

Twelve Point

By Dean Parr

Twelve. It takes twelve points to make a monster. And I ain't talkin' about one of 'em' patty cake zombies created in one of their Hollywood basements. I'm talking about something wrong...unjustified. Something the almighty couldn't explain himself. God creates the creatures, and well...I guess I hunt 'em. But the devil...he doesn't hunt 'em. He makes 'em monsters. And I'll let you know right now...ain't no monster huntin me. Twelve. It takes a twelve gauge to kill one.

Sundays take it slow in Casper. They either too tired to raise the sun or too dumb to show the moon. The streets remain flooded with sorrow, the people remain beat with dreams, the graves remain buried with regret. Lonely winds crevice the sky and whistle with a deep hum. You'd be a liar to hear anything else. Everyone has a story, yet no one tells it. They'd rather not remember it. Whatever their story was, it brought 'em here, Casper, Wyoming, and that's all there is to it.

I'm a victim of sorrow too. Like one of those deeply scared strangers in Bonanza. I spend my sorrow at my ranch, my 654 acre ranch. When land was cheap and good, my old man went searching for land. Finding Casper, he noticed the miles of yellow grass, which were home to many deer. One time, he had seen a twelve-point buck, majestic in its beauty. He promised me that one day, its magnificent head would hang above our fireplace. Momma says that the buck was his true love. After all, he went out hunting for it more than he spent time with me and momma. Hoping to carry the land through his bloodline, it reached me. No wife. No kids. Just me and my cows. It's a lot of land with little beauty. The hazy mornings blur the far hills and the smell of cattle droppings scent the air. The land ain't what it once was. After years of waiting, Sunday would turn dark. I locked my gates and hung my hat, just like usual. As I went to sleep in a sudden snap, a horrific screech beamed through my ears. Out of all the years I lived on this land, ain't nothin sound like that. The horrendous belch awoke the other cattle and me as well. I quickly put my coat on, grabbed my twelve gauge off the shelf, and marched out with my old-ridden boots.

The sky was darker than a tar pit and the porch lights did nothing to help it. I walked off the steps into my land which had now become the great unknown. The human-like screams of cows echoed in the distance. My feet began to pick up and I started sprinting with my gun in one hand. I theorized there were either teenage cow tippers, or god, some cattle thieves. Whoever it was or whatever it was, a consequence was guaranteed. Stopping my tracks, one of my cows laid on the dead grass. Its intestines had been dug out. By heaven almighty, had I ever seen such a monstrosity. I kneeled down and studied this incident. 'D23', it's tag read. Simply put, she was dead. Ain't nothin I could do about it. Drenched in shock and fear, I lifted my head and saw a violently distinguished silhouette. It wasn't a bear, it wasn't a wolf, it was something I wouldn't expect in a million years.

It was a twelve-point buck. Organs and intestines hung off its antlers like ornaments, blood smothered across its face. Its antlers were a spectacle of sharp knives and steep curves. Its fur was almost a dark gray. Though the beast was about ten yards away, its soulless eyes stood into me. It didn't move...it didn't even flinch. I stared at the beast in utter disbelief. Slowly aiming my rifle, attempting in silence, I had the perfect target. When I cocked the twelve gauge, a tick sound broke our quiet gaze. The blood shedded buck charged towards me. As adrenaline rushed through my veins, I pulled the trigger and the buck trampled towards me with half its brain showing. I had killed the twelve-point.

Out of all the things I failed to promise to my father, I had fulfilled one. To this day, its head hangs above my grungy fireplace, against my stone set wall. I go to sleep wishing to hear the lonely winds of Casper, but I don't. My cows used to sleep, but now they scream.