

Cowboys

by

Scott William Foley

Ron and Danielle Irlam passed the time in their den as they awaited the arrival of their son and his family. Danielle read a book about a woman whose husband involuntarily traveled through time, while Ron fidgeted with the laptop. It was Father's Day, and just like every year, Ron behaved cantankerously.

"Well, I guess I better start getting into character," he sighed while moving the cursor around with his fingertip. "Every year I have to put on this big show like I'm Charlton Heston or something."

Without looking up, Danielle groaned, "Ron, I'm not listening to this ..."

"That's real nice!" Ron huffed. "You should, considering the last thirty-seven years have been your fault."

Again, Danielle would not humor him. She continued reading.

"Look at all those things!" Ron cried while pointing across his desk. Danielle found it unnecessary to follow his extended finger. She knew perfectly well of what he spoke.

The black, imitation leather recliner, which Danielle currently occupied, rested in a corner a few feet from the oversized desk. Opposite from the desk resided the doorway embedded within a wall of built-in shelving. And on those shelves were cowboys—many, many cowboys. There were cowboys leading their horses by the reins, cowboys resting near fences, and cowboys breaking

wild mustangs. Anything a cowboy might do, Ron possessed a statue of a cowboy doing it.

Actually, to be precise, there were thirty-seven cowboys. And renowned Old West artist and sculptor, Cam Cole, meticulously designed each and every one of them.

Just how did Ron Irlam become the owner of so many cowboy figurines? Well, there's a story behind that.

When Ron and Danielle's only child, a boy named Cliff, was a mere five years old, he went shopping for a Father's Day gift with his mother. Ron had been captivated by a John Wayne western the night before, and so Cliff naturally presumed his father loved cowboys and all they entailed.

Danielle took Cliff to a store where children found gifts for their fathers and when he saw Cam Cole's three inaugural cowboy figurines, he felt as though he'd discovered an invaluable treasure. It proved a tough decision, but Cliff settled on the cowboy sitting by a fire and playing the harmonica.

Of course, as would any father worth his beans, after unwrapping the gift on that fateful Father's Day, Ron went on and on about how much he loved it. Little did Ron realize that because Cam Cole's initial line did so well among the enthusiasts, the artist would continue releasing three cowboys a year for the next thirty-seven years.

In fact, Cliff had taken such delight over the decades in Ron's happiness that he wanted his own son, Nick, to experience it as well. And thus, Cliff now allowed Nick to assume the cowboy selection duty on his behalf.

“Seriously, Danielle!” Ron cried. “I have to go through this all over again with Nick? A man my age cannot be expected to gush and cheer enough to please a seven-year-old! Just how much hooting and whooping is a fella expected to do?”

“You’ll survive,” Danielle muttered as she turned a page.

Ron continued complaining, “Thirty-seven years of cowboys just because I watched a John Wayne movie? It boggles the mind. And you know, honestly, the western isn’t even my favorite movie genre. I like espionage movies far better—international thrillers and covert operations, that sort of thing. Too bad they didn’t have a James Bond statue in that store back then. Shoot, I would have settled for Napoleon Solo.”

Danielle didn’t recognize the reference, but she knew to ask would only feed into Ron’s hysterics.

His wife’s silence did not go unnoticed; therefore, Ron ignored her too and went back to the images upon his laptop’s screen. He saw Cam Cole’s latest sculptures and started planning how he would respond to each. Obviously, he never knew which of the three Cliff and Nick would buy, so he liked to rehearse his reactions. This was much harder to do before the Internet came along. In the old days, Ron had been forced to subscribe to all sorts of western-themed shopping catalogues.

He whispered just loudly enough for his wife to hear, “I’m such a good dad and grandfather ...”

At Cam Cole's website, Ron studied the newest collection. It included a cowboy tipping his hat to a young lady, a cowboy showing his son how to rope a calf, and finally, a cowboy pouring pebbles out of his boot.

Ron examined them intently before making up his mind. Then he looked up at his shelves and found the perfect spot for his latest statue, whichever one it may be. Back in 1972, Cliff had loved it when Ron removed a few books and put the first Father's Day cowboy on the top shelf. Ron didn't know that he'd set a precedent for the next several decades. And since Nick liked to visit the den now with Cliff and Ron and listen to the origins of each statue's purchase and unveiling, it's not as though Ron would consider taking them down.

Ron moaned, "Do you know how long it takes to dust those things?"

"Yes, Ron, I do, because I'm the one who does it," Danielle replied. "Now just settle down. We both know you love those cowboys even if you won't admit it. During the whole year you don't say a word against them, and then Father's Day comes around and you go nuts. I wish you'd just accept the fact that you're nervous."

"Nervous?" Ron repeated incredulously.

"That's right," Danielle confirmed. "You're worried you won't rave about your present enough to please the boys."

As though on cue, the doorbell rang at the conclusion of Danielle's revelation.

Ron sprang from his chair as though he'd been branded and practically galloped out of the room, exclaiming, "I hope they got me the one where the dad's showing his son how to rope a calf!"

Danielle gently closed her book and placed it on the arm of the recliner. She shook her head as she stood, murmuring, "Every year ..."

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