

Crosshairs

By Peter Templeman

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1 **EXT. EDGE OF FARM - AFTERNOON**

1

Up close on the base of a sturdy wooden fence post, rooted in fresh soil. It stands staunch and still against the shuffling haze of bush-scrub beyond it.

In the soupy background, a sharper movement creeping this way. A car. Drifting closer. A rusted old brown Range Rover leading with its bull-bar. It quietly rolls up and idles a few metres from us.

A figure gets out the passenger side and ties something to the bull-bar. He treads this way, off-screen. Someone calls from the car.

 BEAU (O.S.)
 Not there, the hinges.

BOOTS step into frame, close to the base of our fence post.

 BEAU (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Just-- Loop it then wrap the hinge.
 The top one.

At a HINGE near the top of the post, a pair of HANDS fumble with a snatch-strap.

The end is looped over the post, the strap wound twice around the hinge itself. The hands test it with a tug.

SLAM! --

2 **INT. STATION WAGON - SOON**

2

-- AS the passenger door shuts and JAMIE peers out the windscreen at his work. He's seventeen and keen.

 JAMIE
 Can't we just climb over?

His older brother BEAU ignores him as he eases the car back till they feel the length of the strap.

INT/EXT. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

The deep tread of a tyre grips at the earth.

Beau's boot tweaks the accelerator.

The hinge of the gate creaks against the pull.

Beau's eyes steely, fixed on the gate.

He eases the pedal down further.

The strap strains at the bull-bar, engine humming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The tyre spits gravel then locks in again.

The fence post starts to warp with the drag, the steel hinge gripping to it defiantly.

Beau fixed on the operation -- A big padlocked gate, their strap wrapped to the hinge on the other side.

JAMIE (O.S. (CONT'D))

Is it that far from here? Why don't we just--

BEAU

Shut up.

Beau fixed on the fence-post. It creaks. The engine revs. Tyres skid and grip, kicking up dirt. The wood of the fence-post cracks, splinters, and the whole thing is ripped clean out of the ground.

The 4WD lurches back, tearing the gate open backward.

Jamie stares wide-eyed and galvanised at the carnage. Looks to his brother.

BEAU (CONT'D)

Soils still loose from last time.

Jamie nods at him, trying not to beam. Beau just sits there. Silence.

BEAU (CONT'D)

You gonna get the strap or you wanna take the gate with us.

Jamie snaps to and scrambles out of the car.

JAMIE

Yep.

SOON.

High and Wide we can just make out the kid as he scurries back in with the strap. The Range Rover rolls through into the property, flanked by paddocks and thick bush as it creeps along the fire-break.

TITLE.

CUT TO:

GUN SCOPE VISION - LATER

Through the gun's telescopic lens we see about fifteen sheep loitering in an open grazing paddock.

The crosshairs float unsteadily from one animal to the next.

4 CONTINUED:

BEAU (O.S.)
Keep breathing.

JAMIE (O.S.)
I am breathing.

BEAU (O.S.)
You got one?

The scope singles one out and settles.

JAMIE (O.S.)
Yep.

BEAU (O.S.)
Okay. Breath in.

Jamie inhales sharply.

BEAU (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Easy.
(pause)
Now breath out.

Jamie breaths out. The tremble in the scope finally settles.
Silence.

BEAU (CONT'D)
Fire.

CRACK! Blood sprays from the back of the Sheep's head. The rest of the flock bolt.

5 **PADDOCK- THAT MOMENT**

5

Jamie lifts his eye from the sight. Looks to his brother for approval.

BEAU
Nice.

6 **PADDOCK - LATER**

6

The brothers haul the dead sheep back through the field. Beau has the front legs, Jamie the back. The undulating paddock stretches out before them as the boys head toward the tree-lined fence. They're a fair way from their car.

JAMIE
We get the spit from Sorbsy's?

Beau nods.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
What if Mum asks where the sheep's from?

6 CONTINUED:

A beat. Beau suddenly stops. Tilts his head slightly. Listens. Birds. A gentle breeze pushing through the nearby trees. In the distance something else is there...

JAMIE (CONT'D)

What is it?

Beau doesn't move.

A low rumble, far away. Getting closer fast. Beau and Jamie lock eyes.

BEAU

Go!

Beau drops his end of the animal and bolts. Jamie scrambles after him. They hurtle toward some thick scrub at the distant end of the paddock.

Behind them, a LAND CRUISER charges over the crest of a hill.

Beau is already lengths ahead of his brother. The Truck quickly bares down on Jamie - running for his life.

A SHOTGUN appears from the driver's window and fires into the sky.

Jamie instinctively ducks, throws his arms in the air and stumbles to a halt.

Beau keeps sprinting ahead to where the paddock meets the bush.

7 **THE LANDCRUISER.**

7

Skids up next to Jamie. The driver door flies open -- Mangy steel-capped boots hit the dirt, heavy overalls, a wide-brimmed Akubra, the FARMER stalks to Jamie with shotgun trained on him.

8 **BEAU**

8

Still sprinting flat out, finally hurtling into the camouflage of thick scrub.

He goes in a little way, edges around behind a dense bush. Peers back through its leaves.

100 METERS AWAY

Jamie with his hands in the air. Behind him the Farmer cocks his gun and reloads.

BEAU

Fuck.

9 **AT THE LANDCRUISER**

9

THE FARMER glares down the barrel at Jamie. Rotting teeth clenched through a grey ratty beard. He's puffing, snorting like an angry horse.

JAMIE
Take it easy man.

Gun locked on Jamie, the Farmer moves around to see past him to the stretch of bush in the distance. He squints, not exactly sure where Beau is within them.

THE FARMER
(low; hoarse)
Call him out.

Jamie just stands there. Farmer's eyes shift back to him.

THE FARMER (CONT'D)
Call him!

JAMIE
He's gone.

The Farmer levels the barrel at the kid's head.

Jamie cowers. He sees the Farmer's button eyes blazing and bloodshot. Murderous.

10 **BEAU**

10

Watching intently from the bushes. He hears the panic in his brother's voice.

JAMIE
(yelling)
Beau!

Beau doesn't move.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
Come out!!

Beau crouched in the scrub. Mind racing. Eyes pinned on the scene...

Off-screen he hears a sheep bleat. Looks over in that direction.

He looks back to the Farmer, settled with a decision.

11 **AT THE LANDCRUISER**

11

Jamie sweating it. The Farmer breathing heavy, barrel steadied at the kid.

11 CONTINUED: 11

They wait.

Suddenly--

CRACK! A gunshot from the bushes.

They both duck. The Farmer lurches behind Jamie. Waves his shotgun loosely in the direction of the gunfire. Scans the distance frantically.

A flock of sheep are scattering from the noise. Over to the side, something catches Farmer's eye. He stops--

-- In the distance, lying on the ground where the flock was... Is that--?

12 **GUN SCOPE VISION - THAT MOMENT** 12

It's clearer through Beau's rifle sight. The SHEEP's back legs twitch as it lies in the dirt, shot.

13 **BEAU** 13

raises his eye from the sight. He turns evenly back toward the Land Cruiser. Watches.

14 **AT THE LANDCRUISER** 14

The Farmer staring out at this new carcass. He blinks. Incredulous.

He glances back toward the distant bushes. Then to Jamie.

Panicked, he hurls the kid forward and trains the gun on him again. Scours the length of bushes concealing his shooter.

CRACK!! Another shot from the bushes. The flock scatters again.

15 **BEAU** 15

Shooting at the sheep. He fires off two more rounds at the galloping flock.

CRACK... CRACK!!

He looks back to the Farmer again, gamely seeking a reaction.

16 **AT THE LANDCRUISER** 16

The Farmer seethes. Speechless. Glaring toward the scrub.

17 **BEAU** 17

Staring right back at him. Despite the distance, it's like they're looking straight at each other.

17 CONTINUED:

Beau waits. Watching.

He hardens.

He yanks his rifle into position again, aims out and away to--

18 **GUN SCOPE VISION**

18

The flock. The scope instantly tracks and rests firmly on a target. Clearly the last three were warnings, not misses.

Beau's steely gaze in the eyepiece. Almost relishing this next one...

19 **AT THE LANDCRUISER**

19

The barrel at his back, Jamie cranes over his shoulder at the Farmer squinting toward the scrub.

CRACK! Another gunshot.

They both look in time to see the Sheep drop.

Jamie stares. Even he didn't expect that one.

The Farmer doesn't move. Staring out at the carnage to the fading sound of the flock galloping off again.

He watches for a long moment. Turns back to his hostage.

Jamie meets his gaze. Swallows his fear.

JAMIE

Better let us go man. You won't
have any sheep left.

Silence. Just the sound of the Farmer's raspy breath. He's staring at Jamie. Steely. He raises his gun and steps right up to the kid. Peers down the barrel. Jamie stiffens.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Easy.

The Farmer peeled with rage. Spits the words out under his breath.

FARMER

On your knees.

Jamie doesn't move, terror rising in him. His breath catches as he feels the muzzle suddenly pressed hard into the back of his neck.

FARMER (CONT'D)

Down.

31 CONTINUED:

31

Then he stops as he sees -- the landcruiser turns and heads sideways, not back toward the farmhouse. Beau scans the trajectory and spots the Farmer's priority -- One of the shot sheep still kicking over near the fence line.

Beau steels himself...

32 **INT. LANDCRUISER - THAT MOMENT**

32

Jamie stares at the dash as the car rumbles over the paddock. It's tattered, grimy with grease-stains and dirt.

The Farmer still breathing heavy. Mutters through clenched teeth as he drives.

FARMER

You tear down my gate again?

Jamie says nothing. Staring at the dash.

Suddenly the vehicle stops and Jamie sharpens, turns to see the Farmer grab a handful of shells and climb out with his shotgun.

Jamie cranes back but can't see where he's gone. Then he hears it -- A sheep bleating. Shot but still alive. Behind them. He peers in the side-mirror -- The animal's legs kicking lamely in the air. It's lying on its back, bleating pathetically. Then --

BANG!

Jamie doesn't move. Staring at the mirror to the sound of the Farmer treading back to the drivers door.

Farmer climbs in and crunches into gear. Jamie steals him a glance as they rumble off. He's old. His eyes softer than when they were peering down the shotgun at him. He looks sallow, defeated.

Suddenly --

CRACK--CHINK!

The Farmer flinches.

33 **BEAU**

33

Crouched in the clearing now, shooting at the vehicle.

CRACK!

34 **INT. LANDCRUISER**

34

CHINK!

34 CONTINUED: 34

The Farmer panicked. Rams it into second gear and floors it to get away. Jamie ducks and holds on.

35 **BEAU IN THE PADDOCK** 35

A true sniper, steady as a rock, taking aim...
Fires - CRACK!

36 **EXT. LANDCRUISER** 36

The BACK TYRE blows.

37 **INT. LANDCRUISER** 37

The Farmer loses control as the vehicle lunges to the side.
Skids it to a halt. Jamie watches him. The Farmer flared with horror and fury as he grabs his shotgun and hurls himself out.

38 **EXT. LANDCRUISER** 38

The Farmer charges around the car, madly reloading his gun.
Sees Beau in the clearing, raises the barrel at him.
Beau doesn't move. Crouched and motionless, gun aimed directly back at the Farmer. A stand-off. He and Farmer glaring straight at each other now, both exposed across the paddock. For a moment. Then--

39 **JAMIE** 39

suddenly leaps from the vehicle and bolts toward Beau in the distance.
The Farmer turns to see the kid pelting away, heading for the sniper. Jamie keeps running. Farmer refocuses on Beau. Grimacing, strangling his shotgun. He hesitates. Takes a pointless step.
Lowers his gun.

40 **BEAU** 40

Holding steady on the Farmer as Jamie sprints past him into the bush behind.

41 **GUN SCOPE VISION** 41

The cross-hairs locked on the Farmer. Beau's breath steady. Listening to his brother's footsteps fading into the bush. The old man just stands there. Gun hanging in his hands. Impotent. The cross-hairs framing him.

41 CONTINUED:

41

BEAU (O.S.)
 (to himself)
 Bang.

42 **BEAU**

42

Rises from the sight. He keeps his eye on the Farmer as he casually gathers himself. Pauses a moment as they look at each other across the vast paddock.

Beau turns and strolls off into the bush.

43 **IN THE SCRUB - SOON**

43

Deeper in the scrub Jamie is bent forward catching his breath as his brother strolls up.

BEAU
 I rather have chicken tonight
 anyway.

Jamie looks up at him, breathless.

A beat.

Jamie lunges at him. Swinging haymakers and connecting with a couple. Beau staggers, fending off the attack and they hit the ground in a brawl.

Beau throws him off and gets up. Jamie scrambles back to his feet.

BEAU (CONT'D)
 I knew he wasn't gonna do nothin'!

Both glaring at each other, scuffed and panting.

BEAU (CONT'D)
 I could see in the scope man he was
 bluffing! Jesus. I got you out of
 there didn't I?

Jamie just stands there. Beau gives him a moment more then pushes off. Goes a little way but Jamie hasn't moved.

JAMIE

Deep in thought. Beau behind him, a few metres closer to the car, standing looking back at the kid.

BEAU (CONT'D)
 What.

Jamie steps off back in the direction of the Farmer.

Beau stares. Speechless. Gaping at his brother climbing back through the scrub toward the paddock.

44 **THE LANDCRUISER. SOON.**

44

A punctured tyre lying in the dirt next to the jacked up 4WD. The Farmer is bolting on the spare when he picks up a distant sound.

He turns around --

Across the paddock, JAMIE. Dragging a sheep's carcass by its hind legs.

The Farmer watches the kid haul it along the ground toward him. Jamie straining from the weight of the body, dragging it this way.

Farmer stares. Blinks. His raspy breath slow and steady. He watches the kid for a long moment. Then turns back to the wheel and proceeds to tighten the nuts.

45 **THE BUSH. THAT MOMENT.**

45

The rifle lying in the dirt.

Next to it Beau sits with his back against a tree stump. Staring down at the earth, indignantly rolling a spent shell around in his fingers. His jaw clenched. Morose.

We rise up to see he is sitting back at the edge of the scrub, the paddock rolled out behind him. In the distance, Jamie and the Farmer load the sheep's carcass into the back of the Land Cruiser.

Beau waits.

End.