

## **The first lesson**

I remember sitting in my dad's car desperately trying to guess where I was going for my birthday surprise. Minutes later, we got to Meadowcroft stables where I was about to have my first ever horse riding lesson. The first smell of the stables was one that most people would think of as disgusting and revolting, but to me it's a comforting smell that reminds me of the first time that I ever experienced the thing that I enjoy the most. It was a birthday present that my parents wish they'd never given me as 9 years, thousands of pounds, hours of time and endless arguments later I am still horse riding.

We went into the cramped office where there were several rabbit hutches, but somehow I only noticed these in the visits that followed my first as I was so swept up in all of the ponies and excitement. I was told that I was riding a pony called Missy; I now know her colour as palomino (a light colour with flaxen mane and tail). Missy smelled like a clean horse, most people would not be able to tell the difference but it is different to the smell of a wet horse or a dirty horse. In the lesson I learned how to do a rising trot, in my memory; I got the hang of this quite quickly, however my dad disagrees. I pleaded with him to let me come again to have another lesson-he said that I could but that it couldn't be next week as we were going to Bath to see some friends, at this point I was distraught and almost cried at the thought.

I remember the first time that my Nan came to watch me. She wanted to buy one of the cute fluffy Labrador puppies that the stables kept and I think she would have been nervous thinking of the fact that I was sitting on an animal that had its own mind and could easily hurt me. The first time that I ever cantered was amazing. It felt so fast as it was the fastest I'd ever moved, outside of a car, I did fall off but I still loved the whole experience and the next time I stayed on, the experience was so exciting. The first time that I jumped was even more special. It was such a tiny jump but the same thrill still hits me when I'm jumping 2ft6 jumps now. I was riding Missy again and when we got to the other side of the jump I was so happy that I had got there in one piece.

Sadly I had to leave Meadowcroft because of the price rise. I went to Hole farm, a riding school in Woodgate valley. There I rode many horses, fell off many horses and jumped the biggest fences that I'd ever jumped before. I had to leave that place though. I'd had a 6 week phase of falling off every week and in the end, I decided that really I wasn't happy there. The people weren't very friendly, the horses were naughty and I just didn't enjoy it as much as I did at Meadowcroft. I moved again to where I am now. I work there every Saturday and look after a 15 hand skewbald cob called Tommy. I ride him for jumping and a smaller pony called Ziggy for hacking. I have kept riding for 9 years because it is the highlight of my week and I can't wait for Saturdays every week.

## **Marzipan**

When we moved into my current house in Harborne, my parents promised me that I could get a rabbit. We went to Bromsgrove Pet Store to look for one. There were four in the shop, all boys, three white with black and brown spots and then the odd one out; a blonde

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smaller rabbit with big brown eyes and the fluffiest body. He was beautiful. I held one of the spotty ones; it wouldn't let me hold him for longer than a minute. Then I held the smaller light coloured one. He stayed still and was almost falling asleep. He was gorgeous and by the end of the day he was mine.

When we were driving home, he was in a 'Bonio' box on my lap. My dad helped me to set up his hutch and we left him alone for that night. The following morning I got out of bed early to go and see him. I let him out of his hutch and played with him for a while. As he was bouncing around the garden I was watching him carefully to see what he liked to eat and where he liked to go in the garden. I found it difficult to put him away but now it is easy as he recognises me and he will run up to me happily.

In the summer, he got even cuter than in October when I first brought him home. His fur molted to become a lighter shade of yellow without the flecks of dark brown in his coat. He would roll around in the mud to replace the natural brown flecks in his coat. Sometimes he would roll over completely to show his bright white belly. Now that he's older he isn't so energetic but he recognises me whenever I see him.