

He ll Make a Cowboy Yet

You can always tell an Eastern dude,
I used to hear them say.
It s not the way he looks or talks.
He thinks a dif ferent way.

But give the dude a couple years
of gripping leather reins;
and herding cattle all day long,
across the windswept plains;
of getting bucked off from the horse
and battered, bruised and skinned
with mouth that s full of prairie grit,
whipped up by flogging wind.

Give the dude a couple years
of forty-plus below;
of struggling to feed cattle
through six-foot drifts of snow;
of praying for an early spring
just to face some flood,
and gully washers bearing down
on cattle mired in mud.

Give the dude a couple years
of calloused hands and sweat.
A couple years of all of this
he ll make a cowboy yet.
He ll take the time to look around.
He ll see a circling hawk.
He ll take the time to listen
and he ll hear the prairie talk.

The same old horse he used to cuss,
he ll cherish as a friend.
He ll stoke his fire contented
when the day draws to an end.



Thanksgiving Dinner for the Ranch by Frederic Remington (1888)

Shaney Ridge

They rode into Montana
with their pockets full of poor,
their appaloosa ponies,
and the homespun clothes they wore.
What was it about Shaney Ridge
that drew the brothers there?
Clear springs of mountain water!
They glistened everywhere.

Through icy chills and six foot drifts,
through mud and sleet and mire,
across the range their claim spread out
from Shaney Ridge to Pryor.
None of it was easy
One crisis spawned another
but through it all good-natured George
cheered his worried brother.

Winters tortured Shaney Ridge;
but when the sixth one passed,
nature begged forgiveness
and the range thawed out at last.
Caleb's spirit blossomed out
as soon as winter died;
and that spring Caleb left the Ridge
to fetch a promised bride.

When Caleb and his bride returned,
two months had passed them by.
The parching sun was overhead.
The water holes were dry.
The cattle languished on the range;
and George was not around.
As searing as a red-hot brand...
the note that Caleb found.

One night, it seems, that George played cards
with other gambling men.
He lost his cash, his saddle.
He lost his horse.... And then,
he bet the spread at Shaney Ridge.
He lost his bet again!
George wrote that he was leaving...
that someday when he'd earn
enough to buy their holdings back,
then only, he'd return.

It took a while for all the words
to really filter through;
but when they did,
the pain evoked
each curse that Caleb knew.
The dream called Shaney Ridge was gone;
and Caleb had a bride.
So Caleb started over
and hid the rage inside.

Slowly, slowly, years passed by,
as slowly as his ire;
and just as slow, he gained control
of grazing range near Pryor.

What became of brother George?
Caleb never knew.
His bother simply vanished
like Rocky Mountain dew.
Just like the evanescent dew,
impossible to find;
yet when he viewed the Pryor spread,
George often crossed his mind.
He knew he'd chuck the lot of it...
each acre, steer and calf
just to see George once again
and hear his brother's laugh.