

Anmer by Jessica MacFarlane

"Isn't this fun!" I said to myself as I galloped over the field with the soft green grass. I had never known galloping was so much fun when you didn't have a jockey on your back, constantly telling you to go quicker, and a set track that you had to follow!

Suddenly, I had to skid to a halt. My old leg injury was coming back to haunt me. That forced me to remember that day. The day it all went wrong...

Hang on, wait a minute. In case you hadn't picked up any of the hints, I am a horse. But not just any old horse. My name is Anmer and I am King George V's racehorse. Would you like to hear my story? I thought you would. Well, I suppose I have to tell you about the day it all went wrong, and my life was ruined...

It was the night before the race, and I was standing in my stable at Epsom Racecourse, dreading the day to come. I thought about what would happen if I came last. The King would sell me. I would miss James the stable boy and the stables so much. I gazed around the wonderful stall I was standing in. The lovely, smooth wooden planks that were the walls, the wood shavings on the hard concrete floor that made it so nice to stand on. It was my home. I simply couldn't imagine myself anywhere else. "Tonight," I said to myself "I think I'll go to bed early and have a proper lie down. I have a big race tomorrow!"

The next day, I was woken by James, the stable boy, coming in with a highly polished saddle and bridle in his arms. "Today's the day ol'Anmer. I 'ope you blow's them away like there's no tomorrow!" Only then did he realise I wasn't listening and I was nuzzling my haynet, asking for it to be filled. "Oh no ya don't, ol'guy!" he said cheerfully "You needs yer energy for thr big race today!" James placed the saddle and the bridle very carefully onto the hooks outside and came into the stall with a bucket of oats. I turned to him and tried to look cute (he knew I hated oats).

A few minutes later, when James was patting me and telling me how well I would do, he stopped dead. We could both hear the screeching of metal on metal and see smoke billowing through the sky. Hastily, James looked at his watch and said "Gosh! That can't be the 11:58 train already! We'd better get a wriggle on!"

In almost not time at all, I had my saddle on and done up and my bridle on my head. But how I hated those blinkers! I could barely see where I was going, let alone navigate around the inside of a racing track!

Just then a man poked his head over the door of the stable. He told James to hurry up with whatever it was he was doing and then left, growling to himself. "Bad temper, he's got, that Herbert Jones," whispered James into my ear, "I always say he's like a snake: attacks and then wriggles 'imself ou' of danger and trouble. I jus' feels so sorry for ya. Ya will have to carry 'im all the way round the track jus' so the King's 'appy ya came first!"

About an hour later, Jones walked into the stables thanked James for getting me ready and brought down to the start for the Derby. The noise from the crowd was deafening. So many people

screaming, shouting, cheering and occasionally crying almost made my ears explode! The sun seemed to be throwing all its heat on Epson on that day. I looked over the right as far as my blinkers would let me and saw a beautiful black thoroughbred standing right next to me. He had an air of smugness about him and so did his jockey. I was sure I'd seen them before in winner's circle at Newmarket.

Looking to the left, I saw a chestnut who looked completely petrified and not at all likely to win the race, or be placed. Jones led me into a small box, which as I knew from previous years was the place where you run into the doors, throwing them apart, straight onto the track. It's very clever how all these humans have discovered ways to do everything so much easier! As Jones mounted me, I marvelled at how he had improved his posture since last year's Derby. As the seconds ticked on I became more and more tense. The commentary became a blur of noise in the background. All I could hear was my own breathing, rattling in my chest...

But then I heard the gunshot. It was the moment to leap into action. I galloped on and on, not sure where I was or where I was going. Those blasted blinkers always play their part, don't they? We were in third to last position and Herbert was coaxing me to go even faster. But then I got confused. Why was this woman standing in the track? What was she holding? But I only had a second to think about it...

I rammed into her. She fell to the ground, unconscious. I did a full unplanned somersault and launched on the ground, on top of my jockey, Herbert Jones. As the last horses of the race galloped past, (not to my surprise, the last was the Chestnut I had seen earlier) the crowds came flocking in to attend to this stupid woman. What had she been thinking? I will never know. My only thought was that I had to finish the race. I got to my feet and tried to start moving again but that uncovered two problems. Jones was hanging on with one foot in the stirrup clearly unable to move. The second problem was neither could I. My leg was throbbing like mad...

And if you could guess what happened next you're probably right. I came last in the race that I never finished, if that makes sense.

The woman was taken to a nearby hospital (according to everyone else, how would I know that!) but I'm not quite sure what happened to her. My brain is only the size of golf ball!

Jones was seriously injured too. That hurts me so much that his days of being a jockey are over.

So that's my story. I don't think you've ever heard it before. When people tell this story, they either think 'Poor Emily Davison!' or 'Poor Herbert Jones!' but never ever 'Poor Anmer!' That's because

horses in a normal human's life are just meant for buying selling and riding. But that's not just it. Horses are also in my opinion, allowed to have some down time, just like humans.

Now I think my racing days are over. As I'm trudging back inside I hold up my leg up for James to look at and I think, that for the first time, someone has realised I'm injured and will call a veterinarian! But I always think to myself- none of this would have happened if women had just been given votes from the very start...