

# 13 The Devil's Trade Mark

In "The Devil's Trade Mark," from "Black Beauty," the narrative unfolds as John and Black Beauty, after attending to their master's business, witness a troubling scene. A young boy, later identified as Mr. Bushby's son, is brutally trying to coerce a pony into jumping over a gate. The pony, resistant and distressed by the boy's harsh treatment—whipping, kicking, and striking—ultimately rebels, catapulting the boy into a thorn hedge and then fleeing home. John, finding slight amusement in the boy's misfortune, opts not to assist him, considering the ordeal a just repercussion for the boy's cruelty.

Upon nearing Mr. Bushby's farm, Mr. Bushby and his wife, anxious and frightened, inquire about their son. John recounts the episode to Mr. Bushby, condemning the boy's vile treatment towards the pony and subtly advocating for the welfare and respectful treatment of animals. Mr. Bushby, taking heed of John's account, recognizes the urgency to reprimand his son's behavior—a recurring issue—not just for the safety of the pony but to instill a lesson in empathy and responsibility in his son.

Mr. Bushby's resolve to discipline his son, coupled with John's and the house groom James's discourse over the incident and past instances of the boy's superiority complex and cruelty, underscores a broader societal repulsion towards inhumane acts. It brings to light issues of animal abuse, the importance of empathy, and the consequences of unchecked aggression in youths. The chapter concludes with a reflection on past admonishments against cruelty, emphasizing its recognition as both a moral failing and a societal concern.

This segment of "Black Beauty" serves not only as a caution against the maltreatment of the vulnerable but as a narrative championing the virtues of kindness, justice, and the moral growth arising from facing the consequences of one's actions. It sharply criticizes not only the act of cruelty itself but the broader implications it has on moral character, marking such behavior as fundamentally unjust and socially reprehensible.