

THE SHOW RIDER

By Lloyd Nelson

ONE

I'm showing my marvellous little dark bay horse in the Dubbo show ring. I call him Rainbow, a name I pirated from Rolf Boldrewood's famous character Captain Starlight's horse. It's probably the best description of a horse ever written. Boldrewood had this to say about his horse: "He was a dark bay horse, nearly brown without a white hair on him. He wasn't above 15 hands but looked a deal bigger than he was for the way he held up his head and carried himself.

He was deep and thick through behind the shoulders and girthed up ever so much more than you would think.

He had a short back and his ribs went out like a cask. Long quarter, great thighs and hocks, wonderful legs and feet of course to do the work he did. His head was plainish, but clean and bony and his eye was big and well opened with no white showing. His shoulder was sloped back that much he couldn't fall, no matter what happened to his forelegs. All his paces were good too. I believe he could jump. Jump anything he was ridden at and very few horses could get the better of him for one mile or three."

Of course Captain Starlight used his Rainbow for many and varied highly illegal activities. My Rainbow is used for driving behind sheep, mustering cattle, galloping behind the hounds at occasional hunt meets and today is his first day in the show ring. He's moving like a clockwork mouse and swishing his long tail. I'm the first called in and go out with the blue ribbon winner of the maiden hack class. As I leave the ring a very good looking girl bubbles up.



"You look to be on your own, what say we pair for the Champion pair of hacks?"

I run my eye over the bay mare she is holding by the reins. I haven't seen this horse before but they're a good colour match at least. I'm a bit slow in getting my tongue into action, I've been too busy taking in the mare and this

lovely creature holding it. She's not a slim beauty but she's very well made and has the look of a horsewoman about her.

She says, "come on, get your ass into gear, we could be winners if we want to be."

"Ok," I say.

We are called shortly after and as we line up she questions whether I've hacked pairs before. I haven't.

"Mmn," she says.

When our horses have been inspected with all the others, we get them up side by side, she gets real close and hooks her leg and her stirrup around mine and says "stick close", and we do, it's a pairs event and she has me hooked so hard against her I let her call the shots and Rainbow without me hardly touching the reins rubs along with the bay mare in close tandem.

We win it in a walk in a very good field. We ride back still legs entwined past the clapping from the grandstand.

"Jeez we go well together," she says, "what are you doing tonight?"

"Nothing," I say, "I'm sleeping with the horses, we're going on to compete at Narromine tomorrow."

"OK. Where will you be a 9 o'clock this eve?"

"Stall 1," I say.

"Right I'll be there at 9 pm, a canter together will be nice."

At 9 pm I have a clean horse rug spread in the stall corner and she turns up nicely dressed in a pink dress. She's been dining I think. She whips up her dress, nothing under and splays herself on the rug.

"Come on," she says "I haven't much time."

We combine even better than we did in the show ring and we're galloping rather than cantering. The door of the stall crashes open, it all happens so quickly, a biggish man, I can only see him behind the torch, says "got you, you bastard. I'll killya."

He boots me hard in the buttocks and as I get up starkers he takes a huge kick at my more vulnerable areas. I'm on my feet now, grab his boot push hard back on it, he hops back on one leg and when I give his other leg a tremendous heave he falls out the stall door and there is a sickening thud as his head hits the concrete edging which keep the stall sawdust in. He's down and badly hurt. I've done medi vac work on National Services in Vietnam and can tell he's il morte immediately. The girl shrieks.

"He's dead," I say, "get dressed and get out of here. I haven't seen you."

She acts quick and is gone in her tojo station wagon. There's no sign of another vehicle, he must have cat footed in. I marshal my thoughts, change the horse rug for another from the truck, yard broom the stall, place a summer rug over the body and drive down to the cop shop. No one's there so I go to the hospital, the emergency doctor who has been patching up battered original Australians who always run a bit wild at shows says "I'd better check" and we roar up to the show ground. I demo a bit and open the stall and say I was here and he came in and attacked me and so on, scruffing up the ground a bit as we talk. The cops arrive, the hospital has raised them.

The cops ask me what happened, I say "well, I caused that you see, but it was an accident," the taller cop, he's only a Constable grabs my arm,

"I want every detail," he says.

"And you shall have them, just as soon as I get the family lawyer on hand."

“Why do you want a lawyer?” he says, “What are you concealing?”

We proceed to the Police Station.

The copper then says “I’m going to charge you with wilful murder and I’m going to lock you up.”

I tell him he’s duty bound to hold his horses until our lawyer gets here.

“I won’t take that,” he says and thumps me hard on the face. I later have a grade one shiner. He puts so much force into this punch that he is far off balance and there he is, the perfect target. I pick my spot, flex my arm, break his nose dreadfully, screwing my fist as I go, he will carry these marks for ever and I give him a shiner to match mine. He crashes to the floor and flops like a stranded fish, his smallish mate rushes in, tries to pull out his gun and baton at the same time. I rip the baton out of his hand and crash him hard on the pimple with it. He’s not only down but he’s out. I now hand cuff them both and retrieve their pistols and empty these out. I then take their keys and lock the door. I get on the station phone and ring Charles Buzzworth the family lawyer, luckily he’s home. Yes he’ll come, ‘bring a camera, a flash light one,” Charles I say.

I then ring Sydney Central police and report my actions and tell them I will open the door and hand the weaponry to the lawyer the minute he arrives. I also ring a journo I know, also our Member of Parliament, it’s going to be a story, not a nice story. I concentrate my remarks on police ineptitude and suggest he ring the Commissioner. The whole thrust of what I’m doing is really to save my own skin from being badly beaten up that evening in the lock up. I know a bit about these sadistic bastards from country hearsay.

It all works, I hand the empty guns to the lawyer, we go in to interview and so on.

I’m stone cold sober but icily mad. They’re entitled to hold me but I suggest they don’t. Sobered by all these happenings they release me and Charles helps me load Rainbow and a big hunter I have at the show ground and escorts me back to the farm.

Sunday’s papers have flaring headlines and Monday’s paper show my friend and I winning the pair of hacks, the picture is beaut but the story is murky.

Tuesday brings the love of my life to my doorstep.

“You’re finished,” she says, “in this town and with me, do you hear? And were you involved with that married woman?” she asks.

I can’t resist being a smart ass.

“Why yes.”

Curiosity consumes this bitchy but very sexy girl,

“well, what was she like?” she asks curiously.

“Like licking a chocolate double cone,” I reply.

This is not perhaps the wisest remark to make, she sniffs, huffs and puffs all at the same time, then swallows and says,

“should you be lurking in the back lane after Sunday night church.?”
It’s a turn around.

She fronts, it’s very dark in the lane way.

“Walk me through it,” she says referring to show night.

I tell her, “get the bloody horse rug,” She barks.

She’s skirtless and thrusting within minutes and goes and goes and goes.

I’ve never got this close before, or even near it and now its liberty hall.

“Don’t talk, don’t talk,” she says, “push, push, push.”

No charges are finally laid but I have to make an appearance at the inquest. Accidental death is the finding.

I get back to work, at this time I’m a bank audit clerk for the State Bank and spend all my spare time on the family farm. My employers don’t say anything, not a word anywhere about the matter and it seems to be going away until one Saturday morning I’m working Rainbow on the soft road leading to the T.V. mast on Shooters hill when a Tojo roars past me, cuts me off and three blokes jump out, they grab axe handles off the tray. I spin Rainbow around like a top and set him at the road fence, which he flies like a bird. I circle back and say “who the fuck are you?”

“We’re the brothers of the bloke you killed,” they say, “and you’re not going to get away with this.”

“Alright,” I say, “go back to town to the showgrounds and I’ll get a couple of disinterested observers. We’ll settle this before lunch, I don’t want low life’s like you ganging up on me.”

I duly cantered back through the paddocks jumping fences as I get to them and rouse up a couple of burly railway gangers who owe me a favour.

“Just stand back fellows and see fair play,” I say.

They come and when I’ve thumped the first two the third runs for the cops. We hang in and they’re very testy, “you’re doing our work,” they say. “We thought the last thing you’d want is this sort of thing.”

“Tell me about it,” I say.

The next event is even nastier, the same three cut me off on the Dubbo road late afternoon. I’m returning from Sydney, same scenario, same axe handles. I’m ready for them, chuck a military flash bang stun grenade at their feet, the silly sods are bunched as they approach. They go over like nine pins.

I drag them well clear of their vehicle, undo the petrol cap and drop a long strip of old towel in the opening and light this up. The Tojo burns like a Roman candle and eventually explodes. It’s a quiet bit of road and no one comes along so I leave them there with their burnt out wreck, making sure first they are breathing serenely.

Its early winter so there’s no fire problems.

I eventually contact the girl, she tells me that it’s really all about the farm not the casualty. The dead chap signed her into his big cattle and fat lamb property when they married. The brothers have adjoining land but they reckon their late brother’s farm should be theirs. They are not fashed about the station type country out near Condoblin, she can retain that peacefully they say. It’s an impossible sort of situation and at present unsolvable. I go away to England for a look at the Grand National and the Liverpool police pick me up and hold me pending the arrival of police from N.S.W. with extradition papers. I get a smart lawyer and he springs me on a writ of Habeus Corpus, a strong and immediate law in the UK. I’m in Liverpool and have a current pass port which luckily I wasn’t carrying when the rozzers turned up. I ship out of Liverpool that night en route to the Argentine as a stock hand, they’re shipping over dairy cattle.

Having gained a bit of breathing space I ring home from the Argentine. The brothers have belted the girl and she’s coughed. The cops now want me for perjury and conspiracy and anything else they can think of. I now ring

Charles Buzzworth. He isn't optimistic about the whole business but I put it to him to talk the D.P.P.

"After all, I did it for the girl's good," I say, (a real whopper, I did it to keep the good opinion of my true love really). Charles says he thinks it needs a bit of time for the ripples caused by my departure from Liverpool gaol in Pommy Land to settle a bit but he'll keep working. Actually I enjoy the Argentine. I'm not broke and being a horseman soon find work on the big spreads on the Pampas. I'm also a polo player and these chauvinistic bastards live breathe and sleep polo. I'm soon having the time of my life.

At a reception to the winning Polo team tendered to my team by the Bishop of Cordoba, I meet and later marry in his cathedral the heiress to one of the many huge and prosperous ranching farming concerns that cover endless acres of the famous Pampas, grass and Hereford cattle to the horizon.

Time goes by, I can't yet go back to Australia. Police memories are long. I sit on the terrace gazing across the rolling acres of the casa Vidista, a servant brings me out a silver tankard of iced beer, I sit in the sunset pulling on my Briar Pipe.

I think back to the morning when I was loading Rainbow and the big Hunter onto a two horse float at the farm.

My mother calls out, Going far?

"Not far, Mum," I yell back, "only to the Dubbo Show."

