

# Caliber

By : **Rediel**

Aaron Rose, aged twenty-two, borrows his elder brother John's pistol to partake in a duel with the towns pistol for hire, Gregory. He loses the duel and barely holds onto life, the winner takes the pistol, and his brother orders him to replace the lost weapon. Aaron comes across a strange man with a supposedly cursed pistol called "Caliber." Unafraid of the myths Aaron takes the pistol and gives it to his pistol who misfires the pistol and injures himself. Aaron gets other people to try to gun with the same result and it seems like he is the only one capable of wielding the "cursed" gun. He re-challenges Gregory to a duel and hits him right between the eyes winning the duel. A band of "Undertakers" acknowledge his skills and hire him to kill the Indians but Aaron refuses to kill people that have caused him no harm. He returns to his home to find his brother murdered with a note from the Undertakers. He challenges their leader to a duel and wins the wager, meaning that the Undertakers have to leave the town. They do however return and chase Aaron into the wild where he meets a band of Nomads who don't seem too keen on his presence.



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# Chapter 1

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"Do you see that buck?" whispers John. I nod and line up the buck in my rifle sights but realise that the shot would probably hit a tree or be slowed down by the brush before it hit the deer.

"We should move in closer for a better shot." I say.

"OK. Just try not to spook him." John slides down the hillside using trees and brush as both cover and a means to stop him from tumbling down the hill. I follow him down staying within an earshot so I can hear his next hushed command. Since he is the elder brother he always takes charge when we hunt, after all he was taught by dad, dad passed away shortly after mother leaving John to look after a twelve year old me. Ten years later and he's still looking out for me, he taught me how to read, write, shoot and hunt and it's about all I'm going to need in our town. We make good money from selling our fresh meat and high quality pelts. John wavers for me to wheel left to a nearby tree, which allows me to have a clean shot at the buck's right eye, he always taught me to aim for the eye because it damaged less of the pelt. I see him give the signal and squeeze my trigger, the buck makes a feeble jolt, but the bullet pierces its neck, killing it instantly. John eyes another buck making a dash and cleanly takes it out with a bullet through the skull, he moves in to claim our prize, that's when I see them.

"Wolves!" I exclaim pointing to the hillside opposite us. John looks up and cocks his rifle. I rush down into the valley by the stream to join his side, the pack bolt towards us, I pick one off with a clean shot to the head and score a bloody shot on another's left paw, it pounces at me, I crack it across the head with the butt of my rifle and finish it with a quick stab in the throat. John's doing much better than I am and has already taken down three effortlessly, the rest of the pack scatter back up the hillside, realising the error of their greed. John kneels down beside the carcass at my feet, "These pelts are pretty nice," he remarks stroking his chin like how father did when he was in thought, "They should sell rather well."

"I wouldn't mind a new coat!" I laugh and John joins in.

"Unfortunately we need the money more but maybe next time cock-eyed." he teases.

"Just because I'm not a crack shot like you!" I mumble.

"Let's collect our bounty." The wolves are too big to carry back home and their meat tastes horrible anyway, so we skin them on the spot and clean their pelts in the stream, before stuffing the pelts into our game bag. We sling the bucks over our shoulders and return home. John skins and guts the deer and I cut the meat into manageable portions and then wrap the meat in linen to be sold at the market, we wash out the pelts and wash the blood out of our clothes, I change into a fresh pair of jeans, white undershirt, and a beige jacket.

"Aren't you going to get ready for market?" I ask John who is lazily rocking back in dad's chair.

"Nah," he says, "You can go by yourself this time. I'm gonna try and catch forty."

"Gettin' more like pa with your forty winks." I laugh.

"Just bring me back a bottle o' whiskey," he reminds, "An bring back some good money. I got taxes to pay!" I leave the house and head to the marketplace, which is bustling with people, cloth traders, jewellery stalls, butchers, pelt stalls, gun stalls, and of course the usual crazy traders trying to sell some weird kind of medicines that supposedly make you stronger, all line the streets and people move between the stalls buying and selling what they need and what they don't. I go to Hermit at the pelt stand because he seems to be free, he only shows up once every month so he isn't always available, he does always offer the best price for pelts though.

"I'll take all your pelts for one-hundred and thirty dollars," he smiles, he fingers the pelts, letting the soft fur run between his experienced fingers, "I need some new pelts after those damned Nomads attacked my wagon puttin' 'oles in all my darn pelts."

"One-hundred and thirty it is!" He counts out the money and gratefully accepts the pelts, it's not unusual to hear him complain about the Nomads, he tends to travel through the rough areas quite a bit.

"Take care!" he shouts after me.

"Watch out for those Nomads!" I laugh.

## Caliber

"Don't start me on them damned menaces!" he shouts and wails.

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