The Free Press Short Story

WILD BLACK PRINCE

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road, he barely missed colliding with the was repeated, yet a finer saddle mount, expectedly swung around the blind on the Whipple ranch.

black brute! He should have more sense encounter, leaning over again to stroke than' to bring his fractious mount on the its hot neck, 'but I can't let you gohighway!"

for the fence, jumped it cleanly and a familiar car roll up the winding drivebounded across the field.

the fun, swung his hat and velled: "Some horse, Boy! Some horse!"

control and rode back to the fence. Not until this moment did he know two persons were in the car. Nancy, Roscoe's sister, was the other passenger. When so quick--"

over her blond ourls and smoothing the

"He should get rid of that wild brute!" gloved hand gently patted the steaming shape or form. neck of the nervous horse. He was looking at Nancy. "I'm sorry-for causing but left the black horse in the stall. you trouble-" He faltered. "I didn't won't turn you loose to-day." he said. expect to meet anybody on the road- "You might jump out!" This had hap- To shorten the distance, Mace took a coat behind-the door. Quickly she pourthis early-"

garoo off the road at all times!" Roscoe were high enough to keep the spirited bald ridge for a distance of five miles you up. Drink it!" interrupted. "He'll kill somebody yet- horse in. Twice he had jumped into the toward the county seat. The road was and probably break your own neck."

The grin vanished from Whipple's face. "I can't have any more trouble over and quite steep. jaw tightened. "I have as much right boys be friends again-" to ride my horse on the road, as you

away-anything to dispose of him-". "You both are acting-and talking- high-strung youths.

argument. Roscoe slumped down in the the lot, bolted the fence into the Hanley anyhow? Why all this wrangling every tance when he saw Nancy riding down several miles yet to go-" time you meet? If you ask me, I'll tell the slope on her buckskin pony. She Prince was coming round the corner too rode straight toward him. fast in one direction, and Roscoe was

"You've said enough, Curly Locks!" warning glance, "Hold that kangaroo! of the advancing charger. On he came I'm getting away from here!"

horse, struck with another fit of terror. reared and spun around, then went leaping and plunging over the field. Mace commanded. The astounding thing ocventured a backward glance and caught | curred. The black horse came to an a fleeting glimpse of the girl's troubled abrupt stop almost alongside Nancy's face as the car boomed round the turn. He rode on, his brain in a whirl. Rossharp reduke. This was the first time gently touch the gelding's heaving flank. he had come into the widening gap "Come get your wild horse!" she called which for the last few months opened to Mace, between Mace and her brother. Mace Dumbfounded, too utterly amazed to found himself bewildered and puzzled. He mutter a word, Mace cautiously apdid not want to hurt Nancy. Perhaps it proached and slipped a halter on the might be better for him to dispose of motioniess animal.

sieck-coated brute that manifested such have troubled you. He's a nuisance, and fear of motor cars. Mace had bought I really should get rid of him-" him from a pair of itinerant horse buyers, "No! Don't do it!" she protested smilwho camped for a day near the Whipple ing. Her eyes glowed admiringly, "He's ranch. The traders were on their way a beauty! You shouldn't let him go!" north with a drove of lean-flanked range | Mace was exultantly thrilled by the horses, most of which they had collected honest sincerity of her voice. "I would in the bunch-grass country. Among the like to keep him, Nancy, but you know lot was this young, coal-black gelding, what an insane brute he is especially He stood out from the others like a glis- when he meets a motor car."

Warnly, Mace made an offer of five a reason for his fear. You can break dollars, all the money he had with him. hem of it. He has been badly scared, for the animal He expected them to and probably injured some time in his bicker, as is the way of horse traders. life, by an auto. You've observed that To his surprise, the offer was accepted scar on his hip?" on the spot, "He's your hoss, Bud!" they A motor car from the road interrupted told him promptly. "Put a rope on him the conversation by a raucous call. Black

and take him home!" Mace soon learned why the traders let snorted, and whirled round. Mace tightthe black horse go so readily. On the ened his grip on the halter rope. "Easy, way to the ranch, leading the gelding, boy! Stand quiet!" said Nancy, leaning he met Roscoe Hanley in his bright new over and patting the black muzzle.

OSCOE HANLEY jammed on the squealed in mad frenzy-kicking, leaping brakes and brought his speeding plunging, pulling at the leash. Several car to a screeching halt. By times later on when Mace ventured on swerving to the edge of the country the road, the same insane performance black horse and its rider who had un in every other particular, never set hoof

"You may be a scary horse!" Mace "Mace Whipple again, riding that crary told Black Prince the morning after the even for Nancy!" He had come back This was not the first time Roscoe had to the main road again when he heard narrowly escaped a collision with Mace the muffled droning of a motor car. The and Black Prince. As on previous en- gelding began trembling, every nerve the madly frightened animal and muscle tensed his sharp ears perked way between the rows of leafless cottonwoods to the Hanley homestead. The youth in the saddle, as if enjoying

Ten minutes later he dismounted at his own gate, and led the nervous geld-"Horse?" Roscoe sneered derisively, ing into the barn. Conflicting emotions with increased distress. "Nancy is suf-"Do you call that jumping kangaroo a still made a tumult within him. Reach- fering terribly! Her arm should be set ing the quiet seclusion of the box stall. Mace soon had his scared mount under the black horse pressed a guivering muzzle against the youth's cheek and gave a low whinny.

dumb beast's great affection, never failed into his mother's white face. "Nancy the machine made its abrupt stop she to bring a response. Mace fondly patted fell and broke her arm!" he said tensely. was pitched forward, under the cowl the gelding's flank. "You're a wonder. "Mr. Hanley and Roscoe are both away Roscoe helped her up. "I hope you Prince! A wonder-but I'm all in a from home. They must have a doctor weren't hurt, Nancy," he said in an muddle! You're a tame kitten now, but at once. I'm riding to town for Doc apologetic tone. "Sorry I had to stop you are a wild tiger the instant you meet Mercer!" He tramped across the kitchen a motor car! You are likely to pounce and jerked his steaming coat from the "No, I'm not hurt!" Nancy answered, upon one and smash it to smithereens! wall where he had hung it only a few straightening her tight-fitting little hat There's a reason—for your terrible fear." minutes before. He pulled on his hat wrinkles out of her crumpled coat. Her and backward to the gelding's right hip, mother clutched his sleeve. blue eyes flashed angrily as she directed pausing at the tip of a long, grayish them first on her brother, then on the mark, the only blemish on the animal's trim-built, jet-coated body. It was a "It was Mace's fault!" Roscoe told her. scar, inflicted, Mace guessed, during the horse on the ranch that can take me of affection. "It's too bad-we had that gelding's colthood years. It could not through fast enough. Don't worry!" Mace bent forward in the saddle. His be a brand, for it bore no recognized

pened several times in the last two weeks. "You should keep that jumping kan- Few of the fences on the Whipple ranch the two ranches, and wound up over a all tuckered out, Son. This will warm Hanley field.

Mace had done his best to apologise, and there!" Mace was not thinking so much many. His eyes gleamed coldly. His themselves to Mace: "Why can't you two spurt on the main highway!"

have to drive your flashy chug-wagon!" hood companions for as long a time as

This brought an end to the heated than an hour after being turned into into the gale.

Mace stopped short in his tracks. That his head, snorted and lurched to a stop, hitting too much speed the other way! wild horse might do anything. "Turn Out of the blurred, rain-blown gloom, mother's calm face, radiant'in the lamp-Why can't you be friends again? I'm back; Nancy!" he shouted, "Don't get directly ahead, a pair of gleaming lights light. Somehow, he seemed much like

Unheeding his warning cry, she rar Roscoe stopped her. He gave the rider a the buckskin down to within ten yards head lowered, mane flying, heels kicking Nancy clamped her hat on tighter. The the air at every leap. The buckskin car bounded off with a roar. The black made a quick side-wise jump and slid to

"Whoa-a-a. Prince!" Nancy sharply

"Quiet, boy! Standy easy!" Mace coe's hot words angered him, but they heard her command in a low-spoken were more easily dismissed than Nancy's tone. She leaned from the saddle to

"Many thanks," Nancy." he contrived He shook his head. He loved this wild, to mumble. "Am sorry Prince should

"Don't let that worry you! There's

Prince, struck with instant frency,

glance in the direction of the highway. "He's waving for me to come over!

Thinks I'll be killed if I stay here!" She rode away without another word. Mace led the horse back to the barn. and to the safety of the box stall. Darkness soon lowered a murky blanket over the ranch. He lighted a lantern to finish the evening work. By the time he was had threatened through most of the day swooped down with a roar of wind and a cold lashing of rain.

Mace was finishing a belated supper when the telephone rang. He got up from the dining table to answer. woman's voice came in excited, broken cadences over the wire, barely audible above the moaning and howling of the gale. "It's Mrs. Hanley," he told his mother, who stood by, listening.

"Nancy is hurt! She slipped on back porch-awhile ago-and broke her She's suffering terribly - and don't know what to do. Must have doctor-at once. Mr. Hanley is away from home-rode to the other side of the range to-day looking for stray cattle. afraid he's met trouble-

"Can't you telephone for a doctor?" instead of galloping by, leaped straight forward, to catch the sound. Mace saw Mace asked, thinking the woman, in her the fenders and front of the machine excitement, had forgotten.

> a message through to the doctor," came the distracted reply. "His line must be broken by the storm." She repeated.

"I'll go for a doctor!" Mace replied "Do you hear-I'll go for a doctorright now!" He slammed the receiver That warm caress, pulsing with a on the hook and turned round, looking His stroking hand slipped downward and gloves as he strode to the door. His "Are you going to ride Prince?" sh

> asked him fearfully. "Do be careful Mace!"

He touched her pale cheek with the go!" Mace took off the saddle and blanket, back of his hand. "Don't worry!" he When Mace stumbled across the porch, grinned. "There will be no cars on the his mother opened the door. She took

this additional cut from Roscoe in of Roscoe as of Nancy, yet her appealing tioned, as he tightened on the reins, she said, "Nancy is resting easy. Mr.

The horse settled to a rhythmic gallop Mace and Roscoe had been neighbor- that swung him by long, measured strides out looking up. up the slope. The rain poured in solid "He had a bad accident up on the they could remember. Nancy was with sheets, making it impossible for Mace ridge. Ran off the road, Mrs. Hanley "Well-I know a few things about them constantly. She was cheery, to see any distance at all. He could guessed. His car was badly smashedhorses! That black one is dangerous! happy-natured, fair in everything. Just hear water gurgling and running every- and Roscoe was cut by flying glass. It I'd advise you to sell him-or give him the sort of girl to win the admiration where. Over the ridge, the wind howled was lucky you didn't meet him, with and arouse the gallantry of two such and shrieked. He did not strike the full Black Prince-" force of it until his mount swung | Mace guiped a swallow of hot coffee like a pair of silly boys!" Nancy inter- For the next three days Mace saw her through the narrow gap at the crest, He could not face his mother with the rupted, her cheeks flaming indignantly, only at a distance. The gelding, in less plunging on with quickened pace, straight truth. He held his eyes on the table.

He straightened suddenly, and tight- you will be neighbors as the Hanley's At the same instant the horse flung up through the years."

and on such a night!"

He had taken the cut-off to avoid the things! - It came on in intermediate gear, whining like some complaining Mace slipped his toes deeper into the tirrups, and vanked off his right to better grip the slippery reins. pulled the shaking horse against the emankment on the inside of the highway. The lights of the approaching machine

'Cara-a-hoo-oo! Cara-aa-aahoo-oo!" The familiar, raucous note burst upon the stormy night like an evil

became more dazzling. Mace hoped the

driver would pass without sounding his

In wild, uncontrollable frenzy, Black Prince leaped into the road, straight int the path of the oncoming car. velled and swung his arm. Another howl came from the motor horn, then the excited shouts of the driver.

"It's you-Mace-with Black Prince Hold him! Let me by-"

Roscoe hasn't returned with his car. I'm the broncho off, and turn him round Blinded by the lights, and squealing like a creature gone mad, the horse struck limply from the saddle and staggered to the door. In five minutes, Doctor Mercer was in his car and thundering of you!" Mace exclaimed, Hanley ranch.

Much slower, Mace rode back home. When he reached the point, near the idge summit, where the collision occurred, he found only bits of broken glass, and tracks in the mud. Mace wondered how the car could have gone on, but wondered still more about the conse-

"Anyhow, Prince, old fellow, we did our best for Nancy!" he muttered wearily, when he led the exhausted, dripping horse into the stall and pulled off the saddle. The gelding's quivering muzzle "Sure. I'll 'ride Prince! He's the only brushed his cheek, in the unfailing token smash-" Mace sobbed, his arm around the animal's neck. "I'll have to let vo

his soaked hat and gloves, and hung his seldom-used wagon road which skirted ed him a cup of steaming coffee. "You're Her hand trempled when she se

gravelled, narrow for most of its length the cup before him. Mace lacked the "Easy, Prince! Easy, boy!" he cau- Hanley telephoned a few minutes ago," words of that morning kept repeating "You must hold your wind for the long Hanley came home—just a few minutes ahead of the doctor."

"And Roscoe?" Mace questioned, with-

Mace, leaning over the saddle horn, see you, in the morning, Son." Her tone seat. Mace raised up and blinked like a back field. Mace grabbed a halter and felt the hot vapor from the broncho's was filled with infinite pleading. "You'll scolded youngster, but Nancy had more ran out to catch him, or to drive him panting breath. "Easy, Prince! Easy, go over—of course? You and Roscoe have to say: "What's come between you two, out. Mace had gone only a short dis- boy!" he cautioned again. "We have sort of drawn apart lately. This should not be. You were boys together. And you that you both are to blame. Black had discovered the trespessing horse and ened his hold on the water-soaked reins, and we have been neighbors down

Mace rose and looked straight into his

Premier and Queen Seen in Ottawa

The Minister Mackenzie King and Her

Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, as they walked together into the Senate of

the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa during the curtailed visit of the King

and Queen to the capital on their current tour of the Dominion.

took form. "A motor car! On this road his father - erect, strong, purposeful. 'Sure-I'll go over and see Roscoe!" he

> storm was over. A sunbeam glistened on the weather vane over the red-roofed barn. Roscoe Hanley, one arm in a sling, his face bandaged stalked down the driveway. Mace never faltered. He a gesture that was like a proud surrender, offered Roscoe the bridle reins "Take him." he said quietly. "He's yours -to dispose of as you please. I'm sorry -about that accident—last night. I'l pay the damages."

Roscoe raised his good hand and smiled "You'll have no damages to pay. Mace. I count myself lucky to have escaped with a whole skin. Anyhow, not much damage was done, either to me or the car. I've learned that I'm to blame for the horse's mad fear. I made a long drive yesterday to see a rancher over in the adjoining county. This rancher owned the gelding when he was a colt. That was why I was late getting home last night and took the short-

were close together now. Roscoe's hand just as the car stopped. A crash of rested on the horse's mane. "You're no "I tried to telephone but couldn't get glass followed, and a hammering of the going to sell, trade, or give Black Prince metal. The lights went out. At the next away. You're going to keep him. Three instant the gelding was running full years ago, while driving to town with a speed, down the grade. Mace tried in truck, I bumped into a little black colt vain to stop him; so let him go, until he frisking on the road, cutting its hip with drew up, trembling and panting, at the a ferider. I didn't know till yesterday physician's house. The rider dropped that Prince was the colt. The scar gave me the clue-"

"That's great of you, Roscoe! Great through the stormy night toward the afraid Prince will always be a wild horse. with fear in his heart-"

"No he won't!" Roscoe smiled confidently. "The best wild horse trainer in the world will help us tame Black Prince. She's waiting for you, Mace. Go on ini I'll take the horse to the barn. He belongs

NOT REASSURED

Officer (in charge of rifle range) Don't you know any better than to point "It's all right—I see them coming along the road now!"

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