

The Fourth Horseman by Jason Rhodes

It was here at the Valentina Mansion that three men sat around a table drinking; all of them were trying to figure out what had just happened to them. The only problem is, well, you'll see.

The first man to speak was none other than Charlie Valentina, the richest man in town. He was having a small party of a few guests at his mansion at the time of the incident and decided he should somehow be the first to break the silence of day-drinking.

“It was a dark and stormy night. The rain was beating the windows, and thunder boomed loud enough to shake the whole house. I was sitting in the living room with my wife when we both heard a crash through the kitchen window. Both of us ran into the kitchen only to see that there was a man laying on the floor with a knife in his chest. He had cuts and bruises on him, and shards of broken glass were stuck to his flesh. Taped to his shirt was a hand written message that read ‘you’re next’. My wife and I were mortified by this. I knew who could have done this. It had to be someone in the house,” he said, staring into his bourbon.

“Woah, woah, woah. Hold on a second. This is not what happened. Not even close. First of all, it was midday with not a cloud in the sky,” said the man to his left, Reginald White.

Reginald White was a humble, simple man according to himself in his memoir.

“Ah, but then why did I hear thunder?” Valentina asked, slowly looking up at White.

“It was the blender in the kitchen. Your wife was making smoothies, and then she accidentally dropped and broke a glass on the floor,” White said, swirling the champagne in his glass.

“Then why was it so dark?” Valentina asked. He took a long sip of his bourbon as White spoke.

“Because you’re fucking blind. You just had eye surgery and were wearing the blackout sunglasses. I was minding my own business in the living room with you, reading the daily newspaper. I never heard any sort of thunder, and there was no rain. I had set the newspaper down and walked over to the window. The sun shone down on my precious golden locks and godlike face. It was hard to see from the sun in my eyes, but I could see someone walking towards the front door, but I didn’t notice. I only noticed the way the sun illuminated my magnificent face. I did hear a crash coming from the other room, but I did not take notice until they came over and disturbed me from myself,” White said, leaning back in his chair and gazing off into the distance.

Where did you get that idea? I didn’t have eye surgery! Plus, if I had just had eye surgery, how was I able to read the newspaper?” Valentina said, placing his glass down triumphantly.

Needless to say, this argument between the two gentlemen lasted a long while. Maybe even too long. the third man at the table just sat there quietly while drowning himself in a bottle of tequila. There was a glass, but he just drank straight from the bottle instead. He finally did something when White angrily stood up and slammed his fist on the table. He quickly pulled out his pistol and shot White’s champagne glass. Both White and Valentina looked at him in horror, silence, and disbelief.

“Wot in tarnation. Y’all don’t know nothin’ ‘bout anythin’. Now ya see, I wuz in the field ‘n I saw some youngin runin’ inta tha house, so I follaed them. Now ya see, I watched as this youngin attacked Charlie’s wife. The only thing I knew ta do wuz wot I’ve known all mah life. I pulled out mah pistol, n I aimed for the youngin. My hand wuz steady as I put mah finger on tha trigger. Before I knew it, y’all were screamin’ n runnin’ so I quickly shot tha son of a beetch ‘fore anymore chaos ensued,” he said.

Finally, White rolled his eyes and said, “Look, no one can understand what you’re saying so just sit there quietly. Plus, who let you in this story anyway? You’re clearly from a different time period!”

Well, he’s not wrong. Harold “Bloodlust” Hendricks was the best cowboy the west had ever seen.

“More like best of the worst,” Valentina said, under his breath before he took another sip of his bourbon.

“What?” asked Bloodlust and White in unison. That was a close call for me.

Now to carry on about Bloodlust. He really was the best of the worst as Valentina said, but history remembers him as the best. No one could gun-sling faster than him. No one had a better mustache either, not even till this day. And yes, he’s not supposed to be in this timeline. So why is he here, you ask? Well only because he... is actually immortal. He was born sometime in the middle ages, and his mother was a witch who knew and taught him how to live forever. One day he got bored and became a cowboy. He liked being a cowboy so much that he never stopped being one. He enjoyed the cowboy life and was determined to live it until he died. So... forever.

“Shouldn’t there be a better way of figurin’ this out?” asked Bloodlust.

“Like what?” said Valentina.

“Wait, why don’t we go and ask your wife?” White asked Valentina.

“Oh yeah, she should know something,” Valentina said finishing off his bourbon.

So of course, all three of them went into the living room to find Valentina’s wife. However, there was one problem. She was not in the dining room with them before, and she was not in the living room where they left her. Surely these men would figure out that she was somewhere else in the house, but no.

“Oh my god, she’s dead! The message on the bloody body was for her! She was next! My wife is dead! Oh dear me what should I do?” Valentina said slumping into the nearest chair.

That’s when Valentina’s butler, Jeeves, walked into the room. “Sir, your wife sent me to find you. She wants to talk to you in the study.”

“Oh, she’s not dead then,” Valentina said, straightening up trying his best to not look flustered. The other two rolled their eyes.

In the study the three me were confronted by Valentina’s wife. She was sitting at the computer and glared at Valentina as he waked over to her.

“Amelia. My sweet Amelia!” he said sweetly to her.

“Don’t sweet talk me. As for you two, please leave and close the door behind you,” she said looking towards Bloodlust and White. They complied and left the couple alone.

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The detective sighed. He looked back through the case file in front of him. He flipped through images of the gruesome murder. Photos of the dead Charlie Valentina, Reginald White, Jeeves, and a man dressed in a cowboy costume who was yet to be identified by forensics were all there. When The detective flipped back to the first page in the file. It had the photo and identification of the man sitting in front of him across the table. It read:

NAME: MARCUS VALENTINA DOB: 3/6/1988

IN POLICE CUSTODY FOR HOMICIDE

SUSPECT WAS FOUND AT THE CRIME SCENE WITH THE MURDER WEAPON

COVERED IN BLOOD

“Is there a problem? Did you not like my story?” Marcus Valentina said looking at the

detective. He had a confused look on his face that slowly turned into a grin then to a soft chuckle. "I thought I told the story well! Come on, man, give me some feedback!"

"I have reasons to believe most of that was a bullshit fantasy. Now tell me, what really happened? Either you're gonna to tell me, or I'll have someone else come in here and they're not gonna be so nice," the detective said. Marcus burst out into laughter.

"But, sir, I'm telling the truth," Marcus said with a naïve puppy-eyed facial expression, which then turned back into a grin. The detective sighed again.

"You murdered four people, and for what? Why did you do it?" the detective asked, clearly getting annoyed.

"Well you see—"

"Don't tell me a story. Tell me what really happened."

Marcus' expression turned back to an almost serious face as he said, "Daddy was cheating on mommy. I had to do something. I couldn't just tell mommy, that would make her upset. I don't want to upset her."

The detective sighed again. "Are you telling me you killed all four people because your father was having an affair?"

"Yes sir. I ripped daddy's throat open, but someone else saw me. Now we couldn't have had that happen! I had to kill them all and leave no trace!" Marcus exclaimed, his serious face turning into an eerie grin.

"Your mother died three years ago. Did you ever think that he was moving on from her loss?" the detective asked.

"Mommy's not dead! She's still alive!" Marcus said smiling.

"I'm sorry, but Amelia Valentina has been dead for three years," the detective said.

Marcus laughed then went back to his almost serious face, “Oh. Amelia’s not my mommy. Nylah’s my mommy.”

The detective went through the file in front of him again searching for the name “Nylah”. She was the only one in the house that didn’t get killed, and the one to call the police. Her profession was listed as Charlie Valentina’s maid.