

We Need a Horse

Written by
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Painted by
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The speckled horse made his way through the field, softly, trying not to step on any insects or worms.

After all, he wouldn't have wanted anyone to step on him.

Soon he saw a bright light appear.





When he got to the light, he stopped.
The light said, "Ask me a question."

The horse already had a question prepared.

He shuffled his feet on the ground and said,
"What is the reason I was made a horse
and not some other animal?"

The light said,
"Because we needed another horse."

His one question asked and answered,
he walked past the light, into a field where
there were many animals, of all shapes and
sizes, in colors he had never seen before.

A sheep passed by.

On her back there was a tennis racket, attached
with a thick rope that went around her belly.





“Do you play tennis?” the horse asked.

“I do,” she said. “Just like a human,
and I’m very good at it.”

The horse found this hard to believe.
She couldn’t even hold a racket.

The horse said,
“What question did you ask,
and what did the light answer?”

“I asked, ‘Why was I made a sheep?’”
You see, all my life, I was never happy being a
sheep. I always wanted to be a human.”

“What did the light answer?”
the horse asked.

The sheep shook her head. “It said,
‘We made you a sheep because we needed
another sheep.’ I wish it had said
something different.”

The sheep kicked at the ground, unhappy.





She seemed so silly, with her disappointment and her racket. The horse said, "I like you."

The sheep smiled and said, "Maybe that's why I was made a sheep. So a nice horse could like me."

The horse said, "Maybe that's why I was made a horse. So I could like a nice sheep like you."

Then the horse snuffled and galloped away.
In the distance there was an apple tree, and he
went to it and started eating an apple.

The horse said, “I guess they needed to
make an apple — this apple I am eating —
so I could come along and eat it.”





As he was thinking this, the apple brightened and spoke. It said, "I guess they needed to make this horse, so she could come and eat me."

The apple was in the horse's mouth and the horse's mouth was around the apple.

In the quiet, there was only the sound of crunching.

Now the horse felt tired, and he
looked about for a place to lie down.

The grass below him seemed soft and inviting,
so he lay down in the grass.

The grass was so happy to have him.
It began to sing to the horse.





*If the ground were raised a lot
Shoes and slippers would get caught*

*If the ground were any lower
All the trees would topple over*

*If the ground were further down
You would never find your town*

*The ground is at the perfect height
Morning, midday, evening, night*

*The ground is perfect, you can't beat her
By a foot or millimeter*

Now the darkness came and whispered in the horse's ear. "Thank you for accompanying me," it said. "I am always nervous on this journey, and I hate to go alone. So thank you for coming with me, horse. Now I'm less scared, and not at all lonely."

The horse said, "You're welcome."

He was glad he was a horse, strong and steady, so he could go with the darkness.





The horse and the darkness went off together.

Then beyond the field, the light came softly
and said, "Any final questions?"

But now the horse understood everything.



Dedicated to my mother, Agnes Vago

—Sheila

For Asha, Tommy, Robbie, Pearl, Luchiano, and Maddy

—Clare

Sheila Heti is the author of three books of fiction: the story collection *The Middle Stories*, the novel *Ticknor*, and *How Should a Person Be?* She also wrote, with Misha Glouberman, *The Chairs Are Where the People Go*. She is the creator of the Trampoline Hall lecture series, and lives in Toronto.

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—Sheila

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and Sheila for the brilliant story.*

—Clare

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