

## Meeting Monkey

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My girlfriend, Taylor, wanted me to meet the new horse she's leasing. Of course, I was also eager to meet her. Ever since Taylor introduced me to horses—what seems like ages ago now—I've developed a connection with the animals I didn't have before Taylor and I got together. I've always loved animals, but I didn't fully understand how special horses are before Taylor came into my life. So now whenever Taylor finds a new horse I want to meet them! She showed me pictures of her new lease, Monkey Business, and I—a non-horse person—could instantly see how special she is. Taylor told me that the girl she's leasing Monkey from said that everyone loves Monkey. I could see why.

### The Drive

I am notorious for falling asleep during long drives, especially on a warm sunny day. For this drive I was wide awake the whole time, though admittedly somber and contemplative. Drives are like showers for me; they activate my brain and random thoughts come and go, as though the landscape itself is sending me messages. Sometimes long drives remind me of El camino de Santiago—The Way—a long road starting in France and going through Spain where people make pilgrimage. Then I start thinking about Martin Sheen in the movie *The Way* and how he carries his son's ashes and sprinkles them along the path. Then I think about myself doing that for someone I love. Then I feel morbid and think about something else.

I think about how there are a lot more farms in New Hampshire than people realize. And that if New Hampshire really tried, they could probably grow most of their food locally. I think about how the color green is underappreciated. Too many people like the color blue too much! Green is luscious and dynamic, and it represents flourishing and abundance. Blue is too calm and deliberate.

I was thinking about these things when my thoughts were interrupted by some jackass in front of us slowing down to 55 on the highway. Taylor passed him and I looked over and saw he was on his phone... on the highway! As we passed him he kept swerving around his lane like he wasn't paying attention. Then I felt glad that Taylor doesn't drive like a moron.

This whole time we were listening to music, of course, through Taylor's aux cable. She put on Fleetwood Mac. It got me thinking that "driving music" is not inherently different from regular music, but for some reason the act of driving makes it different. Fleetwood Mac doesn't feel the same when you aren't in a car. But Fleetwood Mac isn't "driving music" per se. It just becomes driving music when you listen to it while driving.

We pulled over to get gas and the sign said "cash customers please pay first". I thought don't you have to pay before using the pump anyway? The pump doesn't work unless you pay first, so I don't understand why the sign is there. I know that perhaps older pumps worked that way, but I have yet to see such a pump nowadays. So it just

seems redundant and silly. Silly and redundant. Redundancy is everywhere; I guess it isn't such a bad thing. Maybe there are people who still think they can pay after they pump. Or maybe the gas station just likes having the sign there. Who knows? I shouldn't get perplexed or annoyed, I guess, I should just think it's a cool sign.

### **The Barn**

Taylor warned me that the drive to Monkey's barn was long and treacherous. For a little while she actually had to take my car to go there because the long summer drive would ruin her car's still-on snow tires. I didn't mind letting her use my car, but apparently the road leading up to Monkey's barn is a hardly managed dirt road with many pits and hazards. Needless to say Taylor felt bad that she had to drive my car through. I didn't think it could be that bad, though. Then we got to the road and it reminded me of my old landlord's driveway, except it was a lot longer.

Overall it didn't seem that bad, but we had to drive pretty slowly, so I guess it wasn't *great* or anything. Several signs said "GPS WRONG". That's how you know you're in the middle of nowhere. We pulled into the barn driveway and there were more people there than usual. Taylor thought that was weird. Apparently someone else did, too, because someone else said the same exact thing after Taylor said it. Three dogs came running up to us; one big white fluffy one, a smaller black one, and a much smaller tan one. Taylor had warned me before that the big white one has to get to know someone before being friendly. She also said she might be friendly anyway because she already knows Taylor. The big white one came right up to me and wanted me to pet her, so I did. I pet all of them except the small one because it strutted away.

Monkey was in someone else's paddock, so we had to go get her outside instead of from her stall. As soon as Monkey spotted Taylor she started whinnying! She was so giddy that it was adorable. I love when horses whinny, too. Taylor took Monkey out of the paddock and we led her to the barn. While she was in the tack room getting Monkey's riding gear ready I was outside admiring the farm's pet crow, Webster.

I then noticed a worm was trying to burrow into the dirt near the barn entrance. Feeling bad for it, I decided to try to help it out by picking it up and placing it over in a grassy area. Well Webster, perched up on the power lines, saw my act of charity and swooped down and killed the worm I had assisted just moments before! Crows are really interesting animals. They're very smart, probably smarter than most people. This was the first time I ever met a crow in person. What a first impression!

Do you think that worm knew its fate? That my picking it up would be the last thing it experienced? If worms could feel fear, surely that worm knew it was in danger. Even though I intended to help the worm, my assistance spelled its doom. This moment made me think of how flawed utilitarian ethics is. It requires us to know what effect our actions will have, despite our intentions, and that is surely impossible.

After my devastating encounter with Webster I helped Taylor get Monkey on the cross-ties so she could put her saddle and bridle on. I even got to brush her! When I say Monkey is a really cute pony I'm not sure if I'm really conveying just how cute she is. It's hard to explain, but she puts her ears forward and poses when she knows that people are looking at her. It's really funny.

It seemed like it was going to start raining soon, so we went over to the indoor riding arena, a big barn-looking building with open doors. Then it seemed like it *wasn't* going to rain so we went to the outdoor arena nearby. But then deerflies started attacking

Monkey and we went back to the indoor again. Monkey also wasn't on her best behavior, so Taylor was a little disappointed; however she ended the ride on a high note.

I've been to barns before but this one had a really pretty landscape. I was saddened to learn that Monkey is going to be changing barns, especially after Taylor just got used to riding at this one. The new barn is going to be closer at least, but it doesn't have an outdoor arena and the landscape probably isn't as beautiful. Good things don't last, but you can always expect something else will come to make things alright! Even though I was traumatized<sup>1</sup> by an opportunistic crow, I had a great time visiting Monkey. I, as a non-horse person, think Taylor found a one in a thousand horse. Everyone loves Monkey, including me.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an obvious exaggeration