

Hitler. On first seeing the long-legged colt, the girl had screamed and run up to throw her arms around Hitler's neck. She asked its name and Jenny had answered Baby. The girl's father laid out thirty dollars that day for a dozen pictures and a ride to please his daughter. Jenny had seen them at the mall several times since. Always the father. Never a mom or girlfriend. Maybe the father rode some kind of sales circuit and his wife had died, of an excruciating, lingering cancer, and his daughter's day care was now the front seat of a Ford 150. People did weirder shit.

Jenny trotted Hitler into the parking lot and set up her homemade sandwich sign. Inside her head the constant radio of her mother's voice announced: Market Saturation—those inclined to buy already have. Jenny was still more than a hundred dollars short. She switched out the bow for sunglasses and a straw hat. Hitler gave her a head bump and Jenny poured water into a bucket. She had only a few more weeks before it would be everybody's business. While Hitler drank, she scanned the mall for children.

The girl pressed through a knot of people, pulling her father by the hand. "Hi, Baby!" she said and gave Hitler a kiss on her dripping muzzle.

"She just loves that little thing," the father said, his grin as wide as an open gate.

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Jenny brought the car up near the house instead of the barn and twisted the key out of the ignition. When she stepped from the car, her mother turned away from the kitchen window. Jenny slammed the car door, dug a cigarette from her purse, and put it in her mouth. Lit it. Walked into the house.

"Put that out," Alda said from where she stood at the stove browning hamburger.

Jenny walked past her, squinting against the smoke stinging her eyes. She said nothing. Her eyes filled. She wiped her nose with the back of a fist and still it ran.

"Wait," Alda said to her daughter's back. "Where's Hitler?"

"Tell Frank the oil light came on," Jenny said and kept walking.

## STUART PRESLEY

*The Abandoned Donkey*, 2016  
archival print, 16 x 24 in.



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