Winner, Winner, Turkey Dinner

LUCKY LUKE'S HUNTING ABVENTURES

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ISBN 13: 978-0-9857179-2-6

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: 2012

16 15 14 13 12 5 4 3 2 1

Cover and interior design by James Monroe Design, LLC.

Lucky Luke, LLC. 4335 Matthew Drive Eagan, Minnesota 55123

LuckyLukeHunting.com

Quantity discounts available!

This book is dedicated to my turkey hunting buddies, old and new.

Thank you for your friendship and the life long memories.



"I was back in the valley just as the light was beginning to break and I heard a booming gobble. I quickly moved in that direction, trying to track down that turkey. When I felt like I was getting close to where that gobble came from, I slowed down to listen and scan for movement. After a minute or two, I didn't see or hear anything, so I pulled out my turkey call and made a couple of hen yelps. Instantly he gobbled again. And that gobble helped me pin-point the giant pine tree he was roosted in. I was within 80 yards

of him and I figured that was close enough. I didn't want to try to get any closer and take the chance of getting busted. The sun was rising and I knew he would be leaving his roost soon. I set up my hen decoy in a little opening and snuck back into the woods and got ready.

"When I made another call he gobbled again and I knew he thought a hen was waiting for him. Then I heard wings flapping and a thud. My heart started pounding, because he was on the ground. With any luck, he was coming my way. A loud cawing crow flew over and he lit up and gobbled again, and I could hear him coming closer. I made two quiet yelps and he lit up again and then I could see his head through the brush. It was awesome. I had my gun up on my knee, I was perfectly still. I was ready. When he saw my decoy he suddenly puffed up, fanned his tail, and stuck his head out and gobbled. He

was so close and loud I swear I could feel the air from his beak blowing in my face. All fanned out, he marched in and circled my decoy like a sumo wrestler circling his opponent. I made one cluck sound with my mouth call. Right then, he stuck his head up, and BAM, I dropped him. It was one of the best hunts I've ever had."

That night at the dinner table, as Dad told us the story of how he called that big turkey into his decoy, I could picture myself sitting right next to him. I dreamed it was me getting ready to take the shot.

"Hey Luke, back to earth, your vegetables are waiting," Mom said with a smile.

"Yeah, I know, I just can't wait to get my own turkey one day," I said, loading a fork full of green beans. "I'll make a deal with you, Luke. You clear the table tonight and do the dishes, and I'll bring you along next year. How does that sound?" Dad asked.

"Yes! That sounds great! Is everyone done?"

"Hold your horses, young man, we aren't done yet," Mom said, shaking her head.



The next spring, not long after my tenth birthday, Dad's story was still playing back in my mind as I helped him pack in our crowded little hunting room. I was finally going turkey hunting and I had a million questions. Luckily for me, my dad had all the answers.

Dad showed me the three decoys we were going to use. There were two hens and one jake (a young tom). He said the big toms can't stand it when the jakes are near a hen during the spring breeding season. He also showed me the different calls that he was going to use. He had a slate call that sounds just like a hen turkey. It's round and has a clay-like slate material in the middle.

You use a wood or plastic striker, about the size of a pencil, to scratch the surface and make the sounds. I practice with the slate call a lot and am getting pretty good at sounding like a turkey.

Dad's other hen call is a mouth call. It fits in your mouth and you squeeze it between your tongue and the roof of your mouth. I can't get that one to work very well. Dad says it takes a lot of practice and I believe him. Until I get better, I will let him do the calling with the mouth call.

"Can the turkeys smell us, like deer can?" I asked.

Dad joked, "They already can see like a hawk. If they could smell like a deer, we would probably never get one!"

We pulled out our guns from the gun safe and carefully slid them into their cases. My gun is a 20-gauge pump and it fits me perfectly. It has a nice walnut stock and I keep it clean as a whistle. Dad grabbed the box of #4 shells for me and we put them into the shell box.

Last fall when we were up at the cabin, Dad set up targets with turkey heads on them. Dad wanted me to get used to shooting the strong turkey shells. Those turkeys are tough, and they have really thick layers of feathers, so we have to shoot powerful loads at them. We tried shooting #4 and #5 size shot to see which one shot a better pattern out of my 20-gauge. Besides kicking really hard and surprising me each time, the

#4 shells shot a better pattern and really covered the turkey's neck and head on the target. "Those #4s are going to do the trick!" Dad said with a smile.

We spent the whole afternoon going through camo clothes, masks, gloves, boots, and other turkey hunting gear. I love hanging out with Dad in the hunting room.



The lucky weekend finally came, and the truck was packed. Before we left, Dad laid out a map on the table to show me our driving route and pointed out the area where we would be hunting. Dad explained, "Years ago, my friend Mel and I saw an ad in a newspaper. A farmer was advertising hunting land for rent, and we immediately called him up. After we both bagged turkeys on that first hunt, we have been going there almost every spring."

8

We were excited to get going, so we gave Mom a hug and jumped in our big silver truck. Off we went, heading for the southeast corner of Minnesota. After a long drive, and lots of turkey-hunting talk, we turned off the blacktop and drove down a curved dirt driveway. We pulled up to a farm with a big red barn on the right and a tall white house on the left. By the look of the weathered wood on both, I figured they had to be really old. There was cool old, rusted farm equipment everywhere I looked.

We had the windows down as we drove in, looking for turkeys, so Dad's red hair was a little messy as he slid on his baseball cap. I smiled, because we were wearing matching lucky hats, each with a turkey on the front.

We walked over to the barn, where we heard the sound of steel clanging. There was the farmer, all covered in grease, working on a huge tractor. He saw us and stopped what he was doing. He pulled a rag from his back pocket and cleaned off his hands as he walked over.

The farmer shook my dad's hand. "It's good to see you. And who do we have here?" he asked, nodding at me.

"This is Luke. Luke, this is John," my dad said.

