

The Carousel Horse

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With music by relaxdaily

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XULUBg_ZcAU

The horse is racing. Around and around. Frozen in a moment of time, an expression on his face felt for an instant that lasts forever. His body poised for running, a mid-air leap he started and can not finish. His many riders do not know him. He is a magical wizard cast in a spell. His wisdom runs as deep as he runs wild. Yet, no one sees it. Only those who can see into his soul will know of his amazing past before this moment of petrification. His eyes hold the secret. But no one looks. They climb him. They pull his reins. They jump on him. They talk about him in the third person in his very presence, as though he did not exist.

Yet his beauty is stunning. He is black as midnight with hooves of steel. His mane and tail, silky and fine, white as the snow. His chest is high and full of pride. Trapped, he longs to run again in green fields with his herd, the white mare in the lead, her mane and tail, black as the moonless night. She ran free. And now, she waits.

He tries to move, but he cannot. It is another day of not giving up. The carousel rotates in an arc. He can never see past the curve of the arc, the same horses always running in front of him. He can never see their faces. He doesn't know who they are. He wants to speak, but he has no voice. He can only live within his mind, and dream.

How can he let them know he is real? How does he show his vitality? Won't someone look at him, as though he mattered? I think it's the indifference that hurts him the most. The broom that sweeps out the remains of the day, the cold water that washes him down after the carousel closes down each day. LOOK at me. Look at ME. Look AT me. How many times do I have to say it? I am in here. I live in here. And I want you to know



me. I am something truly incredible. I am someone you would want to know, if only you knew. But I can't tell you. I am unable to speak it.

Today, he had a rider that was different. He couldn't feel her on his back. He could see the dark shadow of her hair, flowing like the wind itself. He noticed her reflection in the center mirror. A simple white dress she wore, old linen with no decoration. Her hair was black as were her shoes. She didn't sit on him. She flew above him, weightless, barely touching the pole that went right through his heart, one which was so delicate the slightest move could hurt it. He wanted to turn and see her, but he could not. Who is this rider who graces me this day?

The carousel did not stop in its usual time. Instead, it continued to go around and around, not even slowing down, but increasing in speed. She was the only rider today. The pace of the spinning carousel made him dizzy. He closed his eyes without thinking, so that he could try and balance his equilibrium. Sure enough, his fears went away when his closed eye lids took him home. His feet were hitting a grassy surface. This was no longer the hard wooden floor of the carousel. He could smell the scents of the countryside. He longed to open his eyes, and at the same time, he was afraid to do so, in case this reality would leave him and never return.

But then he heard a woman's laugh, and the woman said, with a smile,

"Why do you have your eyes closed? You're going to run into something!"

Immediately, he recognized the voice of the one he had missed for so long, and opened his eyes. The scene made his heartbeat quicken. He was running in his green pastures of home, in the vast rolling countryside of his youth. And there she was, as if they had never been separated. He did not speak of his past. Perhaps it was not even real. Maybe this was real. He didn't know what was reality anymore. But he dared not question it. He would accept it for as long as he could.

If a horse could smile, that is what he did. And he picked up the pace and ran as fast as he could.

"Wait, silly!" she said. "Don't leave me. You're running too fast!"

He couldn't help it. He was filled with vigor and excitement. He felt as though he could sail completely across the mountains. Finally, he slowed, turned to look at her, and

stopped so she could catch up. She was breathing hard when she got to him. She stopped right in front of him, their black eyes meeting, soul searching, a penetrating stare, directly into the very beings they were.

“The young ones miss you,” she said. “They long for your stories. Will you be with them again?”

It was too soon for him to answer that question. He’d almost forgotten about them, and the evenings they used to share under the stars, telling tales, both true and legendary. He shook his long mane, reared up onto his hind legs, and ran off into the meadows ahead.

“I just have to do this,” he shouted to her from a distance. “I have to let out all my pent up energy. I have to run like I’ve never run before.”

She laughed, because she knew him so well. “You always say that when you are happy,” she shouted after him. Then, she encouraged him. “Run!” she said. “Run until you fly!”

And he did. He ran up the hills. He ran down the hills. He ran great distances across the meadows, and even into the woods. There, he lost his way. He’d been concentrating on running, on his breathing, on his stride, so much so that once in the woods, got lost. He didn’t know these woods. They were not his woods. He turned to go back, but he only got further lost.

He caught a glimpse of someone walking around. It looked like a troll, or maybe a wizard. He walked up to him and the man looked up.

“Oh, it’s you,” the man said, in a normal tone.

“I don’t know where to go,” the horse said, quite matter of factly. “Can you help me? How do I get out of here?”

And the man-troll-wizard said, “Shall we go through this again?”

The horse was surprised. He didn’t remember ever seeing this being before, yet the being seemed to know him well.

“You’ve got to let the world know where you are. They can’t find you if you don’t. You’ll disappear into yourself again and never be able to come back if you don’t open up soon,” said the man.

“I don’t understand,” said the horse. “This morning, I was a carousel horse, trapped on a rotating platform, a prison to me. Then, I was running in a field I knew well with my best friend. And now I am lost. I don’t know what is real and what is not. And I don’t know how to let the world know where I am.”

The man shook his head reproachfully and asked, “How many times must I tell you before you will remember? How many times must you go back to that place, not because anyone puts you there, but because you freeze others out?”

The horse lowered his head in sadness. “I don’t know,” he said. “I just want to be with others, but I am separated from them. I want to enjoy life as they do, but I cannot find my way.”

“Go away,” said the man. “It’s useless.” Then, the man looked the horse closely in the eye, looked deep inside his soul, and said, “I see it all. It’s right there inside of you. It’s so much more than one can see from the outside. There is depth and greatness with no end. You are a marvelous creature, but you hide yourself. You only think you are lost. Your problem is in your mind, not in your surroundings.”

Then, the man was gone, and the horse was alone. It was becoming darker in these deep woods, and the mist was shrouding him in a piercing coldness. He knew he had to get out before a storm set in and weakened him beyond help to survive. But he didn’t know which way to go. He hung his head and closed his eyes. He thought about what the man-wizard said. Was it possible he had put himself in the carousel? That he froze himself to stop some pain of which he could not now recollect? Is it true, he had only to open himself up to be found? And how does one do that?

Raindrops were now falling at his hooves. “Man-Wizard!” he shouted. “I am here, and I want you to come out. I know you are near. I can hear your breathing. I want to share the warmth of your hearth.”

“Why should I share with you?” the man asked. “You are nothing but a horse, and you are wet and dirty.”

The horse hesitated. Why would the man say such a thing? Was he not a friend? Had they not a past together? And so the horse asked, "Why are you so hard on me? What have I done to make you angry?"

"You've done nothing," said the man. "And that's what you've done wrong. We sit here at home and wait on you to come. And you do not come. We take you into our homes and treat you like family. Then, you go somewhere, a place far away, and we don't know where you've gone. And we don't hear from you. It's as though you don't want us. We grow tired of looking for you. You are distant. We must go on."

The horse was surprised. "I do that?" the horse asked. "I never knew you saw me that way. I thought everyone had a nice life without me. I thought I was the one who felt left out, not you."

"When you go away," the man continued, "to your quiet place wherever that may be, you leave us and we can't find you. Then we give up. You are not lost to yourself. You know right where you are. All you need to do is let us know where you are. It's you who must find us."

The horse thought about this, and was sad that he hadn't understood sooner. Then he said, clearing his throat, "I normally don't tell people this, being as how it might sound conceited, but I am the greatest story teller. And not only that, but I know how to make a fire that lights with a single match every time. I can stand on my front hooves longer than anyone else I know. I can play the flute, and I know how to dance the Fox-trot. And give me a couple of glasses of Scotch and I can make you laugh like you've never laughed before! You need me in your life. And I need you in mine. May I follow you home?"

The man thought about it for a moment. He had a frown on his face as he considered everything the horse said. And then, he looked the horse straight in the eyes, and said, "I knew all that, but not everyone does." Then the man smiled, turned and began walking away. He looked back at the horse and frowned again.

"Aren't you coming?" the man asked. "I just happen to have some Scotch."

And so the two walked together in the dark and misty woods until they came upon a hollow tree into which the man walked. The horse saw a light emanating from the interior and so he poked his head into the hollow through which the man had walked.

There he saw a large room and a warm fire, and there was the she-horse, too, sitting comfortably by the fire.

She looked up and smiled when she saw him. “Hi, stranger,” she said. “Where have you been all my life?”

“Right here,” the horse answered, “too deep inside my own mind to be with you.”

“I know,” she said. “We were wondering if you’d ever wake up and be you with us, not get hurt so easy, not take everything so personal. We were wondering if you’d ever let us in there with you.”

And with that, suddenly the horse was back on the carousel going around in circles on the carousel platform. He looked down to where there was a hinged door built into the chest of his wooden body. He had always assumed it was for maintenance, but for the first time, it dawned on him, he had no moving parts, and so he would not need a door for that purpose. So he looked more closely at it, now that he had peeked his own curiosity.

What he saw inside the little door that led into his body was this. There was a wooded forest with a hollow tree. And inside the tree was a warm hearth. And in front of the hearth were a funny looking man, a beautiful she-horse, and himself. And they were talking and laughing, and occasionally there was a disagreement, but that was made light of due to the fact that they let each other know what was true to their hearts, that is, they let each other into their vulnerable place, that spot on your chest where you can open a little door and let people in or keep them out. And once you let them in, and they see why you believe the way you do, and why you do what you do, and that in essence, you are just the same as them, then they can admire all the qualities about you that are different from them, of which there are many, oh so many, being the amazing person, uh, excuse me, horse, that you are.

And with that, he reached his hoof up and shut the little door so as to keep them warm inside his heart. And he walked off the carousel platform never to be seen there again. And he looked behind him and saw the horse which had been standing behind him all the time he had spent on the carousel. It was the beautiful she-horse with the white body and the black mane and tail. She had been behind him, chasing him all these eons, and he had never even known it. She jumped off the carousel and followed him. He saw

that she also had a little door on her chest. He could see tiny rays of light coming from inside.

She shook her mane and asked, "So, do you play cards?"

"That's the one thing I have trouble with," he said. "I find it hard to hold them."

"Me, too," she said, and put on her sad face.

"So," he said, "why the long face?"

She didn't "get it" at first, but then smiled and said, "Oh, that's a joke, isn't it? I know you. You're trying to be funny. Long face. Ha! You sure think you're funny!"

And they talked and laughed and walked together into the night until they came to the meadow on the outskirts of town.

"This is home," she said. "I've got us safe in my heart. You can't leave again."

"This is home," he repeated. "We're safe in my heart, too. I won't leave again, now that we've seen each other clear to the heart of the matter."

Then they both heard a small voice and a tiny knocking coming from far down inside, and the voice said, in a very deep and profound manner, "Hey, can you guys be quiet. How can a man-wizard get any sleep around here?"

And somewhere in the night, a little door slammed. But not a permanent slam. Just one of those temporary slams that all we beings do. In fact, for the first time in the horse's life, everything was exactly perfect.

