



Deadball

by

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Based on Actual Events

FADE IN

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - NIGHT

The sounds of sheep BLEATING in the moonlight, as others graze on grass. Quietly munching away.

In the distance, a campfire.

Three tents.

SUPER: SPRING CREEK, WYOMING - APRIL 1909

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

A SHEEP RANCHER SNORES loudly unaware of the SHADOW projected on the outside skin of the tent.

Suddenly, a knife SLASHES through the top of the canvas and slices it open, as the rancher opens his eyes wide and reaches for his RIFLE.

The shadow transforms into rage in the light of the campfire, as a hand with THREE FINGERS grabs the rancher by the neck and lifts him to his knees. GEORGE SABAN(30) stands over the rancher and points a six-shooter in his face.

SABAN

I told you to keep them sheep off my land, now didn't I?

RANCHER

Sheepers can graze here--

BAM!

Blood splatters onto Saban's face. Eyes never blink.

He empties the six-shooter into the dead body, cocking the hammer back with his three-fingered hand. More GUNSHOTS ring from behind Saban, others there too. This was an ambush.

EXT. CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS

Saban turns and dips a nearby sagebrush into the fire then sets the tent ablaze.

Turns and walks away as the tent fire illuminates the rest of the camp...several dead bodies on the ground. As well as sheep lying dead in the distance.

A handful of MEN lay waste to the campsite as the three-fingered man burns another nearby tent.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A simple but expansive cattle ranch in a plain of emptiness except for wind and dirt.

A dirt devil spins along the roadside as a black 1907 Thomas Flyer automobile rattles toward the lone home.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A THREE-FINGERED hand pulls back the curtain. The car drives onto the property and SQUEALS to a halt just outside.

Saban releases the curtain and walks over to the eating table, where his coffee cup sits next to his six-shooter.

Looks back at the door, then turns and picks one up.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A thin-framed, hardened man with a ten-gallon hat as big as his bushy Hungarian mustache exits the car and steels his eyes toward the house. FELIX ALSTON (40).

Alston approaches the door as his hand brushes the leather coat away from the HOLSTER on his hip. The coat gives way to the SHINY brass badge on his vest.

He lifts his hand to knock--

INT. RANCH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

--but Saban opens the door, coffee cup in hand. Takes a sip.

ALSTON

Not gonna have any trouble today are we, George?

SABAN

Want some coffee, Felix?

ALSTON

Not if you made it.

Saban turns his back to Alston and heads to the wood-burning stove in the corner to refill his cup. Pours an extra.

Alston steps inside. Closes the door and removes his hat, then spies Saban's gun on the table. Walks over to it and sits, holster exposed. Eyes steeled on Saban.

ALSTON (cont'd)
But no trouble, right?

Saban crosses the room with two enamel cups in hand, then sets one down in front of Alston, as we see the left hand missing two fingers, just like the right.

SABAN
Try the coffee. Maybe it's got better since last time. What was that, seven, eight years back?

Alston looks at the cup, then the gun, then back at Saban, who now sits across from him.

ALSTON
Well that's not saying much.
(eyes the gun)
I'm going to move this before you go and do something stupid.

Saban lifts his cup. Takes a swig. Puts the enamel cup on the table. Then looks up at Alston, who drags the gun out of Saban's reach. Eyes locked on him.

SABAN
Me? Somethin' stupid? You didn't come all the way out here to Basin just to insult an old friend, did you?

ALSTON
That was some mess you made out in Spring Creek last month.

Saban leans back, caresses the cup with his finger.

SABAN
Spring Creek? Where's that? Don't think I've done much fishing there. You know how hard it is cattlin', got no time for fishin', that's for sure.

Alston's eyes never leave Saban's. He reaches for the coffee cup. Takes a sip.

Winces.

ALSTON
The coffee is better than your story.

Sets down the cup.

ALSTON (cont'd)
In any case, Billy gave you up. The others, too. Confessed his role in it. You need to have better friends.

SABAN
I thought you were my friend.

ALSTON
Who said I wasn't?

Alston stands, drapes the coat back again.

Saban eyes the holster. Then his gun sitting on the table.

Then back at Alston.

Saban slugs back the rest of the coffee and sets the enamel cup on the table.

SABAN
They got no right to graze on my land. No right to destroy my way of life. Man's gotta right to protect their own, don't they?

ALSTON
Or die trying.

Saban looks off. Sighs.

Alston leads him to the door.

ALSTON (cont'd)
Come on. I'll give you a lift.

SABAN
Can we stop at the Red Light Saloon on the way?

ALSTON
Anything to get this godawful taste out of my mouth.

SABAN
The problem is that you sip it.

ALSTON
Oh, that's the problem?

Saban stops at the door and looks around at his home. At his gun on the table. His way of life.

Then side-eyes Alston.

SABAN
Cobb is gunna clobber Wagner in the
Series. You'll see.

Alston smirks, eyes steeled. Those are fighting words.

ALSTON
Keep dreaming. Let's go.

Saban walks through the doorway toward the car as Alston
closes the door behind him...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BROOM FACTORY - DAY

CLANG!

...iron bars OPEN into a large organized prison factory.

SUPER: WYOMING STATE PRISON - APRIL 1911

Saban struts through the open door, calling behind him.

SABAN
I said, let's go! We got contracts.

Saban leads the way as a handful of INMATES carry crates of
supplies onto the broom factory floor.

Rows of PRISONERS assembling straw brooms. In a rhythm.

An assembly line. A well-oiled machine.

Saban directs traffic as to which crates go where, and the
inmates comply. GUARDS nod at Saban, give him clearance.

He's a man of importance here. Of respect.

Saban glances upward toward the large overlook WINDOW.

A PORTLY SHADOW stands above him in the distance. Waves him
upstairs. *Yeah, when pigs fly.*

A tall guard with dull eyes, D.O. JOHNSON (42) walks over to
Saban and prods him along, also glancing toward the window.

Saban chats it up with Johnson on the way out.

SABAN (cont'd)
So, who you like in the Series?

INT. WYOMING STATE PRISON HALLWAY - LATER

Saban looks down at the factory floor through the window from above as Johnson stops him.

JOHNSON
Wait here.

Saban complies. Waves him off with his three-finger salute and looks down at his factory. Humming right along.

Smiles with pride.

Moment interrupted when a stout, half-bald man sidles up next to him and glares down at the factory. His black suit and tie stiff even through his anger. OTTO GRAMM (65).

He turns to Saban.

GRAMM
Managed this shithole for seven years and that son-of-a-bitch Governor replaces me with some lackey Sheriff?

SABAN
What about the factory?

GRAMM
I got to move it to Laramie, which will cost hundreds! We'll need to keep a tight schedule during the transition.

SABAN
And to do that, I gotta keep my schedules. You know, come and go as I want, back by nightfall. Whatever.
(smirks at Johnson)
My shadow's always with me.

He makes triple quotation marks with each of his three-fingered hands. Looks at Gramm. Then Johnson.

Gramm turns back toward the factory. Looks down.

GRAMM
I've allowed you free reign because of your stature with the guards and inmates here and as long as you kept things in line, which you have.
(MORE)

GRAMM (cont'd)
I've even turned a blind eye to your activities in town. I've kept my bargain. I want you to keep yours.

SABAN
Doesn't sound like you have much to bargain with no more.

GRAMM
(turns, enraged)
I have legal contracts, goddammit, and I'll make them stand! Attend to the schedule and I'll make sure that you keep yours.

Saban cracks a grin at him then looks back down to the prison factory.

SABAN
I'll keep the factory running.

GRAMM
See that the contracts are filled.

Gramm looks over at Johnson and walks off toward the end of the hallway near the Warden's office.

Saban and Johnson head back toward the factory, when Saban turns to him.

SABAN
So, what's this new sheriff's name?

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Alston enters to the outstretched hand of Governor JOSEPH M. CAREY (66, bearded, handsomely dressed), who welcomes him.

CAREY
Felix Alston! The man of the hour!

Alston shakes his hand and removes his hat.

ALSTON
Governor.

CAREY
You ready to get those programs we proposed off the ground? Get those roads going?

ALSTON

Yes, sir. I think they'll do as much wonders for the State as they will with the prisoners, too.

CAREY

Yes, the prisoners. Of course it will. Everyone wins.

ALSTON

Wards of the State shouldn't fatten the wallets of businessmen. Let's build roads. Repair others. Upgrade the prison. Give back to community.

Governor Carey pours whiskey into two crystal glasses. Hands one to Alston.

CAREY

Saving taxpayers thousands! It's the perfect platform for when you want to run for office.

ALSTON

I appreciate your support, but I'm fine with where I am.

CAREY

You've got a future in politics, if you want one.

ALSTON

No thanks. I'll stick with the law.

Carey holds out his glass. Raises it.

CAREY

One in the same, Warden. One in the same.

They toast and slug back their drinks.

EXT. WYOMING STATE PRISON - DAY

Grass pokes out of the ground around the modest four-structure prison at the very edge of the small western town.

Guards approach up the walkway with an INMATE in leg-chains, past the solid wooden wall surrounding the campus, and into the main building.

INT. WYOMING STATE PRISON - DAY

The PRISONER is brought into a small ante-chamber, leg chains rattling against the concrete floor. GUARD points to the shower head on the wall.

GUARD
Strip and shower.

The naked man washes himself in the shower. Slowly. Deliberately. His five-seven frame on strong shoulders, jet black hair rinsed well. JOSEPH SENG (31).

SUPER: JOSEPH SENG: DAYS TO EXECUTION - 127

INT. WYOMING STATE PRISON HALLWAY - SAME

Alston hustles along at a quick pace, holster affixed to his side, as Johnson matches strides.

ALSTON
It's been two days, why hasn't the factory been shut down yet?

JOHNSON
Final orders still need to be run. Gramm has contracts.

ALSTON
They can have one line. I need everyone else.

JOHNSON
But sir, that's going to push out the transition for months.

ALSTON
I don't care. We've got roads to build.

JOHNSON
You'll want to take that up with Gramm--

Alston stops in his tracks, spins toward Johnson.

ALSTON
I run this prison how...and with whom...I choose. Is that clear?

JOHNSON
Perfectly, sir.

ALSTON
Then let's get started.

JOHNSON
Right this way.

Johnson opens the door to the broom factory. Alston enters.

INT. BROOM FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

The room full of twenty or so prisoners operates in rhythm down several connected tables in a row.

Bundles of broomcorn are carried to the front of the line then separated and piled neatly. Once trimmed, they are assembled to handles with heavy twine, and stacked.

Rows of prisoners each focused on their task set the pace.

Alston walks to the front of an assembly line, stands on a box, and gets the room's attention.

ALSTON
Listen up! Road Crew starts tomorrow.
I'll need at least twelve strong men.

Saban steps forward, crosses his arms, and smiles up at Alston, a piece of broomcorn in his teeth.

SABAN
I can get a team together.

Alston looks down and sees Saban. Smirks. Steps off the box.

ALSTON
I bet you can. Come with me.

Alston leads Saban out of the factory as they talk together, leaving Johnson behind.

INT. DEATH ROW CELLBLOCK - LATER

A GUARD escorts Seng down the crowded four-level cellblock, as INMATES emerge from the shadows to catcall the new resident from all levels.

INMATE #1
Home sweet home!

INMATE #2
Don't get too comfortable!

GUARD
Shut your holes!
(to Seng)
Keep moving.

Saban steps out of his OPEN CELL into the hallway, signals to the guard with his three-fingered hand.

The guard nods, and steps away into the shadows, leaving Saban to chat with Seng.

SABAN
Welcome to Rawlins. I'm George.

SENG
Seng. Joe Seng.

Saban looks at the empty cell down the way. At the end.

SABAN
Death row, huh? When's your date?

SENG
August 22.

SABAN
Four months? Shit, who'd you kill?

SENG
They say I killed a man and I suppose that's true. I called it self-defense. They thought different.

Saban thinks about it. Nods.

SABAN
Just trying to protect your own. I can respect that.

SENG
What about you? What's your story?

SABAN
Oh, I killed a man alright. But he had it coming.

SENG
That so?

SABAN
Thought he could take what was mine. That was the last thought he had.

SENG
So when's your date?

SABAN
I got twenty years to go. Plenty of
time 'til then. For you? Not so much.

SENG
I'm most upset I'm gonna miss the
Series this year. Cy Young. Ty Cobb.
Wagner. Gonna be a good season.

SABAN
You like baseball, huh?

SENG
I threw the ball with my dad. With
friends. I mean, who didn't? I can
hit the ball pretty good, too.

SABAN
That so? Let me ask you a serious
question, then: Cobb or Wagner?

Seng looks at Saban, a no-brainer.

SENG
Ty Cobb, of course. Best power hitter
in the game. Thought you said that it
was serious.

SABAN
I'm putting a road crew together.
Some outdoor time. Can practice that
swing of yours. You game?

SENG
Hell yeah. At least until August.

Saban grins.

SABAN
You let me worry about that.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - LATER

Alston sits behind his desk, eyes wide. Leans forward toward
Saban who sits across from him.

Johnson stands at ease by the door.

ALSTON
A baseball team? You can't be serious.

SABAN
Sure, why not?

ALSTON
I said I needed road crews.

SABAN
And I got 'em. You also said you wanted to change things up.

ALSTON
I won't be able to get it approved through the Reform Board.

SABAN
It's reform, isn't it?

ALSTON
Yeah, but they don't look kindly to murderers and muggers having fun.

SABAN
Think about it, we'll be outside working road crews one shift. Exercising on off days. We fix up the yard nice. The team is all set, we just need the work.

Alston leans back in his chair, strokes his mustache.

ALSTON
Not even my first week here and you're already a pain in my ass.

SABAN
You know I'm right, is all.

ALSTON
Get my road crews together and get to digging. Do that, and I'll look into the baseball thing with the Board.

SABAN
You got it, boss.

Saban gets up from his chair and heads to the door, as Johnson opens it for him. Saban walks through and chuckles.

SABAN (cont'd)
Detroit is still hot, you see that?

Johnson looks back at Alston, who's glaring at him, then closes the door behind him.

Alston sits back in his chair, thinks.

Then reaches for the phone on his desk.

INT. OTTO GRAMM'S OFFICE - LATER

The rich mahogany furniture offset by walnut and oak bookshelves, filled with leather bound tomes and account books. An oil lamp burning on the table.

It rattles as Gramm slams his hands on the table, startling Johnson who stands by the door, wishing he could leave.

GRAMM
A baseball team?!

JOHNSON
That's what he said.

GRAMM
It's a damn prison, not a playground!

Gramm paces the room.

GRAMM (cont'd)
What about the factory? How are the orders coming? Are we on schedule?

JOHNSON
Warden shifted men to his road crews, leaving the factory short-handed.

GRAMM
Dammit! We have a contract! This is going to cost me even more now.

JOHNSON
There's nothing I can do.

Gramm shoots him a look.

GRAMM
Tell that six-fingered freak to get more men for the factory!

JOHNSON
Yeah, that. Saban's leading the road crews.

GRAMM

For goddam--

Gramm takes a breath. Calms.

GRAMM (cont'd)

You are with him most all the time.
Anything going on with those two?

JOHNSON

They talk all the time.

GRAMM

Talk? About what?

JOHNSON

Can't always tell. Sometimes it's
road crews. Sometimes it's cattle.
Sometimes it's baseball and Ty Cobb.
And Saban's got his friends in town,
too. At the saloons.

Gramm's eyes light up.

GRAMM

What do they talk about?

INT. RED LIGHT SALOON - NIGHT

Johnson sits alone in a corner and nurses a drink.

A WOMAN clad in a corset and black lace stockings
approaches, and he shoos her aside, clearing his view.

Saban at a table across the way. NOISE of the bustling
saloon drowning out his voice.

JOHNSON (V.O.)

Can't much say. The bar's too noisy
sometimes. But I see plenty.

Saban leans into the table of five-other BRAUNY men, money
changes hands. Saban hands a paper slip to a heavy MAN.

JOHNSON (V.O.) (cont'd)

It's the same gambling bars every
night. Red Light Saloon, Club, Buc's.

The man peeks at the slip and nods, grabs a beer. The others
join in, the NOISE gets louder. Saban chugs his beer and
slams the mug down on the table.

Turns toward Johnson and smiles.