

In 2008, my husband Rodney and three of his mates travelled to South Africa on a Safari trip. They hunted the usual trophies, gemsbok, kudu, and impala etc. Prior to these animals, we had only deer heads in the games room which was a tad bare. After waiting almost a year for the importation of the skins and horns and then another six months at the taxidermist, finally the trophy room was taking shape.



I found myself admiring the animals and would spend equivalent time in the room appreciating Rod's trophies. I then studied books on other African animals and this is when I fell in love with the Sable antelope. I asked why he hadn't hunted one on his trip? He laughed and said "because they are bloody expensive". Well I replied "If I ever go to Africa, that is what I'll hunt!"

I grew up with a BB gun and in 2002 decided to get my shooters licence. I like clay target shooting predominately and apart from the odd duck, I have never made a kill.

In 2010, the next trip was brewing, it started with mates and their wives, then families and it chopped and changed monthly. By mid 2011 and with the financial crisis looming, we didn't have a lot of takers.

I always accompany my husband to the SCI shows and coinciding auction/dinners. This involvement got me excited for our upcoming trip. Rodney would tell everyone I was going to hunt a sable. I had big shoes to fill considering I hadn't fired a big rifle yet.

We booked the trip for June 2012 and just Rodney and I, my daughter and her boyfriend made the commitment. We saved our dollars for a buffalo/sable combo. Rodney decided that his Remington 300 WSM was a good all rounder choice for the trip and he had purchased a 470 Nitro double in anticipation for the buffalo hunt.

In March, I decided that I should take up some shooting practice so we headed out to a friends property for the day. Targets were put in place and I padded up my shoulder in preparation for the recoil. I loved the Remington and found it very accurate. I was shooting rocks off a mountain 300 metres away.

Two weeks prior to our trip I wanted to have another practice with the .300. Feeling confident from my last experience, I aimed for the target and fired. 'Wholly shit', I thought I'd broken my shoulder. Another attempt brought tears to my eyes and I conceded defeat. The next day I cut some foam

from a mattress to try and absorb the blow, but only fired one more shot. My confidence had been shattered.

In hindsight, I was sort of pleased that this had happened because I had gained a newfound respect for the .300. In weeks prior to our trip I felt anxiety and was very nervous about the expectations that had been placed on me.



We arrived in Johannesburg May 28th, spent the next day travelling with Tshipse Safaris to the Kalahari Desert where our accommodation awaited. That afternoon we sat on the terrace having a few drinks when a sable appeared not far in the distance. I wanted to grab the gun right there and then but my PH Courney said there was no shooting allowed in close proximity to the lodge. He said it was my turn tomorrow at first light. I hardly slept a wink.

In the back of the truck I couldn't stop shaking, the cold contributed to this somewhat. I put my hands in my pockets so I wouldn't lose feeling in my fingers. A few hours in, our outfitter, Peet Bezuidenhout, whistled to the PH to stop. He'd spotted a sable. I grabbed the .300 and jumped from the truck. Peet grabbed Rodney's .470 to back me up if needed.

My daughter and partner stayed with the truck. She gave me a quick hug for luck. I followed my PH and Peet in single file through the thorny scrub, with Rod close behind me. My heart was racing and my hands trembling violently. Courney placed the shooting sticks down and I took aim. The sable was obstructed by bush and I was apprehensive with the shot. It wasn't clear enough so I decided against it.

We stalked another 50 metres for a closer view. The sable was a comfortable 120 metres away. Placing the rifle on the sticks, I peered through the scope but I couldn't settle my nerves. Peet whispered "take a deep breath and aim for his shoulder." I lifted my head, inhaled deeply, hugged the gun tightly to my body, took aim and slowly squeezed the trigger.

The sable bucked and then fell. Everyone started congratulating me but all I wanted to do was ensure my shot was lethal. We ran towards it and then I could see, a clean heart shot, no blood. "Absolute textbook material" commented Peet. "You're a heartbreaker!" OH MY GOD! I did it.

I was so elated and words could not express how happy I was. My husband couldn't have been more proud of me which amplified my spirit.

The sable was in great condition, at least before my bullet. My daughter and partner drove over and other hunters from camp, so much acclamation, it was overwhelming!

Loads of photos were taken when Peet realised that my first kill had not yet been initiated. They applied pressure on the wound to discharge some blood and took pleasure in painting my face. I then lit a fat cigar which tasted like crap but I didn't care, this moment was surreal. I had imagined it over and over again in my head for months and now this day had come. I couldn't wipe the smile off my face. I was so happy with my placement and the fact that Peet didn't have to back me up, that result would have made for a different story, one I wouldn't be telling today.

Back at camp we drank champagne and reminisced for the rest of the day.

The trip was an overall success. My husband got his buffalo after a four-day hunt at Tshipese, then another 9 animals, besides we are now saving for a new house with a bigger trophy room. Our Trophy Room!

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