

TOOTH & CLAW

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAINS - MORNING

Winter consumes the thick forest while a thin layer of fog weaves between the white flecked pines.

A speckled brown and white cottontail lays on the ground with a snare wrapped around its neck. Eyes wide. Still breathing.

A man draped with animal skins and moth-eaten clothes reaches down, removing the rabbit from the trap. He squeezes tightly around its neck.

There's a faint squeal then a muffled SNAP. It last but a moment. This is CALEB (40's).

He effortlessly resets the trap by making a noose, pulls the wire through, then fastens it to a tree. He places twigs and leaves around in order to cloak it with the earth.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Footsteps are heard as we follow ABRAM(40's), broad and strong with a dauntless working mans appeal clothed with a badge and a side pistol, through the forest.

He stops and leans down, picking up the butt of a hand-rolled smoke.

He breaks it up then smells his fingertips.

He continues forward, taking notice of footprints stomped into the slush.

Smoke protrudes over the top of the trees.

EXT. CAMP - MORNING

A flame crackles as Caleb places a few logs into the fire, then takes a seat. He grabs his shoulder, then gently moves it around, warming it up.

He grabs a rabbit and skins it with little effort; breaking the foot, then pulling back the fur from the body cleanly. It takes seconds.

A twig cracks and Caleb jumps to his feet, pistol drawn at Abram. Their eyes locked.

ABRAM

Whoa there Caleb. Didn't mean to startle you.

Caleb stands hesitant for a moment. They both taking each other in.

Abram cautiously points to a kettle resting on the fire.

ABRAM (CONT'D)

Any left?

Vigilantly, Caleb pulls his gun down.

CALEB

Come on then.

Caleb removes the kettle, pours a cup of coffee and extends it to Abram.

ABRAM

Long time.

CALEB

Has it?

Abram sips from the tin as Caleb grabs another rabbit and continues stripping.

ABRAM

Little over a year now. Maybe more.

CALEB

Well, if you're here to visit, make yourself useful.

Caleb tosses a rabbit to Abram.

Abram leans down, picks it up, breaks the leg, pulls back the fur clean from the body.

Caleb watches intently, then grabs another rabbit.

ABRAM

It's good seeing you.

Caleb nods, with a heavy heart.

CALEB

Bit far for coffee.

ABRAM

Wanted to talk with you. Curious how you're doing.

CALEB
I'm just fine.

ABRAM
Good.

Abrams takes another sip from the cup. Buying a few more moments as he searches for the right words.

ABRAM (CONT'D)
You remember Ned Pendleton? He grew up around the corner.

CALEB
A bit.

ABRAM
Well, he went hunting a few days back, but never came home.

Caleb pulls out a pouch of tobacco and begins to roll a smoke.

ABRAM (CONT'D)
His wife reported it, so we sent out a search and rescue. Didn't take long, about a mile from here we found him. Stiff as hell. Bullet right to the head.
(beat)
You notice anything unusual the last few days?

Caleb lights the cigarette.

CALEB
You tend to notice a lot of things living out here. Some you can't explain.
(beat)
Most you don't want to.

Abram straightens up and finishes his coffee.

CALEB (CONT'D)
And from the way you're put, I suspect I don't need to.

Caleb stares at Abram dead in the eyes.

ABRAM
I'm just here to find who's responsible.

CALEB
Always the hero.

ABRAM
No, I'm doing what's right.

CALEB
By you? Or that tin?

ABRAM
An innocent man is dead, Cal.
Justice has to be served. No two
ways about it.

CALEB
The same way it was served for my
Evelyn?

You can see the words sink deep into Abrams soul.

ABRAM
Don't do this Cal.

Cal moves to his feet.

CALEB
This been a long time coming. You
and me.

Abram watches Caleb's hand move toward his gun.

ABRAM
Cal, please. This isn't the wild
west.

CALEB
I don't seem to see it that way.

ABRAM
If only Evelyn could see you--

A look comes over Caleb and both men quickly draw guns.

CALEB
Don't you bring her into this.

ABRAM
I'm sorry. I don't know how many
more times I can tell you.
(beat)
Let's just put the guns down. Talk
through this.

CALEB

You know I ain't gonna go with you.
I wont.

ABRAM

You have to answer for what you
done.

CALEB

Sorry to disappoint.

ABRAM

You've been out here too long,
brother.

CALEB

I have a right to protect what's
mine.

ABRAM

From your own kind?

CALEB

I let go of my kind along time ago.

ABRAM

We're not animals!

Caleb looks across at Abram.

CALEB

We're not?

Abram rests on the words. Taking in his surroundings.

BOOM!

A red mist comes from Abrams chest.

BOOM! a flash from Abrams pistol as he falls to the ground.

The silence is absolute.

A boy steps out from the trees. He's dressed in furs. This is
SETH (14).

Shaken, he looks over Abram who is leaned against a tree with
bullet to the chest. His eyes widen as he sees the blood.

Seth heads over to Caleb. A bullet wound to the gut.

SETH

Dad, what do I do?

Caleb has one hand over his stomach as blood pumps through his fingers. Seth's face is pale and frightened.

They both stare at the wound, then at each other.

CALEB
What I taught you.

SETH
I can't. Let me get you some help.

CALEB
No. Leave me.

The sun begins to peak over the mountain.

Seth gets up, taking his rifle and putting it to his shoulder.

Caleb peers down the barrel.

CALEB (CONT'D)
You'll be alright.

BOOM.

Abram and Caleb lay motionless. Their blood stains the pure white snow.

Seth is left standing in the echo of the gun fire.

BLACK.