



I remember well the first time I saw a moose. Most people in the South think of moose as cowardly large deer. People think that at the first sign of a deadly presence, moose will run away. This could not be further from the truth. Moose, in reality, are known to kill humans in defense of themselves or their territory. When I was only a child, about eight years old, and living in Alaska, I came face to snout with my first moose—a full-grown bull moose, with a rack of antlers wider than my height. I went out in the snow early one morning to see why my dog, Taffy, was barking so much. I unfortunately found out why. As she yipped and growled, I rounded the corner expecting to see a fox. As my eyes looked to the ground, I saw four hooves as big as my father's fist. Looking up in awe, I saw a giant mass of fur and muscle slowly dip its head down to charge. My heart beat out of my chest as my face ran pale. I remember the news stories about the hiker who had her ear ripped off and multiple broken bones in a moose attack. I remember screaming my dog's name and running into the house as fast as I could. My desperate strides were slowed down by the thick snow as my heart pumped adrenaline

through my whole body. I had to wait to close the door until Taffy ran into the house. After slamming the door, I immediately started hugging and petting my dog with my hands still shaking from fear. Then I heard a large crash and the familiar screech of wood being ripped from its nails, followed by my dad exclaiming “What the hell?” As I ran up the stairs, gasping for air, I told my dad there’s a moose outside. As I hopped on the couch to look outside, I saw the fence destroyed, a pile of splinters in the middle of the fence line, with the other segments of the fence pulled all three feet out of the ground. As I saw the moose slipping on the icy road outside of our yard, I remember how hard it was for my eight-year-old body to drag those four-by-four fence posts when I helped my dad build the fence, and yet this nine-foot monstrosity shattered them and pulled the others out of the ground. Seeing the fence shattered by the moose made me realize how devastating the animal is. It is rare to see their strength in person without injury. Growing up in Alaska, you hear stories of moose attacking people, you see the pictures on the news that tie your stomach in a knot, and you hear zoologists compare them to reindeer. But, I remember seeing the reindeer, Star, in downtown Anchorage. Star was friendly, domesticated, and goofy. If you ever came across him walking her, the old man who handled Star might let you handfeed her. The moose was a hulking pile of animal instinct, muscle, and a rack of antlers pointed like spears. When I saw that animal, I was frozen with fear for a split second. That moose wanted to kill me, and there is nothing more to be said.

