

## **What's Nice is That You Can't Murder a Horse**

*by Jordan Clark*

The condominium isn't thrilled his horse isn't a dog. His wife copes. It's a cyst that isn't a spider bite that's of her utmost concern. He tells her, A thing at a time.

Umbrella-handed talks seem meeker nowadays. Even though complaints still arise, they've a tendency to be passive or corkboarded. When his stable was unwheeled that night, then refurbished with cinder blocks—that was troublesome. He'd sagged in front of it a while, loafers flecked with dew—why maze?—thinking: traffic won't pander joggers.

The stable is subsequently beached beneath the awning of he and his wife's duel parking space. Thankfully, they consider exercise healthful, because the curbs are alarmingly sparse in regards to red and run both ends of the street.

It was springs ago, miscarriage still afoot, looming, that he proposed they parent an animal: any breed, whatever she fancied.

All the lassoing and cheery requests to be lassoed pushed them into hurrying. Loudspeakers thickened the unobstructed air and made even the mildest deliberation next to pointless. The horse who took the cake was understandably segmented away from the favored livestock, the slew of nonsense-dredged canopies too. Her spots stockpiled majorly toward her hind. She was a lean steed—mostly legs, coat the color of crust, a grandly capitalized sale tag drooping from the botched hole punched through her ear; a bargain. The rancher was joyous.

Having chosen to hang onto her original name, it was ages until his wife was capable of saying it aloud—such finality.

Dakot's well-nourished now and loves lapping water and the block. He's fully aware of her clopping, her ever-chipping hooves his crowbar couldn't pry. An attempt to crochet her booties had soon proved fruitless seeing as he pricked his thumb just about immediately, swore, smacked the sofa and declared, That's it. His wife, bless her heart, is so quick with baking soda; the cushion returned to its main state.

When headlong into warmth, the horse spends plenty afternoons in a heap on the lawn in the courtyard shaded by the girthy tree with its Chinese fingercuff latticed trunk. Seldom tied up, besides

the occasional headlock from the rope swing, she'll often sniff doughnuts. These circles aren't nearly spacious enough to permit diamonds, yet children shrivel in, each manning a position.

Leaning against their doorway one night, ring-bearing a mint bit and bridle, he asked, "Could I just see?" Fringed shawl hovering, her feet nonexistent, she told plainly that she already wears the wig.

As a boy he'd straddle his father's sawhorse, gingerly avoiding footprinting the abounding wood-shavings. A bathmat was flung over for the sake of belief.

He has been after that saddle erection since.

The front door ajar, Dakota's consented to wander while the couple adheres to shucking a side that'll surely dominate what the entree would rightfully assume. Husks and wispy strings are in a mound next to an overzealous ramekin cradling a convincing intermixing of regular and imitation lemons.

A few boys from the surrounding condos grouped around the pudgiest one, the leader, praising his newest bat his mother had just bought him. One suggested it may actually be a billy club. "See? Retractable."

Dakota relaxed, guarding second; stoic.

Another boy readies, swiveling his cleats before being pitched the ball—to which sent a vicious ringing ricocheting throughout the community, hurtling toward Dakota, pelting her upside her temple. A goose-egg developed.

The boys were a toppled sack of marbles and headless.

The couple were deaf.

Dakota sulked into the living room, nudging the screen door with her snout. At first, he figured she was winded from the stairs, they can be steep—depending. After brushing past the ottoman's shoulders, shone by the lamp, his wife noticed the appalling bump.

"Shouldn't you dash it—dot it?" She questions as he slowly circles the goose-egg with a purple felt tip marker to monitor its growth. She then drops a fistfull of painkillers into a mortar and pestle as per his suggestion.

As they knelt together on the wool rug, budding the rough, capsized arch enveloping the fireplace, his wife iced the horse, wishing dearly to retard the swelling. Embers orbed, his elbows were latched as he heated his palms. The ice-pack would melt, stamping Dakota's fur with fleeting spots.

His wife's in charge of bliss. She should've known better, he thought. Eventually, she resorted to using a gallon baggie rather than the sandwich.

On particularly grueling days, which he figured tonight was, he'll treat the horse to nougat a la mode—a fast favorite; dodgy eyes, finger pressed lightly to his pursed lips, back hunched. Captivity doesn't yield dessert. Plus, crude wheat becomes dismal and crimped cabbage, no matter how thinly shredded, and barely digests.

“If he appeared any older,” he gruffed, “or sprouted denser peach fuzz, I'd squeeze him 'til he's mixed berried.”

Unless accounting for his bouts of domestic abuse, he's not a violent man.

A framed picture—thick balsa, slightly askew—adorns the wall left of the mantel. Picture day's annual and it'd landed a week shy of their investment. All three huddled; background asymmetrical; creases neater in front than back; his pleats as flat as his wife could iron without branding; Dakota verging on fattening and her mane decidedly more picturesque in pigtails, though, in the beginning, were ponied.

The wife and horse had jammed themselves between the vanity and tub. A soggy then steam-stiffened, half-rolled catalog on the ground scuttered from the fan and their swift-shifting feet—eliciting the adjoining bedroom door. The molding behind it was in dire need of caulking and a wipe.

Only when nosing the portrait will the matted indentations leftover from her newly forgone muzzle begin to surface.

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