

Kemosabe



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

He loved the solitude of the mountains, and as he dismounted his horse he smiled as the usual thoughts and emotions washed over him. His ex-wife sarcastically called it the Zen of the Mountain Man, which he thought was a perfect fit. To him, well, to family going back a half-dozen generations these mountains were home, and in a lot of ways he knew his way around here better than his apartment complex.

He led his horse to a tiny glade and tied the reins to a low branch where he could nibble on the mountain grass. For a brief moment he gazed at the steed and his hand-tooled saddle and was proud that everything he needed to live in the woods and mountains was right there in front of him. It gave him the comfort self-reliant people have, knowing how to use the best tools and equipment and keeping it all in good shape and neatly organized.

He took his binoculars from a saddle bag and strapped it around his neck. From the scabbard came a well-used Ruger Number 1 rifle, a single-shot chambered in 7mm Remington Magnum topped with an equally worn Unertl scope. He was equally proud of his marksmanship; even after he lost the eye he rarely if ever needed a second shot. Besides, if you missed the first shot chances are your prey spooked and ran.

He climbed a hundred yards or so to a rocky ridgeline that gave him a perfect view of the valley below and the mountainside opposite his position. Any shot at an elk here could be up to 500 yards, well within the lethal range of his gun and optics. He reloaded his own ammo, learning the hard way never leave anything to chance or someone else's control. Soon he spied several younger bucks and a stag too big for the youngsters to challenge—for now.

He loved the natural order of nature, how it provided for those who took care of it, and in his mind he was already butchering the bounty that would feed him well for months. He said a silent prayer the stag would keep grazing and present him a solid broadside shot. Suddenly he noticed the elk froze, ears perked and eyes alert and just as suddenly they bolted out of sight. A brief moment later the sound that spooked his quarry rolled up the hill.

“ Fuck! Ignorant mother-fucking assholes!” he swore, already up and moving down to his horse as the distant growl of a big ‘ dozer washed the hills. He unloaded his rifle and leaned the rifle against a tree. He found the ammo pouch he was looking for, each shell tipped with an especially hardened solid metal-piercing bullet.

It took him a while to get a good view of the bright yellow machine as it tore into trees. “ Just great, asshole,” he whispered to himself. Whack down another couple dozen trees and show yourself.” He waited until the moment the machine throttled up, certain the engine’s noise would mask his gunfire. He knew that from experience. He also knew that the metallic ‘ bang’ of the bullet slamming through the engine cover and impacting on the engine, along with the sudden appearance of a shiny hole would get the operator’s attention.

The heavy recoil of his shot rocked against his shoulder. He was halfway to his mount when he heard the motor die into silence. He shook his head in disgust and patted his horse. “ Well, Jumper, just another day in fucking paradise.”

On the way home he remembered the days when his oath and badge would have compelled him to search out and arrest the sneaky SOB vandal. It was <https://assignbuster.com/kemosabe/>

both just a few years as well as a lifetime past. If anyone had the right to a hard-on for the logging interests, he did. He had tried to restore order in a bar full of loggers and lost his eye in the vicious brawl that ensued. At least a half-dozen loggers set upon him, kicking and laughing as the other patrons watched, either uncaring or too frightened to come to his aid. Miraculously he was able to draw his back-up revolver and shoot three of them, killing one, before they surrendered. Luck was with him—it was a five shot revolver.

Insult was added to injury when he was taken off the road and given a job as a dispatcher. His brother-in-law lawyer was able to secure a decent monetary settlement for his injuries and partial loss of sight. Then a new sheriff was elected, nothing but a pawn of the logging coalition, and he was, in the vernacular, “ adios’d”. Pissed as he was. he knew he couldn’t kill anyone, at least not without the heat of battle. But it wouldn’t stop him from ruining their day. Or months and years, he was happy to admit.

As much as he liked the solitude, he wasn’t anti-social, and had more than a few good friends he regularly met up with at old bar. He thought his pal Barney summed it up: the kind of place Hemmingway would be comfortable barfing in. He loved Barney and his bullshit, and found him holding court with a bunch of coeds and beatniks. Barney held his lecture and beamed at him. “ Yo! The Great White Hunter returns! Are we gonna have an elk bar-be-que tonight?”

He glanced at the cleavage of the young girl putting his beer on the table. “ No such luck. Busted. Goddam noise from the logging scares ‘ em into fucking Canada.”

“ Well,” Barney said, “ maybe you need to chase other game.”

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“ Like hell I will.”

“ Take bulldozers for instance. The news says someone nailed a trophy Cat in Gates Valley this morning.”

He raised his glass. “ No shit? Here’s to ‘ em!”

“ Yep.” Barney had a drunken grin. “ Damn shame they’re too heavy to quarter and take home. It’d make a hellofa mount!”