

a ghost, he was a horse; and since he didn't have the brains man had he was catachable. They put their heads together and cornered him. And now it was Joe duty to teach him he was a horse and nothing else.

Man's Fate

I couldn't sleep that night. Joe laying there 'side me snoring like an alligator. Once there I hit him and told him to turn over. I didn't care how long he had been out on the prairie. But can a log turn over by itself? I laid there wide awake, worrying about that horse and listening to him. The next day I made 'tend I was sick and I asked them to let me go to town and see the doctor. Joe wanted to drive me there, but, ~~in~~ no, I wanted to go by myself. In Deritter I went to Molly Bear and asked her where the hoodoo woman lived. I didn't believe in hoodoo--I don't know what I believed in then--but since nobody else would listen to me I wanted to know if my dream about the horse meant anything. The hoodoo was a big mulatto woman from New Orleans. She claimed she had left New Orleans because she was a rival of Marie Laveau. Marie Laveau was the queen then, you know, and nobody rivalled Marie Laveau. Now that I think of it Deritter was pretty far from New Orleans--clear cross the State; I wonder why she went so far to get away from Marie Laveau. She could have gone

right there to Baton Rouge or somewhere. But when she told me that--Lord, that was when?--seventy some years ago--I never thought to ask her why she had gone so far. But I suppose she had good enough reason. From what I've heard Marie Laveau was nobody to fool around with: mama neither daughter.

After I told her why I was there, she asked me why hadn't I stopped Joe in my dream from getting on the horse. I told her I couldn't stop him in real life, how could I stop him in a dream. She said, "You ever tried to stop him in your dream?" I told her yes I had tried, but looked like he never heard me. It was too dusty or too dark or too much noise was going on or he was too far away or something. She said, "Wait, before we go one step farther, how many children you yourself have gived to this man?" I told her none because I was barren inside.

The hoodoo said, "Ah, but that is it." She was Creold, and they always said things like "Ah". "Ah" and "Mon Cher" and "But". "Ah", she said. "Slavery has made you barren inside. Joe Pittman must prove himself a man to himself and to the others by riding the most dangerous of horses. That is nature, and that is man ^{way}--poor fool. You cannot stop it, mon cher. You cannot bring forth the child he needs, so you should not blame him."

"It's not my fault," I said.

"It is nobody fault, mon cher," she said. "It is the fault of this world that is not perfect." (People used to

talk like that a lot then--'specially Creolds. Important-like.)
"It is not even the fault of God or Nature, mon cher," she said. "Everything is part of God and everything is part of Nature, and we all work together. What is to be will be and nothing else can be. Man and woman is put here to bring forth children, and when one will not or cannot perform the duty, the other partner must do something else. Some men go to other women, some men ride the most dangerous horses, mon cher."

"That horse going to kill him?" I asked her.

"Mon cher, mon cher," she said. "Do you want to know the ~~kkkkk~~ answer?"

"If it's good," I said.

"Mon cher, ~~kkkk~~ there ain't but one answer," she said.

"Give it to me," I said.

She said: "Oui, mon cher, the horse will kill Joe Pittman."

"Nothing can stop it?" I asked her.

"Mon cher, nothing stops death," she said. "Death comes in many ways. A black stallion, lightning, guns, grippe."

"Grippe?" I said.

"Grippe," she said.

"If I kill the horse?" I said.

"You cannot kill deat^h," the hoodoo said. "But your husband will stand between you and death."

"When's it going to happen?" I asked her.

"Mon cher, you want to know these things?" she said.

"I want to know," I said.

"You said the horse bobbed three times, didn't you?" she said.

"Yes," I said.

"On the third fall," she said.

"Suppose he stay down after he fall the second time?" I said.

"Never, mon cher," she said.

"Can't you give me something to put in his food to keep him from getting on that horse? Some powder or something?"

"Do you think I can challenge death?" she said.

"No, Ma'am," I said.

"That's what you asking me to do," she said.

"I thought you stopped things and made other things happen," I said.

"I do," she said. "But, mon cher, your Joe Pittman wants to be a man, and if I stop him here he will find something else to do. You see, mon cher, the horse is only one thing. Man must always search someways to prove that he is a man. Mon Dieu, but some of them are very, very stupid."

"Then he wants to die?" I said.

"Mon cher," she said. "Mon cher, mon cher, riding that horse is his way of living. Not his way of dying."

"When he know that horse's going to kill him?" I said.

"But, mon cher, Joe Pittman does not know that," the hoodoo said. "And he would not believe you if you told him so. Same like you did not tell him you was ~~be~~ coming to see me. If you tell him when you go back he will definitely beat you. He is a man who believes only in the physical. Neither in the spirit of Nature or in God. Oh, mon cher," she said, "he believes that all horses are made to be broken. All horses are made to be broken, Mon cher, but not every man can break every horse. This horse you~~h~~ Joe Pittman will not break. Another will have to break him. That man in his turn will be destroyed by a horse if he is true to his trade. If he is not, then he will be destroyed in some other way. Grippe."

"Grippe?" I said.

"Grippe," she said.

"How come grippe?" I said.

"Why not grippe?" she said. "Man is put here to die. From the day he is born he and death have a foot race for that red string. But he never win, mon cher, he don't even tie. So the thing he is to do while he is here is do what he thinks is best for him. Nothing else matters. Live between the starting line and the red string, mon cher."

"How?" I said. "Breaking horses?"

"But breaking horses is just one way, mon cher," the hoodoo said. "Some men farm, others cut wood, others hunt games."

"Nothing I can do can stop it?" I asked her.

"Bring forth child, mon cher," she said.

"I am barren inside," I said. "Slavery has made me barren."

"And slavery makes him ride the most dangerous of horses,"
the hoodoo said.

"If it wasn't for slavery?" I said.

"Oh, mon cher, mon cher, you would probably have two
dozen children," she said. "Three dollars, mon cher."

I paid her and went back home. I didn't sleep at all
that night. Each time I went by the corral I stopped and
looked at that horse. And by myself he would pay me no more
'tention than any of the other horses did.

The Friday night before they broke the horses--they always
broke them on Saturday because that brought more people--I
couldn't sleep that night and I got up and put on some warm
clothes and went outside. It was freezing, but the night
was clear as day. I couldn't see the ~~the~~ corral from here
and I went a little closer. All the other horses was standing
in a huddle to stay war^m, all but him: he was walking round in
the corral like he was some kind of majesty. When he knowed
I was near by he stopped walking and threwed his nostrils up
to smell the air. I hadn't come out there to turn that horse
loose--the Lord knows that; I didn't know I was going to open
that gate till I had been out there a while. But he knowed

it all the time. He knowed it sure as I'm sitting here, and still he didn't move toward that gate till Pittman showed up. I was in the corral waving my hands, going, "Shoo, shoo, shoo," but he wouldn't go near that gate till Joe came there. Then soon as he smelled Joe scent in the air he and Joe broke for that gate at the same time. He won by no more than a foot and lit out cross the field. It was winter, the ground was hard, and you could hear him pounding the ground a mile away. Joe knocked me down and throwed me over the fence and hooked the gate to keep the other horses in. He got his own horse and went after the Stallion. I got up off the ground hollering. The men broke out of the houses and ran toward the corral, and one glance told them what had happened.

Early the next morning they came back with the stallion, and with Joe Pittman tied to his own horse. They said Joe had cornered and roped the stallion, but with no saddle to wrap the rope on, the stallion had pulled him off the other horse and had dragged him through the swamps. When they found him he was tangled in the rope, already dead. The horse was eating leaves off a bush to the side.

We waked Joe that night and buried him that Sunday, and the rodeo went on that next Saturday. Before it started they toned the bell one minute for Joe Pittman. Everybody took their hats off. The women folks stood out there too with

bowed heads. But soon as that minute was up a young fellow jumped on the stallion and rode him down. Not long after that he joined up with a bunch of cowboys in Texas. Who knows what became of him?

I stayed there a few more years all by myself. No man could take Joe Pittman place. And to this day I don't want no other man name. Yes, I have knowed two or three other men since then, but none took Joe Pittman place. One of these men was called Felton Burkes. (Reckond he's been dead, too.) Was ^a fisherman with the seine boats. They was moving to the St. Charles river, and I followed him. That's how I come to live up there between here and Bayonne. After we had been staying up there a couple of years he left and went to New Orleans. Didn't say a word; packed up his clothes and left. Not long after that Ned and his family came back.

Professor Douglas

I had been getting money from Ned ever since he left, but he hadn't been back home once. But after he went to that war in Cuba and saw how Black men was dying for this country he told himself to be a man he had to come back. That war, I think, if memory serve me right, ended in 1898. Because it was early 1899 he came back here, because it was in 1900 when Albert Cluveau killed my son. I won't forget that it was in 1900 because it was the closing of one century and the opening