

"Horse Girl"
by
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INT. RUTH'S BEDROOM - DAWN

RUTH SPITZ, a socially awkward 14-year-old, sits in her dark, dingy, silent room, lit by only her computer. She is surrounded by stuffed animal horses, horse figurines, horse tapestries, and a horse bed spread.

She draws a crappy picture of a horse outside a stable on her computer's "Paint" program.

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY

Morning light creeps into the gray room. Ruth watches anxiously as her mother's new Ink Jet printer spits out pages of her very own short story. Ruth pulls out one of the pages from the tray and reads it aloud.

RUTH

"Of course I'll never forget you!
A horse never forgets. Or wait a
minute-- maybe I'm thinking of
elephants not horses!"

Ruth cracks up. She excitedly pulls out more pages as they are being printed, and reads them as she fantasizes.

RUTH'S FANTASY

INT. ENGLISH CLASS - DAY

Ruth puts on a show in front of her ENGLISH CLASS, reading her story as the students listen intently to every word.

RUTH

"A horse never forgets. Or wait a
minute-- maybe I'm thinking of
elephants not horses?!?!"

The students in the class completely lose it. They jump to their feet and applaud Ruth as they laugh wildly. Some are in tears. DIANA SIMMS, the prettiest girl in school, stands on her desk and addresses the crowd.

DIANA

Hey guys! Check this out: Go Ruth!
Go Ruth!

She dances around on her desk to motivate the crowd. They chant and dance around:

ENGLISH CLASS

Go Ruth! Go Ruth! Go Ruth!

As the students chant her name, Ruth "Walks Like an Egyptian" in the front of the room, soaking up the adulation.

END FANTASY

INT. HOME OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

RUTH'S MOTHER MEG, 40s, charges into the depressing home office as Ruth is lost in fantasy walking like an Egyptian.

MEG
Goddamnit Ruth, how much ink is that?!

Meg tries to yank out the cover page of Ruth's story: Her full color drawing of a horse.

RUTH
I'm sorry!

Ruth tries to help by pressing buttons on the printer but it only confuses matters more.

MEG
Stop it, you're breaking it!

RUTH
I'm sorry.

The printer makes a churning sound as it begins to print a new copy of the picture.

MEG
Goddamnit!

RUTH'S HUNGOVER FATHER, TREVOR, 40s enters wearing a shirt with a gigantic gecko printed on it.

MEG (CONT'D)
The damn printer's out of ink.

Trevor exits in a huff.

TREVOR (O.S.)
Goddamnit!

RUTH
It's not out of ink.

Meg looks at the torn and half-printed horse drawing. Above it reads the title: "Black Beauty 2: Equus Magnificas."

MEG

What's this, some horse shit? Ruth
you're 14, not 6.

RUTH

I just wanted to print my story.

Trevor enters wielding an ink refilling syringe.

TREVOR

Dammit Ruth, I gotta print out my
damn Subway coupons!

He lurches toward the printer and rips out the cartridges.

MEG

You're gonna break it Trevor!

TREVOR

Shut the computer off! Find the
settings! Pull up the-- pull up the-

Ruth clicks away on the computer in a panic. PORN POPS UP.
Ruth screams! Meg covers her daughter's eyes.

MEG

Oh no THAT'S PRINTING TOO!

Ruth's father hastily attempts to squeeze the ink into the
printer and it sprays all over the room and into Meg's eyes.

MEG (CONT'D)

OH MY GOD!

Ruth goes running out of the room as her mother sobs.

MEG (CONT'D)

RUTH! RUTH!

TREVOR

You get back here Ruth!

EXT. RUTH'S RUNDOWN SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Ruth bursts out the house and sits on the stoop covering her
ears. Morning light breaks through scattered clouds.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Ruth stares out the window of the dingy bus. Dull morning
light makes the kids look tired and gross as they yell and
tell stories.

Ruth uses colored pencils to improve her new hand-drawn cover
of "Black Beauty 2: Equus Magnificas."

Suddenly, it is ripped from her hands. A BLONDE BOY named MAX stands before her flipping through the story.

RUTH

Hey!

Ruth tries with gusto to snatch it back, but the boy is too quick for her. A GROUP OF GIGGLING 8TH GRADERS sit behind Ruth and egg on Max.

MAX

Lemme guess. It's about horses.

RUTH

I guess you're forgetting how powerful and strong horses are.

Everyone laughs.

MAX

Hey Dillon. Keep away.

Max reaches over Ruth's head to hand the story to DILLON, who grabs it before Ruth can.

RUTH

Give it back!

Dillon passes it to another friend as Ruth grabs at it again.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Quit it wise guy!

DILLON

No can do, Horsey.

They play 'keep away' with the story.

MAX

Excuse me?

Ruth looks down at her shuffling feet.

RUTH

I said quit it.

Max clears the mucus from his throat and spits it right onto Ruth's story.

MAX

That's what you get for asking me out.

Defeated and heart broken, Ruth gets up and moves toward the front of the bus. She opens her back pack and takes out a floppy disk marked "Black Beauty 2."

She gives a sigh of relief and sits down in the first available seat. It happens to be next to MICHELLE MARACHI and DIANA SIMMS, the most beautiful girls in school.

Michelle ignores Ruth, and Diana glares at Michelle like "do something." Michelle rolls her eyes, sick of this routine.

MICHELLE

We don't let anyone sit in the third seat.

Ruth shrugs, puts away her floppy disk, and gets up to leave.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Well whatever, we're almost there.

Ruth sits back down. She smiles at Michelle.

DIANA

Okay, stop looking at us.

Ruth looks straight forward and doesn't move a muscle.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

The buzz of florescent lights intensifies Ruth's anxiety as she prints out her story on the forbidden "Teacher's Printer." Ruth's eyes dart between the printer and the door.

RUTH

Come on, come on...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Ruth scurries out the teacher's lounge with her story, and bumps right into MRS. SPENCER, 50s, her kind and frizzy-haired English teacher. She gently stops Ruth.

MRS. SPENCER

Woah, hold your horses kiddo!

Ruth stops, clutching her story and looking away.

MRS. SPENCER (CONT'D)

Excited to hear your story, Ruth!

RUTH

Yeah, it should be pretty good.

Mrs. Spencer smiles widely and nods. An awkward silence. Ruth scurries off as Mrs. Spencer watches her go. Hmm. Odd girl...

INT. GIRL'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ruth enters the dirty yellow bathroom reading her story quietly to herself, gesturing with her hands, making edits.

RUTH
 "I am no longer a pretty young
 horse--"

Ruth stops when she hears LAUGHTER coming from the bathroom stalls. She looks over and sees two pairs of legs lower from the stalls. The doors open revealing Diana Simms and Michelle Marachi. Diana is ruthless, but Michelle is reluctant.

DIANA
 Hey Michelle. Do you wanna know
 something totally pathetic and
 weird?

MICHELLE
 Um, what?

DIANA
 Ruth is so poor, I don't think
 she's ever even ridden a horse.

Silence from Michelle. She stares at Ruth's ashamed face, then becomes too sympathetic and has to look away.

Diana scoffs. She grabs hold of Ruth's story. Ruth doesn't let go. Diana looks down at Ruth's feet and notices that she is wearing Water-Socks.

DIANA (CONT'D)
 Are you wearing Water-Socks?

RUTH
 I like them.

Diana leans forward and gets close to Ruth's face. A threat.

DIANA
 You would.

The bell rings. No one moves. Ruth is about to cry, when suddenly, a TRICKLE OF BLOOD COMES RUSHING FROM HER NOSE. Diana drops the story, and moves away. Ruth covers her nose and rushes to the sink to grab paper towels.

MICHELLE

Oh my God are you okay?!

Ruth looks at the girls in a daze as the paper towels become more and more bloody. Michelle comes to Ruth's assistance with another paper towel, shoving in front of Diana.

DIANA

Ew! We're not missing Social Issues for this freak. Let's go Michelle!

There is a beat. Michelle looks at Ruth, unsure. Diana begins to exit, but Michelle waits.

DIANA (CONT'D)

(a command)

Girlfriend.

MICHELLE

Guard the door.

Michelle glares at Diana. Diana rolls her eyes.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Guard the door or peace!

Diana peaces out with a grunt. Michelle opens her cheerleading duffel.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

What size are you?

RUTH

Child's 12.

MICHELLE

Okay, that's like Junior's 4, that's what I am.

She tosses Ruth a pair of expensive skinny jeans.

Michelle lifts Ruth's shirt--

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

You just have to trust me okay?

Ruth changes out of her corduroy pants and into the nice jeans. Ruth stands with her arms out as Michelle buttons a beautiful green blouse on her; it's probably from France or something.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
So like...does Diana so piss you
off sometimes?

RUTH
Umm...

MICHELLE
You can be honest.

Ruth looks down at her feet. She starts to cry.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Hey, it's okay.

RUTH
She's just like pretty much
everyone else in the world.

MICHELLE
I used to hate my sister so much.
She beat me up, like seriously beat
me up everyday. It was hella scary.

Ruth sniffles, looking up at Michelle with hope in her eyes.

RUTH
Really?

Michelle turns Ruth to face the mirror. Michelle smiles,
seeing how well Ruth's new outfit fits on her.

MICHELLE
Cute.

Her eyes dart to the door as a FRESHMAN GIRL enters. Michelle
hands off a pair of flip flops, careful the girl doesn't see.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
These are better and they're way
cheap, you can get tons at Urban.

She begins to exit, and comes back to say one last thing.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Listen, I wouldn't worry about
Diana. We're going to stop being
friends with her next week.

Michelle sympathetically eyes Ruth's sweatshirt: A horse
making a jump, now covered in blood.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

By the way, I would drop the horse thing. I stopped liking horses when I was like eight. No offense.

(beat)

K. Bye.

She kisses Ruth's cheek and breezes out. Ruth looks at herself, vaguely made over. She touches the beautiful fabric of her new blouse. She checks out her legs in the expensive jeans. She does look good. For a moment she forgets who she is and she becomes like Michelle in the mirror; carefree, cute, happy.

Before she leaves, Ruth crouches to the floor and finds her story, the first page nearly covered in blood. She stops at the trash can. She looks at her story for a long time. She throws it in the trash.

INT. LUNCH YARD - DAY

Blaring sunlight shines on the depressed cement lunch tables as students laugh, yell, and eat French Bread Pizzas with weird little pepperoni cubes. Michelle, Diana, and TRENZYCE, 15, sit on a bird-shit covered table as Ruth approaches smiling hugely, carrying two French Bread Pizzas.

They all stop eating. Trenyce looks Ruth up and down. Diana glares at Michelle and grudgingly moves over her back pack. Ruth sits down.

DIANA

Who's the other FBP for?

RUTH

What?

DIANA

Who's the other FBP for?

MICHELLE

She means French Bread Pizza.

Diana and Trenyce laugh. They look at Michelle. Michelle can't hold it in-- she actually does think it's funny. She laughs too.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Save some for the whales!

They all laugh hardily. Ruth is confused. She laughs too. ROBERTA, 14, overweight, walks by with two FBPs.

DIANA

Hey Roberta, come here!

Roberta points to herself with her pizza, like "me?" Diana nods, inviting. Ruth scoots over to make room for her.

DIANA (CONT'D)

Ruthie here ordered one too many French Bread Pizzas, you want it?

ROBERTA

Oh, no, I'm okay.

TRENYCE

Are you sure? You only have two...

MICHELLE

Save some for the whales!

Michelle bursts out laughing. Ruth can't believe it. She looks at Michelle expectatly as Roberta sulks away.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Hey girl, can I have a bite of your extra FBP?

RUTH

Have it, I'm not hungry.

The girls devour the French Bread Pizza like ravenous pigs as Ruth watches on in dismay. She leaves the table, determined. The girls don't notice.

INT. GIRL'S BATHROOM - DAY

Ruth bursts in, rips through the trash can, tossing paper towels and empty water bottles, and finally emerges with her story. It's falling apart. Ruth hugs it.

INT. ENGLISH CLASS - DAY

Mrs. Spencer stands at the front of the room writing on the chalk board. Ruth enters clutching her story, and the room suddenly quiets.

Michelle waves at Ruth, and points to the empty seat next to her. Max, the rude blonde boy, NEIGHS like a horse. Michelle elbows him. A few kids laugh, and Ruth gets embarrassed and hides the story behind her back.

MRS. SPENCER

Alright then, class. We have a special Friday treat for you all.

(MORE)

MRS. SPENCER (CONT'D)
 Ruth would like to read her fan-
 fiction piece, "Black Beauty 2."

Michelle eyes Ruth and shakes her head. Ruth looks up at Mrs. Spencer, still hiding the story behind her back.

Ruth takes out her bloody story as Mrs. Spencer sits at her desk in the back of the room. The students squirm and whisper when they see her bloody story. Michelle covers her head with her hood and sinks down in her chair.

Ruth settles into a stool at the front of the room.

RUTH
 "Black Beauty 2: Equus Magnificas,"
 By Ruth Spitz. It's been a lot a
 years but my name is still the
 same. Black Beauty.

SERIES OF SHOTS

--Ruth wakes up and greets the day as sun beams into her room. Her mom enters furiously yelling at her as Ruth cowers in bed. Then her father enters carrying broken lamp.

RUTH (CONT'D)
 I wake up every morning and there's
 always something beautiful to see.
 I see beauty in everything. In
 everyone.

--On the school bus, Max and his giggling friends play 'keep away' with one of her toy horses.

RUTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I am old and no longer a pretty
 young horse, but there are still
 those who think I am beautiful.

--Diana Simms glides past Ruth in the hall, inconspicuously squeezing a piece of gum into her tangled frizzy hair as Michelle follows, conflicted.

RUTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 It's the simple pleasures I relish
 in now. Now I can sit back and
 remember all the horses I have
 known.

--Ruth lies on the floor of her room surrounded by every horse figurine and stuffed animal she owns.

BACK TO CLASS

RUTH (CONT'D)
I have loved every single one.

Ruth looks up at the class.

RUTH (CONT'D)
That's-- That's it.

Ruth looks up at the class. THE SCHOOL BELL RINGS and the students immediately file out of the room paying no attention to Ruth. Michelle rolls her eyes at Ruth as she exits the room last.

There is a silence once the room empties. Ruth looks down at her new flip-flops and deflates. Mrs. Spencer smiles at Ruth, touched by her writing.

MRS. SPENCER
That was very beautiful, Ruth. I'd love to talk to you about horses some time.

Ruth looks up at Mrs. Spencer hopefully. Mrs. Spencer smiles and pulls out a photo album.

MRS. SPENCER (CONT'D)
I've been riding since I was a little girl, would you believe that? I'd love to show you my horses some time.

Mrs. Spencer opens the album and it's full of pictures of her with horses. Ruth watches on in awe.

RUTH
You know all of them?!

MRS. SPENCER
Know them? They're some of my best friends.

She whispers in Ruth's ear.

MRS. SPENCER (CONT'D)
I have a ranch.

Ruth's jaw drops.

MRS. SPENCER (CONT'D)
We care for injured horses there. Horses who's parents don't know how to treat them.

(MORE)

MRS. SPENCER (CONT'D)
And horses who have been abused.
Physically...and emotionally.

Mrs. Spencer is filled with emotion. She smiles at Ruth.

MRS. SPENCER (CONT'D)
I'd love to take you some time.

RUTH
You. Are. Joking.

MRS. SPENCER
That way, we can hang out with
horses outside of school, and then
when you're at school, you can talk
about other things you like.

RUTH
Like what?

MRS. SPENCER
Well, do you watch anything on TV?

RUTH
(shrugging)
House.

MRS. SPENCER
Perfect. You know Olivia? Her
favorite show is *House*.

RUTH
Really?

MRS. SPENCER
I think you and Olivia would have a
lot to talk about.

Mrs. Spencer points to a picture of one of the horses.

MRS. SPENCER (CONT'D)
Do you know what this one is?

Ruth becomes emotional. She can't believe she's actually
talking about horses with another human being.

RUTH
Pinto.

Mrs. Spencer looks at Ruth and touches her back.

MRS. SPENCER
That's right. This one's my
favorite...

The two continue talking about horses as golden afternoon light beams into the classroom. They could go on forever.

THE END