**People of the Range**

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*Verse 1: The Past*

New life stands on legs unsure, under mother’s watchful eye… and a nudge that says, “I’m here”. A scene played out for too long to remember, too many times to count, yet always fresh and wonderful. Just as if this one were the first. And at that point in time, it might as well be. This life becomes the next sentence in a new chapter of an old story. A story written on the land.

Created for us, the land provides for the herds and the herds in turn provide. But the land is an obdurate keeper, yielding only to time. Time doesn’t care, it only requires. Whether we tend or hunt matters not. The strong, the clever, the persistent survive. Observe, adapt, move on. As we learn, we teach; as we teach, we learn. One generation becomes another and another.

*Refrain*

Fire and ice, joy and pain.

Watch the sky and pray for rain.

Grasses grow, seasons change.

Here we live and leave our legacy.

Children of the land, people of the range.

*Verse 2: The Present*

Will there be enough this year? Water, feed, cash? Last year’s dry is now a full-on drought. The sun, relentless shines. Wasn’t it just yesterday that we were chopping ice? Thunderheads rise, arrogant. All talk. So, we cull, we move, we monitor. It’s not a rut, it’s a rhythm. Look at the numbers and plan for rest. This will work, we’ll be alright. We’ve been through all this before.

There are few who want to do this work; most who do know little of it. They yearn for romance and idyllic scenes, not sweat nor solitude. But those who do, those who will, are exceptionally well paid. Paid in blue sky benefits. The music of hooves on limestone. Sage, the smell of sage. A bracing whisp of wind through grama blue and aspen gold. It hints of change, soon to come.

*Refrain*

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*Verse 3: The Future*

Data stream, data cloud, decision support, AI. We know where the deer and the buffalo roam, we see them on our screen. Pod cast broadcast, pick a subject, now we know. Stocking rate, remotely sensed, still matters. Sequestered carbon mitigates. Biodiversity gives back. Food, fiber, fuel, and fun. Ruminants still matter. Lone rider in a gale force wind, hat pulled low, still matters.

History was written one mistake at a time. There is so much knowledge now. Swipe, click, scroll. Best management at our fingertips, but we had better go look, just in case. Is that *Bouteloua curtipendula*? I ask, on bended knee. When all is said and all is done, some things stay the same. New life stands on legs unsure, under mother’s watchful eye… and nudge that sys “I’m here”.

*Refrain*

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