

Discrimen:

Outside we were discussing matters with her father. He would start his work the following day cutting branches off the big tree.

She stood defiantly, wanting to be with her dad but not here. Bored she swung on his arms and muttered about the horse she saw in the field. All adult talk paused.

“Would you like to see him?” my mother inquired.

My heart leapt. I looked up. Our eyes met, just a second too long then I turned facing her.

“Uhh, yeah, *sure!* I can show you him. I’ll go grab some apples, but I’ll be back, okay?”

I rushed round to the backdoor not bothering to wipe my feet. Quickly grabbing the bag of stale bread crusts kept for this purpose alongside a half rotten apple. I cut it in eight and grabbed some kitchen roll for later, wiping the stickiness of my hands on my dirty leggings. Bag in hand I rushed down the stairs hearing the familiar tamping noise of the hollow stone steps, almost falling down them in my haste in my too big men’s dealer boots. I came ‘round the house to find the parents gone and her waiting patiently.

“Let’s go!” I chirruped, sounding sour and false.

I nervously shake the bag at her and head to the field gate. She follows, not like how I expect her to, behind. Instead, alongside, just in front she soldiers on.

“I-I do horse riding you know.”

I scramble for a proper response but am found lacking:

“Really? Cool so what have you been up to?”

"I've just learnt to canter!" she blurts proud as punch. "I look after *my horse Daisy* she's grey.

"What kind is *that one*?" She points into the field as we reach the gate.

"He's a hackney, full bred but he's a little funny so just be careful around him, okay?"

I look for him but he's miles away. I deliberate, finally deciding on getting him closer in order to appease the girl. Stupidly I duck the fence, walking up and calling him, torn bread in hand.

Hearing the wire fence twang a second time I turn and freeze. The mini me has followed, standing by my side as he approaches. He's older now, lumbering closer, his back creaking and sunken and his chestnut coat shaggy but warm.

He walks up slowly head bobbing with his forward gait, showing his handsome face printed with a perfect white diamond. I give him the bread, his mouth lipping at my hands.

"He is pretty shy so don't worry if he moves away from you." I tell her.

I offer her the bag, she fills her hands and walks closer to him. He snorts moving away, more interested in the treats than her grabbing mitts.

"Just be careful of his back end," I warn. "He got my mum once. We think he was abused by his previous owners, they did nasty things to make him raise his feet higher for hackney showing.

His feet have a kind of nervous tick..." "He doesn't realise he does it. Honest."

Blindly excited she desperately reached closer trying to pet him, leading him away with apple as bait, teasing him.

"What would happen if I ran?" she asked.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that it will just make him upset."

I see him already agitated by her quick movements, frustrated searching for the treats. Sensing the danger I try to keep myself between them and usher both towards the gate. She rushes the opposite way. I silently marvel at the wickedness of young children.

*She thinks she knows, I realise. She thinks all horses are like riding ponies... that is all they are to her.*

Heart racing, I can't allow myself to panic. Upset and volatile he starts snorting and trotting, chasing hard behind this tiny creature.

She is doing the one thing that will make him dangerous. I advance toward them my blood singing.

"Don't run!" I warn as she darts about.

He reaches her first. I'm still too far away and now see both our fathers chatting, coming to the gate behind her. Split second. He bucks and twists, hooves lashing out, head in the air.

Adrenaline floods my brain as I watch. Time slows.

Automatically I go to him. Soothing the head still snorting his displeasure, guiding the taut neck in my arms, itching that spot he can never reach.

"Eeeassyyy boy... Easy." I whisper to him.

I had seen the fathers' faces, how they looked just moments before. They knew, I knew. It was lucky how this dance ended.

She slinks over to join us at the gate unhurt and seemingly unfazed. Her father called out to her and thanked me, but she was still reluctant to leave. Standing stiffly she watched my hands grooming the horse. Seeing him following me, seeing him trusting me.

Finally, she turned and crossed the gate back into her world; leaving me in mine.