

Postgraduate/Distance Learning Assignment coversheet & feedback form

**THIS SHEET MUST BE THE FIRST PAGE OF THE ASSIGNMENT YOU ARE
SUBMITTING (DO NOT SEND AS A SEPARATE FILE)**

For completion by the student:		
Student Name: Sian Patricia Evans		
Module code: CSCW7014 Module title: Creative Writing Project (Dissertation)	Student ID number: 1503219	Educational support needs: Yes/No
Module tutor: Jeni Williams		
Assignment due date: 30/01/2018		
If your module has multiple submissions please indicate which piece of work this is. 1 st ☐ 2 nd ☐ 3 rd ☐ 4 th ☐ 5 th ☐ 6 th ☐		
I confirm that this is my original work and that I have adhered to the University policy on plagiarism. Signed ...Sian Patricia Evans Email submission: if you are submitting this form via email, please tick this box ☐ (as a substitute for your signature) to confirm that you agree to the above declaration.		
Assignment Mark		
1 st Marker's Provisional mark		
2 nd Marker's/Moderator's provisional mark		
Agreed Internal Mark:		
External Examiner's mark (if relevant)		
Final Mark		
NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the Final Examination Board.		

For completion by Marker 1 :

Comments:

Marker's signature:

Date:

For completion by Marker 2/Moderator:

Comments:

Marker's Signature:

Date:

AGREED INTERNAL MARK (where necessary):

Comment on process on arriving at agreed mark:

External Examiner's comments (if relevant)

External Examiner's Signature:

Date:



APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL – MA level

CAIS AM GYMERADWYAETH MOESGOL – Lefel MA

CEFNOGWYD / APPROVED	A GYFEIRIWDYD / REFERRED	NIS CEFNOGWYD/ NOT SUPPORTED
Mae'r ffurflen hon i'w llenwi gan bob myfyriwr MA cynnal ymchwil, prosiectau neu gynyrchiadau. Dylai'r ffurflen hon gael ei chwblhau gan y myfyriwr mewn ymgynghoriad â thiwtor y modiwl. Rhaid i bob ffurflen gael ei ystyried gan y Pennaeth Ysgol/Cyfadrn / Gyfadrn. Rhaid i bob ffurflen gael ei gyflwyno i Fwrdd y Gyfadrn Moeseg. Bydd y ffurflen yn cael ei adrodd i'r Pwyllgor Moeseg y BrifYsgol/Cyfadrn os anarferol a / neu y tu allan arfer arferol. This form is to be completed by all MA students conducting research, projects or productions. This form should be completed by the student in consultation with the module tutor. All forms must be considered by the Head of School/Faculty. All forms must be presented to the Faculty Ethics Board. The form is only to be reported to the University Ethics Committee if it is unusual and/or falls outside of normal practice.		

**ADRAN 1 – MANYLION MYFYRIWR
DETAILS**

SECTION 1 - STUDENT

Enw Llawn
Full Name

Sian Patricia Evans

Ysgol/Cyfadrn/
Cyfadrn
School/Faculty

Faculty of Humanities &
Performing Arts

Rhif
Myfyriwr
Student
Number

1503219

Tiwtor y Modiwl/
Cydllynydd Rhaglen
Module Tutor/
Programme Co-ordinator

Jeni Williams

Enw'r
Gradd
Name of
Degree

MA Creative and
Script Writing

Teitl dangosol yr Traethawd Hir:

Indicative Title of Dissertation:

The Final Hurdles

ADRAN 2 – GWEITHGAREDD YMCHWIL

SECTION 2 – RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Ydy'r prosiect yn cynnwys:	Does the project include:	Ydy / Yes	Nac ydy / No
Defnyddio holiadur neu offeryn ymchwil tebyg (atodwch gopi drafft)	Use of questionnaire or similar research instrument (attach draft copy)		No
Defnyddio prawf ysgrifenedig neu gyfrifiadurol	Use of written or computerised test		No
Cyfweliad (cysylltwch gwestiynau posibl)	Interview (attach provisional questions)		No
Dyddiaduron	Diaries		No
Arsylwi ar gyfranogwyr a hwythau'n ymwybodol o hynny	Participant observation with their knowledge		No
Arsylwi ar gyfranogwyr a hwythau ddim yn ymwybodol o hynny	Participant observation without their knowledge		No
Recordio fideo neu sain	Video or audio-taping		No
Mynediad i wybodaeth bersonol neu gyfrinachol heb gydsyniad penodol y cyfranogwyr	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants specific consent		No
Defnyddio unrhyw gwestiynau, ysgogiadau prawf, cyflwyniad y gallai rhai cyfranogwyr eu profi fel rhywbeth sy'n achosi niwed / tramgwydd corfforol, meddyliol neu emosiynol	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive		No
Cyflawni unrhyw weithredoedd allai achosi embaras neu effeithio ar hunan-barch	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem		No
Ymchwilio i gyfranogwyr sy'n ymwneud â gweithgareddau anghyfreithlon	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities		No
Gweithdrefnau lle defnyddir twyll	Procedures that involve deception		No
Gweini unrhyw sylwedd, cyfrwng neu blasebo	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo		No
Dull arall o gasglu data neu fformat cyflwyno (esboniwch)	Other method of data collection or presentation format (please explain)		No

Os 'Na' wedi cael ei dicio ym mhob blwch, dylai'r ffurflen gael ei llofnodi gan Bennaeth yr Ysgol/Cyfadrn / Gyfadrn a'r canlyniad a adroddwyd i'r Pwyllgor Moeseg ar ddiwedd y semester. Os 'Ydw' wedi cael ei dicio mewn un neu fwy o'r blychau, rhaid i'r myfyrwr gwblhau'r ffurflen hon a'i chyflwyno i diwtor y modiwl. Rhaid i'r ffurflen wedyn yn cael ei ystyried yn y Bwrdd Moeseg Gyfadrn cyn dechrau ar unrhyw waith ymchwil.	If 'No' has been ticked in each box, the form should be signed by the Head of School/Faculty/Faculty and the outcome reported to the Ethics Committee at the end of the semester. If Yes has been ticked in one or more boxes, the student must complete this form and submit it to the module tutor. The form must then be considered by the Faculty Ethics Board prior to the start of any research.
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Llofnodau

Os nad oes unrhyw faterion moesegol sylweddol, dylid ffurflen hon gael ei chwblhau a'i llofnodi gan y myfyriwr a'r goruchwyliwr ac yna llofnodi gan Bennaeth yr Ysgol/Cyfadrn.

Signatures

If there are no significant ethical issues, this form should be completed and signed by both the student and the supervisor and then signed by the Head of School/Faculty.

Myfyriwr / Student Sian Patricia Evans	Dyddiad: / Date: 21/01/2018
Cydllynydd y prosiect / Tiwtor Project co-ordinator / Tutor Arolygwr / Supervisor	Dyddiad: / Date:
Pennaeth Ysgol/Cyfadrn / Head of School/Faculty	Dyddiad: / Date

**ADRAN 3 – MANYLION Y PROSIECT / YMCHWIL /
CYNHYRCHIAD**

**SECTION 3 – PROJECT / RESEARCH /
PRODUCTION DETAILS**

1.	Braslun o'r prosiect	Project outline
15,000 word young adult novel about Olivia Hendy, a sixteen year old who has to learn to let people in w her Father is sent away for training with his job in the army and her estranged Mother re-enters her life.		
2.	Disgrifiad Rhowch fraslun cryno o'r prosiect, heb unrhyw jargon, ac yn cynnwys beth bydd angen i'r cyfranogwyr ei wneud. Esboniwch unrhyw dermau technegol neu derminoleg sy'n benodol i'r ddisgyblaeth (Uchafswm 300 o eiriau.)	Description Provide a brief outline, free from jargon, of the pro including what participants will be required to Explain any technical terms or discipline spe terminology (Max 300 words.)
Write a 15,000 word novella in the young adult fiction genre		
3.	Dulliau Arfaethedig: Rhowch fraslun o'r dulliau casglu data neu o natur yr amser mewn ymarferiadau (hyd at 500 o eiriau).	Proposed Methods: Outline how the data will be collected or the natur rehearsal time (up to 500 words).
5.	Lledaenu Gwybodaeth / Cynulleidfa: Rhestrwch i bwy y rhoddir neu y dangosir copi o'r canlyniadau neu adroddiad / cyflwyniad terfynol.	Dissemination of Information / Audience: List to whom a copy of the results or final rep presentation will be given or shown.
6.	Lleoliad y Prosiect: Nodwch bob lleoliad lle y cesglir data neu y cynhelir ymarferiadau / cynhyrchiad.	Location of Project: Identify all locations where data will be collecte rehearsals/ production will take place.

7.	Cymeradwyaeth Arall: Oes angen cael cymeradwyaeth unrhyw sefydliad arall cyn cychwyn neu gwblhau'r prosiect? Os felly, gan bwy ac a ydy wedi'i sicrhau eisoes?	Other Approvals: Is there a requirement for approval from any other organisation / institution prior to starting or completing the project? If so, by whom has it been obtained?
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ADRAN 4 – MANYLION CYFRANOGWYR / CYNULLEIDFA		SECTION 4 - PARTICIPANT / AUDIENCE DETAILS	
Pwy yw'r cyfranogwyr arfaethedig?	Who are the intended participants?	Ydw / Yes	Na / No
Myfyrwyr / staff Y Drindod Dewi Sant	Students / staff of Trinity Saint David		No
Oedolion (dros oed 16 ac yn gymwys i gydsynio)	Adults (over the age of 16 and competent to give consent)		No
Plant a phobl ifanc dan oed	Children / legal minors		No
Cleifion neu gleientiaid gweithwyr proffesiynol	Patients or clients of professionals		No
Rhywun sy'n cael ei gadw yn y ddalfa neu y mae'r llys wedi cymryd cyfrifoldeb amdano	Anyone in custodial care or for whom the court has assumed responsibility		No
Aelod o unrhyw sefydliad lle mae'n bosibl bod angen i unigolyn arall hefyd gydsynio.	A member of any organisation where another individual may also need to give consent.		No
Eraill: Nodwch: / Others: please identify:			

Nifer, Oed a Ffynhonnell y Cyfranogwyr		Participant / Audience Number and Age
Rhowch fanylion yr demograffeg y cyfranogwyr / gynulleidfa.		Provide details of the demographics of the participants / audience.
Nifer o Gyfranogwyr / yn y Gynulleidfa	Participant/ Audience number	N/A
Grŵp oedran y Cyfranogwyr/y Gynulleidfa	Participant/ Audience age group	N/A

ADRAN 5 – RISGIAU YN PROSIECT	SECTION 5 – RISKS IN PROJECT
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Bydd y diffyg ateb cadarnhaol i bob un o'r cwestiynau hyn yn arwain at y gofyniad eglurhad a gallai arwain at oedi yn eich ymchwil. Dim neu Dim NID yn dderbyniol.	A lack of a positive answer to all of these questions may result in the requirement of further explanation and a delay in your research. None or Nil is not acceptable.
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Risg Posibl: (corfforol, seicolegol, cyfreithiol, cymdeithasol neu economaidd)		Potential Risk: (physical, psychological, legal, social or economic)		
A oes unrhyw risg bosibl i:		Is there any potential risk to:	Ydw / Yes	N
A	Cyfranogwyr?	Participants?		N
B	Ymchwilydd?	Researcher?		N
C	BrifYsgol/Cyfadrn?	University?		N

2	Rheoli Risg: Os oes, beth yw'r risg a sut y bydd yn cael ei reoli?	Management of Risk: If yes, what is the risk and how will it be managed?

3	Os ydych yn delio â phlant ac oedolion sy'n agored i niwed a ydych wedi gwneud cais am dystysgrif DRS?	If you are dealing with children and vulnerable adults have you applied for a DRS certificate?

ADRAN 6 – MONITRO, ADBORTH A CHYFRINACHEDD

SECTION 6 - MONITORING, FEEDBACK AND CONFIDENTIALITY

1.	Monitro: Os ydych yn sylwi ar unrhyw ymddygiad sy'n groes Cod y BrifYsgol/Cyfadrn Ymarfer, unrhyw ganllawiau a gyhoeddir gan y gymdeithas broffesiynol priodol neu weithred anghyfreithlon. Amlinellwch eich strategaeth adrodd.	Monitoring: Should you observe any behaviour that contravenes the University's Code of Practice or the guidelines published by the appropriate professional association or is illegal outlining your strategy of your reporting action.
A wnewch chi roi gwybod am unrhyw ymddygiad sydd yn erbyn Cod Ymarfer y BrifYsgol/Cyfadrn neu sy'n anghyfreithlon?		Will you report any behaviour that is against the University's Code of Practice or is illegal?
		Ydw / Yes
		Na / No

A ydych yn darparu adborth i'r cyfranogwyr?	Will feedback be provided to participants?		No
A fyddwch yn dogfennu'r 'caniatâd i gymryd rhan yn y prosiect'	Will you be documenting the 'consent to participate in the project'		No

ADRAN 7 – STORIO, DIOGELWCH A MYNEDIAD I DDATA SECTION 7 - DATA ACCESS, STORAGE AND SECURITY

			Ydw / Yes	Na / No
1.	Ydych chi'n gyfrifol am storio a diogelwch y data eu casglu?	Are you responsible for the storage and security of the data collected?		No
2.	Sut y bydd y data yn cael ei storio?	How will the data be stored?		

3.	Mynediad i Ddata: Pwy fydd yn cael mynediad at y data? A oes unrhyw amodau i gael mynediad?	Data Access: Who will have access to the data? Are there any conditions to access?
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4.	Cyfrinachedd / Anhysbysrwydd: Rhestrwch y dulliau a fydd yn cael eu defnyddio i sicrhau cyfrinachedd ac anhysbysrwydd y cyfranogwyr.	Confidentiality / Anonymity: List the methods that will be used to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants.
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ADRAN 7 – DATGANIAD

SECTION 7 - DECLARATION

Rhaid i'r adran hon gael ei chwblhau gan bob parti perthnasol cyn y gellir cyflwyno' r cais i'r Bwrdd Moeseg Gyfadran.	This section must be completed by all concerned parties before it can be submitted to the Faculty Ethics Board.
Datganiad Mae'r wybodaeth a gynhwysir yma yn gywir, hyd eithaf fy ngwybodaeth a'm cred. Rwyf wedi ceisio dynodi unrhyw risgiau a phroblemau sy'n gysylltiedig â'r prosiect / ymchwil neu gynhyrchiad ac rwyf yn cydnabod f'ymrwymadau innau a hawliau'r cyfranogwyr.	Declaration The information contained herein is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the project/research or production and I acknowledge my obligations and the rights of participants.

Llofnodau

Dylai'r ffurflen hon gael ei chwblhau a'i llofnodi gan y myfyrwr a'r goruchwyliwr lofnodi ac yna gan Bennaeth yr Ysgol/Cyfadrn/

Signatures

This form should be completed and signed by both the student and the supervisor and then signed by the Head of School/Faculty

Myfyrwr / Student	Dyddiad: / Date:
Sian Patricia Evans	21/01/2018
Cydlynnydd y prosiect / Tiwtor Project co-ordinator / Tutor Arolygwr / Supervisor	Dyddiad: / Date:
Jeni Williams	
Pennaeth Ysgol/Cyfadrn / Head of School/Faculty	Dyddiad: / Date
Rhaid i bob cais am ymchwil ar sail cyfweiliadau gynnwys y dogfennau canlynol:	All interview based research applications must provide the following pro-forma documents:
1. Ffurflen gydsynio ddrafft 2. Sampl o'r cwestiynau a ofynnir 3. Taflen wybodaeth am yr ymchwil sy'n esbonio'n glir ddiben y prosiect, y deilliannau disgwyledig a'r rheini y dangosir y canlyniadau iddynt.	1. A draft consent form 2. A sample of the questions that will be asked 3. An information sheet on the research which clearly explains what the project is, what the expected outcomes are and who the results will be shown to.

DYCHWELWCH I'R GYFADRAN MOESeg CYDLINYDD

PLEASE RETURN TO THE FACULTY ETHICS CO-ORDINATOR

Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Moeseg Gyfadrn /Chair of the Faculty Ethics Committee

Dyddiad: / Date:

Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

Declaration Form

1. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Name.....Sian Patricia Evans

Date 14/01/2018

2. This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of ...MA Creative and Script Writing

Name... Sian Patricia Evans

Date ...14/01/2018

3. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references.

A bibliography is appended.

Name.... Sian Patricia Evans

Date: ...14/01/2018

4. I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying, inter- library loan, and for deposit in the University's digital repository

Name.....Sian Patricia Evans

Date.....14/01/2018

Supervisor's Declaration.

I am satisfied that this work is the result of the student's own efforts.

Signed:



Date: 14/01/2018

University of Wales: Trinity Saint David E-Thesis Deposit Agreement

Details of the Work

I would like to deposit the following item in the digital repository maintained by the University, and/or in any other repository authorized for use by the University:

Title ...The Final Hurdles

This item is a product of my own research endeavours and is covered by the agreement below in which the item is referred to as “the Work”. It is identical in content to that deposited in the Learning Resources Centre, subject to point 4 below.

I agree that the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David may electronically store, copy or translate the Work to any approved medium or format for the purpose of future preservation and accessibility. The University is not under any obligation to reproduce or display the Work in the same formats or resolutions in which it was originally deposited.

UW: TSD Digital Repository

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I understand that once the Work is deposited, the item and its metadata may be incorporated into public access catalogues or services, such as national databases of electronic theses.

I agree as follows:

1. That I am the author or have the authority of the author/s to make this agreement and do hereby give the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David the right to make available the Work in the way described above.
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3. That I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the Work is original, and to the best of my knowledge, does not breach any laws including those relating to defamation, libel and copyright.
4. That I have, in instances where the intellectual property of other authors or copyright holders is included in the Work, gained explicit permission for the inclusion of that material in the Work, and in the electronic form of the Work as accessed through the open access digital repository, *or* that I have identified and removed that material for which adequate permission has not been obtained and which will be inaccessible via the digital repository
5. That University of Wales: Trinity Saint David does not hold any obligation to take legal action on behalf of the Depositor, or other rights holders, in

the event of a breach of intellectual property rights, or any other right, in the material deposited.

6. That I undertake to indemnify the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David against all actions, suits, proceedings, claims, demands and costs occasioned by the University in consequence of any breach of this agreement

Name ...Sian Patricia Evans

Date ...21/01/2018

Abstract

The Final Hurdles is a young adult novel that follows Olivia Hendy as she tries to navigate through a particularly difficult year at school. We begin with Olivia as she finds out that her Father has to go away for some training with his job in the Army. As he prepares to leave, Olivia discovers that her estranged Mother has returned. Olivia heads to the livery yard for some time to talk things through with her horse. A new girl, Jessica, arrives at the yard and immediately sees Olivia as a threat. She begins to pick on Olivia at school and hides her things at the livery yard. It all comes to a head when Jessica puts dye in Olivia's horse shampoo, ruining her chances at the livery yard show. Olivia meets her Mother for dinner to try and clear the air with her but when she only defends Jessica, Olivia leaves the restaurant, vowing not to speak to her again. During the final show, Olivia finds out that her grandmother has been rushed to hospital. Olivia's Mother offers to drive her to the hospital so that she can be with her Grandmother. During the journey, they make peace. Jessica apologises to Olivia. Olivia accepts the apology.

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The Final Hurdles

Chapter 1

Olivia stood in the stable with her chestnut horse, Tiger Lily, grooming and getting her ready for a hack. She put her hand in her pocket for the hoof pick but instead pulled out the hand written envelope that had dropped onto the doorstep that morning. Her name was scrawled across the envelope in messy but familiar handwriting. Olivia's stomach knotted uncomfortably every time she looked at it but she couldn't help pulling the letter out of the envelope and reading it just one more time.

The letter was from her Mother, who had left when Olivia was six years old. She couldn't handle being an army wife any longer. One day, after Olivia left for school, Julia had packed her things and left. Olivia didn't hear from her for a year and after that, her mother had been in and out of her life every few months. Now, she was back in town and wanted to get back in touch with Olivia.

As Olivia read the letter, Tom came into the stable, back from taking his own horse, Humphrey, to the field for a well-deserved day off. Tom leant on the saddle and bridle hanging on Tiger Lily's door.

"Off out?" He asked, smiling at Olivia. Olivia almost dropped her letter as Tom's voice made her jump, she shoved it back into her pocket. "What's that?" Tom asked.

"Nothing," Olivia replied quickly, "List of books for school." She hoped he'd believe her lie. Olivia picked up the bridle from the door and slipped the bit into Tiger Lily's mouth. Tom tapped on the top of the door.

"I've got to go help Mum, have a good ride, I might see you when I come to get Humphrey in." Olivia nodded and waved at Tom as he left. She picked up the saddle and gently placed it on Tiger Lily's back.

As Olivia left the yard on Tiger Lily, looking forward to a long hack to help clear her mind, Jessica was on her way to the stable yard for the first time. Her grey thoroughbred was tied in the back of the lorry and her mother, Katherine, was staring ahead at the road, cursing drivers that made her slow down as they overtook cars parked on the side of the road. Jessica flipped through the pictures of her old yard and riding friends, silently, already missing her old life. The one where she wasn't the new girl.

"There's a girl at the new yard, she'll give you a run for your money if you're not careful." Katherine, told her. Jessica moved her long brown hair out of her face and looked at her mother.

"Oh, yeah?" She responded. Unsure whether her mother would encourage or berate her.

"You'll need to train much harder, this girl has real talent, I saw her riding when I visited the yard. We'll look into getting you a new trainer, but for now, the yard owner, Lauren or something like that, will have to do." Jessica looked back at her phone, now looking at pictures of herself in a dancing leotard, she beams at the camera, her smile showing in her eyes.

Olivia cantered along the path, slowing to a trot and finally a walk as they approached the gate to the field. Lambs jumped around and bleated in the field. Olivia watched as one skipped to its mother and head-butted her before beginning to feed.

"Looks like we can't go through the field today, Tiger, let's just head home, hey? Have a go at that fallen tree?" Tiger Lily's ears flickered forward as she heard Olivia's voice. , Olivia patted her shoulder before they turned around and she nudged Tiger Lily into a canter, the wind tangling her long hair behind her, making her wish a little that she'd tied her hair back before putting on her hat.

As Lorraine, a tall native American, the yard's owner brushed her Shetland, Jim, she heard the sound of tyres on the gravel of the yard's driveway. She put the brush down, assuming it was the new livery, arriving. She had only met Katherine once, but knew that she was booked for some private lessons with Jessica. She was doing her best to reserve judgement but she was prepared for Katherine to try and push her around, using her husband's earnings as a factor, but Lorraine didn't need Katherine's money and she wouldn't hesitate to ask her to leave if need be. Lorraine let herself out of Jim's stable and walked out to the driveway where Katherine was already climbing out of the driver's side of the lorry.

Lorraine rushed forward, a smile on her face and her hand out, ready to shake and greet Katherine.

"How was the drive?" She asked.

"Oh, you know, I'll get used to the idiot drivers around here, I'm sure." Katherine responded, ignoring Lorraine's outstretched hand. Lorraine turned to Jessica,

"And you must be Jessica, my new student, hey?" Jessica smiled at Lorraine,

"Only until we find a new trainer, Jessica's last trainer was an Olympic Gold Medallist," quipped Katherine.

Olivia turned up the driveway, the first thing she saw was the huge horse lorry in the driveway.

"New friends for you, Tiger." She smiled, "perhaps for me and Tom too, though I thought they were only bringing one horse." Sensing the tension between Lorraine and the new people as she approached them, Olivia nudged Tiger Lily as close to the barn as she could before swinging her leg high and gently dismounting. She led Tiger Lily into the barn to untack and groom her down after their long canter back. Jessica watched after her, wondering if she was the girl her mother had told her about on the journey over. She had a kind face, Jessica thought. Perhaps they'd be able to hack together. They looked around the same age. In her day dream of riding through woods and along the surf on the beach, Jessica heard her mother ask Lorraine about the size of the stable, the two women began to walk towards the barn but Katherine turned and told Jessica to put the ramp down and start sorting the tack in the lorry. She wanted the horse moved into the new stable as soon as possible so that she could get to her hair appointment in town that afternoon.

In Tiger Lily's stable, Olivia was gently sponging her off and brushing her after the hack, she picked out Tiger's feet, she was just finishing up when Lorraine put her head over the stable door.

"So, that's the new girl? What's her name?" Olivia asked.

"Jessica, I hope she'll fit in with y'all when she gets the chance. I need to go finish up with Jim, give me a shout tomorrow if you want that jump lesson." Lorraine smiled and headed back to Jim's stable. Katherine swept passed Tiger Lily's stable,

"Jessica," her shrill voice called, "you can get the horse out now." A few moments later, Jessica led Baby Blue Bullet passed the stable. Horses knickered as they passed, eager to meet their new neighbour. Olivia led Tiger Lily out to the field. Not long after Olivia had left the barn, Katherine left Jessica to carry on filling the water bucket while she went to get some hay nets. The bucket filled quickly and Katherine still hadn't returned from the lorry so Jessica decided to have a look around the small barn. There were only three other horses in the barn and two empty stables. One was Tiger Lily's, the other, Humphrey's. On top of the grooming box by Tiger Lily's stable, Jessica found the letter to Olivia from her mother. She opened the envelope and read the letter. She was so engrossed, she didn't hear Olivia coming back into the barn. Olivia coughed to make herself known. Jessica held out the letter.

“This was on the floor, didn’t want it trodden on, is it yours?” She asked sweetly. Olivia took the letter back from her and hesitantly returned the smile she was getting.

“I’m Olivia, Maybe you could join Tom and me on a hack one day?” Jessica opened her mouth to respond when Katherine barked at her from the barn doors.

“Jessica, I don’t know if you’re expecting me to bring all the hay nets but I can assure you that is not happening. You can chat another time.”

Without another word, Jessica ran back to her mother and the lorry. Olivia let herself into the stable next to Tiger Lily’s.

“Hey Ozzy Old Man,” she mumbled to the cob lazily eating his hay. “Want me to clean some of this up?” She let herself out of the stable again, returning minutes later with a wheelbarrow to muck out her Granny’s horse. Her Granny usually came to the stables with her, but today was her monthly lunch with the girls while their husbands played golf.

That night, Jessica sat at home, eating dinner with the housekeeper, Julia, while her parent’s went out with her father’s new associates.

“How did you find the new stables?” Julia asked. Jessica shrugged.

“There was a girl called Olivia there, she seemed nice. I can tell she has some drama though, there was a letter from her Mum asking to make up for something.” Julia frowned at Jessica’s obvious excitement for drama.

“You shouldn’t have read her letter, that was probably private.” Again, Jessica shrugged her shoulders. She pushed her empty plate forward and left the table.

Julia shook her head at the young girl.

Meanwhile, Olivia was enjoying her monthly pizza night with her Dad, James. They’d both polished off their pizzas and were waiting for pudding when James asked Olivia about her ride that afternoon.

“It was good, there were lambs in the field so we couldn’t go in but we did find a fallen tree,” Olivia smiled. James shook his head at his daughter.

“Of course you did. How about I go with you tomorrow? We could go to the beach, I know Granny didn’t get out on Ozzy today, the old boy could probably do with the exercise.”

“Really,” Olivia asked, “Are you sure? It’s been a while since you’ve ridden?”

“Oh please, it’s like riding a bike...or a horse.” James laughed at his own joke while Olivia rolled her eyes and shook her head. They were interrupted by the waitress, delivering their pudding. Once she’d left James sat up, he cleared his throat and smoothed down his shirt.

“I need to talk to you about something, Livvy.” James began. Olivia looked at him suspiciously, putting down the spoon she had only just picked up. “I’ve got to go to Scotland for training.” James told his daughter, watching her expression fall as the news sunk in.

“How long?” She asked quietly.

“I have three weeks in Scotland, after that, I have two in Germany.” James fought to keep his eyes on Olivia, not on his plate. He knew that she hated him going away.

“Can’t you tell them no?” Olivia asked, rhetorically, she knew that he couldn’t say no to the army, at least he was no longer fighting. “When do you leave?”

“Wednesday,” James answered. “I’ll still be able to take you to school for the start of year and I’ll be back before you know it.” He said after a brief pause. Olivia nodded and picked up her spoon and began to play with her melting ice cream. She hardly said another word while they were at the restaurant. When they got home, she said goodnight to her grandparents and went straight to bed. Olivia didn’t sleep well that night, every time she was about to drop off to sleep, she thought about her revolving door of parents. To her, it seemed that as her father was leaving her mother returned and when her father

returned, she was sure her mother would leave again. At two in the morning, Olivia text Tom, he was sleeping and did not reply.

The next morning, Maggie, Olivia's Granny took her into town to get the last few bits of school supplies. She tried talking to Olivia about James' work trip, but she was not interested. She wanted to get her school things and go home as quickly as possible so that she could ride Tiger Lily. Tom had responded to her late night message when he woke up and had promised he'd do what he could to make her feel better when he saw her at the stables that afternoon. As soon as she was home, Olivia ran upstairs to change. James called to her to wait for him as she dashed back down the stairs and towards the door. "Oh, you were being serious?" She replied to him. "Shouldn't you be packing or something instead?" She snapped. Her Granny stared at her and scolded her for her cheek.

"It's okay," James said quietly, "you two go, I need to go to the shop anyway." James turned and headed for the kitchen. Olivia opened the front door and left, not looking back at Maggie who was shaking her head.

Olivia rode dressage tests in the sand school, drilling them into her mind, desperately trying to perfect them for the livery yard show that was coming up in a few weeks. As she came out of the sand school, her Granny was taking Ozzy, the black cob out of his stable, on her way to put him in the field. She returned in a few minutes and began to help Olivia untack and groom Tiger Lily.

"Do you want to tell me about what was going on with you earlier?" Maggie asked. Olivia simply shrugged and mumbled an incoherent response

The beginning of the school year was a mild Tuesday. As he did every year, James drove Olivia to school, when they reached the gate, he turned down the engine and turned to look at his daughter.

"Big year, this one, Sweetheart. You did great in your exams, let's keep it up yeah? You'll be off to uni before you know it." This year's speech was considerably shorter than it had been in the previous years. Jessica's send off to her new school couldn't have been more different. As Katherine pulled up to the school gates in their Range Rover, she took a sip of coffee from her travel mug. Jessica was out of the car and half way to the school's door before Katherine could even think the word goodbye. She was still angry about having to leave her friends at her private school and couldn't understand why her mother wouldn't let her board full time for her sixth year. She had no idea that Katherine's heart froze every time she thought about not being able to see her daughter achieve every goal in person. She couldn't bear for her to be living away just yet.

Chapter 2

On the first day of term, Olivia only saw Jessica at lunch time. She hadn't even realised that she was in the same school as her, but a friend told her that they shared a class. She was horrified when Olivia suggested they ask her to sit with them, apparently Jessica had been rude when they'd tried to introduce themselves. Tom sat at the table, smelling faintly of cigarettes while the two girls were talking about Jessica, he also suggested they invite her to join.

"Even the upper sixths are talking about her already." Olivia and Tom's friend, Lora, exclaimed at Tom's suggestion.

"I only know her from the yard." Tom defended glancing quickly at Olivia.

On Wednesday afternoon, Olivia walked home from school to find James' suitcase packed and waiting by the front door. James was in the living room with his parents watching a quiz show when Olivia walked in to the room.

"Get changed, Love, and then we'd best make a move, don't want to be missing any planes now, do we?" Maggie was forcing her happiness, trying to cheer Olivia up. Silently, Olivia turned and went upstairs to her bedroom, quickly stripping off her school uniform and changing into jeans and a t shirt. When she got to the bottom of the staircase James was giving her Gramps a man-hug before they left and James drove to the airport.

Tom had offered to take Tiger Lily to the field for Olivia, he knew how much she hated her Father going away. As he was rugging Tiger Lily, Jessica poked her head over the stable door.

"Where's your little girlfriend today?" She asked, "Looked pretty miserable at school today, then again, with that horse, it could just be her face." Tom ignored Jessica until she went away.

As the car pulled into the airport, Maggie turned into her seat to look at Olivia.

"Lorraine gave me your entry form for the show today," she told her, hoping that the news of the autumn show in a fortnight would cheer her Granddaughter up, it didn't. Olivia gripped the car door handle, willing it to lock and stop her father leaving. As slowly as she could, Olivia got out of the car and followed James and Maggie into the sprawling expanse of the airport. They reached the check in desk, Olivia could feel the tears sting her eyes as they began to fall. James held her tight, holding enough strength for the two of them, he hated leaving her but he loved his job and knew he was making a difference in the world, keeping people safe was his calling.

"It's only five weeks, I'll call and skype you every night." He promised. Olivia stepped back and watched as James climbed to steps to the departure lounge.

On the way home from the airport, Olivia and Maggie stopped in a shopping centre. It was something they did every time James had to go away for work. Together, they would look around the shops for an hour or so before picking a restaurant to eat at. This time around, they chose a chicken restaurant that hadn't been in the shopping centre when they'd last visited. As they sat themselves at the already greasy seats, a young waitress handed them a menu each and disappeared off to serve another table.

"Is everything okay?" Maggie asked Olivia, over the last few days she hadn't been able to shake off the feeling that there was more to Olivia's mood than James' departure for training. Taking a deep breath, Olivia sat at the kitchen table and began to tell Maggie about the letter from her Mother.

"And now Dad's left and she's back and I know you and Gramps don't like her. I just wish that Dad hadn't gone away right now. I hate that he's left again." Olivia looked down, forcing herself to stop the tears that had clouded her vision. Maggie watched her with softening eyes. She hated it when James left too. It was better now that he wasn't fighting but sometimes she felt like Olivia's Mother more than she did her Grandmother. "Well," sighed Maggie, she wasn't Julia's biggest fan, she'd never forgiven her for abandoning Tom and Olivia all those years ago. "I'm not going to tell you what to do," Maggie began again, "but don't think that just because she's your mother, you have to bend to her every whim." Olivia sighed.

"I doubt she'll stick around anyway. You know what she's like, there's bound to be some country she hasn't explored yet. I guess I should see her before she goes again." Maggie opened her mouth to respond to her granddaughter but thought better of it, she tried her hardest not to badmouth Julia in front of Olivia.

A knock on Jessica's bedroom door made her look up from her laptop screen, she'd been trying to call some of her old friends on Skype but hadn't had any luck. Julia, the housekeeper, and Olivia's mother, opened the door. She smiled softly at the dark haired girl lying on the bed.

"Your dinner's ready." She told Jessica. Jessica smiled back and got up from her bed.

"Doing homework?" Julia asked,

"No, there's a girl at the yard, she's so good at dressage, I was just trying to watch some videos to learn some of the tests. If I don't win this show, Mum is going to kill me."

Jessica stressed as they walked down the wide staircase.

"It's not all about the winning though, is it? As long as you have fun."

"Tell Mum that." Jessica deadpanned and sat at the kitchen table which had a single plate of food on it. Julia sighed, although she knew that she was not going to be winning any mother of the year award, she was planning to stick around and try to make things up with Olivia this time around. She hoped that it wasn't too late for them. Julia left Jessica at the table and went to the laundry room to change the washing over when her phone vibrated with a text message. It was Olivia, she didn't want to see her. Julia felt her heart break. Her biggest regret was not taking Olivia with her when she left James ten years ago.

Olivia didn't sleep well that night. She'd heard her Grandparents talking about her mother before she went to bed and made the decision to cut contact with her. She'd spent all night wondering if she'd made the best decision but ultimately, Maggie was right. Julia would stick around for a few months, there would be a few meals out, some shopping trips and then she'd be gone again. Olivia's poor night's sleep had a negative effect on her mood.

"Who peed in your cheerios?" Her friend Lucy grinned as they walked down the school hallway.

"She's probably just thinking about how second rate her horse is." Jessica's voice popped up as she walked around them, hardly bothering to even look at Lucy and Olivia.

"Who even is that?" Lucy asked, angrily. Olivia shook off the insult and carried on her way to class, dragging along a fuming Lucy, who was threatening to teach Jessica a thing or two about second rate horses. During the morning lessons, Olivia stared at the clock in every classroom, wishing for lunch time. When the bell finally rang, she sat with Tom, Ed, Lucy and their friend Erin. Lucy, unable to drop Jessica's comment from that morning was glaring at Jessica sat a few tables away, on her own.

"Did you want a lift to the stables?" Tom asked Olivia. Olivia nodded with a smile.

Everyone stood up when they had finished eating and made their way out of the hall.

Olivia stopped and told them to carry on without her, she'd catch up. She made her way to Jessica who was still sat alone. Jessica didn't look up as Olivia took a seat opposite her.

"Hey, if you're at the yard tonight, Tom and I are leaving straight from school. You could come with us if you like." Finally Jessica looked at Olivia.

"I don't carpool with misfits." She responded with her nose in the air. Olivia stood and turned on her heels. She was done trying to be nice to Jessica, from now on she would just leave her to her own devices. Olivia caught up with her friends who had watched the entire exchange. Tom leant over to say something in Olivia's ear,

"For the love of God, please beat her at the show." He smirked.

Tom was just as excited about the horse show as Olivia but he didn't do it to win like Olivia did. Tom just enjoyed riding.

At the yard, Olivia was getting increasingly frustrated. She'd spent the last ten minutes looking for her brushing boots and knew that she'd put them on the hook by her saddle the last time she used them. She double checked in her grooming box. Tiger-Lily stamped impatiently in her stable. Olivia gave up looking and pulled her horse out of the stable. Tom left his own stable to give Olivia a leg up and walked to the sand school with her to open the gate. Olivia warmed Tiger Lily up around the outside of the school before pointing her to the first in a series of jumps. Olivia pushed Tiger Lily until they had completed the course of jumps in less than a minute. She let her cool off, riding her on the buckle and stretching her muscles out. Olivia dismounted in the sand schoolwalked out with Tiger Lily following her freely.

"You'll need more practice than that to beat me at the show." Jessica grinned as she passed Olivia. Olivia ignored her, taking Tiger Lily outside to untack her and wash her legs off. She'd just turned the hose off when Lorraine walked towards her carrying a pair of brushing boots. She'd found them in her food bin on the other side of the yard. Olivia had no idea how she boots had ended up there. Olivia took her brushing boots from Lorraine and thanked her for finding them before she led Tiger Lily back into the stables. Tom came out of his stable, his horse Humphrey shining from the long groom he had been given.

"I see you found your brushing boots. Look, I was wondering, do you fancy going to the cinema on Saturday?" Olivia accepted Tom's invitation and suggested that they invite the rest of their friendship group in school. Tom blushed. "I thought maybe it could be just us. If you don't mind that is." Tom added in a mumble. Olivia couldn't help but smile at him. She'd like that, she told him. As Olivia went to put her hand on Tom's arm, Tiger Lily nudged her forward. They both laughed and Olivia put Tiger Lily back in her stable. When Olivia had finished putting a sweat rug on Tiger Lily, she went to see if Maggie had finished grooming Ozzy. She hadn't just yet but Olivia could hear, Katherine barking orders from the sand school and decided to watch Jessica ride.

Katherine was stood in the centre of a maze of jumps, lower than the ones Olivia had just been jumping, Jessica rode passed and turned towards a cross pole, as she was preparing for the jump Baby Blue Bullet stopped dead. Jessica growled in frustration and smacked the horse on the shoulder with the short crop that she was holding.

"Goodness sake Jessica. Again." Katherine barked. Jessica took a deep breath, corrected her position in the saddle and turned to the jump again, the horse made the jump this time, just. Deciding she'd seen enough, Olivia turned and left the sand school. At the sound of a jump falling, Jessica was threatened with the sale of her horse.

Chapter 3

The car park of the yard was busier than ever. The sounds of grooming brushes and horses being tacked up echoed around the stables. In the sand school, a large crowd had gathered in the viewing area, ready to watch the day's event.

Lorraine walked through the stable block, giving everyone a five-minute warning before the first class. Olivia looked at the list of classes she'd stuck onto Tiger Lily's stable door. She took a deep breath and gently slid the bit of the bridle into the horse's mouth. Maggie put her head over the stable door.

"Are you ready, Sweetheart?" She asked gently. Olivia nodded and unbolted the stable door. A bell rang through the yard. It was time to start the show. Olivia led Tiger Lily out of the stable. Both horse and rider were sparkling clean.

"You're going to want to tighten that plait," Jessica's mother sneered as Olivia passed. Olivia carried on walking, not giving Katherine the satisfaction of a reaction. Behind Olivia, Tom led Humphrey. He had tied his blonde hair back into a small, tidy bun to keep it out of the way. After Tom, Jessica led Baby Blue Bullet into the sand school. Once everyone had filed into the school, they did two laps on each rein before turning into the middle for an inspection from Lorraine. Lorraine made sure that not an inch of horse or tack had been missed in preparation for the class, keeping score on a sheet she held on her clipboard. After a few moments, Lorraine went to the box of rosettes she had in the corner of the sand school. Lucy, a small girl that shared her horse with her twin sister, came third, Jessica was awarded second and Olivia proudly attached the first place rosette to Tiger Lily's bridle. The other people in the class left the sand school while Lucy, Jessica and Olivia did their lap of honour.

The next class was Introductory Dressage, a class designed by Lorraine and mainly intended for the younger children that she taught in weekly lessons, however, Katherine had insisted that Jessica join the class too. Being the most experience rider, and the oldest rider by around six years, Jessica completed the simple test without a single fault and came first in the class. As she left the school following her lap of honour, Olivia and Tom congratulated her and struggled to not mention the age of her competitors.

Olivia was the first to compete in the medium dressage class. She took a deep breath as she mounted Tiger Lily. Tom walked with her to the gate of the sand school.

"You'll do great," he grinned at her and patted her leg gently as she nudged Tiger Lily forward. The bell rang and Olivia made her way up the centre line, smiling at Lorraine in the judges block. Once the test was done and Olivia had made her way up the centre line again, she felt herself let out a big breath, she hadn't realised that she'd been holding. Jessica glared at Olivia as she left the sand school, Olivia simply wished her luck, tired of the animosity between them. Tom shook his head at Jessica but remained leaning on the fence to watch her test while Olivia took Tiger Lily to the stable to untack before lunch. It hadn't taken long for Olivia to untack but while she was, Jessica began her dressage test. It could be classed as the world's worst ridden test. As Lorraine rang the bell for Jessica to begin, Baby Blue Bullet bolted. When she was under control again, a flustered Jessica began to walk up a very wonky centre line. The next few steps of the test were relatively uneventful, until Jessica forgot the test, she turned a circle, racking her brain desperately for the next step when her mother's voice boomed across the school.

"Jessica Lynn Mayweather, how hard was it for you to learn a simple test?"

Jessica rode back up the centre line, saluted Lorraine and left the school. Katherine didn't follow her to the stable.

By the time Olivia made her way back to the sand school, it was time for Maggie to do her test on Ozzy, not the typical dressage pony. As they watched, Tom relayed the details of Jessica's disaster to Olivia. Maggie was just finishing her test, when Olivia felt a tap

on her shoulder. She turned and felt her face turn into a beaming smile as she saw James, standing behind her.

Olivia's Grandfather had picked James up from the airport so that they could both be there to cheer on Olivia and Maggie. Olivia felt her eyes well up with tears. James had never missed a show before.

Jessica didn't place in the dressage, but Olivia came first. In Blue's stable, while everyone else was eating their lunch or walking the course for the show jumping class that was coming next, Jessica sat in the corner. Katherine was off talking to someone on the phone. Her mother would kill her if she didn't at least place in the championship and Olivia already had more points than she did. Blue nudged her head with her nose.

"Hey Blue," she mumbled, and stroked her nose. She nudged her again, earning half a smile from Jessica.

As Tom's parents were both at work, he was invited to join Olivia and her family for a picnic lunch. They talked mainly about how school had been and how James was finding it being away. It wouldn't be long until he went away to Germany for a fortnight. Olivia told James about the hostility she was getting from Jessica. He encouraged her to rise above it, it didn't sound to him as though Jessica had a very happy home life. Treat others as you would like to be treated was a big thing that James lived by.

Tom and Olivia wanted to get ready for the show jumping and walk the course before they brushed the horses down and tacked up again. They had the course just about learned and were leaving the sand school when Jessica barged passed them.

"You may be ahead for now, but I've seen your jumping so it won't be for long." Jessica snarled. Olivia shrugged off the comment, she had seen Katherine talking to Jessica before lunch and it hadn't looked pleasant at all.

Olivia was brushing Tiger Lily and bent down to change brushes when she heard a familiar voice.

"Excuse me, can you point me in the direction of Jess?" the woman asked Tom. Olivia slowly stood up and walked to the stable door.

"Liv?" The woman noticed Olivia. Katherine's footsteps clicked along the floor.

"It's about time you got here." She quipped at Julia. Julia handed Katherine a basket and she turned and headed back in the direction of Jessica's stable.

"What do you have to do with the Mayweathers?" Olivia asked her mother, a crease forming in her brow. Julia was about to answer when James turned the corner into the stable block.

"Julia," he said in shock. "I didn't know you were back in town." Julia looked between James and Olivia before excusing herself. For the rest of the show, Olivia was distracted. She had known that her mother was in town but not that she was involved with Jessica's family. Why had she let Katherine talk to her like that?

Soon it was nearing five o'clock and time for the championship scores to be announced.

All the competitors were gathered in the sand school as Lorraine explained the championship scores would be carried on over the next two shows of the season.

"In third place," Lorraine smiled, "we have Alex Charles." Alex stepped forward to receive his sash and rosette before returning to the group.

"In second place, we have Jessica Lynn Mayweather," Jessica flounced forward, flipping her long brown hair over her shoulder as she was handed her rosette and sash.

"And finally, first place." Lorraine smiled and beckoned James into the sand school. She handed him the sash, rosette and trophy. "Congratulations, Olivia Hendy." Beside her, Maggie and Tom clapped loudly, nudging her forward to receive her prizes from her Dad. Lorraine thanked everyone for attending and closed the show. Everyone began to clear away. Olivia hugged James tightly as her Grandfather, Granny and Tom all came to join them.

Olivia and Tom headed back to the stables where Olivia added the championship rosette to her growing collection on the door. Tiger Lily nudged her pockets for some treats, Olivia laughed at the horse and gave her a handful of mints.

“You deserve it, you gorgeous girl.” She reached up to stroke her head. “Ready for some dinner?” Tiger Lily snorted, before chewing on some hay from the hay net. Olivia let herself out of the stable and went to the food room, carrying buckets for Ozzy and Tiger Lily. As she was filling the buckets, Olivia heard Katherine’s voice, sharper than she’d ever heard it before.

“Second place, is first place for those that failed.”

“I’ll do better next time, Mum. I’ll win it next time.” Jessica sounded quieter, timid even.

“Next time? Next time that girl will get more points, she’ll stay ahead of you. You’re going to be playing catch up the whole time and what were you even thinking in that dressage test?” “I’m sorry.” Jessica mumbled.

“You will be when I sell that animal.” Olivia heard Katherine march away and Jessica call after her. She opened the door to leave the feed room, almost walking straight into a teary eyed Jessica.

“Are you okay?” Olivia asked gently. Jessica turned on her heels and marched away.

Olivia felt terrible that she’d been caught eavesdropping and that Katherine had spoken to Jessica that way. She knew that Katherine trained Jessica hard but didn’t think that she’d react that way to a second place.

Tom was leaning on Tiger Lily’s door again when Olivia returned from the feed room.

“Hey, I thought we should rain check the cinema tonight, I want you to have as much time with your dad as you can. And I guess you need to talk through some ‘mum’ stuff.” He put air quotes around the word Mum. Olivia smiled and suggested they go on Thursday.

“We can give Humphrey and Tiger the night off.” Tom smiled in agreement and hugged Olivia goodbye.

Chapter 4

On Sunday, the day after the show, Olivia and her Dad went for a ride together. James told Olivia about his training and some of the young people that he had been working with and helping to train harder. In turn, Olivia told him about her new teachers, how she was getting on at school and Jessica. Olivia had noticed more and more of her things going missing.

"I usually find it before anything drastic happens. I thought, at first that it was me, and I was just being careless, but there are things I know I haven't touched. And my brushing boots, why would they be in Lorraine's food bins? I don't even go in there." Olivia wondered aloud to her father.

"You should tell Lorraine," James told his daughter, squeezing Ozzy forward to keep up with Olivia. "Tell Granny too, she can keep an eye out when you're not there." Olivia nodded in agreement, without any real intention of following through. As annoying as it was, she didn't want to tell tales on Jessica and she had no proof that it was her, after all. As James and Olivia came to the end of the bridle path, they were unaware that Julia had just pulled into the car park of the stables. She got out of the car and looked around her, pulling her hair forward over her face. She walked directly into the stable block that she had seen Olivia in the day before. She paused as she got to Tiger Lily's empty stable. Tom came out of Humphrey's stable and was on his way to the hay store when he spotted Julia.

"Can I help?" He asked, Julia turned around. "Oh. Hey, you know Olivia, don't you?"

"Yeah, she's my um," Tom paused. "She's my friend, she's out on a ride right now, shouldn't be too long. Anything I can help with?" Julia shook her head and said that she'd wait. Tom nodded and carried on his way to the hay store, empty hay nets over his shoulder.

A few minutes later, Julia looked up at the sound of horse hooves coming towards the stable block as James and Olivia returned from their ride. They both dismounted, James led Ozzy into the stable and tied him up,

"I'll untack him in a little while. I'll leave you to it." He walked away, not looking back. He didn't get on with Julia. He still had not forgiven her for walking out and hated to see the way that she came in and out of Olivia's life. For Olivia's sake, he chose to simply not be around Julia when he could help it. Julia and Olivia watched James leave the stable block in the direction of the sand school. Julia turned to Olivia with a beaming smile as she opened the stable door to allow Olivia to take Tiger Lily in.

"I hoped you'd be back soon. That boy with the long hair told me you'd gone for a ride. He seems nice. I think he has a crush on you." Julia grinned as she leant on the stable door again. Olivia, who had begun to untack stopped and looked at her mother.

"What do you have to do with Jessica?" she asked bluntly. Olivia didn't want Julia to start talking as though she'd never left again. Julia explained that she was a housekeeper for Jessica's family. Julia had good hours and good pay. She'd been working for the Mayweather's when they lived in Wales and when she found out that they were moving to Gloucester, she agreed to move too, in the hope that she'd be able to reconnect with Olivia and they'd be able to build a relationship again. In her head, Olivia scoffed at the word 'relationship.' By the time Julia had left the yard, she and Olivia had a date for dinner in the week. Olivia felt a knot in her stomach, should she tell Granny? Her Dad wouldn't mind but Olivia knew how the rest of the family felt about Julia, but she was her Mum and as much as she'd felt disappointed by her in the past, she did want to try and build the relationship she'd scoffed at.

Tom and James returned a few minutes after Julia had left.

“Is everything okay?” James asked as he let himself into Ozzy’s stable and began to untack. Olivia nodded and continued untacking quietly. James decided not to push it any further until they were at the dinner table, enjoying a Sunday lunch prepared by Maggie. Maggie didn’t look impressed when Olivia told them all about Julia’s job and how she had asked to meet for dinner later that week. She didn’t mention that she had accepted the invitation. Not long after the dinner was tidied away, James’ taxi arrived. He gave Olivia a big hug before leaving. Once the taxi had turned the corner and Olivia could no longer see it, she went inside and upstairs to her bedroom. She pulled a box from under her bed and flicked through the photos that she had kept from before her mother left. There were photos from the zoo, from various holidays and a few wedding photos that Olivia had rescued when her father was burning them all.

The next day, Olivia was almost late for school. She’d overslept and needed her Grandpa to give her a lift so that she got to school just before the bell rang. As Olivia walked through the main doors, someone stuck their leg out in front of her. She tripped, just managing to break her fall with her hands. The few people that were around her sniggered at her as she took a second to try and understand what had happened. Tom had seen and stepped forward to help her up.

“Liv, here,” he smiled at her, offering her his hand. She took it and allowed him to pull her up. Looking around, Olivia saw Jessica standing next to her with Alice and Laura, two girls from Tom’s year, laughing. Alice and Laura were the closest thing the school had to ‘mean girls.’ Olivia had managed to stay under their radar, despite being friends with Tom and others in the year above. Now that Jessica was friends with them, it looked like Olivia’s days of peace were numbered.

“Send us a postcard next time,” Laura grinned.

“Just leave her alone, yeah?” Tom told them, turning to go to his form room.

“What’s she going to do? Tell her Mummy? Oh, wait.” Jessica grinned at Olivia who shook her head. For the rest of the day, Alice, Laura and Jessica used Olivia as a target for their fun, it was never anything serious, just irritating. Before PE, Alice had gone into the changing rooms and hidden Olivia’s gym kit leaving her with a ten-minute detention for forgetting it, or blocking her way into classrooms. By the end of the day, all Olivia wanted to do was go home, put on some comfy pyjamas, and watch some trash TV.

Olivia was lying on her bed watching ‘The Notebook,’ wearing gym leggings and a baggy jumper when her Grandpa knocked on the door. Tom had come to visit. Which wasn’t unusual, most Saturdays, Tom would come back with Olivia when they had finished at the yard. Olivia sat up and made sure she had no food around her mouth as Tom entered her room. Olivia’s Grandpa left the bedroom door open and went back downstairs. Tom jumped on the bed as Olivia paused the DVD. He grabbed a handful of the popcorn Olivia was munching her way through.

“How was the rest of your day? Didn’t see you at lunch.” Tom asked. Olivia explained that she had spent her lunch break in detention and then went to the library to finish off some homework. She told him all about her day trying to avoid Jessica and her new friends.

“They said some stuff to me about you and I just thought you should know.” Tom began. Olivia rolled her eyes. He’d been told that she had said mean things about Humphrey and Tom’s riding. Olivia sighed.

“I’d never say that. You know, I wouldn’t.” She vented. Tom put his hand on her back comfortingly.

“I know,” he replied. Olivia groaned. If they’d said that to Tom, what had they said to other people. “Let’s go for a drive.” Tom suggested.

Julia knocked on Jessica's bedroom door, a pile of clean washing in her hand. She heard Jessica call from inside and pushed the door open. She smiled as she entered the room. As she put the washing down on a chair by the window she glanced at the screen of the laptop Jessica had open in front of her. On the screen, Jessica was editing pictures of groups of girls from her old school.

"What's that for?" Julia asked.

"Oh, nothing." Jessica replied. "I just wanted to practice some editing. I'm just going to delete these after." She smiled sweetly.

"well don't stay on that all night, and put these clothes away when you get a chance, okay?"

Julia left the room and closed the door behind her.

During their lunch break at school, Olivia was telling Luke about her dinner date with her mother that night, when Lucy walked up to the table and handed Olivia a knife.

"What's this for?" Olivia asked, frowning in confusion.

"For the next time you want to stab me in the back." She half shouted, half growled.

Before Olivia had a chance to follow Lucy as she stormed away, the bell rang for lessons. Olivia stared after her for a few seconds before getting up to go to class.

Olivia walked into the stable block, Tiger Lily stuck her head over the door and whinnied in greeting, a smile appeared on Olivia's frowning face as she felt the stress lift off her shoulders. Tom was already in Humphrey's stable picking out his feet. Olivia stopped at the stable door and told Tom about her dinner plans with her Mother.

"Will you cover for me?" She asked, "just tell Granny that I'm with you?" Tom looked unsure. "Please?" Olivia looked up at Tom, begging him with her eyes. He let out a sigh.

"Fine, but I need you to text me when you're on your way home and buy the popcorn at the cinema on Thursday." Olivia returned the smile that had crept onto Tom's face and went to see Tiger Lily. Jessica had overheard their conversation and quietly made her way into the tack room once she saw Olivia start to groom Tiger Lily. Jessica crept to Tiger Lily's saddle and swapped the stirrups around, as she had finished, she heard footsteps coming so ran as quietly as she could, hiding behind a rack of rugs.

Olivia picked up her saddle and bridle and left the tack room as quickly as she entered it. Jessica waited a minute before she left the tack room herself and returned to grooming Baby Blue.

As Olivia went to mount Tiger Lily, she noticed that the rubber band of her safety stirrups was the wrong way around. She had only ridden two days before and knew for sure that they were the right way then. Quickly, she turned her stirrup around before getting on and nudging Tiger Lily forward, out of the stable block and towards the short bridle path. She wanted to get rid of her nervous energy before she met her mother.

In the fast food restaurant, Olivia and Julia sat opposite each other. Olivia heard all about Julia's time in Australia, where she had stayed for a month and a half with her friend. She had also been to Scotland for a short while where she'd stayed in a castle for Olivia's Grandfather's seventieth birthday. Olivia didn't know her Grandparents on Julia's side of the family, she'd only recently reconciled with them after an argument they'd had before Olivia was born. Olivia told her Mother about her horse riding and the show that was coming up in just under two weeks' time.

"Jessica's sweet, don't you think? Are you two friends?" Julia asked, Olivia grimaced in response.

“No,” she responded flatly. Julia told her about Jessica’s tough time at home, but Olivia was not interested in hearing about Jessica’s tough life with a father home at seven thirty every night and a mother that was always around.

“Shouldn’t you be standing up for me? You do remember that I am actually your daughter, not her?” Olivia’s voice was filled with acidity.

“Jessica’s struggling to settle in, I’m surprised you’re acting like this towards her, Olivia.” Olivia’s mother was sharp, to the point.

“You know what, I did try. She was horrible to me. I tried again, she was horrible and then gets her friends to join in and can I remind you that you left when I was six to go on these ridiculous mid-life crisis adventures to Australia so you haven’t been around enough to be surprised by what I do, perhaps we should keep it that way and you can go Mother Jessica all you like, not that you know how to do the job.” Olivia’s mother looked as though she’d been slapped in the face as Olivia stood up from the table and marched out of the restaurant, hiding the angry tears in her eyes.

Olivia walked the two mile journey home, while her mother drove the short five mile drive to the Mayweather’s. She got out the car, all the lights on the ground floor were turned off, she made her way up the stairs and knocked gently on Jessica’s bedroom door. Jessica called her in.

“How was it?” She smiled, Julia smiled back at her,

“Great,” she lied, “get ready for bed now, okay.”

Olivia pushed open the front door and walked to the living room, expecting to see both her Grandparents. Maggie had gone to bed with a headache earlier that evening.

“Is everything okay?” Olivia’s Grandpa asked. Olivia nodded and mumbled something about going to check on the horses, quickly she turned and left the house again, leaving her Grandpa calling after her that it was too late at night to go now, but she’d already left.

Tiger Lily was lying on her bed of shavings when Olivia slid back the bolt on her stable door. Olivia smiled and sat down beside the horse, laying her head on Tiger’s side.

“You okay, Tiger?” Olivia asked, “Feeling a little sleepy, hey? Me too. It’s been a long day. I went for lunch with Mum. It was awful. I should have known it would be. I bet even you could have told me. What makes her like Jessica so much anyway? Why couldn’t she just stick around?” She told Tiger Lily about how she was dreading school because she’d have to face Jessica and her friends. As the sound of footsteps, Olivia stood up alarmed. Lorraine was walking down the stable block in her pyjamas and dressing gown. Lorraine had come to check the yard after seeing the light from the barn when she looked out the window.

“I didn’t realise how late it was, I’ll go home now.” Olivia let herself out of the stable and said a goodbye to Tiger Lily. She walked around Lorraine, but stopped when she was called back.

“I’ve moved your tack into my tack room, Tom said that someone seems to have been messing with it.” Olivia thanked her and Lorraine returned her a smile. “If you need to talk to anyone Olivia, you can come to me, you know.” Olivia nodded and rushed out of the stable block.

The house was quiet when Olivia got home, her Grandpa had fallen asleep in front of the news. Olivia gently nudged him awake and they both trudged up the staircase to bed.

Chapter 5

Olivia had another sleepless night. She spent hours tossing and turning. It felt that she'd only been asleep for half an hour when Granny was calling her awake from the bedroom door. She stretched out in her bed and dragged herself to the bathroom for a shower. She replayed her argument with her mother over and over again in her head and the rain hitting the bathroom window was not helping Olivia's mood. Less than an hour after getting out of bed, Olivia was walking through the school gates. Jessica and her friends were gathered in a huddle. Jessica stepped forward, a smug grin on her face.

"Hey, your mum said that it was the worst meal out she'd ever had."

"Oh yeah," Olivia sighed. "Not surprised, Julia doesn't like the truth."

Olivia walked passed Jessica's friends as her Granny walked through the automatic doors of the doctor's surgery. She took her number and sat down patiently amongst the coughing and spluttering.

"Margaret Hendy." The doctor called from the hallway. Maggie took a deep breath stood up and followed the sound of the doctor's voice.

In the baron room, Maggie sat opposite Dr Mitchell.

"I've been getting the shakes a lot, I feel tired all the time and I've noticed occasionally that my eyes go a bit blurry. I've booked an appointment with the optician for next week for that."

The doctor looks concerned as he types at his computer. He takes a deep breath and looks back at Maggie.

"I'm going to refer you to the hospital for a scan, just so we can get a bit of a clearer view of any neurological or spinal issues." Maggie nods.

Tom had given Olivia a lift to the stables straight from school. Together, they tacked up and went for a ride. When they arrived back at the yard, Julia was waiting for them.

"Why do you insist on ambushing me here?" Olivia spat out bitterly in her Mother's direction.

"Olivia, we need to talk about last night." Julia sighed, stepping back as Olivia walked towards the stable door and opened it.

"Olivia," Julia tried again, "I may have left when you were six but that doesn't make me any less your mother."

Olivia spun around from untacking Tiger Lily. "Yes, it does. You know nothing about me. How did I break my arm when I was ten? When did I get my first period? Who was my first boyfriend? You don't know any of this. You know who does? Granny, she is the one that has raised me while you have been off gallivanting and Dad has been at work, but she shouldn't have had to and you are the one that will have to deal with that consequence now." Overhearing Olivia's voice began to rise, Tom left his own stable to see what the fuss was about.

"I think you should leave." He firmly told Julia. She looked between Tom and Olivia before sighing, completely defeated. She walked away, desperately trying not to look back at her daughter. Tom let himself into Tiger Lily's stable. He wrapped his arms around Olivia and she melted into him, feeling the tension roll off her shoulders.

"Did I just see your mother leaving the driveway?" Maggie's voice echoed through the stable block. Tom and Olivia sprang apart. Maggie reached the stable. "What have you two been up to?"

"Oh, we just went for a ride. There's a fallen tree, it's a pretty good jump. What are you up to?" Olivia forced a smile.

"I'm just going to put Ozzy in the field for a few days. I think he deserves a little holiday." Maggie smiled. Olivia frowned.

“Granny, you’ve not ridden him in a week. What does he need a holiday from?” Olivia frowned. Her Granny just smiled and went to Ozzy’s stable to rug him up. Tom and Olivia frowned at each other.

Once everything was done at the stables, Tom and Olivia both got changed before heading to the cinema for their date. Jessica had been watching them quietly from her stable and was waiting for them to leave. She knew that in the next couple of days, Olivia would be bathing Tiger Lily ready for the show. Jessica had snuck into Lorraine’s tack room while Olivia and Tom were out on their hack. She’d had taken the shampoo that she’d seen Olivia use on Tiger Lily’s white socks and poured blue dye into it. She shook the bottle and placed it back into Olivia’s grooming kit, hoping that she hadn’t disturbed anything else.

Tom and Olivia came out of the cinema. In one hand, Tom held half a bucket of popcorn, his other was around Olivia’s waist.

“Thank you,” Olivia smiled up at Tom. Tom looked down at her, his eyes softening as he squeezed her side a little tighter.

“You’re more than welcome.” There was a moment of comfortable silence. “What are you up to tomorrow night?”

“Probably getting Tiger ready for the show. She needs a bath for tack and turn out, did you see her socks after our ride?” Tom laughs low as he opens the car door for Olivia. As she sits down, he hands her the popcorn bucket and walks to his side of the car.

The drive from town to Olivia’s house was quiet. As Tom pulled up, Olivia undid her seatbelt, Tom leant forward and gave her a soft kiss. They pulled apart, smiling.

“I’ll see you tomorrow.” Tom smiled from ear to ear. Olivia got out of the car and watched Tom drive off from the front door. She turned to go inside, still clutching the popcorn, her cheeks were beginning to ache from smiling too much.

School had dragged. James had called her before she’d left for school to let her know he’d be home that night, just in time for the show, as he no longer needed to fly out to Germany. Tom promised that he’d help Olivia to bath Tiger Lily so that she could get home earlier to get ready for her Dad’s return.

Tom pulled Tiger Lily out of the stable and led her to the tie ring just outside of the barn as Olivia went to get her bottles of shampoo and tail conditioner. Jessica had arrived just as they were turning on the hose.

“You’ll need more shampoo to clean that horse.” She smirked as she walked into the barn to get Baby Blue Bullet ready for some jumping practice.

Olivia was focussing on Tiger Lily’s mane and tail so that she’d be able to plait them first thing in the morning for the class and left Tom to clean Tiger Lily’s legs and feet.

“Umm, Liv?” Tom called as they rinsed Tiger Lily off with a hose. “Are her legs meant to stay blue?” Olivia’s mouth dropped as the bubbles were rinsed off, leaving Tiger Lily’s socks a bright blue.

“What did you use?” Olivia cried. Tom picked up the bottle of shampoo Olivia had given him to wash the socks with. “It’s what I always use.”

“I think it looks good,” Tom grinned unhelpfully.

“I’m going to kill whoever did this.” Olivia threatened, grabbing the hose from Tom and rinsing the rest of the bubbles from Tiger Lily before she took her back into the barn to dry her off and put a fleece on her for the night. Olivia felt ready to burst into tears as she walked home, momentarily forgetting that her Dad was on his way home from his training.

Jessica left the sand school after yet another jumping session of her knocking poles and her mother barking orders and threatening to sell her horse. Feeling defeated, she

untacked Baby Blue Bullet and put his tack away. Nearly everyone had left so she walked the long way back from the tack room which took her passed Olivia's stable. Jessica couldn't help but laugh out loud as she took in the horse's blue socks. Tom stuck his head over his stable door.

"What's funny Jessica?" He asked sternly. She mumbled a response and darted back to her own stable where her mother was leaning against the wall complaining about being late to a dinner appointment if Jessica took much longer.

Olivia was enveloped in the biggest hug of her life as soon as she opened the front door. She jumped in fright, relaxing when she took in the scent of her Dad.

"You're home!" She cried, throwing her arms around his shoulders. She clung to him for what felt like an hour.

"Granny's gone to bed early, she was feeling tired. Why don't you, Gramps and I go out for food?" Olivia nodded excitedly and went upstairs to change. She turned around as she got to the top of the stairs she turned around.

"Dad, I'm really glad that you're home."

"Me too," James smiled.

Jessica and Katherine entered the house. Katherine went straight up the stairs to change for her dinner plans, while Jessica went into the kitchen, looking for a snack. Julia was in the kitchen, preparing Jessica's dinner.

"How was the jumping practice?" She asked with a smile. Jessica rolled her eyes.

"About as good as usual when Mum's there." She sighed, grabbing a yoghurt from the fridge.

"Hey you, don't fill up before your dinner."

"I won't." Jessica sat at the kitchen island. "Are you coming to watch the show tomorrow?" she asked.

"Not tomorrow, I've already made lunch for you. Don't worry, your mum will be there to support you."

"Yeah, support." Jessica snorted, jumping down from her seat and going up to her bedroom to shower and change into her riding gear.

The next morning, Olivia was at the stables just as the sun was rising. She'd bought some more shampoo with her from her shower room at home and was desperately trying to wash the blue dye from Tiger Lily's legs. When Tiger Lily started stamping in impatience, Olivia gave up, she'd managed to get a lot of the dye out, but the horse's socks still had a pretty noticeable blue tinge. Back in the stable, Olivia plaited Tiger Lily's mane into small buns and plaited her tail, tying the end up underneath the top of the plait. Tom was next to arrive at the barn, he made a beeline for Olivia and let himself into the stable. He enveloped Olivia in a hug.

"You look tired." He mumbled into her hair.

"I got up early to wash her legs again." Olivia sighed, stepping back from the hug.

"I'm pretty sure it was Jessica." Tom told her. Olivia felt her blood begin to boil. Tom put his hands on her shoulders and looked into her eyes. "The worst thing you can do is beat her today, okay?" Olivia nodded her head. Tom went to fill hay nets for Humphrey, leaving Olivia to finish grooming Tiger Lily.

The seating area of the sand school began to fill as Olivia tacked up Tiger Lily and mounted for the Tack and Turnout round. She didn't have strong hopes as her Dad led her to the gate of the sand school. Ten minutes later, Olivia rode out of the sand school, defeated by Jessica in the tack and turnout class. Tom and Olivia's Dad both walked to join her as she rode to the stable to prepare for the dressage class that was coming next.

Olivia placed higher than Jessica in the dressage class before lunch. She sat with Tom and her Dad during the lunch break, watching the jumping course be built.

“Hey, Dad, why is Granny not here?” Olivia asked.

“She said that she might come down later but she felt a little tired today.” He explained.

Olivia frowned. Tom looked at her and nudged her gently.

“Want to walk the course?” He smiled. It was one of the few courses that Tom had entered on Humphrey. As they walked around to the gate for the sand school, they could hear Jessica and Katherine talking about their game plan.

“You don’t need a game plan to beat her.” Tom smiled as he and Olivia stepped over the first low jump.

Eventually it was time for the championship scores to be announced. Lorraine stood in the centre of the sand school with a range of trophies and rosettes on the floor beside her.

“Everyone has tried their very best today. These scores will go forward to the next and final show. In third place, we have Gemma.”

The crowd erupted into applause and Gemma stepped forward with a grin from ear to ear as she accepted her small trophy and her rosette. She stood beside Lorraine as the second place was awarded to Jessica. The crowd applauded and meekly Jessica walked towards Lorraine to receive her prizes.

“And finally,” Lorraine grinned, Olivia felt her stomach drop, her points for the dressage were only slightly better than Jessica’s and due to Tiger Lily’s blue socks, she hadn’t placed in the tack and turn out. “In first place, we have Olivia.” The crowd clapped and Olivia heard her Dad’s cheer as she accepted her prize from Lorraine. The sand school emptied and as Olivia and Tom overheard Katherine, not so subtly, berating Jessica for her second place.

“Had you not pulled that ridiculous childish stunt with the blue dye, you probably wouldn’t have even placed second. What on earth were you even thinking? You really need to step up your game. Get that horse rugged so that we can go home.”

Chapter 6

Jessica stormed into the house, dropping her riding jacket on the floor.

“Jessica, pick that up now.” Katherine barked at her. Jessica ignored her mother’s command and continued stomping up the stairs to her bedroom. Julia came into the hallway from the kitchen.

“How did it go?” She asked, with a feeling that she already knew the answer from Jessica’s thundering up the stairs.

“Second place.” Katherine fumed. “and she only got that because she put dye in another girl’s shampoo. I just don’t know what to do with that girl. Whatever I do, she just doesn’t respond. She wants a horse, I get her a horse and then she doesn’t even place in little riding school shows. I need some wine.” Katherine rants, not allowing Julia to get a word in. Katherine stalked into the kitchen. Julia followed, to stir the pots boiling on the hob as Katherine took a bottle of wine from the fridge and pour herself a large glass.

“I thought bringing her here would be a new start, for all of us, but all that girl has done is fight me on everything. I don’t know what to do with her anymore. Perhaps it’s that new school? Whatever it is, she is driving me insane.” Katherine vented before stalking out of the kitchen and into the living room, closing the door behind her. Julia waited a few minutes before she slowly made her way up the stairs. She knocked gently on Jessica’s bedroom door and heard nothing in response. She opened the door, Jessica was lying on her bed, still in her riding gear. She had a sketch pad beside her and was drawing. Jessica closed the pad and sat up.

“Is she going to sell Blue?” Jessica asked quietly. Julia shook her head and sat on the end of the bed.

“I don’t know. I doubt it. Now, tell me what happened with this dye.” Julia pressed gently. Jessica sighed and sat up.

“It’s just that, Olivia is so good and she doesn’t have my mother barking at her, she just rides, she doesn’t even have lessons from Lorraine. I do and I can still hardly clear a round of jumps. She has you, and her Dad is always around at the shows when I can’t even tell you what time mine got home last night and Tiger Lily is a really good looking horse, even with blue socks.” Jessica hardly took a breath as she tried to justify her actions. Julia pursed her lips and looked at Jessica for a second.

“So you did it because you were jealous?”

“No, I did it because I wanted to win.”

“Okay,” Julia took a deep breath. “Olivia has been horse riding since she could walk, she’s worked very hard. It hasn’t been easy for her. Her Dad is in the army and he can get deployed for months at a time. She actually walked out of our dinner the other week and won’t talk my calls. You are a great rider, you just need to relax. Putting dye in Olivia’s shampoo was not the way to win.” Jessica looked at Julia. “I want you to really think about what you’ve done. I also want you to apologise to Olivia and mean it. She told me that you’ve been picking on her and if it’s true and if it is because you’re jealous, you have to know that it is the wrong, you can’t treat people that way.” Jessica sighed. Julia got up from the bed and made to leave the room, telling Jessica to put her riding gear in the washing basket when she went to shower.

Olivia and James got home after a celebratory dinner in town. Olivia’s Granny and Grandpa were in the living room watching the television.

“How did it go?” They asked as they heard the voices in the hallway. Olivia gave them a play by play of the show before going upstairs to shower and get ready for bed.

Dressed in her pyjamas and a thick dressing gown, Olivia walked down the stairs to make herself a hot chocolate. In the kitchen, she put the capsules in the coffee machine and

turned it on. She was wandering around the kitchen and picked up a folded letter addressed to Maggie. She scanned the letter which gave an appointment for a scan at the local hospital. She put the letter down and returned to the hot chocolate. As she was stirring, Maggie walked into the room.

“What’s that letter, Granny?” Olivia asked, trying her best to come across as only mildly interested.

“Oh, that’s nothing.” Maggie smiled. “How was Oz today?” She changed the subject.

“He was a bit bored. I think he misses you.”

“I’m sorry I missed the show, darling. I promise I’ll be at the next one.” Maggie gave Olivia a squeeze on the elbow. “Have a good sleep.” Granny shuffled out of the kitchen. Olivia took her hot chocolate up to her bedroom and took her phone out to send a good night text to Tom.

Sundays were Olivia’s favourite lie in days. She loved not having to set an alarm and just wake up when she wanted to. Tom had different ideas about Olivia’s Sunday morning when he arrived at her house at nine in the morning with a large bunch of flowers in his hands. He knocked on the door and was greeted by James who allowed him to go up to Olivia’s room to wake her up.

Quietly Tom let himself into Olivia’s room and sat at the edge of her bed.

“Hey, Liv, wake up.” He nudged Olivia in the ribs. She groaned as she rolled over to see who was nudging her. A small smile crept across her face as she saw Tom.

“What are you doing here?” She rubbed the sleep from her eyes and wrapped her arms around Tom.

“Just thought I’d bring you these,” Tom handed Olivia the flowers. Her smile grew even bigger, “and I wanted to ask if you’d come over and let me cook you a nice lunch. Mum and Dad are away for their anniversary so we’ll have the house to ourselves.” Olivia smiled and nodded her head. “Well, up you get then lazy bones.” Tom patted Olivia’s hip. Tom went downstairs to let Olivia get dressed in peace. He asked Maggie to help him put the flowers in a vase. It wasn’t long until Olivia arrived in the kitchen too, dressed in comfy jeans and a hooded sweatshirt.

They left the house, hand in hand, with Tom even holding open the car door for Olivia. The drive was short and pleasantly quiet. In the living room of his house, Tom had already set out a blanket and some packets of sweets. He handed Olivia the pile of DVDs, allowing her to choose the first film they watched.

Jessica laid on her bed with her laptop in front of her. She’d been watching music videos online before deciding to try to call her friends again. She clicked on the Skype app and held her breath as it rang. The ringing sound stopped and Ellie’s face appeared on the screen. Jessica couldn’t help but break into a smile.

“Ellie!” Jessica grinned. “I miss you so much, you wouldn’t believe. Every time I try to call it rings out.” Ellie smiles awkwardly.

“Yeah, sixth form at school is a lot more intense than matron led us to believe it would be. We’ve had to supervise the lower years as well as get our course work done.” The excuse came fluidly off Ellie’s tongue, “How’s the new school?” As Jessica opened her mouth to respond when she heard the sound of Ellie’s door open.

“Ellie, we have to go supervise lunch.” The person said.

“Is that Millie?” Jessica asked, her eyes lighting up even more. Millie popped onto the screen.

“Oh hey, Jess, sorry but we really have to go.” Millie smiled apologetically. Ellie gave her a small wave before the screen went blank. Jessica sighed as she snapped the laptop screen shut and pushed herself up so that she was sitting against her headboard. She

turned her head and saw a photograph of Ellie, Millie and herself on her bedside table. She turned it facedown.

Tom was in the kitchen, the fire alarm screeching as loudly as it possibly could. Olivia sat at the kitchen table, with her fingers in her ears laughing as Tom flapped a tea towel under the fire alarm. On the hob, was a tray of singed pork chops. Finally, the beeping stopped, Tom stopped flapping the tea towel and flopped into the seat beside Olivia. He rubbed his hands over his eyes.

“Looks like we’re going out for dinner then.” He’d been defeated.

“We could go back to mine and Granny will cook us something.” Olivia offered.

“As much as I love your Granny’s cooking, I wanted it to be just us for once.” Tom sighed, “go on, go get your shoes on, we’ll go into town.”

They parked in the town’s main car park and were walking through the shopping centre when Olivia spotted her mother she tried to avoid her but Julia had already spotted them and was making her way to them. Olivia squeezed on Tom’s hand as Julia approached smiling.

“Olivia, it’s nice to see you. I thought you two were just friends.” She gestures between Olivia and Tom.

“Well, we were, but now we’re more. Can I help you? Are you going to ask me to throw the show for your precious little Jessica or something?” Julia sighed at the bitterness in Olivia’s voice.

“Actually, I heard about Jessica’s little stunt and she told me that everything you’d said was true. I don’t think she’ll be getting in your way anymore, she had a very stern talking to from Katherine.”

“Shame you didn’t believe your actual daughter, hey?” Olivia walked around Julia and began to walk away, but paused and turned around.

“Hey Mum,” Julia turned around to face Olivia again. “The final show is next week, will you come?”

Julia shook her head, she avoided the stables, not only did she not want to see James and think about the huge mistake she’d made years ago, but she’d feel like she had to step in with Katherine and Jessica.

“I don’t think that would be the best idea, love, I’m sorry.”

Olivia shrugged her shoulders and carried on walking, trying to ignore the sinking feeling in her chest.

Chapter 7

For the majority of the week, Olivia's mind had been on her Mother. She had felt well within her right to walk away from her mother and decline her invites before, but when her Mother had done the same thing in return, she felt rejected and abandoned all over again. She hadn't been sleeping well and had become more irritable than normal. She hadn't even wanted to begin her preparation for the final show. She'd turned Tiger Lily out in the field after getting home from Tom's on the Sunday and had only brought her back in to the stable on Wednesday evening. Finally, she decided to talk to her Dad about it. She'd called him into her bedroom on Thursday and he'd listened to her explain about the disastrous meal a few weeks before, Jessica's behaviour and the run in with Julia on Sunday.

"The best thing that I think you can do, Sweetheart, is to ride in that show on Saturday, beat Jessica, though it doesn't matter if you don't and just show your Mother, that you have got this far without her. You have me, you have Granny, Grandpa, Tom. We are all here for you and we love you so much. We are never going to leave you, okay?" He wrapped his arms around his daughter, who still at the age of sixteen felt like a small, scared child to him.

Olivia slept a little better that night and was almost feeling herself again on Friday when she arrived at school. She was sat next to Tom and her friends at the lunch table when Jessica caught her eye and sent her a small smile. It was only then that Olivia noticed that Jessica had left her alone all week. Perhaps her Julia had spoken to her or she'd realised that picking on Olivia was not going to make her better at riding. Whatever it was, Olivia was just glad that she could go back to being left in peace.

That night, Olivia scrubbed Tiger Lily's legs, getting rid of the mud and the final remnants of the blue dye from the week before and practiced her dressage tests. Jessica wasn't at the yard. She was at home, trying her best to call Ellie again. Finally, her call was answered and her old best friend popped on to the screen.

"Hey, Jess. I really am sorry that I had to run last week. We have a rota to supervise weekend lunches and last week was my week. What's been going on with you? Do you like your new school?" Jessica grimaced.

"Actually, I hate it. I would do anything to be back at St Kitts. I miss you guys, I miss boarding during the week. I miss not having to deal with my mother screaming at me for every 'indiscretion,'" she gives indiscretion air quotes.

"Aww, Jess. Why don't you just ask to come back?"

"She'd say no. I know she would. She's such a control freak, she only has me around to boss and micromanage because she can't control Dad anymore. We moved here for him and he is never here. He's probably shacked up with some twenty something blonde half the time."

"Put your foot down. Tell her that you're going to go on strike or something until she lets you come back." Jessica smiles at Ellie's determination. "You can even room with me, I'm on my own this year. In fact, I'm pretty sure that we have spare sixth year rooms left over. Miss Noon was saying how it's a small year group compared to normal." Jessica happily talked to her friend until late into the night, when Julia put her head around the door and told her to go to bed. Jessica said goodbye to Ellie. Her heart felt lighter than it had since she'd moved to Gloucester.

The yard was filled with tension as everyone groomed their horses and gave tack a final polish before the last show of the season. The first class, as usual was tack and turn out.

The night before when Olivia had been bathing Tiger Lily, she'd used a brand new bottle of shampoo, just in case. The bell rang, giving a five-minute warning before the start of the show, Olivia looked around for Maggie but she was nowhere to be seen. Ozzy, still had shavings in his tail. Olivia tried to call Granny's mobile and the house phone but there was no answer.

The show began, Maggie had still not made an appearance but as Olivia led Tiger Lily around the sand school, she spotted Julia give her a thumbs up from the crowd. Her heart leapt involuntarily. Julia has been hesitant to come to the show. Before she'd left, Julia had tried to push Olivia into dancing, she had no interest in horse riding but she'd been feeling guilty ever since she'd seen Olivia's face drop when she declined her invite the week before.

Olivia was feeling confident for the final results of the show as she left the sand school with the red first rosette attached to Tiger Lily's bridle. With her good score from the last two shows, even if she didn't place in three classes, she'd still win the championship. Olivia's confidence wavered when she arrived back at Tiger Lily's stable to find Ozzy looking as bedraggled as before and still seeing no sign of Maggie, who had been up and about when Olivia had left for the stables earlier that morning.

The unease that Olivia felt for Maggie took hold of a lot of her attention, she knocked down two poles in her first jumping class, her faults led her to a third place. Tom comforted her and helped her to get ready for the dressage class. Olivia had practiced the tests so many times before that Tiger Lily practically knew the test herself. Olivia received the best score in the class, helping her to claw back some points for the championship. As she reached the stable to give Tiger Lily a break for lunch, her phone rang. It was James. Maggie had fallen earlier that day and hit her head. She'd been taken to the hospital. In a panic, Olivia ran to Tom.

"I'll take you to the hospital. Don't worry. Let me just untack Humphrey." He rushed to his stable door and unbolted it. He was loosening Humphries girth a second later when Julia stepped up.

"I just overheard, Olivia. I'll take you to the hospital, Tom, is it?" Tom nodded in response. "You sort all the horses out; I don't know a thing about the animals." Olivia thought about it for a second before nodding. She didn't want Tom to miss out on the fun of the show.

"I'll come to the hospital as soon as I've sorted the horses, okay." He took Olivia's face in his hands.

"No, keep competing, come when the show's over." Tom nodded and kissed Olivia quickly, before she ran out of the barn ahead of Julia.

"Maggie will be okay," Julia told Olivia, noticing her daughter's leg bouncing ten to the dozen. "Tough as old boots that woman." Olivia didn't respond. "Liv, the other week, you were right. I've been a terrible Mother, but I really do want another chance to make it up to you." Julia kept her eyes forward on the road.

"I'm tired of giving you chances." Olivia responded in a voice hardly above a whisper.

"I know, I've had so many more than I deserve, but I promise you, I'm not going anywhere." Julia vowed as they pulled into the hospital car park. Olivia leapt out of the car without replying. The chemical stench of the hospital slapped her in the face as she ran along the corridors, trying to find her Father and Grandpa. When she spotted them in a family room, she ran straight for her Father's arms. She hadn't even noticed Julia still following behind her.

"Thanks for coming Julia." James smiled tightly over Olivia's head.

“Of course, as soon as I heard, I knew Olivia would need a lift.” She looked around the waiting room and caught sight of the glare Olivia’s Grandpa was giving her. “I should go, let me know how Maggie is, okay.” Julia waved as left the waiting room. Olivia had only just taken a seat when a doctor entered the room with a handful of files. “Are you with Margaret Hendy?” She asked, her voice soft and gently. James nodded and leaned forward in his chair. “We’ve given Margaret stitches on the wound. It was a little deeper than we originally thought, there may be some concussion. Do you know how she fell?”

“She just lost her balance, one minute she was fine, the next, she was on the floor in the kitchen.” The doctor looked thoughtful.

“We’d like to run a few more tests. I can see on the notes, that Margaret has recently visited the GP about some health concerns she had. We’ll run some scans and we’ll keep you updated.” The doctor smiled.

“Can we see her?” Olivia asked.

“Of course, though we would prefer it if you could keep it to two at a time.” With that the doctor left the room.

At the yard, Lorraine was getting ready to announce the show’s final results before the championship results. Everyone was in the sand school, waiting with baited breath. Tom had his fingers crossed for Olivia in her absence.

“Today’s show was very close for the final scores. In third place we have Elliot,” Elliot, one of Lorraine’s riding school clients stepped forward for his rosette with a proud smile on his face. “In second place, is Louisa.” Louisa stepped forward to the applause. “And finally, in first place, we have Jessica Mayweather, congratulations Jessica.” Jessica practically jumped at Lorraine for her trophy and rosette. “I also have our championship scores which have carried over the last three shows. Third place, is awarded again, to Louisa.” Louisa put her second place rosette on the ground and walked to retrieve her prize from Lorraine. “Second place goes to our newest riding club member, Jessica Mayweather. Well done, Jessica.” Jessica casts a look at a fuming Katherine before stepping up for her prize from Lorraine, much more timidly than she had minutes before. “Unfortunately, a family emergency has pulled our champion away today, first place goes to Olivia Hendy. Tom, would you like to collect her trophy for her?” Tom nods and takes the trophy from Lorraine. Everyone left the sand school, Tom was eager to go to the hospital to see Olivia and her Granny. He mucked out Humphrey, Tiger Lily and Ozzy’s stable as quickly as he could.

“You could have at least tried,” Katherine’s voice carried through the barn. “You only got that first place because whatever her name is forfeited. You can’t even win a championship when she missed the majority of a show. It’s disgraceful.” Katherine stomped out of the barn, the sound of her car door slamming echoed around the yard. Tom emptied the wheelbarrow for the final time and put his tools away before getting in his car and going straight to the hospital.

As Tom arrived at the hospital, the doctor was making her way to Olivia and her family gathered around Maggie’s bed.

“We suspect that you may have multiple sclerosis Mrs Hendy. Have you heard of it before?” Maggie nods slowly with a slight frown. “We would like to keep you in overnight for observation and to run some more tests tomorrow. Once we are sure that it is MS, we will be able to come up with a treatment plan and get a specialist to you straight away.” Maggie nods again. “We’ll be moving you up to a ward shortly. Once on the ward, I’m afraid I will have to insist on only two visitors to a bed.” James looks at Olivia and Tom.

“Perhaps we should get something to eat,” Tom suggests. Olivia nods. The doctor checks the various drips attached to Maggie before leaving the family to it.

“Liv, go have some food and go home. Gramps and I will be there soon, okay.” James told her.

“I want to stay.” Olivia protested.

“Listen to your father, Liv. I’ll be home tomorrow anyway. I don’t want any of you worrying about me.” Olivia nodded, sensing that she’d lose the argument and gets up from her chair. She kissed her Granny on the cheek before following Tom out of the room.

In the car, Tom handed Olivia her trophy and congratulated her. Olivia took it less than enthusiastically, trophies meant nothing to her when all she could think about was how small Maggie had looked in the hospital bed. In a different attempt to distract her, Tom told Olivia about Katherine’s outburst at the yard.

“I’m starting to feel a little sorry for Jessica, to be honest. Mum said she doesn’t have a great home life and her mum is just vile to her. It’s all about competition.” Olivia mumbled.

“It doesn’t give her an excuse to bully you the way she did though.” Tom defended.

Olivia shrugged mumbling an “I guess,” in response.

Jessica was sat in her room. She’d changed out of her riding gear, her rosettes were piled up on the bedside table. On her phone, she scrolled through the website of her old school, St Kitts. She sent a text to Ellie.

‘I’m going to do it. I’m going to ask to come back.’ The message read.

Jessica took a deep breath and got off her bed. She walked down the stairs and into the living room, where her mother was nursing a glass of red wine.

“Mum,” she began before taking another deep breath. “I have a question.”

“I don’t think your performance today warrants an answer to any question, do you?”

Katherine hardly looked at Jessica as she replied.

“At least I tried. I didn’t win, no, but how do you expect me to with you barking orders at me. You make me so on edge at shows and in lessons that I can’t help but screw up. I want to go back to St Kitts. I want to go back home, back to my old school and back to my friends.”

“And where are you going to live? I’m not returning to that hell hole.”

“I don’t want you to go back with me. I’ll live with Grandma if I have to, or I could board. Ellie says that it’s a small year, there are still boarding rooms left. What does it even matter anyway? I boarded during the week before.”

“Perhaps sending you back to that school would be best, your attitude has been disgusting since we got here. You’d never talk to me like this before, now get out of my sight before I say something I regret.” Jessica opened her mouth to retort but decided against it. She left the living room feeling proud of herself. Katherine stared forward, wiping the tear that had begun to roll down her cheek.

Tom sat on the sofa with Olivia, the television was turned on to a mindless talent show but Olivia wasn’t watching it. A knock on the door made both Tom and Olivia jump. Olivia opened the front door to Jessica, stood on the front step.

“I just wanted to say congratulations for winning the championship. You’re a really good rider, and I’m sorry for dying Tiger Lily’s legs blue, for everything actually.” Olivia stayed quiet through Jessica’s apology.

“I’m not going to forgive you. You brought my horse into it. I’d never dream of doing anything to your horse, I appreciate the apology though.” Jessica nodded and left.

A few minutes later, James and Olivia's Grandpa arrived home. They'd discussed treatment a little further but still would not learn any more about Maggie's condition until the rest of the tests came back in a few days but doctors were optimistic.

James allowed Tom to stay the night. They were laying in her bed as the time neared midnight but Olivia couldn't sleep.

"She's been tired lately, and dropping things more. I should have noticed that something was wrong but I was so caught up with everything at the yard and with Mum, I didn't even notice."

Tom shushed Olivia, brushing her hair away from her face.

"You weren't to know. When we know that things are okay with your Granny, I'm going to take you out to celebrate the amazing win today, even with only doing a third of one of the shows." Tom grinned in the darkness.

The next day, Olivia, James and her Grandpa were gathered in the doctor's office as she began to explain the disease, Multiple Sclerosis.

"What does it mean for Maggie?" Olivia's Grandpa asked, his voice thick with emotion.

"Eventually, it could mean paralysis and diminished brain function, we'll work with the specialist to slow down the progression of the MS and we'll look into any support that may be available to you."

Olivia stared ahead, so much had happened in the last twenty-four hours, she could hardly get her head around it. Maggie was sleeping, James and her Grandpa had gone to get some coffee. Maggie stirred, pulling Olivia out of her thoughts.

"I told you not to worry about me," Maggie accused immediately, making Olivia jump.

Granny smiled. "How did you do in the championship?" Olivia allowed herself a proud smile.

"I came first, Granny."

"I knew you would, and I'm going to watch you win shows for years to come."

"Actually, I think I want to be a doctor." Olivia's Granny looked at her seriously.

"Do you really? Or did you just get worried last night. You are such a good rider. I don't want that to go to waste, but, if you do want to be a doctor, you do that. We'll be proud of you, no matter what."

Olivia thanked Maggie with a hug. James had been right. She had Maggie, her Grandpa, James and Tom. That was all she needed.

The Final Hurdles Critical Evaluation Essay

For my dissertation I decide to write a short young adult novel that focussed around a sixteen-year-old called Olivia. Olivia's father is in the army and her mother left when Olivia was six. As the story opens, Olivia finds out that her Mother is back in town and would like to meet up, this happens, just as Olivia's father announces that he has to go away for training. Olivia feels overwhelmed with the parental changes in her life and spends a lot of her time with her horse, Tiger-Lily, however there are changes at the livery yard as well when there is a new horse and owner, Jessica. At the yard, Jessica becomes Olivia's biggest rival and in school, she becomes Olivia's biggest tormenter. The themes of the novel follow some of the common ones found in young adult novels including parental issues, misunderstood peers, jealousy and betrayal.

I chose to write in the young adult genre because it is what I have been used to reading in the past.

“a genre comes with certain in-built codes, values, and expectations. It creates its own world, helping the author to communicate with the audience, as she deploys or disrupts generic expectations and so creates a variety of effects. Genres appeal to writers because they give a structure and something to build on, while they offer audiences the pleasure of the familiar,” (Allen, W, 2014, blog.oup.com)

I felt a lot more comfortable writing with a specific genre and audience in mind as I was aware of many of the genre codes and this allowed me to put them as themes into the story. It also means that any readers already know what sort of story they can expect to read. The young adult genre set the age that the story was aimed at “usually between 12 and 18 years old, but sometimes as young as 10.” (Feeney, N, 2013, theatlantic.com) This allowed me to ensure that any language I used was appropriate for all ages and that the characters were relatable. One of the defining ways that young adult fiction does this is through the age of the character and the way that the story was told through the teenager's eyes, “You're not looking back or looking down. The narrator is not observing things the people themselves are not.” (Rowell, R, 2013) as Rainbow Rowell was told by a fellow author when she argued that her novel *Eleanor and Park*, was not a young adult novel. Despite the fact that I have written in third person, a lot of the story is told through Olivia and her perspective. This allows the audience to see as Olivia does and react as Olivia would. I was concerned when I chose to write in this particular genre that people would have the common misconception that young adult novels are dumbed down, I was able to see that it is not always the 'safe,' place that it is perceived to be.

“There's nothing off-limits when it comes to YA fiction, which frequently dives into unsettling territory like death, drugs, and rape across all of its genres and styles. Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why* is about a high school girl who commits suicide” (Feeney, N, 2013, theatlantic.com)

The freedom of topics covered by the genre of young adult fiction allowed me to explore different possibilities and outcomes for the characters, for example, I considered Olivia's father being deployed to fight rather than train. I also considered different routes for Jessica's character to go down, touching on an implied eating disorder as a result of the emotional abuse from her Mother. I decided when it came to writing that these topics didn't fit into how I wanted the story to go.

The majority of young adult fiction that I have read is written in the first person. In the initial draft of *The Final Hurdles*, I had chosen to write in the first person from Olivia's perspective, however, I found that as I reached the fourth chapter, I wanted to explore

Jessica's character more in order to make her turn around in the conclusion of the story more viable and understandable as well as to make her character a little more relatable. I also considered telling the story from both perspectives in third person in a similar way to Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor and Park* however, I was concerned that this would give Jessica a more significant role in the story so I decided to follow the way Lauren Brooke writes, focussing mainly on the protagonist, Amy, in her series *Heartland*.

When writing, I had the influences of other young adult fiction authors such as John Green and Lauren Brooke in mind. I liked the honesty of the characters in Kody Keplinger's book *The Duff* which played with the idea of a hidden family life to the one that is shown by the character when they are in school. This really helped me to separate school and yard Jessica from home Jessica. In *The Duff*, Wesley's pillar of hope is in the form of Bianca. She's the one that knows the secrets, in *The Final Hurdles*, Jessica's pillar of hope is Olivia's Mother, Julia.

In John Yorke's book *Into the Wild*, he discussed structure a great deal. He says that "the central archetype that governs modern screenwriting, and on which so much of storytelling is built, is three." (Yorke, 2013) Olivia has a three act structure herself. Everything is fine and normal for her until her Father leaves for training and her Mother re-enters her life, from there things are difficult for her until normality begins to be restored when her Father returns from his training.

I think that one of the strengths of the novel was Olivia's character development. I knew the history of her character and what she planned for the future, however, I do think that she was perhaps a little too nice, even when Jessica was tormenting her and hiding her belongings, Olivia didn't react. I wondered if people would relate more to the character of Jessica and if they would care more about her because of her home life. Olivia has also had a turbulent home life but she seems to have coped with the change when she was younger and now sees it as a way of life. On the Life Rich Publishing website, C.S Marks discusses Mary Sue and Gary Stew character types, which are the idealised perfect character, they say,

"Usually this character comes from humble beginnings, achieves impossible goals, ends up saving the galaxy, and then dies in the arms of King Arthur after having become the first female knight of the roundtable. How is anyone going to relate to that except the author? The author is living out his or her fantasies. We all do that to some extent, but Mary Sue is the extreme version of that kind of wish fulfilment, and we need to be careful about it."

I feel that I based Olivia's horse riding and her personality on myself a little, although our home lives are very different, and I think that I have portrayed her reaction to the bullying as the idealistic way of dealing with it. In reality, I don't think anyone would be able to stand by while Jessica hid their things, picked on them in school.

I used a notebook while I was writing the story to keep track of everything that I had written as well as using images of what I imagined the characters and horses looked like. This meant that when I was editing, I could look back at what notes I had already made and that I could rethink things in any chapters that needed altering. It also helped me to keep track of the different characters as well as their basic information such as age and job.

I looked on different websites such as The Writers Digest, Absolute Write and Bryna Butler to see what length other young adult novels were. I found that the lengths of young adult novels varied a lot, The Writer's Digest suggests fifty thousand to seventy-five

thousand words, however, Bryna Butler's post shows that in practice, the word counts of young adult novels are a lot higher than seventy-five thousand words. The lowest of the Barnes and Noble top ten list that she is studying is *The Elite* by Kiera Cass at just under eighty-one thousand words and the highest word count is joint between *Divergent* by Veronica Roth and *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. My young adult story is just under sixteen thousand words which is a long way from even The Writer's Digest's suggestions. If The Final Hurdles had been longer, I think that I would have been able to write a lot more fluidly and pace the story much better. I think that the final two chapters of the story appear to have been rushed and a lot happens in those chapters. If the story had been closer to the fifty thousand word limit, I'd have been able to include a lot more and could have explored some of the secondary characters a lot more. One character I would have loved to have been able to explore deeper is Lorraine, the owner of the livery yard that Tom, Jessica and Olivia keep their horses. I'd have also liked to have explored Maggie, Olivia's grandmother, a little more. If I had a larger word limit I would have been able to explore her illness much more as at the minute, I think it is a little rushed. I had planned to have Maggie as a large character that was very well known in the community and well-liked by everyone, however with a word limit, I had to choose what elements to focus more closely on. Focussing on Maggie's character more would have contradicted the young adult genre so I decided to make her more of a background character that supported Olivia.

In order to make sure that characters and other various elements of the story were correct, I had to do a lot of gnerreal research. The majority of the knowledge around the horses and the horse care was my own prior knowledge and my experiences with stereotypical 'snobby' and wealthy owners which created the basis for Jessica and her Mother, Katherine's characters. I used the British Army website and some of my prior knowledge to select a rank and job for Olivia's Father, James' character in the army. I also did some research on Multiple Sclerosis and it's early symptoms. I tried to present these in the story but don't think that enough time was spent focussing on Maggie in order to do this effectively.

If I were able to redraft the story, I would definitely extend the story and go into a lot more detail of other aspects of Olivia's life. I would like to see her getting frustrated more and react to the bullying in a lot more of a realistic way. I would also increase Tom's presence in the story and show their relationship grow a lot more which would add another subplot to the story. I would focus more on Maggie and how her illness affects Olivia as Maggie has been her most constant family member since her Mother's departure. I would like to show the closeness of Olivia's relationship with James as he leaves very early in the story and when he returns, they don't seem to spend a lot of time together. I'd like to show how James stepped up and did his best to take care of his daughter when his wife left. I'd also like to use a lot more description in the novel to allow readers to imagine what I am writing a lot clearer and engage a lot more with the text. Overall, I am glad that I was able to complete the project as I have never written a full story before. I am used to writing scripts rather than novels and I really enjoyed the challenge of completing a different form of creative writing.

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