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## The Day of the Hunted

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THE DAY OF THE HUNTED

Honorable Mention

Roy T. Yarbrough

The great moose was running. Through the aspens, across frozen creeks, smashing the deep drifts of snow aside, the powerful animal ran with a dogged determination. His huge shadow followed him, mimicking his every move. Now and again, a low piercing howl reached the ears of the moose. The wolves! Once again they had found his trail, and with noses to the ground, tongues hanging from slavering jaws, they were relentlessly in pursuit of the warm, quivering flesh they so craved. Never for an instant did they pause; not once did a great, white snow-shoe rabbit turn them from their quest. Never slowing, always moving, their taut bellies throbbing with expectation, they remained glued to the trail.

All the previous night the wolves had harried the great moose, never for an instant allowing him to rest. Not once did the moose gain a respite. Not once could he pause to sample the succulent twigs of the saplings through which he plunged. The wolves were in pursuit, and with an instinct akin to intelligence, the moose knew that his life depended on his strength, his speed, his determination and will to live. But listen! The howls! They were becoming louder, more distinct! The wolves were gaining. Soon they would be able to see their quarry. And the moose ran on. Over the cement-hard tundra he ran, his eyes rolling in terror.

Suddenly, two hundred yards to the rear of the moose, a huge, starving wolf emerged from the grove of aspens marking the beginning of the tundra. His eyes caught the moose, and with a piercing howl, he quickened his pace. Soon other wolves emerged from the aspens until nearly fifty were on the great, flat plain, stretching their lithe bodies out in order to gain more speed.

The moose was tiring. His legs were growing weak beneath him, and he slowed. Sensing this, the wolves ceased their howlings, and began to close in for the kill. One hundred yards, fifty, twenty yards separated them from their kill. Now, the moose, with a great effort, turned to face his tormentors. With lowered head, his great antlers sweeping, he cast aside three of the wolves, but to no avail. For as soon as three were killed six more leaped for his throat. Four were on his hind legs, chewing and mauling maliciously. With a last great effort, the moose reared, shaking two starving wolves from his now cut and bleeding throat. Once more the wolves closed in and the moose went down, covered with fighting, snapping, rending and tearing killers.

The sun set that afternoon on the cold, bloody remains of the moose. Not much was left! But wait! What is this? On the antlers of the moose, impaled and dead, were two wolves, their jaws still, their emaciated bodies crushed. The moose, fighting to the last, never giving up, had resisted, and even in death, had gotten his revenge.