

Sometimes it just doesn't pay to try to save a few dollars. Jonathan walked dejectedly down the street. The Walmart had been out of 9ers jerseys, and the season was almost upon him. He could not believe his luck. Ordering online would take days. It was going to scandalize his family, showing up on game day without their colors. "I'll be a jinx," He muttered to the empty sidewalk, wishing for a can to kick.

It was already getting late. All around him stores were closing down. The sidewalks were empty. For once he counted his blessings at living in a small town. In San Francisco, or L.A., there would be no peace and quiet. Maysfield may have been the ass of California, but it had that small town charm. You didn't constantly like a drop in a bucket.

Still musing, he walked into a sign.

Everything went white for a few seconds. Hours, minutes, it all blurred together. He could hear a voice calling out in the distance. The sound was muffled though. Slowly but surely it started to clear.

"Bro, don't be dead. Just don't be dead!" The voice was oddly nasal. No, nasal wasn't the right word. It just had an odd twang to it. Still dazed, Jonathan couldn't quite respond. Colors started to return. Concentrating on the voice was surprisingly helpful. The first thing he noticed was that the world had gone horizontal, followed immediately by pain. It felt like he had been punched in the face.

Staring down at him was a very large horse face holding a sign. He could make out the words "Grand Opening." Some kind of promotional costume, he mused. A hand kept shaking him, well, what seemed like a hand. Looking down, the entire thing was furry and tipped in fumbling nubs.

"I'm fine, I think?" Jonathan fumbled out, more stunned than anything. The pain in his face was subsiding. Most of it stemmed from the pavement, though his nose was still both numb and sore. He tried to sit up.

"Oh thank god, let me help you, bro." The hoof hands were surprisingly strong, lifting him back up with ease. Once back on two feet, Jonathan could make out a bit more of his assailant. The guy was probably 6 foot under all the costuming. "I am so sorry. You were walking, and they have me waving this sign. Seriously, dude, it was all my fault." He stammered a bit. The suit's lips moved as if it were talking. Someone had spent serious money on their mascot. Now that he could see the ears, it was obviously a donkey. It, well, he was grey furred, a star on his eye, and in some sort of basketball uniform.

"Damn good thing I wasn't running." Jonathan rubbed at the back of his head. There didn't seem to be any bulges. The donkey genuinely seemed concerned. It was a nice trick through a costume. "So uh, who are you supposed to be?"

"Oh! Call me Jack. Just got a temp job waving that sign, knocking out customers." He brayed nervously. There were obviously some neat animatronics at work. Jonathan nodded a bit. It must be some new sports store, or novelty outfitter. Who ever heard of the P.I. Cloppers? "Seriously, you want me to get a doctor or something? I think the store has a doc on staff somewhere."

“Probably fine, don’t worry about it. What store?” There was obviously no real damage; even Jonathan’s nose was feeling a bit better. The store, now that could be useful. If they sold novelty uniforms, maybe they had some real ones.

“P.I. Outfitters, it’s a new brand out of east coast. They have it all, bro! Are you looking for something in particular?” Jack snorted, wrapping an arm around Jonathan. The suit was even more realistic on contact. It didn’t seem to sag at all. It definitely smelled like a guy in a suit though, like sweat and hair.

“Just need some sportswear. I mean, it is that time of year right?” Jonathan stammered a bit, his thoughts still kind of fuzzy. The donkey easily led him around, putting that arm to use. Staring them in the face was a rather large building. The only sign was a temporary one banner with the strangest logo. They really were going all out with the burro motif, a donkey pulling a loaded down cart.

“Uniforms and stuff? It’s your lucky day, bro! Well, uh, kind of. Super sorry about the face still. I can make it up to you! How about we get you a jersey on me? My manager certainly won’t mind.” Jack seemed positively gleeful at the thought. Before two shakes of his tail, they were inside. The store itself was huge, laid out in three sections. On the left, there was what looked like a grocery. The isles were stocked with fresh produce, frozen treats, even a deli department. The right side was stocked with what seemed like toys. They were all old fashioned, games of horse shoes, water guns, x ray specs. The entire side looked haphazard and silly.

Down the center, though, was apparel. Jack ushered him along it, the costume hooves trotting melodically on the linoleum flooring. Everything looked top notch, with a surprising level of variety.

“I’ll just grab you a changing room. You chill for a sec, and I’ll talk to the management. They are bound to get you some free stuff!” Without much ado, Jack led to the promised dressing room. There were only two, one for men and one for women. “They are going to install a ton more soon, so stay put! We’ll be getting crazy busy soon.” As if to emphasize, he shut the door.

Jack trotted off without a second thought, leaving Jonathan to his own devices. The dressing room was pretty simple, just a bench and a full length mirror. The door shut all the way to the floor, but left a pretty large gap at bit above eye level. Killing time, he just leaned on the wall, looking over the mirror. Luckily, Jack hadn’t bruised his nose. There was a bit of a red spot, but nothing more. Jonathan brushed back his dark brown hair, examining the reflection. He’d never cared much for his eyes. They always seemed the color of mud. Plus he could use some exercise. It wasn’t that he was fat, but there was a lot of room to improve.

“Are you in there, darling?” The voice was female, high pitched and bubbly.

“Yeah, Jack told me to wait here?” He said, quite obviously.

“He told me all about his accident. You poor thing, just let Jenny take care of everything! Jack said something about a jersey. What is your game? I grabbed several, basketball, soccer, football, even scrounged up some lacrosse!”

"Football was all I needed..." Jonathan stammered a bit, and in response a shirt flew over the door.

"Just try that on for size, sweetie. We can set you up for the full football package! Free of charge." She giggled. The sound was strangely throaty. "Can't wait to see how you look in our colors!"

The jersey itself was mostly brown, with hints of green. The name listed it under the "Salt Miners" and the number eight was emblazoned on the back. Pretty standardized for a spoof team. It even felt legitimate. Not wanting to be rude, Jonathan slipped out of his t-shirt and pulled the jersey on. It fit like a glove, though the material rubbed oddly at his skin. There was definitely an itching sensation spreading where it touched.

"What is this thing made out of, wool?" He snorted, making his face twitch strangely. His nostrils flared ever so slightly, and his nose started swelling outwards. The itching sensation started to spread as well, moving up the back of his neck.

"No, we use polyester. The players would kill us if we used real fur!" She laughed, and what a sound. It was half a bray. The itching was growing worse though, making Jonathan scratch in some rather awkward places. He quickly turned to the mirror. Underneath the jersey, fur was sprouting and moving up his neck. It merged into his hair, adapting the cut into itself. Before long, it had formed itself into a short-cropped mane. The flaring nostrils had grown out much farther into a huge muzzle. It strikingly reminded him of Jack. Fur crept further up, coating his neck and over his face. The itching was unbearable.

He tried to call out, but the sound coming out garbled. It was as if someone were massaging his throat and moving things around. The fur continued to spread down his arms. It was light brown, almost golden. Every centimeter it spread suddenly itched. It even rubbed inside of his pants. As if to counter the feeling, a strange numbness started to grow in his fingers and toes. He stared down in disbelief, watching fingertips darken. "I know you are in shock, can you believe they are going to let me give you a first run Salt Miners number 8? That was Hawlson's first year. It would be worth a mint signed!" Jenny droned on in absolute glee, the words barely registering. As if in response, Jonathan's ears swiveled and twitched. Slowly but surely they crept up the side of his head, growing longer as they shifted. Before long they were twitching to the sound of Jenny's voice.

"You really are lucky! He's so dreamy. Remember when he threw that eighty-yarder? That ass could pass." She sighed almost wistfully. All the while Jonathan was twitching inside the booth. His entire body was on fire with the spreading fur. His skin ached, darkened, and toughened. Beneath the new coat and hide, his muscles toned to perfection. It almost seemed like a mocking consolation prize to his lost humanity. His face in the mirror was nearly entirely a donkey. Even his eyes were different. Rather than simple brown, they were gleaming gold.

"I also grabbed you some shorts to match. We wouldn't want people to think you aren't a real fan, right?" She laughs and tosses them in. Jonathan's own jeans were starting to be unbearable. The muscles in his thighs and hips were making them stretch, and a new bulge was pressing in the back.

Desperate to relieve the building stress, he fumbled at the button with the new fingers. It took a few tries, but he managed it in time to see a tail rip through his boxers. It swished a donkey tassel, as if amused by the whole thing.

With a yelp, he struggled to remove his shoes. The numbing in his toes didn't help at all, nor did the strange shifting sensation in his heel. It made him completely unbalanced. Inside his socks, toes were merging into solid mass. They swelled against them, straining the fabric. Before he could pull them off, the new hooves tore through the material.

"Oh, and we have a free shoeing after this. Aren't you lucky?" Jenny brayed happily. The new hooves were not going back in his tennis shoes. With a bit more effort, Jonathan managed to pull his new legs free of the tangled deathtrap fabric. His entire lower half was asinine, and perfectly matched his top. "You are awful quiet in there, you need some help?" Jonathan tried to call out in response, but only managed a mix of help and haw.

"You should have said something!" She said, almost sounding concerned. The door quickly opened. In shock, Jonathan stared at his first blonde donkey. Her fur was practically white, and the mane platinum. It was a striking combination, combed to perfection to fall dramatically in front of her face. "Oh look at this mess, you jacks are all the same. Should think you'd put your pants on for a lady!" She sighed, nudging the jeans to a corner.

In a mix of surprise and embarrassment, Jonathan put on the jersey shorts. Surprisingly enough, the itching stopped. It was actually comfortable. There was even a hole for the new tail. Unlike the jeans, which rubbed against the fur coat, this material didn't cause a twitch of itch. In fact the entire ensemble felt ordinary, now that the most constricting clothing had fallen away. "That's better. You would think they raised you in a 'barn' barn."

Jonathan's head hurt for a moment. Now that the itching was gone, it was hard to remember what was so distressing in the first place. The jersey was perfect, and the pants fit like a glove. He smiled into the mirror, admiring the proud donkey staring back at him. It suited him.

"You know, I got to say, you are one fine donkey. Have you been training or something?" Jenny poked his bicep. It was pretty impressive, flexing under the jersey. He could vaguely remember all the workouts it had taken to get so chiseled.

"Nah, I'm just naturally this hawt!" Jonathan brayed, for the first time without a hint of struggle. He had always been rather proud of his body. He strutted in front of the mirror. The jersey seemed to bring out the light in his eyes. It was perfect. He grinned, flashing his buck teeth.

"Well, we do some intramural sports here. I can get you a signup sheet if you wanted to join in the fun?" She smiled, full of sincerity. "If you got good enough, I do know the Salt Miners are looking for some late recruits. Just don't tell people I said that. It is kind of on the down low." She put a hoof finger to her lips.

“That... sounds fantastic.” Something inside him started to feel all warm. He could remember watching the games. The Salt Miners had always been his favorite, donkeys with attitude. To join would be a dream come true.

“They are pretty particular, but I think you are made of the right stuff. Jenny knows her stuff. There are tryouts in a week, if you think you can do it.” She darted off, returning in two clops of a hoof. In one hand was flyer. “The info is on here. Try and rest up, and do your best! Oh, and tell them Jenny sent you. Maybe I’ll get a bonus if you become a big celebrity! Now off with you, go get shod.”

With a snort, she shoved him along to the back. As the farrier did his work, Jonathan looked over the flier. It was the opportunity of a lifetime. If the Miners were really looking for some new blood, it could be his chance. He barely twitched a hoof as the tough, cleated horseshoes were nailed into place. It was too exciting. The Big Leagues could be a week away! Thank goodness he had been looking for that jersey. It was getting to be game time.