

# STRANGE PASTURES

By

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Late one evening, as I was driving home from my radio station job in Houston, where I now lived, the car's radio was tuned to a talk program on our station. The Dallas-based host remarked that the subject of the next night's show would be "'Animal Mutilations' . . . you'll find it interesting . . . don't miss it."

'*Animal Mutilations?*' I gave the radio a quizzical glance and wondered if the talk-show guy was running out of topics to discuss.

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By the next night, I had forgotten all about the strange subject until I casually flipped on the car's radio as I again drove home from the radio station. At first, I paid scant attention to the program, but after a few minutes, I began to listen more closely.

The guest was describing a mystery in which thousands of cattle had been found dead in pastures all over the world, with parts of their bodies missing. According to the man, many animals---mostly cows, but also other species, including dogs and cats---had been discovered mutilated in a horrific manner. Usually their anal portion was found to have been sectioned-out in a defined cone-shaped plug, as if their immediate area had been cauterized or "cooked" at a very high temperature by a precision-laser or some other type of very hot, sharp, sophisticated instrument. He noted that it would have required a large, heavy, truck-borne device to have cut and cauterized the bodies in such a manner, yet *in no instance were there any tire-tracks, footprints, or any other evidence of human presence at the scenes where the bodies were found.*

Other missing body parts included genitals, udders, lips, eyes, ears and legs---all of which had been cleanly excised in such a manner that there was no bleeding. In many cases the animals had been totally drained of their blood, although no body fluids were detected about the carcasses. The radio guest said that the unfortunate creatures appeared to have already been dead before they were cut upon, and forensic specialists had been unable to determine what had actually caused their deaths. Some had suffered multiple broken bones and other injuries that were consistent with bodies that had fallen from a great height. Other evidence supporting the animals' descent from high altitude. included broken tree branches through which some of the the bodies had fallen. No teeth marks were noted anywhere about the wounds, which ruled out predators. It was intriguing, the guest went on, that other cattle, wildlife, horses, birds and scavenger animals refused to approach the bodies as they would have ordinarily done, and became agitated if forced to do so.

In a number of instances, there was a nearby circular-shaped area of scorched, dished-down grass, usually about thirty to forty feet in diameter, suggesting that a large, hot, and very heavy object had recently touched-down there.

As the animals' bodies were almost always found shortly after sunrise, whatever had happened had taken place sometime during the previous night

As I drove along the deserted Houston streets in that post-midnight hour listening to the radio, I became so fascinated by the animal mutilation story, that when I arrived home a short while later, I turned on the radio in the den and listened to the remainder of the program.

According to the investigator, on many occasions people had noticed strange lights in the sky and dark-colored, totally-silent helicopters flying nearby at about the time the events had probably taken place. On some occasions, a caravan of white vans had been observed in the vicinity at the same time. He asserted that in several instances the mysterious helicopters had landed and dark-skinned, "Oriental-looking men" wearing black clothing and dark glasses had emerged. In one report, one of the helicopter men lost his dark glasses in a wind gust, revealing cat-like eyes with vertical pupils. There were other reports of such individuals in connection with the soundless, blacked-out helicopters, all of which defied rational explanation.

There were compelling accounts of similar-looking men who had arrived at observers' homes in older-model---but immaculate---dark-colored Cadillacs, *before the citizens had even had a chance to discuss what they had seen with anyone else*; threatening the residents and confiscating film; sternly warning the observers not to discuss what they had seen. Some of the people who had encountered the so-called, "Men In Black" had remarked about the unearthly, robot-like voices of the mysterious strangers. In several instances, the threatened residents managed to write down the Cadillacs' license plate numbers, all of which turned out to be non-existent.

The radio guest asserted there was an orchestrated cover-up and news blackout in force, and that sinister elements of danger seemed to be associated with the strange encounters that had first been reported in northern Europe about 1963. More such sightings soon took place in Australia, New Zealand and North America, he said. Other such events had been reported in Montana; in Manitoba, Canada, near the U.S. Border; in northern Utah; in New Mexico, and in central Texas.

The man went on that there had been a cluster of mutilation events in the mid-1970's around the town of Fyffe, in northeastern Alabama, where, over a period of several months, dozens of cattle, some even belonging to a local police officer, had been sectioned in their anal parts and drained of blood, in the now-familiar manner. Some had appeared to have fallen from a great height, as they were found beneath trees, surrounded by broken tree-branches.

All at once I sat up straight and gasped, wide-eyed. For these stories triggered the recollection of a chilling event that had taken place several years earlier, in 1976, when I still lived in northern Alabama.

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It was election time in the area, and the television station where I worked had assigned me to manage the political advertising of one of the candidates for county sheriff. I had arranged to spend an entire day taking pictures of him in various locales around the county, creating a photo-montage for a TV commercial.

Just after sunrise, on a cool, late-April morning, the middle-aged candidate and I set out in his big Mercury sedan for a location shooting in Waterloo, a picturesque little waterfront town on the Tennessee River in the far western part of the county. After taking photos in and around the village, he and I headed back toward Florence on the Waterloo Road, a narrow farm-to-market road that ran through the countryside past small farms and pastureland. As it was still fairly early in the morning, small patches of fog hung to the ground.

A few miles west of Florence, when we pulled up to a stop sign at a country crossroads, I

happened to glance off to my right and did a double-take. Out in a pasture, lay the bodies of several cows, their legs stuck out at grotesque angles. "Look at those dead cows!" I pointed at the startling sight. "We'd better see about this!" The driver eased the sedan onto the grassy shoulder and both of us got out.

As we clambered over a split-rail fence, I was stunned to see that, in addition to the bodies visible from the road, there were more carcasses lying about---a dozen, at least---over an area of about ten acres. My first thought was that they must have eaten some kind of poisoned grass, but when we came to the nearest dead heifer, I saw it had been carved-out in the hind quarters, and had a leathery, shriveled appearance. A closer inspection revealed that every cow had a broad, deep, cone-shaped section sliced out of its anal area. Even though they had been savagely---if neatly---butchered, *there was no blood anywhere in evidence!* In fact, all the animals seemed to have been drained of their blood and other bodily fluids! "I've never seen anything like this!" the older man exclaimed.

"Look!" I pointed at a patch of discolored grass I had noticed over at the far edge of the field, near some woods. We made our way past several of the rigor-mortised cows to an area about thirty-feet in diameter where the pasture was heavily scorched. Within the burned circle the ground appeared to have recently been pressed down by a tremendous weight. I gazed around at the weird scene, shaking my head in bewilderment. "What do you make of this?"

The portly politician rubbed his chin as he scanned around at the peculiar landscape, then a sudden expression of alarm came onto his face. "John, I believe we had better leave."

"But we need to find out what happened here---something strange is going on."

The man gave me a sharp look. "We must go at once!" His tone was insistent. He turned and started for the fence. "Let's get out of here!" he glared at me, "I mean, *RIGHT NOW!*"

I followed him back over the wooden fence to his car. In a flurry of dirt and gravel the agitated man swung the Mercury back onto the pavement and we sped off. For some minutes, he looked straight ahead without speaking, gripping the steering wheel with white knuckles in obvious anxiety. I noticed he was sweating.

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Late that afternoon, back at the TV station, I told the one of the bosses about the dead cows. "I believe we should do an investigative report."

The man shook his head. "We're not going to cover that story."

"But . . . something happened---"

"John, forget you ever saw those cows."

I knew by the tone of his voice the issue was settled, so I let the matter drop.

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A few days later, on a regular visit to City Hall, I happened to tell a ranking police official what we had seen out on the Waterloo Road.

He looked straight into my eyes. "John, don't ever again mention what you saw."

"But . . . something . . . *something* happened out there." I persisted. "I think the authorities should look into it . . . the mutilated animals---"

"I'm telling you," he cut me off, "forget what you saw in that field---you understand? *Don't you EVER talk about it again!*"

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Soon afterward, I left the TV station, and with my new university degree, took a job in Houston.

I forgot about the strange pasture and the mutilated cows and never told anyone about it. Until now.