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Mrs. Youngberg

ELA 11 6th Period

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The Last Ride

The week my life took a turn was an interesting week. Every now and then I think about that week and wonder what my life would be like if those events didn't happen, if I made a different decision, or if I just walked away from it all. I still remember that week like it happened yesterday. A lot of the time the memories all come back to me. It all started on that one ride.

As I walked over to shoot three, I started to feel a strange feeling in my stomach. It was the feeling of butterflies in my stomach. This feeling caught me off guard, I've never felt this before. I've rode many times before, but why is this night so different?

My friend Cody came up to me and up to me and asked if I was nervous. I said no, but that was a lie. I didn't want him to think differently of this. He helped me up in the shoot, guided me down, and held me in place. Then my dad came to give some dad advice.

"You ready kid?" he said in a low southern drawl. My dad was always there for me and gave the same speech as I tied myself down.

"Don't be nervous, boy. This ride is like all those other ones. It's just you, the animal, and the timer," he said these words, hit the brim of my hat and then walked back to his truck where the rest of my family was.

Once I was already, I stopped for a few seconds to breathe; something my mom always taught me as a kid. Deep breaths in, and deep breaths out. Doing this calmed me down and helped me focus. The roar of the crowd, a witty remark of the clown, and the clinking of the shoot. It all fades away into nothing. It's just me and this one ton beast of pure hate. I let out one last breath, and I gave the nod.

One second is a massive explosion. Two seconds, the bull gave a high kick and a whip to the left. Three seconds, four. Five seconds later the bull spins and I dig deep with my spurs. Six seconds; seven seconds. Eight. The timer goes off and the crowd goes wild.

I hobbled out of the arena with a smile on my face. I went back to where I was sitting and sat there the rest of the night waiting to get my reward money. The night came to an end. I got up and walked to get my reward. Then out of nowhere I felt a firm grasp on my shoulder.

I turned around to see who it was, and standing right in front of me was a fine gentleman. He was looking down while lighting a cigarette. He slowly looked up at me and let out a quick chuckle. He took his cigarette out of his mouth and blew a smoke ring in my direction.

He said to me in a raspy tone, "I saw your ride boy, you're pretty good."

He explained he was looking for someone to sponsor and train for the PBR. I was in shock. Ever since I was a little boy, I've always wanted to be a professional bull rider. This was my opportunity. I was hesitant at the time to give him an answer right away, so I told him I'd like a day or so to think about the decision I had to make.

When I got home that night it took me a bit to settle down. All my life I grew up on a farm so I knew the responsibilities I had to do. That part of the night was a blur though, all I remember doing was putting my horse up, and then going straight to bed.

Usually I don't sleep in but that morning was different. When I woke up it was around noon. I laid in my bed and stared at my ceiling for a bit, then all of a sudden I heard laughter, and more specifically I heard a laugh I thought I'd never hear again.

I shot out of my bed and rushed down the hall. When I got to the living room, there she was. Standing right next to my mom was the one person I thought I'd never see again. It was like there was an angel standing in my living room. I tried to speak but words couldn't come out at the time. I was in shock.

My mom was the one who broke the silence. She offered to make breakfast, so we took the offer. We followed her to the kitchen and sat down at the counter. That's when our conversation started.

The usual questions were asked. How you've been? What brings you to town? She said she moved back to town because she was tired of the city life. Then it was my turn to answer questions. She asked the usual as well. How you've been? What have you been up to? I explained to her that after she left I got serious about riding. I rode a little bit in high school, but it wasn't much. She still wasn't a fan of it though, she was always scared I'd end up injured, or maybe even dead.

Out of nowhere, I remembered the man from the arena. I didn't know what to do. At the time I didn't have an answer to give him. I wanted to go pro, but I also wanted to stay in town. I thought to myself, "*What am I going to do now?*"

After she left, I sat at the counter for a bit thinking about what I should do. Whatever decision I decide on could change my life completely. I got up and walked outside. I went out to my horse and saddled him up. My dad came out and did the same thing. Somehow he just knew what was going on. We got on and rode around the back roads.

"What's your plan son?" he asked in a low, calm voice.

I said I didn't know. I was stuck. Do I chase the highlife, or do I chase the girl of my dreams? I was really stuck. It was like the two were playing tug-o-war in my mind and I was the rope.

Out of nowhere my friend Cody called. He said the committee decided to stay in town for one more night and that I should ride again. I told my dad the news and said it might be a good idea to ride one more time to see if I could get an answer of what to do. I thought it was a good idea as well.

We rode home, I got all my stuff together, and my dad and I drove to the grounds, so I could quickly get registered for that night.

Once we got there, the people were excited I was riding again. I guess they all liked my ride the night before. Cody met up with me, and messed around for a bit while waiting for the bull riding to start. While I was roping a dummy, out of the blue I felt a tight squeeze around my hips. It scared me a bit, but when I turned around there was the same angel standing behind with a big smile on her face. I guess she heard from my mom that there was one last rodeo tonight, so she rode in with her and the rest of my family.

The sun finally set and it was time to ride. I was the last ride for the night, so it took a bit for it to be my turn. When it got to about five riders before me I hugged my mom, then my dad and I walked over to the shoots to get ready.

I had Cody sit me down and spot me as usual, and my dad gave the same speech as always. This time the man who talked to me the night before was standing on the shoots with everyone else. It got to my turn so I double checked everything and gave the nod.

The bull once again exploded out of the shoot like dynamite. The timer was counting down, but five seconds later something unexpected happened. Next thing I knew I was under a one ton beast. Everything seemed to slow down in those few seconds. I saw the bull kick right over me. I felt a load of pressure on my knee. I tried to get up and walk it all off but I couldn't move. Once all the adrenaline wore off, I felt my knee quickly turn into a sharp throbbing sensation. It was as if my leg had a bunch of sharp needles in it.

I felt a warm brace after a few minutes. I looked up to see who it was and it was her. I guess she ran out once they got the bull taken care of. I was expecting her to stay, "I told you so," but no. She just held me in that moment.

I then got my answer. I'm here to stay.