



Photo by Ylla

ELEPHANT HUNT

In the center of camp they tied the captive elephant for the night.
And then the herd came out of the darkness to take her back

BY WYNANT DAVIS HUBBARD



It is the persecution of close-quarters hunting which wears the elephant hunter until his life is a combination of taut nerves, foul temper, insomnia and physical exhaustion. It is his knowledge of constant danger, because a hunter cannot forget the power, the speed, the fury of elephants. It is always eating at the brain and conjuring up frightening pictures in his imagination.

Coupled with the knowledge, bought through experience, is the grind: the hour by hour, day by day, drip, drip, drip of little things that gradually tear a man to pieces. It is the sudden bursting flight of a francolin, the yelping cry of a ground plover in the night, the biting of the flies, the faint rustle of bushes, deep in a saka, which turns out to be only the movement of a tiny duiker antelope. It is the heat, the sweat, the miles and miles of walking when the balls of your feet burn with a dull, constant, aching pain, and your knee joints are so dry you dare not stop for fear you won't be able to move again.

The hunter, following a herd of elephants, can never relax, no matter where he may be. Those huge grey ghosts, weighing four, five and even six tons, can move so silently that even a dog will not hear their passing twenty yards away. Surprisingly difficult to see, it is never safe to assume the elephants are a day's march ahead. Under the leadership of an old cow, influenced by the actions of the scouting elephants and by memories of areas which contained pumpkins, or wild fruit, or a particular bog which held succulent lily roots, a herd may decide to backtrack, or may swing in a tight circle to cross their earlier spoor at an unexpected spot.

An elephant hunter's eyes search the veldt ahead and on all sides. A thicker patch of bush or a group of trees coming into sight will bring him to a halt while he listens for any telltale sound; searches the sky and the trees for birds whose actions might tell him if the elephants are near; or lies upon the ground, ear in the dirt, to listen for any possible sounds the ground might carry.

Harry and Mackie Walker and I held licenses to shoot three elephants each. We also had special permission from the Northern Rhodesia Government to catch calves. We had dogs, around a hundred and fifty natives, a competent arsenal of both heavy and light rifles. The Walkers had been born in the Rhodesias and grown up as professional hunters. From previous experience we were familiar with the area in which we hunted. It was bounded by the Zambesi Escarpment to the south and east, the Kafue River to

the east and north, and the Congo Railway to the west. As the hunt wore on we came to know every inch of the land.

We first picked up the spoor of the elephant herd near the native village of Choma. This village is twenty miles or so from the railway hamlet of the same name, and is the capital of the Batonga tribe. The herd, about sixty elephants of all ages, had gotten into the native gardens and helped themselves to melons and pumpkins. The corn had long since been harvested.

Once we had the spoor we never left it. There were many times when we were badly confused and couldn't have told you how far ahead the herd actually was, but we never lost the trail. Up hill and down we trekked, across small rivers, through swamp and dense clumps of bush and trees so thick we had to crawl, studying the spoor, now getting close, now falling behind.

At night our beds were made of the long grass, crosslaced between two 6-inch logs laid three feet apart on the ground. Each of us had a canvas deck chair, and we ate our food from enamel plates set on a checkered tablecloth covering a portable wooden table.

The washboys took our soggy, bloodstained clothes and washed when they could, and ironed at night. The cook sometimes had to stoke the stove and bake his bread while the small stove was being carried slung on a stout pole between two natives—because we never stopped. We could not afford to. Hunting was our profession and we had to earn enough in four to five months to keep us and our families alive and eating for a whole year.

When we first picked up the trail of the herd of elephants, they were about 36 hours ahead of us and heading southwest into the triangle between the railway and the Zambesi Escarpment. It was well-watered country, for it was June and the pools and pans had not yet dried. But it was nasty hunting country, full of dense clumps of bush and trees which we call sakas.

The herd was moving leisurely. We came up with them after two and a half days of hard, fast spooring. The sun was just beginning to make its strength felt when we came out of a stretch of mauhaubahauba fruit trees to see a small saka lying dark and forbidding across a narrow vlei or treeless shallow valley in the bush.

It was breakfast time, so we halted. While the cook got breakfast we sent the trackers and hunters off to circle the saka and see if, as we suspected, the elephants were inside.

Unless one of us spotted a bull with a good pair of tusks, shooting was to be done only to catch a calf. We would watch to see when a calf strayed [Continued on page 118]

Elephant Hunt

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away a bit from the large ones. Then we would shoot to stampede the herd, let some of the dogs loose, and see if we could not cut the youngster away from its mother and the others. We would, we agreed, have to find calves less than five feet high at the shoulder. Anything over that we were sure we could not handle. We didn't realize how optimistic we were.

In the middle of breakfast the trackers returned with information that the herd had drunk and bathed at a small pan and that they were in the saka, standing up during the heat. As we finished eating, the gunbearers lined up, each with his rifle and cartridges. Carefully we inspected all to see that each had the right cartridges for the rifle he carried. The dog-natives lined up, each with four dogs, two to each leash. The dogs whined and jumped and bit at the natives. They were eager to get going. But we couldn't take the dogs into the saka. They would get tangled in the bushes and whine or bark, and we could not risk any sudden noise. The cook together with the washboys and most of the carriers were to stay where they were and not make a sound. Only the trackers, the gunbearers and our native hunters would enter the saka with us. If the natives behind heard shots and the sounds of yells, they were to turn loose the dogs and come a-running themselves to help in the chase and capture.

We three stripped down to stout hunting vests holding fourteen cartridges in loops, seven at each breast, rolled up shorts, socks, light rubber soled low shoes and small felt hat. We rolled our shorts so that they fitted tight to our thighs because it has sometimes happened that a hunter has had a stick run up his shorts and throw him just when he was trying to jump. The smaller the hat, the more we could see.

The elephants, according to the trackers, were pretty much right in the center of the saka. Harry chose to go in the southern end. He took Shamakembie, his chief tracker-hunter with him, and five others. I was to go with Mackie as I had the least experience, and we would take the northern end. Old One-Eye and Mangineera went with me. Mackie had his Shaluma, Old David and Sixpence.

Sakas are unreal sorts of places. One minute we were standing in the open in brilliant sunlight. The next we were creeping in gloom so thick we had to pause to let our eyes become accustomed to the shadows. It was impossible to walk upright for more than a step or two at a time. The bush, the vines, the creepers, the branches were too thick and tangled. It was down on all fours, creeping, worming our way beneath branches, wriggling and squirming so that our vests didn't scrape and make a noise; watching constantly that our rifles didn't get fouled in a bush, and trying to stay in such a position that we could, if necessary, spring to some sort of a shooting position in a hurry.

In the heat the saka stunk with the humidity and rottenness of an over-heated

hothouse. Ants bit our arms and legs as we wormed our way, and bugs crawled up and down our bare skins. Flies gathered in clusters around our eyes and in our ears. Sweat ran down our faces and trickled across our backs, and our bare knees and elbows got torn and scratched.

It is the silence which draws nerves tight and twangy. We crept four or five yards into the saka and crouched—listening. Mangineera pulled a small gourd from his belt and dribbled a thin stream of fine, bone-dry meal from the opening. The white powder fell straight to the ground. There wasn't a breath of air moving. We detected no sounds, no rumblings from the stomachs of the elephants, no chewing noises, no whistling breaths.

Cautiously, slowly, slowly, we wormed our way deeper into the saka. Somewhere between us and Harry there were sixty elephants. That was a lot for so small an area. Were the elephants alert and listening? Did they know we were in the saka?

An elephant is big, but in a saka it is seldom that a hunter sees more than just a piece of the great animal. Our eyes were looking for a chunk of grayish leg, the gleam of a bit of tusk, the sight of an opaque slab of rough hide, perhaps the twitch of a tail.

Foot by foot we passed around the base of a huge anthill. Suddenly, Mangineera raised a hand and we froze. He looked at me, a grin splitting his pock-marked face as he pointed. A little duiker antelope stood watching us five yards ahead, its head cocked and its ears thrust forward. It wandered away slowly.

No one moved, for we didn't want to frighten the duiker and have it make a noise. Some of the tension eased, for it was unlikely that the duiker would have been there if the elephants were close.

But they had to be fairly close. There just wasn't room in that saka. I lowered my head to get under a vine and pulled one knee slowly forward, feeling to make sure there were no sticks to break.

Then a scream shattered the silence. It sounded almost over my head. From the corner of an eye I saw Mackie come to his feet and start away. There was the crash of a breaking tree. Mangineera and One-Eye were already moving. Fast. I scrambled up and, dodging, ducking, stumbling, fled as fast as I could for the anthill. I scrambled up the side and found Mackie on top standing close against the trunk of a tree. I did the same as the screaming of other elephants sounded.

The entire herd had bolted.

Mangineera and Shaluma appeared high on the anthill and the four of us stood there motionless as the saka came alive. There was the scrape and hiss of branches switching against tough hides; vines snapped and small trees went down with a tearing sound. Another wild trumpet, and abruptly a smallish elephant burst from the saka and raced around the anthill. Its trunk was half curled and it squealed and screamed as it trampled bushes and small trees, banged against larger ones and wreaked havoc seven feet below us.

While we waited, the turmoil subsided—the ebbing uproar of the stampede of the sixty elephants, the squealing of the calves, the trumpeting of the cows, the

breaking of trees. The young elephant had disappeared. We held on for a minute, then made our way down the anthill and out of the saka. We returned to our breakfast site, took tea, then packed up and took up the spoor.

It was four days before we caught up with the herd again.

We spored far to the east of the village of Choma. The frightened elephants were moving fast. Although they slowed to feed during the night, and once bathed in a pool, they were covering about thirty miles a day. We had to really hump it to catch up. Forty to 45 miles a day. As we trekked, we hunted. Ahead of the main safari and to the sides, the native hunters ranged searching for game and sent back word when it was found. The trackers stayed on the elephant spoor and the carriers and dog boys followed them.

Sometimes the three of us hunted together. More often, we split up and each went after antelope or buffalo alone, cutting back at evening to find the spoor and the trail of the safari and catch up to where camp had been established for the night.

Day in and day out we hit the trail early, covered near forty miles, shot and hunted, then ate and dropped dead on our grass beds. We washed as best we could, for we were sweaty and streaked with ash from the burnt ground and with dust and dirt. Our arms and legs were red with long scratches from catnail thorns and the stings and bites of insects.

The fourth day we knew we were close to the herd. We found them late in the afternoon spread out through some mauhaubauba trees. We could see several calves but they stayed close in by their mothers and there was no chance to cut one out. Besides it was too late in the day to try. There would not be light enough for the chase and struggle which would be bound to follow.

When a big bull, carrying what looked like heavy tusks, moved from behind a group of cows and showed himself broadside, Mackie shot him just a little behind the shoulder. It was a good shot. The bull lurched, stumbled, regained its feet and moved away. But from the way its trunk dangled we knew it was done for. The herd milled, screamed and trumpeted and vanished through the trees. The bull cut away by itself, and when we followed the spoor we caught up with it moving very slowly, blood pouring from its trunk and mouth. Harry gave it the coup de grace.

We got a little rest during the next few days while we traded the elephant meat for grain, tried out the fat and strained it and poured it into five gallon tins. We cut off the feet and cured these with salt and sand, to be sold later to curio dealers to be made into wastebaskets. We saved the tail hairs to make bracelets and rings. The stench of rotting meat and guts, cooking meat, boiling fat and drying curios was terrible. In three days the meat and muscle around the roots of the tusks had putrified enough so that they could be pulled. It is unwise to chop them out.

Once the tusks were pulled we hired additional carriers for the grain, etc., and hiked back to the main camp at Choma where we weighed the tusks—one was 107 and the other 98 pounds—and buried

them in damp ground so they would not lose weight. We traded meat for over forty bags of grain, worth twenty pounds sterling. We had near forty pounds of fat, thirty tail hairs, four feet, two tusks representing 205 pounds of ivory worth in those days about \$6 a pound, and had some meat additional for more grain trading. All told, that elephant was worth between thirteen and fifteen hundred dollars to us.

Four of the trackers had kept after the herd. They sent back a runner to tell us where they were, and we left Choma to rejoin them down in the foothills.

The third time we caught up with the herd we managed to cut a calf away. It was about 9 in the morning and the elephants were strung over quite an area, feeding, just standing under the trees and throwing leaves and dirt on their backs or rubbing their sides against tree trunks. It was Harry who spotted the calf. It was pretty big, I thought, over five feet at the shoulder and looked very strong and heavy. It was an independent cuss and hung on the outer edge of the herd, sometimes staying to pull at bushes until the others were as much as sixty yards from it.

We decided to try for it. Harry, with four dog boys, sixteen dogs and fifteen other natives, was to sneak as close to the calf as possible without being detected. Mackie was to take his three hunters and stalk as close to the main herd as he could. I, with my natives, would approach in the center between Harry and Mackie.

When Harry had gotten as close as possible and thought the time was right, he was to fire a shot, loose the dogs and try to run between the calf and the herd. Mackie and I and our hunters were to fire shots, holler and create as much rumpus as we could, rush at the herd and try also to get between the calf and the other elephants.

As I crept forward the elephants looked enormous. Whenever one turned in my direction it would trumpet wildly. I was positive they saw me. The rumblings from the elephants' stomachs sounded loud and ominous in my ears. One elephant reached up and wound its trunk around a branch and then stepped backward, ripping the heavy bough from the tree with a rending, tearing sound.

Flat to the ground, with my natives close beside and behind, I inched and wormed my way closer and closer to the herd. Looking upward from ground level my eyes traveled up the thick postlike legs and to the flabby skin of the hind-quarters and up the sides of the elephants to their dirt-covered backs. A ball turned toward me and flapped its enormous ears so that they spread four or five yards. I pressed so hard against the ground I must have left a depression.

Mangineers grasped one of my ankles and pulled. Evidently he thought we had gotten as close as was safe. I heard an elephant squeal up Mackie's way and all the elephants in front of me stood motionless for a long moment while they listened. Then they resumed feeding.

Sweat trickled down my arms and face and my palms were wet as we lay waiting. I pressed my hands against the ground to get dirt on them to give me a better grip on my rifle.

There was a shot. Then a sudden chorus of wild screams and yells. More shots, and the furious barking of dogs. I leaped to my feet, shouting, and fired into the air over the elephants. Pandemonium broke loose. The herd closed ranks, trumpeting and screaming. Trees went down with a crash. I could hear Mackie firing and hear the shouts and yells of his men. The thunder of the heavy rifles reverberated under the trees and rolled across the veldt. Shuffling, their great ears flapping and tails curling, the elephants crowded away. Several turned and whirled to start back threateningly but changed their minds as another fusillade of shots crashed out. Running, firing, yelling, we rushed toward Harry, trying to work our way between him and the retreating herd. Mackie and his natives caught up with me and we spread out in a line, leaping up and down like wild men, hollering, shooting and reloading as we ran.

The herd disappeared. In the opposite direction we could hear dogs barking and natives shouting and hallooing. We tore off, following the sounds, and ran as if our lives depended on it. The chase was going away from us and it must have been a full mile before we caught up to find Harry standing panting beside a tree, the sweat pouring off him in rivers. His throat was so dry he couldn't speak. Just pointed at a thick clump of bush and trees. I saw dogs rushing in and out and saw the bushes shake. There was a squeal, and the calf dashed out of the thick stuff after a dog, whirled and rushed back in again.

The dogs couldn't hurt the elephant and the elephant could not turn quickly enough to catch a dog. But the dogs tormented the elephant and occupied all its attention. When it took after one, a dozen others nipped at it from the sides and from behind.

Giving our rifles to our gunbearers, with strict orders to keep an eye out for the possible return of the herd in response to the squeals and trumpets of the calf, we plunged into the fracas.

Forty natives, three whitemen and near eighty dogs surrounded that charging, bellowing, plunging calf. Panting as if our chests would burst, yelling in hoarse voices, we tried to close in and overpower the calf. But it was too strong and too full of hell. We would get close and then it would rush us and scatter us in all directions. It wrecked that bit of thick bush and trampled it flat.

The elephant burst through us and took off across the veldt. We streamed after the calf, and when it finally pulled up and stood we surrounded it again. The elephant wheeled in a tight circle. Then it took off again and we ran after it.

Four times, with the help of the dogs, we baited that elephant and surrounded it and tried to get close enough to grab its tail, an ear, or whatever we could lay a hand to. No dice. When one of us got close it curled its trunk, screamed and charged, and we had to run for it. When I tried the front end as a diversion so that Mackie and Harry could try the rear, the calf charged me in a sudden spurt, then whirled and chased Mackie and Harry. Natives tried to close in from the

sides but the elephant swung its trunk and beat at them and threw its hips against them, knocking them down. Once it tried to kneel on a man but we all made a rush and drove it off.

By 3 o'clock we were so exhausted we could do no more. We'd had nothing to eat since about two-thirty in the morning and only a few hurried gulps of warm water from a waterbag to slake our thirst. My legs shook so from fatigue I could barely stand.

When the calf broke away from us the fifth time we hadn't the strength to follow. Even the dogs were played to a frazzle. For a long moment we watched as the baby elephant rushed through the trees. Then it was gone. It would find the herd in some mysterious manner.

We were at it again the next morning. We had frightened the herd thoroughly the day before. They traveled hard and far. It was seven days before we caught up. Seven days on each of which we covered near forty miles across country. Seven days of constant hunting, of hours of nervous tension for we never could be certain when we might meet the herd again head-on. We were always tired. Food, however tasty, began to lose its appeal. We ate only to keep up our strength.

Each time we came up with the herd there was the same mounting of tension, the stretching of nerves, the tightness in the throat. The elephants were getting skittish and more alert and more dangerous. We cut a calf away from the herd the next time, and Mackie shot a medium bull. Harry had to shoot a cow through the stomach to turn her. The shot didn't kill her. But it would be painful for days and she would be very dangerous to approach.

The second calf was not as large as the first we had tried to catch. It was just over four feet at the shoulder. Again it was a case of run, run, run. Finally the calf pulled up out in the open. It was nearly as badly blown as we. Harry and Mackie went for its head, and when it charged them I closed in from behind and succeeded in getting the calf by the tail.

Ever try to hold a bulldozer? That's the nearest thing to what I had hold of. Only the elephant could move faster. The moment it felt me grab its tail it whirled. I hung on and was sort of flailed through the air. Then it took off and I stumbled and dragged behind. We went through bushes and over trees and some of the hardest ground I've ever felt.

But I slowed that elephant down. While I yanked and pulled and tried to keep my feet, Mackie and Harry marshaled the natives. In one howling mass the group descended on the elephant and me. Men swarmed all over that youngster and pushed it flat by sheer force of numbers. We got rawhide ropes around the elephant's legs and around its body. We had him.

We used up all the water we had sluicing down the calf's head and pouring water into its mouth. After a rest, we rearranged the ropes so that we had a stout one on each leg and a sort of harness around its body, and started the slow pushing, prodding, heaving, hauling road back to camp. The sun had long since disappeared when we finally roped our

catch between trees and sank into our deck chairs before trying to eat.

The amount of punishment the human body can stand is remarkable. We didn't feel as exhausted that night as we had before. That's what success does. We had caught our first calf. It was a bull, and as it stood, grumbling between the trees, it represented money in the bank, 1,500 dollars of hard-earned dough. We washed it with great affection.

The next day Mackie went off with a gang to get the tusks out of the bull he had shot, and to salvage what meat and fat he could. Harry and I began the slow task of walking the calf to the base camp near Choma where we would leave it under the care of natives.

Although the young elephant was surprisingly docile, it took us two days to cover the 25 miles to Choma. At the camp, we built a stout kraal of heavy poles. We put the elephant in this and draped branches from the trees it liked inside so that it could feed, and threw in grass and pumpkin. The first day and night it would not eat. Then it tried some pumpkin and from that went on to the branches and pulled down some and chewed on the tender twigs and leaves.

Mackie returned on the fourth day. He brought grain, fat and some meat and the tusks with him. Although we had many things to attend to at the base camp and were busy all day, the comparative rest did us good. But staying in camp wasn't catching elephants or shooting ivory. In two days the calf had settled down sufficiently so that we felt it safe to leave it with the natives.

Each day a native had come to camp to report the whereabouts of the trackers and the elephant herd. So, five days after capturing the calf, we struck off early to intercept the trackers and take up the spoor again.

The elephants were nervous and moving more than ordinarily. The spoor crossed and recrossed. Because the herd was traveling much they often cross-cut their own trail within a matter of hours, which created confusion for us and made unraveling the tracks hard work.

Eight days out of the base camp we tangled with the herd again. The calves were close in and we couldn't see one which we could cut away. When Harry shot a large bull with thick short tusks, we loosed the dogs hoping that they might be able to separate a calf, but with no luck.

The herd headed for the Kafue, only about 25 miles ahead. Knowing that they would have to turn and head back from there, we left a few natives to cut up and guard the bull. We took after the herd. As we spoor along, we sent hunters out to the east and west in the hope they might spot the elephants as they returned.

It was a wise precaution. The second day, around noon, one of the runners came in with news that the herd was standing in a saka not more than eight miles to the east. We abandoned the spoor we were on and cut across country at a rapid clip. We reached the saka before the elephants decided to move. Creeping up, we could hear them inside and hear the rumblings of their stomachs.

Experience had shown us that trying

to cut a calf away while the elephants were in thick bush was almost if not utterly impossible, so we decided to risk waiting, hoping the herd would come out before it was too dark or too late for us to try for a calf. We backed off, leaving Mangineera, Shaluma and another native to watch.

Stopping to test the wind with fine dry meal every few yards, we cautiously worked our way into the more open country beyond the far end of the saka. Inside, as we passed, we could hear an occasional squeal from a calf elephant, and once one of the larger ones tore down a branch. The herd was moving.

An old cow thrust her way out of the saka and stood, her little eyes rolling and her trunk scenting the faint breeze while her ears flapped to catch any sounds. Satisfied, she came out and slowly moved in the direction of the pan a mile or so distant. Other huge elephants walked out singly, in small groups, until forty or more were strung out before us leisurely moving through the trees. There were calves with them.

Time was becoming more and more important to us. There wasn't much more than two hours of daylight left as the last of the elephants came out of the saka. With them, right at the tail end, came a calf a little smaller than the one we had caught. I saw Harry and Mackie rising. I tensed. We had no prearranged plan, but it was obvious that the only thing to do was to try and rush between the calf and its mother.

We started without a sound, all of us running hard and fast right at the calf. The natives were faster and drew ahead. We covered half the distance before the cow realized we were on her. She whirled to face us, throwing out her ears and curling her trunk half way. Having no scent, and bad eyesight, she wasn't quite sure what we were. Mackie fired. The heavy bullet hit the cow toward the top of her head. The impact stunned her for a moment. She started to turn. I fired, into the air. Of a sudden we were all firing and yelling. The sudden onslaught was too much. The cow gave ground, then broke and shuffled after the other elephants which were streaming away rapidly.

We ran after them for a short distance, making as much racket as we could. I realized I hadn't seen the calf, and turned about to look for it. I saw Mangineera and Shaluma and One-Eye and two or three other natives racing back and forth just outside the thick bush. We had cut off the calf. It had run back into the saka and become separated from its mother.

Mackie and I cut into the saka behind the scrapping youngster, with one lot of natives. Harry marshaled all the rest outside to prevent the calf from breaking out and racing across the veldt to join its mother. She, too, would be angry and full of fight. The bullet fired at her would not have done serious damage. The brain is far down in back and a shot into the top of the head does little more than give an elephant a headache. But it makes them mean, which is understandable.

Mackie and I closed in on the calf from the rear. One minute it was facing

us and about to charge. Then the dogs nipped at its thick legs and it whirled about and rushed toward them. We edged in closer. Harry was tightening the circle from the outside. We were too many. We pushed the calf flat and tied so many ropes around and to it that it looked like a ball of twine.

There wasn't more than an hour of light left. We rearranged the rawhide ropes on the calf and got it to its feet. Pushing and hauling, we manhandled it back along the edge of the saka and across a shallow vlei and in among the trees in relatively open country, where we secured it between four trees and then set about making camp. We were a little short of water but there was enough for one night.

We knew that it was risky to camp so near the spot where we had tangled with the herd, but we didn't have much choice. It would have been even more risky to have tried to move. The elephants had set off in that direction and we could not be certain how far they had gone.

Instead of the usual rather sprawling camp, with the natives somewhat separated from us, we pulled everything in tight between two anthills which were about thirty yards apart. Under the direction of the hunters, the carriers went out on the veldt and brought in great logs and hunks of tree trunks. With these we established a line of fires between each anthill so that we, and the elephant, were inside. We didn't light these until we were through cooking at the smaller fires and until we had double-roped the calf and made it as secure as we possibly could.

Four of the native hunters were posted as guards. They would be relieved during the night when either Harry or Mackie or I got up, as we always did during the night, to patrol about the camp.

We lit the guard fires and stayed up while the light brush burned away, then adjusted the large logs so that they would burn slowly. A last check on the calf and we lay down on our grass beds, each with a heavy rifle on the blanket beside him.

I dozed and waked and dozed. The natives lay stretched out about the beds of coals from their cooking fires and the dogs wandered about then flopped down to sleep. I saw Harry get up and circle the camp, standing for a time looking at the calf. Then he returned to the fire and stretched out.

It was the sudden bark of a dog which brought us to our feet with a rush. A stick snapped with a sharp report out in the blackness beyond the flickering glow of the fires. Natives yelled and, leaping up, started to run.

Heaven only knows how the elephants got that close to us without our knowing. But they were there, and coming into camp to rescue the calf. Harry and Mackie and I raced for an anthill behind and scrambled to the broad-domed top. We were about seven feet above the level of the surrounding land, and as I turned to fit myself close to a tree I saw the elephants come shuffling into camp in a crowding mass. The natives had vanished.

Trampling everything, trumpeting, pushing trees down, the herd smashed

over the camp site. Coals and smouldering logs were kicked about and trampled. Dust rose in clouds, and ashes and the stink of fires smothered with cooking water filled the air. The dogs got in among the elephants, barking and nipping and racing this way and that. They drove the great animals crazy. Trying to catch a dog, the elephants barged about, knocked against trees, kicked pots and tubs. Our table was flattened and our deck chairs thrown and tossed about.

There was no moon. Only the hard thin light of the stars. Within minutes we could see little, only tremendous screaming shapes rushing this way and that. The night burst with the sound of the trumpeting, the squeals of the calf straining and fighting against its ropes, the barking of the dogs and the occasional wild shriek of a native. An elephant crashed into a tree near the base of our anthill and the whole thing fell partly on top of us.

So long as we remained motionless and silent atop the anthill we were reasonably safe. But if one of the dogs, chased by an elephant, decided to run to us for safety we would be in real trouble. Perhaps it was just as well that we couldn't see the shambles. Hearing was bad enough.

The temptation to fire a shot was terrific. But shots would only have infuriated the elephants the more. A huge elephant boomed in the blackness right at the base of the anthill. For a moment I thought it was coming right up. It banged against a tree, shaking the whole hill, and barged away.

Back and forth, around and over the camp the elephants surged and shuffled. In the darkness it sounded as if a number were close about the spot where I knew the calf had been tied. It didn't seem possible it could still be there, or that if it was it was alive. If the elephants got firm holds on the rawhide ropes they could break them with their enormous weight and strength, for they were tied to stout trees and no rope could stand such a strain. Or, in their frantic excitement, the elephants might tangle in the ropes and tramp on the calf; or kill it deliberately because of the smell of humans on its hide.

Overhead a faint light began to creep into the sky. I was just beginning to see the enormous shapes through the dust and haze and steam from the coals when the elephants departed as suddenly as they had come. One moment all was turmoil and noise and uproar. The next we heard only the whimpering of a dog and the voice of a native calling that the herd had gone.

Silent and motionless we waited, peering into the gloom and searching for the shape of an elephant which might have lingered. Then, cautiously, we worked our way down and headed for the place where we had tied the calf. Miraculously, it was there. It was down and tangled, but it was alive and, so far as we could see, unhurt.

The camp was wrecked. Three dogs had been killed, stamped to death. As the natives came in we lined them up and counted noses. They were all present.

—Wymant Davis Hubbard