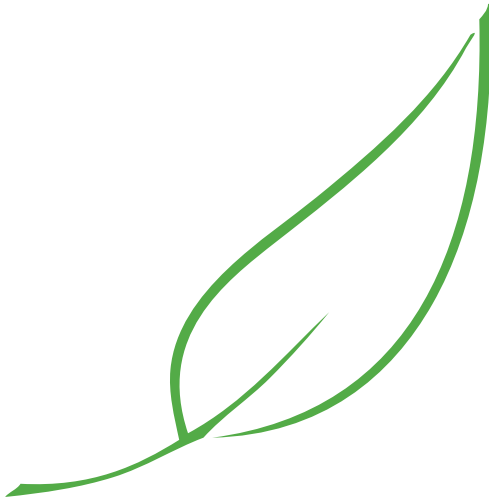


King Of The Horses

By Edan Schappert



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SYNOPSIS: You're in the Crusades of 1098, you're loaded down with equipment, and you're off to a battle! What are you doing there...and where are you off to? A new look at an age-old human dilemma. A war of words, with plenty of fast-paced action.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 male, 1 female)

JAKE (m)A brown horse. *(72 lines)*

MARILYN (f)his marching partner. *(72 lines)*

NOTE: For contest purposes, where costumes and props are not allowed, this play can easily be performed without either.

AT RISE: JAKE and MARILYN are facing audience. They wear plain brown leotards, and hair is pulled back behind their ears. They each wear a headband that has a tassel coming down between the eyes. Each wears a red sash across body. Their feet and shoulders rise and fall in a steady beat, and their hands rise and fall rhythmically in front of them.

MARILYN: This trip is ridiculous!

JAKE: Keep trotting, Marilyn...

MARILYN: Why do we have to be the ones chosen for these stupid Crusades?

JAKE: We do as we're told.

MARILYN: Crusading...down to Constantinople...to Jerusalem... for no good reason.

JAKE: Don't make trouble.

MARILYN: (*Kicks up her foot.*) These satin sashes hanging down my sides tickle.

JAKE: Lords must look elegant. That's why Lords put sashes on their horses.

MARILYN: (*Looks angrily over her shoulder.*) If only he'd stop poking me with that sword. (*Blinks eyes.*) These blinders and body armor make me itch. (*Twitches body.*) And they weigh a ton.

JAKE: Stop grumbling.

MARILYN: (*Crosses eyes.*) We look ridiculous with these tassels hanging between our eyes.

JAKE: No. We look regal.

MARILYN: And that big, cold metal shield he carries. Does he have to hold it against my rump?

JAKE: It looks dramatic that way.

MARILYN: It bangs me with every step we take!

JAKE: (*Mutters.*) We never should have taken women along...

MARILYN: I'd like to throw this guy off my back and go home to the stable.

JAKE: You can't.

MARILYN: Why not?

JAKE: We're 100 miles from the stable. You'd never make it back alone. Besides, it would embarrass *me* if my partner broke out of the ranks. What would the guys think?

MARILYN: Oh, you and your guys. Always worrying about what they think.

JAKE: I'm macho. Macho horses don't have partners who want to go home. Now, step lively and look smart!

MARILYN: Yeah, smart...and lug these idiots around to their little war.

JAKE: It's not a little war. We're in the Eleventh Century Crusades.

MARILYN: They only say that to make it sound better. It's war, Buster.

JAKE: Keep trotting, Marilyn. *(They both keep trotting, then they veer abruptly off to one side.)* They're taking us to the shade under those trees. I guess the men need a rest.

MARILYN: I need water.

JAKE: *(Flexes his back and arms and smiles.)* Ah! He got off of me. I can stretch the old muscles.

MARILYN: *(Looks over her shoulder.)* And my fat little dummy just sits there. *(Shouts.)* Hey, El Blimpo, get off my back!

JAKE: He doesn't want the other men to think he's tired.

MARILYN: Well, I don't care...I'm tired. Why doesn't he admit he's tired and dismount?

JAKE: He doesn't want the other men to think...

MARILYN: Oh, shut up with the other men! *(Looks over shoulder.)* Hey, dummy! Get down...find some water...do SOMETHING constructive.

JAKE: He *is* doing something constructive. He's part of the Great Crusades. *(Enthusiastic.)* First down the Valley of the Danube! South to Constantinople! Then down to Jerusalem to capture it. *(Kicks up heels.)* Feels good to be on the move again!

MARILYN: So *that's* the reason for this?

JAKE: What?

MARILYN: So all of you can feel "on the move" again?

JAKE: You just don't understand men. It's *action*, Marilyn...that's what counts.

MARILYN: But who cares about capturing Jerusalem!

JAKE: That's not important to know. It's just that our side wins, see? It's good to be the winner.

MARILYN: If you ask me, real estate interests are at the heart of this.

JAKE: And it's also for religious reasons, dear. Religious reasons.
How many times do I have to explain that to you.

MARILYN: *(Looks over shoulder.)* El Stupid-O never got off me. And now your Warrior's getting back on you and wants to move.

JAKE: *(Grunts as his shoulders fall down heavily from the rider mounting him.)* He's not a Warrior. He's a Crusader.

MARILYN: *(Sarcastic, sing-song voice.)* "He's not a Warrior. He's a crusader. We're only going to Jerusalem to conduct mass slayings and take over the city for religious reasons."

JAKE: That's right. That's why it's called a religious crusade.

MARILYN: Religious crusades spill a lot of blood.

JAKE: *(Softly.)* Don't start, Marilyn...

MARILYN: They make people massacre each other. And then do you know what happens?

JAKE: It's not for us to know.

MARILYN: Somebody ends up with a nice chunk of real estate.

JAKE: Now you've done it.

MARILYN: Done what?

JAKE: Ruined the trip...muttering non-sensical propaganda against our great Crusades!

MARILYN: All this trip means to you is a chance to flex your muscles and act all high and mighty.

JAKE: We're going to Constantinople, Kid. Get this whole deal sewn up pronto. No matter what the cost...no matter what the reason. And no more lip from you!

MARILYN: *(Whinnies.)* Nya-eeeeeehhhhh!

JAKE: You're a war horse. Start acting like one.

MARILYN: We're just satisfying some guy's ego.

JAKE: Ego is good. Ego is power. It shows who's better...it shows who's boss.

MARILYN: Why does anyone have to be boss? We're in the year 1098. Hasn't anyone learned to live and let live? Why do people always have to take over other people's land?

JAKE: Power, honey. Power.

MARILYN: Oh, you Dark Age dolt!

JAKE: Don't mess with me. I'm considered brilliant. They didn't pick me as the head war horse for nothing. *(Shouts.)* I'm KING OF THE HORSES!!!

MARILYN: And what does that get you?

JAKE: Other horses fear me! They're in awe of me! I'm their commander! I get the corner stall in the stable. It even includes a window. I get more oats in my feed bag. I get to wear the purple feathered plume on the back of my saddle.

MARILYN: I need water.

JAKE: Can't you show some fear, awe, and respect?

MARILYN: I need water.

JAKE: Hey look! Over there! A sign!

MARILYN: Does it say "water?"

JAKE: No. It says "Constantinople, 2 Miles."

MARILYN: *(Peers over to one side as if looking down a hillside.)*
Would you look down there. Palaces...churches...monuments
...very pretty. Very peaceful.

JAKE: We'll get that knocked down to rubble in no time.

MARILYN: But what's the POINT?

JAKE: We'll get rid of the emperor-ruled Byzantine Church. We'll pillage and loot and crush it until it's just a page in the history books.

MARILYN: *(Suspicious.)* Where'd you hear all that?

JAKE: In the locker room at the stables.

MARILYN: Oh, sure. All great war plans are made in the locker room. That's why they stink.

JAKE: You don't know anything. Action is what counts. Big action, gross action. That's what makes crusaders great, see? And noise, lots of noise. Banging and yelling and screaming...it's a beauty to behold. Why do you think our riders have so many chains and metal shields clanking? The noise, my dear. Noise makes them feel important...it gets attention. You've seen the common folk on the side of the roads looking at us. Oh, yes, they know we're important. And when there's lots of noise, the best part is...we don't even have to think!

MARILYN: *(Turns and gives him a cold stare.)* You're crazy...

JAKE: Why do I try to explain anything to you?!! You'll never get it.

MARILYN: Oh, I get it all right. I get it.

JAKE: *(Sighs.)* You don't know anything about gaining territory. You don't have any fight in you.



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