

By the same author

KANGAROO SHOOTS MAN

MURDER À LA MOZAMBIQUE

ANIMAL HEAVEN

Adventurer's Paradise

by

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to be an execrable shot. He missed a rhino at forty yards. A rhino is not a small animal, and to miss one is rather like missing the proverbial barn-door.

I did not want him on my safari, particularly as he was equipped with a .404 rifle of German make and some age. It was a low-velocity rifle and probably deadly in the hands of an expert. Our game scout was no expert. Besides which he waved it around whilst loaded and cocked in the most disheartening fashion, and whilst one might wonder if the rifle would prove lethal in his hands against elephant, there was no doubt whatever that it would make the most ghastly mess of a man's head at three feet. All the time we drove towards the river in the hunting car I was constantly reaching over my left shoulder and pushing the large muzzle away from the back of my head.

There is nothing pretty about this countryside. Under-foot is yellow, sandy soil. The vegetation, away from the occasional tributary of the Ruaha, is tangled thorn bush (*Nyika*, in fact). It is not green, but light grey in colour, brittle to the touch, the sort of thorn bush that is always covered in small, dry, brittle black balls, each ball being full of tiny black ants. There are many snakes here, and that morning we caught a magnificent copper-coloured cobra which I later sold to a collector.

This particular cobra, *Naja melanoleuca*, to give him his Latin name, lay sunning himself on the hard dirt road, and when we stopped the truck he 'threw a hood', by erecting the first few feet of his length at right angles to the ground. It is this action, the preparation to strike, which spreads the skin of the neck into the famous 'hood'. I flapped a sack at him and he ran, but Kinimai, my snake boy, headed him off with another sack and he spat venom into the folds of the sack three separate times. Then we threw the sack over him, and when his deadly little head emerged I grabbed at it and dropped him into

another sack, held open by Kinimai. Whilst all this was going on the game scout decided to explore the immediate neighbourhood. It was then he saw the rhino and fired at it, luckily missing it. I say luckily because my own rifles were screwed into the gun racks of the hunting car; my big revolver might turn a rhino (I believe it would), but is hardly the perfect weapon for the job. Also I had my hands too full of cobra—almost literally at one point—to do much to help the game scout with his rhino.

In his defence it must be said that rhino had proved a nuisance that year. Two women had been charged and killed on the road by (or so the game scout said) this very beast. Food crops had been severely damaged, and the rhinos were getting *kali*—an excellent word meaning angry, hot or sharp, according to its context. *Kali* is a permanent adoption from Kiswahili (although it is originally Hindustani) into English. Another such is *shenzi*, meaning savage, uncultured, badly made, rough or rude. In return Kiswahili has taken from English the immortal words 'bloody fool', which can be heard in almost any market-place where Swahili is spoken.

The Game Department had sprung to the defence of their rhinos, for this *kali*-ness is a certain sign of tribal hunting. There was, I believe, a wonderful official letter in reply from a District Commissioner saying, 'In this matter my sympathy is to some extent with the rhinoceros, yet I would urge that the Game Department tempers its favours towards *Diceros bicornis* with some regard for the more deserving species *Homo sapiens*.'

It was, I believe, as a result of this letter that the buck-toothed game scout with the .404 fired at the rhino.

Buck-tooth was an excellent tracker, a man with an exuberant temperament and unfailing good nature. If he was a bad shot he at least stood his ground without flinching when we were charged by elephant later that day.

may take an hour to cover a hundred yards, it may take a day or a week; it is difficult to judge these things. In any case, it is part of the safari and cannot be avoided.

We had to build a road by cutting down trees and laying them on the muddy sandbank. That took one day. That night we all stripped and washed in the warm, fast-flowing river, watched by a couple of dyspeptic-looking crocodiles who made no move to intercept us. Next day the winch was rigged by fitting an alternative propeller shaft from a secondary gear-box (one must be something of a mechanic in Africa) and the car was slowly cranked across, sticking from time to time.

Then one of the Wahehe went back to Iringa, club on shoulder, at a fast lope, for a replacement part. I sent him to the shop with the sign 'DUKYA SPEA PATIS', which, translated, reads, 'Spare Parts Shop'. I may say here that the part was unobtainable, as there was no Dodge agent in town, but that a local blacksmith made a very serviceable replica. We went on into the bush on foot.

Up until this time we had seen no great concentrations of game: a few buck, a lion or two lazing in the afternoon sun, two elephants in the distance, two rhinos on separate occasions. Even the Ruaha banks were deserted. This did not seem the game paradise described by our friend the Afrikander; yet the boys assured me that usually there were great herds of game along the river. It was all rather mysterious. We walked on for an hour or so at a fast, swinging pace and then stopped to have food on the bank of a dry river. The mosquitoes were bad here and the tsetse flies stung like red-hot needles. This is all tsetse country, and the natives can keep no cattle. They live on maize, beans, eggs and scrawny chickens and their lives are made miserable by malaria and low fever.

The river we stopped on must have been one of the many tributaries of the Ruaha that meander over the

plains. It was a deep, tree-fringed gash in the earth with a solid sand bottom, and after we had eaten we climbed down the steep bank and walked along the river-bed. It was cool there and easy walking, although the yellow sand had been torn up by every kind and species of African animal—there were elephant tracks, lion tracks, rhino tracks, the spoor of hundreds of antelopes, the small prints of hyena and jackal, as if all Noah's Ark had promenaded down-river.

Coming rather suddenly round a curve we almost ran into a rhino that hurried off into a 'side road' where the river—when there had been a river—branched off. We did not molest the rhino as he was about his business and not very interested in us. He was very big and very old. I stopped a moment and loaded my camera, screwed on the 'unipod' I use instead of a tripod for big game filming, and ran up the bank to head him off. I got a beautiful shot of him coming towards me, swinging his head, then stopping and facing down-wind, trying to find out what was wrong. He must have caught the sound of my camera although, having had some previous experience in this type of filming, I had silenced the 35-mm. Arriflex by fitting it into a lightweight fibre box lined with sorbo rubber.

Half an hour later we found an excellent waterhole; not a pool, but literally a hole in the sand dug by some enthusiastic elephant or other with his tusks. There were great churnings of sand around the hole, and obviously a large elephant herd had watered there, together with many other animals. I would have liked to see if the elephants waited their turn to water, or fought for trunk-room at the hole, which was about two feet across and had cool, dark, but very dirty, water not a foot down from the lip of the pool.

Our Wakwave found the elephant herd tracks and we followed them at a very fast walk indeed. The bush was

punishable, and it is only in a distant colony suffering from internal strife, where native men, women and children are being butchered by a gang of ritual murderers inspired by witchcraft, that one can appreciate the opportunist attitude of British politicians, seeking to make party gain or loss out of a situation such as Mau Mau. No one ever stopped for a moment to consider the poor, damned Kikuyu, who bore, and still bear, the brunt of this business.

That is how one often thinks in Africa, sitting watching the distances and the heat shimmer above the plains, with a crowd of friendly and relaxed Africans around one. I remember that day stubbing out my cigarette and starting to pack my few eating irons, ready for another trek on towards an unknown goal, feeling these men were my friends and the only friends I wanted or needed at that moment. We pulled ourselves together and walked off into the heat.

We were promptly charged by a rhino.

Before I go any further I must explain that I later was told in some detail, with many a lurid oath, by Dirty Paddy Riordan himself, just what had happened to make the Ruaha big game animals so *kali*. A German (or Swiss) expedition had been given permission to trap four baby elephants, and had done so by throwing sticks of dynamite at the elephant herds from fast trucks, chasing and 'beating up' the herds until the calves strayed off through terror or exhaustion, and could be safely roped and loaded. These methods of game catching are illegal and cruel, and the expedition got out a jump ahead of a warrant, or so I am unofficially informed. However, they had made the place untenable for human beings—not only the odd white man, be he District Officer, surveyor, or camera hunter like myself, but for the hundreds of Africans living in the neighbourhood. Some of the cow elephants, grieving for their calves, had to be shot, as

they were menacing human beings at every opportunity, and two natives were killed in incidents with enraged cow elephants.

It was this expedition which made my first few days in the Ruaha country so very, very lively! No wonder everything on four legs came pounding at us on sight!

Now this rhino was unlucky. He was a four-year-old, at a guess, in prime condition, without even a wound behind the shoulder as most rhinos have, and he was full of fire and murder. By all accounts he should have turned off in his charge, but he did no such thing; he came straight at us. Usually a rhino faces up-wind, and charges when he scents danger, or what he thinks is danger. He will normally 'make a demonstration', veering off at the last minute and rushing past you, especially if you stand quite still. But this particular rhino came very fast, out of thick bush from about thirty feet away, straight at us. I had no chance at all of learning his intentions, so I got my rifle to my shoulder and shot him.

Remember this was in very thick thorn bush, and I didn't see him for many seconds in all. Before I could get in a second, more careful shot, he had vanished into thick bush once more.

He was 'chugging', as rhinos do, making a noise like a runaway shunting engine, and we heard him, but did not see him, in the bush quite near us. After a time, the 'chugging' stopped. I guessed what had happened. I had aimed at the heart, missed, hit him in the lungs, and he had taken five minutes to die. In the meantime he ran round and round like a crazy thing whilst he choked in his own blood, poor devil. We found him, shot six inches behind the heart, lying quite dead in a patch of thorn bush, his belly crawling with beautiful black and gold ticks. He was in excellent condition but his horns were small.

Nevertheless, the fibrous rhino horn is worth quite a bit

to the Arabs, who sell it to the Chinese, who make an aphrodisiac from it. The horns would help to pay the cost of the game licence one must take out, so the boys cut them off with a chopper and a sharp knife. The rhino did not smell particularly strong, he had an animal scent all his own, rather pleasant, like a huge cow. I had the usual picture taken sitting on him, and cut a strip of hide from him with my hunting knife to make a *sjambok*.

Whenever I have to shoot one of the larger animals—a rhino, an elephant, a lion—I have first a feeling of primitive exaltation, then a feeling of guilt. I think most hunters have, even those who hunt for sport. But in that district at that time a rhino or an elephant was a good target, and a lion an even better one. The natives were suffering cruelly from crop damage and lost lives, and the district officers' reports from the outlying districts had incidents like the following in them:

SIR,

I have the honour to write to tell you of what happened in the neighbourhood of my village of Ruahini on Saturday last. Eight elephants attacked the maize shambas, and we set fires to drive them off, also shouting and banging tins, etc. But they did not go, and indeed began to picking up the firing grass and tossing it on to our huts, etc. One hut was burned down. Then the elephants broke deeply into our crops.

Koloki, our best hunter, laid in a tree and speared one in the back with a spear and it fell dead, and he then took two other hunters, one with a musket. They fired the musket and struck one elephant, then Koloki speared it in the trunk and Matsuhu speared it well in the side and it died after killing Matsuhu by tramping upon him.

Koloki and Ruhili, the other man, then speared two more, one being wounded and one dead. The wounded

one was trumpeting loudly and scared off the herd and we were left in peace.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

JOSHUA KITINI (school-master)

Incidentally, the excellent English of the letter, considering that the man has never been to any other than a small Mission school and teaches his small charges in their own language, is most unusual.

I will refrain from quoting 'funny letters' from Africans, but to leave out the police report I saw in Iringa would be shameful. I was reporting to the Inspector there after my car had caused chaos and confusion by charging across a newly metalled piece of street—it was dark and there were no lights, poles or other warning, so I was exonerated, but that is by the way. Whilst waiting for the Inspector I picked out a card 'advertising' a wanted man, and this is what was written in very careful, spidery writing:

WANTED FOR THEFT: Chuki, son of Ikoli. *Sex:* Male. *Height:* Not grown up quite. *Colour:* Brownish. *Distinguishing Features:* Smells pretty bad. Itches all over.

the buffalo. I believe the Masai call an elephant 'Oldonyiro Sabuk'.

Above where Nairobi is to-day is shown Fort Hall, now the hot-bed of Mau Mau activity, and the neat hand of my pioneer has written, 'Tribe here Gikuyu. Very treacherous and untrustworthy.' A road goes off to 'Mumia's Kraal', now the frontier post between Kenya and Uganda. Then the road straggles round the east shore of Victoria Nyanza to Port Florence—Kisumu to-day. Here it joins the slave caravan routes.

And that is all.

Just seventy years ago, the life of a man. And from that small beginning modern East Africa has sprung, a great land of power stations and mines, farms and homesteads, schools and churches, mosques and temples. Of towns and railways and motor roads and garages and retail shops. A market and a source of raw materials. Still hardly developed, still, most of it, in the pioneering stage.

And there are loonies in England who talk of 'keeping it in trust for the Africans' and handing it 'back' to the tribes who never owned it. There is room enough for everybody in East Africa, but for many years to come the country must stay under European domination, or it will tumble into the limbo of tribal war and exploitation by the Indian shopkeeper class.

Kenya's trouble is a warning to the West, and an indication that the good old days are over and done with. But Kenya is a beautiful country and a potentially rich one, and to give it to a crowd of savages would surely be the silliest thing any British Government could do.

Meanwhile, here is something of my own life in Kenya, the life of a roving cameraman in search of screen thrills. To perdition with politics, anyway.

CHAPTER XI

THE TAME ONES

Still the film units come to East Africa and at times the lounge of the New Stanley Hotel looks like Wardour Street at noon on Friday. Nairobi has got used to film people as it gets used to everything. Some of the Nairobi regulars have even joined film units and become all sorts of things from camp managers to actors, and at least one white hunter goes around looking gravely at the daily scene and saying, 'Not much actinic value in this light', and shaking his head, whilst another has turned actor and celebrates the change of occupation by wearing strange apparel that even Hollywood would blink at. Instead of two six-guns, a sombrero and a checked shirt worn outside his jeans—an ordinary and dull sort of costume—he now wears sky-blue pants, moccasin shoes, a Palm Beach sports shirt and smokes cigarettes in a long holder. The town is quite upset. And instead of telling everybody of the record elephant he shot on the Guaso Nyiro in 1926 (or was it '27?), he now bores them stiff with stories of 'my greatest performance'.

The film crowds themselves are the usual orderly, stolid, businesslike people working in one of the most exacting of all the professions and certainly the least rewarding, and they continue to talk the usual film talk about horse-racing and football and whether there will be a chance to claim double-overtime if there is any night shooting.

Nobody knows exactly why they have come, except the producers. It is cheap to make films in Africa and one can work at least some 'background stuff' in. That means

animal filming, and every producer is on the look-out for somebody with a tame lion, a tame rhino, a tame hyena or a tame crocodile. The hunters, or rather some of them, get inflated ideas of the value of things, and one optimistic gentleman possessed a rhino for which, he said, he would charge £1,000 per half-minute of screen footage taken. He found no takers, but held on so long that by the time he lowered his charges the big, splendid Hollywood units with the millions to spend had folded their literal tents and more or less stolen away, leaving the field to the documentary boys, the television merchants and the 'B' picture producers; all of whom have but two things in common, they somehow keep going and they are invariably broke.

But there are folks around the landscape who will be glad to oblige with a tame animal or two. How it is that so far (touch wood) no cinematographer has disappeared into the inside of a 'tame' lion or a 'pet' leopard no one will ever know. It is one of the miracles of this world, and proof that God looks after drunks, mugs and tenderfeet.

One cameraman was inspired to take a picture of a tame leopard springing on to the camera. The animal sprang on to the cameraman instead and after a little whirling around the leopard was shot by a white hunter who said, 'I didn't know which was of the greater value to the picture, the leopard or the cameraman, but I had to think fast!' On another momentous occasion a small unit was filming a 'tame' lion attacking cattle, this on a well-known farm in Kenya. They put the lion back in his cage after he had sullenly refused to perform, and then discovered they hadn't got the door for said cage. Whilst they were trying to decide what to do about this unfortunate situation the lion yawned, stretched, decided it was his supper-time, made one mighty bound off the lorry on which his doorless cage stood and killed two cows before anybody could stop him.

Then there was my own experience when shooting a scene with a 'tame' rhino. The rhino kicked his way out of his pen, and disappeared into the landscape, going like blazes. Finding a rhino in a thorn-bush landscape with night coming on is like hunting for the proverbial needle in the haystack. But we tried, and I have grim memories of that night, bucking over the surface of the veld in my old Dodge truck. And of calling on a missionary who was encamped beneath a tree prior to reading the Good Book to the assembled Kikuyu next day. I blew my horn twice and when the missionary appeared, clad in a glorious night-shirt, I yelled, 'If you see a rhino don't shoot him. He's tame.' He did, poor man, see a rhino. At first I believe he thought I was a more or less harmless drunk, as I went roaring off in low gear with my swivelling spotlight sweeping the bush. But later that night the rhino tried to get into his tent. Thirty-five minutes later only the flickering remains of a camp-fire showed where the Man of God had encamped. He had pulled his tent down single-handed, flung it, his bed, his stoves, his lamp and himself into his big American truck, disappeared over the nearest horizon and was known to the district no more.

I remember scattering a Kikuyu circumcision ceremony that night under the moon and yelling, 'Come and spot my rhino—the man that sees him gets a hundred bob!' The Kikuyu, like the missionary, sought fresh fields and pastures new, and to the newly-circumcised young warriors who ran like merry hell for the nearest stumpy thorn trees that year must surely go down in history as 'the Year of the (tame) Rhino'.

Probably working these 'tame' animals is the most dangerous task in making animal films. At least you are wary of a large elephant in the bush, and well aware of the fact that he may take it into his sinful old head to grind you into the dust; but with a lion which everybody calls 'Charley' and fondles you are in rather a spot. Too

when his first mistress left him and went to England, refusing to come out, facing every man with hackles erect and a growl in his throat, slinking out for food and attacking harmless natives without so much as a warning bark. I have seen how she first managed to pet him, then fed him by hand, until at last he became a great, sloppy idiot of a dog who followed her around from room to room and made friends even with other dogs, chickens and natives. That was a small miracle of patience.

But Carr Hartley, with hundreds of animals in his care, cannot give attention to every one. He has made remarkable conquests, though. One was Brock, the honey-badger. Sometimes he is called a ratel, and his Latin name is *Mellivora Capensis*. He is a tough, powerful, courageous and truculent brute, like a big European badger; his skin is pretty, a grey back, white flanks and a black face; he has tough, loose skin and powerful claws, and his ears are covered by his skin—but he hears well for all that.

The honey-badger lives on insects and dislikes snakes; his skin is so thick that not even the cobra can kill him, and he makes short work of any snake with his hooked, steel-sharp claws. He gets his East African name from the fact that he loves honey and tears into the trees to get it. No native bee-hive is safe from him and on the farm we have cursed his kind for stealing chickens. Wire netting won't keep him out and no dog will come to conclusions with him. It would be a sad day for the dog if he did. He has one strange habit—he follows the bird *Indicator* to a hive, guided by the bird's calls. *Indicator* is called a 'Honey Guide', and even the natives follow him to find honey.

Carr's badger even learned tricks, and his best trick was to roll over on command. 'Over,' Carr would say, and Brock would roll like a circus animal, over and over like a fat little barrel, to please his master. Incidentally, I

once met a native who had been attacked by a honey-badger (I believe he was taking the honey from a hive and drove the badger off with a stick) and had been crippled for life by the tough little brute's attack; he had been lucky to escape alive, so badly had he been mauled.

Within a few days of their capture at the end of his lasso, Carr will have wild giraffes eating from his hand, and who will forget the baby elephant and the little rhino which played with Ava Gardner in *Mogambo*? Those two were inseparable, and once, Carr told me, when the little elephant started squealing with rage on the set because he was not being given another banana (he had had a bunch by then), the rhino tried to break out of his pen and go to his friend's assistance.

But Carr Hartley's most remarkable possessions are his two white rhinos, Mitzi and Gus. These rare creatures were caught, I believe, in the Sudan. If I remember correctly, Carr had to catch four and give two to the government as the price of being allowed to trap and keep the two he has. The animals are almost literally priceless, and no shooting or trapping of this very rare animal is normally allowed.

The differences between black and white rhinos are marked, and it has often been pointed out that the name 'white' does not come from the skin colour. I suppose people have seen black, or darkish 'white' rhinos, but I must confess I never have; those I have seen in Uganda have been of a much lighter shade than the black rhino—but I am prepared to agree that this may be because they had been rolling in light-coloured earth. However, Carr's gruesome twosome are strangely light in shade. The white appellation is usually said to be from the Afrikaans word for 'wide' and to refer to the snout. In the pictures you can clearly see the difference between white and black rhinos. The white ones are also much

bigger animals, of a different structure, being bulkier and somehow heavier altogether than the common black variety.

This pair have gambolled through films together until they are quite well known to the public even in England! But Carr is limiting their screen appearances just now because he hopes to breed from them—never has a white rhino calf been born in captivity. As he believes Mitzi is in a certain delicate condition she is being allowed to take things easily. Last time I saw her she made a very determined effort to charge Carr himself, but he, remembering that an expectant mother can be excused a lot, simply lifted his fist and clouted her alongside the nose. Even Carr's enormous fist can have little effect on a rhino, and Mitzi snorted, shook her head and went back to cropping grass. Carr, shaking his hand slightly, went on talking to the Army officer who had called with his armoured car to have a Christmas-card picture taken. The insignia of his squadron was the rhino, and what better for the purpose than a rhino standing by the car?

He had several surprises, though, for the leopard, Chui, insisted on getting into the car, sniffing it delicately all over first, and emerged with a nice Army boot which he would not put down. I don't know if the *askari* ever got his boot back.

Mitzi and Gus have grown up from calves on Carr's farm, and I have seen one frantic rush for penicillin when it was thought Mitzi had some illness or other. Carr usually acts as his own vet and I have seen him doctor a bull giraffe, more than half-grown, which was in great pain from a growth on the leg. Carr received a terrific kick on the knee for his pains, but he banged in the necessary injection, after lassoing the giraffe and having it spread-eagled by a veritable army of natives. He is scarred, bruised and bitten all over his arms and legs where his pets have proved fractious, often during

medical treatment—and some of the worst injuries have been inflicted by animals genuinely trying to play with him.

Catching game with Hartley is great fun. It is also rather strenuous. He rides the animals down in a fast truck, and lassoes them. There are two opinions about this use of trucks for catching game. One school says it is more sporting to work from horseback, and less strain on the animal. A giraffe, for instance, may die from fright when caught and a cheetah from the sheer fatigue of having been run down. (Incidentally, it is possible to run down the swift 'hunting leopard' on foot. The bushman can do this. They also do it with very fast buck; they just keep trotting after them, allowing them no rest, until the quarry is tired out. The cheetah tires very quickly if he is harried.)

But Hartley always uses a truck. He says he is not out for sport, but to catch the animal in as good condition as possible. He maintains that the quicker an animal is lassoed the better condition it is in, and the better it can withstand shock. He keeps a syringe of coramine or other heart stimulant ready, and the first thing he does when an animal is caught is to inject this if it shows signs of dying from fear or shock. He loses very few animals.

The chase itself is frantic and you can see why the truck graveyard is so full. Even the Dodge Powerwagon, the best bet, in so many ways, for this game, is not fast enough or tough enough to stand much of the hammering, and every now and then Carr's Powerwagon will be in dock, having bits welded on to it. This is no criticism of the Powerwagon, for a thirty miles an hour chase over broken bush country is not exactly what the vehicle was designed for. The nippy little four-by-four ex-Army trucks do very well, and Carr uses them sometimes for catching, sometimes for driving game. Often he works from his Chevrolet pick-ups, or a big three-ton



The thing is amenable to G.S. and J. no Heashi and Cur Hurley and Cur's
two of the things, M.D. and Gus

Kilave is a remote village





The white rhino is amenable to discipline. Juno Hayashi and Carr Hartley ride Carr's two white rhinos, Mitzi and Gus

Kikuyu in a remote village

