



Just the Two of Us

My husband and I unloaded our three young children with my parents, and it was just the two of us camping and hunting pronghorn. Finding a big buck would be icing on the cake.

It was a very hot August day in northeastern Nevada back in 2022. I made sure we brought a ton of water and frequently stopped to rest. I also bugged Joe to do the same. I didn't put a lot of pressure on myself that day. I just wanted to enjoy it with my husband, without the kids. We did a lot of hiking. I passed up two very small, young-looking bucks that could be seen from the road. Three offroad vehicles passed us, and not more than 15 minutes later, I heard one of the other hunters shoot twice at one of those small bucks we had seen.

Joe and I pulled off the road, hiked up a mountain, and Joe spotted a buck and a doe together. The pronghorn saw us as we hiked below them in plain view to get behind another hill to make our way up to them. Out of sheer curiosity, I wanted to see this pronghorn buck a little closer. It was hard to tell with the binoculars how large his horns were. I hiked ahead of Joe up a windy, steep mountain for several minutes. I stopped

frequently and glassed because I wanted to see the pronghorn before they saw me. I finally got up to where they were, and an pronghorn buck appeared, staring at me for no more than 15 seconds. I quickly decided that I didn't want to take this buck. He had short, stalky horns with some mass. But he was not what I had wanted. I was just in awe, looking at his beautiful dark face. There was an unheard language between the buck and his doe, and she ran up a little hill above me, and he followed her close behind. They ran back down to where I had just walked past Joe. I didn't regret my decision not to take him. It just didn't feel right. We made our way down to the truck and started back towards camp.

Down the road, I spotted another pronghorn. Belly crawling and sneaking closer to get a better look at it, I saw that it was a doe with really long ears. A little disappointed it wasn't a buck, I hopped back in the truck with Joe. We started down the dirt road, where a very large bull (the bovine kind) was trying to show us who the boss was. The bull was kicking up the fine dirt, throwing it on his back, tossing and turning his head back and forth. Two cows and two calves were close by him. Fortunately, that bull hadn't crossed the road and found me while I belly-crawled to the doe.

We continued to camp. We did a lot of hiking that day and were both dead tired. We re-grouped, cleaned out our packs of anything unnecessary, and

Joe talked me into making our way toward the spring we had seen earlier. We had two hours until sunset and decided to use all the time we had left of the day. We departed for the spring, dragging our tired feet and legs up a small hill until we came to an open valley with very short sagebrush. At a distance of more than 1,000 yards was an pronghorn buck. He was feeding. The buck's long black horns stuck out in the sunlight. I watched him with my binoculars and determined that I wanted to go after that buck because his horns looked big from that distance. I told Joe he was a "shooter." He looked with his binoculars and agreed.

With Joe behind me, I started the stalk as quickly as possible, knowing we did not have much daylight left. Each time the pronghorn put his head down to feed, I sprinted and crouched behind the small "not enough to cover me" sagebrush. We continued to do this until he disappeared. He went behind a slope or ran off; I wasn't sure. I saw another pronghorn a couple of hills behind where I had seen this buck, and I thought it could have been him. We finally got to where I thought he would be, and he wasn't there. I started to look around with my binoculars, trying to decide what to do next with the precious time we had left. Joe came up behind me and said, "There he is. Get ready."

Joe stepped behind me and cupped both of his ears with his hands.



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The pronghorn buck we were stalking was coming down the dry drainage right in front of us, feeding on green grass. The buck stopped 50 yards before me, took a bite, looked at me, and then put his head down. Standing, I shot one shot, and he went down. I was shocked at how quickly it happened. The timing couldn't have been better. Most hunts don't happen that way. It was like it was meant to be for me. It was such a great feeling, and the pronghorn didn't suffer. Joe and I realized right away how beautiful he was. I said to Joe, "I want to have him mounted." Joe replied, "You should." Joe helped me take some pictures quickly so we could start harvesting him. While we cut up the pronghorn, it got dark, and a coyote a few yards away let out a call very close to us. I never did see the coyote, but I knew he and his friends would enjoy any leftovers we left behind.

To lighten our packs, Joe suggested we empty our plastic water bottles, crush them, and put them back in our packs. We then stacked our packs with meat and headed back to our campsite in the dark. Some birds got spooked as we walked, and one flew up in front of Joe and into his face. We saw another hunter driving on the road several yards below us. I told Joe to turn his headlamp off. I wanted us to remain unnoticed. The truck drove on, and we turned our headlamps back on. Just as we switched them on, Joe stopped in front of two bushes. Strung between them was a web with a large black widow, her red hour-glass clearly visible. I was so glad Joe had noticed that.

I kept asking Joe how much longer. I wasn't sure of my direction in the dark. After some time, he said, "We should be close." I said, "Maybe you should push the lock button for the



truck." Joe took out his keys and pushed the button for the truck. In the pitch black, down below us, the truck lights illuminated. It was the best feeling ever. It was such a relief to be back at camp. We wanted to go home that night, but we were so exhausted. It would have been a long drive, so we kept the meat and head as cold as possible. We had a quick dinner of soup and a large roll of French bread.

The following day, we slept in a little and started back home. I sent pictures of my pronghorn to my dad, family, and friends. Dad met us back at our house to see the pronghorn. I am grateful every day for this beautiful buck and the hunt that I was able to experience. I love Nevada and the wildlife in it so much. Nothing gets me as excited as hunting and being out in the outdoors with my family. ■



While it was nice to have a weekend alone, the kids often join us out scouting.

