

The Mustang

You're crouched outside the lair of the Mustang, near the burned tree. Your friends are with you, exchanging nervous looks. Like you, they're having second thoughts. Like you, they smell death on the air and wonder if it's their deaths. Cassie has a big piece of sheet metal with a rope across the back, because the Mustang breathes fire. Jack has a rifle, because the Mustang is far too swift to catch. William has a bible, because the Mustang is the Devil's steed. You have a knife because, in the end, someone has to cut the Mustang's throat. It's the witching hour, the moon is full, and fresh blood is on the ground. The Mustang will surely run tonight.

Cassie is a young woman from town. She's fierce and wild. She's in love with you. When she heard you were going to kill the Mustang, she insisted that she come along. She made a shield out of sheet metal and rope, to protect you from the Mustang's fire.

Jack is a young man from the hills. He's calm and quiet. He steals glances at William when he thinks no one is looking. He brought his father's rifle with him to shoot the Mustang. He cut crosses into the noses of the bullets, just in case.

William is a young man from town. He's brave and faithful. He came with you tonight without being asked. He brought the Word to still the Mustang's black heart.

The Mustang is a living nightmare: A soot-black stallion with eyes like burning coals, breath of flame, and hooves of ringing steel. It's swift and deadly. It is everything that is savage and cruel, given physical form.

Keep a sharp eye out for the Mustang. If it takes you by surprise, you'll all surely die. But it's a long wait and the night is cool and someone brought a flask of whiskey. So your friends will set to talking to work off their nerves and they'll pass the flask to keep warm. You can hardly begrudge them these comforts. You're the reason they're here, after all. Let them talk about why they came with you. Let them ask you why the Mustang has to die. Let them talk to each other, while you keep silent. Finally, before the blood is dry on the ground, give each friend a silver coin from your pocket and say the prayer together:

*Some through the waters, some through the flood,
Some through the fire, but all through the blood;
Some through great sorrow, still carry a song,
In the night season and all the day long.*

You have only three chances against the Mustang. The first chance is when the Mustang charges. Its fiery breath blazes forth and its hooves strike sparks. You have to stand your ground and face the flames if you want a chance. If Cassie can shield you from the fire, maybe you can cut out its burning tongue.

You remember Cassie standing on the edge of the old rail bridge with you, looking at your dark reflections in the water far below. The sun is high and bright in a clear blue sky. She reaches out to touch your hand...

Cassie's coin flips to the ground. It shows her fate. Pick it up!

The second chance is when the Mustang runs. It is far too swift to catch. If Jack can bring down the beast from afar, maybe you can cut its legs so it can no longer run.

You remember Jack pounding on your door in the dead of night, drunk and wailing. His face is bloody and swollen from the beating he has taken. Later, he cradles the rifle in his hands, talking about death...

Jack's coin flips to the ground. It shows his fate. Pick it up!

The third chance is when the Mustang snorts and screams and summons up the Devil. If William can still the creature with the Word, maybe you can wrestle it by the neck and sink your knife deep into its throat.

You remember William kneeling in the river beside you, his hands strong, lifting you from the water, a benediction still echoing in the air. William's eyes are clear and kind. You feel free for the first time in years, but there's a question on your lips...

William's coin flips to the ground. It shows his fate. Pick it up!

The Mustang is stilled. You must act now!

When you grapple with the thrashing Mustang, your friends' coins slip from your pocket and fall onto the bloody ground. It's an omen, showing your fate. You raise the knife and bring it swiftly down, but you already know how this ends.

Summary:

1. Gather three of your friends around the table.
2. Ask them to choose between Cassie, Jack, and William.
3. Tell them you're all waiting for the Mustang by the burned tree.
4. Someone will pass the flask around. You, Cassie, Jack, and William should talk to each other for a while. Don't rush. This is important.
5. When you see the Mustang charge, shout a warning!
6. Now you face the monster. First, Cassie will try to protect you from the fire. What are you doing? What does Cassie do? Remember to warn everyone about what the Mustang is doing! When the Mustang is almost upon you, read your memory of Cassie. The memory is incomplete. You and Cassie will have to show how it ends.

7. When the memory is over, Cassie's coin flips to the ground. It shows her fate, good (heads) or ill (tails). What happens to Cassie? Pick up her coin and shout a warning to Jack. The Mustang is running!

8. You and Jack must bring the Mustang down. What do you do? What does Jack do? When Jack is about to shoot the rifle, read your memory of Jack. Complete the memory and flip Jack's coin as you did for Cassie. What happens to Jack? Pick up his coin and shout a warning to William. The Mustang is summoning up the Devil!

9. You and William must still the Mustang with the Word. What do you do? What does William do? When William reads the Word, read your memory of William. Complete the memory and flip William's coin as you did for Cassie and Jack. What happens to William?

10. Finally, you must grapple with the Mustang alone. What do you do?

11. When you raise the knife to kill the Mustang, flip the three coins you have. Heads are good for you. Tails and bad. You and your friends will read the coins to see your fate. What happens?