

1

All The Pretty Little Horse: Episode 1 - How Small You
Are

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2 SCENE 1 - STAPLES

STELLA

The funny thing is, I never really liked horses that much. Everyone thought I was like, a horse girl, ya know? Cos when I was in elementary and middle school I had all those folders and notebooks with pictures of horses on them. But honestly I was pretty indifferent to them.

3 CASHIER

Mhm.

STELLA

I mean, it's not like I was the one buying my school supplies. It was my dad. And I was like, what, nine years old? I wasn't gonna say, "No, dad! I don't want the folder with the horses! I want the one with Doc McStuffins or The Minions or something!" Actually I was terrified of the Minions as a kid. I used to have these nightmares about them, that they were peeling my skin off and laughing and laughing -- so I mean it's not like I wanted that on my school supplies. But my dad was always the one to make decisions for me.

CASHIER

Mhm.

STELLA

I mean, I did whatever he told me. I joined the science club because he told me to. I joined the soccer team because he told me to. I studied biology because he told me to. I went to veterinary school because he told me to. Thank god I'm an adult now, right?

← **4**

CASHIER

Mhm.

STELLA

Making my own choices. He's not picking out my notebooks anymore! Now I go to Staples and I say, "Dad, I'm picking out my own notebook!" Like a real adult would say. I mean, I don't really say that out loud because my dad isn't really there. My dad is in no condition to go to Staples. Or anywhere, for that matter. But I think it. Sorry, what was the question?

CASHIER

Debit or credit?

STELLA

What?

CASHIER

Are you paying with a debit card or a credit card?

STELLA

Oh. Um. Credit.

CASHIER

Sign the pin pad please.

STELLA

Sorry, I guess I got off on a bit of a tangent there.

CASHIER

Sign the pin pad please.

STELLA

Right. Yes. Signing the pin pad.

Sounds of signing.

So, do you have any family, or--

CASHIER

Do you want your receipt?

STELLA

Um. Yes. Or, no, I won't need or. Save the trees, right? Or, yes, actually. Just in case. I mean, I think they're plastic so I wouldn't be saving any trees anyway. Don't know what I might need a receipt for, but who knows! Maybe I'll have a receipt related emergency where--

CASHIER

Thank you for shopping at Staples.

STELLA

Right. Thanks. Right.

NARRATOR

This is Stella Thomas. Stella Thomas has just purchased five spiral bound notebooks, which is what she does when she gets particularly stressed or anxious, and today of all days she was feeling both. Stella's little apartment was filled to the brim with spiral notebooks, only some of them filled out. When she was still in school she would fill them with notes, and occasionally story ideas that she never followed through on, but now she used them mostly for research. She never completed a whole notebook. Once she got about halfway through she would find another reason to be stressed or anxious, and that would send her to Staples all over again.

Stella Thomas had been living in her little world of spiral notebooks from Staples for twenty-seven years. Stella did not know it yet, but that world was about to come crashing down all around her. As she chased after the city bus, thanked the irritated bus driver, and took her usual seat next to that guy who smells like beef, she had no idea that today would be the last day she ever did any of those things. It would be the last day of everything she ever knew. She wondered maybe she should have Thai food for dinner.

INTRO AND THEME MUSIC.

SCENE 2 - THE APARTMENT

STELLA

I'm home!

DAN

Hey! What took you so long?

STELLA

I had some errands to run.

DAN

Oh, great! I was afraid you forgot. Because we have nothing in the way of dinner so I was hoping you'd remember to--

STELLA

Oh...heck.

DAN

What?

STELLA

Not food errands. I didn't do that.

DAN

Oh. You were supposed to--

STELLA

Yeah. I know. I forgot. Sorry.

DAN

I mean, I've been at work all day, so it's not like I could have--

STELLA

Yeah, I know.

DAN

What are we going to eat?

STELLA

Let's just order pizza.

DAN

We've had pizza for the past three nights.

STELLA

So a fourth won't make a difference.

DAN

I've forgotten what fresh vegetables taste like, Stella.

STELLA

I still have that box of Moon Pies--

DAN

That's not dinner!

STELLA

I'll remember tomorrow! I promise!

DAN

You promised that yesterday!

STELLA

I'm trying my best.

DAN

Can you make your best better please?

STELLA
(beginning to cry)

DAN
Whoa. Are you okay?

STELLA
I'm really sorry. I miss
vegetables too. I'm just as tired
of having plain white rice and
peanut butter for dinner as you
are. I want to remember what
broccoli tastes like. Really, I
do.

DAN
Forget the vegetables. Stella,
what's going on?
(Beat.)
Oh. You bought notebooks.

STELLA
(sniffles)
Yeah.

DAN
So what happened then? You went
to visit your dad today?

STELLA
Yeah.

DAN
And how is he?

STELLA
Not good.

DAN
Oh man...I'm sorry. I didn't
realize you--

STELLA
It's fine.

Sound of a knock on the door.

MEL
Hello?

STELLA
Hey Mel.

MEL

So? Did it come yet?

STELLA

No. Not yet.

DAN

Did what come yet?

MEL

How could you forget! Today is
the big day!

DAN

Wait, you mean the shipment-- it
was supposed to come today?

MEL

Are you serious? The most
important day of your
girlfriend's life and you forget?

STELLA

Well, I wouldn't call it the most
important--

DAN

Stell, I am so sorry.

STELLA

I didn't mention it this morning.
I was nervous.

DAN

I didn't know what the box was,
so I already brought it inside.

MEL

What?

STELLA

You mean it's already here?

DAN

Yeah. Came while you were out.

STELLA

Oh my god.

MEL

(squeals)

Isn't this great?

STELLA

Oh my god. I can't believe it.

DAN

Let me get it.

Sound of boxes shuffling.

I had no idea what it was.
Thought maybe you order something
big and weird online, like that
giant essential oil diffuser you
got that one time.

STELLA

(sheepishly)

It was supposed to help with
anxiety.

MEL

Did it help?

STELLA

No.

DAN

Well here it is. You want to do
the honors?

STELLA

Yeah.

Sound of paper ripping.

Wow.

DAN

It's beautiful.

STELLA

It's...shinier than I expected.

DAN

Hardcover. Nice. Did you pick out
the art?

STELLA

No. That was all up to the
publishing company.

DAN

(reading)

The Wild Horses of Chincoteague.
Can I hold a copy?

STELLA

Yeah. Of course.

MEL

It's...

STELLA

What?

MEL

I mean, they look great. They look really nice. Like real...books. Because they are. Real books.

DAN

Mel? Is something wrong?

MEL

It's just...

STELLA

What?

MEL

Why isn't your name on the cover?

STELLA

Oh. Well. I didn't write it.

MEL

Yes you did.

DAN

Mel!

STELLA

I helped do the research. I helped edit it. But I didn't write it.

MEL

You basically did. I mean, you got a goddamn veterinary degree just cos of your dad's weird obsession--

DAN

Mel, this is not the time--

STELLA

It's my dad's book, not mine. I just helped.

MEL

He wrote the words, sure. Some of the words. But-- I mean, I've seen how hard you've been working over the past few years. You've been the one doing all the groundwork, doing the interviews, scouting locations, writing up reports, while he just sits around--

STELLA

Mel. He's sick.

MEL

I know! I'm not saying he should be able to jump right out of his wheelchair and start riding horses himself! I'm just saying...you put your whole self into working on that book. And now it's finally done. Shouldn't you get some credit?

STELLA

It'll make him happy. That's all the credit I need. It was always his book, not mine. Besides, today when I saw him...he was a little more distant than before. He always is.

DAN

He'll be so excited to see the book in print.

STELLA

But what if he doesn't even remember what it is? What if he doesn't even remember who I am?

DAN

He will! He's always so excited to see you. He loves you.

STELLA

Just because he loves me doesn't mean he can't forget me.

(Beat.)

MEL

So...how about dinner?

DAN

We were just gonna do pizza.

MEL

Again? Don't tell me Stella has converted you to her disgusting eating habits.

STELLA

I just-- I never have time to cook!

DAN

I'm trying to make her eat real food, but it's a struggle.

STELLA

I don't even need dinner. I'll just eat a Moon Pie.

7

DAN

Are you serious?

MEL

Those things are gross.

STELLA

They're my comfort food, okay? I need...I need a minute. I'm feeling a little overwhelmed.

DAN

Okay. Fine. I'll get you your nasty marshmallow abomination.

MEL

And then we'll head over to my place and I'll make you real food. Like a salad.

STELLA

Hm. I remember salads.

DAN

Here you go, babe. It's the last one.

Wrapper crinkling.

STELLA

Wow that's good.

DAN

I can't believe you went through that entire box of them.

Mechanical whirring. Other misc sci-fi sounds.

SCENE 3 - THE SIMULATION

NARRATOR

Stella looked around to find herself no longer in the apartment she shared with Dan, which was very confusing as she didn't remember leaving. It appeared that the walls had simply melted away, and that Dan, Mel, and Stella now stood in a huge metal box.

8

JERRY

Ha! In your fucking face, Stu!

STELLA

What?

JERRY

I totally called it!

STELLA

What is happening?

STU

Fine. You win.

NARRATOR

Stella's utter confusion turned to abject horror when she saw the sources of the two new voices. If asked later about the experience, she might have described them as "gelatinous pools of green sludge, with all their organs floating around their viscous bodies like toy boats in a child's bathtub."

In the moment, however, the only description that came to her mind was "nightmare goop."

DAN

What...are those things?

STELLA

Where are we?

STU

Time to shut it down?

JERRY

Yeah. Shut it down.

MEL

Where did you take us? What is happening?

JERRY

(exasperated)

Nowhere! We didn't take you anywhere! You've always been here.

STELLA

What?

STU

Allow us to introduce ourselves. I'm Stu and he's Jerry.

JERRY

We created your world.

MEL

Take us back to Stella's apartment.

JERRY

There is no apartment! Your world
wasn't real!

DAN

If you're...not human...how do
you speak English?

STU

Are you hearing this?
(mocking)
"How do you speak English?"

JERRY

Oh, I am hearing this.

STU

What you know as English is just
the language that we speak.
Because we made your world.
Remember?

STELLA

Please, I just want to see my
father. Before it's too late.

STU

(starts laughing
again)
Oh my god you people are so dumb.
He's not real.

STELLA

What?

STU

We made it up. All of it. He's
not REAL. No one you ever knew
was real. I mean, you three are
real, obviously, but that was
only because of the bet.

STELLA

What bet?

JERRY

Stu here made a little bet with me about civilization formation and I wanted to prove him wrong. So we made a little fictional world and after developing it for a few millennia, we dropped some real humans in it to see how they would react. And you did NOT disappoint!

STELLA

You're trying to tell me...my father never existed?

JERRY

Oh, not just your father. Everything.

STU

Sure, we based somethings on stuff that already exists in our world, but more or less, nothing you ever knew was real.

JERRY

Like that book you helped write? Never existed.

STELLA

So Earth just...doesn't exist?

JERRY

Nope! It was just an electronic projection from our handy-dandy world simulator.

Sound of goop slapping metal.
It only exists in code through this thing.

STELLA

But building that whole world...it must have taken YEARS.

JERRY

Millenia, actually. I was procrastinating. But I'd say it's probably time to go back to work. I've got another few millenia's worth of paperwork to do before I can finally get some lunch.

STU

Lunch sounds great. How do you feel about tacos?

DAN

You can't just do this. You can't just give us a whole life and just throw it all away. You can't--

11

Zappy sound, body falls. Maybe Stella screams.

JERRY

Yeah, I'm definitely feeling tacos. Of course, it's on you.
(he starts calling in
an order for tacos)

12

STELLA

What happened to him? Is he okay?

STU

Him? What? Yeah, he's fine. He's just dead.

STELLA

You killed him?

STU

Is there a problem?

STELLA

I love him! That's the problem!

STU

Oh. Sorry.

STELLA

Sorry? You kill my boyfriend and all you have to say is sorry?

STU

Oh, I was saying like, sorry that you loved him, not sorry I killed him. I'm not sorry about that.

STELLA

Why would you do that?

STU

I can make you another one.

STELLA

Bring him back!

STU

I can't. He's dead.

STELLA

But I want him back.

STU

You're making to big a deal of this. Death happens all the time. Look at this.

Another zap. Body falls.

STELLA

MEL!

JERRY

(getting off the phone and seeing the commotion)

I think you're making her upset.

STELLA

OF COURSE YOU'RE MAKING ME UPSET. YOU'RE KILLING EVERYONE I LOVE.

(she breaks down crying)

I just wanna go home.

STU

God you are so annoying. Fine, if you really want, I could just restart the--

Door sound.

MR. SMITH

Stu and Jerry? What are you doing in the world simulation center? I leave for only a few millennia and I find you two here, mucking about.

JERRY

We were just having some fun--

MR. SMITH

Well that's enough fun for today. What do we have here?

13 Beep boop bop.

A simulation of a planet called Earth? This is garbage. The culture is tacky, the people are stupid, and the continents are awkwardly shaped. Get back in the accounting office where you two belong. I'm going to delete this abomination.

STELLA

No!

Powering down sound-- Earth is deleted. 14

MR. SMITH

Who's this?

STU

This? Oh, this is...um... What's your name again?

STELLA

(through tears)

You spent millenia...building my world...tricking me into thinking everything around me was real...and you can't remember...my name?

STU

Yeah sorry I'm bad with names. I wanna say...Susan?

STELLA

Stella.

STU

Stella! That's hilarious! I totally forgot we named you that!

STELLA

Why...is that funny?

JERRY

Nice one.

15 Gloopy high five.

MR. SMITH

Well tell Stella to get off the floor. I have some investors coming in to look at the world creation room in a few hundred years and I don't want any of these- what do you call them?

JERRY

Humans.

MR. SMITH

I don't want any of these humans dirtying up the place.

STU

Don't worry. She'll be dead way before then.

JERRY

Yeah, you don't have to worry about her. She's already more than a quarter through her lifetime. She's basically already dead.

MR. SMITH

As long as she's gone before the investor gets here. I hate these humans you two are sound fond of playing with.

STU

C'mon, Mr Smith, don't be...
(Snickering to himself)
...racist.

Stu and Jerry break into uproarious laughter.

MR. SMITH

What?

JERRY

(struggling to speak. He is laughing so hard he is crying)
So, on this...on this Earth planet we made...we made up this concept called racism where...where basically the humans actually think-

16



MR. SMITH

You mistake me for someone that actually cares. And make sure you have that accounting paperwork done before the investors get here!

Door sound.

STELLA

(getting herself together)

Why...why would you do this?

STU

We're immortal beings. It gets boring.

STELLA

So you spend your life preying on other creatures?

STU

Uh. Yeah.

JERRY

We do this kind of things all the time. You're not special.

STELLA

So you just torture other life forms for fun?

JERRY

Guess what? When you're dead, it's not gonna matter. Dying is a treat, really. I have to live with the knowledge that in five billion years, I'll still have the memory of the time I shat my pants in seventh grade. I've gotta live with that literally forever. At least all the sadness or whatever you're feeling now, you're gonna forget when you die.

STU

Think of it like this. Have you ever swatted a mosquito?

STELLA

Yes.

STU

Exactly.

STELLA

What?

JERRY

Do you have any idea how small you are?

STU

I mean, this whole "loss of everyone and everything you love" thing- don't you think you're being a bit, I don't know, overdramatic, Stacy?

STELLA

...no?

JERRY

C'mon, Stu. We've got to get to work if we're gonna have everything done by the time the investors get here.

STU

Yeah, I guess you're right.

STELLA

Wait! Please. Kill me.

JERRY

What?

STELLA

Everything I ever cared about it gone. I don't see any reason for me to want to live anymore. So please. Kill me.

STU

Um. Okay. I guess if you-

MR. SMITH

(distant)

Stu! Jerry! Did you order tacos?

STU

Sick! The tacos are here!

Door sound.

STELLA

Wait!

JERRY

Sorry, can't leave tacos waiting. You know how it is, the shells get real soggy and then there's taco innards spilling everywhere and it's a real mess.

STELLA

You can't kill me first?

JERRY

I don't want a soggy taco!

STELLA

Could you at least tell me what the bet was?

JERRY

Okay. Fine. Well, you know how we based some stuff in the Earth world on our own lives?

STELLA

Yeah.

JERRY

Well most of the companies we made up. Except Moon Pies. We have those in our world, too, and they're disgusting. And Stu bet me that even in the most unevolved human society, no one would be stupid enough to finish an entire lifetime supply of Moon Pies on their own because, I mean, let's face it, those things are absolute trash. BUT YOU DID IT. Heh. Totally worth the five bucks.

17 Sound of gloop and door closing.

STELLA

Wait! I don't even know-- I don't even know where I am! I don't even know who I am-- I don't know-- I don't know anything.

NARRATOR

Stella stood in the simulation room alone, as one does when their entire reality has been stripped away from them so violently and so suddenly. She stood there until the janitor came in to clean up the dead bodies. He looked surprisingly human, unlike the gelatinous creatures that had just torn her life apart, except he looked far older than any human was ever allowed to get.

GERALD

Ma'am?

STELLA

Hm?

GERALD

I'm gonna have to ask you to move to I can mop the floors.

STELLA

Oh. Right.

Sounds of mopping.

STELLA (CONT'D)

I think...I think my whole life
was fake.

GERALD

18 Is that so.

STELLA

Everything I spent my whole
existence worrying about...none
of it was real.

GERALD

I see.

STELLA

And the only people who were real
are dead.

GERALD

Okay.

STELLA

What do I have to live for
anymore?

GERALD

("I don't know"
sound.)

Ya like peanuts? **19**

STELLA

What?

GERALD

Well, I got a pack of peanuts
here, if that would make you feel
better.

STELLA

No, it would not make me feel
better.

GERALD

Okay. Suit yourself.

Crunching.

Mm. Good peanuts.

STELLA

Where do I go?

GERALD

Doesn't matter much to me. Can't stay here though. I got to mop up this blood.

STELLA

Those were my friends.

GERALD

Okay. Why don't you wait in the hall?

STELLA

I guess I will.

NARRATOR

20

Stella thought she had reached her threshold hold of "overwhelmed" for the day, but when she stepped into the hall, she was "whelmed" quite a bit more than she ever thought was possible. She was so caught up in the whole "my world wasn't real" thing that she forgot to look around at the world that was real, the one that she had been hurled into against her will. She'd spent her entire life in a simulation room that she thought was a world, and when she stepped out of that room she saw the real world.

It was a hallway. A hallway in an office building. An office building that orbited an orange sun, hurtling through the vastness of space. And when Stella stepped out of the simulation room, she looked out the window, and with a dizzying queasiness she realized that through a window framed by fake office plants, she was looking directly into the void.

(CONT'D)

She very well could fling herself into the inky black void and end it all. But for some reason, she didn't want to. There was a seed inside her, and that seed was this: Who was she in the absence of everything she'd ever known? She didn't know, and a tiny piece of her, underneath the much larger piece that despaired the loss of the world she knew, wanted to find out.

(CONT'D)

A thought crossed Stella's mind that had never crossed her mind before. It was alien, like a splinter in your toe, but exciting, like a splinter in your worst enemy's toe. And that thought was: why not fuck around and see what happens?

END OF EPISODE 1

