

HUNGER

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EXT. SCARCE CAMP - DAY

GRETA (late 20s, early 30s) and ELLIS (late 30s) sit across from each other, a small fire between them. They each scrape at the insides of a couple of cans of beans.

Ellis thoroughly cleans his spoon, eyeing the empty can in his right hand. Ellis' gaze shifts to Greta.

ELLIS

You gonna finish that?

Greta looks down at the measly few beans at the bottom of the can. She tosses the can to him which he hungrily scrapes clean. He looks up at her, tossing the now empty can into the fire.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

Let's move.

EXT. FOREST PATH - LATER

The sun sets through the trees, rays of light piercing through the canopy to illuminate the damp forest floor. The crunch of footsteps breaks the quiet ambience of insects emerging as the sun sets.

Ellis and Greta trek forward. Their faces are weathered with dust and grime; their animal-skin jackets covered in stitching and twine, holding together past wounds to the fabric. Both have small, limp satchels.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING, CAMP - SUNSET

Ellis and Greta emerge from the trees and into a small clearing occupied already by a tent, an assortment of packs, and a black fire pit. Ellis' eyes widen and he scampers forwards. Greta pulls the rifle from her back, scanning the tree line.

Ellis tears open one of the packs and looks inside.

ELLIS

Greta!

She looks over to her partner, cocks an eyebrow. He rummages through the other packs as well, glancing up.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

It's full. They're all full.

GRETA

Mmmm...

ELLIS

What?

GRETA

Makes me nervous is all.

ELLIS

Then get over here and help me load
up so we can get a move on.

Greta, her back to Ellis, looks off into the trees. Ellis
grabs a fistful of soot from the fire-pit.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

The pit's cold Greta, ain't no one
comin' back for this.

GRETA

And that's worryin'...

Greta watches the sun as it is slowly obscured by the
horizon. Her eyes narrow as she scans her surroundings.

GRETA (CONT'D)

We ought to move on.

STRANGER

Yes, Ma'am. You oughta.

Greta swings the rifle around to face the newcomer, a
STRANGER (50s), whose hands are already up. Ellis has his
pistol out at his hip, pointed up at the stranger.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

I found this camp and I believe I
am thus entitled to the spoils.

ELLIS

How long ago you found it?

STRANGER

Couple hours.

GRETA

What is your name, Sir?

ELLIS

And you 'spect me to believe you'd
just up and leave these here
supplies?

STRANGER

I wouldn't rightly expect anything
of you, Stranger.

ELLIS

As long as we're understood then.

Greta turns as the sun winks out below the horizon. The
stranger follows her gaze.

STRANGER

Gettin' late.

Greta glances at Ellis who hasn't taken his eyes off the
stranger.

ELLIS

We ain't leavin' this haul.

The stranger glances between the pair.

STRANGER

I can see when I am outmatched and
I do not wish to die. So, if I may
instead propose an alternative.

The stranger pauses, as if waiting for permission, but
continues seconds later, though none is given.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

We will make camp on opposite sides
of this here clearing. Come sunrise
we will negotiate a fair split. You
may assuage your fears of me
killin' you in your sleep so long
as you spare yourself the sin of
killin' me in cold blood.

Narrowing her eyes, Greta shoulders her rifle. She gives
Ellis a look. He shrugs, clicking the hammer back in place,
and standing up.

ELLIS

Just 'cause it don't feel right
killin' you, don't mean I won't.

Ellis pats Greta on the shoulder as he passes, leaving a soot
black hand-print where his hand used to be. Greta watches the
stranger turn and walk to the other side of the camp.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Greta lies on her back, eyes closed. Her hat, rifle, and knife lie next to her. The light of a fire flickers through the canvas material that makes up the tent.

KRRNNCH! --sound almost like a footfall. A very heavy footfall.

Greta's eyes open and shift towards the sound, the rest of her body remains still. *KRRNCH.* --Greta silently gets to her knees and wraps her rifle in her blanket to pull back to the bolt and check the chamber.

KRRRNCH! --Greta looks up, rifle in hand, to see an enormous BEAST silhouetted against the canvas of her tent. The large figure passes by the fire and moves closer to her tent, reducing the size of the shadow and revealing what appears to be distorted antlers atop the misshapen shoulders of a grizzly bear.

KRRNCH! --now just outside her tent. Greta's eyes follow the beast as it passes by and heads towards the opposite side of the clearing. She steadily breathes in.

In one smooth movement Greta propels herself through the tent flaps and into the--

CAMP - CONTINUOUS

She holds the rifle to her cheek looking down the sights but outside the tent there is nothing and nobody. She moves to one knee, scanning the periphery of the camp. She sees the stranger lowering himself to sit, his back to her, next to a small fire on his side of the camp. She watches him for a long few seconds.

The fire crackles. Greta turns.

CUT TO:

TENT - NEXT MORNING

A loud snap. The sound of a blunt object meeting human flesh. Greta's eyes open. She sits up.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING, CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Greta emerges quickly from her tent, eyes already scanning the camp for the source of the commotion, rifle held loosely to her chest.

The stranger lies on his back, mouth bloodied, crawling away from Ellis through the soot of the old fire in the center camp. Two of the four packs lie strewn across the campsite, contents spilling out. Ellis throws a long piece of firewood to the ground and pulls his pistol from it's holster.

ELLIS

Make 'em good, your next words will be your last.

STRANGER

I'm sorry! I'm so sorry, I didn't--
I ain't meant nothin' by it, I'm
just-- ... I'm so hungry. I'm so
hungry.

ELLIS

All right.

Ellis cocks the hammer back. Greta lunges forward.

GRETA

Hold! Hold.

ELLIS

Greta. He was gonna make off with
our goods! You tell me it ain't
just for me to end this man.

The stranger wipes blood from his face, smearing a red and black streak across his cheek. He licks his lips before he talks.

STRANGER

I found this camp! It's mine by
right!

GRETA

He is just hungry, Ellis.

ELLIS

He's broken his word, simple as
that. I promised him death.

GRETA

Save your lead. It is more valuable
than a couple cans of beans.

STRANGER

Thank you, thank you--

Greta pushes him back down with the butt of her rifle as he scrambles towards her.

GRETA

Shush.

ELLIS

Greta--

GRETA

Fetch us firewood, Ellis. I will
make certain he makes his way
before then.

Ellis slams his pistol into its holster with a huff, turning on his heel and stalking into the forest, picking up his pack on the way.

Greta watches Ellis go then glances back at the stranger with just her eyes.

GRETA (CONT'D)

Up.

CAMP - LATER

Greta sits on a stump, leaning on her rifle, eyes unblinking as she watches the stranger pack. The stranger shoves cans into a sack, most of the camp already broken down and stored away.

STRANGER

Where're you headed?

Greta silently stares at him.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

I'm just headed west. Gonna get
rich. You headed west?

GRETA

I do not think so.

The stranger eyes a can poking out of the top of one of the abandoned packs.

STRANGER

I'm hungry, d'you mind?

GRETA

If my partner returns I will not
stop him from killing you.

STRANGER

I'm sorry... I'm so hungry.

The stranger cracks open the can of beans with his knife, fumbling with a spoon to shovel some beans into his mouth. After cramming a few spoonful's into his mouth he pauses, gags, and then spews the beans onto the ground.

GRETA

No good?

The stranger gives a manic half-smile.

STRANGER

Must be fixin' for somethin' different.

The stranger slowly begins walking towards Greta.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

That man... He your husband?

Greta, with the rifle still propped against the ground, lets it fall forwards into her left palm to point in the stranger's direction.

GRETA

Back up.

STRANGER

You smell real nice. I never smelled that before.

GRETA

I said, "Back up."

STRANGER

I'm sorry, I'm just so hungry.

GRETA

I will not say it again.

The stranger continues walking forwards, now only a few feet from Greta. He licks his lips then brushes flecks of bean from his mouth with the back of his hand. He takes another step forwards as Greta racks a round into the chamber.

GRETA (CONT'D)

Step ba--

A sharp crack, Greta flinches back slightly. The stranger falls limply on his side, blood pouring out of the side of his head. Ellis stands on the other side of his smoking pistol. He grins.

ELLIS

Well, it's all ours now, ain't it?

CAMP - THAT NIGHT

Greta and Ellis sit on opposite sides of their campfire, two additional backpacks are fully packed next to each of their tents.

ELLIS

Eat more, wastin' whatever we
leave.

Greta tosses her can into the flames.

GRETA

Not hungry.

ELLIS

Hmph. Suit yourself.

Ellis pulls another can from the fire, wrapping it in his bandana and blowing on the hot beans.

Greta stands, scanning the forest around them. She glances towards the stranger's old camp, now obscured by darkness. His corpse lies in shadow, only his feet illuminated by the flickering glow of their fire.

INT. TENT - LATER

Greta checks her rifle before lying down, placing it to her right. She lies down and shuts her eyes taking deep, level breaths.

KKRRRNNCHH... --A loud crunch, just like the night before. Greta's eyes open and she immediately, silently rises to the balls of her feet. She lifts her rifle from the floor as the giant antlered beast's silhouette is cast across the canvas of her tent.

The beast lumbers towards the tent, crossing around towards the flaps that lead inside. Greta's muscles tense as she prepares to launch towards the beast.

She springs out of the tent, into the--

CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Standing at the other end of her rifle is Ellis, sweat dripping down his brow. He stares at Greta, not in surprise or fear but in a sort of thirsty curiosity.

GRETA

Ellis, what the hell?

ELLIS
Sorry for wakin' you. Some trouble
sleepin'.

Greta looks out over the camp. Ellis doesn't take his eyes off her, he licks his lips.

GRETA
You see something out here?

ELLIS
Just you.

Ellis chuckles to himself but doesn't smile. Greta looks at him for a long second before backing towards her tent.

GRETA
Get some sleep. We are moving out
early tomorrow.

Ellis nods, half-smiling.

TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Greta lays herself down gingerly on her cot, pulling her blanket to her waist. She stares up at the ceiling of the tent, listening.

The ambience of the forest creeps in growing louder and louder. Seconds pass, maybe a minute. Leaves crinkle outside of her tent, then again and again as Ellis finally, slowly moves away from the outside of her tent.

FADE TO BLACK:

The ambience of the forest continues, transitioning from the insects of the night to the birds of the early morning. A sound: a wet crunch then a sound like tearing fabric. A smacking, dripping noise both liquid and solid.

CUT TO:

TENT - NEXT MORNING

Greta opens her eyes. Sitting up to look curiously out of the flaps of her tent.

CAMP - DAY

Greta emerges, holding her rifle loosely in one hand. She looks towards Ellis' tent: empty.

The fire is nothing but embers now, not relit for breakfast. The cans of beans from last night lay strewn about in the ashes. Greta turns towards the source of the wet, crunching noise.

She crosses the middle camp, towards the stranger's. Slowly, a figure comes into view. Ellis' back is to her. He squats, hunched over the stranger's body. As Greta rounds the tent she steps on a twig that snaps loudly. Ellis turns suddenly to look up at her, face covered in blood and bits of raw meat. He licks his lips. The stranger's body oozes blood from a cavity in his chest, splayed at Ellis' feet.

ELLIS

I-- ... I was hungry. I was so hungry. I'm sorry. I couldn't help myself. I was--

Greta backs away slowly at first but as Ellis gets up and starts walking towards her, arms out, pleading, she breaks into a sprint, bounding over their campfire, scooping up her old empty pack and running into the trees. She runs, rifle in both hands, pushing through the brush and branches of the forest.

KRRNCH. KRRRNCH! KRRNCH!! --the crunch of heavy footfalls gain frequency behind her, growing louder and louder, closer and closer. An inhuman sound, like a crying animal, rings through the forest. Greta slams her forearms over her ears, eyes half closing. Her foot catches on a root and she falls to her knees.

The thuds grow louder: closer. Greta scrambles forwards, grabbing her rifle. A black shadow falls across her, obscuring the sun. She takes in the full breadth of THE CREATURE's shadow: a massive deer skull atop a fur covered body with elongated arms ending in long sharp claws.

Greta whips around to face the monster but finds herself only a few feet from Ellis, his front covered in blood and viscera. The giant antlered beast stands behind him in ominous silhouette. Ellis is half-smiling, half-grimacing.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

I don't feel-- ... I'm not hungry anymore. I promise.

END.