

Enbarr of Ballybay

John Moffett could hear the sounds of distress coming from their stable. Those high pitched squeals were unfamiliar, definitely an alert of her displeasure with the disturbance in her routine. It was past sundown, time for rest, deep sleep, and dreaming of frisking in open fields with the wind in her mane. This was not that.

Her life had been sublime — well-fed, plenty of fresh hay, fresh air and exercise with a kind man that took great care of her ever since she was a yearling. There was another barn where she slept with her mother when she was wee, but that was long ago.

Morning light brought him to this barn with food and the promise of a full day. Great care was taken to brush the hay from her mane, stroking her shimmering coat while he murmured “Good girl, you’re pure feek, aren’t you?” She answered with nickers and nodding in agreement. She did feel pretty and loved. He took great measures to treat her like the thoroughbred she was. She knew she was fast too. He taught her to take him to the far end of the pastures, to stretch herself out and run faster than the wind behind them. He whispered secrets in her ear... she could be faster still... and she would prove him right every time. They both felt the exhilaration of the speed, the strength of her velocity, and the power of her spirit. There was always the laughter of triumph from him with each run and she was as pleased as he was when he tested her.

John bolted from the house to witness that speed being provoked by another man, mounted and snapping a switch to her hindquarters. They escaped the paddock in a blur, streaking toward the road in the twilight. Her whinnies were of mistrust and a fear he had never heard before from Enbarr, but good god was she swift... look at her fly. His rage of loss was immediate watching them both head out to Carrickmacross Road. He didn’t recognize the rider, but knew any horse thief would choose the fastest mare in County Monaghan to make it worth the risk of

being shot. John Moffett had no gun, and now, no horse, no other horse like Enbarr. Plenty of thieves hung around the local races, sizing up contenders for their larcenous schemes. Anyone who knew horses could see her potential. Always present in the final pack at the finish of a race, his Enbarr showed great promise, even winning against the lesser horses she left behind. John had grand plans for her, but now they... and she, were disappearing into the distance in a cloud of dust.

He knew the road they were traveling like the back of his hand. He had helped build it with those same hands, years ago when it brought him here to Ballybay where he met his dear wife Elizabeth. Her father, Robert Ritchie gave his consent to marry his first born, as long as they settled down on her dowry... a portion of the townland of Crieavagh he owned. His other two daughters would marry and live nearby with their husbands. They all had plenty of land and plans for big families to fill all its corners.

The Moffetts were already well on their way. Elisabeth and John welcomed their baby James, named to honor his own dear Da, then Nancy, their first sweet daughter and John, his namesake soon followed. With mouths to feed on a roadmaker’s salary, John looked to opportunities where they presented themselves. That’s when the yearling Enbarr trotted into their lives. Urged on by his father-in-law, he took ownership from a nearby breeder, and delighted his children with their new pet and the bouncy rides that came as a rare treat. Naming her after a Celtic myth was meant to fascinate the children and imbue her with the magical stories about her origins. Imagination was certainly something to instill in their young minds where anything was possible.

At this moment, the impossible had happened. All his hard work and training were being exploited, as she galloped away like a streak of lightning. This could not be, not with his Enbarr,

a horse he cherished like family. He was compelled to follow the road, not to lose sight of her on these flat open lands. Elisabeth understood when he rushed in to gather provisions. He was determined to take back what was rightfully his. Without a horse, what choice did he have, but to make the best time he could on foot. Spurred on by his anger and the injustice, his thoughts turned to concern for Enbarr. She was still a young mare, unaccustomed to any mistreatment or even harsh words. Her plaintive sounds in the stable haunted his pursuit as the distance widened between them. His pace quickened imagining her fate at the hands of this common thief. Surely, even he would know to rest her and allow her to drink the water she needed, to nurture this stolen treasure.

His spirits flagged, yet he kept a steady pace in his hurried stride, minutes turned to hours and the road seemed to lengthen endlessly before him. The moonlit night twinkled with stars and he swore he could see her familiar gait far, far away on the horizon. He suspected it was a mirage, more of wishing than truth, in his mind. Nevertheless, he held the possibility in his heart and forged forward. If the bandit's plans were to sell her, Dublin was the likely destination for horse trading and fetching the highest dollar. He figured the distance would require a full 24 hours on foot, without stopping. His devotion to Enbarr was to be tested, along with his family's faith in his abilities to endure. He steeled himself with the new perseverance he needed, despite his weariness and breaking heart.

When he passed through Slane at daybreak he figured he was halfway to Dublin. The dawn was illuminating the clouds to brighten the glistening dew in the fields, as if the night stars had descended from their once dark sky. John thought of their early morning rides back home. Her spirits were highest then, as the promise of the day always quickened her impatient steps in the wet grasses.

He wanted to believe Enbarr was still fighting back in her way. If she was indeed the namesake of Aonbharr of Manannan, she was '*quicker than the naked cold wind of spring*' and could '*travel over land or sea with equal ease*'. His children loved the idea that Enbarr possessed these powers. As the story goes, Aonbharr of the myths gave invulnerability to whomever rode upon her back. These bedtime stories were meant to soothe his children, knowing no harm or death would come to their Da. Here on this lonely road, John cursed this deserving *gadai* (thief) with a ruinous ending to his life. Because Enbarr, namesake of the very horse of mythic protection, carried the thief now, John felt his vengeful thoughts were futile.

Reaching Dublin, he went directly to the parish constables to file a complaint of an evil-doer in their City's midst. He reasoned this formality would prevent him from being arrested as a thief himself. He had enough trouble and sorrow already, and no intention to borrow more. The Charlies advised him to scout the River Liffey to watch the horses brought down to drink in the evening. A positive identification would solidify his claim and they could offer him the help he required. Impatient for a resolution, he haunted stables throughout the rest of the day looking for Enbarr, hoping against hope that his fears and anguish would be dissolved upon finding her. Each neigh and snort raised his expectations as he admired the array of breeds. No luck, but he swore to himself he felt her presence. Evening approached, quieting the hustle and bustle of the markets and pubs. Families retreated to their homes for meals together while he picked a place at the river's edge to spot his beloved Enbarr.

As promised, geldings, mares and stallions, tethered together and led by stable boys, began arriving to drink... and there she was! To his eyes, the finest in a herd of other fine horses. His heart leapt in his chest, as tears of joy ran

down his cheeks, from relief and fatigue. His hopes and dreams were answered and the pursuit on foot was worth every grueling moment. She was here, alive, not broken or lame, yet still a little lost in this congregation of unfamiliar horse flesh. Despite her confusion from the ordeal, she drank dutifully and behaved warily. He had the proof he needed to enlist official assistance. The following night, he took a few officers with him, to reclaim her from the young stable boys in charge of watering the herd.

Finally untethered, Enbarr sniffed the air, perked her ears, and walked directly toward her familiar guardian, nickering and snorting a greeting to her tireless champion. She nuzzled his shoulder and chomped on the juicy apple he offered. "There's my girl, there's my Enbarr." They took a slow walk to one of the stables to properly feed and groom her for the morning ride back home together. Without a lead, she followed him like a puppy dog, watching his every move, lest she lose sight of his kind face ever again.

On horseback it would take less than half a day to travel the 60 some miles back to Crievagh House Ballybay. There was no hurry and so much to 'discuss' on the road back, to undo the trauma and bolster her to high spirits once again.

John's low murmurs of her bravery, dignity and grace were welcome to her ears. He reassured

her in his slow steady tone, she was finally free from that other man who tried to possess her confidence and power for his own. Promises were made, these few days would soon be forgotten in the sunshine of their many rides together. She could now reclaim her standing as the best beast in all of Ballybay.

As they neared those outskirts of the townland, the familiar smells and sights accelerated her plodding trot to a cantor, propelling her back homeward to her 'true place'. The townspeople came from their homes to gather along the roadside to offer choruses of 'céajd míle fáilte' (a hundred thousand welcomes) to the victorious heroes and to celebrate their triumphant return with her John Moffett.

The sight of her barn and their family increased her speed two-fold, enough to loosen the hat off John's head. It fluttered in the roadway and a cry went up, as John tugged her reins to turn 'round. His whisper in her ear perked her for this chance to exhibit their teamwork. They had practiced this trick and it was time to show her talents as a trustworthy mount.

With her best speed, Enbarr started back and John scooped up his hat as they passed it on the roadway. Jubilant cheers filled the air and raised everyone's spirits for days, a truly glorious finish for the fastest, favored horse in all of Ballybay.



Old Moffett Home, at Creivagh, Ballybay, Ireland, home of John Moffett, third generation. Replaced by the present Creivagh House between 1850 and 1860.

BALLYBAY MOFFETTS.

A HISTORY OF THE BALLYBAY, IRELAND, BRANCH OF THE MOFFETT FAMILY.

GENERATION NO. 1.

1. JAMES MOFFETT, (1).

Nothing known of him except that he had at least two children, John and Isabella; only one son may have had more than one daughter.

GENERATION NO. 2.

2. JOHN MOFFETT, 2. (James 1).

Came from Farney, near Carrickmacross, to Ballybay, County Monaghan, Ireland. He married Elizabeth Ritchie, eldest daughter of Robert Ritchie, who owned part of the townland of Creivagh, Ballybay. Robert Ritchie had three daughters, the second of whom married James McMullen, and the third, David Williamson, father of Robert Williamson. The three sisters inherited their father's portion of the townland of Creivagh, and Elizabeth's inheritance is still in the family.

John Moffett was a roadmaker. He had six children—James, Nancy, John, David, Elizabeth (Betty), and Ritchie. He died at the age of 96 and was buried in the burying ground of the Derryvalley Presbyterian meeting-house, where his wife also is buried. The following anecdote is told about him. He was the owner of a race horse, which was stolen from him. He followed it on foot and traced it to Dublin. On going to the police, they advised him to go down in the evening to the River Liffey and watch them bring down the horses to drink. The second night he went he saw his horse, and taking some police with him on the following night, seized it, and rode back to Creivagh in triumph. He was a great rider, and when at full gallop could pick up a hat from the road. He was very athletic and could jump as high as his own head.

3. ISABELLA MOFFETT, 2. (James 1).

Was married to a Mr. Martin and had at least one child, Archie Martin. (We have not traced this family).

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GENERATION NO. 3.

4. JAMES MOFFETT, 3 (John 2, James 1).
First child of John Moffett and Elizabeth Ritchie, born 1774, at Creivagh, and married Elizabeth McCull. He and all his descendants were members of the Congregational Church, which he joined on his marriage to Mrs. McCull. He had six children, Thomas, Nancy, Martha, John, David and Elizabeth. The last four emigrated to America. He emigrated in 1842 to Edwardsville, Ill., U. S. A., where he lived with his son John until the time of his death, Oct. 12, 1842.
5. NANCY MOFFETT, 3 (John 2, James 1).
Second child, married Archie Green, a street sweeper, and had six children, Timothy, John, James, Bess, Sally and Jane. (This family see have not traced father). The only information we could get in regard to this family was, that two sisters, granddaughters of Nancy Moffett, came to New York City, years ago, but we have no trace of them father.
6. JOHN MOFFETT, 3 (John 2, James 1).
Third child, born November, 1783. Died February 16, 1869. Buried in Derryvalley, where there is a white marble stone with the following inscription: "In memory of John Moffett, of Creivagh, who died Feb. 16, 1869, aged 86; also of Anne, wife of the above, who died Sept. 10, 1872, aged 81 years. He was born, bred and died in the old townland of Creivagh, and was always looked up to by his neighbors as a just, honorable and trustworthy man who was ready to assist his social duties. Like many farmers of that time he was skilled in horse raising he had, a prosperous industry, farmer, in the north of Ireland. He was a member of the Derryvalley Presbyterian Church, in which he took an active part as teacher and superintendent of the Sunday school, and an officer of the church. He was married to Anne Wylie, daughter of Adam Wylie and Jane Hunter, and had nine children, Robert, Ritchie, Adam, James, Jane, Elizabeth, John, Thomas, Joseph.
7. DAVID MOFFETT, 3 (John 2, James 1).
Fourth child, was of a cold disposition and had a disolute life; was not married; was very strong physically.
8. ELIZABETH MOFFETT, 3 (John 2, James 1).
Fifth child, was married to John Carson, in 1822, and died in Ireland in 1845; being buried in the Congregational meeting-house ground. After her death her property and family moved to Central Illinois, U. S. A., where there are many descendants. The children were, Thomas, Eliza Ann, Nancy, John, Jane, Isabel and Richard, and another who died in infancy. (The husband, John Carson, was born about 1798, died October, 1842, at Elkhorn, Illinois, U. S. A. He came to Illinois from Nova Scotia, Ireland, in 1846).