



## Monday just after lunch

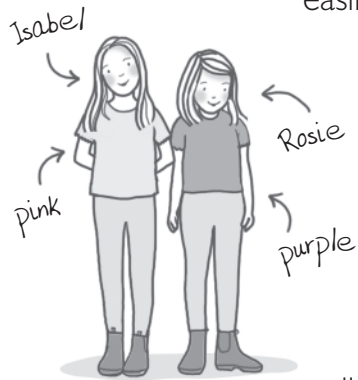
I'm so excited to be at Pony Camp! We've all been given these cool diaries to write about our week here and we're starting them straight away, sitting on the benches outside the farmhouse. It's been so fantastic here already and it's



only the middle of our first day! I've been given a gorgeous pony called *\*Dancer\** and I'm sharing a room with these lovely girls, Isabel and Rosie, who are actually twins. How cool is that? I'd love a twin sister. Or any kind of sister, actually! I've got two little brothers called Jack and Ali and they aren't into ponies – they only ever want me to play Dinosaur Battles with them.



Isabel and Rosie are both 10 like me and they ride most Saturdays near where they live in Bath, which isn't that far from here. Well, not as far as Watford, where I come from, anyway! Even though they're identical twins you can



easily tell them apart because they don't dress the same – well, they both wear beige jodhs, but Isabel's riding tops are pink and Rosie's are purple, and Isabel's a bit taller and they've got different

hairstyles too. They've been riding for about six months and I only started a year ago, so we're really hoping we'll be in the same group. We had an assessment lesson this morning, all riding together, and the main instructor Sally's going to announce which groups we're in when we go back on to the yard.



In our room there are bunk beds and a single bed by the window. I arrived first so I got to choose and I went for the top bunk. Rosie's under me and Isabel's across in the other bed. We tucked our towels in under my mattress to make a secret camp in Rosie's bit, and we put the sweets and stuff we'd brought with us in a bag under her pillow, ready for a midnight feast!



I was a bit worried about making friends here, because of coming by myself, but Isabel and Rosie are really nice and it feels like I've known them a lot longer than, hang on, I'll just look at my watch – 3 hours and 41 minutes!



Here's a pic of *all* us girls squashed on to the benches, writing in our diaries. Sasha and Libby are both 10, like me, and they're sharing Millie's room. They're in the same riding group at their stables in Bourmemouth and they came together. Millie's mum Jody runs Pony Camp so she actually lives here, lucky thing. She's 11 and so is Stephanie (who's sharing a room with Lara and Brooke, both 12). Stephanie, Lara and Brooke came on their own like me, all from different places I can't remember now.



When we'd unpacked and got our riding gear on, Jody took us down to the yard and introduced us to Sally, the main instructor, and Lydia, the head stable girl. Sally told us it's an especially exciting week for us Pony Campers because we're having a fab trip out tomorrow to a horse show. And guess what, her friend Kate is actually performing in it!

And that's not the only reason why this week is going to be extra-special! There's the big barbecue party on Friday too, which Jody mentioned in her welcome letter. It's the last week of Pony Camp for the year, so she's having the party to say thank you to all the people who've helped out this summer, like Western Bob and the lady whose beach they go riding on, and local farmers who let them have right of way over their land and the village shopkeepers who supply all the food. I can't wait!

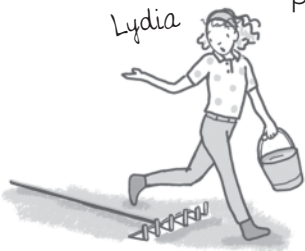
After we'd introduced ourselves, we had a



# Sunnyside Stables



tour round Sunnyside and that was brilliant because we got to see the ponies in the barn. We were all making a big fuss of them and wondering which ones we'd get. After that, we had a Safety on the Yard talk, and Lydia



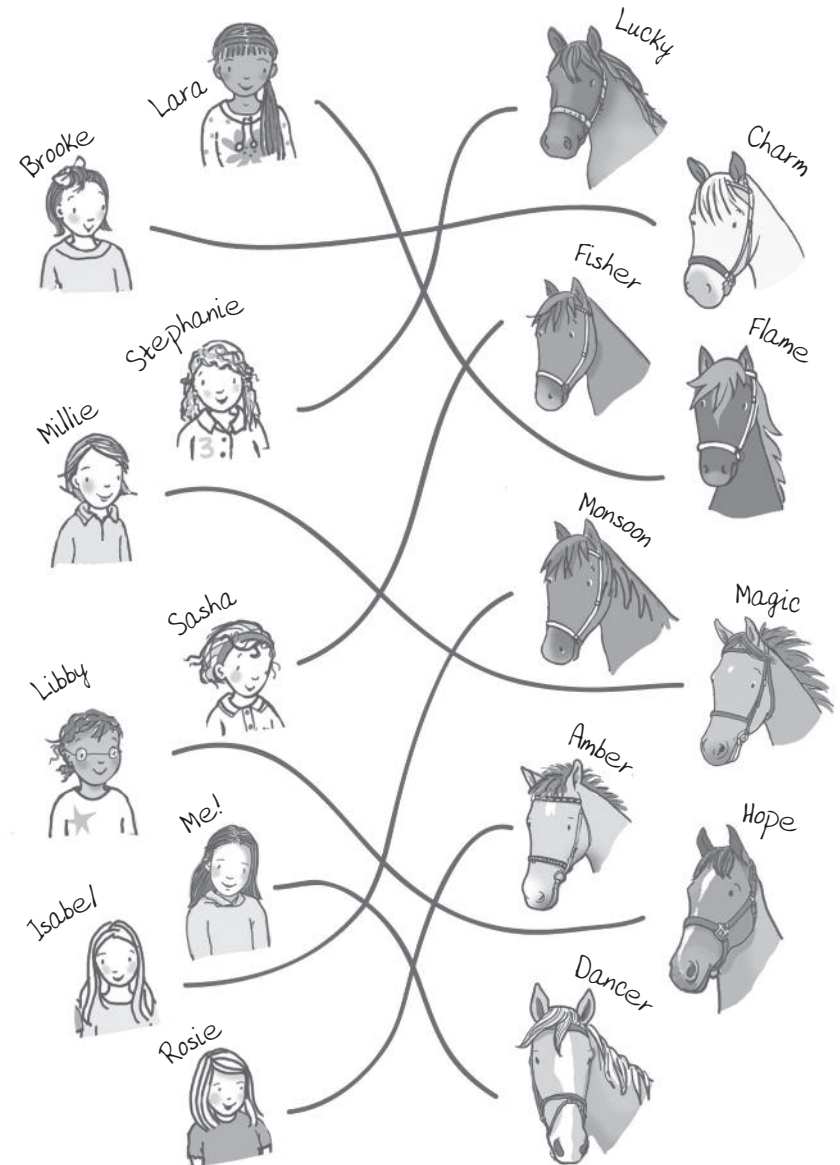
pretended to do dangerous things like leaving an upturned rake on the ground and not shutting a stable door behind her, and we had to shout out "STOP!" and say what the mistakes were.

Then we all went crazy with excitement because it was time to find out who was going to be paired up with which pony. But we couldn't go round squealing and jumping up and down or anything, because Lydia was leading them out on to the yard and that would have spooked them.

This is who we got. I've made it into a puzzle for fun!



# Sunnyside Stables





Sally said Dancer is only here for this week, because she's looking after her for a friend's daughter while they've gone on holiday, so I'm extra-lucky to get her. She's so elegant and graceful (completely the opposite of me!) and she's really sweet too. When I took the reins from Lydia I gave her a big pat and she nuzzled into me straight away.

Here's my pony profile of her:

Name: Dancer

Height: 13.2hh

Age: 5

Breed: Maybe some New Forest pony in her, Lydia thinks!

Colour: Lovely bright palomino - I can't wait to groom her gorgeous mane!

Markings: Cute stripe down her nose

Fave foods: Yummy lush summer grass from the field

Personality: Elegant and graceful, and really friendly!



Everyone else loved their ponies too. In fact, there was so much cuddling and fussing and patting going on, Sally had to remind us a few times to mount up so we could get on with the assessment lesson!

We all rode into the manège, and Sally got us warmed up with loads of turns, circles and changes of pace. I'm a bit higher from the ground on Dancer than Bailey, the cobby pony I usually ride at my stables. And Dancer's slimmer as well, so it took me a while to get used to her and feel like I wasn't going to slide off! She's quite quick off the leg too – you only need to squeeze her into the next pace, rather than kicking on like I usually have to. I found that out the hard way when I asked for trot a bit firmly and she went skittering across the manège – I nearly *did* fall off then! Sally noticed but she told me not to worry, because the assessment lesson is *meant* for us to get used to our ponies.



I already felt extra-nervous riding in front of a new instructor and new girls, as well as on a new pony, so it was good to know she wasn't expecting to see anything amazing straight away!

Saying that, Isabel and Rosie looked really elegant and effortless on their ponies from the moment they got on. They both have really good seats and seem to change pace and direction without even *doing* anything. I can't believe they've only been riding for six months – I would never have guessed if they hadn't told me. I've been riding twice as long and I don't look like that!

It was really exciting when we all got to have a canter to the back of the ride.

Dancer did a big plunge into it and

I nearly came off again, but I grabbed the pommel and managed to steady myself and we made it round.



She was so graceful when she got going. Pity I was bobbling around on top, trying to get my balance – oh well!

Oh, hang on, Sasha and Libby are showing everyone this cool routine they performed in their dance school show. Isabel and Rosie want us all to go and join in with it. I'm AWFUL at dancing so I'm kind of pretending I'm too busy concentrating on writing in here to notice, but – EEK! – they're *making* me! Gotta go!

