

HUNTING

Logan

I had just climbed aboard the ATV that was to transport both me and my equipment to the swamp in which I would spend the next few hours. The first leg of my journey was relatively uneventful as I checked for traffic and pulled onto the newly paved roadway. After traveling a short distance I looked over my shoulder to be positive that no vehicle would strike me as I maneuvered the ATV onto the gravel driveway that began the interesting off-road route. The gravel driveway soon gave to dirt trail that traversed the countryside in a zigzag manner. The trail was abnormally soft and slippery as the ATV fishtailed in the mud. Without even thinking my thumb moved to the location of the four-wheel-drive switch to engage the handy feature. The mud turned quickly to corn stalks when the ATV rocked because of the bump separating field from woods. I squeezed the throttle harder to increase speed, the trees bordering the field rushed past my head as I made my way to the location that the ATV would be parked. With the ATV backed into its designated spot I unloaded my bow and started into the woods.

Splash, splash, each time my sole met the soft soil it was met by a barrier of cool murky water. The ankle high leather boot was no match for the yet higher water. Slurp, a vacuum formed under my foot each time it separated from the gooey mud. It seemed to be the longest short walk of all time, seeking out the next position that I would assume to minimize the soaking of my barely protected feet. Finally, I had made it, I was at the foot of the ladder made of treated lumber showing signs of aging after many years of braving the elements. I took one rung at a time, groaning under the unfamiliar weight, the ladder settled farther into the muck.

HUNTING

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It was huntin' time. I moved slowly and deliberately as I situated myself in the wooden cube made to conceal predator from prey. Then it began, the all important wait.

My heart went into overdrive as I heard a crunch and splash a short distance away. Slowly and as calmly as I could, I turned my head to pinpoint the source of the exciting noise. To my dismay it was the all too common gray squirrel having a good old time playing in the swamp water. Disappointed I turned back around and said aloud to myself, "I have no idea why I'm even out here. There is no way any deer will ever want to walk through all of this water." Not 15 minutes had passed and yet again, crunch, splash, this time I almost didn't even look over my shoulder in fear of another let down. But this was different, it persisted and was much louder. I was overwhelmed with curiosity so again I slowly turned my head to see not a squirrel but a whitetail doe. Now my heart just about flew from my chest as the doe glanced up at me and returned to its trek. I then silently reached for my camouflaged bow, cold to the touch, to prepare for the possibility of a shot. Once bow was in hand I turned one last time and this time I had the ultimate surprise, not only had the doe been joined by another doe, but with another doe and a buck! I followed their every move until my view was obstructed by the tree supporting the homemade structure I was residing in. I then turned to view the deer that have now spotted me because my calm, tedious movements became not so calm and tedious. The two doe had long since fled the scene when I caught sight of the buck standing broadside, facing me, staring me down. I knew this was my only chance at this trophy buck so in one swift movement I had stood, raised the bow, drew back on the stiff limbs until the cams had at last

HUNTING

Logan

let off to allow me to aim, aimed, and finally squeezed the trigger of the release. Effortlessly the arrow sliced through the air toward the buck. The broad head had made its mark just inches behind the muscular shoulder of the buck. The buck then turned and ran deep into the bowels of the swamp with the deadly arrow protruding from its side.

Then it hit me the wave of tremors associated with the biggest adrenaline high of my life. The buck had bounded away in a sickly manner causing the peace of the swamp to echo with deafening crashes as the buck stopped less than 100 yard away but concealed by the thick foliage of the cedar swamp. I then sat back into the plastic chair in order to once again gain my composure to guarantee that gravity would not take care of my next task. Once the tremors had ceased, I gathered my things and descended the ladder that I had climbed mere hours ago. This trek was much shorter and much less concern was paid to keeping my feet from becoming water logged for they already were. Once I reached the ATV I sifted through the contents of my pocket until I had found it, my phone. After the pressing of a few buttons there was a short pause until the ringing had erupted from the earpiece.

“Hello?” my father asked with a bewildered voice.

“Hey. I got one.” I revealed with the calmest voice I could muster.

“You got one what?” my father questioning me once again.

HUNTING

Logan

Before he had the chance to say another word I blurted, “A buck, a nice one too, I think it’s an eight or ten pointer. I think it was a good shot too, the arrow was sticking out just behind the shoulder.”

“Cool, I’ll be over in a bit,” this time he was not questioning me, he was excited.

I then made the journey back to the house to meet Jim, Nick, and my father to begin the second, most important part of the hunt. Once there we made short work of gathering enough flashlights and waterproof boots for all of us to be effective in the search. We then all piled on the one ATV to once again make the journey to the swamp, this time the sun had already made the decent to its home under the horizon. We then began the search for the all important blood that would lead us to the death bed of the trophy buck. Yet after hours of searching none of the bright red liquid had been spotted and the search had been called off for the night.

I had spent the night laying awake and praying that this deer would turn up the next morning. That morning, my father and I made the journey to the swamp for the last time. This was the last hope of finding this deer. After a few futile hours of searching we had yet to find blood. We had given up and were on our way back to the ATV when I looked down and there it was, a brown leaf soaked in bright red blood. At first I didn’t believe it until the blood smeared onto my hand as I caressed the leaf.

“Uh, Dad? I just found blood,” I proclaimed in disbelief.

HUNTING

Logan

He turned on a dime and looked down at the splotch of blood on the leaf, looked up at me and agreed, "It sure looks like it, don't it?"

We then marked the location of the leaf with a segment of bright blue binder twine and continued the search in the direction of the stand to make sure this was the blood of the deer, and sure enough there not 100 yard from the stand my arrow lay in the water covered in blood and hair. Yet still hours of searching we lost the blood trail and were forced to call it a lost cause. We somberly made our way back to reality.

Once home I went through my daily routine of getting ready for school in a slow and depressed fashion. I then climbed into the truck manned by my father and we made our way to the high school. The whole trip there was not a word spoken for he knew that I was down in the dumps. Once at school I obtained a pass to my favorite class, fourth hour Lit and Comp, and made my way to the classroom as if nothing had ever happened.