

'Hang Him'

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EXT. FIELD - DAY

In the middle of an open field on the edge of town. HOWARD, 23, stands on top of an old wooden stool underneath a tall tree.

From a branch, a length of rope hangs. A noose is then placed around Howard's neck and his hands tied together behind his back.

Two MEN in cowboy hats and long leather coats inspect and make sure he's tied up good. Unable to escape, he's not going anywhere.

Howard wobbles on the stool finds it hard to maintain his balance. If he falls he'll hang.

A small crowd of people is gathered to watch. Men, women, and children.

GRANT, 65, steps forward and looks up at Howard.

GRANT

You have been found guilty and sentenced to death. You'll stand there and suffer just as your victim's family has been left to suffer. Once you are no longer able to stand and your legs give out you will fall and hang where you are until dead. And then you will, on my word, be given a proper Christian burial.

Howard scans the crowd. He sees ANNE, 14, staring back at him coldly as everyone else avoids his gaze.

He locks eyes with Anne, both staring unblinkingly at one another.

Cut to.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Howard continues to wobble on the stool, fighting desperately to stay upright.

The crowd of people is all gone and he is alone.

He attempts to free his tied up hands but it's no good, can't get out of the rope.

Anne returns. With a bag slung over her shoulder she walks over and stands in front of him.

ANNE

What did you do?

HOWARD

Does it really matter now?

She places down the bag on the ground beside her. She opens it up and takes out a bottle of water and a sandwich. She shows them to Howard.

ANNE

I'd really like to know.

He licks his lips, he really needs to eat and drink something.

HOWARD

I killed a man.

ANNE

Why?

HOWARD

He was going to kill me. He shot at me. Missed. He took a second aim and I knew he wasn't going to miss again. So I picked up a rock and smashed it across the side of his head.

ANNE

And you didn't miss.

HOWARD

It was a big rock.

ANNE

And they're hanging you.

HOWARD

He belongs to an important family around here. They paid men to hunt me down and do this to me. Just the way things are.

ANNE

You don't sound afraid.

He nods.

HOWARD

Oh but I am. I'll stand for as long as I can simply because I don't want to die. This man tried to kill me because I was dancing with a girl he liked but she didn't like him back. I could have walked away. I could have left the girl to deal with him all on her own but it wouldn't have been right. In the end, I think the world will be better for him not being in it anymore.

ANNE

Even though it cost you your life?

He nods to the water.

HOWARD

I've told you why. Trade.

She opens the water and holds it up to his lips. He drinks.

ANNE

You can't stay on this stool forever.

HOWARD

No.

She looks down at the floor.

ANNE

I want a deal. I'm pregnant. And if my stepfather finds out he'll kill me.

HOWARD

Then leave.

She slowly lifts her head up.

ANNE

He'll hunt me down. If you a fully grown man couldn't escape being hunted what chance do I have?

HOWARD

What's the deal?

ANNE

If I free you, you have to kill him for me.

Howard wobbles on the stool again, almost coming off. He closes his eyes.

HOWARD

It appears as much as I'm your only hope, you're all I've got too.

EXT. GIRL'S HOUSE - DAY

Howard follows Anne up to the front of the house. A quiet street in a small friendly town.

A family home.

Anne places her bag again down to the ground, reaches inside and takes out a gun. She gives this to Howard.

ANNE

My stepdad is asleep inside. Straight upstairs. The first door. Right in front of you. That's his bedroom.

He checks the gun then looks down at her.

HOWARD

Is this really what you want. Teenage girls have babies all the time. You should not feel ashamed.

ANNE

It's not that.

HOWARD

People will know what you've done when his body is found. They will put two and two together. If I go through with this. Will we both have to face the consequences. Don't think you'll get away with this because you won't.

ANNE

He's the reason I'm pregnant.

Howard is stunned.

HOWARD

Oh.

ANNE

He's the father of the baby. He rapes me almost daily. But he always said

that if I became pregnant he'd kill me. I always knew he was serious.

Howard nods and takes down a slow deep breath.

HOWARD

Alright. And after this what will you do?

She shrugs. Doesn't have a clue.

Howard checks the gun. Loaded and ready to fire. He enters the house.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Howard eats his sandwich and walks along the narrow dirt road. He's followed by Anne who drags a suitcase along with her.

She run away with him. He glances over his shoulder back at her. They share a look and a smile.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END.