

“Track, Sight, Target, & Commit.”

As I stared at the Big Hairy Thing, it got up on its hind legs and with its huge claws extended outward, came at me emitting a low grunt like sound. I stood there, the gun barrel pointed at its mid-section, ready to shoot. Sweat began to form on my brow and trickles down my face, the bear approaching closer. The gun barrel started to shake, the perspiration blurring my eyes, my finger crotched on the trigger. I pulled the trigger.

Nothing happened. I jerked the trigger again, waiting for the sound. Kablam!

But the only sound I heard was the deep grunt; now louder growl of the furry creature, its mouth agape, teeth snarling. Its arms reached out five feet from me. It was so close I could smell the hairs on its hide. Saliva dripped from the black bear's lips.

I threw the rifle. Panicking, I reached for the revolver that hung from the leather belt around my waist. The holster was empty! The bear's arms now encircled me; its sharp claws digging at my skin, its mouth inches away from my face. I reached for my hunting knife and brought it up.

The blade began tearing at its flesh, ripping open the outer hide. The bear howled and tightened its grip on me. I stabbed at the demon's neck. Blood began pouring out and the wild thing clutched my left ear with his vice-like jaws.

I pointed the knife upward toward his head and with one mighty thrust, plunged the steel shaft in as far as it would go.

I heard a snap as the bear's neck broke. White flesh shown from under the black hairy animal's skin and the flow of blood covered me in a red sheet- the crimson river stained me from head to foot. My left ear fell to the ground.

The bear released its death-like grip. I slowly stopped hacking away at the big animal. We both were panting loudly; the bear moaning. Now I was grunting.

We stood there glaring at each other both with quizzical expressions on our faces. I thought of finishing him off. It probably would be the right thing to do.

The bear sat up on its haunches almost in a prayerful stance, looking up at the sky. Tears welled up in my eyes. I couldn't do it.

Just then, my partner appeared over the bluff. Jim quickly surveyed the situation and saw what needed to be done. The hunter brought the rifle up to his eyes, peered in the sights, took aim, and fired two shots.

The animal emitted a high whine and twisted with each shot; the black fur flying off in spots where the bullets impacted the body. The black bear fell to the ground right in front of me. Jim came down from the crest of the hill. He was carrying my revolver. I retrieved my rifle from the pit where I had thrown it, and we headed back to camp.

The dead bear was still looking up at the sky, when we left.