



HORN OF THE HUNTER

■ It was very late the first day out of Nairobi when Harry Selby turned the jeep off the dim track he was following through the high, dusty grass and veered her in toward a black jaggedness of trees. The moon was rising high over a forlorn hill and it had begun to turn nasty cold. The jeep bumped and lurched and stalled once. She wasn't really a jeep, but a kind of glorified jeep that the British call a Land Rover. We had named her Jessica, figuring that to be a nice name for a jeep, and Jessica, by temperament, seemed considerably more jeep than rover.

In the glare of Jessica's headlights the trees profiled more clearly now. Harry flicked the searchlight upward and said: "Lots of dead stuff. And water, too, down in that donga. I expect we'd best camp here." He suggested that he had a priceless bottle of scotch someone in Nairobi had given him, which would make a world of difference to anybody. He turned to Chabani, the Wa-Kibuyu car boy.

"Na kuja lorry?" he asked.

"Ndio," Chabani said.

"Wapi pumbe?" Harry asked.

"Hapa," Chabani said. "Kariba."

The black boy handed Harry the bottle of scotch. "Magi hwa bavona," he told the black boy, who crawled out of the jeep, and bled two cupfuls of water—now cold from condensation—from the tied canvas bags of water that were lashed to the steel uprights that supported Jessica's canvas top. The dust and little wiggly things settled in the water. The scotch burnt through the water going down. It stayed warm when it got down, lighting a tiny little furnace in the stomach.

"Painkiller," Harry said. "Cures everything. We'll make a nice camp here soon the lorry comes up."

We could see the lorry, overloaded and grotesque with a dozen black boys making silhouettes from the tarpaulin-lashed top, lumbering and complaining and wallowing along. She had stuck herself like a contrary cow twice that day already. We watched her lights leave the track and turn in toward us. All of a sudden her lights pointed upward and her black shape lurched and stopped.

"Oh, Christ," Harry said. "Pig hole. You two wait here with the bottle and one of the water bags. I'll send Chabani back with some camp chairs and have him do up a fire while we wrestle the old girl out of her troubles."

He said something swiftly in Swahili to Chabani, who began to untie the dead Tommy ram from the spare tire on Jessica's bonnet, where it had been lashed down a couple of hours before when Harry shot it just at dusk. Chabani dumped it on the ground and took a panga, a big, curved, sawbacked knife, out of the back seat and dropped it on the ground by the dead Thomson gazelle. Then he tortured out the heavy, square green wooden chop box and put two canvas cushions from Jessica's hard front seat on it. He pointed to the chop box, smiled cheerlessly, and said: "Sit." Then he took the panga and disappeared into the grove of flat-topped thorn acacias. We could hear him breaking dried branches. Harry climbed back into the jeep and drove off to check on the lorry's sad condition.

My wife Jinny looked at me with a very small, pinched face. She was wearing my trench coat and looked very small, although she is not small, and very miserable, although she does not have the face for misery. I poured her another drink into the gay red plastic cups and took one myself off the top of the bottle of Harry's whisky. It didn't taste any nastier.

I looked down at the dead Tommy, at the hole



Author, right, and white hunter Harry Selby pose with a waterbuck.

No other book ever written has expressed so well the fears, joys and disappointments of a long African safari.

Come along on rare adventures where the game is plentiful and the shooting can be hair-raising

BY ROBERT C. RUARK

With Drawings by the Author

in his shoulder, centered exactly on the point and traversing all the way through him where Harry had shot him with the little Mannlicher. I was glad I had no license for Kenya and that it would be two more days before I would be allowed to shoot in Tanganyika. I wanted to see more of it first.

Harry had shot the Tommy ram swiftly and competently. We had not seen much game that day. Just on dusk we passed a few wildebeest and an odd zebra or two and began to see the Thomson gazelles in groups of a dozen. They were beautiful and dainty with their sharp, straight black horns curving a little at the tip, and the black bars on the gold hides just over the white stomach hair.

The Tommy was the first dead thing I had seen in Africa, and I began to wonder, with considerable nervousness, if I would be up to the task of feeding 15 people who considered 10 pounds of meat per diem, per each, a bare necessity of living. I knew what I could do with a shotgun. I did not know what I could do with all the fancy rifles I had, owing to never having shot any sort of rifle at anything but a target at the Campfire Club.

I was still wondering as we sat on the chop box, drinking whisky and water and waiting for Harry to come back with the lorry. Chabani had dropped an armload of dried, dead limbs and twigs a few feet away from the dead Tommy ram. He came over, asked me for a match, and then scuffed a handful of the dried grass from between his big flat feet in their tattered tan tennis shoes. He lit the handful of grass with a match, blowing on it carefully, and then started to feed it twigs, one by one, each no bigger than a kitchen match. His little blaze caught, and he fed it more twigs, gnarled ones this time, as big as a baby's wrist. The fire danced and reached up for more food.

Harry soon came striding along at the head of his porters, carrying a rolled-up something, which proved later to be the toilet tent, on his back. The boys strung out behind him, loaded with other tents and odd, lumpy-looking packages and angular poles.

"Bloody thing's bedded down for the night," he said. "We'll dig her out after dinner. All the boys are starved, and I imagine you are. Also, they've all got dreadful hangovers, as we have 1. City life is not good for country boys, black or white. We'll set up the sleepers and turn old Ali loose at the cook fire for a little *chacula* and have a drink or so first to keep off the fevers and would the *Memsab* like a bath?"

The *memsab* muttered that as long as she was going to die anyhow, she would rather die drunk and dirty.

"She'll doubtless grow to love it," Harry said. "Well, cheers, chums. Wonderful stuff, isn't it? Tastes so nasty and feels so good."

One of the blacks came and took the dead Tommy away. Another set up a portable table and unfixed three camp chairs—canvas and comfortable. We set the bottle on the table. Harry excused himself and drifted away to supervise the erection of the tents. We weren't making an extensive camp—no mess tent, no tents for the boys, no tent for Harry. Just a tent for the *buswa wa safari*, which suddenly was me, and for the *memsab wa safari*, which suddenly was Virginia. A hyena chattered across the donga. I didn't know it was a donga then—a dry river bed with just a trickle of water to one side. The hyena squealed, roared, growled, and then laughed in that maniac's mirthless hysteria which nobody has ever put down on paper correctly.

"My God," Jinny said, "what was that, a lion?"
 "No," Harry said, sliding suddenly out of the darkness. "That was a hyena. The lion is over that way," with a sweep of his arm. "If you wait a second you can hear him. It's a cross between a cough and the first muster of a summer thunderstorm. Now. Hear him? We call it *ngwama*, wonderful word for 'roar'—*ngwama*."

"No," Jinny said. "I don't hear him and I don't want to hear him."

There was a sudden crashing cacophony of assorted noises from the trees. It was a hoop and a squeal and a chuckle and a yell and a yip and a yap and a growl and a roar and a whistle and a clash of cymbals. We just looked at Harry.

"Birds," he said. "Baboons. Monkeys. Bugs. And away up the donga, one leopard. Also, there's lots of fairly fresh rhino sign down by the little river. Unpleasant beast, the rhino. Apt to

come blundering into camp. Can't see very well. Knew a bloke once got up to go to the sanitary tent and when he stuck his head out to go back to bed there was this big rhino cow grazing between him and his sleeping tent. Stayed in the latrine all night. Most uncomfortable."

"My God," Jinny said.
 "Looks about like time for a little *chacula*," Harry said. "You hungry?"

"Starved," I said.
 "Famished," Jinny said.

"We'll be having a bit of the Tommy," Harry said. "A touch fresh for my taste, but if we don't get our bit tonight the boys'll have it gone by tomorrow. And it's a young one. Shouldn't be had. Old Ali—he's the cook—is a ruddy wonder with game. Juma! Jumasaa! he yelled. "Lette *Chacula*!"

"*Ndilo, buswa*," came back from the cook fire. A white-robed wraith in a white fez, followed by another banshee in white, writhed up from the smaller grove of acacias. They cleared the table of bottle and glasses and reset it rapidly with china plates and condiments. "*Somp*," the head boy, Juma, said. I could recognize him now. He had a happy, evil sort of face, with a pencil-sized hole in his ear lobe that the fire shone through and an impudently cheerful look about him, owing undoubtedly to an Irish kind of snub nose. His color was very light, about gahardine. Juma was a Coast Swahili. He spoke and wrote Arabic and Swahili—Coastal Swahili, impecably grammatic, and unlike the crude pidgin Swahili the Wakamba and Kikuyu and Nandis spoke.

"Very important fellow, old Juma," Harry said. "Got hell's own amount of influence with the boys. Priest of sorts. Threatens 'em with Allah's vengeance and lends 'em money at God knows what interest rate betimes. Between praying and usury he keeps 'em on the jump."

Juma and the other man fetched tureens of soup, undoubtedly Campbell's. The bread was toasted and hot. The butter in its green plastic dish was fresh and sweet. The Tommy chops came smoking from the fire, and they looked and smelled wonderful.

"Fancy a beer?" Harry asked. "We've got a couple of bottles in the water bag, Kaluku!" He spoke sharply to the other white-robe. "*Lette beer-i kuu buswa!*" Kaluku bobbed his head and swished his skirts off after the beer. It was barely cool and very pleasant, rather like Australian beer in its heavy body. It was beer that never saw a ball game.

"Local product," Harry said. "Called 'Tusker.' Bloody awful, I think. I love that Danish Pilsen they have at the Norfolk, myself. But this can taste awfully good—well, say a month hence."

"I ain't knockin' it now," I said. "Pass the Tommy."

Considering that this particular Thomson gazelle had been dancing on the village green about four hours ago, possibly contemplating matrimony, he was great. He was not so tough as tender, and he tasted unlike any game I had ever eaten. No rankness, no gaminess, no stringiness. He was succulent and unfat and I had three helpings of him.

Juma, the head boy, came and swept away the dishes. He went back to the cook fire and returned with a smoking frypan.

"What's this?" Virginia asked.

"Desert," Harry said. "*Crêpes Suzette*. Old Ali always makes 'em first night out. Instills any amount of faith in the clients."

Juma and Kaluku came and cleared away the table. Juma fetched coffee, and I remembered a bottle of brandy I had stuck into the back of Jessica. We sat there facing the fire, listening to the night noises, the hyenas, the birds I did not know the name of, the leopard coughing somewhere up the creek, the bugs swooping and zooming but not biting. The moon had climbed steeply into the sky, and you could see the little hills plainly under it, like a long caravan of camels suddenly stopped and still to wait beside a well.

It was cold—not bitter, not quite frosty, but chilly-dew cold—and the fire was warm and wonderful. I was tired and I was full and the coffee was strong and black and the brandy slid down smoothly. I started to think about just how far I was from New York and newspaper syndicates and telephones and telegraphs and the 21 Club and income taxes and subways and elevators and then I sat up with a startled feeling inside. I am a hunter, I said to myself. I must be a hunter, or I wouldn't be here in the deep end of nowhere with a city-slicker wife and 15 strange black boys and a young punk with no beard, practically, who says he is a white hunter. Looking at the fire



and listening to the noises. I ran my mind back about what brought me here and wrote a little mental essay for myself as I sat and sipped the brandy.

The hunter's horn sounds early for some. I thought, later for others. For some unfortunates, prisoned by city sidewalks and sentenced to a cement jungle more horrifying than anything to be found in Tanganyika, the horn of the hunter never winds at all. But deep in the guts of most men is buried the involuntary response to the hunter's horn, a prickle of the nape hairs, an acceleration of the pulse, an atavistic memory of his fathers, who killed first with stone, and then with club, and then with spear, and then with bow, and then with gun, and finally with formulae. How meek the man is of no importance; somewhere in the pigeon chest of the clerk is still the vestigial remnant of the hunter's heart; somewhere in his nostrils the half-forgotten smell of blood. There is no man with such impoverishment of imagination that at some time he has not wondered how he would handle himself if a lion broke loose from a zoo and he were forced to face him without the protection of bars or handy, climbable trees.

This is a simple manifestation of ancient ego, almost as simple as the breeding instinct, simpler than the urge for shelter, because man the hunter lives basically in his belly. It is only when progress puts him in the business of killing other men that the bloodlust surges upward to his brain. And even war is still regarded by the individual as sport—the man himself against a larger and more dangerous lion.

Hunting is simple. Animals are simple. Man himself is simple inside himself. In this must lie some explanation for the fact that zoos are crowded on Sundays and museums which display mounted animals are thronged on weekdays as well as holidays. This must explain the popularity of moving pictures which deal with animals. This explains the lasting popularity of the exploits of Tarzan of the Apes, the half-animal figure created by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Man is still a hunter, still a simple searcher after meat for his growling belly, still a provider for his helpless mate and cubs. Else why am I here? From the moment he wakes until the moment he closes his eyes, man's prime concern is the business of making a living for himself and his family. *Bringing home the bacon* is the modern equivalent of banging a curly mammoth over the head with a big sharp rock.

Man has found it exceedingly difficult lately to decipher the weird incantations and ceremonies which surround the provision of meat and shelter for his spawn. He is mystified by the cabalistic signs of the economist. He does not understand billions of dollars in relationship to him and his. Parity baffles him; the administration of ceilings and floors and controls and excises and supports does not satisfy his meat urge or his aesthetic response to the chase, when the hunter's horn of necessity rouses him. *These are pretty fine thoughts*, I thought. *I will think some more.*

But he can understand a lion, because a lion is life in its simplest form, beautiful, menacing, dangerous, and attractive to his ego. A lion has always been the symbol of challenge, the prototype of personal hazard. You get the lion or the lion gets you.

And he can understand a gun, because the gun is the symbol of man's brain and ingenuity, the device of difference between small weak man and big, brawny, cruel life. But I do not even know whether I can shoot a rifle yet.

And he can understand man, himself, puny ape with outsize brain and weak talons, short blunt teeth, and always ridden by consuming fear and uncertainty. And I am real scared at this moment.

And he can understand a star and a moon and the sun and grass and trees and uncontrived beauty, when modern art and physical formulae and aerodynamics and jet propulsion are cloaked in unreality.

A man and a gun and a star and a beast are still ponderable in a world of imponderables. The essence of the simple ponderable is man's potential ability to slay a lion. It is an opportunity that comes to few, but the urge is always present. Never forget

that man is *not* a dehydrated nellie under his silly striped pants. He is a direct descendant of the hairy fellow who tore his meat raw from the pulsing flanks of just-alain beasts and who wiped his greasy fingers on his thighs if he bothered to wipe them at all. I wiped my greasy fingers on my thigh, for practice.

This is the only deeply rooted reason I can produce for the almost universal interest, either active or vicarious, in hunting. As time and civilization encroach more deeply on the individual, as man hunts his meat at the supermarket instead of in the swamps and forests, it is still interesting to note that in America some 36 million hunting and fishing licenses are sold annually, that the sale of outdoor magazines and books continues to boom, and that the firms which handle safaris in Africa are booked up four and five years in advance. Oddly, as the opportunity for direct participation dwindles, the interest in man versus animal continues to grow.

It seems to me I heard the hunter's horn earlier than most. I was raised in the country-small-town part of North Carolina. My grandfather was a hunter, and a serious one. So was my father, although he never shot anything larger than a five-ounce bobwhite quail in his life. When I was six years old they gave me an air gun, and I was physically sick from excitement when I killed my first sparrow. I was even sicker when I killed my first quail with the 20 gauge shotgun Santa brought me on my eighth milestone. Thereafter I hunted six days a week, and on the seventh I did not rest. I worked out the bird dogs on dry runs with no gun. We did not defile the Sabbath with gunfire in those days. I had few gods, however, that were not to be found in the fields and woods, and I early learned that you did not have to shoot it to enjoy it. Seeing it wild and happy more often was enough.

You might say that *Field and Stream* was my early Bible. I worshipped before the shrines of men like Archibald Rutledge, David Newell, and Ray Holland, a far piece ahead of Ernest Hemingway or Thomas Wolfe. I had good dogs as a kid, and a great many marvelous things happened to me in the woods. For a long time I had a small boy's dream of writing a story about my dogs and my quail—and of course, me—and seeing it printed in a magazine with a cover by Lynn Bogue Hunt. This was the going-to-sleep dream. I never expected to achieve it, but dreams are not taxed for small boys, not even the wildest ones.

Somewhere along the way, when I was out after squirrels or creeping after ducks or following my old setter, Frank, after bobwhite, I got involved in an even more ambitious dream. I had early fallen under the spell of Mr. Burroughs and his *Tarzan*. Somewhat later came more realistic approaches to Africa—the Martin Johnsons, *Trader Horn*, *Sanders of the River*. I got involved with the travel tales of Somerset Maugham, and it seemed I would bust a gusset if I didn't get to see jungles and lions and cannibals someday.

And so now, for no real reason at all, save a boyish dream and a 20-year itch, I suddenly rigged my own safari to Kenya and Tanganyika. It was mine. Nobody sent me. I was paying for it myself. Nobody goes along but my wife and the white hunter and a company of African "boys." I refused to share the trip with anybody else, even though I had offers of plenty of company.

There is not much personal adventure left in this world—not many boyhood dreams that lose nothing, but rather gain, by fulfillment. So I combined two dreams in one: I was on a safari and I was going to write about it.

The fire was beginning to shake into solid glowing coals now, and some of the night noises had stilled others, and new ones had commenced. The boys had finally succeeded in dragging Annie Lorry out of her sloven nest in the pig hole, and she was moored alongside the sleeping tent. Harry had stretched a length of canvas as a dew cloth from her topmost rigging to the jeep and had set up his cot under the canvas. I yawned. Virginia yawned. Harry yawned. Harry got up. "Time for bed, I expect," he said. "*Nataka lala*. We'll be up at dawn. Two more hard days' drive yet to come. Sleep well."

We walked to the tent, where a small carbide lamp blazed



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on a rickety little table and the two white tall cones of mosquito netting draped over cots with inflated rubber mattresses on them. I reflected that if it were possible for a man to be happy in this day and age I was a happy man. I didn't know precisely why, despite the fine talk, but I was a truly happy man.

It started out to be a funny trip. It had to be funny, funny peculiar, that is, because the kind of friend who had been giving all the good advice either through malice or stupidity completely misled me on the time to go: He said June was great. I was in Nairobi a little less than an hour before I found out that June was not great. June was ungreat. June was lousy. June was not the time to do anything, because of a simple truth. Rains make grass, and animals stay up in the hills where the grass is short and the carnivores can't hide in it, and when the miles and miles of bloody Africa are a bloody sea of six-foot grass, there are no bloody animals to shoot at or take pictures of or even to look at. They burn the grass in July to get it short again, and the decent hunting starts in August. My fine friend, the expert, sends me over in June, when the prairies are wet and all the game is either hidden out in the hills or still working on the water holes in the reserves. Some friend, my expert friend. Ten thousand bucks' worth of former acquaintance.

Now in Kenya, a stone toss across the border of Tanganyika, I woke up. A few mosquitoes buzzed desparately about the net. Away off somewhere the lion coughed and complained. I contemplated the high cost of lions as I lay on an inflated chilly rubber mattress in a strange land. (The cost of lions is considerable.)

A baboon barked somewhere down the donga and followed it with an outraged squawk. A little later the leopard which had outraged him sawed at the foot of the tree, from which the snugs undoubtedly was swaying from a limber branch. "Bastard," the baboon said. "Spotted, evil, ugly bastard." The leopard replied: "Just wait, snugs. I'll have indigestion over you yet."

It is a long, long way, although short in miles, from the modern civilization of Nairobi's Norfolk Hotel to where we aimed in Tanganyika, because you have to go through little places named Narok and Loliondo and across a big plain named Serengeti. After you leave the Naivasha area there aren't any roads much, only tracks through grass and winding over and around mountains, and when you start across the Serengeti there is only a double-barreled peak to steer you 60 miles, and unless the day is clear you can't see the peak. You drive the hunting car by guess and by God. The weary old lorry labors behind you and now and again you pause to wait for her to catch up, the boys gray-faced with the dust and clinging to the tarpaulined top like a flock of baboons on a rocky kopje.

Much has been written about the profusion of game just outside Nairobi, and some sportsman once wrote a magazine piece called "They Hunt from Taxicabs in Nairobi," suggesting that it was simple if you desired to have your wife or daughter shoot a leopard. All you did was to nip into a car and go and collect it before cocktail time in the New Stanley Hotel. He was wrong on only one count: The Athi Plain outside Nairobi is a game preserve, and they hang you for shooting so much as a dik-dik in its confines. Africa is a large plot of land. In relatively few of its areas are you allowed to shoot anything. Achieving those areas is difficult and dusty. And the kidneys moan in anguish from the punishment they absorb from a bucking jeep called Jessica or any other name.

"This bloke I mention," Harry was saying, "was one of the few real crackpots I've been forced to entertain on safari. He was an Englishman, and he thought he was Tarzan of the Apes. He wanted to sleep in trees. He ran around naked all the time. I couldn't keep him from bathing in the streams, and the crocodiles were eyeing him appreciatively. He— My aunt! Look yonder. What a lovely lion."

I do not believe there are many more impressive sights than

a city man's first glimpse at a live maned lion loose on a plain in strange country, sinister and far from home. This old boy was a movie lion. He had a luxuriant mane and tufts on his elbows and he was right smack in the middle of a bare prairie. Him and his lady. She took off in a swinging lope. The old boy stopped cold and turned to inspect us with a cynical yellow eye. Harry swung Jessica past him at about three feet.

"Jumbo, Buana Simba," he said. The lion grunted and scowled and began to move off. Jinny unlimbered the camera and stood up in the jeep. I placed both palms on her behind and braced her against the windshield so she could take pictures. The lion, heavy-maned and very full in the paunch, swung off after his old lady. Then he stopped again, and Harry tooted the jeep to within six feet and halted it. The lion looked at us. We looked at the lion.

A lion, loose, and six feet away, with no bars in front of him, is bigger than the lion you remembered from the zoo. His teeth are longer. He is scrubbier, perhaps, but loses no dignity and no ferocity. I was not displeased when he sauntered off. Neither was Jinny. She had not yawned back when the lion yawned at her. She was not bored.

I will never, possibly, forget that first day on the Serengeti. We saw 14 lions—one pride of five drinking peaceably and serenely at a water hole with half a hundred Grant and Thomson gazelles, only a few feet away from each other, and each animal serenely aware that nobody was going to eat anybody else. As we got off the plain and into bush we began to see giraffes and ostriches, and the antelopes thickened into herds of several hundred. The first stirrings of the semi-annual game migration was beginning, and the flocks of wildebeest, shaggy and high-

bumped like American bison, were beginning to move, along with their friends and companions, the zebras. We saw bands of five and ten thousand, and coursed them briefly in the car. At one cutoff we paused for a few unforgettable moments while some five thousand zebras thundered past our bow, their hoofs thunderous even on the grassy plain, and the dust boiling behind them like the wake of an armored column in North Africa. And now the grass was high, towering over the windshield of the jeep and pelting our faces with the sharp grains from the heavy seed heads. Hundreds of coveys of tiny quail sprayed up from under Jessica's hood. The seed heads got into her grille, and every so often we had to stop and clear them out of her front.

"Bloody Rover smells like a bloody bakeshop," Harry said. "Grass. Nine miles high everywhere. Too much rain this year. Too much water on the plains. Too much water in the hills. Game all massed in the reserves or up in the hills—anywhere the grass is short and the cats can't crawl uneven. I've high hopes, though, for where we're headed. It's freak country, a little strip about 15 miles long by five wide, and the grass is never high there. I don't know why. Unless I'm off my reckoning, we'll find game in that area. We'll find the game in any area that's legal and isn't covered with a forest of this bloody grass. Let's stop for a bite of lunch and one of those delicious nutritious martinis you're always talking about."

We went down through a poison-green patch of grass that covered a wet spot, with Kidogo, the gunbearer, testing the terrain with his horny feet ahead of us, and trundled up to a high knoll where a patch of many acacias gave a grudging shade. Harry's curly black hair was whitened and stiffened by dust. Jinny's blond crop under the bandanna and the Stetson was blonder. There was dust in my whiskers and dust in my mouth and dust in the water bag and dust in the plastic glasses and dust in the gin, which made a very nice hot martini if you like them hot. I like them hot.

Chabani and Kidogo got the chop box out of Jessica's back seat and spread the front-seat cushions around under the trees. We had a couple of martinis apiece and then we had a bottle of Tusker lager and some remnants of the cold Tommy and a can of cold spaghetti and bread and butter and pickles. The tenses fed on us sparingly as we ate. A few hundred yards away a herd of wildebeest stared stupidly at us. The sun filtered through the acacia tops and we sweated and the insects' bites



itched and our eyes were red and I still decided that I was a happy man, with two months ahead of me and nothing to do except look at the game and maybe shoot a little of it and not answer any telephones.

"When we get off this bloody reserve we'll have to shoot a big piece of meat pretty quick," Harry said. "It's been a hard three days for the boys, and they'll be ravenous and eat too much and I'll have to dose them all for the bellyache. Sooner we get them fed up and over being sick, the better.

"Ought to make the permanent camp on the Grummetti sometime after dark," Harry continued. "Must stop off and see the Game Department bloke. Nice lad name of Thomas. Sign the register and that sort of thing. He'll buy us a drink. Then I want to stop in the village—the Wa-ikoma manyatta—and pick up old Kibiriti. He's wired for lion, and I've a hunch we'll need what he knows. Manned ones, shootable ones, getting tougher and tougher to come by."

"Who's Kibiriti?" Jinny asked as she got into the jeep and straddled the gearbox.

"Bit of a sorcerer," Harry said. "I expect his mother was a lion. He thinks exactly like a lion. He can find lions when other lions can't find lions. I don't know how he does it."

It was coming on for dark when we took Kibiriti away from his mud-watly hut. He perched atop the lorry, his red fez cocked rakishly, as full of importance as Winston Churchill coming over for a new loan. I wished later we had kept him for in the 18 miles that separated us from our first permanent camp site Mr. Harry Selby, the infallible white hunter, to whom I had entrusted my life and that of my wife, got lost. Hopelessly lost. Bitterness was added to the brew when that unreasonably slut, Annie Lorry, the faller-in-pig-holes and sticker-in-mudholes, that slab-sided, overloaded, weak-axled travesty of a truck, had to come and find us.

It was an eerie evening. The sky was dusted with stars against the incredible furry velvet blue of the African night. The bush bulked black against the horizon, making strange animal forms, like a fancifully trimmed yew hedge on an English estate. The vast plain of grass—shorter now—was silver in the night and gimmered like a field of wheat. A slim, graceful crescent of moon made the grass sparkle as we sped over it fruitlessly, seeking the harbor entrance to the camp we knew was over a long, low-bulking hill. Little bat-eared foxes scampered ahead of us and grimaced at Jessica's headlamps. Night jars whooshed and got up ghostly ahead of us, fluttering off like startled spirits. My knees ached. My back ached. My knees cramped. My eyes were full of dust and my beard itched.

"Home to Campi Abahati," Harry said. "I see Annie Lorry's headlamps. She's waiting for us around that corner and just past that hill, damn her eyes. She found it first, and I shall never forgive myself."

"What does Abahati mean?" Jinny said. "Bugs in bed or rhinos in the john or what?"

"It means Happy Camp, Lucky Camp," Harry said, and pressed the gas. The jeep leaped and bounded at 50 miles an hour over the plain, occasionally loosening teeth as Harry struck a stone or a hole or a stick.

We couldn't make much out of Campi Abahati at midnight, except that seven hyenas, three lions, and an assortment of baboons and leopards seemed to be eagerly awaiting us. It looked pretty dreary.

"This doesn't seem like the happiest camp I ever camped in," the memsahib said as we crawled under the mosquito nets and a lion voiced a certain amount of displeasure 50 yards away. When we left it ten days later she cried. And not from relief.

I woke up in an Old Testament, or possibly Koranic paradise. To estimate a paradise today you have to call it a place that God was happy to make, had not erred in the making, with the original creatures in it and not even man behaving very badly. The Happy Camp, the Lucky Camp, was on a grassy knoll overlooking the Grummetti River. We pitched the tents beneath a high thorn acacias. Up the river a leopard sawed. Over the hill a lion spoke. The baboons came to call to see that we were doing everything right. Halfway between the camp and Harry's favorite leopard trees was a big anthill 12 feet high. Somewhere along the marsh there would be a couple of juvenile twin rhinos, special friends of Harry's, and one old buffalo bull with a crumpled right horn.

The sounds become wonderfully important. There is a dove that sounds like a goosed schoolgirl. He says: "Oooh. Oooh!

OOOH!!" The bush babies cry. The colobus monkeys snort like lions, except it does not carry the implied threat. At first it is hard to tell the baboons from the leopards when they curse each other in a series of guttural grunts. A hyena can roar like a lion. A lion mostly mutters with an asthmatic catch in his throat. The bugs are tumultuous. A well-situated jungle camp is not quiet. But the noise makes itself into a pattern which is soothing except when the hyenas start to giggle. A hyena's giggle is date night in the female ward of a madhouse.

"You will find yourself growing fond of old Fisi," Harry said. "He's a noisy nuisance and a cheeky brute, but if you took him out of Africa it wouldn't be Africa any more. He's a tidy one too. Cleans up everything for you."

We slept late that morning, bone-sore from the three-day drive, and along about elevenish Harry said we'd best go and sight the guns in.

Our camp was cuddled in the crook of a low mountain's arm, but behind was plain, a brilliant yellow plain dotted with blue-and-white primrosy sorts of flowers. Wherever you looked there was life. Five thousand wildebeest there. Five thousand zebras yonder. Two hundred impala here. A thousand Tommies there. Five hundred Grant gazelles there. A herd of buffalo on the river. Harry's twin baby rhinos. A shaggy-necked, elk-looking waterbuck with his harem in the green reeds. If you grew grass on Times Square and cleaned up the air and made it suddenly quiet and filled it with animals instead of people you might approach some likely approximation of what I saw that morning, with the sky blue and the hills green and the plain yellow and blue and white.

The animals looked at us casually and with little curiosity. We stopped the jeep beneath a thornbush and Harry motioned to Kidogo. Kidogo, wearing his floppy shorts on his skinny bowed legs and his big cheerful grin on a face like an Abyssinian king, picked up the panga and walked a hundred yards away to another tree and chopped a big blaze off it with the panga. Harry took a couple of cushions out of the Land Rover and laid them on its bonnet. He spraddled his short thick legs, leaned the .375 against the cushions, and fired. Kidogo tapped a point of the blaze with his panga.

"High and left," Harry said. "We'll just rearrange these graticules." He did something to the scope and then rapped on it with a big .416 cartridge to see that the new setting was solid. He fired again, and this time the big Winchester was dead on.

"Good gun, that," he said. "Just remains to see if you can hold it as steadily as it'll shoot straight for you if you give it the chance."

We—he—sighted all the guns, the .375, the .30-06, the .220, and the big ugly .470 double. I shot them all afterward. They all seemed to kick. The big .470 had a push, but it pushed you back two feet. I was beginning to feel nervous, having never shot anything more serious than a shooting-gallery duck with a rifle. These guns seemed to make a god-awful amount of noise.

"Tell you what," Harry said. "We'd best break you in easy and get you used to the light and the guns. On the way back to camp we'll let you shoot a zebra for the boys to eat and a Tommy for us to eat and a Grant and a wart hog for a leopard bait. I've a very fine tree just down from the camp. Always seem to haul a leopard out of it."

We climbed into Jessica and aimed for the camp and lunch. A herd of Grants looked at us and ambled slowly away, walking gingerly on seemingly soft feet.

"See the old boy, the last one, just over there?" Harry said. "He's an old ram and about ready for the hyenas. He'd be tougher than whiteleather and his liver is full of worms and his meat is measly, but the leopards won't care. Get out and wallop him. Tos .30-06," he snapped over his shoulder to Kidogo. The Nandi gunbearer slid the bolt of the little Remington and handed it to me. I slid out of the car and crawled to an anthill. The jeep went away. One does not shoot from cars in Africa, nor until the vehicle is a good 500 yards away. The Game Department aesthetically deplors car shooters and also puts them in jail.

I have shot at submarines and I have shot at airplanes and I didn't shake, but now I shook. The sight of the rifle was revolting like a Catherine wheel. It seemed to me my breath had ceased forever, and I was panting like a sprint horse extended out of class in a distance race. My eyes blurred. I aimed at the gazelle's shoulder, waited until the rifle stopped leaping, snatched at the trigger, and heard the bullet whunk. I aimed



at the shoulder and I hit him in the hind left ankle. *Great beginning, boy*, I said. *Steady rest on 135 pounds of standing animal and you hit him in the foot. I shot five more times, carefully. The last time I shot he jumped into the bullet which broke his neck. He went over on his horns, and the jeep drove up to get me.*

"Nice shooting," Harry said.
 "Kufa. Kufa. M'zuri sana," the boys said.
 "Nuts," I said. "It looks like I am a shotgun man."
 "You broke his neck," Harry said.
 "I was aiming at his behind," I said.
 "It's like that for everybody at first," Harry said. "The light, you know. Everybody misses at first."
 "Look, the light hasn't got anything to do with my shakes," I said. "The light doesn't make the gun wiggle like a cooch dancer. I got no guts. I shake and I can't control my breath. I aim at the shoulder and hit it in the foot. I am sighted in on his can and I break his neck. This we can't blame on the light. This we can't blame on the gun."

"Take it easy, take it easy," Harry said. "It happens to everybody. Even Hemingway. It even happened to Theodore Roosevelt."

Next I had trouble with a wart hog. Then I tried for a hyena. Again trouble.

We shaped back to camp again and put up another hog, a bigish boar accompanied by the sow and six piglets.

"You'll kill this one well," Harry said. "Mind what I say. Use the .30-06."

The boar was running diagonally across and ahead of us. The Remington felt comfortable in my hands. I swung it ahead of the boar's shoulder and squeezed her off. The pig did a forward flip and stayed still. One of the gunbearers exhaled sharply.

"Kufa," he said. "M'zuri sana. Piga m'zuri."
 "Old Bwana Firecracker," Harry said, grinning. "The toast of the Muthaiga Club. You have now passed your apprenticeship. That is a very dead pig and a very nice shot and we will hang the pig in the tree next to the Grant and we will shoot us a very nice leopard, and now for Christ sake quit worrying about your shooting."

Just before we got back to camp we remembered that I was supposed to shoot a Tommy for our table. There was a likely-looking one standing and switching his tail. I got out of the jeep with the Remington and shot at him. I shot at him 14 times. My wife killed him three days later. He had horns good enough for space in Rowland Ward's records.

I did not speak much during lunch.
 I don't think I ate any, as a matter of fact. All I could think of was the fact that the guy who couldn't hit a Tommy was supposed to shoot a lion.

We left the men in camp again to do whatever it is that women have to do, and we went down by the reeds. We had Kidogo and Adam and Kibiriti along as ballast. We drove slowly along the wet edge of the high green reeds and we flushed a herd of waterbuck, but the bull wasn't much and you can't eat them anyhow, so we pushed on and then Kibiriti rapped Harry on the shoulder. A ripple showed through the reeds.

"Kits," Kibiriti said.
 "It was a hunting cheetah, and you could see his small round head plowing through the reeds, and he looked over his shoulder once and then took off like a shot."

"Hapana," Kibiriti said.
 "He's right," Harry said. "This one we will not see again. When they go they go, and you have had him. Let's go shoot a zebra for the blacks to eat."

Kibiriti said something rapidly in Swahili. It was about a paragrafuhl of Swahili.

"The old boy's come down with one of his hunches," Harry said. "He's feeling liony. He says that, the way the moon is and what with the rains and all and the state of grass and economics amongst lions in general, he feels like a lion ought to be about three miles from here, contemplating his navel under a tree hard by a rocky hill. To my certain knowledge Kibiriti has not been here for a year. But if he feels liony we'd best go and take a dekko at his hill. Don't let the fez fool you. This is a true savage, and he is finer with a bow or spear than anybody I ever met, and he feels lions. Are you up to shooting

one today, your first day?"

"Christ preserve us," I said. "Let's hope this lion fancier is wrong. Today I would hate to go up against a bull butterfly."

"You'll change your tune when you see your first shootable simba," Harry said. "You'll be awfully brave. You'll probably be so scared that you will mistake fear for bravery and do everything right."

And it was that simple. We traveled the three miles. There was a rocky hill alongside the marsh. There was a clump of thorn, and under it there was a lion, catching a nap in the afternoon sun which slanted under the umbrella tops of the trees and struck some golden sparks from his blackish-yellow hide.

"Simba," Kibiriti said. "M'kubwa. Dozmi," as a man might remark that if you go east far enough on Fifty-fourth Street you will find the East River.

"I'm damned if I understand it," Harry said reverently. "This silly bastard in infallible. I know he hasn't been here in a year. I also know that three days ago there couldn't have been a lion in the neighborhood because the game is just starting to come in. But here we are. Your first shooting day in Africa and now you've got to shoot a lion. His mane is a little short on top and he's a little past prime. But he's the biggest blighter I've ever seen, and today a lion is a lion. I think you'd best collect this bloke, and maybe we can better him later."

"We will collect this simba like this," Harry said sternly, like an over-young professor lecturing the class. "Kidogo drives Jessica here. I sit in the middle. You sit on the outside. We will drive as close as we can without annoying this creature overmuch and taking care to observe the government's rule about 500 yards away, et cetera. When I nudge you, fall out of the jeep. Fall flat and lie still and then we will crawl as close to this simba as we can, and when I tell you to shoot him you shoot him. The idea is to get close as you can—less danger of wounding him that way. You wound this chap, old boy, and he gets into those reeds, and we will all have a very nasty time. I'd not wound him if I were you. When you've shot him once, shoot him again, and then shoot him once more for insurance. Very sound rule. Old Phil Percival taught it me. All set?"

I couldn't say anything but yes. Kidogo had taken the telescopic sights off the .375. I slid back the bolt and caught the comforting glint of the bullets in the magazine. There was one in the chamber. *Good-by, Mother, I said to myself. Et up by a lion in the bloom of youth.*

"Well, let's go shoot him," I said. "What are we waiting for?"

"That's the spirit," Harry said. "*Pese pese, Suris. Kuenda.*"
 The jeep began to roll, Kidogo obeying motions of Harry's hands. We approached the lion devoutly. We seemed always to be going away from him but actually were growing closer. Kidogo took his foot off the gas. Harry hit me in the ribs with his elbow. I fell out of the jeep. I remembered to fall with the gun protected and pointing away. Harry tumbled out behind me. He had a dirty, rusty-looking .416 Rigby bolt-action rifle in his hands. He had told me once that it could not hit anything but lions.

I was on my belly in the stiff, coarse yellow grass, and the lion was looking enormous now, staring in that oddly stuffed-shirt profile way they do, like bankers contemplating the future. A lion's hide is not tawny. It is yellowish-black. This one flexed the muscles of his forelegs, hooking his claws, and flicked his back hide to express annoyance at the camel flies that buzzed around him. I was humping along on my elbows, with the gun pushing out ahead of me.

We were close to the lion now. I could count flies on him. Harry reached back and touched me, pressing me down behind a hummock. The lion turned his head and looked straight at us. He was a little scruffy on top, but he had a fine dark mane below. His feet were as big as Satchel Paige's feet. His head was as big as a bale of hay. He yawned and I saw he had his right canine tooth broken off. He was huge.

"Wallop him," Selby whispered.
 I got up on one knee and went for just behind his ear. He flopped over like a big dog, kicked once, roared once, and stretched out. I never did hear my gun go off and felt no concussion.

"This is the biggest lion I ever saw in my life," Harry said. "Also the deadiest. But I should slip another one into him just behind that shoulder blade if I were you. I keep telling you, these dead animals are the ones that get up and kill you. Bust



him again."

I busted him again. You could tell he was dead from the sound of the bullet hitting him and his bodily reaction to the bullet hitting him.

"*Kufa*," Harry said. "My Christ, he's huge. An old boy to boot. Shouldn't be surprised if he isn't the type that citizen in Ikoma was calling a cattle killer. He'd be about ready for cattle now and mauling the odd native now and then. He's about 10 years old. I might say you shot him rather well, chum."

"I always shoot lions in the ear," I said. "Like I always shoot Grant gazelles in the foot. I was probably aiming at this one's ear too."

"No bloody fear," Harry said. "I was watching you. Old Bwana Simba. Old Bwana Liasi Moja. One-Bullet Bob. The toast of the Muthaiga Club. Here come the worshipping throng. They want your autograph. Kill a lion, make friends, influence natives. Nice going, chum."

I looked at my lion. The top of his brainpan was off. We walked off his measurements and he was 10 foot six. That is a lot of lion. His paws were as big as pumpkins. It suddenly occurred to me that I had crawled up on this thing as close as I had to get and when I had to shoot him I shot him and didn't wound him and of a sudden the boys were admiring me and Harry was kidding me and I felt real good. I hadn't spooked. I hadn't butchered it. I hadn't looked bad in front of the boys.

I am a hell of a fellow, I said to myself. I am a slayer of Simba. Lord of the Jungle. And anyhow, I didn't run or fire into the air. Whisky is indicated.

We wrestled the corpse into the back of the jeep, on a matting of rushes so he wouldn't bleed up the Rover. I talked a great deal on the drive back to camp and accepted congratulations freely. One of the camel flies bit me painfully, and I didn't care. I was suddenly free of a great many inhibitions. Every man has to brace a lion at least once in his life, and whether the lion is a woman or a boss or the prospect of death by disease makes no difference. I had met mine and killed him fairly and saved him from the hyenas which would have had him in a year or so if one of his sons didn't assassinate him first.

When we hit the camp the boys knew. They surged over the jeep and me and mauled us all and told us *m'zwi suna*, *buena*, and waited for the money tip to the whole camp. They did a sedate lion dance and ran me for alderman of metropolitan Ikoma.

I went down to the tent to collect the hero's bride. She was taking a nap. She bubbled gently as she snored.

"Get up, you lazy slut," I said. "While you are sleeping your life away I have been out slaying lions and protecting the honest poor. Come and see what Father done done with his gun. And bring your camera."

Virginia came with the camera. We posed the defunct *simba* suitably, his chin arrogantly on a rock. The blacks told me again that I was one hell of a *buena*. Then the lion's eyes opened. Then his ears twitched. Then he uttered a grunt. Then I found myself alone with a lion and Mr. Selby. The admirers had achieved trees. I am not ashamed to say I shot my *simba* once more in the back of the neck. Like Harry says, it's the dead ones get up and kill you.

There was something enchanted and enchanting about the little lucky camp on the Lower Grummetti, 18 miles from the shambling village of Ikoma in Tanganyika. We lived later in lovelier camps, scenically—the jungle camp at Mto-Wa-Mbu, at the fundament of the Ngoro-Ngoro crater, was more Tarzany and more majestic. The temporary camp on the Little Ruaha River was the most beautiful spot I have ever seen. What Virginia later called "Hippo Haven" on the fringe of Kiteji Swamp, on the high plain away up from Mto-Wa-Mbu, was breath-taking, with its cool canopy of huge wild figs and acacias, their trunks yellow-mottled like a leopard's hide. But the little lucky camp—Campi Abahati—grabbed and hung onto my heart. Maybe it was because it was my first one, my first permanent one.

The ordered simplicity of the day was what struck me after

so long a period of overcomplication. At five in the morning either Gathiru or Kaluku would bring the tea into the tent and shake me awake. They aroused Mama more pointedly. They let the air fizz out of her mattress. Then they would unhook her mosquito netting, and there wasn't much she could do but get up. During the night your boots had been dubbined and left by the bed. Your fresh bush jacket and pants and heavy socks had been laid neatly on the canvas flooring of the big double-fly tent. There was hot water in the basin at the wash table out front. The fire in front of the mess tent had been revived. The morning was cold and gray and dewy, and the birds were just beginning to speak. Jama would have the table set in the mess tent, with its clean checkered cloth and its green plastic dishes. There was no New York Times by each plate.

Selby was usually up, sitting morosely on a non-burning log by the fire, wearing a ratty old turtle-neck sweater under his green bush jacket. And wearing the look of a man who has had malaria all his life and who is never really comfortable until the sun breaks.

"Good morning, Bob," he would say. "Good morning, Virginia." He always gave "Virginia" the formal four-syllable pronunciation. We would say: "Good morning, Harry." Then nobody would say anything. We would eat cold plums or cold pears, their syrup chill from the night, and we would drink

two cups of tea and eat a slice of crumbly toast with marmalade and then Harry would say, "*Kwenda*," and the boys would drive up Jessica, the jeep. Kidogo and Adam and Chabani, wearing the same miserable look of recently awakened malarials on a cold morning, would be standing silently in the back of Jessica, clinging to the hold-on bar over which the canvas top was stretched when we were not hunting. We would drive a mile through the forest woods in the half-light and then turn out into the plain. Then we would hunt—Harry driving, Virginia in the middle, me on the outside, the boys standing up and peering from the back.

It is a relatively new kind of hunting, certainly a radical change from the old foot-safari days, and even a change from the heavy hunting-car days, when you had to pay some respects to terrain. Nearly anywhere an animal could go, the little British Land Rover named Jessica could go. In a day's hunt we would cover 30 square miles, putting 150 miles on the speedometer.

When we saw likely-looking game one of the boys would point. Harry would stop the car, get out the glasses, stare long, and speak for the first time since breakfast. "Nice impala ran over there," he would say. "Let's go and look at him more closely. Lovely rack on him."

He would drive off in a curiously circuitous fashion, always seeming to go away from the animal, and always approaching more closely. Selby, like most of the able professionals, can see animals with a naked eye at four miles and judge their horns accurately within a quarter inch before the visitor can tell what species he is looking at.

"Hmm," he would say, "*tos* 30-06, Kidogo," and turn to me. "This is the best I've seen lately," he'd say. "I'll drive you past that anthill over there, and you fall out. After I've driven away, you stalk up to just behind that thornbush and take him from there."

When you are out in the bush for any considerable length of time you do not remember days by date or week or weather. You reach backward to the day of the buffalo or the day of the lion or the day the lorry busted her axle. The day of the waterbuck was quite a day.

We headed out of camp with the dew still bright on the grasses, looking for nothing. It is a gorgeous way to hunt, looking for nothing. You spin along in the jeep and just look. The breakfast is still warm inside you and the second cigarette is tasting almost as good as the first. The sun is just beginning to take a touch of chill off your face, and the woods and plain are alive, vibrant with tentatively stirring animals. The birds, just awakened, are starting to scratch and fly and complain. You



drive along by the wood or the river or out along the veldt and you almost hope you will see nothing worth working for that day because it is more fun to watch it than to chase it or shoot it.

"I think we'll check down by the river and see about that waterbuck," Harry said, driving around a herd of impala that seemed trying to set a record for altitude in their leaps. "The ones we have seen have been fairish, but I seem to remember an old gentleman from the last trip who's got more horns than he needs. They must be making his head ache. He used to live over here." Harry said, driving through some reeds and coming out of the reeds to draw up to a small grassy hill with trees and shrubs that looked considerably more like woodcock country than waterbuck country. As we drove up to the summit of the little hill a herd of perhaps a dozen waterbuck broke from the rushes and loped leisurely up the hill and across a small pastury-looking field and stopped just short of a wood.

"That's the gentleman I had in mind," Harry said. "I believe he's the best I've ever seen, but I've never yet had a good close look at those horns. Suppose we walk a bit and investigate this fellow."

We climbed out of Jessica. Kidogo handed me the Remington, and Harry started a stalk in that half crouch which looks so easy at first and then forcibly reminds you of age and girth as it continues. I was puffing when Harry held his hand, palm down and pushing backward, in the stop sign. We were in a small copse of trees and thick lianas as big as your wrist, with the dew still heavy on the grass underfoot and on the leaves that brushed your face. Harry reached around, grabbed my gun arm, and pointed with my arm.

The herd of buck was in the pasture, feeding straight at us. You could feel the fresh brisk wind blowing directly into your face, curling back your eyelashes and causing a constant rustle in the trees—which is always fortunate if you are the kind of man who steps on dry sticks and goes through bush like a bull buffalo in a hurry.

They were beautiful. A little suspicious at the extra rustle I made, maybe, but with no scent of our presence and no real worry about the snapping and crackling in the clump of trees. The bull was looking straight at me.

Waterbuck are awful to eat, since they are tough and carry an insect repellent in their hides, a greasy ointment that comes off on your hands and smells like hell. Their fat is made so that it congeals swiftly in the cooking and winds up in hard balls, stuck in your teeth. But there is no more ruggedly handsome animal in Africa.

The bull will weigh nearly as much as an elk. He is not so rangy, nor does he stand so high, but he has a thick, tufted elk's neck, a noble face, a compact, heavily furred body. He will weigh around 700 pounds. He is beautifully marked in black and white and grayish-fawn, and his horns are slim parentheses that are heavily gnarled at the base and finish off in four inches of clean ivory point. Perhaps a kudu is more beautiful, but he does not own the compact, rugged, swell-necked masculinity of a mature waterbuck.

My boy was walking steadily toward me. My breath had come back a little. The Remington was braced in the crotch of a small scrubby tree. The gun was shaking again, and the limber limb was moving gently to match my shakes. The buck kept coming. I put the post of the telescopic sight on his chest, sucked in my breath, and started what I hoped would be a squeeze.

The squeeze was two-thirds complete when Harry's hand came back and closed over my trigger hand.

"Watch," he said. "Wait."

The magnificent bull separated into two animals. What I had been aiming at suddenly became a cow, who sidled off to the left. My bull had been standing so directly behind one of his wives that his horns had appeared to be growing from her

head. In a hundredth of a second I would have shot the cow. When they separated, it was exactly like watching two images merge and move apart in the sighting machinery of a Leica. The cow sidled off. The bull looked me straight in the eye at 50 yards and snorted irritably. His horns appeared to be the size and length of two evenly warped baseball bats.

Harry's hand came away from my gun hand. The post went back to the old gentleman's chest, and the unseen force which fires guns operated. There was a whunk like a boxer hitting the heavy bag. The waterbuck went straight up in the air and turned at the top of his leap. He must have gone a good six feet off the ground. The herd of cows and yearlings went off with a snort and a crash. There was nothing to be seen.

"I hit him," I said to Selby. "I hit him where I was holding. I was holding just to the right of his breastbone. If this boy ain't dead I am going back to Nairobi. This is the first time since I've been here that I felt confident about anything."

"You hit him all right," Harry said. "I heard the bullet smack. But where you hit him remains to be seen. Christ, wasn't he something to see standing there with that head thrown back? Let's go see what happened to him."

Kidogo and Adam had come up. They looked at Selby. "Piga," Selby said. "Kufa—maybe. But he was a big one. A real m'ambusa sana."

"Ehéh," the boys said without much enthusiasm. Kidogo, stopping, tracking, walked over to where the animal had been when I shot him. You could see the deep scars his feet had made in the turf when he jumped. Fifteen yards away Kidogo stooped and picked up a stalk of yellow grass. It was brilliant scarlet for three inches at its tip.

"Damu," Kidogo said. "Piga m'uzuzi."

"That's heart blood," Harry said. "Not lung blood or belly blood. The lung blood's clottier and pinker. The belly blood's got more yellow to it. You got this bugger in the engine room, I think."

Everybody tracking now, including me, we followed the bright slashes of blood for 50 yards or so, turned a sharp L around the patch of bush, and almost stumbled over my fellow. He was completely dead. I had taken him through the heart squarely as he stood with his head up and his chest thrown out. Harry took one look at him and let out a yell like a Maasi mosen

on the warpath. He threw himself at the animal, seized it around the neck with both arms, and kissed it in the face. Both gun-bearers fell on their knees. Kidogo picked up the great noble head by the ears, and he kissed the buck. Adam ran his fingers up and down the chestnut-colored horns, rubbing his fingers over the ivory tips. He said a short prayer in Wakamba. Selby hit me a punch in the chest that nearly floored me, and both boys grabbed me by the arms and danced me around the waterbuck.

"I don't suppose you know what you've got here, old boy," Harry said. "Unless I am mad or drunk, you have just walloped the best waterbuck that anybody ever brought out of Tanganyika. If this one ain't 34 inches I will carry him back to camp on my back. This one you can hang on your wall, chum, and Mr. Rowland Ward's records will be very pleased to include him at the top of the heap. Very nice shooting, *bwana*. For one dreadful split second I thought you were going to loose off at that bloody cow. I would have sworn she was the bull. Those horns of his were sticking right out over her ears, and it wasn't until she moved just a fraction of an inch that I realized she was standing square in front of the *dowazi*. If she hadn't moved you'd have shot her, the bull would've spooked and would have been halfway across the Serengeti by now. You're a lucky lad."

This was quite a creature, this buck. You couldn't close your hands around his horns at the base. They were serrated and very clean, and they curved inward at each other in a nearly perfect ellipse. His big bull's neck was thick and shaggy with a chest mane. He had a big deer's face, although he was an antelope, and his hairy hide was gray-fawn like a good tweed suit. He was very heavy. It was all the four of us could handle



to help him into the back of the jeep. He smelled like hell, with his insecticide coming out of his special glands and making sweet splashes on his hide.

"We'll take this baby back whole," Harry said. "I want better pictures of him than we can get here. We'll go back to camp and let the messiah do her stuff with the color box." Harry patted the buck on his poll. "You beauty," he said. "You lovely, lovely hunk of horn."

He wheeled Jessica around and we headed back to camp. We were driving slowly across the blue-and-white flowered plain, full of self-congratulation and the yearning for a celebration drink, an afternoon off to gloat, an afternoon free of hunting, for no man likes to cheapen his achievement by doing something competitively else that same day. A miss on a good head can spoil the hit on the other. This waterbuck was all I wanted from that day or that week, for that matter.

The plain was like a great wheat field, and Jessica went smoothly along in it, her windscreen down, and the grass seeds hitting you in the face as she plowed like a ship through the sea of grass. Tiny quail buzzed out from under her bonnet. Cloud-like flocks of weaver birds swarmed in masses, dipping and twisting like a miniature tornado. Kidogo braced his bowed Nandi legs around the waterbuck's horns and leaned over to seize me on the shoulder.

"Simba," he said. "*Kuboko kidogo, Busana Haraka.*" Harry swung Jessica left a little, and there the *simba* was. My neck hair was lifting again. There is no other word in Swahili that carries the electrifying impact of *simba*. Away off, making a gentle ripple in the sea of yellow grass, two rounded ears were flattened to a yellow skull as a lady *simba* stalked a herd of zebra. Her ears looked like a Portuguese man-o-war sailing along on a quiet ocean. You couldn't see her slither as she moved, belly flat-pressed to the ground, and just her nose and ears showing.

"Let's go and have a look-see," Harry said, wheeling the Rover. "The old girl's stalking a kill. You very seldom see a solo lioness. The old boy has got to be around somewhere, probably upwind from her, letting his scent float down to distract the zebra while she sneaks in for the kill. Very sensible arrangement. Make the wife do the work, what?"

We drove in narrowing circles through the grass and came up on the lioness. The zebras spooked and took off. The lioness looked annoyed. She curled a disdainful lip and made a half pass at a charge and then bounded away into some scrubby thorn acacia. We circled the bush. On the other side of the prickly island we turned up three more lionesses. And four unsteady, spotted, clumsy cubs. The first lioness growled and started toward the car.

"Mama *simba*," Harry said. "Old boy's bound to be about somewhere. Wouldn't find four *manamouki* and young *matoto* together without the big fellow, unless he's just been killed, and nobody can've hunted here since before the last rains. Must be the fellow we've heard roaring 'cross the river at night. Nice one. I'll promise you, by the sound of him."

We widened the turning circles, and suddenly Kidogo tapped shoulders again. "Doumi," he said. "*M'ubusa sana, M'uzuri sana.*"

He was, too. He was *m'ubusa*. He was real *m'uzuri*. He was male, all right, and he was very big, and he was awful good. His ginger mane sparkled in the climbing sun, and his gray-tawny hide glistened. He looked very burly and handsome against a backdrop of green bush, the yellowing grass just matching his hide. He looked at us and yawned as we drove slowly toward him, with all the bored disdain that a prime lion can muster. He spun on his heel and sauntered into the bush.

"Beauty," Selby said. "Much better than the one you've got. Let's go and have a spot of lunch, pick up the messiah, and after we've eaten we'll come back and collect him."

I said nothing. I had been out long enough to know that Harry thought like an animal, and while I didn't know how he expected to find the lion in the same spot, or how he figured to get him out of the bush, or just how we'd shoot him, or how we'd cope with the others, I shut up. Anyhow, that waterbuck was enough achievement for one day.

We drove the bumpy eight miles back to camp, took black and color pictures of the buck, knocked off a pink gin or so, and ate.

"Come on, Mama," Selby said to Virginia. "We are now going out to collect a lovely lion"—in the same tone as a man who says he is going to walk down to the corner for the papers.

"Yes, master," Virginia said. She had quit asking questions, too, some time back. "Just so long as it's a lovely lion."

We drove away. Two miles from where we'd seen the lions Selby stopped the car. A big bull topi was standing sleepily under a tree.

"Get out and shoot him," Harry said. "We need him in our business." I got out and shot the topi. We opened up his belly. One of the gunbearers hitched a rope around his crooked-ended horns, and we headed for the lions, the topi bumping along behind the car.

"Hoes d'oeuvres," Selby said. "The lions must be hungry, otherwise the lady wouldn't have been out after those *pinda*. Can't have killed lately. We will ask our friends to tea. Fetch 'em out of the bush for the party."

We drove up and saw all the lionesses and the cubs where we'd left them. Mama lion snarled.

"Unpleasant sort," Selby said. "Got an ugly face for a lion. Disagreeable. Oho," he said, "look there."

Here was Papa, all right, and he was about twice as big, twice as massively maned, and twice as fine as the other we'd seen that morning. He raised his heavy head, looked at us a very short second, and leaped into the brush. His mane was bright cherry-red.

"Shy type," Selby said. "Wants coaxing. We'll coax him." We drove back and forth in front of the bush. "Smell it, chum," Selby said. "Smell it good. Smells nice, what? Pray do come and dine with us."

He drove then to a broad, clear, grassy oasis in the bush and dropped the topi. It was at least a couple of hundred yards from the nearest thorn. Then we drove a couple of thousand yards away and killed the motor under a mimosa. Harry got out the binoculars.

"All we need now is a few fine vultures or a noble hyena or so," Harry said. "If just one vulture drops, or old Fisi comes bouncing out to feed off that kill, you'll see more lions boiling out of that bush than you'll know what to do with. They just can't stand to see anything else chewing up that nice, fresh topi. They're greedy, just like people."

The vultures came and circled slowly and warily in the clear blue sky. The sun was boiling down now, and everyone was sweating—me especially. The executioner's job was mine. I'd killed my first lion 10 minutes after I'd spotted him and hadn't really had time to think about him before I was tumbling out of the jeep with a gun in my hand and crawling toward him. But now it was past 5 o'clock and I'd been thinking about this fellow for four hours.

"Damn birds," Selby said. "They know the lions are there. You can't depend on vultures. If they work for you, they're fine. If they don't they can bugger up the whole bloody issue."

Finally, after half an hour, one bird dropped his flaps and volplaned down to approach the kill warily. We beamed him in on a prayer. He sank his beak into the topi's belly.

"The rest'll come now," Selby said, "and then the parade'll start. Consider that we have a dead lion. Watch, now."

A half dozen, then a dozen vultures skidded down. Now the sky was blackened with birds.

"Thank you, *ndege*," Selby said. "*Asante sana.* Here comes the parade."

Four lionesses came out of the bush, finally followed by the big male. The younger male did not appear. They went quickly to the kill and commenced to feed.

"Young one's lying doggo, licking his wounds," Harry said. "He and the big boy had a fight after we left, or else he'd be out there feeding with the rest of the pride. If he's not dead he's awfully discouraged. Shouldn't wonder if we find this one marked up a touch when we collect him."

"Hmmm," Harry said. "Old boy's got his head stuck all the way into that topi's paunch. Guess we'd best go and terminate his troubles for him. Mind, I'd really not wound this un if I were you. Any lion's troublesome enough in thick bush when he's hurt, and if this bloke gets into that thorn we'll have two wounded lions, a mother with cubs, and three more lionesses to deal with. That's a lot of lions. Let's go."

We took the door off the jeep, and Harry gave the wheel to the car boy, Chabani. Kidogo was carrying the big .450 No. 2. Harry checked his .416, and I slid a second look into the bolt of my .375. The bullets were there, all right.

We passed fairly close aboard the five lions, who never raised their heads. Chabani swung the car round behind some bush, and Harry and Kidogo and I fell out of the open door.



The car took off, and we commenced to crawl. We crawled to within 40 yards and crouched behind a small tussock. The lions never raised their heads. These were hungry, disdainful lions. "End of the line," Selby whispered. "Wallop him."

I got up on one knee and set the sights on the back of Gorgeous George's neck and squeezed off. He turned over with a roar and began to flop. Three lionesses let out for the bush. The nasty lioness inaugurated a charge toward us and then halted. Gorgeous George got up on his front feet and began to shake the earth with noise.

"Clobber him again," Selby said. I had to stand now, and as I stood, the lioness charged. I was not uninterested in a charge of a lady lion, but the papa was galloping around, roaring and carrying on, and I was having a hard time getting the gun on him. He held still for a second, finally, and I socked him again, this time directly behind the ear. He flopped over with a grunt, and I was free to use both eyes on the lioness.

She had come to us, was still coming at 20 feet, and came again another five. I switched my gun toward her and noticed Selby still casually on one knee, his scarred old .416 held rather carelessly in his cheek. At about 12 feet she put on brakes, stopped but her tail was still waving and she had a mighty big mouth. Selby got up. He advanced toward her, and I advanced with him, feeling rather lonely. The cat backed up a yard. We walked again. She retreated another yard.

Harry said quietly in Swahili to Kidogo, who was standing by with the spare rifle, "Get in the car. Then cover the *buwaa* with your gun." He said to me in English, "Cover me. Then get into the car. Keep covering me from the car."

Kidogo got into the car, which Chabani—who had thoughtfully stalled it into a dead end of bush—had revived and driven up to us. I got into the car. The lioness stopped. Harry stopped. He made a step backward. The cat seemed inclined to follow him, but stopped, her face flat on the ground, her chest on the ground, her tail waving gently, her rump in the air. Harry walked backward slowly. He came alongside the jeep. He slid in. Chabani slid over to the center of the seat. Harry eased out the clutch. He hit the side of the jeep a tremendous whack with his hand and roared. I jumped. So did the cat.

"Begone, you surly slut!" Harry said, tramping the gas and whacking the door again. "Go back to your babies! Go back to your other boy friend! Away with you!" The lioness sneered and backed up. She walked reluctantly to the edge of the bush, across the broad savanna of grass, and stood at the edge, still looking unpleasant. We drove up to where the dead lion lay. His head pillowed on the haunch of the considerably disheveled topi.

We went up to see the dead lion. As we approached Gorgeous George in the car, Harry spoke over his shoulder to the gun-bearers. "Zos .220 Swift," he said, and to me, "When we get out, give him one more behind the ear."

I got out and popped the old boy again with the little gun. It wasn't necessary, but it didn't do any harm, either. We walked to this fine redheaded gentleman, and sure enough, there was a fresh, ragged tear across his forehead.

"Thought so," Selby said. "Fight with the young bleeder after we left. I'd hate to see the other fellow. . . ."

He prodded the lion with his toe while the boys shook my hand.

"Very fine *simba*," he said. "Dead, now. Comes off being greedy. Never let your belly rule your reason." We jabbered, released from tension, all the way back to Campi Abahati.

The night was cold and clear in the little camp at the Grummetti in Tanganyika. It was a sharp-flavored winy night, tangy like New England in the fall, with the stars distinct against the sky. The boys had reared a roaring blaze out of desert-dry thornbush logs. The dinner was responding graciously to a third cup of coffee and a cognac. Everybody was tired. Beat. It had been a day. It had been a hell of a day. There had been the big waterback in the morning and the redheaded lion in the afternoon, and the nasty business with all the lionesses and the cubs.

Suddenly the wind veered. A smell raced down on the breeze, a dreadful smell.

"Oho," Harry Selby said. "Chanel No. 3, if you are a leopard. That delicious aroma would be your pig and your Grant gazelle. It may smell awful to you, but the bait has hit just about the right stage of rot to smell better than Camembert to our noisy friend of the fig tree. I was never able to figure why the cleanest, neatest animal in the bush waits until his dinner is maggy before he really works up an appetite. Let's see. We've had the bait up five days now. The boys say your pussycat's been feeding since yesterday. He ought to be through with the pig now and working on the Grant. He ought to be feeling pretty cheeky about his vested interest in that tree.

"I don't know what there is about that tree," the professional hunter said. "I think maybe it's either bewitched or else made out of pure catnip. You can't keep the leopards out of it. It's only about 500 yards from camp. I come here year after year and we always get a leopard. I got one three months ago. I got one six months before that. There's an old tabby lives in it, and she changes boy friends every time. We'll go to the blind tomorrow and we'll pull her newest fiancé out for you—that is, if he's chewed deep enough into that Grant. That is, too, if you can hit him."

At this stage I was beginning to be something past arrogant. Insufferable might be the right word.

"What is all this nonsense about leopards?" I said. "Everybody gives you the old mysterious act. Don Ker tells me about the safari that's been out 14 years and hasn't got a leopard yet. Everybody says you'll probably get a lion and most of the other stuff but don't count on leopards. Leopards are where you find them. We got two eating out of one tree and another feeding on that other tree up the river, and we saw one coming back from the buffalo business yesterday. They chase up and down the swamp all night, cursing at the baboons. You sit over there looking wise and mutter about if we see him and if I hit him when we see him. What do you mean, if I hit him? You throw a lion at me the first day out and I hit him in the back of the neck. I got that waterback with one through the pump, and I knocked the brainpan off that second *simba* okay enough, and I break the back on a running eland at plus 200 yards. What have I got to do to shoot a sitting leopard at 35 feet with a scope on the gun? Use a silver bullet!"

"Leopards ain't like other things?" Harry said. "Leopards do strange things to people's personality. Leopards and kudu affect people oddly. I saw a bloke fire into the air three times, once, and then throw his gun at a standing kudu. I had a chap here one time fired at the leopard first night and missed. We came back the second night. Same leopard in the same tree. Fired again. Missed. This was a chap with all manner of medals for sharpshooting. A firecracker. Splits lemons at 400 yards, shooting offhand. Pure hell on running Tommies at 600 yards, or some such. Knew hell's own amount about bullet weights and velocities and things. Claims a .220 Swift is plenty big enough for the average elephant. Already got the boys calling him One-Bullet Joe."

"So?" I said.

"Come back the third day. Leopard up the tree. Fired again. Broad daylight, too, not even 6 o'clock yet. Missed him clean. Missed him the next night. Missed him for the fifth time on the following night. Leopard very plucky. Seemed to be growing fond of the sportsman. Came back again on the sixth night, and this time my bloke creases him on the back of the neck. Leopard takes off into the bush. I grab the shogun and take off after him. *Hapana*. Nothing. No blood and no tracks. Worked him most of the night with a flashlight, expecting him on the back of my neck any minute. *Hapana ckwii*. My sport quit leopards in disgust and went back to shooting lemons at 350 yards."

"How do you know the marksman touched him on the neck?" I asked. "Did the leopard write you a letter of complaint to Nairobi?"

"No," Harry said gently. "I came back with another party after the rains, and here was this same *cwii* up the same tree. This client couldn't hit a running Tommy at 600 yards and he couldn't see any future to lemon-splitting even at 350. But his gun went off, possibly by accident, and the old boy tumbled out of the tree, and when we turned him over there was the scar across the back of his neck, and still reasonably fresh. Nice tom, too. About eight foot, I surmise.

There was an awful row down by the river. The baboons set up a fearful cursing, the monkeys screamed, and the birds awakened. There was a regular, panting, wheezing grunt in



the background, like the sound made by a two-handed saw on green wood.

"That's your boy, chum," Selby said brightly. "Come to test your courage. If you find him in the tent with you later on, wake me."

Everybody I had met in the past six months had a leopard story. How you were extremely fortunate even to get a glimpse of one, let alone a shot. How they moved so fast that you couldn't see them go from one place to another. How you only got one shot, and whoosh, the leopard was gone. How it was always night, or nearly night, when they came to the kill, and you were shooting in the bad light against a dark background on which the cat was barely perceptible. How if you wounded him you had to go after him in the black, thick thorn. How he never growled, like a lion, betraying his presence, but came like a streak from six feet, or dropped quietly on your neck from a tree. How if four guys went in, three always got scratched. How the leopard's fangs and claws were always septic because of his habit of feeding on carrion. How a great many professionals rate him over the elephant and buffalo as murderous game, largely because he kills for fun and without purpose. And how unfortunately most of what you heard was true.

We got up that next morning, and the stench of the rotting pig and the rotting Grant was stronger than ever. Harry sniffed and summoned up Jessica, the Land Rover. We climbed in and drove down the riverbank, with the dew fresh on the grass and a brisk morning breeze rustling the scrub acacias. As we passed the leopard tree there was a scrunching sound and a stir in the bush that was not made by the breeze. A brown battler eagle was sitting in the top of the tree.

We had made a daily ritual of this trip, after we had hung the bait the first day, in order to get the cat accustomed to the passage of the jeep. We had also made a swing back just around dusk to get him accustomed to the evening visit. We always passed close aboard the blind, a semicircle of thorn and leave with a peephole and a crotched stick for a gun rest. The blind was open to the plain. It faced the tree with its camouflaged front. By now it would seem that the leopard feeding on the two carcasses we had derricked up to an L-shaped fork about 30 feet above-ground, and tied fast with rope, was used to us.

Harry didn't say anything until he had swung Jessica around and we were driving back to the camp and breakfast.

"You heard the old boy leave his tree, I suppose?" he said. "I got a glimpse of him as we drove by. And did you notice the eagle?"

"I noticed the eagle," I said. "How come eagles and leopards are so chummy?"

"Funny thing about a lot of animals," Harry said. "You know how the tickbirds work with the rhino. Rhino can't see very much, and the tickbirds serve as his eyes. In return for which they get to eat his ticks. Now our friend, this leopard which you may or may not collect tonight, or tomorrow night, or ever, has this transaction with the eagle. The eagle mounts guard all day over the leopard's lair. If vultures or even another leopard comes by and takes a fancy to old Chui's free lunch, the eagle sets up a hell of a clamor and old Chui comes bounding out of the swamp to protect his vitals. In return for this service the eagle is allowed to assess the carcass a pound or so per diem. It is a very neat arrangement for both."

We went back to camp and had the usual tea, canned fruit, and crumbly toast. It was still cold enough for the ashy remnants of last night's fire to feel good.

"We won't hunt today," Selby said. "We will just go sight in the 30-06 again and you can get some writing done. I want you rested for our date with Chui at 4 o'clock. You will be shaking enough from excitement, and I don't want it complicated with fatigue."

"I will not be shaking from excitement or fatigue or anything else," I said. "I am well known around this camp as a man who is as icy-calm as Dick Tracy when danger threatens. In nearby downtown Ikoma I am a household word amongst the rate payers. I am Old Bwana Lisase Moja, Slayer of Simba, Protector

of the Poor, Scourge of the Buffalo, and the best damn bird-shooter since Papa Hemingway was here last. I promise you, you will not have to go into any bush after any wounded leopard this night. I am even going to pick the rosette I want to shoot him through. I intend to choose one of the less regular patterns, because I do not want to mar the hide."

"Words," Selby said. "Childish chatter from an ignorant man. Let us go and sight in the 30. We sight her point-blank for 50 yards. They make a tough target, these leopards. Lots of times you don't have but a couple of inches of fur to shoot at. And that scope has got to be right."

"How come scope? I thought you were the original scope hater. At 35 yards I figure I can hit even one of those lemons you're always talking about, with open sights, shooting from a forked stick."

Harry was patient. He was talking to a child.

"This is the only time I reckon a scope to be actually necessary out here. The chances are, when that cat comes it will be nearly dark, well past shooting light. You won't even be able to see the kill with your naked eye, let alone the cat. The scope's magnification will pick him up against background, and you can see the post in the scope a hell of a lot easier than you could see a front sight a foot high through ordinary open sights. And if I were you I'd wear those Polaroid glasses you're so proud of, too. Any visual help you can get you will need, chum."

We sighted in the Remington, aiming at the scarred blaze on the old sighting-in tree, and trundled Jessica back to camp, pausing on the way long enough to shoot a Thomson garrule for the pot. It was a fairly long shot, and I broke his neck.

"I think I can hit a leopard," I said. "A lousy little Tommy is a different thing from a leopard," Harry said. "Tommys have no claws, no fangs, and do not roost in trees."

We slopped around the camp for the rest of the morning, reading detective stories and watching the vultures fight the marabou storks for what was left of the waterbuck carcass. Lunch time came and I made a motion toward the canvas water bag where the gin and vermouth lived.

"Hapena," Harry said. "No booze for you, my lad. For me, yes. For Mama, yes. For you, no. The steady hand, the clear eye. You may tend bar if you like, but no cocktails for the buana until after the buana has performed this evening."

I dozed a bit and at 4 p.m. Harry came into the tent and roused me.

"Leopard time," he said. "Let's hope he comes early. It'll give the bugs less chance to devour us. Best smear some of that bug dope on your neck and wrists and face. And if I were you I'd borrow one of the memasab's scarves and tie it around most of my face and neck. If you have to cough, please cough now. If you have to sneeze, please sneeze now. If you have to clear your throat or scratch or anything else, do it now, because for the next three hours you will sit motionless in that blind, moving no muscle, making no sound, and thinking as quietly as possible. Leopards are extremely allergic to noise."

I looked quite beautiful with one of Mama's fancy Paris scarves, green to match the blind, tied around my head like the old peasant women do it. We climbed into Jessica. Harry was sitting on her rail from the front-seat position. The sharp edge of her after-rail was cutting a chunk out of my rear. We went past the blind at about 20 miles an hour and we both fell out, commando-style, directly into the blind. The jeep took off, with prior instructions to return at the sound of a shot or at black dark, if no shot. I wriggled into the blind and immediately sat on a flock of safari ants, who managed to wound me severely before we scuffed them out. I poked the Remington through the peephole in the front of the blind and found that it centered nicely on the kill in the tree. Even at 4:30 the bait was indistinct to the naked eye. The scope brought it out clearly. I looked over my shoulder at Selby, his shock of black hair unfettered by shawl and unsmearred by insecticide. A tsetse was biting him on the forehead. He let it bite, My old Churchill 12, loaded with buckshot, was resting over his crossed knees. He



looked at me, shrugged, winked, and pointed with his chin at the leopard tree.

We sat. Bugs came. Small animals came. No snakes came. No leopards came. I began to think of how much of my life I had spent waiting for something to happen—of how long you waited for an event to occur, and what a short time was consumed when the event you had been waiting for actually did come to pass.

It was getting very dark now, so dark you couldn't see the kill in the tree at all without training the rifle on it and looking through the scope. Even then it was indistinct, a blur of bodies against a green-black background of foliage. I looked at Selby. He rapidly undoubled both fists twice, which I took to mean 20 more minutes of shooting time.

My watch said 12 minutes to 7, and it was dead black in the background and the pig was non-visible and the Grant only a blob and even where it was lightest it was dark gray. I thought, *God damn it, this is the way it always is with everything. You wait and suffer and strive, and when it ends it's all soured and the hell with all leopards, when I felt Harry's hand on my gun arm. Down the river to the left the baboons had gone mad. The uproar lasted only a second, and then a cold and absolute calm settled on the Grummetti. No bird. No monkey. No nothing. About a thousand yards away there was a surly, irritable cough. Harry's hand closed on my arm and then came away. My eyes were on the first fork of the big tree.*

There was only the tree to watch, a first fork full of nothing, and then there was a scrunching noise like the rasp of stiff khaki on brush, and where there had been nothing but tree there was now nothing but leopard. He stretched his lovely spotted neck and turned his big head arrogantly and slowly and he seemed to be staring straight into my soul with the coldest eyes I have ever seen. The devil would have leopard's eyes, yellow-green and hard and depthless as beryls. He stopped turning his head and looked at me. I had the post of the scope centered between those eyes. His head came out clearly against the black background of forest. It looked bigger than a lion's head.

You are not supposed to shoot a leopard when he comes to the first fork. The target is bad in that light, and small, and you either spoil his face if you hit him well or you wound him and there is the nasty business of going after him. You are supposed to wait for his second move, which will take him either to the kill or to a second branch, high up, as he makes a decision on eating or going up in the rigging. If he is not shot on that second branch or shot as he poises over the kill, he is not shot. Not shot at all. You can't see him up high in the thick foliage.

And Harry had said: *On a given night there has never been more than one shot at a leopard.*

I held the aiming post of my telescopic sight on that leopard's face for a million years. While I was holding it the Pharaohs built the pyramids. Rome fell. The Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock. The Japs attacked Pearl Harbor.

And then the leopard moved. Only you could not see him move. Where there had been leopard there was only fork. There was not even a flash or a blur when he moved. He disappeared.

He appeared. He appeared on a branch to the left of the kill, a branch that slanted upward into the foliage at a 45-degree angle. He stood at full pride on that branch, not crouching, but standing erect and profling like a battle horse on an ancient tapestry. He was gold and black against the black, and there was a slightly ragged rosette on his left shoulder as he stood with his head high.

The black asparagus tip of the aiming post went to the ragged rosette, and a little inside voice said, *Squeeze, don't jerk, you jerk, because Selby is looking and you only get one shot at —*

I never heard the rifle fire. All I heard was the bullet whunk. It was the prettiest sound I ever heard. Not quite the prettiest. The prettiest was the second sound, which said BLONK. That was the sound the leopard made when he hit the ground. It

sounded like a bag of soft cement dropping off a high roof. *Blonk.*

There were no other sounds. No moans. No growls. No whish of swift bounding feet on bush. A hand hit me on the shoulder, bringing me back into the world of living people.

"Pigs," Harry said. He was very excited. "Kufs. As bloody kufs as a bloody doornail. Right on the button. He's dead as bloody beef in there. We were as near to losing him as damn to swearing, though. I thought he'd never leave that bloody fork, and when he went I knew he was heading up to the crow's-nest. You shot him one sixtieth of a second before he leaped, because I could just make out his start to crouch. You got both shoulders and the heart, I'd say, from the way he came down. My God, aren't they something to see when they first hit that fork? With those bloody great eyes looking right down your throat, and that dirty big head turning from side to side. You shot him very well, Bwana Two Lions. Did you aim for any particular rosette, like you said?"

"Go to hell twice," I said. "Give me a cigarette."

"I think you've earned one," Harry said. "Then let's go retrieve your boy. I'll go in ahead with the shotgun. You cover me from the left. If he's playing possum in there, for Christ sake shoot him, not me. If he comes, he'll come quick, except I would stake my next month's pay that this *chui* ain't going anywhere. He's had it."

Harry picked up the old Churchill and I slipped the scope off the 50-06 and slid another bullet into the magazine. We walked slowly into the high bush, Harry six steps ahead and me just off to the left. I knew the leopard was dead, but I knew also that dead leopards have clawed chunks out of lots of faces. Selby was bobbling the shotgun up and down under his left shoulder, a mannerism he has when he wants to be very sure that there is nothing on his jacket to clutter a fast raise and shoot. We needn't have worried.

Chui—my chui now—was sleeping quietly underneath the branch from which he had fallen. He had never moved. He was never going to move. This great, wonderful, golden cat, eight feet—something of leopard, looking more beautiful in death than he had looked in the tree, this wonderful wide-eyed, green-yellow-eyed cat was mine. And I had shot him very right. Very pretty.

"You picked the correct rosette," Harry said. "Grab a leg and we'll lug him out. He's a real beauty. Isn't it funny how most of the antelopes and the lions lose all their dignity in death? This blighter is more beautiful when he's in the bag than when he's in the tree. Lookit those eyes. No glare at all. He's clean as a whistle all over, and yet he lives on filth. He eats carrion and smells like a bloody primrose. Yet a lion is nearly always scabby and fly-ridden and full of old sores and cuts. He rumples when he dies and seems to grow smaller. Not Chui, though. He's the most beautiful trophy in Africa."

The leopard looked lovelier than ever in front of the campfire. His eyes were still clear. His hide was gorgeous. Even the bullet hole was neat. He was eight feet and a bit, and he was a big tom. About 150 on an empty stomach.

The next evening when Harry and Mama went down with cameras to see about the female, she had already acquired another tom. This leads me to believe that women may be fickle.

Time was spinning out on our stay at Campi Abahati. We'd spent some 10 days there and had had a really phenomenal run of luck. Everything had been much, much too easy. The long corridor of short grass was overflowing with new herds of game flocking in as the water dried up on the Serengeti, as the grass towered high and dry in the long-grass country. The plains now were solidly swarmed with zebras and wildebeest. The little gazelles, the Tommy and the Grant and the impala, had increased by thousands. A big herd of buffalo had come in from somewhere, and the carnivores were all around. There were at least half a dozen leopards feeding up and down the Grummetti. You could hear the lions in a dozen directions. The grass fires were beginning to start—a patch here, a patch there. This was around the first of July. By August it would all be burnt and the tender green shoots would be coming up



everywhere, waiting for the early autumn rains to send it plunging upward in almost visible growth, and taking the animals back off the plains and up into the hills, where they had enough to drink from the pockets and the little water holes, and where they would be safe for a while from the cats that sneaked the thick grasses.

There were only the twin young rhinos in the area. The buffalo had been numerous but meager in the horn. The best bull we saw measured only 43 inches. But otherwise we had had this wonderful burst of luck. In a space of about five days we had taken two lions—one decent, one very fine—an entirely noble leopard, a fair buff, two exceptionally fine impala, a magnificent Tommy and Grant, the best waterbuck to be seen in those parts, and a damned good eland. I am no shooter for shooting's sake, and Harry was the kind of man who would rather not shoot at all than to shoot something unworthy of his reputation.

The *memsaab* had had a couple of days out on the plain with her cameras, while I stayed in camp and wrote, and there didn't seem to be much point to staying on. But we hated to go. I would have been content to stay there all summer, watching the baboons, watching the grazing game, shooting a piece of meat once in a while for the pot, and keeping track of the progress the ants were making in rebuilding one of their dilapidated hills. But it was a wrench to leave. I suppose it is always like that with your first camp in a new place, where the weather has been fine and the luck full and the new fresh wonders countable daily on the fingers.

The last full day in camp I laid down some law and demanded the right to my kind of shooting. I am a compulsive bird shooter. Therefore I am accorded to be nuts by people who wish to slay large, angry animals every day. The natives especially regard a bird shooter as mad. They cannot understand a man spending time and energy blasting away at birds when there are two thousand pounds of eland over every hill and a sleepy top standing under every bush. Harry was as nearly impatient. He is a trophy man and considers a six months' hunt with no armed activity as highly worth while if it yields one monumental head at the end of the struggle.

But I had my way. We had a morning of bird shooting—a wonderful, memorable morning. Later we broke the camp and policed the site, burning everything that could be burned, burying the tins and sweeping clean the campfire area. The boys climbed aboard the lashed tarpaulin top of Annie Lorry, and I noticed now that burlap bags, wound round the light line, with horns sticking out, were tied securely just behind *katunga*, the skinner. He looked happy. He had had a lot of labor lately and had been forced to enlist the services of one of the locals, a dude whose sole article of attire was a kilt made of brown-striped blanket.

It was funny, when we lurched out of Campi Abahati to head back across the Serengeti for Lake Manyara and the rhino country. Only two weeks had passed, and I knew something about all the people who made up my string—something about their wives, their diseases, their peculiarities, their bravery or lack of it, their industry. The faces were no longer just black faces, indistinguishable from each other. Their personalities had emerged from the shabby khaki and the shoddy castoffs which they wore over their black, dusty hides on safari. I knew already that Chege was the lady killer and Chabani the sea lawyer, that Juma was the Machiavelli and Ali the venerable gentleman, Katunga the character, Kibiriri the thespian, and Mala the strong silent man. They had decided that the *memsaab* was not the complaining type of female and that the *buena*, while he had had legs and great fear, had so far managed to control both at important moments. In two weeks they were beginning to joke me a little. I was very proud of that.

I felt like a hell of a fellow as the battered Land Rover clattered and bumped along ahead of Annie Lorry, who wheezed and lurched behind us. I was sunburned and my nose had quit peeling. I wasn't afraid of the guns any more nor of myself when I shot one of them. I had always wondered what I would do when I was faced with dangerous and tricky game, and to some extent I knew. My safari clothes were becoming weathered. So was my conversation. So was my knowledge of what I saw. I was speaking some small Swahili, and I knew a euphorbia cactus from a whistling thorn, a Tommy from a Grant, a dik-dik from an oribi.

We took a bearing on the devilishly distant crater of Ngoro-Ngoro. It was going to be a long and unpleasant, hot and tiresome two days. It was going to be distinguished by a series of balks and pushes and busted axles and off-loads and reloads of our tragic truck, Annie Lorry.

Annie's penchant for pig holes, soft cotton soil, red clay bogs, treacherous dongas, and top-heavy loading kept her in a state of permanent consternation. She snapped the leaves of her springs as easily as other vehicles snapped sticks in their paths. She boiled the water in her radiator for no good reason. She cast wheels as horses cast shoes. She gobbled oil. She staggered and fell on her side. She was more animal than machine and invited mercy shooting.

She dropped nearly dead in her tracks well after dark two thirds of the way across the Serengeti, far from wood, far from water. We went back to her and made a makeshift camp. It was bitter, searing cold, with an evil wind that whipped the lava dust from the bottom of what was once a volcanic lake into the pores of your skin. Your teeth grated on it. It kinked your hair and tainted your cigarettes.

We pitched the one tent only, its closed rear to the teeth of the wind, and dug a hole in the ground. Harry dripped a mixture of gasoline and crankcase oil into a dug pit, set it afire, and had Ali warm some soup over the blaze. We ate some gritty, cold Tommy cutlets, had a can of cold spaghetti, took a tremendous drink of brandy, and went to bed dry.

The next morning we noticed that the wind had pushed a shifting hill a few more feet away from us. A lonely pregnant rhino cow was all that we could see in the way of game, and what the hell she was doing out there in her delicate condition not even Selby could say. We fixed whatever was wrong with Annie Lorry's cervix and started the hard, high climb up the shaly side of the serrated hills that led to Ngoro-Ngoro.

The sides of the mountains were talcumed with gray, choking lava dust, cobbled loosely with stones and small boulders, thinly wooded with starved thorn. The trail wound round and round on a slow rocky pull, with even the jeep in low or second, her gearbox groaning. Annie Lorry was suffering terribly behind us. We were averaging a good four miles an hour as we crept up the slopes. It got a little greener as we climbed higher, greener and colder. The few semi-Masai we saw, mostly small children, were a mangy and miserable-looking lot. We finally hit the top. Just before we stopped the jeep to wait for the lorry to come up, Harry pointed at an eagle. He was suspended against the cold, gray sky. His wings were churning furiously. He was headed into the wind and going exactly nowhere. I had on wool pajamas under my safari clothes. I was wearing a cashmere sweater over the pajamas. Over all was a heavy trench coat, and I was never colder in my life. It must have been somewhere around 30°, with a 60-knot gale going at 9,000 feet.

Harry pointed down into the vast crater of Ngoro-Ngoro, the extinct volcano, the 15-mile-wide walled meadow in which thousands of head of game roamed, a reservoir achievable mainly by a meandering wildebeest trail in which you could see some fairly fresh droppings—a trail that twisted and tortured itself thousands of feet below to the lush green of the volcano's floor.

"This was a hell of a place to shoot once," he said. "Used to pull lions out of this crater by the hundreds. It's still a sort of Shangri-La. Not many people been down into the bottom. Some bloke was going to lower a hunting car down into the crater, piece by piece, but I don't know whether he made it. Sometimes, when I have time, I'd love to go down there and spend six months or so looking around."

The lorry lumbered up, stopped, and Harry sent it on ahead of us. He gave her a mile's start and started down. About half-way down, or around, the crater, he turned off the trail into what seemed a picnic ground, a series of rustic huts overlooking Ngoro-Ngoro, with the grass green around them, the flowers bright, and such odd and miraculous things as taps with running water and stone fireplaces. There was even a three-hole latrine and what seemed to have been a shower bath before it rusted out of shape.

Harry pattered around in the chop box and came up with some cold francolin and cold beans, coarse cold bread and rock-hard butter. It had melted and frozen and looked like yellow lava. The taste was not unsimilar, either.

"You'll like Manyara," he said. "It's the real movie jungle, tropical, big trees, thick bush, and steamy-hot kind of Africa.



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The lake is a big soda deposit. When it's dry you can rip up and down on its bed at 90 miles an hour, if you've a vehicle that'll do 90 miles an hour. The shores are stiff with rhino and a kind of smallish, reddish buffalo. We ought to pick up a good rhino first day out—second day, anyhow. Then we'll have a look up in the hills around Kitefi for an oryx, kisa Manyara good-by, and shoot up past Kandoa to have a look-see at the kudu. We're over the hard part now, except maybe for the kudu. Might get a nice one the first day. Mightn't get one at all. But the rhino I can almost guarantee. Lion and leopard are the tough ones, and we breezed through lion and leopard. Luck holds, we'll have a chance to get in at least a couple of weeks at the Northern Frontier District. Then you can shoot your bloody birds to your heart's delight, and pull in an elephant as well, if you're so minded."

The Manyara side of Ngogo-Ngogo was considerably more cheerful to look at than the Serengeti side. The earth was a dark maroon clay, still slippery and treacherous from the recent rains. The vegetation was thick alongside the narrow roads. The grass we saw was dark green against the clay. These slopes were farming country. The road was fairly populous with both vehicles and strolling natives. It seemed strange to see Europeans again after a couple of weeks of complete solitude, and stranger still to see automobiles and buses with yelling natives hanging out of the rear end. The wet road, deeply torn with skid marks, crowded the lip of the sheer drop, and we could see where Annie Lorry had slewed seriously on several bends. We could also see a straight plunge down the side, dripping green and thick with baobab and creepers, verdant thorn and fleshy-looking underbrush. This was wet country—and there didn't seem to be any bottom to where you could fall if the jeep skidded too enthusiastically. I was beat from the night before and a little stupefied from the heavy lunch and the generous gin. I slept going down the hill and woke up just as we came into the little settlement of Mto-Wa-Mbu, the River of Mosquitoes. I had seen the town before, in Cuba, in Spain, in North Africa, in Mexico.

We learned that there was nobody at Harry's old camp site at Mto-Wa-Mbu; that there was another safari just pulling out which had shot a couple of buffalo yesterday, and that there were *mingi sana mbogo*, likewise lots of elephant, also myriad rhino. We bought a few staples, including a clump of sugar cane stalks and a bunch of bananas, and headed past what seemed to be the local warehouse, from the noise coming out of it, down a winding trail to the River of Mosquitoes. Two hundred yards away from the town and the local warehouse and we were right back in the bush again—this time jungle bush. A million butterflies fluttered back and forth across the trail. Branches whipped at our faces in the open jeep. A couple of withes armed with thorns tore at my arm, and a branch bit me viciously on the ear. We drove two miles to a semi-clearing, topped over by big wild figs, baobabs, towering acacias, all thickly woven with lianas. The clearing had filled with high green grass and short, shiny, broad-leaved shrubs. There was a strong stink of baboons in the air, and the high trees were full of baboons. Also monkeys. And birds. Annie Lorry was waiting for us when we got there. The boys had started to off-load her, and a couple of them were chopping at the underbrush with pangas. While they were setting up the tents, we strolled a few hundreds yards away down a well-defined track to look at what I called Mosquito Crick. Mto-Wa-Mbu was not the most impressive river I ever saw, being not much more than 30 feet wide, but it was swift and swollen by the rains.

"Take a look at that bridge," Harry said, pointing downward to what seemed more like a floating raft made of skinny logs and leaves than a serious structure. "Everybody who camps here builds a new layer on it. Once in a while it collapses and everything goes into the drink, so we haul out the vehicle and chop a few more logs and strap 'em onto the top. Surprising how much actual weight this thing'll sustain."

A couple of black gentlemen with bundles of fresh-peeled sticks on their backs and another carrying about 25 pounds of just-caught catfish strolled by. They said "Jambo" tentatively. They said the place was overrun with rhino. *Mingi sana fero. Doumi. M'kuboa sana. Manamouki, mingi, mingi sana.*

"Place is loaded with rhino," Harry said. "Always was. They come down out of the hills for a little sunshine and to graze.

Last time I was here I saw 14 the first afternoon out. Shot a twenty-three-inch or more than three or four miles from the camp site here. Can't tell, though, whether we find them in the mornings or in the afternoons. Never could figure it out, myself. Last time, nothing whatsoever in the mornings, but the afternoons would find them fair swarming. Around 4 o'clock you'd have to beat a path through them. We wouldn't be here very long before we collect the fero and go up into the hills, about 18 miles up yonder, and grab off the oryx. Ought to be herds of them come down to the plains, the high plains off the Rift, by now."

The next day we were up early and excited; at least, I was excited. It was still gray when we got into the jeep and headed across the bridge on the River of Mosquitoes, a bridge which shook and shivered frighteningly under Jessica's tentative wheels. The forest, dripping, thick, and poison-green, with knobby roots like cypress knees threading across the track, lasted for about three miles, until we hit marsh, which was sopping still and impossible to cross in anything but a light four-wheeled drive job such as our Jessica. You could see the deeply bitten tracks where the last safari's hunting car had gone just so far and then no farther. We put up a reedback and some sort of hog before we finished with the marsh and headed back into another patch of jungle—real jungle, this time, like Congo jungle in the bad television movies. This was not cheerful bush at all. It was sticky, butterfly-clogged, creeper-twisted, humid bush, with immense trees rearing out of the practically impassable underbrush. You could see the raw stump occasionally where the elephants had broken the top off a tree. The trail was very narrow, crossed and recrossed with streams, and at every stream we had to unload and push.

"These'll take some digging," Harry said. "They've been washed out too steep even for Jessica, and she'll go anywhere. We'll shallow the banks some and cut some sticks for a tread at the bottom. Nasty bush, hey?"

We were crawling along through a sort of open-topped tunnel in the solid mass of vegetation when Harry was struck by a happy thought.

"I believe it was right here that Andy Holmberg and Chris Aschan were driving along when they ran head on to a bull elephant standing right in the track. Andy couldn't drive around him, and the bull was walking steadily at them, and I do believe Andy slapped his Rover into reverse and set a new record for backward driving. I hear he was hitting 60 when he came astward out of the bush."

I could believe it. In that compressed wilderness of malignant growth there would be no place to go except backward, and that highly unlikely, since the trail twisted and contorted in constant S-turns. If Holmberg made any time backward, his jeep had a flexible spine.

We burst out of the jungle suddenly, curved toward the lake, and passed through a sea of saw-edged grass that towered over the Land Rover by half a dozen feet. The showers of seeds added to general irritation of last night's bites. The sun was coming up now, and while it was still cool, the tsetses had relieved the mosquitoes of their watch and were working lustily. It did no good to sweat them. You had to pull them off and pinch their heads, as you did with the lion flies.

We came out of the grass as suddenly as we had come out of the jungle, and proceeded along the twisty trail that goes by Manyara's shore line.

The lake was full. To the left, as far as you could see, it stretched with a peculiar, flat, silver-dull sheen. On the right was a sheer wall of hills, dropping steeply to a few hundred yards of indented, sloping grounds, so that at times you were riding along directly under the frown of the thickly forested cliffs, at other times half a mile or so away from them. Where it was flat or semi-flat it was either thornbush or soft soil or grassy marsh. Only the shingle was sandy and shell-speckled. We stuck to the shingle.

Up ahead was another headland, a sort of thumblike peninsula, which curved backward from its point to make a palm of ooze and heavy bush. Steicking out, farther on, as the inlet came around to another headland, was Majimoto, the hot-water mountain. Seaming springs in the hills cut downward in small waterfalls, to gurgle their warm waters into Manyara. Something like six small rivers, all difficultly possible to cross, were between us and Majimoto. It was only 18 miles from Majimoto to camp. It took us, we learned as days passed, six



hours a day to make the round trip of 36 miles.

As we drove along, a dozen ostriches, including two albinos, broke out of the bush and ran foolishly ahead of us, splashing through the water, not pausing even to defecate, slapping along knee-deep in the lake on their big splay feet. They were joined by a small herd of wildebeest, who bucked up and down, meeting other herds, reversing their courses to run back at us, snorting and plunging and acting exactly like wildebeest. A few zebras, 50 or more, hooked up with the wildebeest, and our escort was joined.

"Bloody reception committee," Selby grumbled. "They'll spook everything from here to Majimoto. If they don't, the bloody birds will."

"This," I said, "is known in my country as public relations. You announce the arrival of the honored guests. You send out invitations. Then you run around, waving your arms and squawking, and bollix up the whole works. I've been trying to remember what we have in New York that these stupid wildebeest remind me of, them and the ostriches. It's press agents. New York is loaded with their blood brothers, all running around in circles, yelling and waving their arms and screwing up the entire bleeding issue."

Clouds of waterfowl were rising along the oozy edges of Manyara. The black-and-white Gypsey geese were squawking. The curlews and snipe and plovers were screaming. The secretary birds were sailing up and down, trying to make up their minds to leave permanently. The ducks were setting up a hell of a clamor, and occasionally a flock of guinea fowl would run out, look indignantly around, cackle, and scuttle back. A hippo grunted offshore. A flock of flamingos rose and went dipping over the lake in an indescribable, improbable pink cloud. Up on the sides of the hills there was a crashing in the bush and a small herd of elephants squealed in displeasure.

We spun along, back wheels slipping and sliding through little rivers, wheels spinning in the sandy dongas, and rounded the first headland. Cutting back, following the heavy, scored wheel tracks of another, earlier vehicle, we ran around the rim of the hills in a crescent course and came out to the point of the second headland before Majimoto. Harry stopped Jessica and pointed.

There was a shapeless lump a thousand yards away. It looked like a big gray anthill.

"Fero," Harry said. "Toa 470. Toa 450." This to the boys. To me: "Well, first morning out and you've probably got your rhino. There he is, feeding down on the shore. Wind's right, too. Blighter's blind, and we can walk up close enough to take his pulse."

We walked along over the muck, not crouching yet. Harry and I were still letting the bearers carry the big double rifles.

"This is very simple," Harry said. "We'll stalk up as close as we can. If you take him head on, go for that little sore spot at the bottom of his neck. You'll see it. All *faros* have 'em where the armor plating rubs. If he's lying down—and this one seems to be—you can go for the brain. If he charges, you'll know, because the tickbirds'll jump just before he comes. Other shots, take 'em in the shoulder, about a quarter the way up. Heart's a little lower on these blokes than on some others. Nothing to it, really."

You may be a very brave man, and perhaps your breath does not begin to hurry in your chest when you walk up for the first time on three tons of antediluvian armor plating, but I am not a particularly brave man and I was beginning to breathe jerkily although the going was fairly easy on the rough, fissured mud. The rhino had its head down. You couldn't see whether the horn was worth it or not. Selby had taken his 450 No. 2 from Adam, and Kidogo handed me the 470.

The rhino raised its head. The horn was nothing. Then a small gray blob of putty detached itself from the rhino's side. It was a calf, no more than six months old, if that.

"Manemouki," Kidogo breathed behind me. "Mfoto."

Ordinarily you don't mind shooting a rhino cow if the horn is good, and quite often the horn is better on the *manemouki* than on the bull, apt to be longer and more symmetrical and less splintered from brawling. But this lady was too new-come to motherhood for us to leave a baby loose in the bush, even if her horn had been a marvel.

We picked up the wildebeest-ostrich-zebra convoy again and meandered down the shore line. We came down under the lee of Majimoto. There was a broad green valley tucked under the mountain's steep side, angling backward out of sight into heavy bush, a mile or more in length from what we could see, and a half mile wide. It was rolling, lovely green, cool and inviting, like a park. On the near side, our side, was half a mile or so of very high yellow grass. Harry stopped the car and stood up with the glasses again. He swept the valley from lake to undetermined end.

"Rather a busy plot," he said casually. "I spy a small herd of buffalo just past that copse of trees down by the water's edge. There is a cow rhino just there in the center, with a three-quarter-grown calf. There are two bull rhinos having a hell of a set-to over there to the left in the high grass. There's at least one other rhino over to the right, under the trees at the bottom of the big hill. Seems a likely enough choice for a spot of amusements."

He started the car and drove, seemingly aimlessly, toward the general melee. We had come close to the two bull rhinos, who were making all sorts of ugly noises in the grasses. You could hear them grunt when they met under full steam. They made sounds I had never heard before. It was somewhere between a roar and a growl and a snarl and a gurgle and a grunt and a squeal. You could follow them through the grasses. They would square off, turn, run in opposite directions, and then come together with a smack, like a couple of heavy trucks colliding. The tickbirds, temporarily deprived of roosts, hovered around the battling pair, screaming helplessly.

One of the bulls backed out into the open, bleeding a little, but not seriously wounded, and the other followed him. Harry granted disgustedly.

"Neither worth a damn," he said. "Young fellows. Neither one'll go better than 14 inches. Waste of time to fuss with them. Especially in this high grass. Better horn, I'd either drive them out of the grass or risk going in after them. But you don't want either of those fellows. Oh! Here come the buffalo. Keep a sharp lookout, and if there's a decent bloke among 'em we'll collect him later."

The rhinos had gone back into the grass and were having at each other again. The buffalo, spooked by our noise and the scent, were running the only way they could run—straight past us. The herd was bearing down directly on us. Harry had stopped the jeep. She was idling. We all stood up. It was quite a sight if you do not have to see it every day.

The young rhino bulls were clashing and banging heartily. The buffalo streamed past us like maverick freight cars, low and bulky and long, their legs too short for the lengthy barrel of their bodies. They were a touch smaller than the Grummets' buff, and a peculiar reddish-black in color. They came past us, flirting froth, walling their eyes, pounding through the grass with their sentinel egrets flying fighter cover over them and screaming profanely. One bull passed within a few feet. I could almost have poked him with the gun.

"Bloody awful," Selby said scornfully. "Not a decent head amongst 'em. Can't imagine what turns 'em red, unless there's a lot of iron in the earth about here. The zebras are reddish, too, you've noticed. The ostriches are lighter. Even the wildebeest—if you'll look at that fresh herd—are buff-colored."

We looked at the fresh herd. Approximately 1,500 wildly head-tossing wildebeest bore down on us in the trail that the buffalo had left in the high grass. Snorting and pawing when they saw the jeep, they split around us and high-tailed after the buffalo into the narrow end of the valley.



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The two male rhinos continued to batter each other 100 yards away.

"Jesus," said Virginia.

"Let's go and pay a call on the lady rhino in the valley," Harry said brightly, and spun the jeep toward the cow with the calf as big as she was. The other rhino—the one at the edge of the hill—had climbed upward and had disappeared.

The lady with the large child was obviously in a surly mood. She took one look at the jeep and charged. Baby, about two and one half tons of Baby, took us on a quartering shot. Harry hit the accelerator and we passed between them. Cow stopped. Baby stopped.

"Hapana," Harry said. "No good, either. Got a horn like a bloody banana." We shoved the jeep on toward the point under Majimoto. The ground was soggy. It got soggier. He pushed Jessica as far as she could go. It was about 11 o'clock in the morning. The sun had finally come clearly from the clouds. It was very hot and bright. A small hesitant breeze was blowing, and tsetse had knocked off for lunch. Ahead of us was a mile of marsh. Beyond the marsh was a patch of nasty-looking scrub thorn. On the sheer side of Majimoto you could see the little waterfalls glimmer as they ran down through the trees and rocks to cut small channels across the beach and into the lake. Around the patch of scrub, about two miles away, a third headland jutted. Selby used the glasses again.

"Seems to be a couple of rhinos in the middle of that last meadow," he said. "Just off that big point of rock. And what looks to be a sizable herd of buffalo down by the water's edge off the point of trees. Tell you what. It's two or three miles down there, at least, and the going's pretty mean. I know those legs of yours are pretty dicky. Suppose you sit here and I'll just slip down and check the horns. If they look like anything at all, I'll shoot Kidogo back for you and you can come and collect it. No use wearing out your legs for nothing. We're going to need them when we go after the kudu."

This was fine. The breeze was getting brisker, and I had a paper-backed, two-bit detective story and a bar of candy in my jacket pocket.

"Proceed, son," I said. "And don't forget your calipers. We don't want to make any quarter-inch mistakes on horn size. Be sure you get good and close now. None of this slipshod stalking."

Harry grinned. Kidogo fished the .450 out of the case again, and they swung off, long-strided and easy, through the marsh grass and the muck. As they entered the scrub of thorn I saw Harry take the big gun from the bowlegged Nandi bearer. He was carrying it at half-ready, diagonally across his chest. They disappeared. The wind was my way. There weren't any shots.

I went to sleep in the sun, with a handkerchief over my face. When I woke up Harry and Kidogo had popped into sight. They looked cheerful. Harry waved an arm and beckoned, the way he had beckoned when he went to look at buffalo at Ikoma and had found an outcaste bull that pleased him.

I walked off to meet Harry and Kidogo, with Adam following behind. The ground was oozy and watery and I sank up to the calves. The marsh grass was taut across the path and tripped you at every step. You could avoid falling down only by lifting your feet exaggeratedly high in a sort of goose step. This was fine for a left leg that had been painstakingly rebuilt by an excellent Washington doctor but which lacked a certain number of blood vessels and nerves from its original quota.

Halfway to the patch of scrub, Harry and Kidogo were waiting.

"There's a couple of bulls up there in the meadow," Harry said. "I stalked up on one who looked rather a decent sort. Couldn't see his horn very well, but I'd hazard that it's better than 20. The other one fed off into the edge of the bush. But there's 12 or 14 bull buffalo there, too, and you could use a better bull if we miss on the fero. Let's go."

The walking wasn't much better after we left the marsh. Both of us took guns as we threaded, half crouching, through

the narrow elephant path in the bush. Harry grimaced to his right and pointed with his chin. "Spooked a small herd of elephant as we went through," he whispered. "Shouldn't care to meet one close up under these conditions. Too thick."

We made it out of the close bush and graduated to rocks and rills. We handed the guns back to the boys. The rocks were reddish, iron-heavy stones, small boulders, and wonderful round ankle-twisters. They formed small islands in the hot sand where hot water seeped through. The pools were red from the iron and green around the edges from the copper deposits. There was a fine healthy stench of sulphur, and the water, as it trickled down from the mountain, was just under steaming. This was Majimoto proper—Hot-Water Hill.

We crawled up some really respectable boulders the size of houses, lovely red, blue, black, and white rocks, with creepers growing over them. What breath I had saved was gone when we hit the summit of one special young mountain. The rhino had fed back while Harry had come to fetch me. We could just see the two bulls moving into the shade. The gray finally merged with the black of the thorn. I swore.

"This is the first and last time I ever send you off on any errand that I don't go along myself if I have to crawl," I said. "The only decent bull all day, and I'm sitting on my fat can reading Agatha Christie while you crawl up and carve your initials on him. How close did you get, by the way?"

"Not very," Harry said. "He was feeding down there in the wet—in that patch of bright green grass. I'd say I crawled up to within 20 feet of him. Rather an easy shot. However. Nothing to do now but wait three or four hours to see if they feed out again. Pity."

"Damn me for a lazy bastard," I said.

"I think I'll take a little nap," Harry said. "Lovely day, isn't it? I'll crawl down here and stretch out on that sort of sloping boulder. Wake me if you see anything. He scabbled down a drop of 35 or 40 feet, sliding like a mountain goat, and curled up contentedly on the ridge of the rock. If he'd slipped a foot each way he might have fallen 60 feet to some jagged and unpleasant-looking granite spikes. The possibility didn't seem to bother him any. Presently he snored."

I was thinking that this kind of a day would make anybody tired, when my brave companion aroused himself from slumber on the boulder below with a scream. He came off the rock, standing straight up, and seemed to soar upward some 30 feet. He was white and trembling.

"Now what?" I asked him. "Bad dreams?"

"Christ," he said. "I was catching a little nap and I put my hand over on a little stone in my sleep, to brace myself, I suppose. There was a sort of little coral snake—a red, yellow, and black thing—curled up on top of the rock. When I jerked my hand off it a scorpion crawled out from under the same stone."

We sat for a long time, watching a lizard playing ring-around-the-rosy on the rocks, listening to the birds, watching the duck flights and the billowing pink waves of flamingos as they passed over Manyara's sheen. It was very peaceful there on the high rock, with the breeze drying up the sweat inside your shirt and the thousand blended noises coming down from the hills. Finally Harry swept the big meadow and the outer rim of marsh with the glasses and looked at his watch.

"It's nearly 4 o'clock," he said. "I don't think that biggest rhino's coming back this way. The buff are still feeding down by the point, and there's one bull looks shootable. Let's stalk up on the mbogo and take one if he's bigger than your other one. If not, we can beat around the peninsula and maybe put up one of the rhinos on the other side. It's an old elephant wallow, and the fero might just be taking it easy in the mud."

Harry may be afraid of snakes, but buffalo give me the feeling of wishing they hadn't come up at all. There was nothing to say but yes. We slipped and slithered down off the rocks and started a stalk across the fairly open meadow, keeping to the six-foot, poison-green grass the rhinos had foraged earlier. It wasn't a very long stalk, maybe a thousand yards, but I was blowing and soaking wet again when Harry sank to his knees ahead of me and motioned for his gun. Pushing the rifles ahead



of us, we crawled about 20 yards and achieved the protection of a small green bush. The wind was fine, coming straight down at us. You could smell the buff. It was an old familiar farm smell, the cattle smell of dung and dirty, muddy hide. It wasn't strange we could smell them. When I peered around the corner of the bush, after my heart had come back down to its usual position, there were eight buffalo, about 25 yards away—three bulls and five cows. There was one good bull, an old boy with a magnificent heavy boss and one horn that might have completed a formal measurement of at least 48 inches between the tips. If there had been more than one tip. The right horn was broken and worn down to a nubbin, its former point scuffed and many-ended, like a handful of sticks.

We hadn't been very careful in the stalk and had made as much noise as necessary, because the wind was dead in our face and the grass high enough to hide us. The buffalo couldn't smell and they couldn't see, but the old boy and one tick-ridden old cow were uneasy. The bull kept snorting and kicking up the water he was standing in. The cow kept swinging her head and sniffing painfully.

"No good," Harry said, "Hapana." He stood up and motioned me up. We stood quietly and looked at the buffalo. The old bull took a couple of steps forward. He raised his head and stared through his bugged-out eyes. But he made no effort to run. All the buffalo had spotted us now, but the man smell wasn't there and they seemed puzzled. We stood quietly for at least a minute, maybe longer. Then the old bull seemed satisfied. He swung his muzzle at a man swings a foot against a ball, hit the nearest cow in the tail with his nose, and indicated departure. With dignity, looking back, they shambled out of the water and cantered off into the bush.

"Wonderful thing about buff," Harry said. "That half minute of curiosity. You can run smack into the middle of a herd, and they'll stand quite still for that 30 seconds or more. Just wait. All we've done so far is stalk. When the situation's right I'll show you how to hunt buffalo when a quiet stalk is impossible."

"I don't really want to know," I said. "I'm scared enough when we just stalk 'em like this."

"Well," Harry said, "long's we've come this far, we might take a little stroll around the end of this bit o' land and see if we can raise one of those rhinos. Better hang onto your weapon. This grass ahead is pretty thick, and we might jump something out of it."

But we saw nothing and so later we walked slowly back to the jeep. We skipped from rock to rock. We waded the hot-water pools. We took the guns again when we came to the section of thick bush and gave them back to the boys when we came out of it. I was stumbling and tripping again in the last half mile of marsh when Harry stopped and waited for me to quit playing tail-end-Charlie.

It is a long ride back from Majimoto to Mto-Wa-Mbu. It is a long ride and a ghostly ride. There were five rivers—rivulets or wet dongas—to ford, and one of them was deep enough to let the water rise a foot beyond Jessica's floor boards. Jessica likes water, as a rule, and can go most places a duck can go. This night she didn't like it and fouled up her transmission. This takes time to fix in the dark.

The rocky road, when it was not muddy, was serrated and full of small boulders. Each lunge that Jessica took dislocated something new. Each lurch and bump fetched into focus a fresh ache in pulled leg muscles, in cramped knees, in tooth-sore back. The mosquito bites and the tense wounds started to smart and ache and throb again. The plovers screamed like bambees and flashed ghostly white as they squawkingly rose ahead of the car. The snipe shrieked at us, and the nightjars swooped ahead of us. It was like a funeral procession to a madhouse in a weapons carrier on a rough road. The trail was visible for only a few feet ahead of us under Jessica's feeble candle power. Once Harry stopped the jeep, got out, and tenderly removed some object on the shale from the path of the hunting car.

"Nightjar's egg," he said. "Finding it and not crushing it means good hunting. Like finding a porcupine quill. That's my special fetish. If I find a porcupine's quill I know we'll have luck, just as I know that losing this elephant-tail-hair bracelet of mine is lousy luck."

Once we took a wrong turning in the dark and went down a strange pathway. Kidogo and Adam both yelled at the top of their lungs. The pathway we had innocently adopted led

straight into Lake Manyara. We stopped three feet from the water's edge.

The last three miles, through the immensely tall grasses, through the velvet-black jungle, amounted to some sort of masterpiece of homing instinct on Selby's part. Trees and stumps became rhino and elephant. Animal trails and old native trails crisscrossed the only feasible track. We ran into blind alleys and had to back out of them. Three times the boys off-loaded and pushed as Jessica mired in streams. The itching seed pods from a specially accursed bush flew jaggedly into our eyes and down the front of our jackets, where they set up local irritations to rival the insect bites. We finally made the semi-floating bridge over Mto-Wa-Mbu, and Jessica lurched and snorted up the steep incline leading to camp. We had left before 6 a.m. It was 10 p.m. when we dismounted.

The fire was beautiful. The pressure lamp in the mess tent was beautiful. Juma in his white kenzu was beautiful. Even old Katunga was beautiful, snaggleteeth and all. The gin bottle was especially beautiful, nearly as beautiful as Gathiru and Kaluku trudging by with the bathi. I don't remember what we had to eat or how I got to bed.

We hunted just as hard for the next two weeks. The days began at 5 and we crawled into camp at 10. We saw in that time some 28 rhinos. We stalked them all. We ran from most of them. We fired no shot, in anger or otherwise. We spoke very little. We were hunting now with a hard, stubborn, bubbling inner anger. It communicated to the boys, who stopped joking—who cleaned the guns and repaired the ravages to Jessica's springs and axles and motor and who staggered to bed at midnight to be up and on deck at 5. Their eyes became red from dust and lack of sleep. *Hapana fero*.

Then one day even the cows and the calves and the immature bulls disappeared completely from Manyara. The last three days we hunted without seeing a pile of dung, without seeing fresh footprints, on a shore that is generally scarred and cut up like a cattle wallow from rhino spoor. The last night we dragged in at an early hour, something like 9 p.m. Virginia didn't ask us any questions. She just handed us the gin. Harry, hollow-eyed and turned-down at the mouth corners, his beard full of dirt, spread his hands.

"Shauri mzungu," he said, going back to the Swahili excuse for everything. "God's work. I never saw it like this before. I guess we'll break camp tomorrow and go up top by Kitei and see what's in the hills up there. I'm damned if I can understand it." He glared in the firelight. "I wish," he said vehemently. "I wish I'd run over that goddamned nightjar's egg."

The next day we went bird hunting.

We kept the camp at Mto-Wa-Mbu, on second thought, and decided to drive daily up to the high hills under the escarpment. It meant getting up an hour earlier, but there was a pretty well-defined track through the high, waving yellow grass, and we could do the 25 miles up to the top in little better than an hour. It was cold in the morning and cold coming home, and dusty all day, but at least we didn't have to ford any rivers. There was only one, anyhow, and it was easier to get out of the jeep and walk if anything popped up in the hills on the other side.

"I expect if we get an oryx we'll call ourselves lucky and push on up to Iringa for the kudu," Harry said as we drove up in the freezing morning, the lava dust in the track still settled by the dew. "Frankly, I'm not expecting much."

There's still bags of water on the reserve plains and in the high hills, and from what we've seen, the game just hasn't come down yet. These hills are generally black with animals at this time of the year. This damned grass has ruined everything, everywhere, except around Ikoma in that pocket we hunted. We had gone possibly 10 miles, past the strangely milky-musky-smelling settlement of anthills, and were working along to where the escarpment begins to look high and haughty, when Kidogo clamped his broad black hand on the back of my neck and whispered, "Fero." Harry stopped the car and got out the glasses. He was excited now.

"By God, I think we're going to have luck after all," he whispered, although the rhino was at least 3,000 yards away. That Kidogo had seen him at all was miraculous. The green valley was studded with gray rocky outcrops and pimpled with thousands of anthills, each one of which looked exactly like a feeding rhino at a distance. This *fero* was browsing under the lee of a little red, black, brown, white. [Continued on page 86]



(Continued from page 39)

and green hill. They have very picturesque hills in Tanganyika. "There's a good one," Harry said. "I can't make out his horn at this distance, but I think I know him. We killed a hell of a big cow here a couple of years ago, and there was a bull about then. We only got one swift look at him, and he was enormous. The cow went 28 inches, herself, and he looked to be bigger. If it's the same old boy, you've got yourself a real one. This is the smartest rhino I know. He's evidently lived here for the last 20 years or so. Creature of habit.

We decided to drive down about three miles, leave the car at the river, walk over to the little hill, climb it, and come down on the rhino from over the top.

"He rolls there right under that hill," Harry said. "He holes up in that long donga off to the right, behind the hill. I'd judge he was feeding back. He'll take his dust bath and then bugger off to his hidey-hole in that grown-over donga. If we miss at the hill we can beat him out of the donga. Send the boys in with stones along both sides, and we'll stand downwind of him and wallow him as he boils out. That's how we did it with the cow."

We parked the jeep and picked our way across the tree-lined, swift-running clean little river, jumping from stone to stone. It was a mile to the hill, and we nearly ran it. It was a little hill to look at distantly, but it was a sizable mountain when we reached the bottom, about 100 yards straight up. We took an old game trail and wound around a bit on its circumference, but it was nasty climbing—slipping and falling on loose stones, and pulling muscles in the thigh from the stress of the climb. I was blowing and hurting in the chest when we hit the top and peered over.

Hapana fero. We could see his rolling bed, all right, the dust still loose and swirling in the mounting breeze. We clambered down the near side and walked up to his beauty bath. There were fresh hoofprints the size of ash-can covers. There was plenty of new dung, and the clear marks of his wallowing. The outlandish hoofprints led off toward the grown-over donga.

"Wind must have changed a little on us and he heard the car," Harry said. "Smack into the bush for this gentleman. It's the same one, all right. Couldn't be two bulls in this neighborhood with feet that big. If he fits his feet, he's as big as an elephant, and he's got to be at least 40 years old. Lone bull, now, too set and surly in his ways to find a new wife. I'll bet he's a cantankerous old brute. Let's go and flush him."

We started to track. I can include myself in the we, because following this lad was as simple as tracing a tractor in the snow. He had great round pads, sunken deeply at the heel, as if his head were so heavy he rocked backward to counterbalance its weight. He had been in no hurry. He had used his own deep-worn trail. You could see the shattered clay upstosed in crumbles and the low thorn broken where he'd passed. We followed him over two little mountains and into the donga, at least three quarters of a mile long by a block in width. He was in there somewhere. Doggo. And smart. That's how you live that long if you are a rhino with a heavy horn.

We figured the wind, and we figured his point of entrance, and Harry figured where he'd bust out if he came. We went to where Harry figured he'd bust out. Kidogo and Adam went up to the end of the donga. Each took a side. They yelled. Kidogo cursed him in Nandi. Adam belabored him in Wakamba.

Harry and I stood at the edge of the donga, with the safeties slipped and the big doubles rocking gently up and down. He had to come out here, like the music that went down and round. There wasn't any other place for the big sonofabitch to go but out into the clear past us. And if he fit his feet, like Selby said, you could have shot him on the hurry with a bow and arrow, he would be that big.

We heard him snort and we heard him crash and we heard him turn and that is all we heard. We clasped insanity by the hand eventually and beat the donga upwind, our scent blowing straight to him, figuring maybe we would anger him into a pass. He didn't anger. He didn't pass. He went. He went quietly.

I know that Harry Selby is as fine a tracker as any native loose in Tanganyika. He can track with Kidogo. He can track with Kibiriti. He can track anything from elephant to dik-dik on the strength of a blade of grass arranged the wrong way, a rumped leaf, a suspicion of blood, a dissipation of dew,

alignment of dust or loam. He can also smell. Especially he can smell fresh rhino. I had seen him stretch a neck and distend a nostril and say in his schoolboy English: "Bob, there's a rhino just over the rise there, in that patch of bush. A female on heat, I'd say." And sure enough, there would be a cow in season.

We tracked this *fero*. We tracked the big blundering behemoth most of the day. We lost him on the seventh hill, where the sun-dried rock showed no passage. This *fero* got lost.

We turned up late for camp again. Later than we'd planned.

"You know," Harry said seriously, "I read all I could about the old hunters, Karamojo Bell and Selous and the rest. I read about the old-time elephant shooting, where the professionals used small-bores and how they used to shoot one beast and then climb up on it to shoot a dozen as the herds milled. I know one old bloke who has killed more than one native who crossed him—and this, mind you, less'n 20 years back. I've read all the hunting literature of this country, and you know the one thing sticks out in my memory? Karamojo Bell. Bloody old ivory-poacher, mass murderer of animals that he was, he still wrote a line makes me want to cry. He had a bit about the small-gleaming campfires at the end of a hard day's hunt, and that, by God, is the Africa I love. The small-gleaming campfires at the end of a long day's hunt."

"Son," I said, "you are a sentimentalist and I forgive you. I also forgive you for trying to kill us all coming home tonight when you were having that stake race with the bat-eared fox. Some clients would be annoyed when you nearly capsize a jeep at forty miles an hour to keep from hitting some bloody stupid little animal that charges the jeep out of sheer bravery. When that fox turned and snarled and charged—all three pounds of him—I knew you would turn Jessica over and kill you, me, Kidogo, Adam, and Chabani rather than run down the bat-eared little bastard. I forgive you because I am a tiny-gleaming-campfire man myself. When man made fire he lifted himself up, over, and above the animals. Fire is actually too good for people. Let us sit in front of one of these tiny-gleaming blazes and drink a little gin."

"It is nice to hunt with a philosopher-poet, especially on my birthday," Selby said. "I am now 28 years old, battered and worn from clients."

"Happy birthday, little man," I said, and wondered if Virginia and Juma and Ali had done right by the celebration. They had, it turned out.

The next morning we were up and hungover from the birthday and into the hills early to look after our friend in his red dust wallow. We climbed the little garish hill again, and he had been back but he was gone. He was not gone to the donga but up into the high hills. We tracked him for three or four hours until his trail got onto the hardpan again, and cursed him and went back four or five miles to the car. We headed for the top again and came onto a very fine herd of Grants. They were spooky and did not indulge in the looking-back habit. I followed the ram into some high grass on foot. All I could see were horns cutting a wake through the grass. They were fine-looking horns.

The old boy finally reached a shorter stand of grass and stopped to look back. I could see his chin and a little piece of neck, so I popped one at him offhand and accomplished nothing except to run him out of the grass and up the foothill of a minor mountain. He stopped behind a bush, leaving me his insolent tail and saucy hindquarters for a target. I did a quick calculation as to where his neck might be and winged one at him on pure speculation. I was speculating well, because I broke his neck. There was about as much credit due me on this one as if I'd touched off a .45 at a flying quail and managed to hit it. He was measly when we cut him open, like all the Grants are measly these days, but his horns were heavy and more than long enough and shapely enough for Mr. Rowland Ward's Bible.

"We finally score something out of this blasted area," Harry said as we waited for the boys to take the headskin. "I've not seen a better Grant in years. You're not going about saying that you made that shot on purpose, are you?"

"Of course I am," I said. "I always break the necks of Grant gazelles when they stand behind bushes at a 400-yard minimum. Have you ever noticed that nobody ever kills anything out here that wasn't a measured 400 yards plus? Someday somebody must shoot something that staggers up to within rock-throwing range, and he ought to shoot him early in the day, not courting desper-



tion in the dark. It must be against the law to ever get a good shot close—at least it's against the law for American buvanas to tell about anything that wasn't hard come by. Lessens the worth of the story. As for shooting this thing on purpose, you know and I know that anybody who hits anything in the neck is jerking his gun one way or the other. I just fired blind at where I thought his shoulder might be if he had a shoulder."

"Such honesty will have me weeping in a moment," Harry said. "Let's go scare us an ox. Ought to be a few up top here, anyhow, no matter what the weather."

It was pleasant driving along up top with the escarpment stern and beautiful and blue and the little hills green and pretty. The broad rolling meadows were yellow as wheat except in the bottoms, where there was still some ooze and the grass was virulent green. There was a nice stretch of green grass all along the river, and the country was laid out as neatly as farmland in the Middle West, except it rolled and was occasionally accented by blunt hills. There were birds everywhere.

"Nice place for a man who likes the shotty-gun," I ventured as a couple of black-bellied forficans, the bustard's cousin, squawked and flew from beneath the Rover's nose.

"No shotty-gun right now," Selby said. "Look yonder." Yonder was a herd of ox, the first I'd seen. They look enormous at a distance, bigger than they're actually are. They are fawn-grayish, with a black stripe down their back, with a black, brown, and white face shaped like a mule's, big floppy ears, and a mule's tail. They look more like mules than antelopes. The straight, rapier horns make an ox look as if somebody had panted them on a jackass, daubed him with black and white, and turned him loose. These animals, an old bull, a couple of youngsters, and a herd of cows and calves, were swinging along at a steady loping trot a thousand yards up front and heading for the steep hills. Harry fed Jessica some fuel, and we barreled after them.

"These are pretty tough beasts," Harry said. "They're a desert animal, you know, and they've a hide a good inch and a half thick around the back of the neck. They'll take an awful lot of lead and still go, and they're one of the few antelopes who're really dangerous when they're hurt. You never go up to an ox from the front when he's down. They've accounted for several natives with those thin straight stickers they wear on their heads. Go through you like a double bayonet. Up on the farm at Nanyuki I've seen them carrying dogs around, stone dead, skewered on their horns. For my money, they're more dangerous than sable when they're hurt."

"I don't look like we are apt to hurt these babies very much, friend," I said. "Every time they stop, they start again. We haven't shortened the gap very much in the last half hour."

"I know it," Harry said. "I'm going to cut across that patch of meadow and come out ahead of that piece of bush about a mile up to the right. They'll be coming out about the same time, and all you can do is hop out and snap one offhand, like you did when you got lucky with that eland bull back at Ikoma. It'll be the only chance you'll have at this crew, because they're going right up the side of that escarpment, where we can't follow with the Rover."

Selby jammed his foot on the accelerator, and Jessica bucked and flattened out for the chase. We careened over the field, jouncing two feet off the seat when we hit a pig hole or a boulder, and when we came out of the woods the ox were trotting amiably along about 200 yards ahead of us. They picked up the tempo of the trot. Harry squeezed a last burst of speed out of Jessica, closed to 100 yards or so, and clapped on the brakes. I went out the door in an arc, lit miraculously on my feet, and threw up the .30-06. The herd bull was running last, quartering away from me. I forced the gun ahead of him, pulled it out in front of him on a level with his shoulder, and squeezed off. The bullet made the right slapping sound, and the ox bucked and jumped with all four feet off the ground, and then he straightened out and was last seen going like hell in the general direction of Rhodesia.

The car came up and both Harry and the boys were yelling. The boys were yelling "Pigo!" and "Kufu!" like they yelled the

day I took a running whack at an eland at about 300 and managed to take him up the rear end and break his spine. I didn't bother to tell the boys that day that I thought I'd led the eland enough to get him in the shoulder. If they wanted to think I was a hell of a rump-shot artist I wasn't aiming to disillusion them any.

"You hit him," Harry said. "That was quite a shot, offhand, on this bloke. He was a good 250 when you cut down on him."

"I don't think I hit him," I said. "I would love to believe it, but he was quartering more than I allowed for. I thought I was going to stick one up his tail, but I think I shot just behind him. There was a little puff of dust right behind him that I don't think his feet made. If he jumped I probably sprayed him with some ricocheting pebbles. But it didn't say whunk like it ought to. It sounded more like a slap than a whunk."

"The boys say you hit him," Harry said. "Hop in and we'll go look for some blood."

"You ain't going to find any," I said. "This isn't my day. Mind what I say. There won't be any damu, or bloody dung, or anything."

We went up to where the band had been when I fired at the bull and they had torn up the grass getting across the field and over the river and up into the high hills. If there had been any blood we could have seen it as clearly as ink on a sheet. There wasn't any blood.

"Hapana dawu," Kidogo said. "Hapana pigo."

"You're so bloody right," I said in English. "When I pigo I will know I pigo-ed, and I will be the first to announce it. Let's go each some lunch."

We swung over by Kiteti Swamp, with lunch about an hour away in the blinding, brassy sun, across the hot, dusty plain. There were a lot of giraffes—80-some in one bunch—and a few ostriches and the occasional sand grouse crouching in the hot rocky sand. But there wasn't a scrap of common game—no Grant, no eland, no kongoni, even. Not even a lousy zebra.

We swung down the road past some big baobabs and turned off to go into Kiteti. It was a big cool swamp. We started to park under a clump of high mimosa, but Harry sniffed and said a rhino had just left the locale and we didn't particularly need it busting in on the luncheon party. It was a cow, anyhow, he said, and not a very big one. This he ascertained with his nose. A little later along we saw the hoofprints. It was a cow, and not a very big one.

We wound on into the swamp and came to an old and favored camp site of Harry's, a big amphitheater under huge liana-draped trees, with a staggering reek of baboon and a loud orchestral arrangement of hippo grunts coming from deeper into the swamp. The roots of the trees were gnarled and crawled along on top of the ground and made fine chair backs. It was cool and cathedral-dark under the sheltering umbrella of green, with just a few arrows of light slanting in from holes in the leafy canopy. There weren't many bugs, and the ground was clean, clear of brush, and cool. Elephants had been at the place fairly recently, for some of the shorter, smaller trees had been ripped apart at the top for fodder, leaving bright sharp spears of raw wood sticking up. There was a porcupine quill on the ground and another sticking into one of the trees.

"Luck," Selby said. "We can use some." He wedged the quill in his professional hunter's badge and unsnapped the chop box. Juma had stuck a couple of bottles of Tusker beer into the box, under the red plastic plates, and it was pleasantly cool. Anything that wasn't boiling would have tasted cool after that long morning under that sun and in that dust. My lips felt woolly, like somebody else's, and my nose was a brilliant cherry-red from the sun.

We ate the staple cold boiled francolin with the mustard pickles, and I polished off half a can of beans mixed with half a can of spaghetti, both cold. You could feel the peace spreading through you, hand in hand with the beer, and I lay down under one of the big trees, propped my head up on one of the knee-like roots, and went happily to sleep. I woke up when a baboon misconducted himself high up in the trees over me



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and a portion of his misconduct hit me on the head. It was time to go, anyhow, about 4 o'clock.

It was after 5 when we made the low hills, down toward the bottom where the escarpment begins its long low slope, and I had decided to shoot a few francolin. The stupid but delectable little semi-pheasants love this time of day. They sit on anthills, looking forlorn, and say "quarank-quarank" back and forth to each other in the waning light. It is as lonesome a sound as any. I was out of the car and walking over to a covey of anthills which held a dozen or more lonesome quarankers when I heard a whistle, and Harry was waving me back. He grabbed the shotgun and handed me the Remington.

"I was sick for fear you'd shoot that blunderbuss," he said. "There's a wonderful lesser kudu bull just jumped as you got out, and he's over there in that donga. Wonderful head on him, and I don't see how we can lose him. Let's go. The wind's just about right."

We half ran across the stubby savanna to a long, low black strip of stubby thorn that made an island of the dry donga. Creeping round the lower edge, I saw a blur of gray that walked up to a bush and stopped. Harry pointed. I crouched down on my thighs for a steadier rest, and all I could see was bluish-gray rear end. Kidogo and Adam were both on the other side of the donga. I didn't know where. But my Grandfather Adkins took a sound switch to me when I was very young for shooting blindly into bushes when I couldn't account for the rest of the party, and it's a lesson I still remember. I lowered the gun and began to crawl around to the front of the bush. The lesser kudu bull barked once and leaped. He headed straight into the donga, and you could hear him crashing. Then he stopped.

I walked on up a quarter of a mile over the rocky earth, turning angles and swearing monotonously. I stationed my self on a stand at the head end of the donga and waited for Harry and the boys to drive this sportsman at me. There wasn't any other place he could go, for the donga was a peninsula which led to another donga which linked up with still another, to make a series of islands for intelligent kudu to hide in as they slip back to the hills.

This was not an intelligent kudu. He reversed his engine and ran the wrong way in the donga, almost knocking Kidogo down. I could see the bull streaking across half a mile of completely open plain, going the wrong way, away from the hills, away from the interlocking dongas, away from the river and the thick bush along its edge.

We got the jeep going again and spooked him as well as we could in the now rapidly fading shooting light. His sharp tracks led into a lonesome donga with no connecting strips of bush to any other place of refuge. I took up a stand again at the other end of it and sent my black bird dogs in to beat this junior-grade *temdalla* out past me. He reversed his engine again, ran smack over the boys against the stiff breeze that carried their scent into his flared nostrils. He barked sarcastically again, crashed out of the heavy thorn, and romped across the plain, heading for home and mother. It was so dark by the time we got back to the jeep that we went the last five hundred yards holding each other's hands to keep from falling over the little boulders and loose rocks. It was bitter cold when we passed the thousand sentinel anthills. They smelled milkier and muskier than ever in the frost.

We belabored the high hills and the Kitei area for a week. We kept a faithful tryst with the old bull rhino for five more mornings. For five more mornings and five more afternoons he outsmarted us. Selby finally lost his temper.

"I told you this old bastard was a creature of habit," he said. "I told you it was only a matter of getting onto his habits and we'd collect him. I still say it's only a matter of fitting ourselves into his pattern. But I haven't got the next 30 years to spend trying to adapt myself to his schedule. He's got more alternates

than a war map. I say the hell with him. We'll stop off at Yaida Swamp or someplace on the way back from Iringa and do the rhino there. Or if we're lucky with the kudu in Frank Bowman's new country we'll have time to whiz up to the N.F.D., and I'll guarantee you a big rhino there in less than three days."

"Like you guaranteed him at Manyara," I murmured. "Yah," Selby said.

We drove and we looked and we saw only one other band of oryx in a week, and the bull in this group had horns like railroad spikes. We saw another lesser kudu bull, a fine one, finer than the other, and he was a cinch. All we had to do was stalk over two little hills and make the summit of the third. A steady rest on a thorn and I would have him nearly point-blank as he stood on the top of Hill No. 4, surrounded by three wives and a small son.

It is a long way over three little hills when you are scrambling over sharp rock and sharper thorn on your hands and knees. We made the summit of Hill No. 5. The bull had fed off, as per kudu habit, leaving three cows and Junior in his wake. They fed slowly down the slope, no more than 70 yards away. They didn't know anybody was around. They didn't care. I could have killed all three of them if there was any point to shooting females for fun. We let them walk into the bush. Then we went down the steep slant of our hill and up the steeper slant of the kudus' hill to see if we could spoor the bull and track him to his next stopping place. When we got to where the cows had been and crouched to examine the tracks, there was a crash and a bark in the bush 15 yards away.

Father had remained.

"I will just be goddamned if I ever saw anything like it," Harry said, throwing down his hat. "Everything I know about kudu tells me that the bull is going to lead off and drift, letting the cows follow him. Instead this blighter decides to back off and feed in that bush, letting the manasouki wander away ahead of him. If we'd known he was staying, all we'd have had to do was wait where we were, behind that big thorn, you with a steady rest, and this dumb bastard feeding out across the open within five or 10 minutes. And at a range of no more than 75 or 80 yards. You could have whacked him with a two-two long rifle at that range. It's all wrong. Everything is running wrong. Let's see if we can follow this lad on this lousy, rocky, dry terrain, where tracks don't show on lousy sunbaked soil and lousy rock."

We tracked him. We tracked him over four more hills. We tracked him for four hours. We lost him.

It was like that for a week. Everything went wrong. Harry threw away the porcupine quill he was wearing in his hat. Everything disappeared, even the bloody giraffes. Even the shootable birds got scarcer. The small band of oryx never showed again. The kongoni went elsewhere. The impala that played around the camp on Mto-Wa-Mbu left the neighborhood.

We had invested three weeks in nothing. We broke the camp and packed the lorry and hit the road. We saw 14 lions as we left. They looked hungry.

A couple of days later we drove down the rutted, rock-strewn, eroded road toward Frank Bowman's last big camp, with Kidogo standing in the back of the jeep, exclaiming and pointing as he saw landmarks he remembered. There were about 50 miles of it to do, and in midafternoon we came to a village where Kidogo seemed to know everybody. They gathered round the car and grabbed his thumb, jabbering nine to the dozen. They trooped after us as we drove the half mile to the Ruaha and clustered around while we set up the camp.

Here on the interior ford of the Ruaha the ground was high, sloping sharply into the water. Here, twice a day, the women drove the black-and-white and red-spotted cattle down to drink, creating all sorts of noises. We pitched the camp off the trail to the right, 100 yards from the river, under a tremendous green-leaved tree whose name we didn't know. It was a lovely camp. Even the elephants liked it. One came and left his calling card in front of the mess tent the first day. The monkeys



liked it too. They capered overhead and impressed us with their presence by depositing their droppings on the flap of the tent which served as an awning in front of the mess. It sounded like gentle steady rain on a tin roof.

There was an old man, a real 'mzee, come to call in the early cool of the evening, after we had resighted the guns and scared the green pigeons out of the trees in enormous clouds. The old man was grizzled. He limped against his knobby stick. His goanin toga was dirty and mangy. His feet and legs were sore and scarred with the white remembrances of ancient sores. His beard was clotted and filthy.

"Jambo, 'mzee," Harry said. "Iko tendalla hapa?"

"Hapana," the old man said sadly, "I have lived here for 120 years (this would make him sixty, because the Africans have two full seasons each year) and I have never seen a kudu. I am an old man, and if there were kudu here I would have seen them."

"How about across the river?" Harry asked. "How about down by the Little Ruaha? Are there tendalla there?"

"I would not know this, *busana*," the old man said, sadder still. "I have never been across the river. What would I be doing across the river? The *shenisi* live across the river. The *Ndrobos*, the wild men and the bee chasers, they live across the river. There are no kudu here."

We gave the old man a cigarette and he limped off. Harry turned to Kidogo.

"This is the country where Bwana Bowman got the *doumi Mkubasa*? You sure?"

"Ndio, *busana*," Kidogo said, pointing. "Pandi hio."

"Where else?"

"Also back there," Kidogo said, pointing at the road behind the village, the road down which we had just come. "Mingi sana tendalla, *M'zuri*."

"It looks all right," Harry said. "I don't know. Let's try and get the jeep across the river before dark. We can leave her there and wade over in the morning."

Jessica didn't like this river, this swiftly running, rapid-ripping Ruaha River, with its slippery boulders underfoot and its current fit to pull you down and drown you. She made a heavy effort to crawl across and stalled when she went in over her dashboard in the shallowest part. We sent Adam back to the village to press a gang of locals and broke out the tow line. All together it snapped four times before we sweated the jeep up on the far bank and mopped out her vitals so she would run again. There was still time for a small hunt, and we aimed off into the bush, following Kidogo's directions until we came to a clearing of hard-baked clay with a little *shamba* in it—a few goats, three seedy huts, and another old man sitting in front of the biggest hut.

We stopped and asked him about *tendalla* and the Little Ruaha. This was an adventurous old man. He said he knew the trail, only 18 miles, as well as he knew the body of his wife. He said he would like to show us how to get there. He said he was sadly in need of meat—that he was too old to hunt any more and that the game would not feed close to his *shamba*. He said that a few miles farther on the *tendalla* would trample you unless you were careful, and that the bulls were even tamer than the cows, and that the cows were even tamer than the chickens.

The old man was right. We got only two thirds of the way to the little river, along the grown-over trail that Bowman had made, but we saw 14 kudu in 10 miles, not so spooky as eland, as nearly sloven in their movements as topi. There were two immature bulls we might have shot with a .22. There was one big bull with a retinue of cows, who moved slowly off into the bush just at dark. There was a fine big red, black, white, and blue hill in the middle of the scrubby mesa which gave an admirable view of the country. Harry scurried up the side like a baboon and reported another herd of kudu, and also that he had located the river and it all answered to Bowman's sketchy description. His eyes were shining when he scurried down and turned the Rover's nose toward home and camp.

We came back in the chilly black night and dropped the old man off at his shabby *manyeta*, with a packet of cigarettes for his trouble and the promise of meat tomorrow. We fought through the low thorn scrub to the river's edge and left Jessica high and dry to spend the night by herself. We didn't figure anybody was apt to steal her. There wouldn't be any place to take her if they did steal her.

Crossing the river was very cold and very scary. Juma had come

down from camp on the opposite bank with a lantern to light us across, but the water was well past waist-high and the current was now a good twelve knots. The stones were sharp and mossy-slick and loose underfoot, and even with Adam on one side of me and Kidogo on the other, we all slipped and went in to the armpits three or four times. I kept thinking about crocodiles, but obviously the water was too swift for them, Harry said. I still kept thinking about crocodiles.

We limped barefooted to the camp, accumulating thorns in the process, and staggered in wet and cold and beat and starved. Gathiru and Kaluku had the *bathi* steaming and Mama had the whisky on the hob. There was a big fire blazing and the night sounds had tuned up and there were certain smells coming from Ali's cook fire. The sky was as frosty-looking as Connecticut in the fall and the stars twinkled coldly and I felt a great upsurge of confidence. This was going to be another Campi Abahati, despite the pessimistic old man, despite the freezing crossing of that river twice a day. I was going to come out of here with a kudu bull bigger than a stud mastodon. I knew it. Harry knew it too. We had some drinks and ate and turned in. I went to sleep smiling. Tomorrow had to be a lovely day.

The Ruaha was bitter cold again as we stripped and bundled our clothing, held high overhead as we staggered through the rushing waters to cross to where the jeep was waiting. Harry carried Virginia on his back, which must have been an awful job of balance-maintaining. We dressed, shivering in the pre-dawn gray, and got into the jeep. It was just coming on light when we stopped to pick up the old man. He was sitting in front of his hut before a small blaze of thorn branches, waiting for us.

"Jambo, 'mzee," Harry said. "Kwenda nataka pigs tendalla?"

"Ndio, *busana*," the old man said, grinning. "*Doumi mkubusa*. Horns like this." He stroked the back of his head, made a graceful double curl with his hand, then carried the hand backward until it passed his buttocks.

"God save us," Harry said. "If there are bulls here so big their horns pass their rump when they run, we must have found a sanctuary."

The jeep swept along, following its own track as far as the gaudy little red, blue, black, and white hill, and as it rolled it passed through a sort of Eden. I thought I had seen wildlife before. I had not seen it this way.

The first indication of something special was the guinea fowl. We passed through flocks of hundreds. By the time we had reached the river we had seen 5,000 or better. They were not scared, not in the slightest spooky. They trotted along, heads held high like pacing horses, but moving as unconcernedly as chickens. They cackled until the whole bright, sunny world seemed full of that harsh "potrack-potrack" sound they make.

Then there were the impala. I thought I had seen impala.

I had not seen impala. They ran 100 to the herd. The herds joined one another every thousand yards. There were hundreds of herds. They stood still at the side of the track, sniffing curiously. One bright gold chap was feeling the frost in the morning. He paced us tentatively at twenty miles an hour, moving easily in great arcs, and then jumped completely over the jeep—just to see if he could, I suppose. Then he stood still, waiting for applause. We applauded. He bowed and skidded away, his tiny heels catching the sun as he turned cartwheels out of exuberance.

And then there were the eland. For all his big bull's bulk, the eland is shy. He grazes at a canter, and he almost never stops still. He moves, and always away, in a swinging lope that grows into a gigantic hop. Here we saw a herd of eland, with a magnificent bull, about 2,000 pounds of bull, his hide gray-gold, horns heavy-twisted and worn round and smooth at the tips from age and use. There were a dozen younger bulls with the mob, and more than 200 cows. We stopped the car to watch them, and the eland walked up toward us, to stand, finally, huge necks stretched, horns laid back along their spines, nostrils jumping at our scent, but standing still and unafraid, and then taking tentative steps toward us. I could hear Harry exhale.

"I never expected to see this," he said softly. "I never saw an eland that wasn't moving, and moving away, unless you were downwind from him and blinded in lots of bush. I don't believe these beasts ever saw a man before."

We left the eland staring at us like cattle and drove quietly along to Harry's hill. The game thickened as we went, and the



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occasional oases of clay were scarred and rutted like a barnyard with tracks.

Harry drove the jeep in a tight circle, slowly around the track-bitten mud, and then he stopped the car and got out to look more closely. He kept shaking his head, muttering. Kidogo was with him, dropping occasionally to one knee to put his fingers into a track and crooning very softly to himself. After a while they both got back into the car.

"I never saw anything like it," Harry said, still shaking his head as if to clear it. "There's one kudu bull passed here last night got a hoof on him as big as a flatiron. There's any amount of small bulls and *mingi* *sene* cows. There's a herd of buffalo lives around here, and if the bull's got horns to match his hoofs, he must be 50 inches.

"A pride of three male lions and about 11 females is using around these parts, and there were three separate sets of leopard tracks out in the open. There's no elephant out here, of course, but the old man says the bush on the other side of the river is stiff with *tembo*. There seems to be everything in the world here, and none of it seems to have been shot at. Kidogo says that they only shot a couple of times when they were here before, and got right out again. I'm beginning to believe everything Bowman told me about this place, especially since I saw how the eland acted. Let's go on down and check along the river."

We drove easily through the short yellow grass, making our own track, with the old man pointing and saying "*Kishoto*" or "*Kudia*" as he directed us left and right. After this trip we wouldn't need him. Our own track would be plenty signpost.

As we came closer to the river we passed a deserted native *shamba* to our left. The thatch was half stripped from the wattle huts, sagging and forlorn. The cactus *boma* had gone to seed. The gardens were tangled and overgrown. Someone had died there, and the survivors had moved away to avoid the evil spirits. As we passed there was a short, sharp bark, and two immature bull kudu, followed by a harem of six cows, broke from the deserted garden and went for the wood. We followed slowly in Jessica and came up to them standing no more than a couple of hundred yards away, their nostrils flared and their huge mule ears flanged forward. They were curious and perhaps a little startled but not afraid. They were in easy gunshot.

"Two youngsters," Harry said. "But they'll go 45 or 46 easy with only one curl to their horns. And they've already grown the ivory. Give 'em another two or three years and they'll both touch 60 inches. My God, my God, I never saw anything like this."

The kudu, still frozen, suddenly unfroze and began to graze. Harry swung the jeep gently away and we left them feeding. We went on again toward the river. As we came to within half a mile there was a vast plateau of white, soft sand, studded here and there with scrub thorn, old logs, and a few cacti. It was again a barnyard, its large acreage almost entirely marked by tracks and sign.

"It looks like Johnny North's circus has wintered here," Virginia said. "There's enough manure to fertilize a truck farm. There must be about eight million of everything using this place. I still don't believe that there are enough wild animals to make all this mess and all these tracks. We must be in some extension of Texas."

Just as Jinny said "Texas" a bull kudu, his horns laid straight back along his spine, broke from the bush behind us and ran along parallel to the jeep. I saw him first and pointed.

"Holy Mother of God!" Selby said, and slammed the brakes. "Too anything!" he yelled at Kidogo. I had trouble opening the door of the jeep, and by the time I got out the bull had crossed ahead of us and was going away in unhurried jumps, pausing briefly as if he were trying to make up his mind. As I fell out Kidogo handed me the .375 and I sat flat on my tail, wedged elbows on knees, and tried to cover the running animal. Harry had driven the jeep away.

The big bull almost stopped, at maybe 150 yards. His horns were very fine—at least 50 inches, maybe more. He looked bluish as he cantered, and I finally got the sights on his shoulder and a little ahead of him. I was squeezing when he dived into a patch of thorn and I lost him. I swung the gun some more to where he was supposed to come out, and when he came I

touchered her off at what I thought was a respectable lead. The bull barked and lunged, diving upward into the air and seeming to soar. He smacked into the heavy thorn, and you could hear him crashing as he went through the cover.

"I think you got him," Harry said, excited. "The boys think so too."

"*Piga, buwana*," Kidogo was saying over and over while he was hitting me on the back. "*Piga m'zuri. Piga. Piga.*"

"*Hapana piga*," I said. "God damn it to hell. I missed him. He started that bloody jump just as I squeezed off, and jumped right over my lead. There wasn't any bullet whunk. I'd know it if I hit him. I didn't hit him."

"Let's go look, anyhow," Harry said. "I still think you walked him. He jumped awful funny. He jumped like that big waterbuck jumped when you socked him that day at Ikoma." "You won't find any blood," I said. "Remember the oryx. You aren't going to find any blood."

We walked over to where the bull had crashed into the thick thorn, and we saw the ground scored deeply where his hoofs cut it when he took off. We saw some broken thorn branches and a few patches of gray hair stuck to the wait-a-bits. The boys fanned out like pheasant dogs, spooring and circling and crisscrossing each other. They went a couple hundred yards into the bush and came back crestfallen.

"*Hapana piga, buwana*," Kidogo said. "*Hapana damu*." "I told you," I said. "There isn't any blood and there isn't going to be any blood. I missed that bugger a long mile. In a way I'm glad. I don't want this thing to end before it starts. Make it too easy and you cheapen the whole business. I want to work some for my kudu, and when I get him I want a good one. This is one I want to really earn."

"I'm glad," Harry said. "There's no point to shooting these things if they're easy as topi. Beast's too noble to just bash the first day out. Wants a bit of work to make him immortal on your wall."

We got back in the jeep and turned her into a point of land where Kidogo said he and Frank Bowman had made their camp. It was under a huge grove of palms that grow those little round red nuts the elephants love—palms and towering thorns and figs and baobab. The thorns were the flat-topped acacia that make a flat canopy over a long, clean expanse of trunk. The trunks reached upward 100 feet or more before they began to branch and form their roof. The ground was flat-trampled straw. Elephants had stood beneath these trees since there were elephants to stand beneath trees.

There were two piles of dung in the middle of the five-acre area. One was conical, two feet high and still smoking in the morning cool. The other, also smoking, was scattered in pellets the size of small golf balls. Harry pointed.

"Elephants," he said solemnly. "Kudu. Just here. Took off when you shot back there. Man, you don't have any problem with kudu. It's just a matter of shooting the first very good one we see, and then hanging around a few more days to see if we can better him. I've been hunting this M.M.B.A. since I was a boy and I never, ever saw anything like this for game. Especially kudu. Place is simply stiff with 'em, and if they hang about the river like Bowman says, we've no problem. No problem at all."

We fiddled with lunch, but nobody ate much. We were too excited. The excitement that Harry felt, that Kidogo felt, that even the phlegmatic Adam felt, was too electric to permit such indulgence in food. We wanted to go and see it all, everything in it. As we finished the beer a leopard sawed no more than 100 yards away. This was high noon, when God-fearing leopards are supposed to be sleeping off last night's excesses in the swamp.

About 2 we clambered back into Jessica and started down the river's edge. By river's edge you mean maybe half a mile away from it, because a thickish swamp and a broad douga divided the first swell of the hills from the actual water. We wound in and out of this swamp, all of which was elephant swamp, kudu swamp (for all we knew), but certainly baboon swamp, impala swamp, waterbuck swamp, leopard swamp, guinea swamp. Even to call it swamp is insult. It was a series of interlocking groves, shady and cool and clear underfoot where the elephants kept it trampled down.

Still coughing and spluttering and retching a bit from her bath, Jessica indicated by jeep sign language that she thought she ought to rest a bit and have her diaphragm looked into, so we stopped under one of the big elephant groves to tidy up



her innards. Then we heard the elephant orchestra. We never saw the herd, even when we walked down to the banks of the river. What we saw were buffalo standing placidly on the bank, but what we heard was the awful crashing of the elephant bulls as they waded through the deep bush we couldn't get to, with the river as high as it was. What we heard was the trumpeting like a Philharmonic composed entirely of Harry Jameses. What we saw was the turmoil in the treetops as the herd threshed about.

And the buffalo. Yes, the buffalo. I looked at one bull for 25 measured minutes across 20 yards of water. I looked at him. He looked at me. When I left he was still looking. So were the two or three hundred friends he had behind him. They never seemed a dime's worth of alarmed.

We found a shallow sand bar where the sand grouse flighted to drink, and I marked it down against the morrow. We jumped five or six kudu cows and a couple more young bulls just across the donga that separated the swampy part from the brown hills. We walked up one bull we never saw. He barked throatily and crashed just ahead of us as we stumbled back from the river-bank to the jeep. He sounded old and he sounded big.

We rolled on some more and came onto a small *shamba* with some scared kids and timid wives in it, and they said that the boss man was off with his gun, trying to shoot the *tendalla* out of the corn patch. We achieved this fellow eventually and he was carrying a wire-trapped, sewer-pipe-barreled, muzzle-loading flintlock which was undoubtedly loaded with rocks, nails, and pieces of broken glass. He said yes, there were *tendalla*. Between the *tendalla* and the *tembo*—the kudu and the elephants—he was just about to be et out of house and home. He had seen three big bulls this morning, but the bachelor coterie of bulls had not yet come down from the high hills. They were still with the cows, each man to his dames, and it would be maybe next month, September, before the big stag parties started on the banks of the river, and the bulls would desert the cows to hang stupidly about the river to eat some shrub he had not yet been able to identify.

We wheeled the jeep around and headed back, fighting our way through the baboons and the hyenas and the impala, and suddenly came onto another herd of buffalo. There was a herd bull out in front that made my mouth secrete furiously, but Harry said no, we wouldn't shoot anything around here until we'd collected the kudu. All of us—Harry, Virginia, Kidogo, Adam, Chabani, the old man, and me—got out of the car without guns. We walked toward the herd of buffalo. The herd walked toward us. At about 20 yards both herds, human and buffalo, stopped walking and looked keenly at each other. The old bull stretched his neck and sniffed. He didn't paw the nervous way they do, and he didn't snort. The cows with him that had the little calves at their sides didn't snort and nudge their kids back behind them. The calves walked ahead of their mothers.

We squatted down on our hams and smoked a couple of cigarettes each, and the smoke drifted straight away from us toward the buffalo. Eventually they stopped staring and began to crop the weeds around them. The calves played and butted each other and kicked up some fuss. The herd bull was still serious. He looked and looked and looked and finally said the hell with it, these people have no importance. He turned his back, and the herd began to feed away. Somewhere down the swamp two more leopards sawed, a crew of baboons scolded, a kudu barked, and a lion complained. This was still bright day.

"I've seen enough," Harry said. "I want to go back to camp and think about it. I have always laughed at this business about untouched country, because every hunter is always sounding off about secret territory, but I'll be damned if this isn't the secretest territory I ever saw. Not an animal we have seen today ever saw a man before, bar a few natives maybe,

and these natives aren't hunters. They're bear robbers and agriculturalists. Not even old Joe with the blunderbuss counts as a hunter. He couldn't get close enough to kill anything with that sewer pipe, and even if he hit it, he wouldn't hurt it. Might blow up and kill him, but that's all.

"What I think we'd best do is bring a few pieces of gear over tomorrow and camp there by the river, under that line grove, and not have to bother for a few days with fording the big Ruaha and making the 18-mile run twice a day. We'll just hunt up and down the river from the camp until we've got our kudu. If we don't like the first one too much we can switch back across the big Ruaha and hunt the road in the high hills backward to tringa."

We drove slowly back to the old Bowman campsite, watching the game and hearing the noises and feeling the sun still warm as the breeze stiffened and grew chillier, as content as seven white and black people can be. We stopped for another look at the camp, and as we walked into it another young kudu bull barked, leaped, and streaked across the ground on which we would be living tomorrow. The shady grove still looked like a cathedral. We walked to the river again, and the same crocodiles looked bored and slid into the stream. The same elephants, I suppose, bagged across in the deep green thicket across the way. There were two or three other piles of fresh dung, deposited since we had left that morning.

"You know," Selby said, "I am not a particularly religious man, but there's an awful lot of God loose around here."

I noticed then for the first time that nobody had raised his voice above a whisper all day long.

Bending back to camp in the bloody-streaked sunset and the creeping chilliness of the dusk, we passed Harry's ornate hill, and he climbed it. When he hit the summit, maybe 200 feet of sheer drop above ground, he turned and waved at me. I lost a lot of breath getting up to the rock where Harry was sitting contemplatively like an old baboon. While I panted the ache out of my chest he pointed. In the fading light you could see the shimmer of horns—big, back-twisted horns—a couple of hundred yards away and off to the right of the thorn. There was a steady wake behind the horns. We counted. There was the one big kudu bull. There were two youngsters, and then there were 12 cows.

"Too late to go after them," Harry said. "By the time we're down the hill you couldn't see to shoot in that thick there. We'll see 'em tomorrow. But my God, Bob, have you ever even imagined anything like this?"

When we climbed down over the square chunks of rocks and walked to the car it was nearly black. We drove home quietly and carefully, with the yellow from Jessica's headlamps tonguing out ahead of us hesitantly as we picked our way through the hardened ruts of the wallows and skimmed over the sedge grass. We dropped the 'mzee at his *shamba* and told him that tomorrow we would shoot him a piece of meat, for very sure, before we went into the kudu country where we didn't want to make any noise. The 'mzee looked doubtful, but another pack of Chesterfields hopped him up a little.

We beat through the heavy bush and made the riverbank of the Great Ruaha. It was still as cold as I remembered it. We had a drink and ate quietly. We didn't want to talk too much and mouth up what we had seen that day. I was going to be the very first load tomorrow, when we started to shift the camp by carrying the necessities through the rushing river, moving what we could by a series of trips to the solemn camp by the Little Ruaha. I didn't know what was apt to come after me, but I did know that I was going to be the first one to go and the one to stay there by myself, with a gun, a table, a typewriter, and a bottle of beer.

We packed the first necessities into Jessica in the early dawn and said "Jambo" to the old man as he sat in front of his



meager little fire. We didn't need the old man any more, but there was a small herd of zebra fidgeting around a half mile from his *shamba*, and we shot one.

The old man was surprised when we showed up dragging the zebra. His experience with white folks had led him to expect nothing in the way of the fulfillment of a promise. He looked a little disappointed at his miscalculation of worth. But he lost the disappointed look when he saw how fat the dead panda actually was. We told him "Kusaheri" and absconded. That was a nice old *mzee*.

We traveled through the zoo to the campsite and unloaded the jeep. There wasn't much to unload this trip. I had the mess table and the big double rifle and the .375 and the chop box and some beer and my typewriter and some odd bits and pieces of equipment. The main stuff would come on the next three trips, and the last trip would bring Virginia. Harry had the Mannlicher and he was going to shoot a piece of meat for us to eat on the last trip, far away from here, where the noise wouldn't bother our friends. He had the little shoty-gun and was going to assassinate a couple of guineas just outside the *mzee's shamba*, and that would feed us for half a week. Shooting around the camp on the Little Ruaha seemed very wrong unless it was awfully important or necessary.

I stacked the guns against a big tree's butt, set up the mess table, opened the typewriter, pried the top off a bottle of beer, untangled a camp chair, and sat down to look and listen. I would write after a while, maybe after I had finished lunch and a nap. There was nobody around but me, nobody else in the world but me and a million animals and a thousand noises and the bright sun and the cool breeze and the shade from the big trees that made it cathedral-cool but a lot less musty and damp and full of century-old fear and trembling. I got to thinking that maybe this was what God had in mind when He invented religion, instead of all the don'ts and must-nots and sins and confessions of sins. I got to thinking about all the big churches I had been in, including those in Rome, and how none of them could possibly compare with this place, with its brilliant birds and its soothing sounds of intense life all around and the feeling of ineffable peace and good will, so that not even man would be capable of behaving very badly in such a place. I thought that this was maybe the kind of place the Lord would come to sit in and get His strength back after a hard day's work trying to straighten out mankind. Certainly He wouldn't go inside a church. If the Lord was tired He would be uneasy inside a church.

I suppose I must have dropped off to sleep a little bit because when I woke up there was a nearly naked native leaning on a spear and looking at me with considerable interest. He had on an old moth-bit goatkin, as filthy as he was, if that was possible. His beard grew in scabby patches, and he had no front teeth. There was a bow and a quiver of arrows on his back. He was barefoot, and his legs were sore and scabby from insect bites.

"Jambo," I said. "Pray do join me."

"Jambo, bwana," he said. "Wapi Haraka?"

I said as best I could that Harry was off at the other camp on a highly secret mission involving the fetching of tents and other gear. I didn't bother to ask him how he knew Harry's nickname was Haraka, meaning "hurry." Then I remembered the drums going loud all the way along the line and reckoned pretty accurately that the locals were alerted as we traveled, sort of alerted that some live ones were en route and could be depended on for tips, tin cans, bottles, food, tobacco, and in some instances employment.

I asked this character what manner of man he was and what tribe proudly claimed him.

"Ndrobo," he said. "Wa-Arusha Ndrobo."

If he was a Wa-Arusha Ndrobo he was a hell of a far piece

from home. The 'Ndrobo, maybe you don't know, are outcasts of all the tribes. They have been expelled for one sin or another, like Robin Hood's men, and they live in the high hills. They live by stealing and robbing bee hives and trapping and shooting animals with their bows and arrows. They are generally magnificent woodsmen. They have to be, or starve.

This laddy-buck said that the birds had told him that we wanted a *tendalla*, and that he was the local expert on *tendalla*. He said he had seen two big bulls this morning, back over yonder—with a wave of the hand—and three big bulls yesterday, away down yonder—with the other hand sweeping down the river. He said he knew a salt lick, back over yonder—with the finger pointing back across the big Kuaha—that was so populous with *tendalla* that the horns made a thicket all by themselves. He said that for a remarkably small amount of money he would slave for us, guarantee us a fine *tendalla*, and otherwise richen our lives by his constant attendance. I said I would think it over and we would wait for Harry. He allowed me to give him a cigarette, which he stuck in the hole of his ear, and went happily off to sleep.

Harry rolled up after a bit, with the cook and one personal boy and Juma packed into the Rover, together with the sleeping tent and the cooking gear. There was an impala buck tied on the bonnet, and he tossed a couple brace of guinea fowl out of the car. He woke up the 'Ndrobo, questioned him a long time, told him he was hired, told Juma to give him something to eat, and went back to get Virginia and the rest of the duffel.

It was nightfall when he got back, with a story about having seen another big mob of kudu and some more tame eland. He looked tired and happy. He knew and I knew—we all knew—that we would get a kudu tomorrow.



I do not know if I can explain a kudu, or *tendalla*, except possibly by my drawing. The drawing is done fuzzily, an impression rather than a sharp delineation—a gray blur, partially seen, swift to vanish. A kudu is definite only when he is dead.

There is something about this lovely beast that makes him a hunter's grail. Perhaps it is the tremendous sweep of those double-curling horns, as brown and clean as rubbed mahogany, heavy-ridged from the base around the curls, and ending in polished ivory points. Perhaps it is the chevron on his nose, or his clean, gray, white-barred hide, the skin thin as parchment. Perhaps it is the delicacy of his long-legged deer's body, the slimmness of his long deer's legs, the heavy-maned swell of his neck, the enormity of his ears that pick up whispers at a radar range.

Perhaps it is his perverseness, his consummate genius for doing the wrong thing always, to confound his pursuer, such as being in the hills when he should be at the licks, or being by the licks when he should be by the river. A djinn gradually crawls into the body of the man who hunts him, to where he is devilishly possessed by kudu and is incapable of transferring his attention to anything else. The kudu is just under your hand, and yet he always manages to escape you. Sometimes he escapes you even if you kill him.

There is nearly always a sardonic touch to the story of a kudu. You always seem to get him at the last hour of the last day, with the rains sweeping down from the south, the money and the time running out, and personal patience whetted to an unbelievable edge of irritability. The frustration mounts and mounts and finally achieves an outlandish proportion, to where the whole camp pins its entire attention on the late-evening arrival of the hunting car. If there are horns in it the camp rejoices. If there are no horns the boys set out the whisky and move as quietly as possible, not laughing, and talking in whispers. Nobody asks you how it went that day. Everybody knows.

There are all sorts of ways to hunt kudu. If you are hunting them in the mountains, you drive along the edge of the foothills and scan the cliffsides minutely with a high-powered binocular. Or else you find yourself a high point of vantage and sit there all day, endlessly sweeping the slopes with your

glances toward a faint flick of ear or a flash of sun on white belly or gray flank exposes the animal. Then the work starts, the tough, mean climbing, out-of-breath-and-pain-in-the-stomach climbing, the long and difficult tracking, with the animal always a good five miles ahead of you, until suddenly he whimsically decides to stop to feed and you come up on him and kill him if you can hit him. And a lot of people who can hit everything else go mad when they finally come to close association with kudu, fire into the air, throw the gun away, and sit quietly on the ground to sob.

If you hunt him at the salt licks you are there before dawn and you wait and wait and wait and fight the tsetse and the mosquitoes, and maybe he comes, but then again maybe he doesn't. If he comes maybe something else comes and spooks him. If he comes at all it is almost certain that something will happen to run him off.

Hunting him by the river was a new aspect of the business, because apart from an infrequent trip to drink the kudu is not a low-ground animal, and this finding him in profusion in the flats was a thing neither Selby nor I had been exposed to. We decided to hunt him by guess and by God, as we would hunt anything else less exotic, and see how it turned out.

I do not remember how the days ran chronologically. We hunted the Little Ruaha for a week. We hunted up the river and down the river. Always we saw kudu. One day when we were out a big bull ran right through the middle of the camp. We hunted native gardens and we hunted the low hills. We hunted the swamps and we hunted the thornbush plains. We went to the 'Ndrobo's secret country and tortuously traversed huge flat grasslands where always the local bee robbers had seen *mingi sano doumi* the day before.

We hunted from before dawn until black night. We cut roads through thorn and rearranged Jessica's vitals on rocky terrain that a tank couldn't have handled. Every day we saw kudu—big bulls, little bulls, young bulls, old bulls, and enough cows to start a ranch. Always something happened.

Once we made a very careful stalk, with the wind just so, on a marvelous animal with a rack that would have been at least 58 inches, a full foot better than any exceedingly desirable bull. He was feeding with his harem of seven cows on the brown slopes of some gently rising hills. He had been down to the river's edge to drink or to eat the mysterious leaves or whatever he was supposed to be doing down there by the river. We saw him about 8 o'clock in the morning, the grass still dew-wet, the leaves tremulous in the morning breeze, the sun hesitant and just warm enough, and the air as piercingly clear as a blast of pure oxygen in a doctor's tent.

We hunted him perfectly. We stalked him a mile or more, slowly, cautiously, not cracking the sticks, not stumbling over the stones, not talking, not even breathing loudly. We went over hills and into valleys and finally, the wind stiff into our faces, we came up to the brow of a hill that was crowned by a craggy battlement of stones. I was in wonderful shape by now after six weeks of exercise. I wasn't breathing hard, except maybe a little from excitement. I knew all I was going to do was rest that big .375 on a rock and lay the aiming post square on his shoulder and that would be the story. We would admire this monster and Harry would tell the boys to *taka* headskin. We would cut out his filet and the boys would rob him of his fat and of his hams. We would skin him carefully to make a sports coat for Virginia of his lovely blue-gray, white-barred hide, and we would go home and get drunk.

I crawled to the battlement of stones and rose cautiously, inch by inch. I slid the rifle through a parapet in the rocks and looked down the barrel at seven cows. For no reason at all the *doumi* was not there with his wives. He had fed off, not frightened, not because he was hungry, but only because he was of a mood to wander that morning. I saw him, 2,000 yards away, fiddling aimlessly around a hilltop, looking for a crap game or a buddy to swap a lie with. The cows were completely unaware of us, we had stalked them so carefully. They fed for 10 minutes at 30 yards, while their faithless lord meandered around the young mountains.

We spooed this fellow all day, or nearly all day. We tracked him slowly and meticulously, with all the skills that Harry and the blacks knew, and sometimes we got as close as four or five hundred yards from him. Then in the late afternoon the wind veered sharply and we heard him bark. When we got up to where he'd barked we saw the deep wounds his hoofs had made when he jumped. There would be no more of this fellow this

day. Or any other.

That was a day among the days. Another day among the days was losing a big bull in the impassable elephant swamps, where we'd finally bayed him after six hours of vicious, wicked, awful walking. He barked. He crashed. He went away. He went away like a big bunch we jumped in the deserted ruined garden. He went away like the troupe Harry spotted from his hill and which could go only the one way. They went the other way. They went the same way the big bunch went on the 'Ndrobo's guaranteed plains, to which we cut our way painfully with pangas when Jessica couldn't butt the thorn trees down any more.

The paradise of game was still there, but we didn't see it any longer. We were no longer amused at the caperings of the impala or the coverings of the baboons, the squeals of the elephants or the cackle of the guineas. The peak point of the day, the coming-home, bath-taking, drink-making, food-eating, bed-going part of the day, was soured and flawed by frustration. Harry was short and surly with the blacks. Virginia was intuitively intelligent enough not to speak to either of us. We would sit morosely in front of the fire and brood.

Meat was short in the camp. We would not fire a gun even for food. When the last impala and the guineas gave out we ate from cans and scarcely tasted what we ate. The quest of Cap'n Ahab for Moby Dick arose into my mind again, and I could begin to understand even more clearly than after the abortive effort for the rhino how a man may become obsessed with pursuit until it rides him like a witch on a broom. This was a beautiful camp, but it was not a happy camp.

On the fifth morning we had made a stab at one more bull in the low hills and lost him when the wind did a ring-around-the-rosy on us. We were driving morosely down toward the river, along the edge of the big donga, to give it a final sweep before we rode home for the lunch we didn't have any appetite for.

We were testing the edge of the donga for a place where the jeep might cross it without capsizing when Jessica stalled and Kidogo clamped my neck with his horny hand and Harry pointed straight ahead. There he was.

The sun was still low and rosy from the dawn, red and gold behind this kudu. He stood there, not scenting us, but seeing us, not frightened yet, not quite ready to jump. The sun was behind him and it splintered off his horns. His head was thrown back and his chin was pointed out. We could see only to the first curl, but he was as big as a bull elephant, and the massive roll of his horns as they came out of his skull made them look as thick as logs.

Harry raked him with the glasses and nodded. He checked him with naked eyes and nodded. He gave him the glasses some more and bobbed his head even more vehemently. He spoke very quietly.

"Get out and wallop him," Harry said. "Slip around the edge of the donga to the right, and if you can make that tree while he's still looking at us he's your baby."

I slid out the door and wormed on my belly behind the jeep and then Indian-crawled for a light year until I made the tree. When I raised up behind the low thorn and poked the gun over a branch he was still there. Through the scope he looked as big as a bull moose. I still couldn't see anything beyond the first tremendous curl of horn, but they were as huge in the scope as mooring hawfers for a liner.

I hadn't been able to pick his body out of the gray bush he was standing in on the other side of the donga, but now I could see him clearly through the scope and it was a very mean shot. He was standing tail-end to

His foreshoulder was slightly out of alignment and his neck was crooked around so that while his head faced me all I had to shoot at was either his rear end or a thin wedge of his shoulder blade. I settled for the shoulder blade and held just behind it, hoping the bullet would slip in and take the heart, or at least bust the other shoulder as it went through him diagonally. The post was steady on the fore end of his rib cage, and the trigger got squeezed and the big Winchester roared and the striking bullet made that soggy sound. I knew he was dead before I pulled, because you can feel it and you always know it and the rest is anticlimax.

The big bull never jumped. He pitched. He pitched over backward and fell out of sight in one of the little sandy inlets that ran along the edge of the donga. He was going to be there when I got there. He wasn't apt to be going anywhere.



Not with that magnum through his heart and out the other side, smack on the shoulder blade.

The blacks and Harry came down on me like a festival of ravens. They were yelling, and the blacks were jumping in that jerky, spastic, uncontrollable leap that forms the basis of all their tribal dances. They screamed in their various dialects and hit me on the shoulders with clenched fists. Harry was swiping at me with his hat and yelling as loud as the boys were yelling. I was yelling, too, and jumping up and down in almost the same spastic leaps that the 'Ndrobo was practicing, that Kidogo was doing, that even the stolid Adam and the sophisticated Chabani were doing.

For that 30 seconds I was the richest man in the world, as we ran, hearts thudding, breath gasping, to see our kudu, the culmination of our joint effort.

We pounced up the other side of the donga, and there he lay, dead on his side, with his horns obscured by his twisted neck, the neat hole where the bullet went in exactly as I aimed it. Blue-gray on top, as clean and beautiful and neat and sweet and lovely as any animal ever will be, immortal now and past the possibility of rinderpest or hyenas or poisoned arrows or native blunderbusses. He was big. My God but he was big. Big as a horse and as dainty as a dik-dik.

Harry lunged for his head, twisted the neck, and almost screamed. We all saw it at once. He was a huge bull, all right. His horns had five inches of clear ivory tip. The roll from the forehead and the front curl were even more massive than they had looked through the scope. These horns would go 48 inches at least, a damned fine length of horn for any kudu. I wasn't greedy. All I wanted was a good representative head.

The only thing was this: There was only one spiral to the horns instead of the great double spiral that makes a kudu a kudu. With his head thrown back against the sun, we had shot a 3-year-old bull. The second curl was just starting. In two years he would have been 60 inches of magnificence. I had deprived him of the right to become worth collecting, the right to breed his wondrous possibilities into countless other calves who someday might be as magnificent as their father had had the chance to be before I robbed him of it by accident. I had cheated him and I had cheated me. I had done everything right except the one most important thing, the absolute certainty that this bull was of shootable qualification. I am afraid I cried a little. I cried for me and I cried for the bull and mostly I cried for the spoilage of perfection—of the ruination of the day and the trip and the location.

I do not know how to explain this, either. It was as if you had worked all your life to find gold, had found it, and suddenly it was transformed overnight into clay. It was as if you had courted a woman long and patiently, wooed her, won her, and she turned out to be the village dirty joke, a beautiful idiot with a nymphomaniac's sense of values.

The camp was waiting for us, because we were in early. Juma and Katunga and Virginia had run down from the camp up to the edge of the sandy plateau, and when they saw the slim legs sticking up from the back seat and the bit of gray hide showing above the side rails, they let out whoops and started a war dance. The other boys came down too, yelling, but when they saw our faces they all shut up. Kidogo said something in Swahili. The boys' faces lengthened.

"Eeehhhh," they said in sardines, and walked away.

"Lousy luck," I said to Virginia. "Shot an immature bull by mistake. Make you a nice coat, though."

"I don't want any nice coat," she said. "I'm awfully, dreadfully sorry."

We had lunch and we did not hunt kudu any more that day. I took the shotgun and went out after the guinea fowl, to make them suffer for my sins. I didn't care how much noise I made now. That night we had a lot more drinks and Juma came in proudly bearing a wonderful-smelling dish of broiled kudu tenderloin. I didn't eat any of it. I ate a can of beans. I wasn't very hungry.

We gave it another three days on the Little Ruaha. We hunted upriver as far as we could drive Jessica, and we hunted downriver. We saw *mingi suna* waterbuck and crocodiles and located three leopards. We avoided the elephants and marveled at the impala. We saw plenty of kudu cows and plenty of young bulls, but the real bulls, the big bulls, were someplace else.

"Maybe in the hills back toward Iringa," Harry said. "Maybe in the licks that we heard about. We've worn this place out. Riding up and down it for a week would've spooked every decent bull for some time. It's my guess we're not here for the real right time when the bulls leave the cows and congregate in bachelor mobs.

"Bowman was here in September. It's my guess that whatever herb they're after doesn't leaf out until then. Then I think the cows hide out in the hills and the old men get together and go a little loco in the coco about that time. Frank said that they seemed a little goofy—that you could ride right up to them. We know there's kudu here—God knows we've seen enough. But every mature bull we've seen has had a harem with him, and a bull around his family is twice as scary as when he's off with the boys."

I had regained a little perspective since shooting the young one-curl bull and had resumed some good nature, if not charm. The humor of grown men grimly hunting an extra curl to a horn began to crop out. You would have thought we were looking for a lost lode or a mythological diamond pipe.

"Let's move back across the Great Ruaha to the *campi* by the village," I said. "We can hunt the road back up toward Iringa. That salt lick's kicking about somewhere off the Iringa road. If they're not at the lick, those hills are high enough to hide an army of 'em. Kidogo said that when he and Bowman came in they saw quite a lot of good bulls along the road."

"Right," Harry said. "I think we can give Jessica a rest and use the lorry for this operation. It'll give Chege something to do. He's been sitting on his fanny for the last week and courting the local demoiselles, and he'll be getting soft. We can stand up in the back of that damned Annie and see a lot better on both sides than we can from the jeep. It's a good ten feet of extra elevation."

We packed up in echelons. I had some more writing to do, so I went with the first load. I was sorry to leave the Little Ruaha, the place of great promise that didn't pay off. We hadn't hurt it any. Apart from the one kudu and a few fowl for the pot, we had left the quiet and the trust of the animals intact. I hadn't even shot any sand grouse, although that little sand bar was rugged with them. We left it as we found it, serene and beautiful and unspoiled.

We found the way to the salt lick, about 10 miles out of our camp. It was a good lick. It had some animal droppings and a few kudu hoofmarks and some rhino tracks and one curled kudu horn from a good bull, since the horn was over 50 inches. We blinded and waited until after black dark, but nothing came to muzzle at the salty ooze that bubbled greenly up from the soft, white, rock-studded sand.

We were up there in the black dawn the next day, too, and nothing came until about 10, when Harry saw a small herd feeding down from the hills in our general direction. Harry was high on a hilltop, while I was low at the edge of the lick. It seemed we would have some luck at last. The band of kudu was within five or six hundred yards and feeding steadily when some transient honey hunters decided the time had come to burn off the plain. They set fire to the grasses, and that was the end of that.

Harry came scowling down from the hill, and on the way home, heading down the steep clay road, we jumped two youngsters who whipped across the road ahead of us and then paused, barked, and dabbed across the road again. We were watching the juveniles without getting down from the truck when the biggest, oldest, heaviest-horned, longest-horned grandfather of all kudu burst from the bush, cantered down the road ahead of us, stopped in the middle of the road to let us look at him, and then hopped blithely off the road to stand not 20 feet from it in a patch of low bush. This was a kudu. This was a real kudu.

As he had run along, his horns swept back and passed his rump. Kidogo muttered to Harry: "Bigger than *Bwana Bowman's*."

A shootable mature kudu bull is 45 or 46 inches long in the horns. A good kudu is 48. A fine kudu is 50. A miraculous kudu is anything over 50. Bowman's kudu was 59 inches, a giant, a *Primo Carnera*, a freak. And this kudu, this kudu now standing, waiting, ears cocked in the bush, was bigger than Bowman's. He would go 60 or 61. This was the Goliath of the kudu family. And he was right there, a couple hundred yards down the road.



waiting to be collected. God was smiling again.

Harry and I soared over the side of the truck. We crouched and sneaked down the side of the road. Then God laughed right out loud. This kudu, this ancestor of all kudu, had chosen the only baobab tree within five miles to duck behind. We could hear him move in the bush. But between us and him, wherever he moved, he always kept a baobab tree about as big as a railroad roundhouse.

There wasn't anything for us to do but dash around the tree and try to belt him on the fly. We crept round it, and he had chosen his bush well. He was in it, but you couldn't see him in it. Then he caught our scent and saw us and he barked like a great Dane and went through the heavy thorn like a herd of elephants. We never saw him. We just heard him, those horns clattering as they tore holes in the intermeshed thorn.

"We haven't lost him yet," Harry said. "There's a cut there between the hills. He'll go out one end or the other. We'll take the high end of the pass and send the boys round to the other end to beat him. He almost has to come out our way, because he'll be heading for the cloud country. We'll have to hurry, though."

We hopped back in the truck. It deposited us at the top of a high hill. Harry spoke rapidly to Kidogo, and the truck departed for the other end of the draw. We fought our way over three or four hills and valleys and finally wound up in a commanding position at the high end of the draw. We sat down on rocks and lit cigarettes. The wind carried the smoke directly over our heads. We were even getting a break from the wind.

We waited and chatted in low voices, marveling at the size of this old grandfather and not daring to hope he'd come past us, although there really wasn't any other way for him to come.

The hell there wasn't. In an hour the boys showed up, having beaten clear through and up the draw. Kidogo and Adam had seen him. Grandpa had gone straight up over the top. He didn't need draws or coulees to run in. This was a real alpine-type kudu. He saw a mountain and he just ran straight up the side of it, shook his scornful tail, and aimed for Rhodesia. We hunted him for the rest of the week. We never saw him again.

Of course we hunted the road some more. We hunted the licks some more. Some 'Ndrobo came in one day with lofty stories of a fabulous lick they knew, where the *tendafila* were so *mingi sana* that only a bow and arrow was considered a sporting weapon. After a long and tough trek afoot we wound up at their fabled lick. It was the same old tired lick we had been patronizing for a week, and driving up to within a quarter-mile of it. Some 'Ndrobo.

"They'd starve to death in a butcher shop," Selby said contemptuously.

We saw a lot more kudu, some good, some medium, some poor. We never got another shot. There was the one last, good, big bull we located, but he played baobab-around-the-rosy with us as his cousin had done, using the only other baobab in the locality as his operating base.

On the fifteenth day we said the hell with it and packed up. We weren't having any fun any more, the kind of fun we had had earlier. It had become a grim game, a monotonous business of riding the roads and climbing the hills, watching and waiting and always being bored and disappointed. The camp talk had degenerated into a one-track business of kudu, kudu, kudu, what we'd done wrong and what the kudu had done to thwart us. Virginia said that as companions we rated somewhere between deaf mutes and professional athletes.

We drove the jeep into Iringa, ahead of the lorry, and went to the little hotel to wait for the truck to labor and wheeze up the hills behind us. They had real scotch whisky at the bar and flush toilets.

When the boys came up they were jabbering. I knew what they were saying without understanding it.

"They say they jumped the biggest kudu bull they've ever seen," Harry says. "On the road behind us. Chege says he was bigger than the huge old boy we lost behind the baobab. How about it? Make you angry?"

"I couldn't care less," I said. "Let's have the bartender throw

another double at us and then let's go back down to Kiteki and shoot us an oryx before we go home. I'm all caught up on kudu."

"You know," Harry said, "if you ever write this I have a title for you. It's *Earned but Not Collected*."

"It's a good title," I said. "I'll try to remember it."

The last days at Kiteki, after I took my second buffalo, were an odd mixture of things. There was the business of the scopes all going out at once. I missed a bull oryx, as big as a house, three straight times, holding on by his shoulder and never touching him.

"I can't be that bad by now," I said. "I was on that baby as solid as ever I was on anything. You saw me knock that hawk out of a tree with the same gun yesterday. He was 200 if he was an inch. I think the scope's gone crook."

"We'll see," Harry said, and drove on, circling crabwise up the side of the tilted shallow hill that runs up to the Rift escarpment and then plunges sheerly down for thousands of feet to a flat valley. The blue of the sky was blinding, this day, the sun was a solid brass ball, and all over the country you could see the grass fires starting, darkening the sky early and lighting up the dusk with a rosy, far-seen glow. The time was all gone. We would be off and away tomorrow or the next day or the next, depending on luck.

We came onto a herd of Grants, slow-grazing, unafraid, new to the country, and just off a reserve somewhere. There was a fine herd ram.

"I say," Selby said. "Would you mind awfully if I shot this fellow? I've not much of a collection, but I'd like him in it."

"Fire away, Junior," I said. "I got all the Grants I'll ever need. Take the Remington and wallop him, as Harry Selby says to the clients."

The boys tossed the .30-06 and Harry got out. He crept up on the Grant, getting to within 35 or 40 yards and resting the rifle barrel on an anthill. He fired. There wasn't any bullet-hitting sound. The Grants took off, and Harry let them run. At about 500 yards they stopped. Selby fired again, and the ram went over on his horns.

"Kwaja," the boys said in the car. We drove off to collect Selby, who had walked over to the

Grant and was looking at the precise hole in the geometric center of the gazelle's shoulder.

"Bloody gun's a good foot high, maybe more," Harry said. "I held on this fellow at 30 yards and missed him clean. I held on the same spot at 500 and clobbered him. Let's sight her in."

We sighted her in. She was 14 inches high and a little left. No wonder I'd been blowing them past the oryx bull. I had been aiming high to get the spine if possible, because the oryx is awfully hard to kill, and had been slipping them over his back. We moved a couple of graticules, and now she was accurate again.

She wasn't accurate long. We knocked up another oryx, a fine one in the low meadows where the Rift dwindles, and I held steady on this one from another anthill. He was standing broad to me, and the shot was alarmingly simple. The welcome whunk came after the boom. The oryx leaped and took off, running hard with his horns laid back.

"You shot his jaw off, for God's sake," Harry said. "What's the matter with you, anyhow?"

"The gun again," I said, and bitterly, because I hadn't wounded much and hate it. "Let's sight her."

"Can't be out again so soon."

"Sight the gun."

This time she was a foot and a half to the right and another foot high. This, the gun that had gone two months so accurately that the boys just said "Nyama"—meat—when the gun fired.

"Bloody gun is possessed of demons," Harry said. "Let's go put that poor *choros* out of his misery."

We coursed the wounded animal and came up on him and I had two belts at him. I missed him cold. This time it was my fault. I was nervous and upset at wounding him and I didn't trust the gun any more and I was jerking. He ran and went over a high, stone-cobbled hill where Jessica couldn't follow, and crossed some mountains, and at dark we had to give him



up. I felt like hell, sick and sorry and ashamed.

"Leopards'll have him in an hour," Harry said. "That's one consolation. Every cat in the community will be on that blood spoor. Quit feeling so bad. Everybody butches one now and then. You can't say we didn't try. And you can't blame yourself for the gun."

"These damned scopes," I said. "You can't trust them. But everything you shoot around here you shoot at some impossible distance, and most of us haven't got your eyes. I haven't, anyhow."

"Forget it," Harry said. "Let's go get some *chacula* and hit the sack."

"You're beginning to talk like a bloody Yank," I said.

"Evil associations," Harry said, grinning. "*Kuenda*."

We got a fine oryx the next morning. I had checked the sights again, and when we jumped this big fellow running hard up the side of the hill, I led him two lengths and a shoulder high, aiming at where I thought he might be when the bullet got there, and sure enough he was there. There was that bone-hitting crack and he slowed to an amble. I belted him again and down he went. He was sort of snarling in a bovine fashion, and I had to bust him in the neck before we could come up on him.

The gun was in again, but she went out again that afternoon. This was the last full day, and I wanted Virginia to see some of the lovely country she had missed. We were just cruising, enjoying the fresh breeze and the blue sky and the wonderful yellow plains against their backdrop of blue hill, when Kidogo pointed and said:

"*Kitambile*."

There were two big cheetahs, both toms, in the middle of the yellow plain. The bigger was sitting on an anthill, profiling six or eight feet off the ground. Against the fierce blue of the early-afternoon sky, sitting on a yellow anthill in a sea of yellow grasses, his hide white against the black spots, he was something.

"I'd say this is a definite bonus," Harry said. "A *shauri mungu* sent to repay you for the no rhino, the bad joke with the *kudu*, the way your gun's been acting up. Magnificent, isn't he? You can remember him like this. It's a sight very few people get to see. Get out and—"

"Wallop him," I said.

There wasn't anything to it. I got out, Harry tooled the Rover away, and I found another anthill. This was an eight-foot cheetah, about half dog, half cat, with a round cat's face, a long cat's tail, a spotted cat's hide, long dog's legs, and a dog's non-retractile claws. I put the scope's post on his shoulder at 60 yards, squeezed off, and missed him as clean as anybody ever missed anything. He went straight up in the air about six feet, turned a somersault, and hit the deck, running. I don't know if you ever saw a cheetah run, but when I slung another one at him on the gallop, I was just kidding myself. A cheetah flat out can catch anything that runs, and there are people who say that in a hurry he will be doing about 75 miles an hour. This lad was long gone.

The other lad wasn't. He got up, stretched, walked a short distance away, and lay down in the grass. I could see his round head and hard, clear cat's eyes and the outline of his body as he lay. This time I held the damned gun low, pointing at the ground in front of him. I shot, and he jerked and stayed there. I aimed at the ground and I broke his back, so high up that another inch would have missed him clean. Now this bloody machine was shooting two feet high. I unscrewed the telescopic sight and threw it away. Then I walked up on the big cat, who was snarling and crawling toward me, and put him quietly to sleep. He was beautiful and would look just fine with

the lions and the lovely, lovely leopard, but what I had now was not just a hide and mask but a complete capsuling of a country and a day, with the heat of the sun and the cool of the breeze and the friendship of the boys and all I loved of Africa in it. This was as good a way to end it as any, not shooting any more, with the oryx neat and the cheetah neat and the damned traitorous scope thrown away to rust in the long yellow grasses.

The next morning the boys were knocking the camp apart. "Let's go look at it for a couple of hours," I said.

"Okay," Harry said. "We'll take the .470 in case we just happen to see a rhino, and the .375. You really ought to shoot another zebra or so for those hides your friends wanted, and the boys can use a little fresh meat for the trip home."

We rode over the hills, rode for the last time, looking for the last time at all the landmarks we knew so well now—the cobbled hills there, the green knobby hills there, the long blue slopes there, the baobab here where the road crooks just before you turn in toward Kiteti, the rhino hill yonder, the lonely village of musky anthills, the broad yellow plain, the swamp where the buffalo were, the high hill where the other buffalo were, the sheer drop of the escarpment, the green strip of lush grass with the giraffes always standing solemn and ludicrous nearby, the little scrubby orchards of thorn, the fleets of ostriches running and pacing like trotting horses at Roosevelt Raceway in New York, the buzzards wheeling, the dew fresh on the drying

grass, the flowers beginning to wither, the sand-grouse specks in the sky, the doves looping and moaning lugubriously, the brilliant flight of the jays, the guineas running, the francolin scratching like chickens in the low grass between the ruts the car made, the weaver birds swarming like bees and dipping and rolling like a tornado. This was what I wanted to remember of it more than what I'd shot, but the shooting was important, because the presence of the animals in my home would bring it back as fresh and sharp as the air of this last morning, this last, sad morning.

We headed down for Arusha to register the trophies, and in Babati they told us that Harry's friend, Tony Dyer, had been frightfully beaten up by a buff. We stopped in Arusha, the little Greeky-Englishy Arusha, registered the trophies with a fat Indian babu in the Game Department, and took the good fast road back to Nairobi. Nobody talked much.

We hit Nairobi and found my friends, Tommy and Durie Shevlin, just back from an unsuccessful safari in Rhodesia or someplace, and Tony Dyer was there, limping around on crutches. Little Maureen at Ker and Downey's was just as pretty to look at, and there was a flock of other pleasant folk about. Old Zim, the taxidermist, oiled and oiled over the trophies, which were really quite fine and something to be proud of. Virginia bought a couple of leopard skins for some bags and shoes and a stole, and everybody drank a good deal too much. Harry's pretty airline hostesses were all over the place, and there was a party every night and one drunken South African Airlines pilot that I nearly had to slug but didn't.

None of it was any good. I was glad to leave. There was a part of me, of us, back there on a hill in Tanganyika, in a swamp in Tanganyika, in a tent and on a river and by a mountain in Tanganyika. There was a part of me out there that would stay out there until I came back to ransom that part of me. It would never live in a city again, that part of me, nor be content, the other part, to be in a city. There are no tiny-gleaming campfires in a city.

We got on the plane one day and pointed back to Paris and New York and work and cocktail parties and penthouses and expensive, fashionable saloons. Our first stop was in Addis Ababa. The natives were just as ugly, and there were even more flies than I remembered. I was sure New York would be worse.

—Robert C. Ruark

