



*The*  
**Muddy**  
**Elk**

Lucky Luke's  
HUNTING ADVENTURES

by Kevin Lovegreen

Illustrated by Margarita Sikorskaia

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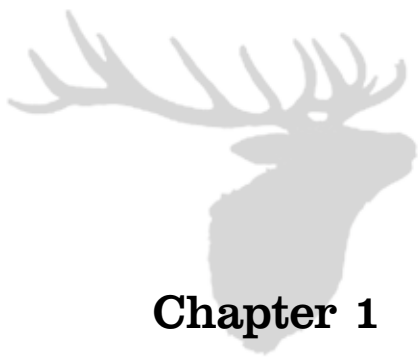
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*This book is dedicated to my outstanding friends and family who have shared the adrenaline rush, from pursuing one of the greatest animals that has ever lived.*





## Chapter 1

Slowly I opened my eyes and lifted my head. I could feel where my crunched-up jacket left a crazy pattern on my cheek.

“Good morning Luke. You should be feeling rested,” Dad said with a smile.

“M o r n i n g,” I pushed out through a yawn.

Trying to get my bearings back, I blinked a few times and focused on the

truck's glowing green clock. It read 6:04, which seemed strange because we had left home at 6:02 the night before. When I looked out the windshield I could see the faint morning light outlining the tops of huge mountains.

“Where are we?” I asked Dad.

“We are in the beautiful state of Colorado, and since you managed to sleep for the last three hours while I guided the ship, you woke up at the perfect time. We are ten minutes from getting hotcakes and sausage.”

“Nice.”

My dad is amazing. He can drive for hours and never seems to get tired. He is a great hunter and has the trophies hanging on the wall to prove it. Almost everything

I know about hunting, my dad taught me, starting when I was very young. When I turned five years old he surprised me with my first bow. It was an awesome birthday present! We had a big target set up in our garage and Dad spent hours with me while I learned to shoot. It took me a long time and lots of practice before I started shooting my first bullseyes.

Dad and I still shoot all the time, only by now I am a pretty good shot and can keep up with him. We even shoot at 3D tournaments. Those are really cool. We get to walk through a course in the woods where there are usually twenty or thirty targets spread out along a trail. They have elk, deer, bear, and even a few dinosaurs to shoot at. Shooting at a 3D course really helps us become better shots, because it is a lot like real hunting.

Over the years Dad has taken me on a bunch of hunts. The number one animal we hunt is whitetail deer. For years I would sit with Dad in a tree stand and watch him in action. We had some exciting hunts; I even got to watch Dad shoot his biggest buck, a monster twelve-pointer.

When I was finally old enough to actually hunt rather than watch, Dad spent his time helping me get a deer. He says he enjoys watching me hunt more than he likes hunting himself. I am not sure if that's really true, though, because Dad still gets pretty excited when he bags an animal.

I love bow hunting for whitetail deer back home in Minnesota, but there is something special about chasing elk in the mountains of Colorado with my dad. We have made the thousand-mile drive three other times, and we've put on a bunch of

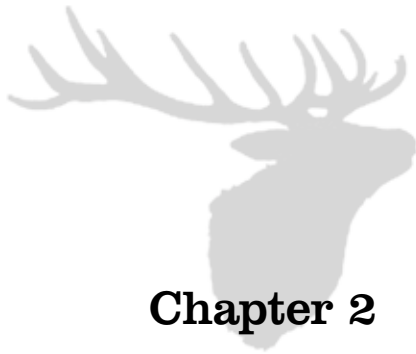


miles hiking the mountains, trying to earn a shot at one of those amazing animals. We have seen a lot of elk but have yet to get a good shot at one.

I have a lot of friends who can't believe I still have fun hunting when I don't get an animal. I try to explain to them that there is so much more to hunting than just shooting game. There's the determination of getting up morning after morning, knowing that any one of them could be the one that starts the most amazing day of your life. There's the challenge of making it all the way to the top of an eleven-thousand-foot mountain, hoping a bull elk is standing on the other side. Even when the elk isn't there, you were, and you have the satisfaction of knowing that you didn't miss one for lack of effort. And then there are the encounters. After hours and hours of sneaking through the hills, just when you think it can't happen,

you look up and three elk are eating in an opening among the aspen. Your heart starts pounding and all your senses kick into high gear. Your instincts, your hunting experience, and all the advice from other hunters instantly play a role. Everything you do or don't do will determine whether you get close enough for a shot. Those moments are what a hunter lives for. It's the challenge, the quest of the hunt.

And it starts even before the hunt itself. One of the coolest things about a hunting trip is the anticipation that builds up the day or two before the hunting begins. You never know what's going to happen, but it's usually amazing. For this trip, we have five days of hunting and I guarantee you, we will be going home with a lot of stories, memories, and with a little luck, elk meat in the cooler.



## **Chapter 2**

After stopping for a hot breakfast, Dad and I were ready to hit the mountain and now our anticipation was really building. My heart was beating a little faster and my eyes were alert watching the headlights paint a mountain picture in front of us. We pulled off the highway and made our way up a narrow two-lane road that ran through a little old mining town. About a half mile past the last house, we came to our turn. The road was pretty quiet on this Saturday morning. We

only passed two or three trucks on our way to the dirt road.

“Here we go!” Dad said, turning the wheel.

The blacktop was behind us and we were now on a well-packed gravel road. It started by winding right, then left, and then back right again. It was like riding a rollercoaster up the mountain. We finally came to the end of the gravel and now we were heading up a true back country mountain road. The road was littered with huge rocks Dad had to swerve around and plenty of big gullies where rain had washed the road away. The truck growled in low gear as we crawled our way up the mountain, heading to our camp. I could feel butterflies of excitement building in my stomach with each turn. I rolled down my window to get some fresh air and the crisp mountain breeze instantly sent chills down my back.

“Whoa, it’s pretty cold out,”

“The truck thermometer says its thirty-six degrees. That sure is a change from the sixty-five degrees we had yesterday at home. But don’t you worry, that Colorado sun always warms it up around noon,” Dad explained.

That last half hour seemed to take forever because we could only manage about five or ten miles per hour on the steep, rugged road. The last thing we wanted to do, after all the hours we spent on the journey to elk camp, was get a flat tire or bust a shock. Dad patiently and expertly guided the truck through the obstacle course as we kept climbing up, up, up.

Finally we leveled off and I could tell we had reached the top. We made our way around the back side of the mountain and

headed down a dead-end road to a grassy field where we have camped before.

“I sure hope no one is in our spot.”

“I’m not worried. There are plenty of areas to pitch a tent,” Dad replied.

“That’s true, but I really like our old spot. It’s flat, which is perfect for the tent, it’s close to the creek for water, and it’s protected from the wind by the big pine trees.”

We came around the last corner, and there wasn’t a tent or a truck to be found.

“Sweet, it’s wide open!” I said with relief.

We pulled off the road and the sun peeking over the valley hit me right in the eyes. Blocking the sun with my left hand, I got out of the truck. I slid my camo coat on

and took a deep breath. The grass was wet from dew and the air was crisp. I met Dad at the back of the truck and noticed he had a smile on his face about as big as mine.

“We made it. We are officially in God’s country!” Dad said.

“Thanks for getting us here safe. You’re amazing! Here’s to a great hunt and hopefully to our first elk,” I raised my right hand up for what was bound to be the first of many high fives during the week.

“Elk or not, I am already having a great time. OK, it would be pretty nice if we could finally bring back some meat for the freezer. If we go home empty handed again, Mom might question our hunting abilities,” Dad joked.

“All right Luke, it’s time to get to work. Let’s pitch the tent over in that shaded area and get our gear put away. The sooner we get set up, the sooner we can head out and find an elk.”

We dove in and started unpacking. We teamed up on the tent and had it standing and filled with our gear in record time. It took all my strength to drag the two big coolers full of food and ice over to the tent. I pushed them under a bush to keep them out of the sun.

It was time to get our backpacks out and make sure we had all of our survival gear. We had already gone through everything at home, but Dad always checks my pack a second time to make sure everything is there. Being prepared with the right gear is very important when you are hunting in the



mountains. Dad pulled out the printed list and I was ready.

“GPS.” Dad sounded off. “Check.” I said.

“Flashlight.”

“Check.”

“Extra batteries.”

“Check.”

“First aid kit.”

“Check.”

“Knife.”

“Check.”

“Matches.”

“Check.”

“Survival blanket.”

“Check.”

“Whistle.”

“Check.”

“Elk license.

“Check.”

“Jerky.”

“Check.”

“Water bottle.”

“Check.”

“Map.”

“Check.”

“Compass.”

“Check.”

“Looks like you’re ready for action, Luke,”

“I am more than ready. Let’s get our bows out and hit the mountain.”

“I will whip us up a couple sandwiches and you make sure our GPSs are ready,” Dad said as he headed to the cooler.

The handheld GPS is one of the most amazing tools for being in the mountains. When you turn on the unit, it sends a signal to several satellites that orbit Earth in outer