**Big Red/1306**

Several shots rang out in the woods and plowed through an improvised target. Big Red sighed with happiness as he watched his friends having a good time. He wiped his hands on a massive flannel shirt and leaned back against a tailgate, sipping a drink. His group slapped each other on the backs, laughing about the previous work days. At the end of each week, Big Red and his friends escaped the pains of life, going out into the rural woods and shooting anything that could blow up, or make a sound. As Red went for another glass of sweet tea, a loud rumble ripped through the forest. A menacing look slowly spread across Red’s face. A deadly creature in the shape of a colossal wolf had been terrorizing his hometown for weeks now. Doing its destructive deeds in the dead of night, it left a massive trail of devastation for the townspeople to discover in the morning. Big Red had been struggling to hunt down the creature, aiming to end the destruction for once and for all. The only clues Red received during his daily hunts were deafening roars he assumed were coming from the creature. Several flannel-clad, equally muscled men approached Red.

“Still working on finding that beast, Red?”

“Well, I was planning on going out tonight, and if a few of you ladies could help me put a bullet between his eyes, I’d appreciate it.” One of the men chuckled nervously.

“Well, I hate to let you down, Red, but the missus and I are going out to the tavern for a date. Speaking of that, I’d best be on my way. Good luck to you two!”

Red raised a suspicious eyebrow at the obvious excuse.

“Well Hudson,” he said to the other man, “Looks like you’ve been voluntold by our little friend over yonder. Meet me behind my place around midnight with your biggest gun.”

“What for?”

“Better to shoot the Wolf with,” replied Red.

“Roger that,” Hudson quipped sarcastically, returning a mock salute.

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Red crouched down behind his house waiting for Hudson, peering deep into the dark forest. Behind his observing eyes, his mind raced with the previous month's events. Four weeks ago, he had been cutting up logs and piling them into a strap, loading them up onto a truck. The wind howled fiercely, hiding the sounds of heavy paw prints. From inside his Mamaw's house, he heard an ear piercing scream. He threw the logs he was carrying on the ground, and sprinted across the street. His Mamaw’s door was splintered and crushed under an immense weight. He leapt over the fragments and ran to the location of the scream. The hideous wolf that had been terrorizing the town was crouched in his Mamaw’s kitchen, his back scraping her eight foot roof, poised for an attack. Red’s Mamaw was backed against a corner with a large butcher's knife in her hand. Red whipped out his knife from his hip and lunged at the huge creature, who easily threw the hulking man aside, pinning him under its weighty paw. Mamaw ran at the wolf, stabbing fruitlessly. Red, pinned under the Wolf’s paw, could only watch as the Wolf snapped its powerful jaws over his Mamaw, and ran back into the forest.

Hudson silently tapped Red’s heavily muscled shoulder, jolting Red out of his thoughts. Hudson’s face was smeared with green and black war paint, similar to Big Red’s.

Red shook his thoughts away and whispered in a hushed tone, “I think our best plan is to intercept the beast while he is making his way through the woods to the town. I scouted out these woods earlier this afternoon and found an overused game trail. I hope that gun you're toting around packs a punch. His tracks were bigger than any I’ve ever seen,”.

A worried look grew over Hudon’s face. He erased it quickly. “I’ll follow you, Red.”

Red stalked off into the woods, and Hudson hurried to catch up, absorbing the impact of his feet, making his steps quieter. After about 15 minutes, Red approached the game trail they had been following off to one side.

“Let’s wait here, off to the side of the game trail, and wait for that son of a gun.”

Red layed down in the thick foliage, highly alert for the beast to come wandering around. The two men set their immense guns up pointing up toward the game trail. Thirty minutes passed and Red had already shook Hudson up from sleep twice. He was getting drowsy as well, he noticed.

Suddenly, Red’s eyes shot open as he sensed an enormous entity near him. He strained his eyes into the dark forest, but failed to see anything. He knew something was there, just out of sight, and it knew they were there as well. He shook Hudson powerfully and he jolted awake, snapping a branch as he did so. Red froze in terror and he saw two glowing eyes suddenly appear out of the woods, staring right at him. They reflected the light of the moon with an orange hue. Hudson made a whimpering noise as Red bolted a round into his gun. He peered through the scope, but the beast seemed to disappear like a vapor.

Suddenly, razor sharp teeth snapped closed on Hudson’s torso from behind, throwing him into the air. Red heard the scream echo into the forest. He raised his gun and saw an enormous beast, built like a dog, but the size of a large horse towering above him as Hudson smashed to the ground. Red fired three rounds at the beast, and the Wolf crushed Red’s gun under his powerful paw. Red drew a small hatchet from his hip and began hacking away at the Wolf's leg, blinded by rage, remembering what the creature did to his Mamaw. The hatchet had no apparent effect on the Wolf, and realizing that, Red ran to Hudson. He chucked him over his shoulder, grabbed Hudson’s gun, and sprinted into the dark forest.

He made his shelter behind a mound of dirt and set the wounded Hudson next to him. He racked a bullet into the gun and peered his frantic eyes through the scope. Frozen by terror, all Red could do was put his faith in the gun and hope the Wolf would walk across the path of the barrel. Suddenly, the Wolf came crashing through the forest behind Red. He whipped around and stared the Wolf down with a cold stare, feeling the hot breath of the Wolf on his face.

As quick as lightning, Red ran between the surprised Wolf’s legs, grabbed his tail, and swung up on the Wolf’s back, drawing his long Bowie knife. He straddled the thrashing animal’s back, summoned all powerful might, and slammed the Bowie knife deep into the Wolf’s head. Letting go of his knife, Red leapt off the dead Wolf and crashed to the ground with a thud. Soon after, the wolf came crashing down on top of him, crushing Red beneath the immense weight. With the rest of his strength, Red pushed the dead Wolf off his body and dragged himself to the wounded Hudson. Hudson’s torso was bleeding little, and it appeared that he would recover somewhat quickly. Red retrieved some cold water from a nearby creek and splashed it over Hudson’s face, waking him up from unconsciousness.

“Red! Is that you?” Hudson said, struggling to remember everything, “And what is that thing laying next to you!” Hudson slowly gathered what had happened, filling in the pieces. “Red! You killed it!” he said with joy. “What happened to me, though? Everything hurts!”

Red, too exhausted to answer everything, slung Hudson over his shoulder and trudged back into town. He collapsed halfway to his destination and slept peacefully until morning.