

# Ballad Of The Absent Mare

## Leonard Cohen

Say a prayer for the cowboy  
His mare's run away  
And he'll walk til he finds her  
    His darling, his stray  
    but the river's in flood  
    and the roads are awash  
    and the bridges break up  
        in the panic of loss.  
And there's nothing to follow  
    There's nowhere to go  
    She's gone like the summer  
        gone like the snow  
And the crickets are breaking  
    his heart with their song  
        as the day caves in  
    and the night is all wrong

Did he dream, was it she  
    who went galloping past  
    and bent down the fern  
        broke open the grass  
    and printed the mud with  
        the iron and the gold  
    that he nailed to her feet  
        when he was the lord

And although she goes grazing  
    a minute away  
    he tracks her all night  
    he tracks her all day  
    Oh blind to her presence  
        except to compare  
            his injury here  
    with her punishment there

Then at home on a branch  
    in the highest tree  
    a songbird sings out  
        so suddenly

Ah the sun is warm  
    and the soft winds ride  
    on the willow trees  
    by the river side

    Oh the world is sweet  
    the world is wide  
    and she's there where  
    the light and the darkness divide  
    and the steam's coming off her  
    she's huge and she's shy  
    and she steps on the moon  
    when she paws at the sky

    And she comes to his hand  
    but she's not really tame  
    She longs to be lost  
    he longs for the same  
    and she'll bolt and she'll plunge  
    through the first open pass  
    to roll and to feed  
    in the sweet mountain grass

    Or she'll make a break  
    for the high plateau  
    where there's nothing above  
    and there's nothing below  
    and it's time for the burden  
    it's time for the whip  
    Will she walk through the flame  
    Can he shoot from the hip

    So he binds himself  
    to the galloping mare  
    and she binds herself  
    to the rider there  
    and there is no space  
    but there's left and right  
    and there is no time  
    but there's day and night

    And he leans on her neck  
    and he whispers low  
    "Whither thou goest  
    I will go"

And they turn as one  
and they head for the plain  
    No need for the whip  
    Ah, no need for the rein

Now the clasp of this union  
    who fastens it tight?  
Who snaps it asunder  
    the very next night  
Some say the rider  
    Some say the mare  
Or that love's like the smoke  
    beyond all repair

    But my darling says  
    "Leonard, just let it go by  
        That old silhouette  
        on the great western sky"  
    So I pick out a tune  
        and they move right along  
and they're gone like the smoke  
        and they're gone like this song

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