

BLACK BEAUTY

A Musical

Book & Lyrics
BARRY HARMAN

Music
KATHY SOMMER

Based on the novel by
ANNA SEWELL

June 2021.
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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

Novelist Anna Sewell published BLACK BEAUTY in 1877, hoping "to induce kindness, sympathy, and an understanding treatment of horses." In 2021, the musical's authors still share her concerns, though our larger theme is empathy - both for animals and our fellow humans.

In this divided age, the eventually "radicalized" title character - who finally begins to question the entrenched hierarchy of humans - is a metaphor for every disenfranchised creature on this planet. Why are the ones in charge...in charge? When we have much in common, why is the world so divisive? Aren't we all Mother Nature's children?

In the novel, the horse named Black Beauty narrates his story at the end of his life; he already has a jaundiced view of humankind. In our musical we chart why and how his thoughts develop, as he comes aware of the foibles of those who employ him and his horse friends as beasts of burden.

We also utilize the characters of the author's father, Isaac - whose horse the novel was reputedly based on - and the author Anna Sewell herself, who intrigues as an unlikely candidate to have written the most famous horse story of all time.

We've enjoyed creating and combining two different musical approaches to differentiate equine characters from people - echoes of pop and hip hop for horses, modern folk for humans.

BLACK BEAUTY is a musical for today.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

OUR HORSE (later called BLACK BEAUTY), a handsome thoroughbred

GINGER, a spirited mare

ISAAC SEWELL, former stable boy, now father to the author of the novel BLACK BEAUTY

ANNA SEWELL, physically-challenged author of the novel BLACK BEAUTY

SIR OLIVER, a shell-shocked, retired war horse

MERRYLEGS, a fussbudget Shetland pony

JOE GREEN, an orphaned stable hand, pre-adolescent

JOHN MANLY, stablemaster at Birtwick Park

ENSEMBLE (Male & Female Actor/Singer/Dancers) who cover:

OUR FOAL (Black Beauty as a newborn)*

DUCHESS (Black Beauty's mother)

COLTS & FILLIES (Dancer/singers)

SQUIRE GORDON (Owner of Birtwick Park)

LYDIA GORDON (His wife)

ARTHUR GORDON (their son, aged 9)*

SIR ALFRED (Lydia's brother)

THUNDERBOLT, SIDESTEP, WINGMAN (3 stud horses)

PIPE-SMOKING GROOM

BRIDGE GATEKEEPER

DR WHITE (A physician)

DR. BOND (A veterinarian)

MR. YORK (A stablemaster)

STABLEHANDS

HER LADYSHIP (Duchess at Earshall Hall)

CLARA (Isaac's wife)

JOEY (Isaac and Clara's son)*

JERRY BARKER (A London cab driver)

LONDONERS

MRS. BARKER

THE BARKER CHILDREN (dancer/singers)

GINGER'S DRIVER

SIMON AND EUSTACE (Cabbies, friends of Jerry Barker)

TOBIAS LUDLOW

THE MAGISTRATE (V.O.)

LUDLOW'S CRONIES

MERRYLEGS & SIR OLIVER'S DRIVER

ARTHUR GORDON (as an adult)

MR. JARROLD, a book publisher

*One preadolescent boy plays OUR FOAL, young ARTHUR GORDON and JOEY SEWELL

OUR HORSE'S "CREW" and GINGER'S "POSSE" are backup singer/dancers, members of the ensemble, utilized to provide vocal enhancement.

MAJOR MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID	ISAAC SEWELL & ALL
MY BEST	OUR HORSE
AN OLD SOLDIER	SIR OLIVER
THE LITTLE ONES	MERRYLEGS
SUNRISE	OUR HORSE
GINGER SNAPS	INSTRUMENTAL
I HEAR YOUR SONG	GINGER, OUR HORSE & ALL
PROGRESS!	JOE GREEN
FOR MY LADY	OUR HORSE & ALL
ANYWHERE BUT NOW	ISAAC SEWELL & ALL
A THING OF BEAUTY	JOE GREEN & ISAAC SEWELL
FADE TO BLACK	GINGER & ALL
A HORSE NEVER KNOWS	ISAAC SEWELL & ALL

ACT TWO

RIDING TO THE HOUNDS	ISAAC SEWELL, JOE GREEN & ALL
HARD FORGETTING	BLACK BEAUTY
A HORSE NEVER KNOWS (reprise)	LONDONERS
MY BEST (reprise)	BLACK BEAUTY & BARKER FAMILY
GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE	ANNA SEWELL
GINGER DREAMS	GINGER, BLACK BEAUTY & ALL
CHUMS	MERRYLEGS & SIR OLIVER
THE WAY HOME	CLARA & ALL
SO MUCH THEY CAN TELL US	ANNA SEWELL & ALL
WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID (finale)	ALL

WHERE: The action takes place in the English countryside, and later in the city of London

WHEN: Mid-Victorian Era

Lyrics in script are correct. In a few cases, they do not match up with tracks recorded earlier.

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE

Words - in the air, on the walls,
floor and ceiling of the theater -
all from the classic novel "Black
Beauty." Enter ISAAC SEWELL,
finishing a copy of the book. He
closes it, then speaks.

MUSIC: #1 - "WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID" <<TRACK 1>>

ISAAC

"Black Beauty," by Anna Sewell. Anna's my daughter; I'm her
father, Isaac. This must be - what, the fifth, sixth time
I've read her book? I reach the end and I burst into tears.
Silly. I know how it turns out! But it moves me. Every time.

(regarding the book)

It's a simple story, really. About a horse. Yet in the six
months since it's been published? Caused an incredible stir.
Changed the way people regard their horses, entirely.

(sheepishly)

Forgive a proud papa. I marvel at what my Anna accomplished.

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO SHED A BIT OF LIGHT,
WHERE LIGHT HAD NEVER BEEN SHED PRIOR.
WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
WAS PROVIDE A LITTLE INSIGHT
THAT SET THE GLOBE ON FIRE.

IN MY DAUGHTER'S NOVEL
SHE WRITES ABOUT A THOROUGHBRED
WHOSE COAT IS DARK AS NIGHT.
AND ON HIS FOREHEAD, HIS NOBLE FOREHEAD -
A BRILLIANT SPLASH OF WHITE!

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO MAKE US SEE A HORSE,
CLEAR AS ANY ARTIST COULD DRAW.
ANY WONDER I STAND IN AWE AT WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID?
WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID. WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID.

Another reason this book means so much? The horse my Anna wrote about? Based on a horse I rode and tended as a boy. A horse I loved fiercely. Always will.

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO MAKE US SEE A HORSE -
HIS HOPES, HIS FEARS, HIS DRIVE.
THEN SHE MADE A CHOICE...
GAVE HIM A VOICE.
AND SHE MADE MY HORSE COME ALIVE!

Did I say "My Horse?" To be clear, wasn't mine, never owned him. But if you ever cared for an animal, felt that mystical bond, you understand why I call him "my horse." Or better: "Our Horse." For he changed my life, surely. But I wasn't the only one.

The human contingent of THE COMPANY
enters: SQUIRE GORDON, wife LYDIA,
stablemaster JOHN MANLY, stable boy
JOE GREEN, LONDON CABBIES, etc.

THE HUMANS (SOLOISTS)

WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO WRITE A CLASSIC TALE -
WHERE ANIMALS CONTEND WITH HUMANS.
WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO TRY AND BLAZE A NEW TRAIL -
A PATH HER BOOK ILLUMINES.

ISAAC

IN MY DAUGHTER'S NOVEL
WE WATCH A STALLION COME OF AGE -
FROM BIRTH TILL HE GROWS OLD.
THROUGH HILLS AND VALLEYS,
DOWN LONDON ALLEYS...
WE WATCH HIS FATE UNFOLD.

ISAAC & ALL

A LIFE TO BEHOLD!

THE HUMANS

WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO MAKE US SEE A HORSE -
AND HE LEAPS OFF OF EVERY PAGE!

ISAAC

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID...

THE HUMANS

WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID...

ISAAC & ALL

WAS TO PLACE OUR HORSE CENTER STAGE!

Attention shifts to a meadow ringed
by trees. At center, an elegant
MARE cradles her newborn FOAL.

ISAAC

There he is, that's Our Horse! His very first day on earth.
And this mare? His mother, Duchess! Little fella doesn't
look like much, I admit. But keep in mind. Each one of these
majestic oaks? All began life as an acorn.

DANCE. DUCHESS leads her son on a
tour of the meadow. He is wobbly
but soon gains confidence.

Then: hip hop rhythms! Enter
dancing COLTS & FILLIES, beckoning
OUR FOAL to join. He hides behind
mother; she nudges him forward. He
watches the HORSES' footwork. A few
false starts, and he catches on.
Soon he is adding his own
flourishes, as:

THE HUMANS

WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID... WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID...
DAUGHTER DID... DAUGHTER DID...
WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID... WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID...
WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO WRITE ABOUT A HORSE!

ISAAC
IN WAYS NO ONE HAD WRITTEN PRIOR.

THE HUMANS
WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID
STARTED DIALOGUE AND DISCOURSE -

ISAAC
THAT TOOK US TO A MOUNTAIN HIGHER.

THE HUMANS
IN HIS DAUGHTER'S NOVEL
OUR HERO'S LIFE EXPERIENCE
ADDRESSES WRONG AND RIGHT.

ISAAC
AND ON HIS FOREHEAD, HIS NOBLE FOREHEAD,
A BRILLIANT SPLASH OF WHITE.

ISAAC & ALL
A STAR BEAMING BRIGHT!

FOAL, COLTS & FILLIES dance off.

THE HUMANS
WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO MAKE US SEE A HORSE -
RUNNING FREE, WITH HIS MANE UNFURLED.

ISAAC/ALL
SHE WROTE JUST ONE BOOK/...JUST ONE BOOK.
COME AND TAKE A LOOK/...COME LOOK
AT THE GIFT SHE GAVE TO THE WORLD!
TO THE WORLD!/...WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID.
TO THE WORLD/...WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID.
TO THE WORLD!

By song's end: COLTS & FILLIES re-
enter. OUR FOAL is now replaced by
his adult self - OUR HORSE.

ISAAC

(referring to OUR HORSE)

They grow fast, don't they? In just a few pages, my Anna already has Our Horse standing fifteen hands high. And as every filly at Farmer Gray's has taken note, he's become quite handsome!

(FILLIES giggle)

He's now just a few days past his third birthday. Already broken in, he's been taught to wear a bit and bridle, to carry a rider, and the sure sign he's come of age?

As an anxious DUCHESS enters:

OUR HORSE

Moms! Check it out - new shoes! Guess what the other colts told me? Over by the apple orchard, some kids were throwing stones at the horses! Someone needs to tell them. They could put an eye out!

DUCHESS

My son, that is of no matter now, you must prepare. You have been sold. You leave today.

OUR HORSE

Today? But...but Mom -- !

DUCHESS

I know. Far sooner than we expected. We haven't much time, I need you to listen. Remember, always do your work with a good will. Do your best to please and mind your manners. If you do, most humans will reward you.

OUR HORSE

Most humans?

DUCHESS

Be wary of them, my son. Many humans are good and kind. But many are not. Some may do you ill, even if they don't intend to. And there are some...some who will purposely harm you. Harm you and be glad of it.

OUR HORSE

Why would they do me harm? Or any horse? They depend on us.
We plow their fields, carry them to market --

DUCHESS

I have no answers. Someday, you will learn this is so.

Enter FARMER GREY with JOHN MANLY.

FARMER GREY

There he stands, Mr. Manly. Right there with his mother. See
how he favors her? This horse descends from an excellent
line. Squire Gordon made a wise purchase for your stable.

JOHN MANLY

We'll see about that, won't we? Come along, Horse.

ISAAC

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO SEND AWAY OUR HORSE
FROM THE MOTHER HE LOVED SO WELL.
GOODBYE, CAREFREE DAYS. SO LONG, FARMER GRAY'S.
WITH A HEAVY HEART, FARE THEE WELL.

MARES gather to lend support to a
stricken DUCHESS.

DUCHESS

He's not ready. I haven't prepared him. Not nearly enough!

1ST MARE

He will learn. He will learn.

2ND MARE

We always do.

ISAAC & ALL

FAIR THEE WELL.

As they will do throughout the
play, COLTS & FILLIES dance us into
the next scene.

SCENE ONE

Birtwick Park, Squire Gordon's estate. JOHN MANLY leads on OUR HORSE who looks off, anxiously.

JOHN MANLY

All right. Won't be needing Mother any more; you're grown-up now, with a new life awaiting. Nice airy stables, and all my charges are fed nothing but the best. You'll see.

(examining OUR HORSE)

Well-mannered, aren't you? I suppose its time we have proper introductions. John Manly, stable master of Birtwick Park, at your service.

(in confidence)

Don't be confused. I'm not your new owner. But Squire Gordon leaves the care of his horses to me, and as I've spent thirty years in his family's employ, I assume he's quite satisfied. Enough about me. Tell us about yourself! What do you want out of life?

*OUR HORSE gives a confused look:
"WTF, dude? I'm a horse."*

JOHN MANLY (CONT'D)

Let me explain. Every horse is different, just like humans. Some want nothing more out of life than their daily feed, and they're content. Others only want to be left alone to dream, lolling about in the meadow. But then there are others, the kind I tend to favor, whose every fiber of their being drives them to -- well, never you mind. You'll tell me what you're about soon enough. Soon as we see what you can do...

Lights immediately dim on all but
OUR HORSE. His backup CREW of
three males join him to sing:

MUSIC: #2 - "MY BEST" <<TRACK 2>>

OUR HORSE & CREW

DOO DOO DOO DOO DO DO DO DO DO.
DOO DOO DOO DOO DO DO DO DO DO.

I GREET THE DAWN AND START THE DAY.
I HEAR A VOICE INSIDE ME SAY
"UP AND AT 'EM BOY, IT'S TIME TO SHINE."
WHATEVER HURDLES I MAY FACE,
I'M POISED TO ENTER IN THE RACE
AND LAY IT ALL RIGHT ON THE LINE.

WHEN THE NORTHERN WIND IS AT MY BACK?
I'M GLAD TO BE ALIVE AND FEELING CRACKERJACK!
GUARANTEED, YOU PUT ME TO THE TEST?
I'LL DO MY BEST. I'LL DO MY BEST.
DO DO DO DO DOO DOO DOO DOO DO.

I SPEED ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE
AND NOTHING EVER BREAKS MY STRIDE,
EVEN WHEN THE LIGHT OF DAY IS GONE.
AND IF THE LOAD I BEAR IS GREAT?
I TELL MYSELF TO CONCENTRATE.
I STAY THE COURSE. I CARRY ON.

EVEN SHOULD I HEAR A THUNDERCLAP?
I KEEP AIMING FOR THAT FEATHER IN MY CAP!
CAN'T IGNORE THE FLUTTER IN MY CHEST
TO DO MY BEST. OH, I'LL DO MY BEST.

DANCE. OUR HORSE shows off his
"equine prowess."

OUR HORSE & CREW
I WILL ALWAYS GO THAT EXTRA MILE,
AND WHAT'S MORE I AM GONNA FINISH UP IN STYLE.
I WILL ALWAYS DO AS YOU REQUEST;
NEVER FAIL TO SCALE THE HIGHEST CREST.
TILL THE MOMENT I GO TO MY REST?
I'LL DO MY BEST. I'LL DO MY BEST.
DO DOO DO DOO. DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO!

MR. MANLY
Now that's the kind of talk I like! You speaking in your way,
me listening in mine.

Enter SQUIRE GORDON and wife LYDIA.

SQUIRE GORDON
Well, Mr. Manly. How does our new horse get on?

JOHN MANLY

First rate, sir. I think you and Mrs. Gordon will be very pleased. Fleet as a deer and full of life and spring.

LYDIA

He seems very even-tempered.

SQUIRE GORDON

I look forward to a ride myself. Tomorrow, perhaps.

LYDIA

I visit the doctor tomorrow, Edwin. Could I possibly try him now, Mr. Manly?

JOHN MANLY

At your service, mum.

(privately, to OUR HORSE)

Now look smart, or you'll make me the fool. Keep in mind: Squire Gordon and the missus? Tis them that buys your oats.

MUSIC: "MY BEST (LYDIA'S DANCE)" NO DEMO

OUR HORSE flashes a big smile, and launches into a real "ride" (dance) with LYDIA. She loves it!

CREW

I WILL ALWAYS GO AS YOU REQUEST.
NEVER FAIL TO SCALE THE HIGHEST CREST.
TILL THE MOMENT I GO TO MY REST...

SQUIRE GORDON

Bravo! Well done! Bring him up, Lydia.

LYDIA

Handsome one, isn't he?

JOHN MANLY

And smart as a whip.

SQUIRE GORDON

Clearly knows a pretty lady when he sees one! What shall we call him, Lydia?

LYDIA

Ebony? Raven? What do you think, Mr. Manly?

JOHN MANLY

I've always found, mum, given time? The proper name for a horse reveals itself.

LYDIA

Yes. Let's wait for a bit. Till he's settled in. I shall have to consider this carefully. Such a fine creature deserves a very special name.

ISAAC

(narrating)

Thought I should alert you. A significant addition to our story is about to enter. Presenting: Master Joseph Green.

Enter stable boy JOE GREEN. He trips and falls, sprawled facedown.

ISAAC

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO INTRODUCE A LAD -
SELF-ABSORBED AS A BOY CAN BE.
RATHER COMMONPLACE. HIS ONE SAVING GRACE?
IN MY DAUGHTER'S BOOK - THIS IS ME!

JOE GREEN

(recovering)

Sorry, mum. Didn't see you.

LYDIA

Quite all right, dear. Have you seen our new horse? We're trying to find the right name. Any thoughts?

JOE GREEN

(sighing)

Lots more to shovel.

LYDIA

Yes, well, that will be all. Carry on.

LYDIA exits. JOE GREEN moves
upstage as, as.

SQUIRE GORDON

Been meaning to ask.

(sotto, indicating JOE)

What of our other new arrival?

JOHN MANLY

(not pleased)

To be determined, sir. To be determined.

SQUIRE GORDON

Local boy. My wife would like us to give him a chance. His
parents were teachers. Lost both in a fire.

JOHN MANLY

Never knew *my* parents. Either way, it's no excuse for
lollygagging, is it?

SQUIRE GORDON

No. I don't suppose it is.

He exits. MANLY turns to JOE.

JOHN MANLY

Tomorrow morning, you'll begin grooming, starting with our
new arrival. Show me how it's done.

(pointing, creating an
imaginary horse)

There be his head, there's his tail.

Hands JOE a brush, who takes it
warily, and begins miming brushing
the horse, tail to the head.

JOHN MANLY

No, no, no! Told you. Stem to stern, not the other way round!

JOE GREEN

Sorry, Mr. Manly. Forgot.

JOHN MANLY

Don't apologize to me. Rub a horse the wrong way, you invite a swift kick in the head! Which I'm thinking, might be an improvement! Nearly sundown. Think you can manage to show our new arrival into the stable?

JOE GREEN

Yes, Mr. Manly. Straightaway.

JOE, embarrassed, leads OUR HORSE
away.

ISAAC

Wish I could say the way daughter portrays me was exaggerated. Unfortunately? Spot on. Generous, if I'm being honest. But my Anna knew what she was about. We humans - even those of us who truly love our animals? We can still bring them a world of hurt.

COLTS & FILLIES dance us into:

SCENE TWO

BIRTWICK PARK STABLES.

OUR HORSE encounters SIR OLIVER,
dotty shell-shocked ex-army horse.

SIR OLIVER

Halt! Who goes there? Identify yourself, sir, or suffer the --

OUR HORSE

Hey. Easy. I'm just the new guy. Arrived today. They brought me over from -- Holy Farmer Gray!

He has noticed that SIR OLIVER has
no tail! Only a stub remains.

OUR HORSE

W-what happened to...?! I mean, w-where is your...your --

SIR OLIVER

Tail? Oh, you noticed it's missing? Thank you for reminding me. Not enough I'm mocked by other horses. Preyed upon by insects, with nothing left to swat them away...

OUR HORSE

Dude, I'm sorry. It was a shocker. *What the heck happened?*

SIR OLIVER

Obviously I lost it. Somewhere. I think someone must have cut it off, don't you? It's all rather hazy now...

UR HORSE

(slightly panicked)

D-does that happen to all the horses here?!

SIR OLIVER

What? Oh no, this was many moons ago. I'm ex-military, you see. Now I recall, yes, it was shot off during the Battle of Mujadin. Along with my rider. I see him now...that sweet young boy, looking up adoringly, a hole the size of a cannonball where his belly used to be. And next to him?

(MORE)

My severed tail. Quite a shock, losing both in one day. Not sure which I miss most.

OUR HORSE

You were an army horse? For real? Never met one of those!

MUSIC: #3 - "AND OLD SOLDIER" <<TRACK 3>>

NOTE: SIR OLIVER IS A MATURE MALE CHARACTER, BUT DEMO SINGER IS FEMALE (COMPOSER KATHY SOMMER).

SIR OLIVER

I suppose we're all much alike. Pressed into service, injured in battle, then cast aside. Of little value to anyone...

AN OLD SOLDIER JUST KEEPS FIGHTING
BATTLES IN HIS HEAD.
AN OLD SOLDIER REMEMBERS IT ALL...
THOUGH SOMETIMES HE MAY LOSE THE THREAD.

HE SEES HIMSELF IN THE CAVALRY -
YOUNG AND LEAN AND HARD.
CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT CHAP WAS ME,
NOW I AM WORN AND BATTLE-SCARRED?

AN OLD WAR HORSE HAS EXCITING
TALES THAT HE COULD SHARE.
AN OLD WAR HORSE ARRIVED AT ROLL CALL
TO FIND SOME FRIENDS NO LONGER THERE...

SOME OF THE WARS HE FOUGHT IN
ARE BEST LEFT UNDISCUSSED.
THE BLOOD THAT WAS SHED
AND THE NUMBER OF DEAD
AND THE BATTLE PLANS GONE BUST...
AND THE TALES THAT HE WOULD TELL YOU --
ARE THEY TALES THAT YOU CAN TRUST?
KEEP IN MIND HE IS JUST AN OLD SOLDIER...

Funny. You remind me of a horse I knew. A dashing charger.
Led the battalion at the Battle of Balaclava.

OUR HORSE

Really? And he looked like me?

SIR OLIVER

Very much. Until a mortar shell blew his head off. Not so much then.

NOW THAT THE BOOMING CANNONS
HAVE ALL BEGUN TO RUST?
AND THE COMRADES WHO FELL
(MANY LADS HE KNEW WELL)
HAVE LONG SINCE TURNED TO DUST?
AND THE CHILL THAT COMES OF EVENING?
WELL, I GUESS YOU GET THE THRUST.
IN THE END I AM JUST AN OLD SOLDIER.

AN OLD SOLDIER JUST KEEPS FIGHTING
BATTLES IN HIS HEAD...

So what about you? Any thoughts of a military career?

OUR HORSE

Not any more.

SIR OLIVER

No. Why would you? Ah, here's one of our stablemates, our dear Mr. Merrylegs. Poor chap works himself ragged, gets no appreciation. Not to worry. He'll tell you all about it...

LYDIA enters with fussy MERRYLEGS.
On his back: ARTHUR GORDON, age 10.

LYDIA

All right, Arthur. Say goodnight.

ARTHUR

Night, Merrylegs! Love you! Oh, can't we keep playing, Mummy?

LYDIA

Tomorrow. It's almost dinnertime. ...Well done, Merrylegs, as always. Sir Oliver, I see you've already met our new guest. I count on you and Merry to make him feel welcome. He's young, and this is his first night away from his mother.

LYDIA and ARTHUR exit.

MERRYLEGS

How lovely. They've brought us a toddler. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised.

MUSIC: #4 - "THE LITTLE ONES" <<TRACK 4>>

NOTE: MERRYLEGS IS MATURE MALE CHARACTER; DEMO IS SUNG BY FEMALE (COMPOSER KATHY SOMMER)

MERRYLEGS

After all, children are my specialty.

THE MISTRESS HAS ME TEND TO THE LITTLE ONES,
SO THE LITTLE ONES CAN LEARN TO RIDE.
MY LOLLIPOP AND CRISP PEANUT BRITTLE ONES...
THE LITTLE ONES NEVER LEAVE MY SIDE.

CHARLOTTE ALWAYS FIDGETS.
ARTHURS'S CHUBBY LITTLE DIGITS
POKE INTO MY NOSE AND IN MY EAR.
THIS BABY BIB IS BRIGITTE'S -
OH, MY DARLING LITTLE MIDGETS!
AND GUESS WHAT I AM THINKING
EVERY DAY WHEN THEY APPEAR...?

I WANT THEM DEAD. I WANT THEM DEAD.
OH MY GOODNESS, THERE I'VE SAID IT.
THOUGH YOU HAVE TO GIVE ME CREDIT
AS I'VE NEVER HAD SUCH AWFUL THOUGHTS BEFORE.
BUT AS EVERY DAY GOES BY I WANT IT MORE!

ELIMINATED! EVISCERATED!
WITH A NOOSE OR WITH AN AX,
ARROWS SHOT INTO THEIR BACKS.
SOMEONE STRANGLE THEM WHILE THEY'RE ASLEEP IN BED!
I WANT THEM DEAD. DEAD DEAD DEAD DEAD DEAD.

AT OTHER HOMES, I OFTEN WOULD BABY SIT
AND IN GENERAL, I DID QUITE WELL.
BUT HERE MY LIFE IS DIAPERS AND BABY SPIT.
THE LITTLE TWITS ARE SPAWNS OF HELL!
DROOLING CHOC'LATE SYRUP,
BRIGITTE TEETHES UPON MY STIRRUP.

CHARLOTTE NEVER FAILS TO SOIL HER PANTS.
DEAR ARTHUR EATS MOLASSES,
THEN HE PASSES NOXIOUS GASES...
AND EVERY DAY WE VISIT AND RESUME OUR HAPPY DANCE.

I WANT THEM KILLED. THEIR VOICES STILLED!
THOUGH IT MAKES ME SEEM COLD-HEARTED
TILL THEY'VE JOINED THE DEAR DEPARTED.
I WILL NEVER KNOW A SINGLE MOMENT'S REST.
JUST IMAGINE EACH ONE DRESSED IN SUNDAY BEST...
AND IN A CASKET! OH, DARE I ASK IT?
MIGHT THE VICAR SAVE HIS BREATH?
WHY PRETEND TO MOURN THE DEATH
OF THESE HOLY TERRORS WITH WHICH I'VE BEEN CURSED?
THOUGH I'M CERTAIN THEIR DEAR MOTHER'S HEART WILL
BURST
FOR THE BABES TO WHICH SHE'S GIVEN LIFE AND NURSED...
AND HOW TRAGIC WHEN THEIR ASHES ARE DISPERSED!
(tearfully)
OH, ALL RIGHT I'LL SHED A TEAR FOR THEM...
BUT FIRST? I WANT THEM DEAD. I WANT THEM DEAD.
I WANT THEM DEAD. DEAD DEAD DEAD DEAD.
ENOUGH SAID.

OUR HORSE

So the kids here are pretty much brats?

MERRYLEGS

(I can say it, you can't)

How dare you slander my charges! They're angels, innocent
angels! Oliver, who is this ill-mannered ruffian?

SIR OLIVER

Yes. What are we to call you, young man?

OUR HORSE

Call me?

MERRYLEGS

You have a name, haven't you?

OUR HORSE

Actually, no. I haven't been given one.

MERRYLEGS

No name?

SIR OLIVER

Oh dear. Oh dear dear dear dear dear.

OUR HORSE

Why? Is that bad?!

MERRYLEGS

Not for us. We already have names.

OUR HORSE

The mistress said she wanted time. To come up with a very special --

MERRYLEGS

Yes. The usual hogwash. "We've got to find a very special name for you..."

SIR OLIVER

It's a human thing. If they don't give you a name, they don't feel so attached. In case...

(not unkindly)

Well, in case they decide not to keep you. Which I'm *certain* will not be an issue. Though they did ship off that bay rather quickly. And the two Belgians. Oh, and that silly nag. Remember her, Merry?

MERRYLEGS

What's it matter? Only lasted a few days. Ginger didn't quite take to her, as you may recall.

SIR OLIVER

Yes. Practically bit her ear off. But that's our Ginger.

OUR HORSE

Ginger?

MERRYLEGS

As in "Ginger Snaps." And believe me. *She does.*

OUR HORSE

She? So there's a filly here? Excellent! We had a number of fillies at Farmer Gray's. I get along well with fillies.

MERRYLEGS

I wouldn't exactly describe Ginger as a filly.

OUR HORSE

How *would* you describe her?

MERRYLEGS

What do you think, Oliver? "Monster?" "Ogre?"

SIR OLIVER

"Evil witch?"

MERRYLEGS & SIR OLIVER

"She-devil!"

JOE ushers in GINGER, then exits.

GINGER

And who might this be?

SIR OLIVER/MERRYLEGS

Ginger/Ginger, love!

SIR OLIVER

We were just telling the new boy all about you.

GINGER

Were you.

OUR HORSE

Hi. I'm...just arrived. From Farmer Gray's? Was telling the guys how glad I am to know there's a filly in our stable.

GINGER

And why is that?

OUR HORSE

(taken aback)

I like fillies. We had several at Farmer Gray's, and --

GINGER

Uh uh. Ginger decides who she "chats" with. Not you. ...I see neither of you told him he's standing by my --

MERRYLEGS

Heavens sakes! How many times must we tell you? That's Ginger's stall.

SIR OLIVER

And as we told you, she's very particular about it.

MERRYLEGS

(to GINGER)

I wouldn't worry about him. Hasn't even been given a name.

SIR OLIVER

But Mistress did ask us to be nice. First night away from mother, and all that.

GINGER

Aww. Did Mommy give her Babycakes a big sloppy kiss before he set out on his awesome new adventure?

OUR HORSE

As a matter of fact, she did. So?

GINGER

(almost impressed)

Score one for the Newbie. I like a man who respects his mother. What I don't like is some total stranger, singing his song like the whole world is waiting to hear it. Who assumes I'd be all palsy-walsy with *someone I know nothing about*.

OUR HORSE

Honest, Ginger, I --

GINGER

Did I give him permission to use my name? I don't remember that. Listen up, Babycakes. Maybe Mommy forgot to tell you. Any new stable you happen into, *you're on trial*. Judged. And not just by humans. We get a say, too. And right now? You're a *long way from getting my vote*.

MERRYLEGS

Ooh. *Burn.*

GINGER

Bedtime! You've told him what happens to a horse who snores?

SIR OLIVER

(a painful memory)

It's not pretty.

GINGER

Night, gents. Oh, almost forgot. Welcome to Birtwick Park!

HORSES settle down to sleep, as
attention shifts to OUR HORSE.

MUSIC: #5 - "SUNRISE" <<TRACK 5>>

OUR HORSE

I'M SORT OF THE ODD MAN OUT.
DON'T KNOW WHERE I FIT IN.
BEEN A ROUGH START.
WRONG FOOT FORWARD.
MAKE SOME JERK MOVES.
NOT SMOOTH. MY BAD...

BUT I'M ABOUT THE SUNRISE
AND THE NEW DAY.
WHENEVER DARKNESS ROLLS IN
THAT'S WHEN I BEGIN
LOOKING TO THE SUNRISE...

TODAY STARTED OUT JUST FINE
THEN SUDDENLY THINGS WENT SOUTH.
SO MUCH COMING AT ME,
IT WAS THRILLING TO SEE
AND TAKE IN.
THEN IT ALL WENT AWRY.
AND I'M TELLING YOU I
WAS SHAKIN'...

BUT I'M ABOUT THE SUNRISE
AND A NEW SKY.

WHEN LIFE FALLS APART
THAT'S THE MOMENT I START
LOOKING TO THE SUNRISE.
I COUNT UPON THE DAYLIGHT
BRINGING ME A BLUE SKY.
WHEN I CAN'T SEE MY WAY CLEAR
YOU'LL FIND ME RIGHT HERE,
WAITING ON THE DAYLIGHT.

THE DARK TIME FOR SOME SEEMS SO BLEAK.
THEY CAN'T SEE THEIR WAY TO THE DAY BREAKING THROUGH.
BUT I KNOW WHEN NIGHT'S AT ITS PEAK...
TIME TO REST UP. DAWN IS NEXT UP.

He closes his eyes. Night begins
to give way to daybreak.

OUR HORSE

WHEN IT'S DARK ALL AROUND
I KNOW I'LL REBOUND,
SOON AS THERE'S A SUNRISE.

DON'T DWELL UPON THE FALSE MOVES
OR THE MISSED CUES.
LET THE WORLD FALL APART,
DON'T GIVE UP. DON'T LOSE HEART.
KEEP LOOKIN' TO THE SUNRISE.
TO THE SUNRISE.
IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SUNRISE.

GINGER cries out in her sleep, in
the midst of a dark dream. OUR
HORSE stares at her, confused.
What's that about?!

SCENE THREE

SIR ALFRED'S ESTATE.

ISAAC

Barely a fortnight later, we were all off for a visit to Squire Gordon's brother-in-law, Sir Alfred...

*Enter SIR ALFRED and a GROOM
smoking a pipe, followed by
SQUIRE GORDON and LYDIA.*

SIR ALFRED

That new thoroughbred of yours looks magnificent, darling. Well done, you two. Is he an easy ride?

LYDIA

A total sweetheart. You won't believe how well he handles.

SQUIRE GORDON

I wouldn't know. Lydia rarely lets anyone else near him. That's her horse, make no mistake. And your stallions seem in fine fettle, Alfred.

SIR ALFRED

What was it Father always said, Lydia? "Nothing lifts a stallion's spirits more...

SIR ALFRED & LYDIA

...than a new filly in the paddock."

*HUMANS move off as GINGER enters,
followed by three STUD HORSES -
THUNDERBOLT, WINGMAN & SIDESTEP.*

MUSIC: #6 - "GINGER SNAPS" - (INSTRUMENTAL) <<TRACK 6>>

This is a dance moment for GINGER and the STUDS. GINGER is in her element. She enjoys flirting and teasing, but still keeps the STUDS at bay, always in control.

As number progresses, STUDS become more aggressive, circling GINGER. OUR HORSE, SIR OLIVER and MERRYLEGS enter.

SIR OLIVER

All right, gents. Let's give the lady some room, shall we??

THUNDERBOLT

Who's gonna make us? You, Pops?

WINGMAN

Why don't you go chase your tail? Oh right. You don't have one.

MERRYLEGS

Take our advice. Ginger is not a mare to be trifled with...

SIDESTEP

Oh, we don't wanna trifle with her.

THUNDERBOLT

We got way bigger plans than that. C'mon, Sweetstuff. Let's take a little tour of the paddock. You know what they say. "Once you go stud...

ALL THREE STUDS

...It stays in your blood."

OUR HORSE

I don't think so.

THUNDERBOLT/GINGER

'Scuse me?/...'Scuse me?

OUR HORSE

I said: *not gonna happen*. Move along. Or I do it for you.

THUNDERBOLT

Really? Grandpa and Hairdo Harry here ain't gonna help much. That means there's three of us to one of you, Hotshot.

OUR HORSE

That's OK. I like those odds.

Realizing OUR HORSE towers over
them, THUNDERBOLT backs down.

THUNDERBOLT

Later, Sweetstuff. You should have told us your brought your
"nannies" along. C'mon, boys. Plenty of other fillies.

STUDS exit. OUR HORSE to GINGER:

OUR HORSE

You OK?

GINGER

OK? Am I OK?! *What were you thinking?* You think I can't
handle chuckleheads like that bunch of losers? You are so out
of line! Why would you even assume -- ?!

OUR HORSE

I -- I don't know. We're all in the same stable, right? I
guess we just felt sort of...protective.

GINGER

You're going to sing that old song? The "little lady" needs
protection?

OUR HORSE

No, it's just... Look, I hear you screaming out in the dark,
almost every night. Those terrible dreams you have, and --

GINGER

Merry. *What have you told him?!*

MERRYLEGS

Not a word! He keeps asking if we hear you talk In your
sleep, and we've been very clear. *We never hear a thing.*

SIR OLIVER

And even when we do hear you scream out --

MERRYLEGS

- *which I repeat, we do not* --

SIR OLIVER

We know we're not allowed to talk about it. Your nightmares --

MERRYLEGS

-- *Which we know nothing about because they do not happen!* --

SIR OLIVER

--are none of our affair. Lips sealed. Hush hush. Strictly need to know.

(withering under her glare)

And we don't. Need to know.

GINGER

But New Boy hasn't gotten the message, has he? And I'm so easy to get along with. All you need are three simple words. What are those words, boys?

SIR OLIVER & MERRYLEGS

No. She. Don't.

OUR HORSE

I don't understand.

GINGER

Demonstrate.

MERRYLEGS

Does Ginger care how many lemon drops the little ones got stuck in my mane last week?

GINGER

No, she don't.

SIR OLIVER

Does Ginger care how many mosquitoes bit me today?

GINGER

No, she don't. Or in your case, Newbie, it's like this: "Does Ginger want me poking my nose in her business *ever again?*"

SIR OLIVER & MERRYLEGS
(at GINGER'S prompting)

No she don't!

GINGER
"Does Ginger want to talk about what she dreams at night?"

SIR OLIVER & MERRYLEGS
No she don't!

GINGER
"Does Ginger think she and Newbie are ever gonna be friends?"

OUR HORSE
Ok. Ok, I get it. No. You don't.

GINGER
Bingo!

OUR HORSE starts off. OLLIE and
MERRY follow.

MERRYLEGS
Been trying tell you, Newbie. She just doesn't like you.

SIR OLIVER
Don't feel bad. She doesn't much like us either.

After she is alone:

GINGER
GINGER DOESN'T GIVE. GINGER DOESN'T SHARE.
GINGER HAS HER SECRETS AND THEY'RE GINGER'S AFFAIR.
SHE KEEPS IT PRIVATE, UNDER WRAPS.
POKE YOUR NOSE WHERE IT DON'T BELONG...
AND GINGER SNAPS. GINGER SNAPS.

GINGER TRAVELS LIGHT. GINGER DOESN'T TRUST.
SOMEONE HAS A PROBLEM? THEY'LL JUST HAVE TO ADJUST.
SHE HAS NO TIME FOR FOOLS AND SAPS...
THOUGH AT TIMES, SHE WOULD LIKE A FRIEND.
SOMEONE STRONG, ON WHOM SHE'D DEPEND.

BUT NO CHANCE, IT'S A REAL DEAD END
'CAUSE GINGER SNAPS. GINGER SNAPS...

Scene transitions partly to the stables at SIR ALFRED'S estate. Pipe-smoking GROOM and JOE GREEN usher GINGER, SIR OLIVER and MERRYLEGS into stalls, as SIR ALFRED enters with SQUIRE GORDON, and JOHN MANLY. OUR HORSE is outside his stall.

SIR ALFRED

Tell me about this new horse, Edwin. He actually saved your life?

SQUIRE GORDON

As God is my witness! Last week I had business in Leicester. Manly, the lad and I had the dog cart. On the way back: a terrible storm. River rising. We reach Hightown Bridge and...

<LIGHTNING & RAIN>. SQUIRE GORDON, MANLY, JOE GREEN and OUR HORSE re-enact scene. OUR HORSE starts onto bridge, then halts. MANLY shakes reins; OUR HORSE won't budge.

SQUIRE GORDON

What's wrong? He's gone stock still!

JOHN MANLY

Don't know, Sir.

(to OUR HORSE)

What is it? You've always behaved, just a touch of the reins. What's wrong?

SQUIRE GORDON

It's this blasted storm! The lightning...

JOE GREEN

Perhaps it's the water, Sir, swirling cross the bridge!

SQUIRE GORDON

No, he's just frightened. Take him in hand! Use the whip!

JOHN MANLY

Aye, I could sir, but I'm hating the thought. He's never disobeyed before.

<LIGHTNING AND THUNDER>. ISAAC
appears to narrate:

ISAAC

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO WRITE ABOUT A HORSE
WHO WAS STALWART AND HELD HIS GROUND...

A light flashes from off-stage.

ISAAC

HE KNEW DANGER LOOMED...

TOLLGATE KEEPER

(enters, with lantern)

Turn back! The bridge is out!

ISAAC

THEY'D HAVE ALL BEEN DOOMED...

TOLLGATE KEEPER

Broke and washed away!

ISAAC

HAD HE NOT HELD STRONG...

As original scene restores:

SQUIRE GORDON

We'd have drowned. No doubt of it.

SIR ALFRED

Good lord! And you think the horse sensed it?

JOHN MANLY

I know he did. Had we gone forward that day, Sir Alfred... I don't even want to think about it.

SIR ALFRED

(to OUR HORSE)

Good job, You! Well done! Bet I know someone who got a special dinner that night.

JOHN MANLY

And every night since. Plus a thick bed of straw.

SQUIRE GORDON

He certainly earned it.

JOHN MANLY

(to OUR HORSE)

Which is why in just a few months, you've become the pride of me heart, haven't you?

SIR ALFRED

And what do we call this paragon? I've yet to hear either of you call him by name.

SQUIRE GORDON

Naming him is Lydia's province. But I fear your sister is not feeling herself. To be candid, I'm worried about her health.

SQUIRE GORDON, SIR ALFRED, MANLY
and JOE GREEN exit. Before
following, GROOM lights pipe, blows
out match and tosses it aside.

MERRYLEGS

(mimicking the humans)

"Well done, You! Bet I know someone who got a special dinner!"

SIR OLIVER

"He certainly earned it!"

GINGER

"And what do we call this paragon?"

OUR HORSE

Give it a rest, can't you?

GINGER

It's all right. We understand. You just think you're better than -- wait. What's that?

OUR HORSE

What's what?

GINGER

I smell something...

MERRYLEGS

Oh, Oliver! Really.

SIR OLIVER

It wasn't me!

GINGER

No. Smoke. I smell smoke!

The match has ignited the hay!
Flames lick at their hooves. ISAAC,
POSSE & CREW appear.

POSSE & CREW

BURNING. BURNING. BURNING.
BURNING. BURNING. BURNING.

MERRYLEGS

What do we do, what do we do, what do we do?

SIR OLIVER

Please, Mr. Merrylegs. A little decorum, please. We are thoroughbreds, we do not fly off the handle, half-cocked!

A burning rafter falls to the
ground with a <CRASH>!

MERRYLEGS

What about now, Oliver?

MUSIC: "PANIC" - <<NO DEMO>>

POSSE & CREW

PANIC! IT WASHES THROUGH YOUR SOUL
AND THERE'S NO WAY TO CONTROL THE PANIC!
FEELING ROOTED TO THE SPOT...
WILL YOU RUN? NO YOU WILL NOT.
YOU ARE PARALYZED WITH FEAR.
YOU CAN'T MOVE OR SPEAK OR HEAR.

PANIC, PANIC HAS THE UPPER HAND!
PANIC, PANIC THOUGH YOU UNDERSTAND
NOT TO MOVE IS NOT A CHOICE,
BUT YOU CAN NOT FIND YOUR VOICE.
THERE ARE SHADOWS PRESSING IN
AND THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN WIN.
PANIC, PANIC, PANIC, PANIC...

ISAAC

Lucky thing, I was only half-asleep that night...

JOE enters. He sees fire, reacts.

JOE GREEN

...Mr. Manly! Mr. Manly!

JOE runs off, returning with SIR ALFRED, MANLY, GORDON, LYDIA and others. MANLY enters stable, blindfolds OUR HORSE with kerchief, and leads him out. LYDIA comforts OUR HORSE. MANLY tries to fetch GINGER; she is too spooked.

Lighting isolates the three threatened HORSES on one side. On the other is MANLY, urging OUR HORSE to call to his stablemates. The last thing we see is GINGER, MERRYLEGS and SIR OLIVER reacting to the OUR HORSE'S summons, as smoke envelops the scene.

SCENE FOUR

THE ROAD BACK TO BIRTWICK PARK.

OUR HORSE and the other three
HORSES enter, shell-shocked,
bedraggled and covered in soot.

SIR OLIVER

Good heavens. I thought the Battle of *Chillianwallah* was bad.

MERRYLEGS

Wasn't it?

SIR OLIVER

I don't know. Was I there?

MERRYLEGS

This had to be worse. Look how it frizzed up my mane.

SIR OLIVER

Actually, I find it quite sporty, Merry. What is it the young
people say? That's smokin'!

MERRYLEGS

Oliver. Nobody says "smokin'" any more...

SIR OLIVER

No? What *do* they say when your hair's on fire?

MERRYLEG reacts, frantically waving
at his smoldering mane.

SIR OLIVER

(to OUR HORSE)

Young man, you're to be commended. A nasty dust up, but we
came through, all thanks to you. Wouldn't you agree, Ginger?

GINGER nods, still in shock.

GINGER

GINGER COULD NOT MOVE.
GINGER COULD NOT SHOUT.
GINGER LOOKED AROUND
AND SHE COULD SEE NO WAY OUT....

And then, it was so strange. Like he was right there beside me, whispering in my ear. "Don't you give up, Ginger. Don't you dare give up! Follow me!" And...and I did.

She looks at OUR HORSE, in awe.

SIR OLIVER

(excitedly)

Because...because he took charge! Like a real general.
Merry, I think headquarters has assigned us a new commander!

(all military)

Leftenant Oliver Septimus Twombly, reporting for duty, Sir!

He executes an overly involved
military salute to OUR HORSE,
forgetting halfway through what he
is doing.

MERRYLEGS

Reassuring, isn't it? Knowing who is meant to lead...and who
is meant to follow. And very happy to do so...

GINGER

Step aside, boys. Ginger calls dibs on this one...

MUSIC: "I HEAR YOUR SONG" - <<TRACK 7>>

**NOTE: GINGER, MERRYLEGS, SIR OLIVER ALL SUNG BY COMPOSER
KATHY SOMMER**

GINGER

COULDN'T SEE MY WAY TO YOU.
DIDN'T FEEL THE VIBE.
SOMETHING WASN'T SITTING RIGHT,
I COULD NOT DESCRIBE.
NEVER DREAMED THAT YOU COULD BE
LEADER OF THE TRIBE!

BUT THEN THERE CAME THAT HAPPY SOUND.
AND NOW I HEAR IT ALL AROUND...

OUR HORSE "doo doo" riffs, as:

GINGER

I HEAR YOUR SONG, YEAH!
IN A WAY I NEVER HEARD IT SUNG.
I'M HEARING BELLS, YEAH,
IN A WAY THEY NEVER HAVE BEEN RUNG.
I HEAR IT PROUD. I HEAR IT STRONG.
I HEAR YOUR SONG, YEAH. I HEAR YOUR SONG.

MERRYLEGS

EVERYTHING IS MAKING SENSE,
EVERYTHING FEELS RIGHT.
OIL AND WATER AT THE START,
BUT NOW WE TWO ARE TIGHT!

MERRYLEGS & SIR OLIVER

SEEING THINGS I NEVER SAW, IN A DIFF'RENT LIGHT.

GINGER, MERRYLEGS & SIR OLIVER

I THOUGHT YOUR GAME WAS ZERO SUM...
NOW I SEE WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM!

I HEAR YOUR SONG, YEAH!
IN A WAY I NEVER HEARD IT SUNG.
I'M HEARING BELLS, YEAH,
IN A WAY THEY NEVER HAVE BEEN RUNG.
I HEAR IT PROUD. I HEAR IT STRONG.
I HEAR YOUR SONG, YEAH. I HEAR YOUR SONG.
I HEAR YOUR SONG, I HEAR YOU SONG, YEAH. (ETC.)

I HEAR YOUR SONG, YEAH!
IN A WAY I NEVER HEARD IT SUNG.
I'M HEARING BELLS, YEAH,
IN A WAY THEY NEVER HAVE BEEN RUNG.
I HEAR IT PROUD. I HEAR IT STRONG.
I HEAR YOUR SONG, YEAH. I HEAR YOUR SONG.

OUR HORSE dances off, the
others following happily.

SCENE FIVE

BIRTWICK PARK.

<TRAIN WHISTLES> in the distance.

ISAAC

From that day on, the four horses were thick as thieves. Mr. Manly teamed Our Horse with Ginger as often as he could, and Ginger was troubled far less by her dark dreams. Birtwick Park was, for a time, a very happy place.

(as JOE GREEN enters)

Even I felt like I was finding my way...

JOE GREEN

(to heaven)

Ma, Dad? Me again. 'Member I told you I can't please Mr. Manly, no matter what? Today, as I'm mucking out Ollie's stable for the *fourth* time, he looks in. God is my witness, I saw it - a grin! Old Sourpuss actually smiled at me!

MUSIC: "PROGRESS" <<TRACK 8>>

JOE IS A YOUNG BOY; DEMO SINGER IS COMPOSER KATHY SOMMER

JOE GREEN

I'M THINKING MAYBE HE NO LONGER HATES ME!
THIS WEEK HE HASN'T HOLLERED AT ME ONCE.
I NO LONGER LIVE IN FEAR
HE WILL BOX ME ON THE EAR.
MAYBE I AM NOT SUCH A DUNCE?

IT SEEMS TO ME HIS MOOD IS FAR LESS SURLY.
THAT MAY BE WISHFUL THINKING, I AGREE.
BUT THE OTHER NIGHT HE LET ME QUIT WORK EARLY.
THAT MAY NOT MEAN A LOT,
BUT IT MEANT A LOT TO ME!

PROGRESS! WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS!
THOUGH IT MAY NOT BE THE HEADWAY I HAVE DREAMT,
IT'S AWESOME...THE ICE HAS THAWED SOME!
HE NO LONGER LOOKS AT ME WITH SHEER CONTEMPT.
(WELL, HE RARELY LOOKS AT ME WITH SHEER CONTEMPT).

SOME DAYS HE DOESN'T BOTHER TO GIVE ORDERS.
HE MERELY MAKES A MOTION TO BEGIN.
SHOULD HE NEED TO SUPERVISE,
HE NO LONGER ROLLS HIS EYES.
COULD THIS BE A DREAM I AM IN?

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BARN DOOR WAS LEFT UN-LATCHED.
THE OTHERS SAID "THE LAD'S THE ONE TO BLAME."
BUT HE TOLD THE BLOKES MY RECORD THERE WAS UNMATCHED.
AND WHAT TRULY WAS A SHOCK? HE REFERRED TO ME BY
NAME!

PROGRESS! WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS!
ALL AT ONCE THE FUTURE DOESN'T SEEM AS BLACK.
I'M BLASTED...AND FLABBERGASTED!
AND I'M PRETTY CERTAIN I WON'T GET THE SACK.
NO, I POSITIVELY WILL NOT GET THE SACK!
(as he struts, proudly)
LIKE THE SMOKE FROM FACT'RIES RISING FROM THE STACKS.
I'M A LOCOMOTIVE CHUGGING DOWN THE RAILROAD TRACKS!

VOCAL BACKUP

SMOKE FROM FACT'RIES, RISING FROM THE STACKS...
LOCOMOTIVE ENGINE MAKING TRACKS!

JOE GREEN

Last week, on Ma's birthday? I was low, and Mr. Manly asked
what the matter was. When I told him? Found out he's an
orphan, too! Never had a family at all. He made his way.
Maybe I can too!

GO FORWARD! KEEP MARCHING TOWARD
TO THAT BETTER PLACE WHERE SKIES ARE BLUE AND CLEAR,
WHERE YOU FACE UP TO YOUR INNER DOUBTS AND FEAR.
AND WHO CAN SAY WHERE THINGS MAY GO FROM HERE?
WHO CAN SAY WHERE WE GO FROM HERE? PROGRESS!

<STABLE BELL>. JOHN MANLY enters.

JOHN MANLY

Quickly, lad! We need to get Our Horse saddled at once!

JOE GREEN

Yes, Mr. Manly. But what is the cause?

JOHN MANLY

The mistress. She may not last the night unless the doctor sees to her!

They exit. SQUIRE GORDON enters, in nightshirt, with candle.

SQUIRE GORDON

John, please! You must be off!

MANLY returns with JOE GREEN, leading on OUR HORSE.

JOHN MANLY

Run to the lodge. Have the gardener open the gate! Go!

JOE GREEN runs off.

SQUIRE GORDON

Ride for your life, John. Not a moment to lose.

JOHN MANLY

(to OUR HORSE)

Gird yourself. It's a hard ride, but it's for the mistress - her that rides you each morning. Her life hangs in the balance. Understand?

ISAAC

And they were off!

COLTS and FILLIES gather, to transition us to:

SCENE SIX

THE TRIP TO THE DOCTOR.

Trees and country-side flash by in
the moonlit night, as OUR HORSE
gallops onward.

MUSIC: "FOR MY LADY" <<TRACK 9>>

NOTE: OUR HORSE IS MALE. DEMO SUNG BY FEMALE, COMPOSER KATHY SOMMER.

OUR HORSE

THE WAY IS WILD AND DARK AND STEEP...
AND MILES TO GO BEFORE I SLEEP.
EVEN THOUGH MY STRENGTH BE GONE...
I AM THE ONE SHE IS COUNTING ON.
GOTTA DIG DEEP, DIG DEEP, DIG DEEP.
KEEP ON KEEPING ON!

Now in the groove, OUR HORSE feels
like he and MANLY are air-borne!

OUR HORSE & ALL

FOR MY LADY...
NO NEED TO ASK ME WHY SHE'S MY LADY.
SHE'S THE EARTH AND WIND AND SEA AND SKY.
I'LL GET THROUGH THIS, CLIMB A MOUNTAIN,
DON'T CARE HOW HIGH.
WATCH ME FLY. WATCH ME FLY.
FOR MY LADY. SHE'S MY LADY...DO OR DIE.

ISAAC

For two miles Our Horse gallops, fast as he can lay his feet
to the ground!

CREW

THERE MAY BE OBSTACLES TO COME.

OUR HORSE

WELL, MAYBE OBSTACLES FOR SOME.

OUR HORSE & CREW
I AM NO JERK OR CIRCUS CLOWN....

OUR HORSE
I AM THE ONE WHO WON'T LET HER DOWN.

OUR HORSE, CREW & POSSE
SHE'S MY LADY.
NOBODY CAN DENY SHE'S MY LADY,
AND A GLANCE FROM HER CAN MAKE ME SIGH.
LET HER TELL ME: "CLIMB TO HEAVEN,"
I'LL GLADLY TRY.

ISAAC
ON THEY RUN, FOR A TWELVE MILE RIDE!

OUR HORSE
STRAINING THROUGH THE PAIN, TO MAINTAIN MY STRIDE.

ISAAC
UP THROUGH THE HILLS,
AND THEN DOWN THROUGH THE VALLEY!

OUR HORSE
FEELING OUT OF BREATH...AND THEN I RALLY!
LAYING MY HOOVES DOWN TO THE GROUND.

ISAAC
NOTHING BUT THE WIND AND THE GALLOPING SOUND!

OUR HORSE
RACING, SPEEDING INTO THE NIGHT
AND SUDDENLY I SEE AN END IN SIGHT.
FINALLY THE HOME...OF DOCTOR WHITE.

CREW & POSSE
SUDDENLY I SEE AN END IN SIGHT..
FINALLY THE HOME OF DOCTOR...DOCTOR WHITE!

ISAAC
Finally the home...

OUR HORSE
(gasping)

...of Doctor White.

MR. MANLY
Please, sir. Mrs. Gordon is gravely ill. The master bids you
to come at once!

DR. WHITE
I've been making rounds all day. My horse is old and worn
out. May I borrow yours?

JOHN MANLY
He came at a gallop all the way and I was to give him a rest.
I'm sure the master will not object if you think it fit.
(as DOCTOR eyes riding crop)
You'll not need a whip. This horse will go until he drops.

MANLY helps portly DOCTOR to
"mount" OUR HORSE, who reacts.

OUR HORSE
GOTTA DIG DEEP, DIG DEEP. DIG DEEP.
DIG DEEP, DIG DEEP, DIG DEEP.
KEEP ON KEEPING ON...
(through gritted teeth)
FOR MY LADY...I'LL COME THROUGH IN THE CRUNCH,
FOR MY LADY...WHAT IN HECK DID THIS DUDE EAT FOR
LUNCH?!
CAN'T SURRENDER...BUCKLE UNDER...HAVE TO TRY!

OUR HORSE & ALL
WATCH ME FLY... WATCH ME FLY...
(up to speed)
FOR MY LADY!
THE APPLE OF MY EYE! SHE'S MY LADY!
SHE'S THE EARTH AND WIND AND SEA AND SKY!
I'LL GET THROUGH THIS, CLIMB A MOUNTAIN,
DON'T CARE HOW HIGH.
WATCH ME FLY! FLY! FLY! FLY! FLY! FLY! FLY! FLY! FLY!

OUR HORSE
FLY!

SCENE SEVEN

BIRTWICK PARK.

SQUIRE GORDON meets DR. WHITE, and
ushers him off. SQUIRE GORDON
leaves OUR HORSE with JOE GREEN.

ISAAC

Sixteen miles, with hardly any rest in between! Our Horse's
legs trembled beneath him. Not a dry hair on his body, the
water ran down his legs, and he blew steam like a pot on
fire. And what did I do for him?

JOE GREEN

Poor thing. Never seen a horse so worn out.

(offering a pail)

Here. Ice cold. That's what I always want when I'm out of
breath. Yes, drink it all down. That's it.

(leading him to stable)

See? I've put up fresh hay. No blanket, you're far too warm
already. Sleep well, then. Anyone would say you earned a good
night's rest.

He exits. OUR HORSE shivers and
trembles, becoming delirious.

OUR HORSE

For my lady... For my lady... For -- ?!

With a terrible moan he collapses.
Lights dim, and restore. It is now
dawn. Enter MANLY, tired from his
trek home. He sees OUR HORSE.

MR. MANLY

...No! What is it? What's wrong?

JOE GREEN enters, blissfully
unaware, whistling "PROGRESS!"

MR. MANLY

What have you done? Look at him! Cold water, I suppose. And lots of it?

JOE GREEN

Yes, sir. He seemed so thirsty. I figured --

MR. MANLY

And no blanket, so he could lie here, shivering all night? You stupid, stupid boy. That's the very worst thing you could do for him after a murderous run like that!

JOE GREEN

I -- I'm sorry! I didn't know, I never thought -- !

MR. MANLY

Never thought?! That's clear. And now your ignorance and refusal to learn has probably cost him his life! This creature did all we ever charged him with, expecting naught but decent care and a kind word. But that was too much to ask, wasn't it?

(as JOE GREEN looks away)

Don't you dare turn your head. Look at him! Look at what you've done, and never forget it! Now out of my sight!

Shame-faced, JOE GREEN runs but finds no place to hide.

MUSIC: "ANYWHERE BUT NOW" <<TRACK 10>>

NOTE: SUNG BY MALE VOICES; DEMO IS SUNG BY FEMALE

ISAAC & MEN

AND THE SHAME THAT COMES SWEEPING DOWN
LIKE A TORRENT OF RAIN...
AND THE NEED TO FIND SOMEPLACE TO HIDE
THOUGH THE SEARCH IS IN VAIN...
AND THE KNOWLEDGE THAT PEOPLE ARE STARING
AND POINTING THE FINGER YOUR WAY.
AND THE SORROW THERE'S NO WAY OF SHARING,
FOR WHAT CAN YOU SAY?
WHEN THE WEIGHT ON YOUR GRIEVING HEART
FEELS AS HEAVY AS LEAD...

AND YOU KNOW THAT YOUR SILENCE
IS BEING MISREAD...
WHEN YOU CAN'T HEAR A WORD YET
YOU CAN'T GET AWAY FROM WHAT'S BEING SAID...
THESE ARE THE TIMES WHEN A LAD WOULD RATHER BE

SOMEPLACE ELSE - ANYWHERE BUT HERE,
ANYWHERE BUT THIS, ANYWHERE BUT NOW.
SOMEPLACE ELSE, ANYWHERE BUT NOW.

JOE GREEN runs off. MR. MANLY
greeted DR. BOND, a veterinarian.

JOHN MANLY

This way, Dr. Bond. I'm not sure if there's ought to be done,
but I had to try.

DR. BOND

These days, there's a good deal more than you might think.
Give me a few minutes.

BOND exits. MANLY is left alone,
pacing, awaiting the diagnosis.

ISAAC & MEN

AND THE HOPE THAT BEGINS TO BLOOM,
EVEN WHEN THERE'S NO CALL...
AND THE WORDS SAID IN ANGER THAT NOW
ONLY MAKE YOU FEEL SMALL.
AND THE HEARTACHE THAT COMES FROM THE KNOWING
THAT YOU'RE TO BLAME FOR IT ALL...
THESE ARE THE TIME WHEN A MAN WOULD RATHER BE

SOMEPLACE ELSE - ANYWHERE BUT HERE,
ANYWHERE BUT THIS, ANYWHERE BUT NOW.
SOMEPLACE ELSE - ANYWHERE A THOUSAND MILES AWAY.
FAR, FAR AWAY.
ANYWHERE BUT HERE. ANYWHERE BUT THIS.
ANYWHERE BUT NOW.
ANYWHERE BUT HERE. ANYWHERE BUT THIS.
ANYWHERE BUT NOW.

MANLY is with OUR HORSE, now standing. A feverish LYDIA enters on her husband's arm.

LYDIA

So it's true. My champion is back on his feet?

JOHN MANLY

Barely, mum. He's very weak. And beg pardon, but should you be up and about?

SQUIRE GORDON

She should not! My wife is a very stubborn woman!

LYDIA

I had to come and see him. This creature saved my life.

JOHN MANLY

For a moment, I thought we might lose him. But doctor left medicine and believes he can recover.

LYDIA

Thank heaven. Now John, I must prevail upon you again. I need you to do something for me.

JOHN MANLY

At your service, mum.

SQUIRE GORDON

Don't agree so readily, John. You're not going to like what my wife is going to ask.

LYDIA

The lad, John. The stable boy. I've spoken to Joe, and he's quite broken-hearted. He feels this was entirely his fault, though he is sure he did the best he knew how. Can't you spare him a kind word?

SQUIRE GORDON

Don't say I didn't warn you, John.

JOHN MANLY

No, sir. Mistress is right. I know the young fool meant no harm. Truth, I should have taught him better. I will try and find something to say to him, soon. You have my word.

LYDIA

I don't like to interfere with how you run your stables. But it'd mean a great deal to me.

JOHN MANLY

Mum? Have you decided on his name yet? It seems cruel for him not to have one, if...

LYDIA

Well, I had considered "Savior."

JOHN MANLY

Except our vicar is not likely to approve!

LYDIA

I shall decide on a name soon, John. You have *my* word.

LYDIA and SQUIRE GORDON move off.

SCENE EIGHT

THE ORCHARD AT BIRTWICK PARK.

JOE GREEN sits, miserable. ISAAC enters.

ISAAC

Squire Gordon's wife was spot on. I was in an awful state. When it seemed Our Horse might lose his life, I confess. I even thought of taking my own.

(sits next to JOE GREEN)

At that moment, I thought this was the darkest day I'd ever know. As if losing my parents wasn't enough...

JOHN MANLY enters.

JOHN MANLY

...Joe? There you are.

(gruffly)

Well, Doctor Bond says he's doing much better.

(pointing out front)

Best to let him stay out yonder in the orchard, running free until he has all his strength.

JOE GREEN

Really? But that's...that's wonderful. Truly. I --

About to cry, he looks away.

JOHN MANLY

Yes. Yes, it is. Now look here, Joe. I've never been one for making big apologies, so don't be expecting one now. But I do want to say, I feel I failed you. In part.

JOE GREEN

Failed me?

JOHN MANLY

I come to care so for these creatures, I assume everyone does as well. But why would you? All he means to you is chores. I never helped you see beyond that and more's the shame for it.

(gently)

(MORE)

Look at him, Joe. Really look. And try to hear what's he saying to you.

JOE GREEN
(confused)

Horses don't speak.

JOHN MANLY
Oh, but they do, Joe, they do. They speak volumes. Once you learn how to listen, you'll understand he's flesh and blood, just like you and me. And he has feelings and emotions - not all like ours, to be sure, but he has them all the same. I don't know if it's proper to say he has a soul, but I find it hard believing he has not. Anyway, here's the thing. For the next few weeks, while he mends, he needs to be watched, day and night. Will you do that, Joe?

JOE GREEN
Me? Y-you want me to - ? After I - I mean, that is--

JOHN MANLY
Good. Then I'll leave him, in your capable hands.

Smiling to himself, MANLY exits.

ISAAC
It was a wonderful thing John Manly did that day, handing the care of Our Horse to the young fool who nearly destroyed him.

MUSIC: "A THING OF BEAUTY" <<TRACK 11>>

JOE GREEN stares out front,
watching his new charge.

ISAAC
All that summer, I spent every moment with Our Horse. I learned to listen to him, to view the world through his eyes. Like a child at church, who suddenly comes to understand the prayers he recites? I trembled in awe at the magnificent creature placed in my care.

JOE GREEN

YOU TAKE MY BREATH AWAY, THAT'S WHAT YOU DO.
YOU'RE THE IDEAL THAT I MUST TRY AND MEASURE UP TO.
IS IT THE WAY YOU STAND? YOUR EASY GRACE?
OR JUST THE OPEN LOOK UPON YOUR FACE?

YOU ARE A BEAUTY, SERENE AND CALM.
A THING OF BEAUTY, LIKE THE WORDS WITHIN A PSALM.
WITH A FIRE IN YOUR EYES,
SHINING BRIGHT AS ANY STAR,
YOU ARE A BEAUTY.
A THING OF BEAUTY, THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE.

ISAAC

And then, as only a boy who knows nothing of how the world operates can do, I made Our Horse a solemn promise.

JOE GREEN

I VOW TO STAND BY YOU AND EARN YOUR LOVE.

ISAAC & JOE GREEN

AND TIME WILL SHOW THAT I'M THE ONE YOU CAN BE SURE OF.

JOE GREEN

I'LL BE AT YOUR CALL, BOTH DAY AND NIGHT.

ISAAC & JOE GREEN

AND I WILL DO MY ALL TO DO YOU RIGHT!
YOU ARE A BEAUTY, A WORK OF ART.
AND THOUGH A BEAUTY, YOU'VE A SWEET AND GENTLE HEART.

ISAAC

AND THE THING THAT I LIKE BEST,
YOU'RE COMPLETELY UNAWARE
YOU ARE A BEAUTY.
A THING OF BEAUTY, BEYOND COMPARE.

VIDEO. We see OUR HORSE - a real horse, now back to himself, and at the gallop, as:

ISAAC/JOE GREEN

AND NOW I KNOW HOW GREAT EXPLORERS FELT,
AS THEY ENCOUNTERED BRAVE NEW WORLDS.
LIKE THEM, I'M OVERWHELMED BY ALL THAT I BEHOLD!
SO FAR BEYOND AND HIGH ABOVE;
I'M IN THE PRESENCE OF PERFECTION -
AND I'M IN AWE / I'M IN AWE.
ON CLOSE INSPECTION / ON INSPECTION...
YOU HAVE NOT A SINGLE FLAW / NOT A SINGLE FLAW.

ISAAC & JOE GREEN

BLESSED WITH ELEGANCE AND POISE
AND THOSE BRILLIANT EYES AFLAME,
YOU ARE A BEAUTY. A THING OF BEAUTY.

JOE GREEN

"BLACK BEAUTY!"

ISAAC

"BLACK BEAUTY..."

ISAAC & JOE GREEN

(as OUR HORSE enters)

SHOULD BE YOUR NAME!

Unnoticed by JOE GREEN, MR. MANLY,
SQUIRE and LYDIA GORDON enter, as:

MUSIC: "A THING OF BEAUTY" (PLAYOFF)" NO DEMO

JOE GREEN

YOU ARE A BEAUTY, AND THAT'S THE TRUTH.

ISAAC

A THING OF BEAUTY, IN THE FLOWER OF YOUR YOUTH.

ISAAC & JOE GREEN

AND WHATEVER LIES AHEAD, BE IT HAPPY DAYS OR STRIFE,

JOE GREEN

YOU ARE MY BEAUTY...

ISAAC

A THING OF BEAUTY.

ISAAC & JOE GREEN

BLACK BEAUTY, I'M YOURS FOR LIFE.

SQUIRE GORDON

"Black Beauty."

LYDIA

It's perfect. Don't you think so, Mr. Manly?

JOHN MANLY

Aye. That I do, mum. That I do.

They watch as JOE leads off the newly christened BLACK BEAUTY. As the scene is changing, BLACK BEAUTY encounters his friends:

SIR OLIVER

It's true, then? You've recovered?

BLACK BEAUTY

Never better.

GINGER

I'm glad. I...we...missed our friend.

BLACK BEAUTY

Missed you too. All of you. And guess what? I've been given a name!

MERRYLEGS

(dryly)

We heard. Quite the elegant moniker. ...Oh, I'm too happy to see you to be jealous. Welcome back, you beautiful thing!

Reunited, the four friends move off.

SCENE NINE

BIRTWICK PARK.

ISAAC

Health restored, and finally given a name. That might have been the end of Our Hero's story, but barely a year later...

*Lights discover SQUIRE GORDON,
with a frail LYDIA by his side.*

SQUIRE GORDON

We've loved our lives here at Birtwick Park. Been my home since I was a boy. But Lydia's well-being is paramount. Doctor White insists only a gentle climate will serve. In a fortnight, we and the children set sail for our new home in the Bermudas.

Lights dim on the GORDONS. JOHN
MANLY enters, with a troubled,
slightly older-looking JOE GREEN.

JOE GREEN

But I thought you said we're all going to Earshall Hall!

JOHN MANLY

You and the horses, yes. The Squire sold our lot to Her Ladyship, and arranged a place for you. But that won't include me.

JOE GREEN

B-but why? How will I tend our brood without you?

JOHN MANLY

Earshall Hall already has a stable master. He's recently arrived, don't know much about him. But it's good you learn from several, Joe. We've talked about this.

JOE GREEN

I know. It's just...I've come to love my life here at Birtwick Park. What will you do?

JOHN MANLY

Always thought I'd do well working with a first class horse trainer. Many young animals are frightened by wrong treatment. If I could help some to a fair start, I should feel I was doing some good. What do you think?

JOE GREEN

Can't think of anyone who'd do the job better.

JOHN MANLY

Let's not be sad, then. For all we know, this may be the start of an exciting new phase. For the both of us.

JOE GREEN

Mr. Manly? You think the horses know we're leaving?

JOHN MANLY

They know. I'm sure of it.

He follows JOE GREEN off. STABLES ride on. It is before dawn. GINGER is having a nightmare. She tosses and turns in her stall, as the male horses are awakened. Just when it reaches its climax --

BLACK BEAUTY

Ginger! Wake up.

GINGER

What? Oh...was I raising a fuss again?

BLACK BEAUTY

Yes. Awful dream, by the sound of it.

GINGER

(avoiding him)

Funny. Don't even remember what it was about. Think I'll stretch my legs...

GINGER exits.

SIR OLIVER

Poor thing. Her dreams get worse and worse.

MERRYLEGS

Has them every night now.

BLACK BEAUTY

Ever since she heard we've been sold off. I'm going to find out what these dreams are about. It's time.

He exits.

MERRYLEGS

He'll never learn, will he? But I suppose it's good he's finally asking, don't you?

SIR OLIVER

Not really. Never liked the sight of blood.

MERRYLEGS and SIR OLIVER move off,
GINGER re-enters with POSSE BACKUP,
followed by BLACK BEAUTY.

MUSIC: "WHY YOU GOTTA DO THIS?" NO DEMO INCLUDED

GINGER

I've told you before. I don't talk about it. With anyone!

WHY YOU GOTTA DO THIS?
WHY YOU GOTTA PRESS IT?

POSSE

LEAVE ME ALONE!

GINGER

DON'T YOU PUT ME THROUGH THIS!
WHY YOU WANNA STRESS ME OUT?

POSSE

LEAVE ME ALONE!

GINGER

WHY YOU WANNA DO THIS...
GET ALL UP IN MY BUSINESS?

POSSE

BUSINESS, BUSINESS!

GINGER

DON'T TRY TO GET IN MY MIND.
YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE WHAT YOU FIND.

POSSE

GETS PRETTY TWISTED, BETTER YOU STAY OUT...

GINGER & POSSE

DON'T YOU LOOK AT ME WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE A WAY OUT!

BLACK BEAUTY

Talk to me. You've got to know by now you can trust me...

POSSE

CAREFUL, GIRL, WHAT YOU SAY, WHAT YOU SAY...

GINGER

WHY YOU GOTTA DO THIS? WHY YOU GOTTA PRESS IT?

POSSE

LEAVE ME ALONE!
HE MIGHT PUSH YOU AWAY...
HE'S GONNA THINK YOU'RE CRAZY, CRAZY,

GINGER

WHY YOU WANNA DO THIS, GET ALL UP IN MY BUSINESS?

POSSE

CRAZY BUSINESS CRAZY CRAZY (ETC.)

BLACK BEAUTY

We're friends, right? If something makes you sad, it makes me sad. Something bothers you, it bothers me.

GINGER

You're what bothers me! I don't like talking about it. And you won't understand. You don't know humans like I do.

BLACK BEAUTY

Humans? What do humans have to do with it?

GINGER

Not every place is like Birtwick Park...

BLACK BEAUTY

Is that what bothers you? How bad could our next place be? The four of us will be together. And Joe is coming too.

GINGER

Joe is a boy. And he almost killed you!

BLACK BEAUTY

He made a mistake. Out of ignorance. But he's learned so much since then. He's become a friend, a true friend. The best a horse could wish for.

GINGER

Humans are not our friends. And when they make mistakes, we're the ones who suffer.

(after a pause, softly)

Do you remember...when you were broken in?

BLACK BEAUTY

Sort of. Weird. Farmer Gray saw me through. Why?

GINGER

The human in charge of mine...didn't like me. Don't know why. Who knows why any human acts the way they do?

MUSIC: "GET USED TO IT" <<TRACK 12>>

Upstage of GINGER and BLACK BEAUTY
a flashback of GINGER's breaking in
begins. Enter YORK, a sadistic
drunk of a stable master, and
STABLE HANDS.

MR. YORK

Bring up the filly. Been looking forward to this. She's a feisty one. Too feisty my taste. Bring me a bearing a bit and a bearing rein!

STABLE HAND

A bearing rein, Mr. York? But she hasn't been taught to wear the bit yet.

MR. YORK

Exactly. Let her learn what she's in for, from the get-go.

STABLE HANDS react. They know their boss is a nasty piece of goods.

BLACK BEAUTY

What's a bearing rein?

GINGER

A horrid thing. Forces your head up, hurts your neck, closes off your windpipe, so you can't breathe...

GINGER is dragged into flashback by YORK. STABLEHAND hands bit, bridle and bearing rein to YORK.

MR. YORK

Hello, darling. Let's try this on for size, shall we?

MR. YORK and STABLE HANDS force GINGER to begin accepting the bit and eventually, the bearing rein:

GINGER

WHAT'S THIS? DON'T LIKE...
FEELS COLD! PRESSIN' DOWN ON MY --

MR. YORK

Hush!

GINGER

WHAT'S NEXT? TIGHT STRAPS.

MY TAIL
TUT!
AND I BUCKED
THAT HURT!

AND I SPIT

NOW, NOW...

AND I BIT
WORSE THAN THE BIT!

WANT IT TO BE OVER
NEED IT TO BE OVER
TELL ME THAT IT'S
OVER PLEASE! OVER PLEASE!

GINGER & POSSE
DON'T YOU PUT THAT BEARIN' REIN
DON'T YOU PUT THAT BEARIN' REIN
ON ME
NOT THAT BEARIN' REIN

NO. NO.
NO.

USED TO THE PAIN.
USED TO THE FEELINGS
THAT DRIVE YOU INSANE

NO. NO.
NO.

MEN
YOU'LL GET
USED TO IT.

IN TIME
YOU'LL GET
USED TO IT

IN TIME
YOU'LL GET
USED TO THE HURT
USED TO THE PAIN
USED TO THE FEELINGS
THAT DRIVE YOU INSANE.
YOU'LL GET
USED TO IT

YOU'LL GET
USED TO IT

GINGER

THIS AIN'T GONNA DO.
I'M NOT GIVIN' INTO YOU.
YOU AIN'T GONNA BRING ME DOWN.
DON'T TELL ME TO GET

GINGER

USED TO THIS!

POSSE

NO
NO
NO
THIS GIRL IS
GONNA FIGHT YOU

THIS GIRL IS
GONNA BITE YOU

GIRL IS GONNA
FIGHT YOU

WITH ALL HER MIGHT

KICK AND SCREAM
AND BITE YOU
AND ONCE MORE
JUST FOR SPITE
...FIGHT YOU
FIGHT YOU
THIS GIRL'S HITTIN'
BACK!

YES I'M GONNA FIGHT
YOU.

THEN FADE

TO BLACK!

MEN

YOU'LL GET

USED TO THIS,
USED TO THIS

Grab her head!

Hold her down!

USED TO IT

Rope her up!

Use some force!

Make that mare heed!

THIS GIRL IS GONNA
FIGHT YOU! FIGHT YOU!
THIS GIRL'S HITTIN'
BACK!

FIGHT YOU, FIGHT
YOU.

THEN FADE FADE FADE

YOU'LL GET USED TO
USED TO

GINGER & ALL

In the final throes, GINGER kicks YORK in the face, sending him to ground, writhing in pain.

YORK

My eye! The bitch put out my eye!

Flashback fades. STABLEHAND enters, with SIR OLIVER and MERRYLEGS.

MERRYLEGS

Why are you so uneasy, Oliver? Earshall Hall is quite the place, from what I hear. Far grander than Birtwick Park.

SIR OLIVER

Yes. But I can't imagine who'd want an old war horse like me.

MERRYLEGS

You'll be fine. Everyone loves soldier boys. The best news? The Duke and Duchess are childless. No little ones!

SIR OLIVER

But they do have cousins, Merry.

MERRYLEGS

Cousins? *Young* cousins?

SIR OLIVER

Dozens.

MERRYLEGS

I've never heard that!

SIR OLIVER

Word is, they visit Auntie and Uncle for months at a time! You're going to be a very busy pony. While I'm shipped off to the glue factory!

Focus shifts: BEAUTY and GINGER.

BLACK BEAUTY

My mother warned there were humans like that. I didn't believe her. But Ginger, he's just one man. One bad apple.

GINGER

That's what you don't get. To ruin a horse's life? All it takes is one.

ISAAC enters.

ISAAC

IN MY DAUGHTER'S NOVEL
WE WATCH A STALLION COME OF AGE
AND LEARN AS HE GROWS OLD
THAT EACH NEW MASTER
INVITES DISASTER
AND LIFE CAN'T BE FORETOLD.
LIFE CAN'T BE FORETOLD...

MUSIC: "A HORSE NEVER KNOWS" <<TRACK 13>>

JOE GREEN and MR. MANLY enter, both
with luggage. SQUIRE GORDON and
LYDIA enter, bidding all farewell.

ISAAC

THERE ARE GOOD MEN IN THE WORLD.
THERE ARE BAD MEN IN THE WORLD,
AND A HOST OF MEN WHO ACT LIKE A FOOL.
THERE ARE MEN WHO WILL GIVE YOU THE SHIRTS OFF THEIR
BACKS...
AND MEN WHO ARE SAVAGE AND CRUEL.
WHAT WILL THE MORROW BRING?
WHY DOES THE MEADOWLARK SING?

ISAAC & ALL

OH, A HORSE NEVER KNOWS.
AND THAT'S HOW IT GOES. THAT'S HOW IT GOES.
NOBODY KNOWS HOW IT ENDS -
WHERE LOVE CAN BE FOUND
OR WHICH WAY THE ROAD BENDS.
A HORSE NEVER KNOWS. A HORSE NEVER KNOWS.

*MR. MANLY & JOE GREEN embrace.
GORDONS and MANLY exit. Segue to:*

SCENE TEN

THE ROAD TO EARSHALL PARK.

ISAAC

ONE ROAD LEADS INTO THE NEXT.
ONE DAY BLEEDS INTO THE NEXT
AND YOU WONDER AT THE STARS IN THE SKIES.
THERE ARE MEN WHO WILL SHIELD YOU THROUGH FIRE AND
RAIN...
AND MEN WHO HAVE DEATH IN THEIR EYES.
WHAT MAKES A HEART TURN COLD?
WHY DOES THE BLOSSOM UNFOLD?

ISAAC & ALL

OH, A HORSE NEVER KNOWS...
AND SO THE WIND BLOWS. THE BITTER WIND BLOWS.
GO, THOUGH YOU'LL NEVER KNOW WHY:
THE REASON WE'RE BORN...NOR THE REASON WE DIE.
A HORSE NEVER KNOWS. A HORSE NEVER KNOWS.
A HORSE NEVER KNOWS. A HORSE NEVER KNOWS.

Other HORSES, whipped savagely by
their DRIVERS, pass by.

DRIVERS

HEY! HEY! STILL GOT ANOTHER MILE TO TRAVEL.
HEY! HEY! HEY! LET'S GET UNDERWAY!
HEY! HEY! STILL GOT A LITTLE WHILE TO TRAVEL -
MOVE IT ALONG! HURRY ALONG! WHADDAYA SAY?

JOE GREEN

Earshall Hall's ahead. Let's look sharp for Her Ladyship and
our new stable master.

ISAAC

AND ROUND THE WORLD GOES. ROUND THE WORLD GOES.
NOBODY KNOWS HOW IT ENDS.
WHERE LOVE CAN BE FOUND OR WHAT HEAVEN INTENDS...

At the gates to EARSHALL HALL
stands HER LADYSHIP.

STABLE MASTER has his back to us, conversing with his employer. When he turns front, we see he wears an eyepatch! At the same moment as GINGER, we recognize her former tormentor, the now one-eyed MR. YORK.

GINGER turns to BLACK BEAUTY, trembling. The horrified look on her face tells us and BLACK BEAUTY everything.

ISAAC & ALL

A HORSE NEVER KNOWS. A HORSE NEVER KNOWS.
A HORSE NEVER KNOWS. A HORSE NEVER KNOWS.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

FARMER GRAY'S, years later. Scene is less bucolic; suburban sprawl has encroached upon the countryside.

Lights up on JOE GREEN: a memory.

MUSIC: "THING OF BEAUTY" (reprise) NO DEMO INCLUDED

JOE GREEN

I VOW TO STAND BY YOU AND EARN YOUR LOVE.
AND TIME WILL SHOW THAT I'M THE ONE YOU CAN BE SURE
OF.
I'LL BE AT YOUR CALL, BOTH DAY AND NIGHT.
AND I WILL DO MY ALL TO DO YOU RIGHT...

ISAAC

(enters)

But I didn't. I'd made all sorts of starry-eyed promises to Black Beauty, but as grownups know: honoring those vows? Another matter entirely. Mere weeks after our arrival at Earshall Hall, there was an incident... Beauty and our horses were sold off as I stood by, stunned and distraught, but unable to stem the tide.

JOE GREEN

(tearfully)

Beauty!

ISAAC

Still in shock, I convinced myself I'd put my pennies aside, keep tabs on Beauty and someday buy him for my own. But a few weeks later, a day arrived that suggested my destiny might lie elsewhere...

Several FOX HUNTERS enter. JOE wanders among them, starry-eyed.

MUSIC: "RIDING TO THE HOUNDS" <<TRACK 14>>

ISAAC

For the first time in several years, Earshall Hall was hosting a fox hunt. The bravest riders, the finest steeds in the county all came to participate! What a morning it was!

THE GROUND WAS COVERED WITH DEW;
THE AUTUMN LEAVES TURNING RED AND GOLD.
THE HAZE WAS HARD TO SEE THROUGH...
AND WHO COULD SAY WHAT THE DAY MIGHT HOLD?
THEN OUT OF THE MIST OF THE MORN:
PROUD AND FIERCE, THAT PIERCING HUNTER'S HORN!

MEN ON HORSEBACK IN SCARLET TOGS,
VAULTING THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE!
MEN ON HORSEBACK AND BARKING DOGS,
WON'DRING WHERE THAT FOX MIGHT HIDE?
I NEVER WITNESSED SUCH A THING...
THE SIGHTS AND SMELLS AND SOUNDS
OF RIDING TO THE HOUNDS. RIDING TO THE HOUNDS.

JOE GREEN

THEN IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE
A TREMBLING BUNDLE OF FUR APPEARS...

ISAAC

I BARELY SAW HER FLY BY.

JOE GREEN

I CAUGHT HER BACK AND HER BLACK-TIPPED EARS.

ISAAC

SHE DARTED DOWN SOMEWHERE BELOW.

ISAAC & JOE GREEN

SOMEONE SHOUTED STOUTLY: TALLY HO!

HUNTERS

TALLY HO! TALLY HO! TALLY HO!

ISAAC, JOE GREEN & ALL
STALLIONS GALLOPING THROUGH THE MUD -
MUSCLES COILED THEN TAKING FLIGHT.
MEN INTENT ON THE SCENT OF BLOOD,
CLEARING HURDLES LEFT AND RIGHT.
I NEVER WITNESSED SUCH A THING,
THE SOARING LEAPS AND BOUNDS...
FOLLOWING THE HOUNDS. RIDING TO THE HOUNDS.

HIGHER AND HIGHER THEY FLEW;
THE LOOK IN THEIR EYES WAS INTENSE.
SOARING UP HIGH IN THE BLUE
OVER LOG, OVER HEDGE, OVER FENCE.
OVER LOG, OVER HEDGE, OVER FENCE.
OVER LOG! OVER HEDGE! OVER -- !

<CRASH!> A HORSE and HUNTER fall
to the ground, HUNTER dying on
impact. THE HORSE lies, one leg at
an impossible angle, trembling. A
BEARDED HUNTER rushes over and
kneels, feeling for the fallen
HUNTER'S pulse. None. YORK enters.

YORK

Jesus, Joseph and Mary. Tell me that's not her Ladyship's
favorite nephew?

BEARDED HUNTER nods. It is.

YORK

Fool! Told him that horse was not a jumper. Quickly, lets
move him. His aunt mustn't see him like this. Damn the man!

YORK, BEARDED HUNTER and others
lift fallen HUNTER. YORK turns to
JOE GREEN.

YORK

You! Green! Take my pistol.

(referring to fallen horse)

Put a bullet in his head, and be quick about it.

JOE GREEN

Shoot...the horse?

BEARDED HUNTER

It's a mercy, lad. See his leg? He'll never walk again.

YORK

(fiercely)

Just take the gun and be done with it!

JOE takes pistol from the holster on YORK'S hip. To a funereal tattoo, YORK and others transport the body off. JOE approaches trembling HORSE. He draws near, then recoils in terror.

JOE GREEN

...Beauty? No, no it can't be...!

ISAAC

And thank the Lord, it was not. We'd heard Black Beauty had an older brother, and this was he. Rob Roy. But he looked so much like my Beauty...

OLDER HUNTER

(seeing JOE waver)

Give me the pistol and move away, lad. Poor beast has suffered enough.

OLDER HUNTER shoots the HORSE. JOE backs off, horrified, and exits.

ISAAC & HUNTERS (CHORALE)

MEN ON HORSEBACK IN SCARLET TOGS...

ISAAC

ONE NECK BROKEN AND ONE LEFT LAME.

ISAAC & HUNTERS

MEN ON HORSEBACK AND BARKING DOGS...

ISAAC

TWO LIVES SQUANDERED AND MORE'S THE SHAME...

A fine young man, dead, and a magnificent steed, destroyed.
And for what? The thrill of the hunt? Merciful God.

HUNTERS

(as the hunt resumes)

RIDING TO THE HOUNDS. RIDING TO THE HOUNDS.
RIDING TO THE HOUNDS...

MEN ON STALLIONS AND HOWLING HOUNDS
COURSING OVER HILL AND DALE!
MEN ON HORSEBACK WITH COMMON GROUNDS:
DYING FOR A FOX'S TAIL!

ISAAC

I NEVER WITNESSED SUCH A THING
THE SENSELESSNESS ASTOUNDS
OF RIDING TO THE HOUNDS...

HUNTERS

TO THE HOUNDS! TO THE HOUNDS!

ISAAC

RIDING TO THE HOUNDS!

FOX HUNTERS

TO THE HOUNDS! TO THE HOUNDS!

ISAAC

To the hounds!

Church bells toll. JOE GREEN
enters, with small suitcase. He
steals off, as:

ISAAC

That night, I left Earshall Hall. Ended up apprenticing to a
distant cousin. Left the world of the stables and became a
tradesman. Years later, I married a wonderful woman.

Present time: An older JOHN MANLY, walking with a cane, enters with CLARA, ISAAC'S wife. CLARA pushes her adolescent daughter ANNA, who is in a wheelchair. Younger brother JOEY follows.

ISAAC

Clara's given us two beautiful children, Anna and Joseph. Few years back, Farmer Gray's property came on the market. I scraped together enough to buy it.

JOHN MANLY

But the stable! Not a horse in sight?

ISAAC

(avoiding MANLY)

Joey, run and get your sister a shawl. It's getting chilly.

ANNA

Papa, I'm fine.

CLARA

Really, sweetheart. It's quite pleasant tonight.

ISAAC

Joey. You heard what I said.

JOEY looks to his mother for confirmation, who nods. He exits.

JOHN MANLY

You haven't answered me. No horses at all? Not even for the young'uns?

ANNA

Uncle John. What would a girl like me possibly want with a horse?

CLARA

We've really no need, John. School, church, the market? They're all close by.

ISAAC

My office is a few leagues walk. But I enjoy the exercise.

JOHN MANLY

You used to like horses. Loved them. What happened?

ISAAC

Life. Life happened.

CLARA

Why don't we get you settled in your room, John?

(as JOEY returns with shawl)

It's almost dinner time.

JOEY

You sit next to me, Uncle John!

CLARA

After dinner, you men can have a talk.

JOHN MANLY

Yes. I imagine we will.

MANLY and FAMILY move off. To us:

ISAAC

Dreaded this day, since I invited John Manly to come live out his life with us. If anyone can understand why I no longer want horses in my life, he will. Came close to destroying two of them. Couldn't press my luck.

(quietly)

Late at night, sometimes I lay awake and wonder about Beauty. Is he still alive? And if he is, is he in good hands? But then I think...if he isn't? Do I really want to know?

LIGHTS DIM.

SCENE TWO

A horse auction.

Lights reveal an older, bedraggled
BLACK BEAUTY, knees badly scarred.
With him: JERRY BARKER, a poor,
seemingly coarse London cabbie.
JERRY talks front to an unseen
HORSE SELLER.

JERRY BARKER

Twelve guineas? For a mangy, broken down plug what's got
damaged knees? I can imagine what Mrs. Barker would have to
say about that! "Jerry Barker, did your last bout of
pneumonia leave you teched in the head?"

(to BLACK BEAUTY)

Look at you, skin and bones! Haul a London cab? You'll be
shipped off to the knackers, before Mrs. Barker says "Bob's
your uncle."

(to unseen HORSE SELLER)

Six guineas for this crowbait. Take it or leave it.

(to BLACK BEAUTY)

Ugly mongrel. Just thinking of the money I'm spending on you
makes me want to reach for the whip, you dumb --

(to HORSE SELLER)

Then we're agreed? Be right along.

(to BLACK BEAUTY)

Pardon me. I've got to see a man about a horse. Though you
barely merit being called one...

Exit BARKER. BEAUTY watches him go.

MUSIC: "HARD FORGETTING" <<TRACK 15>>

BLACK BEAUTY

HARD FORGETTIN' KINDNESS
ONCE YOU'VE KNOWN IT.
A KIND WORD EVER ECHOES IN YOUR MIND.
SEARCHING EACH NEW FACE - DO YOU SEE SOMETHING THERE?
CAN YOU SPOT A TRACE OF SOMEONE WHO MIGHT CARE
FOR YOU WITH KINDNESS? HARD FORGETTING KINDNESS.

HARD FORGETTING FRIENDSHIP
ONCE THEY'VE SHOWN IT.
A TRUE FRIEND'S NEVER REALLY LEFT BEHIND.
LONELINESS AGAIN. YOU MISS THE OLD LIFE SO.
THOUGHTS OF WAY BACK WHEN; WILL ANYONE BESTOW
THE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP? HARD FORGETTING FRIENDSHIP.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?
DARE I HOPE? SHOULD I FEAR?
WHAT ARE THE CHANCES
CIRCUMSTANCES WILL TURN AROUND...
OR RUN AGROUND? OH, WHERE AM I BOUND?

HARD FORGETTING LOVE
SO WE SHOULD OWN IT.
OUR LIVES ARE NOW FOREVER INTERTWINED.
LOVE CONTINUES ON EVEN THOUGH WE'RE APART.
TRUE LOVE'S NEVER GONE. IT LIVES INSIDE YOUR HEART.
LOVE'S NOT A THING TO EASILY DISCARD.
KINDNESS, FRIENDSHIP, LOVE...
ARE HARD FORGETTING. HARD FORGETTING.
HARD FORGETTING. HARD FORGETTING.

JERRY BARKER returns, all smiles.

JERRY BARKER

(to BEAUTY, kindly)

Why so sad? Don't tell me you took that guff to heart? Just wanted to fetch a good price, is all. We both know, you're worth five times what I'm paying. Born a handsome charmer you were, and beneath the wear and tear, still are! Broke more than one girl's heart, I'll wager.

(BEAUTY looks away, sadly)

Oh, a one-woman man like me, are you? Poor thing. Them's the lasses we never forget. Cheer up. You've lucked into the best cab driver in London, and none will care for you better than the family of Jeremiah Barker. Next stop: The Home of the Big Ben. The place where royalty resides. London Town!

Scene transitions to:

SCENE THREE

*London. Twilight. Noisy streets
are filled with horses and
drivers: cabs, wagons and carts.*

MUSIC: "A HORSE NEVER KNOWS (reprise)" NO DEMO

LONDONERS (HORSES & HUMANS)

THERE'S A SMELL IN LONDON TOWN....
SMELLS LIKE HELL IN LONDON TOWN!
COME THE SUMMERTIME, IT'S HARD TO ENDURE.
THERE ARE THOUSANDS AND THOUSAND OF HORSES AT WORK
AND THOUSANDS OF TONS OF MANURE.
CAB HORSES NEVER LAST. CITY LIFE AGES THEM FAST.

OH, THEY COME AND THEY GO...
THE STREET BRINGS 'EM LOW.
REDUCES THEM SO.
NO, EVEN THOUGH THEY BE STRONG.
THE STREETS ARE TOO MEAN. THEY NEVER LAST LONG.
THEY COME AND THEY GO. THEY COME AND THEY GO.

BARKER and BLACK BEAUTY enter.

JERRY BARKER

Now be prepared. City life takes getting used to, especially
for you thoroughbreds, what's used to country living. But
look what you get in return - the most exciting city in the
world!

LONDONERS

THERE'S NO AIR INSIDE THE STALLS.
LIGHT IS RARE INSIDE THE STALLS.
THEY'RE BUT BREEDING GROUNDS FOR FILTH AND DISEASE.
THERE ARE HORSES WHO FAIL AFTER JUST A FEW MONTHS,
BUT MOST OF THEM DIE BY DEGREES,
DRAGGING THEIR WEARY BONES
OVER THE COBBLESTONES....

OH, THEY COME AND THEY GO.
THEY SUFFER EACH BLOW.

INDIGNITIES GROW.
LO, THE STREETS TAKE THEIR TOLL.
CORRUPTING THE HEART, THE BODY AND SOUL.
THEY COME AND THEY GO. THEY COME AND THEY GO.

CART HORSE staggers on, savagely
whipped by its DRIVER. With a
shudder, CART HORSE collapses,
dead, landing near a horrified
BLACK BEAUTY. MEN drag off the
dead horse, as:

JERRY BARKER

Pay no mind; he's in a better place now. That there is a cart
horse. A poor beast reduced to hauling granite from the
quarry till they drop. But no horse owned by Jerry Barker
ever ends up that way. I won't hear of it!

Other CART HORSES struggle past
JERRY and BLACK BEAUTY, as:

LONDONERS

NO, EVEN THOUGH THEY BE STRONG,
THE STREETS ARE TOO MEAN. THEY NEVER LAST LONG.
THEY COME AND THEY GO. THEY COME AND THEY GO.
THEY COME AND THEY GO.

JERRY and BLACK BEAUTY are greeted
by MRS. BARKER and the BARKER
children.

JERRY BARKER

Gather round, Barker Family. Come meet the answer to all our
financial woes and misfortune. Meet our new thoroughbred!

MRS. BARKER

Thoroughbred?! Jerry Barker, the poor thing is so thin, I can
practically see through him!

JERRY BARKER

I admit. First glance, he doesn't impress. But I tell you,
this horse has a fine lineage. He'll make a grand cab horse.

DAUGHTER

What's wrong with his knees, Papa?

JERRY BARKER

Those are scars, Emily. From the look, he suffered a nasty fall some time ago. But that's no reason to toss him aside, is it? Though I'd lay odds that's what happened.

YOUNGEST SON

How can you tell, Dad?

JERRY BARKER

Look at his long neck. The broad chest. This horse is the sort you'd find in a grand house, with servants and livery. I'd lay money: moment his knees got tore up, off to market he went. Mangled knees are simply not the fash -- not the fash --

JERRY explodes in a paroxysm of coughing. FAMILY trades glances.

MRS. BARKER

(putting on a good face)

I do like he's all of one color, Jerry. Except for the star.

Coughing badly, JERRY moves off.

MRS. BARKER

All right, children. We've a new horse. It's your job to get him ready for the streets. Though how you'll do it...

ELDEST SON

Not to worry, Ma. We'll have him shipshape in no time. Give him some good old Barker care and attention.

MRS. BARKER

You're sure you can manage?

MIDDLE SON

Piece of cake, Ma. Go see to Dad. Coughing up a storm.

Worried, MRS. BARKER exits.

EDLEST SON

(to his siblings)

All right, I lied. We've got our work cut out for us. Looks like he's had any number of owners, each one worst'n the last. We need him at his best, so let's see what we can do.

At the word "do" BLACK BEAUTY perks up. His CREW, grey-haired, appears.

MUSIC: "MY BEST (REPRISE)" NO DEMO INCLUDED

CREW

DOO DOO DOO DOO DO DO DO

ELDEST SON

OK, I'm open to suggestions...

CREW

DOO DOO DOO DOO DO DO DO.

DAUGHTER

I'LL SEE HIM BRUSHED DOWN NIGHT AND DAY...

YOUNGEST SON

I'LL PUT UP WATER AND FRESH HAY.

MIDDLE SON

I'LL FEED HIM ALL THE OATS THAT I CAN STEAL.

YOUNGEST SON

I'LL SEE HIS STALL'S KEPT SPIC AND SPAN.

DAUGHTER

WE'LL SHOW HIM KINDNESS, ALL WE CAN.

MIDDLE SON

YOU THINK HE'D LIKE THIS MOLDY CARROT PEEL?

ELDEST SON

WITH SOME TENDER CARE AND EXERCISE
SOON WE'LL SEE A LITTLE --

ALL THE BARKER CHILDREN
SPARKLE IN HIS EYES!
WE'LL MAKE SURE OUR FATHER IS IMPRESSED
WE'VE DONE OUR BEST.

DANCE. BARKER children lavish care on weary BLACK BEAUTY. At first he barely responds, but slowly he regains his mojo, suffering twinges as he dances. Eventually he becomes the limber BLACK BEAUTY we know.

JERRY re-enters with MRS. BARKER, liking what he sees. THE CHILDREN tie BEAUTY to their family's cab.

BARKER CHILDREN
GUARANTEED YOU PUT HIM TO THE TEST...
HE'LL DO HIS BEST! HE'LL DO HIS BEST.

MRS. BARKER
It's his first day as a cab horse, Jerry. And you're still looking a bit peaked. Please, don't tire yourself.

BEAUTY and JERRY set off. Another cab pulled by a familiar team of horses draws up near. Flies <BUZZ>.

SIR OLIVER
Merrylegs! Fly alert, fly alert! Left flank, left flank!

MERRYLEGS
Oh, dear. Here we go again...

MERRYLEGS uses tail to shoo flies away from tail-less SIR OLIVER.

SIR OLIVER
Ah, yes! That's it. Swat him hard, no mercy! Give it to him! ...Oh, thank you, Merry. You're a wonder.

MERRYLEGS

Yes, well, what are old friends for? ...Oliver. Look! Could it be? Good heavens, it is, isn't it?

SIR OLIVER

Beauty! Black Beauty!?

BLACK BEAUTY

...Ollie! Merry! How wonderful to --

SIR OLIVER

Oh, what a sight for sore eyes! How long has it been?

MERRYLEGS

We didn't know you'd come to London!

SIR OLIVER

Isn't this wonderful? A family reunion! If only our dear Ginger were with us, it'd be like old times.

MERRYLEGS

Don't start. You know even talking about her makes you cry.

SIR OLIVER

Poor thing. To see her now, reduced to pulling a coal cart. Breaks an old warrior's heart.

MERRYLEGS

We've passed her in the streets several times, but she won't even look our way.

SIR OLIVER

Too painful, being reminded of the old days. But it's good to see you, Beauty. And your head's still attached!

MERRYLEGS

You're getting on well? Being a London cab horse suits you? Not so bad, is it? ...Who am I kidding? It's the worst.

SIR OLIVER

(before BEAUTY can respond)

Oh dear, I think we're turning at this corner. Left, Merry. Hard left! ...Farewell, old friend!

MERRYLEGS

Stay well, Beauty! We've missed you!

SIR OLIVER and MERRYLEGS trot off.
Uplifted, BLACK BEAUTY launches
into song. He doesn't see an AGING
HORSE stagger forward.

BLACK BEAUTY

I WILL ALWAYS GO AS THEY REQUEST.
NEVER FAIL TO SCALE THE HIGHEST CREST.
TILL THE MOMENT I GO TO MY REST...

The AGING HORSE falls dead at his
feet. He reacts, swallowing hard.

BLACK BEAUTY

I'LL DO MY BEST.

SCENE
TRANSITIONS TO:

SCENE FOUR

Apple orchard, late afternoon.

ANNA is in wheelchair, sketching.
JOHN MANLY sits on tree stump,
resting on his cane.

ANNA

Apple trees in blossom. My favorite time of year.

JOHN MANLY

Tis lovely, I grant. But Anna, I know you have better things to do than watch an old man take his afternoon nap.

ANNA

Not really. Besides, this is my favorite place to sketch.

JOHN MANLY

Surely you have friends your own age?

ANNA

Not so many. ...Please don't pity me, Uncle John, I can't bear it. Yes, I have friends! Katie McAllister used to live down the road. Before she and her family moved, she visited all the time. And Hester, my best friend? She comes by each Saturday, like clockwork. More often, during summer.

JOHN MANLY

Been here several Saturdays now. Haven't seen hide nor hair of this Hester.

ANNA

Girls my age have their heads full of boys, Uncle John. All caught up in finding a husband. Hester's already got a beau. She and Will are to marry at summer's end. She even asked me to be a bridesmaid.

JOHN MANLY

Won't that be something, watching your best friend take her vows?

ANNA

...I won't be at the wedding, Papa says it's too far. Will's people live in Eastwich, and Hester's heart is set on marrying in their local church. Supposed to be lovely.

JOHN MANLY

Anna. Have you ever thought of learning how to handle a pony and cart? So you might get around on your own?

ANNA

Me? Really?

(secretly thrilled)

I can't even imagine it. Besides, Papa would never agree. He worries about me so. And he's not easy around horses.

JOHN MANLY

No. Not these days. But you know, I've known people with far worse infirmities, and they use a horse and cart to --

ANNA

What happened to him, Uncle John?

JOHN MANLY

Your father?

ANNA

And the horse. The one you call...Beauty.

JOHN MANLY

Black Beauty. Your Dad was the one who named him! Back at Birtwick Park, those two were like peas in a pod.

ANNA

He never talks about him.

JOHN MANLY

Wasn't there when it happened. Learned about it later. When our horses were sold to a fancy house, your dad was hired along. But Mr. York, the coachman, had it in for our mare. Ginger.

Flashback. One-eyed YORK is holding
a bearing rein. JOE GREEN is near.

NOTE: This scene is played out front. We do not see BEAUTY or GINGER.

JOE GREEN

Mr. York? Couldn't we break them into the bearing rein a bit more easy-like?

YORK

(feigning friendliness)

You think? Why? Temperamental, are they?

JOE GREEN

You'll have no problem with Beauty. Mr. Manly say he's the most even-tempered horse he's ever known.

YORK

Did he now? Fancy that.

JOE GREEN

But our Ginger, she came to us snappish and suspicious. Very badly treated early on. Or so Mr. Manly says.

YORK

Do something for me, lad. Look about. See Mr. Manly anywhere?

JOE GREEN

No. He took a position up north...

MR. YORK

Exactly.

(dropping the mask)

I'm stable master here, you little pissant. Do I look like I care what your precious Mr. Manly thinks!? I'll treat these Birtwick Park scroungers as I see fit!

JOE GREEN

Yes, sir. Sorry, sir. Won't make that mistake again.

MR. YORK

I know you won't. As for this mare here? Got my "eye" on this one. Going to give her what she deserves.

He mimes tightening reins on the unseen BLACK BEAUTY harshly, as if to demonstrate to GINGER what awaits. Lighting shifts attention to MANLY and ANNA.

JOHN MANLY

Wasn't just the stable master. Lady of the manor insisted on him using the bearing rein. Keeps the horses' heads up, even as it crushes the lungs. Shortens their life.

ANNA

Why on earth does anyone use them?!

JOHN MANLY

Makes a horse look smart. The rich will have fashion.

HER LADYSHIP enters flashback.

HER LADYSHIP

York! Are we ever going to get those horses heads up properly? Raise them and let us have no more nonsense!

YORK

I was taking time with the mare. She's a bit skittish.

HER LADYSHIP

Make it tighter at once! I don't want them mollycoddled!

YORK

Yes, mum. You're right. She needs to learn who's in charge.

VOICES (O.S.)

USED TO THE ACHE, USED TO THE PAIN,
USED TO THE FACT IT'S NO USE TO COMPLAIN...

He flashes a cold smile at GINGER, and very deliberately mimes taking hold of her reins.

VOICES (O.S.)

USED TO THE HURT, USED TO THE PAIN,
USED TO THE FEELINGS THAT DRIVE YOU INSANE --

YORK savagely tightens the reins!

SFX: <HORSE, REACTING IN FURY, AS:>

JOHN MANLY

That's all it took. York knew Ginger would never stand for it; she fought tooth and nail. Knocked him down along with Her Ladyship. Thrashing about, Ginger kicked Beauty too, wounding his knees. He fell hard, onto sharp stones and --

SFX: <HORSE IN EXTREME PAIN>

HER LADYSHIP

Blood! Look at all the blood! The dark one's knees are ruined, he's scarred for life! All thanks to that ill-mannered mare! I can't be seen with such animals! Get them out of my sight!

Lights dim on the flashback.

JOHN MANLY

That moment changed Beauty's life forever. One day, the pride of our stable. Next, he's damaged goods, a lowly workaday horse, sold from owner to owner. He deserved far better.

ANNA

And poor papa. There was nothing he could do...

JOHN MANLY

He was a lad. Hadn't even begun shaving. Who would listen?

ANNA

(miserably)

Uncle John, Papa will never agree to my using a cart and pony! He's too frightened. He lost his parents, then his horse. If anything happened to me -- !

JOHN MANLY

It's true. Your father had a rough time. A hard life, for a lad. But forgive an old man for speaking out of turn. This is your life we're talking about, isn't it?

This hits ANNA hard. MANLY stands.

JOHN MANLY

Think I'll sort out how supper's coming on.

He exits. ANNA considers her
plight.

MUSIC: "GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE" <<TRACK 16>>

ANNA

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE...
THAT'S HOW EVERY DAY STARTS.
GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE...
WILL WE BE ON TIME WHEN THE PLAY STARTS?

GETTING FROM A TO B...
FEELING ETERNALLY HAMPERED.
SYMPATHY SERVED WITH TEA...
CUDDLED AND CODDLED AND CONSTANTLY PAMPERED!

"HOW ARE YOU DOING, DEAR?"
I'M TOO POLITE TO MENTION
HOW I RESENT THEIR INSINCERE ATTENTION
AND CONDESCENSION!

HAVING TO PLOT EACH MOVE...
AND MEASURE THE DISTANCE.
YEARNING TO SOMEHOW PROVE
YOU DON'T REALLY NEED THEIR ASSISTANCE.

HOW DO YOU GET TO THERE...
WHEN YOU'RE IN THIS CONDITION?
SOMETIMES IT'S SO HARD TO BEAR
WHEN LIFE IS ABOUT BEING "OUT OF COMMISSION,"
IN ORDER TO CHANGE IT, YOU'D NEED A MAGICIAN.
AND THEN, EVEN THEN, YOU WOULD STILL NEED PERMISSION.
STILL NEED PERMISSION...

Wait. Do I *need* their permission?

"IT'S YOUR LIFE, ISN'T IT?"
I JUST HEARD SOMEONE SAY:
"IT'S YOUR LIFE, ISN'T IT?"
SO WHY HAVE I NEVER FELT THAT WAY?

WHY AM I ALWAYS DEFERENTIAL?
WHY DO I ALWAYS PLAY THE MARTYR?
SUDDENLY, IT SEEMS TO ME ESSENTIAL
I BECOME VOCAL AND SO MUCH SMARTER!
ISN'T IT TIME TO SPREAD MY WINGS -
CAST OFF THESE INVISIBLE CHAINS?
THERE'S SO MUCH MORE I AM LONGING FOR...
MAYBE IT'S TIME I GRAB THE REINS!

A HORSE & CART appears. JOHN MANLY
enters and lifts ANNA onto CART,
offering instruction as:

ANNA
GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE...
TIME THAT I STATE MY INTENTION!
LONGING TO BREATHE FRESH AIR...
EYE ON THE PRIZE, NOT JUST HON'RABLE MENTION!

WATCH OUT, I'M COMING THROUGH,
A-BARRELING DOWN THE BYWAY!
TAKING A ROUTE THAT LEADS ME TO
LIFE'S HIGHWAY. OUT OF MY WAY!
NO NEED TO PLOT EACH MOVE...
I'M GOING THE DISTANCE!
FINALLY I WILL PROVE
ALL IT TAKES IS GUTS AND PERSISTENCE.

THAT'S HOW YOU GET TO THERE...
WHEN YOU'RE IN THIS CONDITION!
HAVING THE COURAGE TO DARE
SO YOUR LIFE'S NOT ABOUT BEING "OUT OF COMMISSION,"
AND THE TRUTH IS YOU DON'T REALLY NEED A MAGICIAN.
AND DON'T EVEN THINK YOU NEED ASK FOR PERMISSION!
NO, ALL THAT YOU NEED IS TO OWN YOUR AMBITION
'CAUSE THIS IS YOUR LIFE AND IT'S NOT AN AUDITION!
AND ONCE YOU TRANSITION
FROM LIVING A LIFE OF REMORSE?
AND ACKNOWLEDGE IT'S TIME TO CHANGE COURSE?
AND ALL IT WILL TAKE IS A HORSE (!)
TO GET YOU FROM HERE TO THERE...

TRANSITION TO:

SCENE FIVE

*Outside a London pub. Several
HORSES are tied up nearby.*

GINGER staggers on, dragging a coal
cart. This is a changed GINGER,
worn and half-crazed.

GINGER'S DRIVER

Move along, damn you! I've a powerful thirst!
(as they arrive)
Took you long enough. Worthless nag.

She snaps at him. He exits into
pub. She looks about, warily, at
the other horses.

A MARE

(sotto, to another HORSE)
Cart horse. Stay clear. Half-mad, most of them.

JERRY BARKER, coughing badly, leads
on BLACK BEAUTY.

JERRY BARKER

One fare, all day! Barely enough for a pennyroyal tea.

Cabbies SIMON and EUSTACE enter.

SIMON

Barker! Heard what the City Council has done now?

JERRY BARKER

Don't tell me they've raised the license fees again?

EUSTACE

Join us for a pint, Barker. You're going to need it.

JERRY & CABBIES exit into pub.

BLACK BEAUTY

...Ginger? Ginger.

GINGER

Beauty? ...Turn away, don't look. I'm old.

BLACK BEAUTY

We both are. You're still a sight for sore eyes.

GINGER

You never were a good liar. So. Long time. Find any good humans out there yet?

BLACK BEAUTY

(amused)

A few.

GINGER

And the bad ones? The really evil, nasty sons of --

BLACK BEAUTY

(evenly)

Yeah. Met some of them, too. Funny thing is, I find most humans are...well, human. Some good parts, some bad.

GINGER

I'm still waiting on those good parts.

BLACK BEAUTY

Like my last owner, Reuben Green? Treated his horses well. Good food, cared for us. Put me in mind of Birtwick Park.

GINGER

Birtwick Park. Was that even real?

BLACK BEAUTY

Was to me.

(as she looks away)

Anyway, it's a sad story. Good as Reuben was to us, every Friday night he'd saddle me up and head to the town pub. Drank for hours till they closed, then we'd ride home at a gallop. One night, he drinks so much, he doesn't notice one of my shoes fell off. Pushes me hard, faster and faster, and the pain in my foot is so bad! Finally I stumble. Poor Reuben flies off! Dead, the moment his head hits ground.

GINGER

(long pause)

Thought you said it was a sad story.

(amused sneer)

"Poor Reuben." Drunk fool got what he deserved. You still take their part. All this time, you haven't changed!

BLACK BEAUTY

Not true! Look, I'm always going to be doing my best, that's the horse I am. But that doesn't keep all these questions from rattling around in my head at night...

He looks about, almost afraid to begin this discussion.

BLACK BEAUTY

Ginger, my whole life, I never thought of anything but pleasing my owners, doing what they asked, just like my mother taught me. But why? Why do we do it? Even for humans who treat us badly?

GINGER

Don't ask me. Never was my style.

BLACK BEAUTY

And...and another thing? Oats. Now I like oats, they're tasty. I know they're good for us. *But every freaking meal?* And...shoes! You do realize they actually *nail the shoes onto our feet?* And come on. *This is the only style they got?* They call us dumb animals, right? So why, when a human does something even half-way smart, they say he's got *horse sense?!*

(the real issue)

And answer me this: *who in heck put humans in charge in the first place? Huh? Right!?*

GINGER

I like when you ask questions. Like I'm hearing you sing that song of yours again. Ginger always asks questions. That's how I learned all about...

(suddenly uneasy)

Never mind. Foolish talk.

BLACK BEAUTY

What?

GINGER

...I've heard things. Over the years. About places where humans are *not* in charge. Places they don't even *have* humans!

(almost fervently)

Word is there are horses who run wild, up in the hills. And there are some living down by the big waters. Horses who run free, Beauty, free as the wind! No bits, no bridles, no masters. No whips, no coal carts --

BLACK BEAUTY

C'mon. That's just some made-up story.

GINGER

(deflated)

Yeah. Probably. But I don't know...

(she needs to believe it)

I've heard it so many times, from so many different horses... Figure there must be something to it. I mean, it could be, right? Maybe...maybe it's how horses are really meant to be?

BLACK BEAUTY

How we ought to be.

MUSIC: #16 - "GINGER DREAMS" <<TRACK 17>>

GINGER

Sometimes I see it, so clear. Galloping where I choose, eating apples off the trees? It's all that keeps me going...

LONDON vanishes, as BLACK BEAUTY follow BEAUTY into her danced fantasy. Other WILD HORSES join, as they exult in unfettered life. Then, a light-hearted moment. (What do WILD HORSES do for fun? A garden party at MERRY and OLLIE'S summer cottage in The Cotswolds?)

Mood shifts, abruptly. BEAUTY is replaced by GINGER'S nemesis, one-eyed MR. YORK! All at once, GINGER is surrounded by a sea of MR. YORKS, each with his tell-tale eyepatch, wielding whips. GINGER flees, then stops. She turns back. *Not this time, boys.* In the fantasy, GINGER finally evens the score, an avenging angel who turns the tide against the MR. YORKS of the world. BLACK BEAUTY returns to fight alongside. Horses triumph!

Fantasy dissolves back to the bleak reality of LONDON, as JERRY and pals re-enter from pub.

JERRY BARKER

But you can't just sell off your old horse like that!

SIMON

Can't I? He's off to the knackers this afternoon. License fees is too high, and what the city allows for fares is too low. Can't make a decent wage, much less board him proper.

JERRY BARKER

Terrible thing. Barnabas hauled your cab for so long.

SIMON

I've a family! Any idea how it feels, deciding which one you can afford to feed - your three month-old babe or the old dobbin that makes your living? Can't exist that way. Won't.

EUSTACE

Must you put Barnabas down? Sell him for a cart horse!

JERRY BARKER

Hauling stone from the quarry till he drops dead in the street? Handing him over to the knackers is a kindness.

SIMON

Decision's made. I've already taken the money and spent it.
Medicine for our newborn. Had no choice, don't you see?

JERRY BARKER

(as SIMON moves off)

Sad times, these. Sad times.

He coughs, into his handkerchief,
which EUSTACE sees is bloody.

EUSTACE

(alarmed)

Jerry...!

JERRY BARKER

Not a word to Mrs. Barker. Shouldn't have stood in the rain
on New Year's Eve, waiting on those fancy gents. It'll pass.

EUSTACE exits. JERRY starts to
lead BLACK BEAUTY off, then notices
he is staring at GINGER.

JERRY BARKER

Lad, forget her. Poor thing is half-dead. She's a cart horse!

SCENE
TRANSITIONS TO:

SCENE SIX

The Magistrate's Inquest.

Lights discover ISAAC SEWELL.

ISAAC

It was a bitter winter night, five years ago. I closed up my shop, dreading the long walk home. To my surprise, my daughter was waiting for me, driving a pony cart - all by herself! I could only stare. My Anna: so proud, so confident, so hopeful. I could almost hear the walls of the prison I'd built for her come crashing down...

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO TAKE A BITE OF LIFE,
DISCOVERING THE STRENGTH INSIDE HER.
WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
PIERCED MY INNARDS LIKE A SHARP KNIFE -
TO THINK ALL I'D DENIED HER...

That was the night I realized. Of the two of us? I was the one who was truly lame. These days, she drives that horse everywhere. No stopping her!

ANNA wheels on in her chair - for the first time, under her own power. She is now mid-20's, far more assertive and confident.

ANNA

Come, Papa. We'll be late.

ISAAC

Anna, darling. You're sure you are ready for this?

ANNA

I'm more than ready, Papa. I'm also ready for you to start remembering I'm a grown woman. Think that'll ever happen?

ISAAC

Probably not.

ANNA

And I love you for it. Most of the time. But right now, this grown woman wants to concentrate on winning this thing!

They turn front. ANNA appears before an unseen MAGISTRATE, to bring a complaint against TOBIAS LUDLOW.

Also at hearing: ISAAC, CLARA, JOEY, an ailing JOHN MANLY and several of LUDLOW'S rowdy pals.

MAGISTRATE (V.O.)

Tobias Ludlow. You are charged with visiting cruel and inhumane punishment on the horses used to bring your goods to market. What say you in your defense?

LUDLOW

I've nothing to defend! Since when does a woman have a right to stand before this court? Or any court in the land?

ANNA

I do not *stand*, Mr. Ludlow, as you plainly see. ...I am chief witness, Your Grace. My father's name is on the complaint.

ISAAC

Here, Your Grace. I bring the grievance on my Anna's behalf.

LUDLOW

Them horses are my property. I'll treat them as I see fit!

LUDLOW'S mates cheer him on.

MAGISTRATE (V.O.)

Order! We will have order! ...Ma'am. Your complaint?

ANNA

Tuesday last, I was driving my carriage to pick up my father at his office, as I do every weeknight. I passed Ludlow's brickfield. His cart was piled high, and he was flogging his horses, drawing blood and cursing at them.

LUDLOW

Bleedin' right! Lazy buggers refused to budge!

ANNA

They struggled to please you! Your cart was overloaded and the wheel stuck in the mud! Any fool could see it. ...I begged him to put up his whip, and lighten the load.

LUDLOW

And I told her to mind her own beeswax! As if a crippled old maid knows anything about managing dumb beasts!

Catcalls from LUDLOW'S mates.

ANNA

(undeterred)

I've only driven a pony and cart a few years, it's true. But horses changed my life. They provide me the chance to navigate my world, and I've come to value them greatly. I worry over the brutality they endure, especially from heartless men like Mr. Ludlow, who --

LUDLOW

(to his mates)

How do you like this, lads? Now I'm the one getting flogged!

ANNA

Good. Now you know how it feels!

MAGISTRATE (V.0.)

(as court erupts)

That's enough! ...Ma'am, there's little to be done here. It's merely your word against Ludlow's and --

ISAAC

We have another witness. At his own insistence, up out of his sickbed. John Manly, former stablemaster at Birtwick Park.

MANLY moves forward, aided by JOEY.

MAGISTRATE

Mr. Manly. Your reputation is well-known. You have testimony?

JOHN MANLY

Aye. At the lass's urging, I examined the horses in question, barely an hour later. Those animals were completely exhausted, bearing marks of such savage treatment...

(glaring at LUDLOW)

Some people ought never to own a horse!

LUDLOW

Your Grace, it's well known John Manly has got the cancer. God knows what the poor man's addled mind thinks it saw --

MAGISTRATE (V.0.)

His word is good enough for me, Ludlow. You are also well known to this court. For your rude and churlish behavior.

(as LUDLOW starts to object)

One more word, I'll see your sentence is for three months, instead of the usual two! Take him away. We are adjourned!

POLICEMAN leads LUDLOW off.

CLARA

Well done, Anna! You two gave evidence so clearly, His Grace had no choice but to convict. Aren't you proud of her, dear?

ISAAC

I'm proud of her every day. ...Have I ever told you all how grateful I am to Uncle John, for all he's done for us?

JOEY

About three hundred times, Papa.

JOHN MANLY

That you know of.

ANNA

Come, Mama. My poor Betsy has stood in the heat long enough.

CLARA exits with ANNA and JOEY.

JOHN MANLY

All I did was teach Anna how to handle a pony and cart. I didn't raise her from the dead.

ISAAC

I know, John. But I'm still ever grateful. Look at the fearless young woman she's become. That's your doing.

JOHN MANLY

Wasn't hard. She comes from fine stock.

ISAAC

Need to tell you something. Beauty. He's been on my mind of late. I keep dreaming about him. Nearly every night now.

JOHN MANLY

Not surprised. I...hear from him too, now and again.

ISAAC

You think he's alive, then? Still out there somewhere?

JOHN MANLY

Almost certain. Feel I'd know if he were gone. Don't you?

ISAAC

We need to find him, John. *We need to find Our Horse.*

JOHN MANLY

Aye. Here's hoping I'll be here to greet him when you do.

Scene transitions to:

SCENE SEVEN

London.

Flies <BUZZ> as SIR OLIVER enters,
bolstering an exhausted MERRYLEGS.

SIR OLIVER

Almost there, Merry. Chin up. Mustn't let master see how
tired we are, or he'll sell us off, straight to the knackers.

MERRYLEGS

I'm sorry, Oliver. I try to keep up, really I do.

SIR OLIVER

I know. But it's hard on you. I've much longer limbs.

MERRYLEGS

Oliver, we need to have a real talk, you and I. It's time.

SIR OLIVER

Must we? I'm not good at talks. My head's never been right
since the Battle of Ramnagar in the Punjab.

MERRYLEGS

I'm not sure it was right even then. But this can't wait.
I'm so tired, Oliver. Master never brushes us down anymore.
Barely feeds us. He's just waiting until...well, you know.

SIR OLIVER

I keep hoping I'll go first. Then they'll find you a smaller
horse to team with, so you can keep at it. Maybe for years.

MERRYLEGS

Bite your tongue! No, Oliver. The end is coming, we know it.
When it arrives, we may not have time to say...what ought to
be said. And you know how I hate unfinished business.

MUSIC: "CHUMS" - <<TRACK NUMBER 18>>

**BOTH CHARACTERS ARE MALE; DEMO SUNG BY COMPOSER KATHY
SOMMER**

MERRYLEGS

HASN'T BEEN AN EASY LIFE;
REALLY BEEN THROUGH THE MILL.
HASN'T BEEN AN EASY LIFE...
AND IT KEEPS ON HEADING DOWN HILL.
ONLY ONE THING EVER MADE THIS LIFE WORTHWHILE.
AND WHY I WILL LEAVE THIS WORLD WITH A SMILE...

CHUMS. I'VE HAD THE BEST OF CHUMS -
IT'S TRUE.
MATES. EVEN IN THE WORST OF STRAITS -
TRUE BLUE.
HUNGER AND THIRST;
BEEN WHIPPED AND BEEN CURSED,
BUT IN NO SMALL WAY I'M BLESSED.
I'VE HAD THE BEST OF CHUMS.

SIR OLIVER

Friends. They do make the difference, don't they?

SUFFERED QUITE A FEW HARD KNOCKS...
BATTLED WITH ALL MY MIGHT.
WEATHERED ALL OF LIFE'S RUDE SHOCKS...
AND TOMORROW DOESN'T LOOM BRIGHT.
BUT THE ONE THING THAT GAVE MEANING TO ALL OF MY
DAYS?
IMPROVED MY LIFE IN SO MANY WAYS...

CHUMS. I'VE HAD THE BEST OF CHUMS -
ALL TOLD.
FRIENDS. EVER AS THE HIGHWAY WENDS,
PURE GOLD.
TAKEN MY LICKS,
THE PAIN LIFE INFLICTS,
BUT THERE'S ONE THING STOOD THE TEST.
I HAD THE BEST...THE BEST OF CHUMS.

MERRYLEGS

I assume you had your...favorites?

SIR OLIVER

Let's see. ...Ranger. Ranger and Marksman. Two horses I ran with, back in my war days. Brilliant chaps. And Fusillade. Oh, and Warrior... But I'm sure you have your own list?

MERRYLEGS

Oh, yes. Feathers. In the stall next to mine, at my first stable. He and I used to laugh...! Oh, and Radish. Quite the mare. Took a shine to me right off.

SIR OLIVER

Lucky to have known them, I'm sure.

MERRYLEGS

And mustn't forget Ginger and Black Beauty.

SIR OLIVER

I should say not! Both near the top of the list.

MERRYLEGS

Yes. But not the very top. At least...not for me.

An embarrassed pause. They look away from each other. Then:

SIR OLIVER

THE MOON IS ON THE RISE...

MERRYLEGS

SUN IS SETTLING IN THE WEST...

SIR OLIVER

PERHAPS IT'S TIME FOR OUR GOODBYES?

MERRYLEGS

WOULDN'T WANT THESE FEELINGS TO GO UNEXPRESSED.

MERRYLEGS & SIR OLIVER

YOU. YOU'VE BEEN THE BEST OF CHUMS --

MERRYLEGS

BAR NONE.

SIR OLIVER & MERRYLEGS
YOU. WHEN IT COMES TO CHUMS...

SIR OLIVER
YOU'RE NUMBER ONE!

SIR OLIVER & MERRYLEGS
FUTURE'S UNCLEAR
WHERE WE GO FROM HERE...
BUT IN NO SMALL WAY I'M BLESSED.

SIR OLIVER
YOU'VE BEEN THE BEST.

MERRYLEGS
THE BEST....

MERRYLEGS & SIR OLIVER
THE BEST OF CHUMS.

SIR OLIVER
Chums.

MERRYLEGS
Chums.

SIR OLIVER & MERRYLEGS
WHATEVER COMES.

MERRYLEGS
Oliver. See that man, talking to our driver?

SIR OLIVER
Saw him yesterday. And he's back again today.

MERRYLEGS
He keeps looking over here. At us.

SIR OLIVER
You think he's here...to take us off to the knackers?

MERRYLEGS
Farewell, Oliver.

SIR OLIVER

Goodbye, dear friend.

DRIVER enters with a well-dressed
man: ARTHUR GORDON.

DRIVER

These plugs are on their last legs. You're sure about this?

ARTHUR GORDON

Quite. These horses were in my late father's stable. He'd be horrified to see them end their days like this. Sir Oliver was a war horse, a true hero. And I first learned to ride on dear Merrylegs. Tormented him endlessly as a boy, I'm afraid.

(to SIR OLIVER and
MERRYLEGS)

Lads? It's Squire Gordon's son Arthur, all grown up. Can't believe I happened upon you, but I did. Chins up, then. You're both coming with me. Home to Birtwick Park!

A jubilant MERRYLEG and SIR OLIVER
exit with ARTHUR GORDON.

It begins to snow. Scene shifts
to a seedy part of LONDON. GINGER
lies on a pallet, near death.

MRS. JERRY BARKER and her eldest
son EPHRAIM lead on BLACK BEAUTY.
She approaches GINGER'S DRIVER.

MRS. BARKER

Mister? We've a horse to sell. But you've got to be quick
about it.

GINGER'S DRIVER

You've come at the right time. Mare's too far gone; half
mad. Just waiting for the knackers to arrive.

EPHRAIM

Three guineas. Not a farthing less.

GINGER'S DRIVER

Done.

MRS. BARKER

...I don't know. Your father would like to murder us if he knew. Selling our handsome horse to the likes of him...

EPHRAIM

Ma. We have no choice.

MRS. BARKER

(to BLACK BEAUTY)

You're a good one, you are. Served us well, truly. But Jerry's half in his grave, and won't drive a cab ever again. We're desperate for the money. You understand, don't you?

EPHRAIM

(to the DRIVER)

You'll pay us now?

GINGER'S DRIVER

This way.

MRS. BARKER and her son follow
DRIVER off. Up till now, BLACK
BEAUTY has been oblivious to
GINGER. He sees her.

BLACK BEAUTY

...Ginger? Oh, Ginger. What have they done?

GINGER

Beauty? I'm not dreaming, am I? Can't see much any more.

BLACK BEAUTY

It's me, Ginger. It's me.

GINGER

Glad. Said goodbye so many times in my head. Now we can do it for real.

BLACK BEAUTY

No! No, you have to rest, save your strength...

GINGER

Won't matter. I'm dying. I'm dying and I'm glad. It's a sorry world, Beauty. I'm not sorry to leave it.

BLACK BEAUTY

(breaking down)

Ginger...

GINGER

Don't. Once I'm gone, the pain stops, that's what they say. And they're right. It's all fading, even now.

(conspiratorial whisper)

Beauty? They never broke me, not ever! No matter how much they piled on, no matter how hard they whipped. Couldn't go another step, but I kept on. You wouldn't let me rest.

BLACK BEAUTY

Me?

GINGER

I heard you, Beauty. No matter how bad it got, you were always there, whispering in my ear. "Don't you give up, Ginger. Don't you dare give up!" And here you are, saying it again...

(out of tempo; with
difficulty)

I HEAR YOUR SONG
IN A WAY I NEVER HEARD IT SUNG.
I'M HEARING BELLS
IN A WAY THEY NEVER HAVE BEEN --

(smiling)

Always knew you were trouble. First moment I laid eyes on you. "That one's gonna rock your world." And you did.

I HEAR IT PROUD. I HEAR IT STRONG.
I HEAR --

GINGER dies. BLACK BEAUTY stares,
heartbroken. GINGER'S DRIVER leads
on KNACKERS, who haul GINGER'S
pallet away. Numb, BEAUTY watches
them go.

GINGER'S DRIVER

Time to get a move on. Coal to deliver.

He hitches BEAUTY to cart, and
shakes reins. BEAUTY is still.

GINGER'S DRIVER

C'mon, you're a cart horse now. Move, you stupid beast!

For the first time ever, BEAUTY
feels the sting of a whip! His back
stiffens. Trembling with anger, he
glares at DRIVER. For a long
moment, it seems like he might
finally lash out. He does not.
BEAUTY turns and stares out at us,
his look a mixture of anger,
sadness and defiance.

Summoning his dignity, he struggles
off, his resolve growing more
determined with each step. As he
labors forward, ISAAC'S wife CLARA
and CHORUS members emerge from
shadows to sing:

**MUSIC: "HOW DOES HE KNOW THE WAY HOME?" - <<TRACK NUMBER
19>>**

CLARA & ALL

HOW DOES HE KNOW THE WAY HOME?
HOW DOES HE KNOW THE WAY HOME?
THE LIGHT MAY BE FLICKERING LOW,
SOMEHOW HE KNOWS THE WAY HOME.

IS IT THAT ANGELS APPEAR
WHISPERING SOFT IN HIS EAR?
THE GROUND MAY BE COVERED IN SNOW.
HE ALWAYS KNOWS THE WAY HOME.

EVERY LOAD I BEAR.
HE STILL TAKES ME THERE.

WITH HIM, I NEVER AM LOST.
WITH HIM, ALL BRIDGES ARE CROSSED.
NO MATTER WHEREVER I ROAM,
I KNOW HE'LL CARRY ME HOME.

CLARA (SOLO)

NO MATTER WHEREVER I ROAM
I KNOW HE'LL CARRY ME HOME.

ISAAC

We sang that at John Manly's funeral. He was 73. A few weeks later, my Anna began writing her novel.

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO WRITE ABOUT A HORSE
HIS HOPES, HIS DREAMS, HIS DRIVE.
THEN SHE MADE A CHOICE.
SHE GAVE HIM A VOICE...

IMMEDIATE
TRANSITION TO:

SCENE EIGHT

ANNA'S SITTING ROOM.

An older, more fragile ANNA lies on a chaise. With her is MR. JERROLD, a book publisher.

ANNA

But why, Mr. Jarrold? If you think it's a good story, and well written...why wouldn't you want to publish it?

JARROLD

Because if it fails, Miss Sewell, Jarrold and Sons becomes a laughingstock. You have this horse telling his own story - as if he'd actually written the book! Do you really hope an intelligent reader is going to believe that?

ANNA

What I hope, Mr. Jarrold, is that on reading my novel people will think more thoughtfully about the horses they own. To see them as more than mere beasts of burden.

JARROLD

But he's just a horse. A dumb animal.

ANNA

It is my experience horses are anything but dumb. They have feelings and emotions; they sense danger, they experience joy. They even form friendships, just as we do. As for speaking, my horse Betsy talks to me all the time.

JARROLD

Does she? My family's had a stable of horses since before I was born. And I've yet to hear one of them utter a word.

ANNA

Then clearly, you haven't been listening.

JARROLD

I beg your pardon!

ANNA

I can't ignore what I know, Mr. Jarrold. Horses are called dumb because they don't speak our language. But what if we are the dumb ones - for failing to learn how to speak theirs?

JARROLD

You really believe this? That horses are intelligent enough to form actual thoughts? That they speak to us?

ANNA

I do. I believe it is true of all God's creatures.

JARROLD

It's clear you are...very sincere about your ideas. I respect that, Miss Sewell. I'm truly sorry to say we won't be doing business. If you should write another book...

ANNA

(a sad smile)

No. I don't think that will happen. But thank you.

He nods, and starts out. Then:

ANNA

Mr. Jarrold. Do you love your horses?

JARROLD

I don't know if I'd speak about it in those terms. But yes. I do care about their welfare. Very much.

ANNA

Good. Then for their sakes, I do hope someday you will take a moment. And mark what they are saying to you.

MUSIC: "SO MUCH THEY CAN TELL US" - <<TRACK NUMBER 20>>

ANNA

IF YOU LISTEN,
YOU CAN HEAR THEM.
THEY WILL REACH YOU
THOUGH IN A VERY DIFFERENT WAY.
TRY AND LISTEN
YOU'LL DISCOVER GROWING NEAR THEM,

THERE IS SO MUCH THEY CAN TELL US.
SO MUCH THEY CAN SAY.

BE ATTENTIVE
WHEN THEY'RE SPEAKING.
LET THEM TEACH YOU,
AND THOUGH THE GOING MAY BE SLOW...
THE INCENTIVE?
IF IT'S KNOWLEDGE YOU ARE SEEKING,
THERE IS SO MUCH THEY CAN TELL US.
SO MUCH THAT THEY KNOW.

FOR THEIRS IS THE WISDOM OF THE AGES;
HEED IT CAREFULLY.
ANIMALS ARE ORACLES AND SAGES!
THEIR IS SO MUCH THEY CAN SEE.
OFTEN MORE THAN WE
SEE.

SIMPLY LISTEN.
AND YOU'LL HEAR THEM.
WHEN WE LISTEN,
THERE'S AN INFINITE RETURN.
THERE IS SO MUCH THEY CAN TELL US.
SO MUCH THEY CAN TELL US.
SO MUCH WE CAN LEARN...

ISAAC

Eventually, Jarrold and Sons did end up buying and publishing "Black Beauty." And it became an instant success. Soon, my Anna's message was being heard 'round the world.

ANNA

THERE IS SO MUCH THEY CAN TELL US...
SO MUCH THAT THEY KNOW.

ALL

FOR THEIRS IS THE WISDOM OF THE AGES.
HEED IT CAREFULLY.
ANIMALS ARE ORACLES AND SAGES.
THERE IS SO MUCH THEY CAN SEE...

ANNA & ALL

SIMPLY LISTEN
AND YOU'LL HEAR THEM.
WHEN WE LISTEN
THERE'S AN INFINITE RETURN.
THERE IS MUCH THEY CAN TELL US.
SO MUCH THEY CAN TELL US.

ANNA

SO MUCH THEY CAN TELL US!

ANNA & ALL

SO MUCH WE CAN LEARN...

ANNA

SO MUCH WE CAN LEARN.

Lights dim on ANNA as:

ISAAC

Barely five months after its publication, our precious daughter left us. But she lived to see her book become a success, knowing she left the world a better place.

CLARA

No one who read her book would ever look at their horses - or any of the animals they owned - in the same way.

ISAAC

But now you're wondering. Were my beloved horse and I ever actually reunited? As we conclude our story, you will finally hear it as our Anna intended...

BLACK BEAUTY

(returning)

...From the horse's mouth. Finally!

Scene quickly shifts to a horse auction. An aged BLACK BEAUTY joins a line of weary HORSES, as:

BLACK BEAUTY

My life as a cart horse became so utterly wretched, I wished I might, like Ginger, drop down and be out of my misery. But when I had been overworked to the point of exhaustion, covered in coal dust, I was again taken to auction...

JOEY is now with BLACK BEAUTY,
petting him. ISAAC and CLARA
inspect the other HORSES.

JOEY

Papa, Papa! Come see! I think I found your Black Beauty!

ISAAC

No, Joey. I'm fairly certain my Beauty is long gone. Though this one does favor him, I'll grant you.

JOEY

Couldn't this be him? He seems so kind and gentle.

CLARA

Don't you remember, dear? Uncle John told us. Black Beauty had a bright white star on his forehead. And this horse...

She notices something, alerts
ISAAC.

ISAAC

...Joey? Show us your hands.

JOEY holds up hands. They are black
with soot! Frantic, ISAAC rubs off
BEAUTY'S forehead, as:

ALL

AND ON HIS FOREHEAD, HIS NOBLE FOREHEAD,
A BRILLIANT SPLASH OF WHITE.
A STAR BEAMING BRIGHT!

ISAAC

...Beauty? Oh, Beauty, it is you, isn't it? You know me,
your old friend, the fool who almost killed you! We've come
to take you home, Beauty. Home, at last!

JOEY escorts OUR HORSE forward, as:

BLACK BEAUTY

And they did. Back to the very meadow in which I was born. Sometimes, before I am quite awake? I fancy I am still in the orchard at Birtwick Park, with all my old friends, under the apple trees. And I am at peace.

ISAAC

As am I. For what my daughter did in her book was to give me back my beloved friend, for all eternity.

BLACK BEAUTY

My story - and Anna's plea for kindness towards animals - still lives on the shelves of every library on the planet.

ISAAC

WHAT MY DAUGHTER DID
WAS TO MAKE US SEE A HORSE
RUNNING FREE WITH HIS MANE UNFURLED...

ISAAC & BLACK BEAUTY/ALL

SHE WROTE JUST ONE BOOK/...JUST ONE BOOK.
COME AND TAKE A LOOK/...COME LOOK
AT THE GIFT SHE GAVE TO THE WORLD!
TO THE WORLD!/...WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID.
TO THE WORLD/...WHAT HIS DAUGHTER DID.
TO THE WORLD!

THE CURTAIN FALLS