



Lucas looks around, surveying the land, during a deer hunt just north of Brighton, Ont.



Brian Lucas exposed, shelters his face from the wind, while hunting for deer along the Trent River.



## The Thrill of the Hunt

O ntario is an agricultural morgue after the leaves fall and before the snow lays down for its months of rest. Skeletal tress wave their boney hands, gesturing helplessly in their nudity. Their bark is grey, brown, it is worn down, scraped off, hanging sadly, or clutching tightly. A whole environment preparing to disappear under the duvet of a Canadian winter.

Brian Lucas has hunted in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties for most of his life. He started going out with his dad when he was eight, and continues to do so now, at 40. Lucas is proud to be a hunter and finds a great deal of his identity tied up with it. He sees hunting as an almost existential act,

one of communing with nature, taking only what chance and skill provide for him, which is often nothing at all.

"I've gone all this hunting season without seeing a single animal," he says. "But that's OK, the animal is just extra."

There is a certain ethic to hunting as Lucas sees it. For him it is about a symbiosis with nature, taking what he has earned through his own effort and cunning, and using what he has killed. When another hunter told Lucas about a man who killed a deer and left it in the woods, he was repulsed. He was not only angry at the waste of life for meat uneaten, but at the way that such an action reflects on hunters as a community.

Standing, his head swivels from side to side, slowly at times, quickly others, like an erratic radar system. After an hour or two, he sits, still scanning the tree line, the ridge, the grasses. More hours, more searching, waiting. Finally, as the light starts to wane, he gets up, sighs, and stretches. The chair is folded noisily, the rifle slung over his shoulder, and the long wade through the tall grass begins. So ends the last day of hunting season.

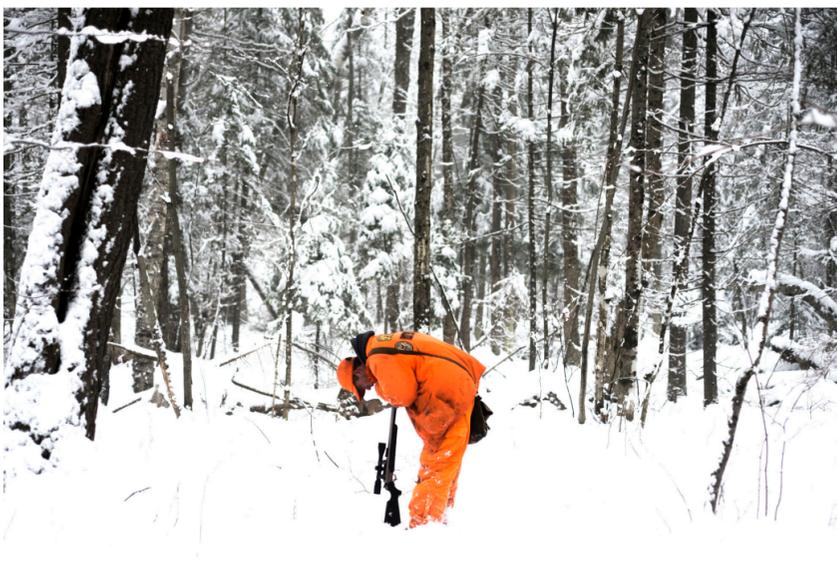
"Like I said," explains Lucas, "It's not about if you get anything. It's just about being out in nature, getting away from bosses, wives, all that. It's peaceful."

PHOTOS+TEXT/DUNCAN CAIRNS-BRENNER

**"I've gone all hunting season without seeing a single animal. But that's ok, the animal is just extra."**



Lucas has hunted the same woods just north of Bancroft, Ont. for over two decades.



Lucas rests during a deer hunt just north of Bancroft, Ont.