Hunting Trip

A man and his dog plan a hunting trip to what they think is a deserted island. What they find is a nightmare that could be hunting them. Hunting Trip is a 1,400 word short story that can be read on your coffee break.

The Hunting Trip

by

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We were on the island for three days before I realized that we weren't alone. Prior to that this “hunting trip” had been everything that I had hoped it would be. I say hunting trip, but truthfully I hadn’t cared if I bagged anything or not. If I were being honest it was an escape; an escape from the well-wishers, the cards with deepest regrets and especially from the cemetery that I passed every day. It took a month to plan the trip but as soon as I stepped out of the boat I felt the weight just fall off. Friday beat me to shore by virtue of jumping out and swimming. Friday was my stray that wandered up to the front stoop as a pup. She is a complete mongrel but came ready stock with floppy ears, a keen nose and a heart of gold.

The field our tent was set up in was filled with flowers and surrounded by woods. While I drove tent pegs into place Friday prowled and explored her new environment. She was as happy as a dog can be chasing butterflies and Frisbees. The first few days were fantastic. We slept late, played, and explored the island. We even found a little time to hunt.

It wasn't until that third night that I felt a twinge of nerves. It was late and I was starting to feel drowsy after eating when Friday sat up from where she was sleeping. She lifted her head and began sniffing the air. Her ears twitched like she heard something and she gave a low warning growl. She started to wander off but I called her back to me. Whatever set her off must have gone away because she padded back and laid her head on my lap. We fell asleep that way until the next morning.

I had mostly forgotten about the incident by the next day. We went down to the river to fish. Friday of course decided that it was the perfect time for a swim. Needless to say not many fish were caught. The few that I did catch I cleaned and cooked over a fire beside the river. We ate and followed the river for a mile or so before heading back to camp.

When I saw our camp I couldn’t help but scream out loud. Friday planted her feet wide with her hackles standing straight up. Our tent was flattened and all of my bags were ripped open. Debris was blown across the field by the wind. I unslung my rifle from my shoulder and shushed Friday before creeping warily up to our camp.

Friday seemed to recognize a scent and began circling with her head down tracking it. I could smell it faintly as well. It was sharp and sour like pungent cheese mixed with rot. Friday was reluctant to give up the scent when I called her back. Whatever it was that destroyed our camp was still close. I could feel its eyes on us and I knew it was a danger to us, but I wanted to meet it on our terms not give it a chance to ambush us. Friday was restless and whined while I set the tent back up. When that was done I gathered together what was left of our belongings and lit a large fire.

I had just calmed down enough to try to sleep when the cry awoke me completely. It was a warbling scream that rose in pitch before falling again as it trailed off. Friday started growling low in her throat with building intensity, but my hand on my on her back stopped the barked challenge that she wanted to issue.

"Easy girl" I said to her while stroking her fur. "Easy Friday, we'll track it tomorrow."

The cry came again a few minutes later from the other side of our camp, just inside the woods around us. There was also the sound of breaking limbs. I could feel the adrenaline dump hit my system and the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. I kept one hand on my rifle even as I tried to soothe Friday. Eventually the cries went away and we both dozed until the sun came up.

As soon as there was light enough to calm our nerves we were off to hunt this thing that had invaded our camp. The trail wasn't as fresh as I would have liked, but it was just clear enough for us to follow.

Nose to ground Friday went along as fast as she could with me trailing right behind her. We tracked for hours before she looked up at a thicket of trees. My legs ached and my chest was heaving. Sweat covered my back but I went cold when I saw where she was pointing. It was so dense that it seemed to be covered in shadows that repelled the daylight. It sat close to a small cliff overlooking the river.

We could smell that smell again. It was so thick in the air it almost choked me. I knew that it was here watching us, waiting for us to make a move. Friday spread her legs again ready to fight. This time when the growl came I didn’t try to stop her. She gave voice to a single barked challenge. We were answered by that same warbling cry. My rifle was at my shoulder before I made a conscious decision to bring it up. And then the creature came shambling out of its den.

It was tall and lean with dark hairless skin. Its arms hung to its knees and its fingers had sharp claws at the ends of them. It spreads its arms wide and cried out again before charging us. I got set to meet its rush and fired a round. The shot cracked the air and I saw its shoulder jerk back from the hit but it didn't go down. I worked the lever and fired twice more, but the thing didn’t slow until it was on us.

Friday, ever the loyal protector threw herself at it to try to bring it down before it reached me. She hit it in the back of the leg and they tumbled to the ground. Her jaws were immediately snapping at its throat, but with a rake of its claws to her side she fell away yelping in agony. I could see blood streaming down her side.

Then the thing was back up and sprinting towards me. Its arms were outstretched reaching for me. I flung myself to the side to dodge its strike. I wasn’t scared anymore. I was furious. This damned thing had attacked us, hurt my best friend and I was determined to make it pay. I came back to my feet and swung my rifle by the barrel like a bat at its head connecting with the butt. It fell back a step staggering and crying in pain. I pulled out my hunting knife and launched myself at it. We fell down in a tangle of limbs with me stabbing it repeatedly in the chest. Now it was bleeding but the damn thing was just too strong.

It threw me off and when I landed on my side I felt a rib snap. The pain was instant and intense. I inhaled sharply and felt the sharp pain intensify. It lumbered to its feet to pounce on me again. But then there was Friday again snapping at its legs and hamstringing it. Its blood got on her muzzle and she whimpered as if it burned. She refused to let go though, hanging on she shook her head tearing further until it batted her off. Pinning her to the ground it raised its clawed hand for the killing stroke.

"Friday" I yelled in fear.

I pushed myself up on unsteady legs and charged it. Without thinking I tackled the thing again with enough force to fracture another abused rib. I began driving it towards the cliff. We were locked body to body slashing at each other, it with its claws and me with my knife. And then I felt empty space beneath us and we fell.

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Friday whined and whimpered as she got to her feet. Her front leg hurt and blood was still flowing down her side. Worse, she was alone. Limping to the edge of the cliff she laid down to wait. She waited there until the sun started to go down whining for her master. Then a hand reached over the top.

About the Author

Stewart Felkel lives in Sterlington, La with his beautiful wife and their three fur babies. He has been a band director, music minister and optician. His hobbies include an eclectic mix of things including boxing, archery, bowery, medieval combat and writing. For more freebies, news of upcoming works and the occasional book review check out his website www.stewartfelkel.weebly.com.