

Seven Fingers

By

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Storytelling Strategies
Spring 2015

EXT. WOODLAND - WINTER - LATE AFTERNOON

A pair of SMALL DIRTY HANDS are struggling to bring life back to a dying fire. They fail.

NOAM, 12, is sitting on his haunches beside the charred circle dressed in rags and animal hide. His hair is long and sandy, his face pale and still round with youth. His older brother TILL stands a few feet away and begins walking over with hands full of herbs and roots. Similar features: darker hair roughly cut, thinner face, taller, 14.

TILL

Forget about it, we need to get moving anyway.

NOAM

(to himself)
I almost had it.

TILL

Huh?

NOAM

Nothing.
(beat)
Where are we going?

TILL

Back towards the river we saw a few weeks ago, there was good shelter there, remember?

NOAM

The cave?

TILL

Yeah, I think that's where we'll spend the winter.

NOAM

That cave was really cold.

TILL

We'll be fine, it should only take us a day or two if we stay moving, and once we're there I think we'll get through this winter a lot better than the last.

NOAM

We better.

EXT. WOODLAND, BLIZZARD - NIGHT

The exposed strips of the brothers' faces are almost impossible to see through the snow, all that is heard is the sound of wind.

The boys trudge through the ever deeper snow for several paces, Noam falls over something buried in the snow, it takes enormous effort for Till to get his brother to his feet. They continue. Noam falls again unconscious.

Till begins dragging Noam through the snow when a FIGURE appears on the edge of consciousness and vision. Till passes out.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Looking down from the ceiling we see Till and Noam curled together on and under deer pelt blankets on a wooden bed. Sound of footsteps from the floor below, cabin creaking to howling wind outside. Cozy but unsettling.

NOAM
(groggily)
What happened?

TILL
I don't know. This beats a cave
though, right?

NOAM
I don't like this place.

TILL
Alright so it's a little creaky,
but it's warm.

NOAM
I still don't like it.

TILL
(gesturing to the window)
Would you rather still be out
there? An ice cube?
(beat)
Okay, look. We should at least go
see who brought us here.

(CONTINUED)

NOAM

Fine.

INT. CABIN, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Till and Noam enter a kitchen. A fireplace with pot occupies one wall, a makeshift counter another. Shelves line the walls, several filled with what appear to be jars containing a pitch black liquid. Hanging on another wall are a variety of deadly looking CROSSBOWS. From the rafters hang various shriveled herbs and dusty animal pelts. There is a doorway on the far side of the room that leads to the front room.

In the middle of the space is a table at which an OLD MAN is seated with a bowl of stew and an opened jar of black water in front of him. He covers it and moves it from the table as the boys come closer. Though very old, he still maintains an air of vitality.

OLD MAN

You boys should still be resting up, can't have you passing out again.

A beat as the Old Man examines them in the firelight as a Naval recruiter would aspiring soldiers. The silence is filled again with sounds of the outdoors and creaking floors, now complimented by the crackling flames. He gives a rasping sigh.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Well come on then, sit down. Got stew for you.

Till and Noam sit at the table as the Old Man serves them stew, pouring the last of it into their bowls. Noam's gaze is locked on the Old Man's hands, on which there are seven fingers each. Each hand is perfectly symmetrical.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

(a chuckle)

You don't get to be the best hunter around with just any old hands.

NOAM

The best?

OLD MAN

Yes sir, far as I'm concerned anyway.

(beat)

Least I was. Those days are gone.

(CONTINUED)

A few more quiet moments as they sip their stews.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
You two know much about hunting?

TILL
We get by I guess.

OLD MAN
Didn't look like you all were doing
too well when I found you.

TILL
We've been worse off before.

Noam lets some of the watery stew run off his spoon and watches it plink back into the bowl. Till and the Old Man watch this and lock eyes again.

OLD MAN
Then good. You two can help me put
some meat back in that stew. Either
of you know how to use a bow?

Another moment as Till hesitates to reveal another shortcoming.

NOAM
(looking at Till)
We can learn, right?

TILL
Yeah, we can learn.

OLD MAN
Good. We'll get started in the
morning, snow'll be too deep to
hunt before long.

EXT. WOODLAND - MORNING

The trio walk among the trees, striking out for a place to begin hunting. The brothers are still looking spent from the night before, but the Old Man seems pleased as he whistles a melodic, if creepy, TUNE. The three are all carrying rucksacks, the Old Man a hefty crossbow, and the brothers longbows.

The Old Man suddenly stops whistling and holds up his hand.

(CONTINUED)

OLD MAN

Hold up.

The Old Man directs their attention down a gentle slope as a deer leaps into view thirty meters away, brown on white snow.

OLD MAN

Now pay close attention.

(beat as the hunter takes aim)

Gotta close one eye. Take a deep breath. Let half it out, hold it, then...

All eyes are steady on the deer. The Old Man's hands are noticeably handling the altered machine using all 14 of his fingers. We see him squinting in profile and as he fires.

The shot nails the deer in its hind leg and it runs, bleeding and panicked, into the woods. Tension vanishes.

OLD MAN

God dammit.

(sighs)

Come on now, let's go. It'll bleed out sooner or later.

The group walks quickly after the deer, following the trail of blood on the snow.

They eventually come to the end of the trail and find the deer half submerged in a pond of almost opaque black water.

OLD MAN

Dammit. Bastard drowned himself.

TILL

What's wrong with that pond?

Till takes a step in the direction of the pond.

OLD MAN

Nothin's with that pond.

TILL

But why is it so black?

OLD MAN

Doesn't matter to you. Come on now, that animal's useless to us.

(CONTINUED)

NOAM

But can't we just pull it
out? Look it's not even sunk down
all the way.

Noam crouches and leans over the lip in the earth, reaching
for the bolt sticking out of the deer's leg.

OLD MAN

I said leave it!

The Old Man grabs Noam and yanks him back looking flustered.
Breathing heavily, the hunter has a look in his eyes that
silences the brothers.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

(calming down)

It ain't worth our time. Now let's
go, it's a fine enough start. We'll
have some good meat by sundown.

INT. CABIN, KITCHEN - TWILIGHT

We're looking down at a table as the hunter's big hand thuds
down a few dead squirrels and an emaciated looking rabbit
with fresh arrow wounds.

The Till and Noam are standing close by with neutral, glazed
expressions on their faces. Everyone is disappointed with
the day's haul.

The Old Man sits down heavily in his chair, breathing hard
through his nose.

OLD MAN

That's not gonna cut it. That just
won't cut it. Till, you're going
back out.

TILL

What?

OLD MAN

There's another blizzard on the
way, so you'll have to be quick
about it.

TILL

But it's almost night.

(CONTINUED)

OLD MAN

You don't think I know that, boy?
Now go on. And don't come back
empty handed. Meantime I'm gonna
show Noam here how to get meat off
these bones.

(to Noam)

Go get me that knife off the wall
there.

(back at Till)

I said go!

Noam retrieves a large knife and exchanges looks with Till
as Till exits, closing the door behind him.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

The door closes and we get a shot similar to that of the
animals on the table, but this time it is of Till's hands
filled with roots and herbs.

Till walks into the kitchen, face red from the cold. The Old
Man and Noam sit at the table with the animals, skinned and
raw, in front of them.

TILL

There's nothing out there.

OLD MAN

What'd I tell you about coming back
empty-handed?

TILL

I searched everywhere, this was all
I could find without any moonlight.

OLD MAN

Has it started snowing yet?

TILL

No, not yet, but the clouds are
real heavy.

OLD MAN

Then there's still some time. Noam?
since your brother can't seem to be
of any use, you're up.

TILL

What?! You can't send him out
there!

Noam shrinks back and the Old Man and Till continue to yell.

(CONTINUED)

OLD MAN
Hush boy! You wanna starve out
here?

TILL
We have what we killed today, won't
that be enough?

OLD MAN
You think a few rodents will keep
us fed until we can get back out
there?

The Old man stands up and walks over to Till, towering over him.

TILL
We've lived longer on less!

OLD MAN
And look where that got you!

TILL
Bu-

NOAM
I'm going.

The Old Man and Till turn to see Noam hefting an oversized crossbow with a quiver of bolts on his back heading out the door.

TILL
Noam, don't-

Till is cut off again as he moves towards his brother as the Old Man grabs his shoulder and Noam closes the door.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Noam marches confidently through the snow as the wind begins to pick up. A few snowflakes begin to drop.

INT. CABIN, KITCHEN - NIGHT

OLD MAN
Now sit your ass down and do what I
do.

The Old Man slides a dull knife over to Till and begins cutting up the meat. Sullen, Till follows suit.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Noam arrives at the hill where the Old Man shot the deer, looks down the slope and walks in that direction.

Arriving at the bottom of the hill, Noam finds the blood from earlier under an increasingly swift coating of snow and follows the trail.

INT. CABIN, KITCHEN - NIGHT

OLD MAN

I'm gonna step out to get some snow to melt, you finish up on that last squirrel.

As soon as the door closes behind the Old Man Till runs to the wall and grabs a much sharper knife which he stows in his jacket and quickly sits back down just as the Old Man reenters.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Noam finds the black pond which looks especially sinister without any light. Crouching down, he finds the drowned deer and begins to reach for it, grabbing hold of the bolt.

As he begins to pull, the lip of the pond suddenly gives out under Noam, and the boy and deer fall under the surface.

Noam comes up once, gasping for air, but it is clear the heavy equipment is weighing him down. He goes back under. Coming up again, his gasp is unnaturally deep.

INT. CABIN, VARIOUS - NIGHT

The Old Man has his back to Till while tending the pot of boiling water, adding in chunks of meet and herbs, gently humming his tune.

Till pulls his knife from his jacket and creeps towards the Old Man.

Just as Till is close enough to strike, the Old Man whirls around and knocks Till to the ground, sending the knife across the room.

OLD MAN

The hell do you think you're doing?! I've had enough of this.

(CONTINUED)

The Old Man brings down the scalding-hot fire poker he's wielding and clips Till's leg as the boy tries to roll away, burning his thigh.

Till gets up and stumbles towards the front room to exit the cabin, grabbing the knife on his way.

As Till crosses into the front room there is a sudden thud as bolt appears in his calf, sending him to the floor again.

The Old man has one of his crossbows in hand and walks into the front room.

OLD MAN

You never listen, do you son?

As the Old Man is reloading his weapon we hear a familiar TUNE being whistled from off camera.

Noam is standing in the doorway with the freshly severed head of a deer in one hand and the crossbow in his other, casually whistling. Blood is dripping from the knife on his hip and his SEVEN FINGERED HAND neatly fills in all the weapon's positions. He tosses the head down in front of the hunter.

TILL

Noam!

The Old Man turns and looks pleasantly surprised at Noam.

OLD MAN

Well shit, look who-

The Old Man is cut off by a loud CHUNK and a bolt sprouts from his head, blood coloring the wall behind him. Noam is calmly humming the TUNE and Till, now in a small pool of his own blood on the floor, is shocked into silence as the Old Man falls dead next to him.

Still humming, Noam's hands seem to just maybe begin the motions of reloading the crossbow.

CUT TO BLACK

END TUNE