

The Viewing Room

You ride by the windows, staring in at me, your lips locked shut. Your eyes – round, blank, like plastic. You are quick, moving down the ring side, your body shifting in time to your horse's tail. Maybe you look to see why I rest when there's work to be done – legs to bandage, bodies to groom, whiskers to clip. Maybe you look to see how I sit – legs crossed, eating a small, packed dinner way past the time. Maybe you want me to smile back through the thick, shatterproof panes. Not the slightest grin spreads across your face. Not the slightest gait breaks in your horse's stride. You tilt down to study the neck, to see the horse give in, lower his head, loosen the grip of teeth on the bit. You spin in smaller circles, turning your head as you ride by, maybe to see me rise, place my hand against the cold glass, my palm flat in a still, frozen wave, my skin blending with window. I press the surface. I imagine pushing through, but I bring the hand back down, swallow the last of my late meal, biting my lip. Before closing, you halt and look in again. This time, maybe you see me lower my head, chin against chest, hands folded in that look of feeling full. I breathe and rise. Lifted, my sore body is newly limber, well-ridden leather. I slide up and out of my seat in the viewing room, giving, giving it up.

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