

Strange, CA - Teaser

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TEASER

EXT. WESTERN PLAINS - DAY

SUPER: California, 1865

Wind gusts over dusty plains. Dark clouds hang low, saturated and nearly ready to burst.

A herd of COWS trudge through the dirt, kicking up clouds in their wake. Two RIDERS on horseback follow close behind.

The first rider, THOMAS HAYES, 30's, is a man who's spent the better part of his life driving cattle, and he's got a lifetime of scars and callouses to prove it.

Beside him, his son, ROBERT, 12, struggles to breathe through the dust clouds. His father notices.

THOMAS

Robert!

He tugs on a bandanna around his neck, signaling to the younger cowboy. Robert nods, pulls up his black bandanna, covering his nose and mouth.

Robert rides ahead, speeding the herd up to a trot. Thomas watches from behind, a proud smile over cracked lips.

EXT. VARIOUS - DAY

The cattle drive continues. Over rolling hills, through thickets and shrubs, across a rushing river. All the while, the sun drops lower on the horizon.

EXT. HAYES HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

A small wooden cottage at the edge of a sprawling grassland, barely illuminated by moon light.

Thomas and Robert pick up the pace, ushering their cattle into a fenced off corral a hundred yards from their home. Robert hops off his horse, locks the corral gate as the last cow enters.

INT. HAYES HOME - NIGHT

Robert sits in front of the fireplace, stoking a minor blaze. Thomas lounges on a well worn chair, book in hand. He lowers the book, turns to his son.

THOMAS

You did good today, kid. Better'n I did my first cattle drive, that's for damned sure.

ROBERT

Thanks, Pa. Learned from the best.

Thomas SCOFFS.

THOMAS

Hardly. What'd your Ma teach you 'bout lyin', boy?

ROBERT

That if you gotta do it, you better do it well?

Thomas laughs.

THOMAS

Suppose she did say that.

His eyes drift back to his book while Robert prods burning logs with an iron poker.

A nice quiet night -- SCCCRREEEEEE!!! -- interrupted by a piercing SCREECH and the sound of CHAOS coming from the corral.

Thomas drops the book, shoots out of his seat. Robert follows suit. He rushes to a window overlooking the corral, presses his face to the glass.

It's dark out. Too dark to see the source of the disturbance.

ROBERT

Pa! You think it's them god damn cattle rustlers again?

THOMAS

Hey! You watch your mouth, son. Your Ma'd be spinnin' in her grave, she heard you carryin' on like that.

ROBERT
 Sorry, Pa. Is it though? Them dirty
 fuckin' rustlers?

He tears his face from the glass, faces his father who is
 busy loading a RIFLE.

THOMAS
 No. That ain't no rustler. Stay
 here.

Thomas takes a step for the door, stops and turns back to
 Robert. He pulls a SIX-SHOOTER PISTOL from a holster on his
 belt, hands it to his son.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 You hang on to this, now.

The boy holds the gun awkwardly.

ROBERT
 But, Pa, I--

THOMAS
 But nothin'. You be careful with
 that. I'm gonna take a look.

Thomas grabs a gas lantern from the wall, trudges out into
 the darkness. Robert watches through the window.

EXT. HAYES HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Thomas closes in on the corral fence. The unmistakable sound
 of an animal being TORN APART fills the air. Bones CRUNCH and
 flesh TEARS.

A mass of frightened cattle obscures Thomas' view of the far
 end of the corral. He creeps around the spooked cows, lantern
 stretched out in front of him...

His eyes strain, scanning the darkness, searching for the
 source of the noise. Finally, he sees it...

Blood drips from 3 inch long FANGS. Fierce CLAWS rip apart
 fallen cow's rib cage. Thick SCALES reflect the lantern's
 light.

It's a fucking DRAGON!

Maybe 5 feet tall, 15 feet from nose to tail. Bony spikes
 line the monster's back. Underdeveloped wings on each side of
 a long, serpent-like body with a head that's more RATTLESNAKE
 than lizard.

The creature spots Thomas, HISSESS and bares its fangs. The cowboy freezes in place, terrified. The frightening reptile returns to its kill, ripping off a chunk of flesh and swallowing it whole.

Thomas stands absolutely still.

After a moment that seems to last forever, he slowly he lowers his lantern, raises his rifle, and takes aim.

BLAM!

He fires. Miss.

THOMAS

Shit!

The gunshot spooks the monster.

Snake-like eyes lock on to Thomas as the animal springs into action. The Dragon's massive claws propel it forward, its belly scraping along the dirt.

Thomas cocks his rifle, lines up another shot as the monster closes the gap between them.

BLAM!

This time the shot hits its mark. The Dragon reels and SCREECHES -- but keeps coming forward!

Thomas moves to reload, but he's too slow. The Dragon is right on top of him now!

The beast reaches out, swiping with razor-sharp talons. The blade-like nails graze Thomas' face, drawing a spurt of blood and knocking the cowboy on his ass.

Thomas kicks away, scurrying backwards through the dirt as the beast rears up, mouth agape, fangs reflecting the moonlight. Ready to deliver the killing blow --

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Round after round hits its mark.

The Dragon's skull caves in and sickening mixture of brain matter and bone fragments blow out the other side, soaking Thomas.

The monster collapses in a heap.

Thomas takes a second to collect himself, spits out a glob of blood and brain.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 God damn, that tastes fuckin'
 awful.

He turns to his rescuer, Robert, who's looking a little rattled. His father's pistol still aimed at the lifeless Dragon.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 You ok, son?

ROBERT
 Yeah. Yeah, I'm ok, Pa.

Thomas stands, slowly eases the pistol from his son's hand and places a comforting hand on his shoulder.

THOMAS
 Awful good shooting.

The compliment goes a long way in soothing the boy.

ROBERT
 Learned from the best.

THOMAS
 Boy, what'd I tell you about lyin'?

Thomas picks his lantern up from the dirt, gets in close to the monster's corpse and examines the head.

ROBERT
 What is it?

THOMAS
 (casual)
 Dragon.

Rather than surprise, Robert's voice only betrays a slight frustration with his father.

ROBERT
 I know, Pa. I wasn't born
 yesterday. What kind?

THOMAS
 Western Diamond Ridge, looks like.
 See this pattern here?

He runs a finger along the diamond shaped markings on the creature's back. Robert nods.

ROBERT

Never seen one out this far south
before.

THOMAS

Me neither. Stick to the mountains
normally, feedin' on rock trolls
and the like. This one here's a
juvenile, judgin' by the size of
it.

ROBERT

If that's a juvenile, where'd you
think the --

SCCCRREEEEEE!!!

Another SCREECH. Eardrum piercing, pants-shittingly loud.

THOMAS

Robert, go to the house, now!

ROBERT

But, Pa, you --

THOMAS

Now!

Robert hesitates, watches his dad jam a few more rounds into
his rifle.

Over a distant hill, a gargantuan silhouette of FLAPPING
WINGS blocks out the moon. Another SCREECH and Robert is off
running. He's almost back at the house when the first GUNSHOT
rings out.

INT. HAYES HOME - NIGHT

Robert rushes in, slams the door shut behind him. He scurries
to the window, peers out into darkness. His father's pistol
still tightly clutched in his hands.

The GUNSHOTS continue, one after another.

Robert squints. The gunshots stop. Robert's face inches
closer to the window, desperate for any glimpse of his
father...

SPLAT!

Thomas' body is flung against the window -- well, what's left
of it, anyway. He's been sheared in half, missing everything
below the rib cage.

Robert SCREAMS as his father's mutilated corpse slides off the glass. He retreats to a corner of the room, collapses to the floor. Tears streaming, his father's pistol still in hand.

END TEASER