First Fall of Patas

Riding the Devil

Narrating Jose (N Jose) Jose Gogo

Narrating Jose: Slowly, I lowered my upper body down until my stomach and most of my weight was on top of his back. Gogo slowly let go of my legs, and I was on Patas’s back! Patas turned his head towards me and looked at me. I was in shock.

Jose: What do I do now?

Gogo: When de heart slow down, you swing de leg ober and sit on him.

Jose: Will he let me do that?

Gogo: He let you do dis, yeah, he let you do dat too.

N Jose: So I did. Once my breathing slowed down, I slowly reached my left arm back over his withers, moved my right leg over his rump, and pushed myself into a seated position … on the back of a crazy horse!

Gogo: See, I tell you.

N Jose: Gogo had a big goofy smile. He patted Patas on the neck and walked away. Patas turned and followed him, which startled me. I reached down to grab his mane and clapped my legs against his sides to hold on. Startled, Patas’s whole body tensed beneath me. His neck went down, and before I knew it, I was on the ground looking up, and trying to breath.

Gogo, Patas, and Little Bear all looked down at me. Gogo was laughing.

Jose: I told … you … he would … kill me. Stop laughing!

Gogo: (laughing) He n-no kill you. Y-you scare him, he b-buck you off.

Before you k-kick him, he like you on his back. … Get on ‘gain. But don’ kick him.

Jose: I don’t know. My back might be broken.

Gogo: You okay, t-try again.

Jose: I need to start breathing again.

Gogo: Okay, b-but you know what de baquero say, ‘if you f-fall off, g-get on ‘gain.’

Jose: I can’t believe I let you talk me into this.

N. Jose: I thought since Patas threw me, Gogo would leave the idea alone, but he didn’t. As soon as I caught my breath, he started in.

Gogo: C-come on, Jose, y-you get back on de horse.

Jose: Are you crazy? I don’t want to get thrown again.

Gogo: You wan’ be a baquero or n-no?

Jose: Of course I want to be a vaquero.

Gogo: Den you do what de b-baqueros do, what Chaco do. Get back on de horse.

N. Jose: Why did he have to bring up Chaco? I remembered how determined Chaco was to break Patas. He was furious when Don Rafael told him Patas wouldn’t be broken and must go back to the herd. Gogo must have read my mind.

Gogo: If you ride Patas b-back to de rancho, Chaco won’ n-never call you a Josephina ‘gain.

N. Jose: That did it. I pictured the look on Chaco’s face when he saw me riding a horse he couldn’t break. A smile spread across my face.

Gogo: Oh, yes, ting ‘bout how Ch-chaco look wen he see you ride Patas! He won’ b-belieb it, he won’ eben stand to watch it! An what ‘bout you papa. He be so s’prize, an’ proud.

N Jose: I pictured it. Papa smiling at me. Don Rafael and Pedro looking at me in wonder, and Chaco. His big arms and fists would be strained tight to contain his rage. But he’d just have to watch and wonder while I was on Patas’s back.

And Papa. Instead of that disappointed look on his face, there would be pride. I pictured myself riding into the rancho on Patas, as if I rode horses all the time. Papa would remind everyone I was his son.. Papa would know I’m becoming a vaquero.

Jose: Okay, Gogo. I’ll do it. I want to show everyone at the rancho I will be a vaquero.

Gogo: Tha’s right.

Patas was grazing nearby. We walked over to him and Gogo started to pick me up again. “Wait, I don’t want to do this in the middle of the herd. If I fall off again, they could trample me to death.”

Gogo and I patted and talked to Patas again while he grazed. We eased him away from the others. Little Bear tried to squeeze herself in between us, but I pushed her away. Gogo said, “Okay, le’s go.”

He picked me up below my waist and leaned me up against Patas who stopped grazing and pulled his head up. But I didn’t feel his body tense up. “Don’ stop talkin’ to him,” coached Gogo.

“Hey Patas, let’s be friends.” My upper body leaned across his withers again. My arms hung down his right side where I patted him some more. “We’re going to ride together, Patas. At least, that’s what Gogo thinks. What do you think, Patas? Is he crazy?”

“Da’s right, Patas, I de c-crazy one, n-not you.” added Gogo. “Jo-jose know you don’ like be broke.”

I felt more confident as I said, “I’m not going to kick you and hit you like stupid old Chaco did.”

Little Bear came up on Patas’s right side and stuck her nose in my face. I put my hand out and pushed her head away. Her nose came right back. “Little Bear, you pest, go away.”

“L-little Bear tell you it t-time to ride Patas.”

“You’re crazy, Gogo.”

“No, you crazy you d-don’ take de gif’ dis horse gib you. Patas like you. He know you. He know you kin’ person. Dat why he let you ride him. G-go on, sit up on him.”

Once again, I slowly swung my right leg over his rump and sat up on Patas. “Don’t walk away this time, Gogo. The trouble started when you walked away last time.”

“Wh-what you wan’ me to do?”

“Just stand there and keep talking to him like he likes.”

“Okay, but you t-talk too. Pet him all ober, let him feel you on de back an’ learn it not time to f-fight.”

I sat there long enough that Patas put his head down again and started grazing.

“Gogo, Patas let’s me sit on him, but how am I going to ride him home?”

“Same way you get on de back. Talk and p-pet and be nice.”

“But he doesn’t know what I want him to do. How do I tell him to go where I want him to?”

“We put a rope on him.”

“Okay, but not today. We need to set up camp for the night.” I slid off the left side and landed on my feet this time. But I still fell down. My knees were like mud.