

# A Tiger Tale

‘Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of the night;  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?’ - William Blake

The metal cage in the musty weather worn barn rattled with the constant pacing of the cat behind them. The regal beast in its fur coat eyed him as he wheeled his cart along. The smell of rotting meat wafted through the air, had woken the tiger from its naps. Dinner time was near.

The tiger exhibited the characteristic yellow orange and black stripes of its species. It measured nine feet long without its tail and weight over 500 pounds. The cat was a formidable adversary as he well knew. He stopped by the workbench to retrieve his cattle prod.

The cattle prod produced a high degree of voltage that, when applied to the tiger’s hide, produced a high level of obedience in the animal. He needed to back the tiger away from the cage door. He needed to enter the cage to dump his bucket of meat. He didn’t need to enjoy the prodding of the helpless animal. But he did. He enjoyed it a lot.

He would sometimes amuse himself by pulling a chair beside the cage and just firing the cattle prod. The resultant

flicker of searing, crackling electrical energy made the tiger jump. He would laugh at that. He would laugh at how stupid the animal was. He hadn't even touched it, yet it jumped. It was a great amusement for him.

He would from time to time, depending on how drunk he was, take the cattle prod inside. He would use it to 'discipline' the wife. Although he never laughed when he used it on his misses, he enjoyed it all the same. Maybe even more than when he used it on the tiger.

Today, he pulled the prod in his right hand and picked up the bucket of meat in the other. He fiddled with the horseshoe pendant he used to secure the gate of the cage. He had won the horseshoe in a game of poker, years before and he regarded the bauble as the reason for his good luck.

His routine was to wedge the horseshoe into the groove that waited for a pad lock. The horseshoe had proven very secure. So secure, he hadn't needed to carry a lock key or a combination in his head.

He fired the prod and zapped the angry tiger. The beast retreated to the corner of the cage as was required to avoid any further electricity. He dumped the contents of rotting meat into the aluminum dog dish on the floor that would hold the tiger's only meal. Before leaving, he took one last stab at the, now snarling exotic feline, but came up short.

He re-latched the cage and forced the once horseshoe jewelry into the opening that would assure the security of those outside the cage. He threw the bucket into the corner of the

barn and replaced the prod in its holder on the workbench. Before he left, he turned off the lights.



It was nighttime when Sheriff Connors reached the Bailey farm, he found a middle-aged woman in distress. He pulled his cruiser next to the farmhouse and grabbing his hat, he opened the car door and approached the shivering lady. He took off his sunglasses.

“Are you Mrs. Bailey?”

The woman took her hand from her mouth so she could speak. “Yyyyes.”

“Are you the one that called 911?”

“Yyyyes.” The woman pointed to the barn.

Sheriff Connors pulled a flashlight out of his belt and walked to the Bailey barn. The door of the barn was slightly ajar. He poked his head inside and shone his light all around the interior of the barn. No movement was detected, so he entered the barn.

The barn was poorly lit, so the Sheriff had trouble making out what had shaken the woman outside so severely. It was then that his light fell on an open steel cage. He shone his light around the metal enclosure but found nothing of interest save an aluminum dog dish.

He pivoted and started to scan the rest of the space. His light fell on something interesting on the workbench. There

beside a cattle prod was a streak of what looked like blood. The Sherriff unholstered his pistol and put it next to the flashlight so the two could act in tandem.

He looked to the floor, and there, covered in blood, was what looked like human remains. They only looked like human because the face had been torn to shreds and the insides of the man were now on the outside. The Sheriff bent over to wrench a bit.

The Sheriff clicked the microphone attached to his shirt. "Heather, send the team over to the Bailey farm."

"Sherriff that you?" Heather responded.

"Yeah, we got a homicide at the Bailey farm. Send the boys. Oh, and alert the coroner, OK?"

"You got it chief."

Sherriff Connors resumed his assessment of the crime scene. There were definite signs of a struggle. Whoever this was, they put up a fight. He kept scanning, hoping to find more clues as to what exactly had happened here.

It was then his flashlight decided to fail. He slapped the metal cylinder against his thigh, but the light was dead. He would have to get another out of his trunk. He was about to turn to leave, when he heard a low rumbling sound. The noise was gravelly, like maybe a dog or something. It was coming from the corner by the tractor.

He crept slowly to the tractor.

“That’s a good boy.” The Sherriff tried to get on the dog’s good side.

The gravelly rumbling grew in both volume and timbre. The sound was forming into a growl of some kind, but the Sherriff couldn’t place it. He knew he had heard that before, but what it was, escaped him at the moment.

He looked around the tractor to the space between the machine and the barn wall. There, crouched in the corner, were two eyes. Two eyes, and they were rather far apart. If this was a dog, this was a big dog. He trained his pistol on the creature with the eyes. His hands started to shake.

He wouldn’t have much time, but the time he did have he wondered if maybe this was why the woman was so upset. He started to back away. They were going to need Animal Services for this one. This hound just might be someone’s pet.

The growl took on an extra layer of volume now and before the Sherriff could react the animal flew the 15 feet between them in the air. The massive beast hit the Sherriff square on and knocked him to the ground.

A flurry of yellow, orange and black fur scraped over the Sherriff’s face as the, now free, tiger ran over him. He was helpless. The fall had dislodged his gun. The animal could have its way with him.

The majestic animal sprang to the barn door in a single bounce. It paused and turned its massive head to the Sherriff, baring its dagger like canine teeth. It gave a final roar before leaving. It leapt out of the door and into the night.

When the Sherriff had regained his composure, he ran back outside to see if the tiger was any threat to the woman. To his relief, Mrs. Bailey was sitting on the porch steps. She seemed to have calmed herself a bit.

“It ran that way.” Mrs. Bailey pointed to the woods.

The Sheriff’s men arrived with the coroner and they worked into the night getting the details of what had happened. It seemed that Mr. Bailey had kept a Bengal Tiger in the barn and that he had been the victim. The coroner packed up his body and drove it away. The Sherriff gathered his men and made a plan to run down the tiger. It was a definite hazard to the community.

The Sherriff advised Mrs. Bailey to stay inside and lock her doors.

“You’ll be safe inside.”

“Thank you, officer.” Mrs. Bailey seemed emotionally spent from it all.

The Sherriff knew his job to be more than just gathering data. HE was a servant to his community.

“Say that’s a lovely pendant you’ve got there.”

“Oh, this thing? My husband gave it to me.”

Mrs. Bailey pulled the pendant closer to the Sheriff so he could have a better look.

“He always said it was his good luck piece.”

The Sherriff looked at the metal horseshoe.

“Mighty pretty.”

