

The Hunting Season I Will Never Forget  
by Danny Mallinson

I am sitting in my room, listening to my i-pod while lightning flashes and thunder rolls. Rain is drowning the earth as I think back on one of the best times of my life.

I hate the city, but I love the country. I love the sheep and cows and pigs on a farm. I love the barn and wide open spaces. I don't have that in town but my cousin Thomas does because he lives on a farm.

In November of 2006 I went to hunt deer at Princeton, Missouri where Thomas lives. We are the same age and like to play outside in his woods. My dad and I drove two hours in the truck to get there. Dad said we were going to get up early so we could get to our spot before the deer started moving. I can't carry a gun because I have not had the hunter safety course yet.

We have developed a way of communicating through hand signs. A downward motion of fingers means to watch and listen. An open palm means stop. Moving the forearm up and down means get down.

My father has a special spot where he killed his first buck. On this trip, I earned my own spot, a completely different spot than my his.

Dad and I were in the field, watching and waiting. I heard something move behind me. It sounded like rustling leaves. I did the signal for watch and listen and I turned around. There stood a buck with at least sixteen points! I could barely keep my mouth shut. I wanted to jump up and down shouting for joy. It was hard to keep quiet. The buck made a circle around us and stopped in a clearing. Dad aimed and fired. The bullet hit the buck but the buck ran. Then Dad turned around and said, "This is your spot because this is where you saw your first deer."

We searched for hours, seeing nothing but a blood trail and chips of bone. We never did find the deer and I felt disappointed that I could not find the first buck that I had ever spotted. I also felt bad for the deer.

We went home for a week. I went to school but I kept thinking about that deer. I wanted to go back to Princeton and hunt. On Friday, Dad met me at the bus and said, "Want to go hunting?"

I said, "Yes!" so we loaded the truck and called Grandpa. Grandpa is a really good hunter. He can read deer sign, where the deer move, and where they eat. He has hunted since he was younger than me. He has been successful many times.

I was surprised that Grandpa came with us because he had been in a wheelchair for a while. He was able to go from a wheelchair, to a walker, and to a cane. Dad played the guilt trip on him by saying, "Dad, I need to take my boy hunting and I'm not going if you're not going."

Grandpa said to my dad, "I don't know if I can. I'll talk with your mother."

A couple minutes later, he called and with an eager voice, said, "Okay. I'm ready."

We went to Grandpa's, picked him up, and drove the two hours to Princeton.

In the woods the next day, I felt fulfilled that I was hunting with Grandpa. We didn't have the hand signs but I didn't care. We sat on a fallen tree for a while and then we made a circle around the forest. Then we sat by a road. We didn't see anything but that is one of the days that I had waited for my whole life. I finally got to go hunting with my Grandpa.

On my birthday the next week, Grandpa gave me my first rifle ever—a 22 caliber target rifle. I will always remember the time that I was able to hunt with Grandpa and what he taught me about hunting strategy.

As I write this, lightning strikes nearby, knocking me out of my daydream. I put my pencil down, lay back, and fall asleep to dream of Princeton, the fields, and hunting with Dad and Grandpa.