

MONTANA QUAGMIRE

10 PAGE EXCERPT

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OVER BLACK...

SUPER: QUAGMIRE (NOUN)

1. A soft boggy area of land that gives way underfoot.
"The meadow became a quagmire."
2. An awkward, complex, or hazardous situation.
"The following events became a **MONTANA QUAGMIRE...**"

FADE IN:

EXT. MEADOW - SUNSET

Pink cotton candy clouds hover in the baby blue Montana sky.

An orange gleam from the descending sun backlights the vast mountain range that surrounds the lush, emerald meadow.

In the midst of the grassland is a beaver pond. Fish dance atop the calm waters as they snatch up mayflies.

Nearby, a herd of cattle graze on the pasture. A few calves cavort around each other.

Off in the distance a pack of wolves is on the prowl.

The pack remains unseen as they move into hunting formation. Alpha commences the chase. The cattle are oblivious, but one set of eyes isn't.

A bird of prey, 300 yards away, stares down the scope of a .30-06...

SILVER BLOODSTONE

At the ripe ole age of 67 Bloodstone may look lost amongst this rustic setting. Don't be fooled, this black man is a cowboy at heart. He has the stetson, boots and duster to prove it. A burgundy LeMat revolver is holstered on his hip. A missing pinky on his left hand. Unkempt chrome hair and beard hide most of his face, but his heavy, bloodshot eyes shelter a dark past. A true enigma.

Bloodstone takes a deep breath.

The CRACK of the rifle reverberates across the meadow sending the herd in a frenzy.

The shot misses everything. Bloodstone is ashamed of himself.

BLOODSTONE

Fuck.

Bloodstone cocks the rifle.

A calf has been separated from the stampeding herd. The wolves chase after the youngling.

CRACK! Another missed shot. The alpha gains on the calf.

Bloodstone inhales deeply through his nose. Pauses... CRACK!

The alpha is hit and stops dead in its tracks.

Bloodstone is astonished at his shot. He double checks to make sure the wolf is down -- Clean kill, but the pack is still on the hunt. He cocks the bolt handle back.

BLOODSTONE (CONT'D)

Gotcha you little --

Bloodstone pulls the trigger. The bullet misses its mark completely, and instead goes through the calf's head.

BLOODSTONE (CONT'D)

Shit.

Bloodstone is out of ammo. He looks through the scope -- The pack of wolves drag the calf's body into the safety of the trees.

Buzzkill. Bloodstone hangs his head like a quarterback after an interception on the game winning drive. He breaks down his rifle and gathers his things.

Darkness is fast approaching.

Bloodstone walks towards his kill.

The alpha's carcass motionless in the grassy field.

EXT. BLOODSTONE RANCH - MORNING

A single strip of dirt road leads you to a wooden rambler overlooking the meadow. A patina-orange '91 Chevy is parked out front.

The ranch is a work in progress. To the side of the house is the barn. Behind the barn are the stables. Next to the stables are the half finished goat pens.

The livestock include cattle, goats, pigs, a few free-range chickens and a rooster.

At the moment, the pigs are in a feeding frenzy. They gobble up pieces of raw flesh.

The alpha is strung up by its hind legs. Guts spilled out on the ground. Bloodstone skins the pelt off.

A cloud of dust alerts Bloodstone there are vehicles inbound.

Bloodstone cuts the final piece off the wolf then rams the blade into the flayed remains. He tosses some flesh into the pig pen.

Two Sheriff Department trucks pull up to the house.

Bloodstone slides his blood-stained hand on his revolver.

A pair of DEPUTIES jump out of each truck.

First truck -- AUBURN MODE (late 40's), next in line to be Sheriff, wears his pride on his lip. MOSS PAYNE (20), the Boy Scout baby of the brigade, a deer in the headlights.

Second truck -- GRULLO MIST (late 30's), looks like he sounds. He is short and stocky with a quick temper due to his lack of height... Or possibly his sexual confusion.

Finally, MARIGOLD GARNET (mid 30's), built like a foxy ox. Despite the fact chewing tobacco oozes from her lip, she is rather attractive.

The deputies approach with caution. Grullo's hand rests on his sidearm.

BLOODSTONE

Is there a problem, officers?

AUBURN MODE

No problem, fella.

BLOODSTONE

What can I do for you, boys?

Marigold spits in resent.

BLOODSTONE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. What can I do for you, ladies?

Moss chuckles, but Grullo shuts him up with a glare.

AUBURN MODE

Sheriff wants to meet you. Welcome you to the neighborhood.

BLOODSTONE
 Sheriff always talk in the third
 person?

Auburn is flattered.

AUBURN MODE
 Naw. I ain't the Sheriff. Not yet
 at least.

Bloodstone searches for another.

BLOODSTONE
 Then... Where is he?

AUBURN MODE
 Yeah, well, see, he don't like
 leaving the office 'less he
 absolutely has to.

GRULLO MIST
 Why don't you go wash up?

BLOODSTONE
 Why's that?

GRULLO MIST
 'Cause we're takin' you to see him.

BLOODSTONE
 Oh, you gon' take me?

GRULLO MIST
 That's right.

Bloodstone and Grullo are getting off to a good start. There is a touching chemistry building up here as the two stare each other down. Both of them guard their sidearms.

BLOODSTONE
 And if I refuse? You gon' cuff me?

Doesn't sound like a bad idea to Grullo.

AUBURN MODE
 We'd rather it not come down to
 that.

GRULLO MIST
 Unless that's how you like it.

BLOODSTONE
 I'm sure that's how you like it,
 big boy.

Bloodstone laughs and moves his hand off the sidearm.

BLOODSTONE (CONT'D)

Shotgun.

Bloodstone strolls over to the trucks.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A two lane highway traverses through dense forest. The trucks make a lengthy trip back to civilization.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - FIREBRICK'S LAIR - LATER

Mounted heads of every animal living in Montana. Gun rack filled to the brink. Elaborate mahogany desk. An all black Newfoundland sleeps on the floor.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (mid 60's), furrowed baby-blue eyes, snow-white hair and a crooked smile, sits on a bison skin throne. He is your typical country hardened sheriff. Friendly to the locals, skeptical of newcomers... And rather racist.

Auburn holds the door for Bloodstone as he saunters in.

The Newfoundland jumps up and GROWLS.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK

(to dog)

Easy.

Bloodstone stands in front of the desk. Auburn closes the door and gives the two of them privacy.

Firebrick flashes a toothy smile and offers his hand.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)

Grizz Firebrick.

Bloodstone extends his blood-stained hand. Firebrick rescinds his offer.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)

Can I get you something to drink?

You hungry?

The Newfoundland BARKS!

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)

(to dog)

Hey! Quiet!

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)
 (to Bloodstone)
 Why don't you grab a seat?

Bloodstone is hardly amused that he's been dragged away from his work.

The Newfoundland GROWLS.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)
 (to dog)
 Sit, Nigger!

The Newfoundland lets out a gruff as he plops down. Bloodstone is still processing what he just heard.

BLOODSTONE
 Sorry?

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
 Oh. The dog. My Nigger. I wasn't talking to you, but please... Have a seat.

Bloodstone glares at the dog as he sits.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)
 So, stranger, what do they call you?

BLOODSTONE
 Who's they?

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
 You know. The royal they.

BLOODSTONE
 Oh. That they. I guess if they had to call me something, they'd call me Bloodstone.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
 Bloodstone?

BLOODSTONE
 That's right, *Firebrick*.

Firebrick can't help but chuckle.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
 First or last?

BLOODSTONE
 Last.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
What's your first?

A beat.

BLOODSTONE
You writing a book?

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
Maybe. So, what is it? And don't
tell me it's 'Nigger' either.

BLOODSTONE
As much as I'm sure you would enjoy
that, it isn't... It's Silver.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
Silver Bloodstone?

BLOODSTONE
That's right.

A beat.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
Where you from?

BLOODSTONE
The west.

Firebrick smirks as he searches Bloodstone for answers.
Bloodstone doesn't give an inch.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
Well, better the west than the
south. Got some crazy fuckers down
them parts. You hear 'bout what
happened in... Ah, hell. Where was
that? Kentucky? Virginia? One of
them states.

BLOODSTONE
I don't watch the news.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
Yeah? Well, they pulled some young
girl out of the quags down there.
Pretty little thing too. Hacked up
into tiny pieces.

Bloodstone yawns, peruses the room. Firebrick is skeptical.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)
You married?

BLOODSTONE
Nope.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
Kids?

BLOODSTONE
Always a possibility.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
Just you?

BLOODSTONE
Yep.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
All by yourself?

BLOODSTONE
Yep.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
Must get lonely.

BLOODSTONE
Haven't noticed yet. I do like the
peace and quiet though.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
No doubt. No doubt.

A beat.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)
Pets?

Bloodstone grows impatient.

BLOODSTONE
No.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
You should get a dog. Keep the
coons off your property.

BLOODSTONE
I'll keep that in mind.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
Beautiful piece of land you got
yourself there.

Bloodstone nods his head in agreement.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)
 Yeah. Tried to purchase that prop
 myself 'bout a year and half
 back... Ole Onyx wasn't as venal as
 I hoped he be... How'd you get it?

BLOODSTONE
 I bought it.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
 Just like that?

BLOODSTONE
 Just like that.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
 Shit... I knew me and that old
 fogey never saw eye to eye, but I
 just assumed he had some
 sentimental attachment to that
 place. Didn't think he had so much
 rancor towards me.

Bloodstone shrugs.

BLOODSTONE
 I wouldn't know.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
 I suppose not.

Firebrick studies Bloodstone who grows steadily more
 agitated.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)
 Livestock?

BLOODSTONE
 Cattle, hogs and billies.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK
 Hmm? And you ain't got no ranch
 hands or nothing out there with
 you?

Bloodstone doesn't feel the need to repeat himself.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)
 You gonna be able to keep up with
 all that work? I know some
 buckaroos looking for toil. I could
 give 'em a call for you.

BLOODSTONE

Thanks, but I think I can manage...
Sheriff.

Bloodstone propels himself out of the chair. The Newfoundland springs up and GROWLS.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK

(to dog)

Keep your ass down, Nigger.

The Newfoundland sits.

SHERIFF GRIZZ FIREBRICK (CONT'D)

(to Bloodstone)

Mister Bloodstone, welcome to
Montana.

Bloodstone tips his hat then swaggers out of the office.
Firebrick sneers as Bloodstone exits.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Barren, neat and tidy. A shotgun rests next to the back door.
A pot of stew steams atop the stove.

Bloodstone sits at a quaint wooden table and wolfs down his
meal.

An eerie HOWL echoes throughout the ranch. The pack mourning
the loss of their alpha.

Bloodstone looks down at his bowl.

BLOODSTONE

(to stew)

Guess they can smell you.

Bloodstone gets a spoonful of wolf meat and rips into it.

EXT. BLOODSTONE RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Starlight illuminates the property. Bloodstone steps out of
the house with his rifle and wanders over to the...

GOAT PEN

The gate is only half finished. The billies sleep in their
make shift enclosure.