

Western Voices 2013, English 180, First Place, (Professor, Barbara Ashwood)

A Memory In The Woods

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Just a short year ago my best buddy Dan, his father, and I were walking out of these very same woods: the woods where I failed to shoot a deer last year. This past season was my first year of hunting. We had spent every day of the past two weekends sitting in our tree stands. My buddy Dan and his father are both veteran hunters and shot deer that gun season, and I had come up empty. The first weekend I sat in the stand, shivering all weekend, and I did not have a deer close enough to me to take a shot. The next weekend, I finally had a deer close enough to me, and I shot but aimed too low and missed. I was extremely disappointed. The walk out to the truck that day was the most disappointing walk ever. I was terribly mad at myself for missing. I knew that it would be a whole year before I got the opportunity to hunt again and redeem myself.

A year later, we rolled up next to the entrance of the farm at 3:30 A.M. It was a cold, crisp morning, and a sheet of white fluffy snow covered the ground. The moon shone upon the snow, and as it reflected off, it was so bright you would have thought it was the middle of the day. We pulled the red Toyota Tundra up to the edge of the cornfield. I could hear the cornstalks

The three of us marched across the field, gun slung around our shoulders, and ready to go. I was nervous; I still had not got a deer yet, and I was bound and determined to get one this year. We arrived at the woods and split off towards our separate tree stands. I walked through the brush, snapping twigs and trees with every step I took. I was for sure scaring all of the deer away: for every step I took I could hear one more animal running away. When I finally got to the tree my stand was hung on, I turned my headlight on and prepared for the thirty-foot climb up the ladder to my stand. It was the most dreaded five minutes of the hunt. I hate heights and the thirty feet I climbed up the ladder on the tree seemed like I was climbing up the side of the Sears Tower. I finally got to the top, nestled into my tree stand and fastened my safety belt around the tree so I would not fall out. The wait was on.

I sat in the stand for a half hour before the sun came up, trying to be quiet as possible in hopes the deer would stay in the area and not run away. The sun finally began to rise over the trees. I loaded my gun; I was ready to go. I would not let my opportunity sneak past me this year. The sun had an amazingly orange-ish red color to it. It reflected off of the snow ever so brightly. It was a calm morning with not a hint of wind coming across my face. It was very chilly and a puff of hot air rose out of my nose every time I would take a breath. The birds were chirping as if

that day was amazing. I truly felt like I was part of those woods and being able to hunt and kill a trophy was like participating in the wildlife's "survival of the fittest" that takes place every day. It is was just like a coyote tracking down baby deer or a hawk swooping down to catch a mouse. I had risen to the challenge and hunted down food for the freezer, a trophy to go on my wall, and many memories for a lifetime! I got out of my tree stand, climbed down, and my buddy Dan and his dad came over and took my picture with him. "I've hunted my whole life and have only seen one or two deer like this kiddo," Dan's father said to me. Dan gave me a hug and said, "Way to go Ryan! Your first deer!" We all took pictures around him as I replayed the morning hunt over and over in my head. I knew for sure he was getting mounted and the king of those woods now resides on the wall in my bedroom.