

The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse

William Saroyan

This is a story of two tribal Armenian boys who belonged to the Garoghlanian tribe. For their family, even at times of extreme poverty nothing could match the importance of honesty. They never did anything wrong and never lied or never even stole anything. The story talks about an incident that revolves around two cousins Aram who is nine years old and Mourad who is thirteen. The world, for Aram, at that time, seemed to be a delightful and extremely joyous yet mysterious dream. People believed in every imaginable kind of magnificence. Mourad was considered to be crazy by everybody he knew.

The story opens with Mourad coming to Aram's house at four in the morning one fine day. When Aram looked out of the window, he was taken aback and startled to see Mourad riding a beautiful white horse. In fact, he was so dazed that Mourad had to say "Yes, it's a horse. You are not dreaming." All this was too unbelievable because Aram knew that they were too poor to be able to afford to buy a horse. The only way Mourad could possess it could be by stealing. They were too honest to lie and yet too crazy to ride a horse.

Thus, they kept the horse for two weeks, enjoying its ride in cool air and singing to their heart's content on the country roads. They hid it from the rest of the world by keeping it in a barn of the deserted vineyard. Meanwhile, Aram came to know that the horse was stolen from John Byro. They planned not to return it to him so soon although it pricked their conscience to steal, which was completely their ethics and tribal norms.

One fine day they came across John, the farmer. Such was the boys' family famous for their honesty that the thought of his horse being stolen by the boys never crossed John's mind. He was just amazed at the resemblance and said: "I would swear it is my horse if I did not know your parents."

This moving experience led the boys towards John's vineyard the very next morning. They left the horse in the barn after patting it affectionately. Later that day, John seemed to be very pleased and shared the news of the return of his horse with Aram's mother. The story teaches us the importance and necessity of honesty even in the face of greed and passion.

THEME

This story acquaints us with Garoghlanian Tribe of Armenia. They are famous for their honesty. In terms of honesty they are the wealthiest tribe in the world. But in terms of money they are nothing. They go through what we know commercial poverty. They do not have any perfect and fixed earning source. Yet they meet the regular necessities of life. They themselves are even amazed with the fact. The story revolves around the two boys – Mourad and Aram who stole a horse against the reputation of their tribe. They realized the fact and to protect and sustain the reputation of the tribe decided to return the horse to the owner sacrificing their desire.

Example of Verbal Irony

Saroyan in his story uses Uncle Khosrove verbal ironies to show the contrast between the character's personalities. For example, for John Byro, horse is an important part of his life and losing it, makes his life uneasy. He is sad and angry at the theft. In contrast, Uncle Khorsove reacts differently when he hears of the story; "It's no harm. What is the loss of a horse?" His reaction might be provocative; he sees no value in a horse. His reaction makes him look "crazy", but when we look closer, he shows something deep and meaningful. By using Uncle Khosrove verbal ironies, the author wants us to pay attention to different values like : patriotism, identity, or solidarity. He makes the point, that the appreciation of life is more valuable than to prize the material things.

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words.

1. What was the Garoghlanian tribe known for over the centuries?
2. Why was it difficult for Aram to believe the sight of his cousin Mourad with the beautiful white horse?
3. What was Aram's experience when he first rode the horse?
4. What did the farmer John Byro tell the two boys when one day they accidentally met him with his horse in their custody?
5. What points were put forward by Aram in defense of Mourad's act of stealing the horse?
6. "I knew my cousin Mourad enjoyed being alive more than anybody else who had ever fallen into the world by mistake". Explain.
7. What arguments did John Byro advance to prove the usefulness of a horse to a country dweller?
8. Describe Mourad's parting from the beautiful white horse.
9. Explain "A man could be the father of his son's flesh, but that did not mean that he was also the father of his spirit."
10. "We'll either take him back or hide him until tomorrow morning." Which course of action did the speaker take and why?

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTION

(Word Limit: 150 words)

Q1. Mourad was the natural descendant of the crazy streak of uncle Khosrove. Explain the statement giving instances from the story, 'The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse'?

Ans: Uncle Khosrove was considered in the Garoghlanian tribe as one of the craziest persons. It was also believed that the tribe that Mourad was the natural descendant of the crazy streak in their tribe. Uncle Khosrove's craziness was out of the world. He had the largest moustache in the surrounding. His talk was not less than roaring, which was but natural for him. Once when his son came running to tell him about his house on fire, he simply said, 'It is no harm; pay no attention to it'. The barber who reminded him that it was his own house also got rebukes. Khosrove also asked John Byro not to worry about the horse or the loss of money or even for his paining legs and answered in the same way.

Mourad was considered the natural descendant of this man though not a biological descendant mainly because of the crazy acts he was involved in. The act of stealing a horse because he was crazy about it is an example to prove the same. Like the punch line of uncle Khosrove i.e. 'It is no harm; pay no attention to it' Mourad used to say that he had a way with the things, animals and even people. Thus Mourad said that he had a way with the horse, with the dogs and with the farmers too.

Q2. Relate some of the humorous incidents in the story, 'The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse'.
