



Monday, at Pony Camp!

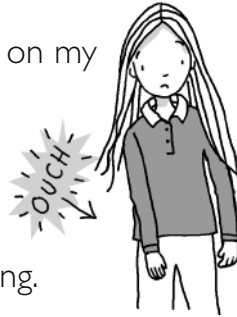


Jody's just given me this special diary to write down all my adventures at Sunnyside Stables. I'm so glad to be here, it looks like such a great place – and I'm really excited about riding for the first time in weeks. On the way in I saw a field full of lovely ponies and I couldn't help trying to guess which one will be mine! But I'm also feeling very nervous because I don't know if I'll even dare get on her (or him!).

That's because two months ago I had a fall at my local riding school. They were holding a show jumping competition and I'd entered the novice class on my fave pony, Pepper. I went clear in the first round, and I really wanted to win, but in round two I got my strides wrong and jumped the combination a bit long. Pepper clipped the second set of poles and nearly fell over – and I came flying off and smacked right



into the wing, then landed strangely on my arm. When I got up, it was hanging at a funny angle – turns out it was broken! It should have really hurt but at the time I couldn't feel anything.



Mum said later it was probably because of the shock. When the pain did come on, it was terrible. Two first-aiders made me a sling and helped me out of the manège, and then Mum took me to casualty. I didn't get back on Pepper that day, of course. And my arm took six weeks to heal.

But the fall isn't really the problem (my arm's fine now) – it's what it has done to my confidence. I did try to have a lesson at my stables last week, to get used to things again, but I didn't even manage to get on. I just couldn't make myself do it. It was awful because all the helpers, Hayley (my instructor) and Mum were standing there saying encouraging things, but I



was really dizzy and trembly. In the end I ran off to the loo, pretending I wanted to be sick. And then I stayed in there for ages just feeling so silly and weedy, until Mum banged on the door and took me home.

Right now, I'm sitting on a bench outside the office, which is next to the tack room. There are stables round all three sides of the yard and a gorgeous (and massive) carthorse is peering out at me! It's really cool here because there's a swimming pool (I love swimming) and also these sweet black labs called Viola



and Cello, who gave me a big licky cuddle when I arrived! So even if I don't dare to ride this week, I'm sure I can help out on the yard and play with the dogs and do swimming and stuff – so I'll still have fun. Just hanging around here will be fantastic, and maybe the pony I'm given for the week will help me get back in the saddle again!



I know I shouldn't eavesdrop but I'm desperately trying to hear what's going on in the office, because Mum said she would have a word with Sally and Jody about me losing my confidence. I feel squirmy with embarrassment about her telling them, but I'm also relieved because if they know, they can help me get back to riding. But – urgh! – I've just had a horrible thought. What if they say, "Oh yes, yes, we understand" to Mum, and then when she's gone they get cross with me if I get scared and don't want to do things? And what if I *can't* get back on and the other girls all laugh?

Oh, it's just so annoying that this has happened! I wish I could

SNAP
OUT OF IT...

but I can't.



But maybe it will be easier here because no one knows what I was like before the fall. It's weird to think that I've got a stack of rosettes at home, for show jumping comps and dressage tests and one-day events. Nothing scared me!



But there's no way I'm telling anyone here that, because then they'll expect me to be really good. And just now I'll be happy if I can even *sit* on a pony!

This lovely girl Lydia has just now asked me if I want to help her pick out Phillip the carthorse's giant feet. If everyone here is as nice as her I should be fine. Right, no more being scared – I've decided that Sunnyside *is* the perfect place for me to get back in the saddle. I'm going to get on – today!



Still Monday, before the first lesson (gulp!)

My new room-mates have gone down to the yard, but I'm hanging around up here to quickly write what's happened so far.

When everyone came out of the office, Sally spotted me helping out with Phillip and gave me a big smile. "Don't worry, Poppy, we'll get you riding again," she said. So she's nice too – phew! I asked her not to tell anyone else about the fall or about me being so nervous now, and she promised – thank goodness. I don't want anyone feeling sorry for me.

The other girls all started arriving then so I thanked Lydia for letting me do Phillip's feet and followed the crowd upstairs. I'm sharing with this girl Jennifer who has a gingery-brown bob with flicky-up ends. Her suitcase is huge – I



think she's brought everything she owns! Our room is actually Millie's own bedroom (Millie is Jody's daughter) and it's really nice of her to share it with us. Millie has her normal bed by the window and me and Jennifer are in the bunk beds. I said I didn't mind which I had so Jennifer chose the top one. (I was secretly hoping for that one too but making friends is more important!)



They both seem nice, especially Millie, but I think I might have a BIG problem keeping my fall a secret.

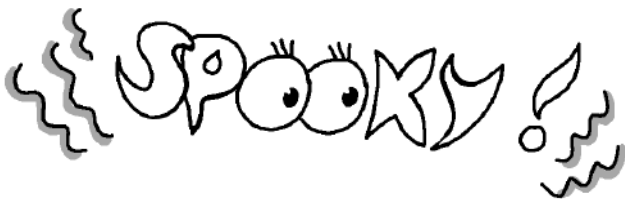


When we were unpacking, I kept glancing at Millie and thinking, “I KNOW that girl.” And then suddenly I worked out where from. We’ve both competed in a local show jumping competition – and I beat her! From the second I realized, I was just desperately hoping she wouldn’t recognize *me*, but she soon said, “Haven’t I met you before, Poppy?”

I wouldn’t usually lie, but I didn’t know what to do, and I found myself saying, “Erm, no, I don’t think so.”

Millie said, “Well, in that case you’ve got a twin out there who beat me and Tally at the Crewkerne show!”

I made myself grin and reply, “Really? That’s



Luckily we got distracted by Jennifer telling us all about her last show jumping competition and re-enacting her fabulous victory. It sounded amazing (almost too amazing to be true, actually). Then she said she could canter a circle on the spot in dressage and Millie instantly cried, “No way! I don’t believe that’s possible even if you are really, really good unless you’re a grown-up professional with a specially trained horse and everything!”



Jennifer looked kind of surprised and embarrassed at the same time. She mumbled, “Well, I haven’t actually **DONE** it yet, but I read about it in

Pony mag and I reckon I could with a bit of practice.”

“Yeah, right!” Millie scoffed. She’s so pony-mad she can spot a fib a mile off. Urgh! – I hope she doesn’t spot mine!



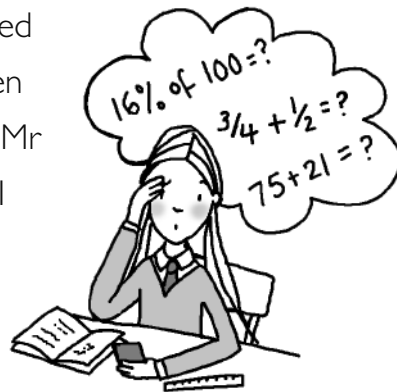
Jennifer was a bit sniffity after that. She turned on me and demanded, "What have YOU done, then?" I just completely panicked and blurted out, "Oh, you know, the usual." Then I added, "Hey, I love your fleece," to change the subject.

But Jennifer kept on at me, asking, "But like what, though?"

I went all red and flustered then, like I do in maths when I've been daydreaming and Mr Raines asks me a question. I carried on unpacking and mumbled, "Erm, walk and trot, obviously, some canter and a bit of jumping."

"Oh," she said, "So you're—"

"But only a tiny bit of jumping – pole work mainly," I added quickly, in case she started asking about heights and combinations and all that.



Jennifer just gave me an unimpressed look and turned back to her bulging suitcase. Phew! I think I got away with it! Of course, I wanted to reveal the truth and shout, "Actually, I *am* the girl from the Crewkerne show and I've even done cross country and a Pony Club team dressage competition – so there!" But I kept quiet.



← Me at the Crewkerne show where I beat Millie and Tally!

Oh, Jody's calling me down to the yard now. Time to meet my pony (hurray!) and see if I dare ride again.

Help!