



8.30 on Monday morning

Hi, Millie here! It feels strange to be starting a Pony Camp Diary of my own. The reason I'm writing one is that, for this week only, I'm going to be a Pony Camp girl! As well as taking part in the lessons and gymkhana, I'm joining in all the lectures and yard work. It was Mum's idea. She's arranged for me to try out a new pony, and if it works out they'll buy him for me. She thinks if I take part in all the activities, we'll get a chance to really *bond*.

Yeah, right!

As if I could bond with anyone but my lovely Tally! We're a team, him and me.





The problem is, Mum's convinced that my gorgeous cheeky chops is too small for me. I've tried and tried to tell her he isn't, but she won't change her mind. She kept going on about it until she somehow persuaded me to give another pony a try.

The new pony's called Magic and he belonged to the daughter of a friend of hers. He arrived yesterday evening and we turned him out into a field with the others. He fitted in really well, making friends with Charm and Jewel straight away – after five minutes they were all grazing happily together.

But when Tally trotted up to say hello to me as usual I felt SO guilty. I know I agreed to try



out Magic (in the end!), but that doesn't mean I'm happy about it.

Magic is lovely and all that – he's an elegant bay thoroughbred cross. And you



can tell he has a good temperament. Mum says his paces are perfect, too.

But no pony could replace Tally. He's not perfect, but he's got, what's the word –



Us two have had some amazing adventures – razzing round the cross-country course, galloping on hacks and doing *loads* of jumping. True, I have been dragged through a hedge or two when he gets a little – ahem – “over-enthusiastic”, but I don't mind that.

Anyway, Mum's wrong about Tally. I'm not *that* big for him. I'm sure we could have another year together; well, six months at least – and after that we could get into driving. But Mum doesn't agree, so I'm going to have to put Operation Keep Tally into action. Not that I've got an actual *plan* yet, not really, not a decent one.

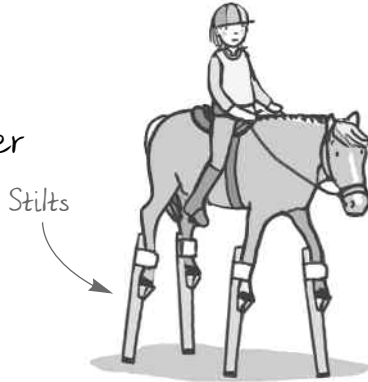




This is all I've come up with so far:

OPERATION KEEP TALLY

PLAN A
Make Tally bigger



Jodh boots
on my knees

PLAN B
Make myself smaller



PLAN C
Run away together
Probably not a good idea 'cos:

1. We'd have to sleep
in hay barns and fields,
and what if a farmer
let out an angry bull?



2. I'd miss out on Mum's roasts
with Dad's Yorkshire puddings
and



3. I suppose Mum and Dad would
miss me a bit (and my big bro James might
too, even if he is a smelly-pants who gives
me dead arms for no reason).

See, rubbish or what?!

Oh, hang on, I've thought of another one.

PLAN D

Maybe me and Tally could chain ourselves
together as a protest.

But what if I need the loo, or even
worse, what if Tally does?!

YUCK!




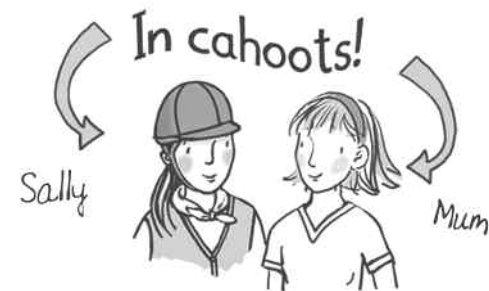
Mum's just walked past and given me a big smile. She thinks I'm getting into the spirit of things, writing in here already (I'm not *into* writing, normally). But she doesn't know what I'm really using this diary for – which is to report on Operation Keep Tally – hee hee!

Oh, gotta go, this week's girls are starting to arrive. They're all loud and lively and chattering away as usual. I SO love living here – it's like being on holiday all the time. And James has gone to an outdoor adventure camp, which makes it even better. I wonder who I'm sharing my room with this week? I hope they don't snore!

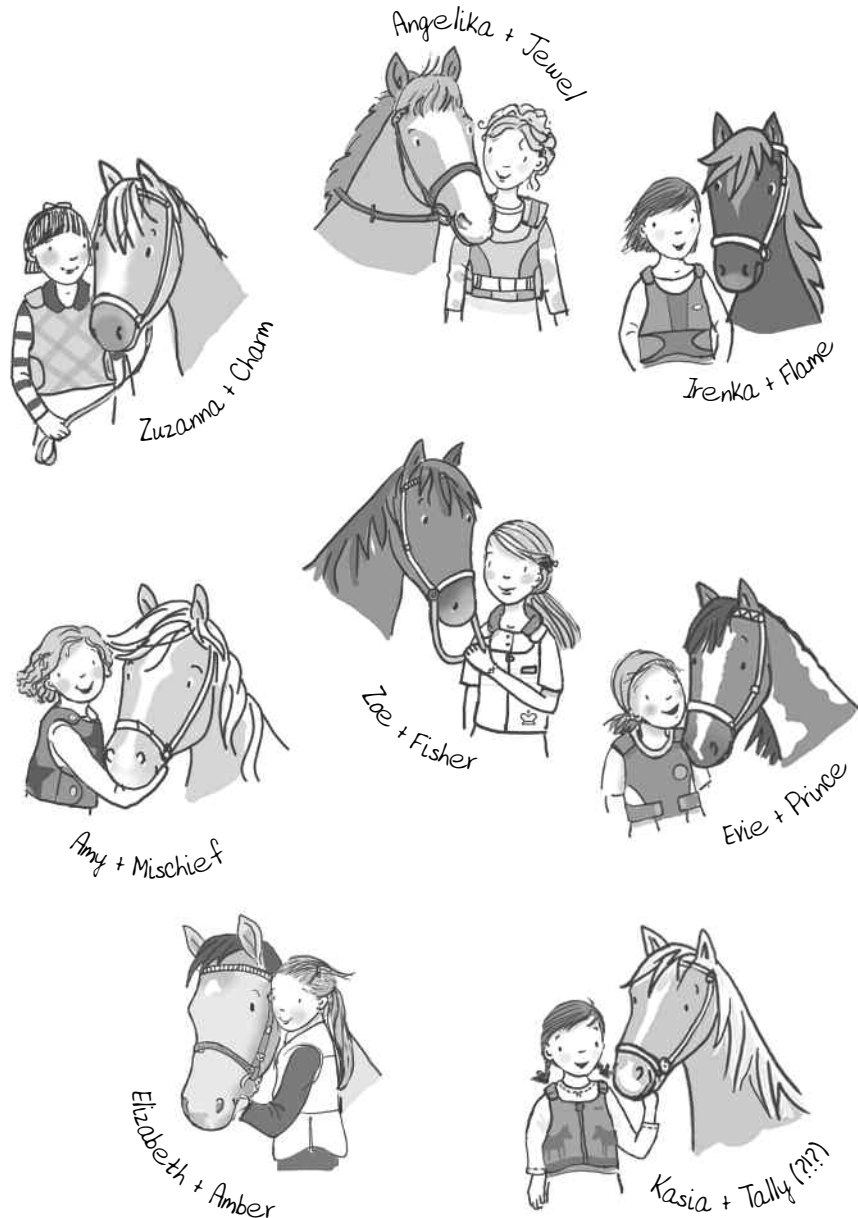


Monday after lunch,
outside on the picnic tables

Well, what a shock! You won't believe what our instructor Sally's done. She's only gone and given Tally to one of the  Pony Camp girls. Yes, as in to be her own pony for the week. OK, so I know I'm riding Magic, but it's only supposed to be a trial. Now it feels like everything's already been decided. I can't believe she's done that! I bet Mum's behind this!



I suppose I should do the same as my room-mates, Amy and Zoe, which is write down all this week's girls and ponies.



I was going to draw Kasia looking like a meanie after stealing MY pony, but I didn't 'cos:

1. She's really nice
and
2. It's not her fault she was given Tally.

Kasia (you say it Ka-sha) is Irenka's little sister, but she's sharing with Evie and Elizabeth, the two girls from Devon. That's because Irenka's two friends Angelika and Zuzanna have come too, and they're all sharing. (They're all Polish but they live in London, not Poland itself.)

I'm sharing with Zoe and Amy, who are sitting here now, writing *their* diaries. They're both 10, like me. Amy's really chatty and bubbly and Zoe's quieter and so smiley. They'd already put their stuff in my room, but we got properly chatting as we had the tour round Sunnyside. I found out that Zoe's from one bit of London (Ealing) and Amy's from another bit (North Finchley). They both go to different city riding



stables where they have to stay in the manège, so they can't wait to hack out in the open countryside.

But my excitement STOPPED when we went back to the yard and Lydia led the ponies out ready for the assessment lesson. I tried to smile when she handed me Magic's reins, but then *Tally* came out and my stomach lurched. I must have been staring in horror as she gave him to Kasia because Zoe asked me if I was OK. So I had to tell her and Amy he was my pony, but I just whispered it really quietly in case Kasia heard and it upset her. Zoe went,

"Oh, that must feel a bit funny. Are you OK about someone else riding him?"

I shrugged. "I guess it's fine," I replied. Then I got Amy talking about the ponies at her riding school to change the subject.



In the assessment lesson, Sally put me at the front, for some annoying reason. That meant I had to keep twisting around to check on Tally, which made Magic think I wanted him to *turn*, so we kept going off the track. I knew Tally was confused and upset, seeing me riding another pony, and that made me feel even worse. When he kept trying to cut the corners off, I called out, "I think he wants to catch up and see me." I hadn't meant to say that, but it just came out before I could stop myself.

POOR
Tally!

"Why?" Kasia asked, so then I had to say he was mine in front of everyone. Kasia looked a bit surprised.

"He's just being lazy, that's all," Sally told me. Then she said to Kasia, "Don't be afraid to kick on and really steer into the corners, so he can't get away with it."



Well, that put me in a grump! I mean, I think I know how my own pony feels! But I didn't say anything – Sally's a fab instructor and we get on brilliantly (usually!) so I didn't want to annoy her.

Magic's a different shape to Tally and I just couldn't seem to find a comfy position for my legs. While I was busy fiddling with my stirrups, Sally called out, "Off you go with Magic!" about five times. It took me ages to realize she meant *me*, so I held everyone up. And even worse, whenever she said "Tally" I kept thinking she *did* mean me and setting off into trot or whatever.

Then as we were changing rein across the school at E I was trying to explain to Kasia that Tally won't turn sharply unless you really get your leg on and push him round from behind. Sally called out, "Millie, I am the instructor round here, thank you very much, and Kasia is doing just fine. All the girls have to learn about their new ponies and perhaps you should do



the same with Magic, instead of worrying about other people."

How embarrassing!

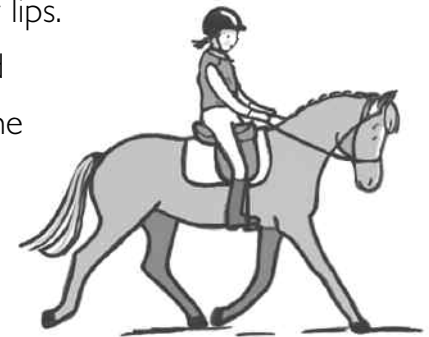


And anyway, how *could* I think about Magic when poor Tally had no idea what was going on? And he didn't even get a canter, because when Sally gave us the choice, Kasia decided to stay in trot. I couldn't help blurting out, "But we've been plodding along all lesson. Tally's desperate for a good razz round."

"Even more reason for Kasia to stay in trot!" Sally cried. "And stop interfering, Millie!"

She looked *really* annoyed with me then, so I forced myself to zip my lips.

As Tally trotted round behind Prince and Evie, he looked so miserable, and I wished I could explain to him that none of this was my idea!



stuck in trot!



Zoe decided to stay in trot too, and went round behind Amber and Elizabeth. She's got a really good seat for someone who hasn't ridden much, and I'm sure she'll be whizzing along soon enough.



CHEEKY BOY!

Amy cantered on Mischief and she was really confident, although he did cut the corner and drop into trot a couple of times, then do a big plunge when she asked for canter again. Typical of him! He's so cheeky! I think he was hoping to send her flying, but she held on and kept trying till she got him going nicely. Good for her! Me and Zoe said a big well done to Amy after the lesson, and she was really pleased with herself.

Angelika and Zuzanna are brilliant riders, and Irenka's really good too, considering she's only



been riding two years, the same as Kasia. Although she's not that experienced, she's really brave. Like, when Flame decided that canter wasn't fast enough and absolutely *bolted* down the long side, Irenka screamed and I thought she'd refuse to try again. But Sally got her to ride a couple of circles in trot then asked for canter, and Flame went calmly that time (well, as calmly as she ever goes!).

Magic was easy to get into canter and had a nice even rhythm. And we made such a smooth downward transition you could hardly see me do anything. Mum's right, he *would* make someone a lovely pony – it just won't be me!

When we got back to the barn to untack, everyone was chattering excitedly about the lesson, and telling me that I'm SO lucky to live here – as usual! I managed to smile and say, "Yes, I am," but it was quite hard to watch Kasia brushing Tally down.





He looked as sad as me, so when Kasia took his water bucket off to the yard to scrub out and fill up, I went over and gave him a big hug.

And guess what? Lydia saw and told me off!

Huh! I hadn't even noticed she was there! She said, "Tally's fine, Millie, stop fussing. Poor Magic needs a bit of attention, though."

Well, he looked perfectly OK to me, but I went back into his pen and brushed him anyway, just to keep her happy. His coat came up really well, and he was so still and calm, I didn't even have to watch my feet. He's a real sweetie and, like I said, I'm sure he'll make someone a great pony.



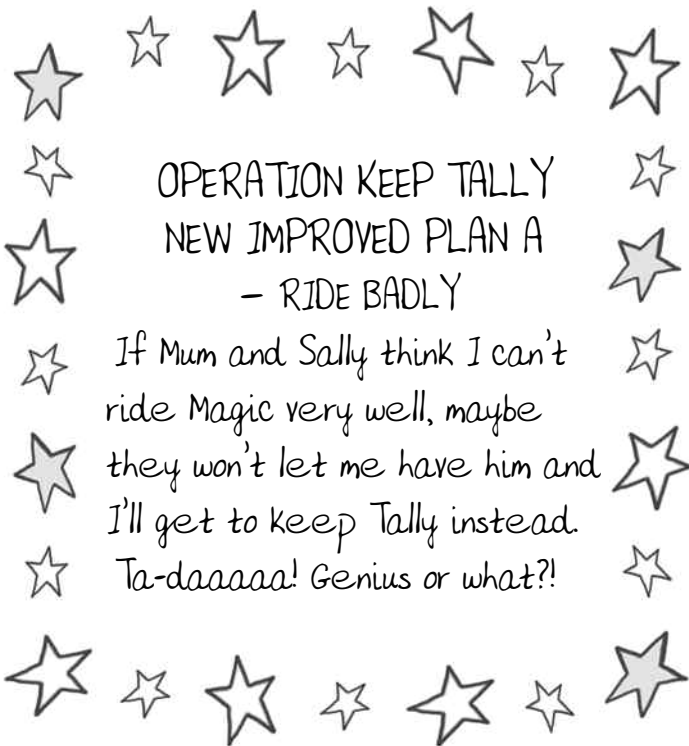
Amy was so funny at lunch just now, doing an impression of Mischief trying to plunge her off. Me and Zoe were in stitches watching her canter around the picnic tables.



Then when I was finishing off my fruit salad and ice cream I came up with a new plan for Operation Keep Tally. It's way better than any of the silly ideas I had before, but I'm keeping it to myself, in case my new mates accidentally let something slip (especially loud-girl Amy!). In fact, I'm moving my arm over this page, so they don't read anything!



Sunnyside Stables



Oh, Sally just came in and announced the groups. I'm in Group B with Amy and the older girls, and Zoe's in Group A with Evie, Elizabeth and Kasia (on MY pony). It's time to go down to the yard now. Fingers crossed that my plan goes well!