

Old Cowboy. She just smiles. The snowflakes big as maple leaves falling now as the same man that earlier saw it as a hindrance now sees it as a white Christmas for the kids.

The new and improved Old Cowboy even breaks down and has Sarah pull over and buys them a cup of store bought coffee for the ride home. Good golly this is like a date for Sarah! Old Cowboy even drove home so she could sit and enjoy her coffee. Sarah thinking, maybe she likes people breaking down on the highway.....

The two Christmas elves pull into the gate and make their way to the barn. Not like everything can be unloaded at the house. Not to mention the bike is not assembled, then, up to the house to unload the rest.

"Hey John" old cowboy asks...."How bout helping me out at the barn for a minute." "Sure thing and hey your phone rang a couple times while you were out" John from Dallas informs him. The two trudge out through the now deep snow and once inside Old Cowboy lights the old pipe stove. They make fast time putting the bike together. John from Dallas can't get over the generosity and thanks Old Cowboy. "Why it's nothing" Old Cowboy reply's.. "I tell you John honest it has been a godsend and has given Sarah and I a reason to enjoy Christmas". "Ok we'll bring this up later when they go to bed" Put out the pipe stove and walk out the door. Old Cowboy makes his way over to the stall. Reaches in his coat pocket and has a sugar cube for Horse. Cowboy puts a blanket on Horse for the night and shuts the stall up to make it cozy for his old friend.

As he shuts the door and turns there stands Goat, right behind him Donkey. Goat was basically Donkeys guide dog of sort as Donkey followed him everywhere because of the cow bell Goat wore. Cowboy opens the door and goat rushes past him and makes his way into Goats special corner to join Horse for the night with Donkey right behind him.

As John from Dallas and Old Cowboy make their way back to the house they come across Bob chewing on some road kill Old Cowboy had brought in the day before.....Bob startled and uncomfortable with the new guy and not wanting to share, hisses and shows teeth he's so famous for. National Geographic teeth.

Big city John from Dallas is frozen in stride at the sight of the big cat. The old cowboy jumps in front of John like Tarzan and with an outstretched arm commences with that sound dog whis-

perer makes.. "Don't look him in the eyes" "be very still" as old cowboy really starts to lay it on thick. Moving and turning like a Kung foo Ninja. Throws both hands high in the air and hollers something similar to a medicine man....even does the finger point from Crocodile Dundee. Bob merely annoyed now just lies down and starts licking....."Ok slow now ...walk on by slow"..."I got him" "Don't look him in the eyes!"...

Frightened John makes his way around, holding one hand up so the monster cat doesn't see his eyes...and watches the crazy ole cowboy move toward the beast and as he gets right to him....the beast rolls over...Old Cowboy still waving his hands like kung foo George and points again as to freeze the old cat. Reaches down and rubs his belly.....Bob's rear leg up in the sky in an uncontrolled scratching motion...Old Cowboy backs slowly away and reaches John. ..scared lifeless John...impressed to no end John....Singing the Old Cowboys praises John....."I've never in my life seen anything like that!" John from Dallas says..."Were lucky to be alive" old cowboy assures him....John dolling out more praise as they go inside. And retelling the story in detail.....Sarah looking at old cowboy like.....sheeessshhh

The rest of the evening was spent putting up and decorating the tree. Sarah made hot cocoa for everyone complete with marshmallows; bacon

and tomato sandwiches and chips and snacks. Cowboy puts a turkey in the smoker and starts it to cooking. The usually death quiet ranch house, now alive with laughter and bustling activity. So much so you can barely make out Crow hid out high in the rafters. Yes, Crow was allowed in the house and for the most part, again for the most part, was house broke. And so the Christmas spirit had in some way or form transformed all....At day-break who would have known where they would be and how seemingly misfortune had proven to set something in motion none there would ever forget.

Laughter and lightheartedness had replaced dread and the unknowing. The old cowboy, that woke this morning and wanted nothing more than the holidays to pass, now is enjoying it. John from Dallas and Celine, couldn't quit being the worried parent but embracing the new experience and thankful for the Christmas for the kids. Sarah, thinking of her own Tessa and as always this time of year, things she never got to do, now, loving that she could bestow on others the things she so needed to give. Strangers that morning, now, as if family.

An old standing Texas tradition to open one present on Christmas Eve, some of it speed wrapped in paper sack wrapping but tonight it didn't matter. The 2 kids tore into the wrapping and Brent pulls out a bright red yo yo and Alisa a set of jacks. Alisa looks at Brent, Brent looks at Alisa...they have not a clue but show they're good

raising by thanking all..."Thank you sir and you too Sarah.....um...but what is it?"...they ask....Everyone laughing and immediately Cowboy sets about teaching Brent the art as well as Sarah with Alisa. No it wasn't the usual for this day and time but they never put them down the whole night.

Celine and Sarah take turns telling Christmas tales to the kids. Cowboy's short stack of books didn't exactly have Christmas books among them. Bedtime comes and the task of leaving hot cocoa and cookies for Santa all taken care of. The kids make their way up the stairs; looking back and asking questions. Alisa ducks under her mom's guiding arms and sticks her head through the railing..... "You sure Santa knows were here right Sir"? Alisa asks Old Cowboy. John from Dallas assures them it's all been taken care of but not if they don't go to sleep. "Kids, he has stopped by here every year since I was a young un. Even when I wasn't so good; which was a lot"! Old Cowboy reassures them.

Finally the kids asleep the 4 of them set into setting things up for the next morning. Cowboy's socks stuffed with fruit and candy and crayons. The ladies tended to laying out Barbie and her house and clothes and things.

The guys turn on the outside lights and go out to the barn to get the bike. Old Cowboy had to show John

of Dallas he could ride it of course .... It truly was Christmas at Old Cowboys ranch now. "O wait, I almost forgot the ladder" Cowboy says ..."Ladder"? John from Dallas asks...."I'll clue you in later" as Old Cowboy takes it back to the house and leans the extension ladder on the highest part of the roof. "O, I get it now, I have to shingle the roof tonight" John from Dallas jokes....Old Cowboy stops still..."Was that humor coming out of you there John?" Old Cowboy and John from Dallas enjoy a laugh. "Let's get in out of the cold" Old Cowboy says running to the house.

Just before reaching the door....PLOPP....a wet snowball squares Old Cowboy in the back. "That's funny too huh cowboy" John from Dallas pops off...."You had it now city boy" as Old Cowboy builds the perfect snowball and whizzes it by him....."Hey cowboy, your spouse to hit me with it" as a may lay breaks out of quickly made snowballs; finally old Cowboy finds his mark...right under the chin..."Got ya" ..PLOPP one lands and takes Old Cowboys hat off!..."Hey isn't there spouse to be hair under your hat cowboy?"...as both reload...."I played some baseball you know" John from Dallas hollers ...."Well one thing for sure you weren't the pitcher!" Old Cowboy reply's... just then John from Dallas nails Old Cowboy right in the pie hole with a good sized snowball...."O no" John from Dallas real-



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