

Cowboy

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A high piercing scream broke the early morning stillness at Wild Pony Ranch. Sarah Jane Howard looked out the kitchen window in time to see Harland Edwards roaring up the drive in his Dodge Ram led by John Lee “Cowboy” Howard III and her daughter Emma Lee Howard on either side on horseback.

“We got you again, Harland” Cowboy laughed as he dismounted.

“Well, what do you expect?” Harland replied. “Jubal and Little Powell are the fastest horses in the county, and you and Emma are the best riders in the state. Even so, three hundred horses under the hood should be able to outrun a horse.”

“Didn't Eddie Wakefield over at the dealership explain to you about the horsepower?” Cowboy asked.

Harland shook his head.

“It's like those little miniature horses you see at the county fair. You know, the ones that are about two feet tall. That's the only way they could fit three hundred of them inside your engine.”

Harland and Emma exploded with laughter as Sara Jane walked out onto the front porch.

“Hey, Sara Jane.” Harland said. “I lost again.”

“Hey, Harland”

“Did you see us?” Cowboy asked.

“I saw you and heard you,” Sara Jane answered. “It sounded like Stuart's cavalry racing against Jeff Gordon. I expect they could hear that Rebel yell all the way to downtown Richmond.”

Emma walked over to her father. "I'll take Jubal and Little Powell on down to the barn, daddy. I want to have a look at Forrest and Jackson while I'm down there. 'Bye, Mr. Edwards,"

"Bye, Emma," Harland said.

Harland turned to Cowboy. "I guess you and Sara Jane are getting excited about having your own equine veterinarian in the family. How much longer does she have to go up at Tech?"

"Just one more semester," Cowboy answered. "She's joining Dr. Waller's practice as soon as she graduates in May."

"Won't you come in and have some breakfast with us, Harland. I've got homemade biscuits, fried apples, and hash browns."

"Can't today, thanks. I need to get back to the ranch. But, if you get tired of Cowboy, maybe you and I could get married. It's been a long time since I had food that good."

"Bye, Harland" Sara Jane said, laughing. She turned to Cowboy "that reminds me, we got the tuition bill for next semester in the mail the other day. I need you to transfer the money over from the ranch account so I can write the check."

Cowboy nodded wordlessly looking out toward the barn.

"The last payment." Sara Jane sighed. "After we write the check maybe we should burn the invoice like we did with the mortgage."

Cowboy nodded silently again.

"Well, breakfast is ready." Sara Jane said. "Better come on before it gets cold."

"You go ahead," Cowboy said. "I'll be along in a bit."

The sun was rising over the roof of the barn and Emma was walking toward the house when Cowboy finally turned and went inside.