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HORSE BY DARREN DOHERTY

Living next to a knackers yard and covered in appalling acne, Ted Bagshaw's Father JOHN was tricked by an insane Horse to set it free from certain death in exchange for a cure for his terrible skin affliction. The teenager found himself unable to control the beast, and the Horse was soon destroying the street before colliding with a car and wiping out an entire family. Lying in hospital, John was visited by the one surviving member, an angry OLD GRANDMOTHER. Cursing him, John suddenly discovers he has something much worse than acne when he finds he has a Horse's tail. She promises a life of misery, unless he can persuade his son to carry out the cure that she whispers into his ear.

Born of the bizarre family curse, Ted is forced to grow up with the affliction of having the hooves and tail of a horse. Encouraged by his Father to wear home made prosthetic feet to hide his hooves, his first encounter with the human world at large is at school. Here he faces a life of prejudice and cruelty from those around him, particularly from class bully Rob. The only children who don't care about his freak status is his best friend Fatboy and Sarah Fitzgerald, though Ted is too shy to talk to her. His affliction brings benefits such as great speed, strength and a heightened sense of smell. Despite his Father's promise of a cure and continual encouragement to think human, his Father still uses Ted for his own gain.

Using Ted to pull his Rag and Bone Cart for the early morning entertainment of the neighbours, , his Father pockets extra money that he makes from the cruel show, and all behind his Wife's back. However, all this is brought to an end brutally when Ted is robbed of these gifts by Rob, who ambushes Ted and cuts his tail off. Family life falls apart, and John is caught by his Mother Mary attempting to force feeble Ted into pulling his Cart for another freak show. The ensuing struggle leave his Mother dead, his Father institutionalised and Ted in the care of Family Friend Sparrow.

So Ted grows up to become a Taxidermist working for Sparrow's stall, and he takes shelter in the odd world of the market behind his stall. Tom appears to have put his horse days firmly behind him, though his fetish-like existence is never faraway, and it only takes the smallest trigger to send him scurrying down to his cellar to don his saddle and become Horse, dancing at Club Curio as a bizarre attraction. Although his performances bring extra money as he saves for expensive, natural looking silicone Prosthetic feet, his performances merely serve to fuel his feelings of inadequacy as a human.

However, his life takes a complicated turn when he is seduced by Sarah on the night of his Twenty first birthday, resulting in her pregnancy. Frightened by the prospect of Fatherhood and the child's appearance making it impossible for Ted to deny what he is, Ted watches in horror as Sarah's body changes. The release of his Father John and his interest in Sarah's pregnancy serve to unnerve Ted more, but nothing can prepare him for the birth of the COLT. The Colt's significance is brought to light when his Father kidnaps it, and in a macabre rerun of the freak shows of his youth, Ted is faced with the ultimate choice when he discovers the cruel nature of the Grandmother's promised cure; remain a freak or become fully human by killing his bizarre off spring...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ted and his Father are sat at the Kitchen table, Ted's exercise books on the table top.

Mary breezes in.

MARY
I'd better get a move on. Dad
will put you to bed after your
homework, won't you?

She picks up her bag.

MARY (cont'd)
Kiss...

She kisses Ted good night and pecks John.

The front door slams shut.

John lifts a large Medical Encyclopedia form underneath the table and places it before Ted, opening it at a page he has marked.

The open page has a finely detailed medical diagram of a woman who is nine months pregnant.

Ted stares at the image.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Staring up towards the ceiling, Ted clutches the Russian Doll.

The floor boards CREAK outside his door.

The shadow of two feet can be seen and the door opens, light creeping in and violating the comfortable darkness.

John enters the room and stands over Ted's bed. He ruffles his son's hair and smiles.

JOHN
Come on, it's time to get up.

Ted's nostrils flare and he takes a DEEP BREATH.

A pot of BARLEY boils on the stove.

Ted bolts excitedly from his bed.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ted sits down at the table and beams an excited smile at his Father, who stands at the cooker.

JOHN
I've made your favourite...

A dollop of the boiled barley is dumped into a bowl.

Beside the barley, a dollop of swede lands.

JOHN (cont'd)
Boiled barley and swede!

Ted immediately shovels the food into his hungry mouth.

MONTAGE:

The wooden prosthetic feet are pushed aside.

Ted pulls his tail out from what looks to be a specially made pair of shorts.

John drinks from a bottle.

A harness is strapped across shoulders, and a pair of straps are fastened crisscrossed tightly over a chest.

John's watch reveals it's six a.m.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

The first streaks of dawn are visible across the black, early morning sky.

A spider gently sucks upon the body of a fly caught in it's web against dancing orange light.

Already PEOPLE young and old have gathered and line the alley waiting expectantly, a hum of excitement in the air. Lines hang overhead. From the lines dangle horseshoes.

Some people hold various unwanted items in their hands, and some hold burning torches. The flames cause the shadows to dance upon the walls.

CHILDREN run around in excitement.

A MAN sits at his back gate and plays a piano.

One CHILD stops next to her MOTHER.

CHILD
When's he coming Ma? When's he coming?

MOTHER
Not long now pet!

CHILD
Is he horrible?

MOTHER
Oh he's disgusting!

CHILD
I can't wait!

The mother smiles as the child runs off again.

Suddenly the sound of hooves can be heard echoing down the alleyway.

The people's chatter becomes more excited as they peer down the alley waiting for the first glimpse, all heads turned in the same direction.

The hooves tread on the alley floor through papers, cans and dog shit.

Ted appears from around the corner. He pulls the cart along, and his Father sits behind holding the reins. As he runs, so the first rays of the sun appear.

John raises his hat to the waiting people.

JOHN
RAG AND BONE! RAG AND BONE!

TED'S POV - Smiling NEIGHBOURS start to laugh and cheer as they throw their unwanted rags, old pots and discarded furniture into the cart.

CHILDREN laugh at the sight of Ted pulling the cart and run alongside him. Ted ignores them and keeps his eyes straight ahead.

Some younger CHILDREN appear from behind adults and stare in wonderment.

The girl from his class, Sarah, stands smiling at a gate. She already wears her school uniform.

SARAH
Hello Ted.

Ted ignores her and gallops on.

A gate opens and Mrs Dunbar steps out into the alleyway. She opens her mouth but no word passes as Father and Son approach.

JOHN
Morning Mrs Dunbar...

Mrs Dunbar nods and attempts to smile. She throws an old duvet onto the overloaded cart.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - DAY

John smiles as the Neighbours continue to drop coins into his hat.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Ted sits in the bath with his arms around himself.

John pops his head around the door.

JOHN
We made a killing this morning son! Did you enjoy it?

Ted nods.

JOHN (cont'd)
Everybody loves a freak!

Ted looks down at his hooves.

TED
Did I do well Dad?

JOHN
You did great son!

TED
You won't send me to the Knackers
Yard?

JOHN
No Son, now hurry up and get
ready before Mum gets home, and
remember, it's our...

TED
Secret...

JOHN
And..?

TED
Think Human!

John winks before he disappears behind the door.

Ted smiles and pops a sugar cube into his mouth from the
bowl that sits beside the bath.

The water splashes around his hooves, dirt floats upon the
water as he uses scissors to scrape the mud off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

John sits and CACKLES to himself as he counts the numerous
pennies that are piled on the table before him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ALLEY WAY

Sarah, hair tied in a ponytail and dressed in her school
uniform, walks unsteadily down the alleyway. She carries a
basket.

The basket is full of apples, swede, turnips and carrots.

She places the basket down outside Ted's back gate. She
BANGS on the gate and runs away.

Mary opens the gate and looks around.

The alleyway is empty.

She looks down to find the basket waiting. A white piece of paper is attached to the basket. TED is written in black marker pen.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A line of BOYS stand opposite a MAN in a tracksuit.

Ted wears a T-shirt and tracksuit bottoms. He stands next to Fatboy. Ted fidgets.

His tail keeps coming out of the top of his tracksuit like it has a life of its own. He forces it back inside.

The games teacher, Mr PEARSON, balding, pot bellied and 40, stands with his arm raised in the air.

MR PEARSON
...So the winner gets to
represent the school at the
county championships!

FATBOY
That'll be Rob. He's the fastest
in our year...

TED
So what do we do?

FATBOY
Just run as fast as you can.

TED
Why?

FATBOY
Otherwise we'll get into trouble!

Ted nods. Like a horse.

Mr Pearson raises the whistle to his mouth and blows hard.

The other boys start sprinting.

Ted is unfastening the straps around his legs.

MR PEARSON
Come on Bagshaw! What are you
waiting for?!!

Hooves step out of the wooden feet.

The whistle drops out of Mr Pearson's mouth.

Ted sprints, and hurtles past the other boys who stop running and stare in disbelief.

Rob looks on, Fatboy next to him open mouthed.

Ted runs past the finish line and continues onwards.

MR PEARSON (cont'd)
STOP! STOP BAGSHAW!
(MORE)