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By Roger Lewis

AS THE SHAFT FLICKERED towards the unsuspecting warthog through the dappled rays of dawn's early morning light, a lifetime's worth of dreams was about to be realized. It was reminiscent of a daydream for a moment. The unmistakable sound of razor sharp steel striking flesh quickly snapped me back to reality however. I watched as the heavy tusked warthog sped away and out of my sight. Although my eyes were no longer of use, my ears were rewarded with a loud crash in the thick African underbrush.

AND THEN, SILENCE.

# THAN DUST







Sitting down, I took a few deep breathes and replayed the events over in my head. I was positive the shot was perfect. The arrow had struck just where Lammie, my PH at Dare to Bowhunt Safaris, told me to aim. And that aiming spot is, in itself, where this story should really begin...

One evening about a year and a half ago, I was surfing the internet, my heart set on finding an outfit that really understood bow hunting and, more specifically, the special requirements a recurve bow shooter might need. Especially, a recurve bow that was only 48 lbs draw weight.

I had been sending off sporadic emails to various outfits about hunting plains game with my light weight Black Widow Bow. Some didn't respond. Some said it was too light as a 25- to 30-yard shot would be the norm. Others suggested I bring it, but if it didn't work out, I could borrow a firearm.

None of which really put this trad hunter's concerns at ease.

None of which, that is, until I opened an email from Lammie Potgieter, who together with his wife Allison own and operate Dare to Bowhunt Safaris. Turns out he is not only a bow hunter; he is a recurve shooting bow hunter. I was intrigued and hopeful for the first time since beginning my search for a place to bow hunt in Africa.

Lammie indicated it would be a little more challenging but certainly do-able with a light weight trad bow. He suggested I use a strong, well-built, cut-on-impact broadhead.

The subject of shot placement came up early in our conversations. I was



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tasked with studying the animals and bone structure of each one.

After a marathon series of back-and-forth emails, we had a plan. I liked his strategy and the encouragement Lammie offered with respect to bringing the recurve. In a nutshell, here's what Lammie suggested. He advised that he takes out quite a few hunters over the course of the long South Africa hunting season. The animals catch on quickly that the waterholes can be dangerous places. He said as the season wears on the more nervous the animals get and sometimes the further the shots can get to be. He also thought that perhaps they spend a little less time at the water hole at each visit.

However, the plus side of going later in the season is that as the waterholes begin to dry up, the animals must concentrate on the remaining water holes.

Catch 22! Go when the animals are a bit less weary? Or go when I will see more animals albeit more nervous and well aware that the hunting season is open?

In the end, with Lammie's input, I decided that I would go early in the season and hope for closer shots at less nervous animals. Getting animals on the inside of 20 yards was a must for me. We eventually chose May 29th as the start of my hunt. I would be part of the first group of hunters for the 2014 season. It was the dark phase of the moon so we all had high hopes for the 7 days we picked.

Any hunting trip requires planning, but travelling from Canada to South Africa seemed to magnify the planning details. With 4 connecting flights,

I was worried about my bow getting to Durban the same time as me. Extra baggage costs could add up as well. Luckily though, laundry is done daily, the weather is warm to just barley cool in the mornings and evenings around the fire, so the need to pack a ton of clothing is unnecessary.

All I checked in was a quality bow case (Pelican), and it contained what clothes I needed. Coupled with a medium-sized backpack that I brought along as carry on, I had everything I needed and avoided extra checked baggage charges.

I would also recommend using the TSA locks for your bow case. The one I had was a combination lock, but also could be opened by a master key that the TSA agents have. That allows them to check your luggage if they wish without breaking your lock. If opened by the TSA key, the lock will let you know by showing a red warning indicator when you pick up your bags that it has been opened.

I can't stress enough . . . do not over pack! I packed light, and I still managed to bring too much. Outfitter's almost always have a suggested list of what to bring for clothing. Remember, laundry is done every day . . . so you can just alternate if extra bag charges and room is an issue for you.

If you check with enough outfits and check enough references, sooner than later you will have a short list of places you would like to hunt. Often, my final choice boils down to nothing more, assuming everything else is equal, than just who I feel comfortable talking to in my initial conversations before choosing. It's just a feeling you get. I really like when the PH I'll be hunting with is involved in the process of phone calls and emails. After many emails and a few phone calls, you will have a feeling on who will best suit you.

Once you have finally booked a hunt, the fun really begins. Once you know what animals you most want to target, study the anatomy very carefully! The African animals have more forward vitals. The shot is more "on" the shoulder than North American big game animals.

It sounds odd, but it took me a long time while practicing on my 3D targets



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at home to aim on the shoulder as opposed to the more traditional behind the shoulder shot I am so accustomed to. I would suggest talking shot placement with your PH and then practicing it at every opportunity you have. I found that during my practice sessions, I subconsciously slipped my focus point to just behind the shoulder rather than on it.

This brings me back to the big 13-inch warthog at the start of this article. Had it been a whitetail deer back at home, I might have thought the hit was too far forward, but after lengthy conversations with Lammie back at the lodge, I was confident it was a kill shot.

After a few minutes with hardly moving a muscle, I reached into my backpack and texted Lammie with the cell phone he provided.

"Big warthog hit hard" was my message.

"Sit still, will be up in an hour or so. Good job," returned Lammie.

While sitting back taking in all this glorious moment had to offer, I was surprised how soon it seemed when I heard the hunting vehicle approaching. In it was Lammie, Allison, and two trackers.

In whispers, I told Lammie where the warthog ran. He turned and spoke to the trackers in their native tongue, and they got on the track. Blood is not easy to see in the dry sandy soil, but the trackers made it look easy. After maybe a hundred yards, I hear a barely audible whistle. I was behind the trackers, and I could tell it was good news. They headed directly to the whistle, and I eagerly followed. Lammie had found the huge warthog piled up in a thick nasty thorn thicket. He uttered the best words a hunter could ever hear — "Perfect shot, well done. Congratulations. He's a very good boar."

After the obligatory handshakes and photo session, the toothy warthog was loaded on the trailer to be taken to the skinning shed. I was quickly moved to another blind or hide as they are referred to in Africa. At this hide, I was instructed I should not shoot just any impala as there was a real bruiser watering there on a pretty regular basis. Being new to judging African game, I asked just how I would know when or



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if he came in. Lammie agreed that impala can be hard to judge but said this one would be easy. He estimated it at 10 to 12 years old, and as a result, he simply looked old. He said to look for big heavy tall horns and a much lighter colored coat on the impala we were after.

With the blazing sun high in the sky, I reached for my pack deciding now might be a good time to have some lunch and a drink of water. While moving the zipper only an inch or so at a time to avoid any unnecessary noise, I caught movement out of the corner of my eye.

A more beautiful sight I may never have witnessed. A mature Sable was cautiously making his way to the water. The image of those horns sweeping up and back are forever engraved in my mind and hunter's heart. He eventually made his way to the water where he took about a 20-second drink and walked away. Right then and there, my morning, my day, my trip, was already more than complete. It's moments such as this that can steal your soul.

The remaining two hours of light were golden, both figuratively and literally. Hidden in the dark recesses of the back of the hide I witnessed many a steely muscled animal come in for a drink of much needed water. To name a few, kudu, warthog, impala, wildebeest, blesbok, and of course, the dark-haired, sceptre-horned sable mentioned earlier.

The shadows began to lengthen. A quiet hush fell on the bushveld. I never felt more in tune with my ancient predatory instincts. Something was going to happen. I just knew it. I don't know how, but I knew it.

I grabbed my bow and slowly stood. Minutes ticked by just as slowly as the sweat rolled down my back. Quieter and darker with each heartbeat. And then it happened. A high-horned impala appeared at the water's edge. His coat was a lighter hued tint than the previous impala that came to water. My brain raced. Was this the one Lammie told me to be on the lookout for?

The hunting Gods smiled on me that evening. While frantically trying to decide if the impala ram a mere 14 yards in front of me was the "one," another mature ram appeared alongside him.

Show Time! There was no comparison. The ram in question was far superior.

The Widow's limbs bent ever so slowly. Ever so silently. I've never held a more rock solid anchor nor had a cleaner release. The ram tore off at breakneck speed but at 50 yards he appeared to falter. The legendary grace they are famous for was fading, appearing to turn into more of a mad dash into the heavier cover than anything.

For the second time that day, I sent a txt to Lammie indicating I had released an arrow at a record book animal. While waiting for his reply, it was then I noticed the fire red sunset. Someone





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once told me you have not witnessed a sunset until you have watched the sun go down in Africa. Sitting there at that moment, I could not have agreed more. To say it was spectacular would not do it justice.

Lammie was on his way. He didn't want to give it too much time as darkness was falling fast and hard. Taking up the trail behind Eric (tracker) and Lammie was like watching a river run smoothly, slowly, and methodically down its course. Nothing more than a few words spoken. A couple hand gestures. It was evident that the best thing I could do was hang back and let this well-oiled team work. And work they did! Just at dark, Lammie spied the downed impala.

More handshakes and more photos. I will always remember the drive back to

camp in the open-air buggy. The sweet smells. The game bouncing out of the way in the headlights. The smile on my face and the complete feeling of being content. It's a ride I will always remember.

Evenings in camp were enjoyable. When returning from the day's hunt, we would grab a quick shower and then head to the patio where the central focal point was a big brick fire pit. Snacks and drinks were provided. We would sit and take turns re-living the day's events. It was fun to tell your personal stories and equally as nice to hear about the others' day. The nights were cool but pleasant. A light jacket or sweater was all that was required. Listening to the night sounds of the African bush only added to the overall experience. The time around the

fire always flew by quickly, and before long, supper was served. We ate lots of game accompanied by various side dishes. Every meal had a decadent desert served with it. It's not the kind of hunt you lose weight on. Allison does her best to pack on a few pounds for your return trip! Of course, if you have any special dietary needs or requests, Allison will see that they are met.

A week goes by quickly in a great hunting camp especially when you mix in great company, great food, great weather and even greater hunting. This week was no exception.

Day 4 found me climbing into a new blind in the pre-light of dawn. With a "silent thumbs up" good luck wish from Lammie, I was once again awaiting good shooting light over an active waterhole. The bush would soon be

coming to life. In the gloomy semi-darkness, I could hear warthogs grunting. Some Impala rams were roaring. Birds I do not know the names of started to sing in the new day. Ever so slowly, the sky began to glow crimson. Dawn in Africa never disappoints.

Trailcam checks told us a couple very good Nyala were watering here. Truth be told, Nyala was what I wanted more than anything. I don't believe there is a more handsome creature walking this planet than a bull Nyala. If there is, I've yet to see it.

The first hours on stand passed with a smattering of warthogs, impala, monkey, blesbok, and wildebeest. I had spotted some wildebeest earlier in the hunt. Instantly, I put a good bull on my hit list. They are big, beautiful, and very African! What more could a bow hunter want from an animal?

The little herd of wildebeest hung up at 50 yards for an hour or more. Positive they would eventually make their way to the water, I stood statue-like for the duration of the encounter. I was gripping the bow like it was the true grail. At one point, I had to move my head a different direction to relieve the burning in my neck from staring at the group for so long. Glancing back toward the wildebeest, I couldn't find them. They had moved off. Hoping that they were moving toward me but out of sight, I endured another hour of standing still, moving only my head from side to side hoping to catch a glimpse of the wildebeest. It wasn't in the cards. I never did see them again that day. The encounter only made me want one more than ever!

After the intense standoff, I needed to sit down. I leaned the bow against the side of the hide and had a long drink of refreshing water. I was enjoying every moment of the experience. I wanted to drink in every second this all too brief trip to Africa had to offer. I could not have been more content sitting there in the hide munching on a granola bar and washing it down with cold water in the growing heat of the day.

Leaning back and stretching out cramped legs, my eye lids began to get heavy. Fighting off the urge to close my eyes didn't last long. I drifted off to sleep.

Perhaps I heard something. Per-

*Ped modit, sit plam  
eatio volorepudi  
consendel mossit omnis  
verios volo berchit  
et labo. Nam eatius  
sitatem im quos eiurit  
dictat fugiati nvelicium  
aut et pliquiant*

haps a 6th hunter's sense. Perhaps just plain good luck. I awoke with a start. I peered out through a peek hole in the hide, and to my astonishment, I saw legs!

I slowly arose from my slouched back position and identified the animal as a nice Impala ram drinking noisily. Still groggy I allowed myself to sit back in the seat to the point where I could still see the tops of the impala's horns.

Enjoying the close range show, I about jumped out of the seat when slowly but steadily I could see the tips of a very big Nyala drifting in behind the Impala. Kicking my butt for not being ready and in shooting position, I painstakingly reached for my bow, careful not to knock the arrow off the shelf. Making sure I had my familiar grip on the handle and a nice deep hook on the string I again looked out hoping to still see the white-tipped horns at 14 yards.

To my complete relief, they were still there almost appearing to float on air. The blackness and height of the ivory tipped horns silhouetted against the blue sky had my heart in my throat. Every movement, no matter how miniscule and calculated, seemed magnified.

Getting my feet back underneath me in just the right position to stand seemed to be a monumental task. Difficult beyond reason. Nevertheless, at some point, I was ready to rise out of the seat. I closed my eyes for a split second, expelled the air I had been involuntarily holding in, said a prayer to whoever might be listening, and began to stand up.

The Nyala came into view as I came to full height. Fighting back an audible gasp, my bow arm instinctively came up and the growing pressure on my string fingers never felt so natural

and well-rehearsed. Practice and muscle memory kicked in. I had no doubt of the outcome. The yellow and black fletched arrow buried deep.

The Nyala wheeled and ran. At about 75 yards, it stopped and stared back. Twenty long seconds ticked by, and then it began to grow unsteady. The outcome was never in doubt at this point. I silently wished for the broadhead to do its work quickly and humanely.

I'm always a little in awe of how efficient a well-placed arrow can be. This shot was no exception. The Nyala fell quickly and never got up. I sat back and had to pinch myself. I'd be lying if I didn't give myself a little pat on the back. Three record book animals with 3 arrows from a light-weight, trad bow. All short recoveries with quick humane kills.

I was riding a wave and didn't want it to end. Once again, I was texting Lammie with good news.

The remainder of the week I spent trying to kill a good wildebeest. I had a good bull in at 15 yards one morning, but he was protected by cows that were also at the water. I can say, though, having a great wildebeest at 15 yards is not something I will soon forget. In fact, there are many aspects of this hunt I will always remember fondly.

More than dust gets into your blood when hunting Africa. It truly has it all. You name it, Africa offers it. We stopped for pictures at one particularly pretty spot. I think I left a piece of my hunter's heart on that hillside — and I'm hoping to go back one day to reclaim it. UHM

**Hunt arranged by Bea's Outdoor Adventures ([www.beas-outdoor-adventures.com](http://www.beas-outdoor-adventures.com))**

**Lammie or Allison at Dare to Bowhunt ([www.daretobowhunt.co.za](http://www.daretobowhunt.co.za))**

**EQUIPMENT:**

**Black widow Bow  
PSA 48lbs @ 28**

**Beman classic 500 arrows**

**Magnus Stinger  
broadheads 125 gr**