

Chapter 1

“What do you mean you’ve never turkey hunted before?” Jet asked me with an astonished look on his face. “Mason, y’all are the most serious and best hunters we know! It just doesn’t make sense that you wouldn’t hunt those thunder chickens too!”

The looks on the faces of Wyatt and Parker told me they were just as surprised as Jet.

“Well, I don’t know what to tell you,” I replied while looking briefly at each of them, “it’s just not something we do. I think my dad used to chase them, but not anymore. We’re just deer hunters now.”

All of us in Wyatt's treehouse—the official meeting place of The Hunt Club Kids—were deer hunters. In fact, Wyatt had just finished sharing the story about how he and his dog had found the antler shed of a giant buck way out on the edge of their property. He found it last weekend in a place his family called The Cliffs—a place Wyatt wasn't really supposed to go. I was actually the one who ratted him out to his parents because I was afraid he was going to get hurt. But this meant I also got to be there when they found him, so I already knew some of his story. I still enjoyed hearing him tell it again to Parker and Jet, though.

It was early spring, which meant turkey season was about to open. And after he finished his story about finding the monster shed, Wyatt mentioned that he and his dad would now be shifting their attention to turkey hunting. "With my shed hunting season wrapped up for the year," he explained,

TALKING TURKEY

“my dad and I are getting ready to go after some of the big gobblers that wander around our property.”

“Us too,” Jet added. “Remember, my grandparents have that place called Turkey Creek. Well, my dad says it’s called that for a reason—there are turkeys everywhere!”

Parker said he’d be playing baseball again this year, so turkey hunting would be tough to fit in. Not to mention that his dad was still running and gunning with his job, making it hard for them to get into the woods very often. In fact, because Parker’s dad was so very busy, my dad had offered to let him deer hunt with us last season—which worked out well. On the opening morning of the annual youth hunt weekend here in Alabama, Parker shot his first deer—a nice doe—while sitting next to my dad.

“But I’d sure like to go if I could,” Parker said, agreeing with Wyatt and Jet about the fun he’d be missing out on.

I really didn't understand what the big deal was, though. "Honestly, guys, I just don't get it. I'm happy just hunting deer," I admitted. "Plus, who'd want to run through the woods chasing a stupid ol' bird anyhow?"

"Stupid old bird?!?!" Jet fired back.

"Oh, Mason... we all know that you know a lot about hunting. None of us can deny that," Wyatt added. "But you clearly don't know anything about turkey hunting. Because there's nothing that will get your heart pumping more than feeling a gobbler shake your insides in response to one of your calls."

"That's the truth!" Jet agreed. "Sometimes it seems like they are breathing fire when one of those thunder chickens gobbles right after the sun rises. It'll make every hair on your body stand up!"

"Well," I said, still trying to pretend I wasn't interested, "I hope you boys have

TALKING TURKEY

fun, but turkey hunting ain't for me. And apparently, it ain't for my dad either, or he'd still be doing it."

But, as much as I tried to pretend that I wasn't interested, the truth was, my friends had stirred up my curiosity and had gotten me to thinking. And so, when we finally wound down to go to sleep that night, I couldn't help but wonder, as I closed my eyes, why my dad had not only never been turkey hunting since I had been alive, but also why he had never even mentioned it to me. And I decided, then and there, that I was going to find out.