

Brief: write a story as suggested by a photograph

## **The Journey** **by James Cowtan**

Have you ever imagined what it's like to travel in the scorching heat on a horse? Probably not! But I can assure you it's exhausting. I was gagging for a drink, and my throat felt like I had not had a sip of water in ages. I frantically searched for my water bottle... it was located on the side of the horse in a little pocket. When I found it I felt like I had struck gold; I ripped the lid off and threw my head back waiting for the clean crisp flavour of the water to reach my parched mouth, but nothing came... only a droplet of water the size of a pea was left in the bottle. I started cursing like a madman.

"Leo!! What do you think you're doing? You're going to agitate the horse!" my father screeched.

"Oh father, it's just Leo being as childish as a toddler," smirked Clementine my sister.

"Well how am I going to survive this weather with no water?" I replied with nasty tone. My father sighed, rode next to my horse and passed a water bottle.

My father was a skinny man with eyebrows like squirrel tails, and a beard that was so big I once thought people lived in that beard.

"So, this is your idea of a holiday," I said in a disheartened voice.

"Stop moaning would you! It's not that bad is it? Your mother would have loved this," he replied and then rode off ahead of me.

It was five years since we lost our mum. She was planning a holiday like this for years, for us to ride horses into the sunset; that was her idea of a family holiday, much to my disapproval until she tragically had a car crash (well that was what father told us). I've never really questioned him on it, as I was too young at the time and now here we are in the middle of Texas, trotting around like a bunch of clueless tourists.

"Hold your horses!" my father bellowed in his best American accent. The three of us halted, half expecting him to start berating us on how moody we were being, but no - he stopped us in front of this V shaped valley that was full of life... the buffalos lining up guzzling up the water from the crystal river, the birds singing in the trees, there were so many animals predators and prey of all kind.

"Why aren't they attacking each other?" Prince, my younger brother asked.

"Because this is the only supply of water for miles. They all know they wouldn't survive without this river. If the prey didn't survive, how would the wolves survive? Now we have to be careful as we go down, because we don't want to cause a scene," my father said in a stern voice. I felt

like he was saying it directly towards me. And he probably was. I could see everyone gazing at me through the corner of my eye. My father went first down to the valley then it was me; I was extremely hesitant but thankfully I had my kind and encouraging big sister to persuade me to get down there.

“Stop being a big baby and move yourself!” she shrieked. How poetic and graceful she was!

When we were walking into the valley, I could feel the cold stares of every animal in that valley. You could see them all lifting their heads from the river as they looked at us mesmerized; to be fair it was probably the first time they have ever seen a human, so I can hardly blame them. Some of them stood back while others were more curious, especially the birds who came fluttering around us some even landing on our shoulders; for a second this startled my little brother who started flapping his arms in the air like a lunatic. Suddenly, his horse got really agitated as Prince was now kicking and flapping like a baby zebra trying to stand up for the first time, then the horse stood up and Prince fell off with a thud.

This startled the other horses as the rest of our horses did the same thing and the three of us fell off our horses as well, then they made a dash for it. I looked around and every animal in the valley was getting agitated - it was like a ripple effect. Suddenly, this enormous muscular buffalo gave out a shriek and it was clearly some kind of warning call because every animal in the valley started to charge its way out of the valley.

“Everybody up to the side of the cli...” my father got bulldozed by a buffalo.

“DAD!!!!” we cried; we looked at each other and dashed to the side of the cliff - we each helped each other up and held on to this singular branch. I closed my eyes and it felt like I was there for hours, hearing the rumbling of the animals desperately trying to get out the valley.

Soon after my sister nudged me, it was over. We were the only living things in the oasis. My sister pointed her bony finger out to something. I could see in her eyes it wasn't good. I followed the direction of her finger and I saw the lifeless body of our dear father face down in the river; we could tell that he had gone - there was no point in checking. Who would survive a stampede? We sat down in the valley feeling helpless. We had nothing to do other than to sit in the valley and hope someone would find us. We are still sat there to this day watching the body of our father decaying every day. And us slowly losing energy, and most importantly, the will to live.