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Word Count: 746

Longhorns!

Early on a February morning, just about daybreak, a longhorn calf drops to the ground with a soft thud. He takes his first breath and gasps at the cold air—so different from his mother's warm body.

Within minutes the calf struggles to its feet to nurse. The calf's mother (or dam) is Ruby Begonia, a fine red cow. On his first day in the pasture she never leaves his side. While Ruby grazes she keeps a watchful eye on the new calf as he tries to stand on wobbly legs. Soon he is exhausted from all the effort and curls into a tight ball to rest. At first Ruby doesn't let the other calves near the newborn, but as the day wears on they are finally allowed to nuzzle him in greeting.

The father (or sire) is an enormous bull named Swartzkopf—a favorite of owner James Gentz. Although Swartzkopf is gentle enough to saddle, he weighs more than 1800 pounds (817 kg). That's about as much as six NFL defensive linemen! On the morning of the new calf's birth

Swartzkopf grazes peacefully in another part of the pasture. He seems unconcerned about the arrival of his new offspring.

When the calf is a month old he is given a name—Major Red. Some of the longhorns on the Gentz ranch are sold for roping events on the rodeo circuit or for riding in parades. Some are bought by breeders. Occasionally people buy them simply because they want to own a living piece of American history. And some are headed to the meat market to provide a healthy, better tasting beef for American consumers. Because Major Red has a name it means he won't be headed to the meat market.

→ sounds like propaganda

"We don't name the ones that are going to market," says James with a grin. "Once you get attached enough to name 'em, it's too hard to send them off to the processor."

By the time Major is six weeks old, Ruby is content for him to play with the other calves while she keeps watch from a distance. Sometimes she takes her turn as "nurse cow," watching over a group of calves while the mothers graze nearby. But when James drives his truck through the pasture all the calves run to the safety of their mother's side.

One day, as James works in the barn, Ruby wanders in for an inspection. Major follows close on her heels. Once Ruby has looked things over she heads back out to the pasture, but Major, who is busy exploring the barn, does not see her leave. James finishes his work and leaves, too, closing the barn door behind him. Major spends a miserable night in the barn bawling for his mother while Ruby cries anxiously outside.

I'd be very careful with the word "propaganda" - too bad this is his only quote in the text. Maybe we can add a few more later.

The trauma of that night is repeated when Major is about six months old. He and other calves are put into a special holding pen to separate them from their mothers. The calves stand at the fence crying for days while they are being weaned. Their mothers often cry, too.

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At about eight months old Major is fully weaned. He already weighs over 500 pounds (226.8 kg), more than some other calves that are a year older. Like his father and his ancestors before him, Major is growing into an excellent example of the sturdy longhorn breed.

Swartzkopf, Ruby, and Major Red are descendants of cattle brought to the Americas by the Spanish more than 500 years ago. The first herd of about 200 of these cattle was driven north from Mexico to Texas in 1690. About the same time Anglo-settlers from the United States were bringing in their own cattle—European bred cows. Over time the European cows mixed with the Spanish breed to create Texas longhorns. Many settlers did not survive those early days in the harsh Texas wilderness, but the longhorns did. (per AB)

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When Major is fully grown he will be tough enough to handle pretty much anything Mother Nature dishes out. He will weigh as much as his father or more. His signature long horns will measure anywhere from 5.8 to 6.7 feet (1.8m to 2m) long, although a record set of horns would be about 9 feet (2.7m). That's wider than an NBA basketball player is tall!

Someday Major will sire offspring of his own. He'll spend the next twenty years grazing alongside his parents on the sprawling Gentz ranch—a living symbol of the American West.

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