

## **Real Women Hunt Moose**

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Rumors of Covid-19 circulated and motivated me to sell off my stocks prior to the market crash. My uptown condo sells to an overseas cash investor, just before flights are restricted. Surviving in the wilderness until the pandemic passes, should be easy for me as my previous stint in the Army conditioned me for physical and mental conquest. Being one of the first females trained by the Army to drive all types of vehicles, shoot rifles, and track humans, my confidence assures me of success.

After settling in at a live-off-the-land log cabin in the backwoods of Maine that I found on-line, my assessments of needs include hunting a moose for winter meat.

I drive over to Portland, Maine—the closest city—to trade in my Porsche for a truck. I pull into the Ford dealership. I've always heard that 'real men' get their pickups from Ford, so I figure 'real women' would go there, too.

The salesman seems like a nice guy and shows me a Ford 350 4×4 V8, with dual rear tires. "The only choice for moose huntin'," he tells me. "Good towin' capacity for the trailer carryin' the ATV and gear."

The dealer's sales pitch includes, "Don't you need leather seats, CD player, and GPS tracking ...?"

"Oh, yes." I tell the Ford guy I want it all. "GoStar with road service, built-in DVD player, satellite radio, internet, darkened windows, and fog lights mounted on the roof."

The total cost? Close to a hundred-grand. The dealer gives me fifty thousand for the Porsche. It's a Carrera GT, a few years old, but sells for hundreds of thousands of dollars.

As the salesman said, "we're sheltering in place soon, and I won't be able to trade her 'til the pandemic gets over with, so that's all I can offer." Unable to return to New York, knowing all the dealerships are closed between here and there, and being eager to get on with my moose hunt, I have no choice but to settle.

Trucking over to the All-Terrain Vehicle store and purchasing a camouflage-colored, fully loaded, automatic ATV, marks off another to-do item. Cruising around Portland in my truck, pulling the ATV, and wearing a pants suit; reveals my lack of practical clothing. I shop for a matching pair of camo-colored undies, a bra, and a beret. In addition, I buy a similar patterned heated, waterproof hunting suit, and fishing wader boots. Now presentable, but lacking camping supplies, my little upper-Maine town outfitter store requires a visit.

My hunt begins with the State of Maine, permitting me to kill. Speaking through my face mask, to the outdoor supply store guy as he rings up my purchases of camping equipment, I add, "and a hunting license for a moose, please,"

The store clerk looks like a good ol' boy from the backwoods. Missing a few teeth, and chawing tobacco, his remaining choppers, and fingernails gleam yellow from smoking, and he smells like a brewery. His face mask hangs off of one ear.

"You win one in the State moose-huntin' lotto?" The outdoorsman questions with a tone implying he already knows the answer.

"Lottery?"

“Don’t recollect seein’ you ‘bout these parts before. You a Mainer?”

“No.”

The tobacco chewer aims towards a spittoon near my feet. “Got one could transfer to you, but it’ll cost a thousand bucks.” He hits the rim, and it oozes down both the inside and the outside of the container.

I step away from the potentially hazardous viral mess. “Where do I find a moose?” I ask the man, “and how do I get there?”

“Ayah,” he moans, and with my help, bags my purchases. “The most important thing about huntin’ for a moose ...”

I am distracted by thoughts of having to clean off everything he has touched, and forget I am waiting for the moose hunting guide’s words of wisdom, but, apparently, he wants me to restate the question, “What’s the most important thing about hunting for a moose?”

I sign to him I would prefer he cover over his mouth. He does, in a manner of swatting at a pesky fly, and then reveals, “lies in a knowin’ at least one crittah’ looms in the area whar’ you’re a-goin’ huntin, and ...” He pauses and leans in close; I smell booze through the cloth, as he whispers, “... Bull Moose lure.” His slimy eyes enlarge to express how important this top-secret formula could be to my success.

This seller of Bull Moose attractant aromas floats the elixir under my protective cover. It smells like cheap perfume. He lets out a moose call, “Mouahahah” sounding like a buzz saw.

“Ahhhh, moose, come?” I say to the wildlife romantic consultant and blush with embarrassment upon realizing the double entendre.

Lucky for me, the bourbon-soaked hunting advisor lacks quick wit, and replies, “Sure they come. They detect the slightest fragrance in the wind, and they’ll charge through heck and high watah to get to you.”

“How many bottles will I need?”

“You only got one moose permit, so I reckon you don’t need too many bottles. On the other hand, it may take you a few times, in different places, before you’re at the place whar’s thar’s a moose lurkin’. Like I said earlier, don’t go huntin’ for moose whar’s thar’ ain’t no moose to hunt.”

My eyes show a smile, but actually, my lips purse under the mask, and I push on. My purchase includes three six-ounce bottles of Bull Moose enticement at a hundred bucks a pop. “A lot to pay,” I say.

He shrugs and responds, “Collecting fresh-female-moose-urine-in-heat takes a special talent.”

“I can imagine...”

I pay hundreds of dollars for all the supplies, and the clerk throws in a little Swiss army knife—the ones with the medical cross on them—as a thank-you gift. He says, “folks often find it a ‘needful thing.’”

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It’s almost dark when I reach the end of the road at the river’s edge and make this my base camp. My tent challenges me as a brain-teaser puzzle, but it finally frames up. I arrange the campsite neatly with my supplies. Gazing at the stars and listening to the wind whispering

through the trees quiets my anxieties. Owls hoot, and other animals reply. Nature rests and shares its blessing with me. I crawl inside the tent, where my sleeping bag awaits. Snuggling within its cocoon, offers warm contentment.

But I am wide awake. As the night drags on, it occurs to me getting up to go empty my bladder every thirty minutes interferes with my getting to sleep—must be the coffee or just the excitement over my moose hunt. I make these trips barefoot and half-dressed, and the spooky woods creak and pop. Mosquitoes land on every exposed part of me. I stub my toes on the way back in and almost poke out my eye on the next trip. Finally, I doze off late at night when it gets cold and windy.

Startled by a noise, I awaken. Something snorts around outside my tent. I smell a foul odor and hear an animal scraping the dirt. I hear it rummaging through all the supplies laid out neatly around the camp. I peer out the tent window and make out the silhouette of a bear. Terror rips through me. I grab the flashlight and try to beam it on the creature. The light only provokes the bear, and it runs towards my tent. I scream as the animal thrashes against the fabric. Finally, I hit it on the snout with the flashlight, and really make it mad. It tears and bites its way through the tent. At that moment, a loud clap of thunder and a bright bolt of lightning hits nearby.