had several successes, before everything came to a screeching halt in February 2011.

“One of the girls at the barn found Sisha out in the pasture standing in the snow bleeding badly from her right hind foot. They brought her into the barn where the bleeding became excessive and the injury became swollen. Sisha could barely walk the pain was so bad,” says Erin.

Months and many, many, vet visits later Sisha's condition had improved but not to the extent that she was able to be ridden consistently and she was still in pain. Erin moved Sisha to Sunrise Meadows, where Sadie Turko and Dr. Schaal of Okotoks Veterinary Clinic took over her care. Since an abscess had formed within the injury, Sisha's foot needed to be cast and her jumping career looked even bleaker.

However, everyone rallied around Sisha and Erin. Farriers, to Reiki therapists, massage therapists, coaches, trainers and vets all worked to get this mare back on track.

Six months of stall rest can make for a grouchy and impatient horse, so Erin has had to work on her confidence to be able to manage Sisha. “The Sisha that she had known before the injury was not the Sisha she was now working with,” notes Erin’s coach, Sadie. “This caused Erin to become over cautious when riding or handling Sisha.”

Today, Sisha is completely healed, Erin is a more confident rider, and they are preparing for the 2013 show season.

“Sisha has had a tough and long journey, but she had allowed many professionals in our province to come together for the greater good, and work with each other to



and prove their strengths when helping her recover to the horse she is now,” Erin says.

“Often equestrian professionals will stop me and say ‘You own Sisha?’ and I will get to hear a special story about how my mare contributed to their memory or career. It’s not often that a horse such as Sisha, is recognized, not for winning red ribbons consistently but for bringing together the equestrian community and proving how great Alberta is and the horse professionals that we have here.”