

WALK SLOWLY WITH PURPOSE

A Bow In the Woods

By Dominic Fortuna

Archery Season Opens, And It's About So Much More Than the Hunt

By Dominic Fortuna | Kalkaska, MI

KALKASKA - On Thursday morning, October 1st, long before most of us will have had our first cup of coffee, a different kind of morning will start in the woods of Northern Michigan.

Archery season opens.

And if you've never been, you should go. Even if you just moved here. Even if you've never picked up a bow in your life. Grab a bow and get into the woods. What a time of year to do it.

People who don't hunt think it's all about the harvest. It isn't. It truly never is.

It's about sitting still for hours, alone with yourself, in a way modern life almost never allows you to be anymore. No phone. No traffic. No noise. Just you, your breath, and the woods waking up around you. It's a type of meditation, if you want to call it that. I just call it being where you're supposed to be.

You sit long enough and you start to learn who your neighbors really are.

You get to know the chickadees in the trees above your stand. They'll come through at the same time every morning, and you start to learn that when the barometric pressure drops, they get quiet. When it rises on a cold, clear morning, they can't stop chattering. The squirrels — you learn their schedule. They come out to feed at certain times, and if you're paying attention, they will tell you when a deer is coming long before you see it. They go still, they bark, they flick that tail.

And the fowl. My God, the fowl this time of year in Northern Michigan. The ducks trading low through the swamp at first light, the geese high and honking south. You hear them before you see them. Autumn is the whole world getting ready. Every animal out there is getting ready for winter, putting on fat, storing food, moving with purpose. And for a few hours, you get to be a part of it, not

apart from it.

I grew up out here with my dad. He and I bow hunted together every fall for as long as I can remember. It wasn't about him teaching me how to shoot, though he did. It was about sitting next to him in the cold, not saying a word for three hours, and knowing exactly what the other one was thinking. Those are the memories that stay with you. The cold hands around a thermos. The whisper when he would point at a doe we had no intention of shooting, just to watch her.

Now I get to go out with my boys.

That's the other thing people don't tell you — it's a family event. It's not a solitary sport if you don't want it to be. My boys are learning the same woods I learned from my dad. They're learning how to be still. How to be patient. How to watch. How to listen. You can't teach that in a house. You have to teach that on a log at 6:30 in the morning with frost on your boots.

Yes, there is the harvest. And I'll be honest with you, there is no better feeling in the world than harvesting a deer on your own property, with a bow and arrow, with your own two hands. That meat is clean. It's venison that lived right here, drank the same water you drink, ate off the same soil you live on. It's full of nutrients and good, honest protein that you can't buy in a store. When you cook it however you like to cook it — I like it low and slow with onions from the garden — you know exactly where it came from. You earned it.

But if you come out of the woods without a deer, you still come out full.

If you live in Northern Michigan, this is your invitation. The season is opening. The maples are turning. The mornings are crisp and the evenings come early. The woods are waiting.

You don't need the most expensive bow. You don't need a big lease or a fancy blind. You need a good layer, a safe spot to sit, and a willingness to be alone by yourself for a few hours and just let the woods do the rest. Walk slowly with purpose, my

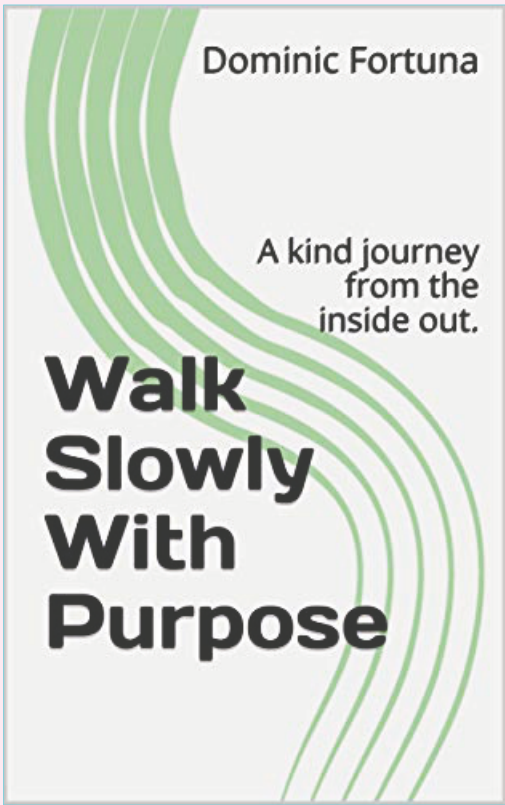
friends as you enter the northern Michigan Woods.

It will change you. I promise you that.

Archery deer season in Michigan runs October 1 through November 14, and again December 1 through January 1. Hunters on private land in Kalkaska County are reminded to check current DNR regulations for baiting rules and antler point restrictions.



Now Available from Amazon on Kindle and in Paperback



Dominic Fortuna’s book, “Walk Slowly With Purpose”
Be immersed in a magical journey from tragedy to triumph. Wise and fun characters jump off the page and keep you reading. A great and inspiring read you won’t be able to put down. Let your mind take a journey along with Gary and all of his new friends to a better life with understanding, kindness, and a grateful heart.

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