

Deer Hunting

Story By: Andrew Frinkle



Ronnie and his dad were going deer hunting. It seemed like a fun opportunity to get out and spend time with his dad, but he was a bit worried, too. His dad had trained him how to safely use a gun. They shot at targets now and then, and they had taken a gun safety course. Ronnie's dad was very careful to teach him responsibility with the weapon. In fact, his favorite thing to say was, "Any tool can be dangerous if you don't know how to use it and don't properly respect it."

So they had their camouflage suits on, along with a bright hunter orange vest. They also had boots, hats, and gloves to stay warm. Dad had a thermos of coffee to go with some donuts they'd bought that morning, while Ronnie had his own smaller thermos of hot chocolate. Despite all that, Ronnie still had some misgivings.

"Why are we going hunting?" Ronnie finally worked up the courage to ask as they turned the truck off onto a side road, which headed down toward the farmer's land where they had permission to hunt.

"To spend time together and see some nature," Ronnie's dad answered, "And maybe get a deer."

Ronnie frowned. It seemed like his dad was giving him the easy answer. "To shoot some nature, you mean? It seems kind of mean to kill deer."

His dad laughed. "If we were just going to hurt animals, that would be mean. We are not going to hurt animals and let them suffer. If we do hurt any animals, we will make it end quickly, just like when we go fishing."

"But they still get hurt and die."

"Ronnie, there are too many deer. If we didn't live here, bobcats, wolves, and coyotes would keep the herd's population down. As it is, only people's cars seem to keep the population down. It is dangerous to have too many of them roaming around."

"So why don't we just bring back more wolves and stuff?" Ronnie suggested.

"Wolves are more dangerous than deer. The cure would be worse than the problem, even if that idea would work. However, wolves don't live well in areas with so many people, and they'd be killing farmers' cows and stuff. No, we've made this situation, so we need to responsibly hunt to keep the population down."

"I guess..."

"We eat the meat, too. It is not wasteful. Cows, pigs, and chickens die every day to give you dinner. This is no different, except that we are playing a bigger part in it."

That quieted Ronnie. He'd never thought about the chickens that it took to make his fried chicken, because they were already in food form when he got it. He'd never thought about the cows that made his burgers and steaks or the pigs that made his bacon and ham, either. "So it's not bad?"

"We do our part, we do it responsibly, and we do it as humanely as possible. We make sure we don't waste, and it's actually a natural part of life here. People have hunted for thousands of years. And, as always, respect your rifle."

"Got it. Still, I feel a bit bad for the deer."

"People who accidentally get very hurt because a deer ran in front of their car don't feel that way. We have to keep the deer population down for safety. Not to mention, they might even starve, because there are too many and not enough food. It is a necessity, because of how we've developed this area."

"Okay, okay. I've got it..." Ronnie gave in, seeing his father's side.

"But you can still feel a little bad for the deer if you want." Ronnie's father added.

Ronnie nodded. In the end, they didn't see any deer from their blind that day anyway. They spent a long time talking quietly, eating donuts, and drinking their hot beverages instead, and that was fine for both of them.