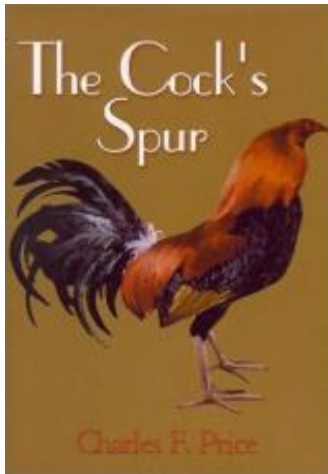


The Cock's Spur

by Charles F. Price



About the Book

Hamby McFee dreams of leaving the valley of the Hiwassee in western North Carolina, and cockfighting is his means to that end. A renowned trainer of some of the meanest birds in the pit, he rests his hopes on the aged, much-feared Gouger, the apricot-tinted Pile-Driver, and the strangely calm, lightning-quick Buttermilk.

As the mulatto ex-slave of the Curtis family, Hamby practices a loyalty he seldom feels. Fifteen years after the Civil War, he still inhabits the farm where he was once chattel. As Andy Curtis, the leader of the household, drifts into insanity and his once-lovely sister Rebecca withers on the vine, Hamby finds himself assuming all the responsibilities of a landowner without reaping any of the benefits.

The other thread of the story involves Ves Price, the son of a close friend of the Curtis family. Hampered by a lack of good sense, Ves makes enemies in high places during his failed effort at moonshining. Then he turns informant for the Revenue and becomes more hated still.

When moonshiner king Web Darling imprisons him in his mountaintop fortress, it appears Ves is doomed. But Hamby McFee, who holds a grudge against Darling, swiftly arranges a climatic chicken fight on the king's home ground. In it, and with considerable reluctance, he will discover just how deeply his home and friends lie in his heart.

Readers of **The Cock's Spur** will recognize a few familiar characters from Charles F. Price's award-winning *Freedom's Altar*. And they will be delighted to meet the new faces--the Cherokee Longrunner, willing Katie Shuford, war hero Irish Bill Moore, hard-edged Revenue deputy Tuck Richbourg--in what is undeniably Price's best novel yet.

Discussion Guide

1. Of the characters in **The Cock's Spur**, who best exemplifies your idea of duty? Rebecca? Tom Carter? Hamby? Ves?

Anyone else? Explain.

2. In the book, Andy Curtis has striven all his adult life to do his duty to his family and dependents. Discuss how he defines his duty. Discuss the cost he paid.
3. Discuss the relationship between Andy and Rebecca. Between Rebecca and Hamby McFee. Between Hamby and the Cherokee Longrunner. What does each signify?
4. Evaluate Ves Price from a moral point of view. What has Ves learned by the end of the book?
5. Discuss the significance of Hamby's love for animals, as opposed to his impatience with animals.
6. Who is the "hero" of the book? Explain.
7. What is Webb Darling's feeling for his wife and children? Theirs for him? Discuss.
8. What is Webb Darling's feeling for his wife and children? Theirs for him? Discuss.
9. Discuss the role race plays in **The Cock's Spur**.
10. Discuss the significance of Hamby's actions with regard to Ves at the climatic cockfight.
11. What does the book say about love? Hate? Faith? Revenge? Explain your thoughts.

Author Bio

Charles F. Price's second novel, **Freedom's Altar**, won the 1999 Sir Walter Raleigh Award, given to the best work of fiction by a North Carolinian. Price worked as a journalist, urban planner, management consultant, and Washington lobbyist before publishing the acclaimed **Hiwassee: A Novel of the Civil War in 1996**. He lives in his native western North Carolina mountains, where he is a full-time writer and teacher. **The Cock's Spur** is his third book.

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