

Writing Sample #3

GROUND BEEF

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE PORCH - DAWN

Rustic. A worn wooden front porch. The wood front door opens in, the mesh screen door swings out with a loud SQUEAK. Out steps CURTIS STANTON (late 40s) a man who looks as if the sun has shriveled not only his skin, but all joy from his soul.

The screen door behind him GROANS on its hinges until it SLAMS shut. The sound echoes in the silence hanging over the ranch. Frost CRACKS under his boots as he walks down the porch steps.

A true cowboy. He carries a REVOLVER in the leather holster around his waist. His battered COWBOY HAT swings in his hand. He pulls on his COWBOY HAT and heads toward a small garage.

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Curtis GRUNTS as he pulls up on the garage handle. The metal door RUMBLES as he slides it open. He steps inside.

He grabs a bag of cattle EAR TAGS off his cluttered workbench stained by generations of oil, rust, and manure. He walks to his filthy ATV, caked in layers of mud. Curtis SIGHS as he secures the bag to the ATV.

He hops on and heads out.

EXT. PASTURE GATE - MORNING

Curtis drives the ATV towards the main pasture gate adorned with a wooden PLAQUE. He slows the ATV to a crawl and stares at the ranch logo.

INSERT - PLAQUE

A drawing of a smiling calf nuzzling its mother in a lush cartoon paradise, "SUNNY HILLS RANCH". It creaks on it's hinges, almost mocking him.

Curtis furrows his brows and drives the ATV forward.

Curtis stops close to the gate, swings his leg over the side and jumps off. His hands, chapped and raw, tremble as he unlatches the gate. The gate CREAKING as he opens it.

CURTIS
(under his breath)
This place ain't paradise anymore.

He jumps back on the ATV and drives through the open gate.

EXT. CATTLE PASTURE - MOMENTS LATER

Back on the ATV, Curtis drives around the pasture searching for fresh calves in need of tagging. In the pasture there are over 200 Black Angus heifers, but very few calves.

Curtis scans the black mass of heifers that dot the brittle landscape, their hides dull and movements sluggish. Some raise their heads as Curtis passes, eyes dull and gray. Most of the herd doesn't acknowledge his presence at all.

They stand like statues across the field, their bodies stiff, heads hanging low with eyes focused on the ground, yet none of them graze on the grass inches from their snouts.

The few heifers that have calves stand huddled together. They graze half-heartedly with their calves tucked close to their sides, flinching as Curtis passes them.

Curtis scans the herd. Nothing.

Cresting the next hill, he spots a small black calf alone near the electric fence. Curtis drives the ATV closer to the calf. Curtis grabs a new EAR TAG from the bag.

Curtis hops off and jogs over to the calf, yellow EAR TAG in hand. As he gets closer, a look of disappointment grows across on his face.

CURTIS

Dammit, another sick calf! I don't
have time for this!

The calf lays motionless on the frost covered grass as Curtis approaches. It looks malnourished, its hide tightly wrapped around its skeleton. Snot drips from its nose as it WHEEZES.

One leg bent wrong below the knee, like a branch jutting from a tree trunk. The calf's head lays sideways as if its neck can't support the weight. Its milky eyes roll in its head.

Curtis shakes his head in disappointment.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

What a waste of meat. Can't even
turn this one into dog chow.

Curtis pulls the REVOLVER from his holster. It gleams in the sunlight as he flips open the cylinder to check it's loaded.

INSERT - Five bullets sit in the cylinder ready to be fired.

He flips the cylinder back into place with a METALLIC CLINK.

Cutis stops for a moment, looking the calf over one last time. He SIGHS and presses the barrel against the calf's twitching forehead. He cocks back the hammer.

As the hammer CLICKS into place, an ear-splitting BELLOW, like a woman's scream, emanates from behind Curtis. He freezes, his finger still on the trigger.

A mixture of fear and disbelief grows across his face. He stares down at the REVOLVER in his hands as the BELLOWING SHRIEK continues.

Curtis drops his aim and points the REVOLVER at the ground. The shrieking stops and is replaced by HEAVY BREATHS.

Curtis slowly turns to face the source of the sound.

Before him stands a creature that he can only assume to be the calf's mother, MAMA COW. The family resemblance is apparent. A yellow EAR TAG hangs from her ear, #366.

Mama Cow huffs steam from her nostrils into the frigid air. She's more sickly than her calf.

She has an elongated broken-looking neck, serrated yellow teeth, and deeply sunken eyes. Her hide, stretched over her jagged frame, is punctured in places where bone has torn through flesh. A gaunt skeleton.

Countless flies BUZZ around her, entranced by the opaque pus dripping from the festering wounds that cover her body.

Disgusted, Curtis covers his mouth and gags.

Curtis raises his REVOLVER once again. He points it at her. He stares at Mama Cow, the longer he looks at her the more his hands and aim shake.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
(faking bravery)
Stay back you stupid heifer!

Curtis looks over to his ATV. Only ten feet away. He slowly backs up, his REVOLVER still pointed at Mama Cow's head.

Each step he takes backward she mirrors with a step forward.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
I told you to stay the fuck back!

Curtis clamps down on the TRIGGER. BOOM. A few heifers raise their heads as the sound echoes across the pasture.

The bullet hits Mama Cow dead between eyes, punching a hole through her skull. Her gaunt legs SNAP under her weight, stopping her mid-stride. Her body collapses.

Mama Cow releases a GURGLING BREATH. She closes her eyes.

Curtis stops and stares at her. His body relaxes. Curtis steps towards her body, taking in her grotesque anatomy.

He turns his attention back towards the calf.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
(glaring at the calf)
I can't let this-- this thing live.

Mama Cow's eyes flash open. Her black eyes, now gleaming red with blood-lust, fixate on Curtis. She breathes heavily, huffing steam out of her nose.

Paralyzed by fear, Curtis doesn't move, his breath locks in his chest. All he can do is stare in disbelief.

Mama Cow's broken body jerks and spasms on the ground.

Her bones CRACK and POP like twigs, muscles TEAR and contort under her hide, as her limbs realign her crumpled skeleton.

With a heavy GRUNT, Mama Cow rises from the ground.

Mama Cow locks eyes with Curtis. Pissed off, she exposes her jagged yellow fangs, blood-tinged drool drips from her mouth and splatters against the frosted earth.

Mama Cow releases another ear-splitting BELLOW and lowers her massive head. She paws at the ground. Her hoof digs into the earth, carving a deep groove and kicking back clumps of dirt.

Curtis drops his useless weapon to the ground. He whips his body around, turning on his heels, and sprints to his ATV.

Mama Cow charges after Curtis with surprising speed.

She rams Curtis into the ATV, crushing him against it. His COWBOY HAT flies off his head and lands in a pile of manure.

Curtis GASPS for air as her assault continues. His body crumples to the ground.

Mama Cow rears back onto her hind legs. She slams down onto Curtis's leg with her front hooves.

SNAP.

His femur breaks in half.

The bone shreds through his thigh muscles and protrudes out of his skin. Blood gushes from the wound.

Curtis SCREAMS in agony.

He scrunches his body into the fetal position. He tries desperately to protect his head using his forearms.

Mama Cow opens her jaw wide and bites down, sinking her jagged teeth into his arm. Her head thrashes from side to side, SHREDDING his flesh down to the bone.

With his arm still over his head, blood gushes over Curtis. Blood streams down his arm, trickling into his eyes and mouth. Curtis sobs through the blood flooding his mouth.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
(choking on blood)
Please-- I'll let it live-- I swear
to ya-- I won't hurt your calf--

Mama Cow snorts in disapproval. Curtis can only stare up at her in horror as she rears back onto her hind legs. Mama Cow releases a final SCREECH and stomps down on Curtis's chest with her front hooves.

WET CRUNCH. Her hooves concave Curtis's ribs and crush his lungs. Blood splatters across the frost covered grass.

Mama Cow sinks her teeth into Curtis's thigh, ripping a large CHUNK of flesh away from his snapped femur. She walks back towards her calf, carrying the flesh in her mouth.

She places the chunk of flesh in front of her calf's face. The calf's nose twitches as it catches the scent. The calf opens its eyes to see what's been placed before it.

The calf's eyes lock onto the meal. Mama Cow leans her head down to nuzzle her calf. The calf reciprocates the affection.

It opens its mouth, revealing the same sharp teeth as Mama Cow. The calf snaps at the meal, happily devouring the flesh.

EXT. PASTURE GATE - CONTINUOUS

The PLAQUE swings in the breeze, CREAKING on its hinges accompanied by soft sounds of flesh TEARING and happy GRUNTS from the calf feasting.

The heifer and her calf still together, still smiling, still sitting in paradise.

FADE OUT.