

DEATH BY GREED

A JOSIAH REYNOLDS MYSTERY
BOOK EIGHTEEN

CHAPTER ONE

I was working my bees when I heard a thunderous bellowing and smashing of wood. Baby, my English Mastiff, took off like a rocket to a neighboring field, barking and growling. He repeatedly ran back to me as if saying “Are you coming? Are you coming?”

Jumping into my golf cart, I followed Baby to one of my horse pastures where I was stunned to see an enormous Texas Longhorn bawling out his poor, anguished heart. Frightened and angry, this behemoth had broken through my horse fence and was now snorting and tossing his head in protest at Comanche, a valuable breeding stallion, which was rearing and neighing in fear and rage himself.

I was beside myself as I had given up boarding Thoroughbred stallions because they proved to be ill-tempered. Comanche had been moved next door to Lady Elsmere’s farm but temporarily relocated back with me as his pasture was being re-seeded.

The sight of Comanche tossing his mane and slashing the air with his dangerous hooves did nothing to deter the bull, who lowered his horns. That bull could gut Comanche with one tip of his powerful horns. Comanche lunged and then sidestepped the bull at the last moment. The bull shook his head and roared, stomping the ground. The Thoroughbred’s actions only incited the Longhorn to more fury. Both animals were a terrible sight to behold in their wrathful frenzy.

Oh, Lordy! What to do? What to do? I had never come across this situation before. Have you?

I knew the bull, feeling threatened would and could, with those long horns, spanning eight feet from tip to tip, kill that priceless Thoroughbred. The horse was my responsibility since he was back in my care. My friend had invested every penny she had in that horse. I shuddered at the thought at Comanche being injured and knew I had to rescue the ebony steed, but how?

I immediately ran into the stable for several buckets of sweet feed and hoisted the feed over the broken fence. I rapped the buckets on a fence post to create a distraction. “Hey, bully bull! Hey, you there, sonny. I got some tasty treats for you.”

The bull turned at the noise I was making, snorted, and pawed the ground. Now I’m not familiar with cattle behavior, but I am smart enough to realize that snorting, pawing, and lowering one’s head means trouble in Texas Longhorn behavior 101. Sure enough, the bull charged—at me.

I ran screaming into the stable with Baby close on my heels. I slammed the stable doors shut and put up the cross bar. True to his nature, the bull rammed the doors and almost knocking them off their hinges. "Merde," I yelled. That's French for manure, and I was deep in it at the moment.

Baby and I ran through the stable and out the other side. Now when I say run, that means a very fast walk for me as I limp with one leg and I am over fifty. Since Baby is a healthy English Mastiff, he left me high and dry. I don't blame him. Just wish I could run as fast as he. I had to get help. Climbing over fences (not my strong suit), I managed to get to my neighbor, Lady Elsmere, where I could ask for assistance. I knew her farm manager, Mike, had a tranquilizer gun. As I ran, I could still hear the bull slamming his massive head against my stable doors. BOOM! BOOM!

Thank goodness he was preoccupied with tearing up the stable.

I hoped I had an intact barn left once we got the beast under control—if we got him under control.

I certainly didn't want to put that magnificent animal down.