

Clarence and Boudreaux

Boudreaux was always up at first sun to check the crab traps. His dock paralleled the shore of the bayou and he just about always pulled up a decent number of crabs. He'd set up a large bin at the end of the dock and configured it with a crank that would allow him to raise and lower it. When he pulled a trap, he'd empty his catch into the bin, toss in some raw chicken parts, and lower the bin back into the bayou. On most Saturday nights his wife, Rose, would fire up the gas burner and boil a mess of crabs. During crawfish season she'd boil crabs and crawfish and a 'fais dodo' would happen more often than not. They'd put the kids to bed at nine and the adults would go well into the night. Rose would gather whatever crabs and crawfish were left and the next day she'd pick the meat and freeze it for a rainy day. Crab cakes, gumbo, crawfish etouffee, crawfish pie...

"Boudreaux!" Clarence lived across the bayou. "You make too much noise, you! I couldn't get no sleep, me!"

"Let me be, Clarence!" Boudreaux replied. "We pass a good time and if you don't like it dat's too bad."

"I'll tell you dis, Boudreaux. If dis bayou wasn't between us I'd come over dere and whoop your coonass butt."

"You the one dat's lucky, Clarence. If it wasn't for dis bayou, I come over dere and whoop your butt."

This went on for years. One morning, when Boudreaux was pulling his crab traps, he spotted Clarence across the bayou pulling his own traps. Rose came out to throw away some crab shells and stood a minute, glaring at Clarence. She turned to her husband.

"Boudreaux! Dat Clarence is trowin' his crab traps out too far. He might be catchin' some of our crabs!"

“Clarence!” Boudreaux said. “You trowin’ dem traps past the middle of the bayou. You catchin’ my crabs, you!”

“You don’t own the bayou, Boudreaux! I can trow my traps as far out as I want!”

“Clarence, if it wasn’t for dis bayou I’d come whoop yo butt!”

“I’d come whoop yo butt, Boudreaux.”

One morning, while picking mirliton and eggplant, Rose noticed some activity about a hundred yards up the bayou. She called to her husband.

“Boudreaux! What dey doin’ down dere?”

“I don’t know, cher.”

“Take dat truck and go see, you.”

Boudreaux didn’t feel like it, but he cranked the old truck and drove up the dirt road that ran along the bayou. He spent about a half hour speaking with the men at the site of all the commotion. He eventually came back.

“What dey doin’ down dere, Boudreaux?”

“Dey from the State. Dey building a bridge across the bayou.”

“Why dey doin’ dat?”

“I don’t know, cher.”

It took the construction crew about six months to finish the job. It was a nice bridge with a modest super structure overhead to bolster the weight capacity of crossing traffic. The bridge had been in place for about a month when Rose first began bringing to Boudreaux’s attention the fact that he now had access to the opposite bank, meaning access to Clarence.

“Now you can go over dere and whoop dat Clarence.”

“Yeah, cher. I’ll get over when I have time.”

The days rolled on and every couple of days Rose would *remind* her husband. After a while, her admonitions seemed to increase in frequency and urgency.

“Boudreaux! You been saying for years dat you gonna go over dere and whoop that Clarence good. Now you get in dat truck and go whoop dat Clarence! Right now!”

“Okay, cher. I’m goin’ across dat bridge and gonna whoop dat Clarence good, yeah.”

Boudreaux went inside and got his keys. The old truck cranked right up so he backed out of the driveway and headed toward the bridge. Rose watched with pride as her husband approached the bridge. Boudreaux slowed as he approached the ramp and stopped. He sat their in the truck for a full two minutes.

“What dat Boudreaux doin’ down dere?” Rose said to herself.

She continued watching as Boudreaux slowly backed the truck and turned toward home. Within minutes he was turning back into the driveway. With a little groan, he lifted himself out of the truck.

“Boudreaux! How come you come back? You supposed to go whoop dat Clarence!”

“I wanted to go whoop dat Clarence fo sure, but dat sign on the bridge say “Clarence 10 foot - six inch.” I swear, cher, he don’t look near dat big from across da bayou!”

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