

OTHER WORKS BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS

*The Young Hemingway*

*Hemingway: The Paris Years*

*Hemingway: The American Homecoming*

# HEMINGWAY

THE 1930s

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camp in silent despair. Ernest, she noted later, had remained inside the car, unable to save her if the lion charged.

Changing camps every two or three days, the hunting party shot its way further into the Serengeti, living off the land and taking trophies. By January 8, Ernest and Charles had killed their lion, buffalo, cheetah, and leopard, leaving only the rhino to complete the five truly dangerous animals. With Percival as their guide and mediator, Pauline as their audience, and several natives as appreciative chorus, an increasing rivalry was beginning to create tensions between the two men. Ernest was by nature competitive to a sometimes unpleasant degree; Charles, the less talkative of the two, was the invited guest who had no intention of being the designated loser in this passage of arms. For amusement the two men kept track of the hyenas they shot at every opportunity.

Adding to the tension was a growing awareness that Ernest's quickly multiplying diarrhea attacks were actually dysentery. By January 11, he was taking chlorine salts continuously, but his evening drinking undermined any good the medicine might have done. By January 13, he was too weak to stay out in the field and too uncomfortable sitting in the car. On the evening of the fourteenth, driving back to camp over a punishing road, Ernest, in terrible pain, was clearly in need of medical attention. Percival sent Ben careening over bush roads 115 miles to Lake Victoria, the closest telegraph station, to arrange for an airplane to fly Hemingway to the Arusha hospital, which was three days away by car. All the next day, Hemingway remained in bed, moving to the campfire only in the evening for a bowl of mashed potatoes. Through that night of wind and rain, awakened by biting bugs and her own anxiety, Pauline tosses about while Ernest sleeps through the commotion. When Ben returns the morning of the 15th, they learn the plane will arrive at two that afternoon. All morning and afternoon, they wait in camp, listening for the motor, but no plane appears. Hemingway spends the day reading magazines, apparently feeling better for the rest and for two days of not drinking. Somehow a radio message comes through: no plane today; plane tomorrow. The next morning at ten, the small silver

plane lands in the road, loads a smiling Hemingway aboard, and takes off for Arusha at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro and the government doctor.

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Your amebic dysentery correspondent is in bed, fully injected with emetine, having flown four hundred miles to Nairobi via Arusha from where the outfit is camped on the Serene river on the far side of the Serengeti plain. Cause of the flight, a. d. Cause of a. d. unknown. Symptoms of a. d. run from weakly insidious through spectacular to phenomenal. I believe the record is held by a Mr. McDonald with 232 movements in the twenty-four hours although many old a. d. men claim the McDonald record was never properly audited.<sup>58</sup>

—Ernest Hemingway, "a.d. in Africa: A Tanganyika Letter"

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Unbeknownst to Pauline and Percival, Ernest landed at Arusha and then continued on to Nairobi, where he registered at the New Stanley Hotel. There a Dr. Anderson treated him with regular injections of emetine, whose efficacy was most apparent in Hemingway's bar bill, which rose from four shillings for mineral water his first night to sixty-four shillings and fifty pence four nights later, when he apparently was well enough to entertain guests at dinner.<sup>59</sup> He used the days in bed to arrange an end-of-safari fishing trip on the coast, to write his promised "African Letter" for *Esquire*, and to answer mail.

The day after he arrived in Nairobi, he was writing Max from his hotel bed, thanking him for royalty and sales statements (over thirteen thousand *Winner Take Nothings* sold), telling about the pleasures of amebic dysentery ("Feels as if you were trying to give birth to a child"), recounting the game bagged, and bitching about the state of public letters. His present unpopularity, which he insisted on despite healthy sales, was to be expected, for a writer's stock always rose and fell with current fads like "this present damned YMCA economic hurrah business." Having once belonged to the YMCA in his Oak Park youth, he often used it as a shorthand way of demeaning trendy salvationists, which was his view of Roosevelt's attempts to

revive the nation's economy. He assured Perkins that when the economic slump passed, he, Ernest, would be better than ever, having remained a writer while others followed the ideological trend to the left. But he could not expect the public to believe in him when his own publisher appeared to have given up on him. This now familiar accusation followed every book he published with Scribner's. No matter what the sales, there would have been more if only his publisher had pushed harder, taken out more ads, done more to promote the book.<sup>60</sup>

While Hemingway recovered, the safari degenerated badly. The morning after his departure, Pauline and Charles poured shot after shot in the direction of an antelope they stalked relentlessly for what seemed like hours before killing him. By the next day, Percival was running a fever as he led the trucks back up to the top of the Ngorongoro Crater, where Pauline and Charles hunted to no great end while Percival remained in camp. On January 20, Pauline and Percival drove, hot and dusty, into Arusha to surprise Ernest, but only surprising themselves when they learned he was actually in Nairobi. Telegrams were sent, but not knowing whether his client was fit for more hunting and feeling somewhat sick himself, Percival repaired to the hotel bar alone. On Sunday morning, Arusha church bells ringing, Pauline thought of going to Mass, but without stockings or proper shoes, she could not face her religious duty in trousers.

After spending an awkward Sunday with Percival, whose drinking did not relieve his gloom, Pauline was delighted on Monday when an apparently cured Ernest, smiling, weak, and handsome, stepped off the small plane on the Arusha landing strip. The three of them spent another day in town, waiting for truck parts, drinking at Luigi's bar, the men telling war stories. By January 24, they were back in the field, camped on the Mosquito River, ready to begin the final month of the safari in pursuit of rhino and kudu.

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Waking in the dark, still weak and thinking maybe not to go out, but after breakfast with the light beginning to break, it all looked

better. Sitting on the hill with M'Cola, Pauline, and Percival, the day heating up as the beaters circle behind the hill, when here comes the rhino, breaking cover fast, heading for the river. "Not awfully good," says Percival, "but we'll shoot him." Three shots at an impossible distance and one snort from the rhino before he's out of sight. Every one running now with Droopy Lids tracking, finding blood, and then we could hear heavy breathing and then nothing but the birds. The rhino down in the grass, dead, with everyone gathered about for the photograph, one of the trackers touching the horn for luck.

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Unfortunately the safari has become a matter of measurements: Ernest's rhino carries a seventeen-inch horn, and Charles's rhino, killed two days later, sports a twenty-three-inch horn. Nothing can change these numbers, not even the magnificence of Ernest's remarkable shot. For good reason, therefore, Percival keeps the two men separated as much as possible during the day, sending Charles off with Ben, the mechanic, and his own trackers while he stands watch over Ernest and Pauline. Much better that way. But there is always the evening rendezvous with whiskey by the fire, where every shot is relished. Charles's trophy heads, somewhat larger than Ernest's, out of sight but never out of mind, color all their conversations.

With rhinos taken, the safari spends two days at Dick Cooper's place near Babiti within view of Lake Manyara's miles of pink and rose flamingoes. There they shoot ducks for the supper table, sleep in real beds, bathe in comfort, and rest for the final push. With less than two weeks remaining before the rains make the dirt roads of the Serengeti impassable, the men turn to the last animal on their list: the greater kudu. Day after day, they rise early to breakfast in the dark, returning weary and late from the bush empty handed. On February 9, they drive all day and part of the next to fresh country around Kijungu where the antelope is said to abound. Lured on by tracks, they hunt in blinds by the salt lick, but no kudu appears. With the men getting testy, Pauline waits with Percival in the camp rather than spending the day in the field with Ernest. On February

11, Charles brings in the first kudu with grotesquely twisted thirty-eight-inch horns; the next morning before dawn, Pauline wakes to see a sad-looking Ernest preparing to leave for the salt lick. Only five days are left for the hunt.

This day's hunt is spoiled by the clanking truck of a short, round little German, who remembered from the mid-Twenties reading the poet Hemingway in a German magazine. Four years later Herr Kortischoner wrote Hemingway, reminding him that he was the man

*you found one day with a broken down motor car, who was a reader of the Querschnitt. . . . You pulled this man out of his awkward situation; he spent two days in your camp at Kijungu, where he met Mrs. Hemingway who kept a diary in which you may find his name.*<sup>61</sup>

On Valentine's Day, Percival sends one truck off with a tow rope to pull Kortischoner and his truck over a hundred miles into Handeni. Meanwhile, Ernest finds one salt lick under water from the now falling rains, another spoiled by native hunters. Back in camp, Pauline feels as despondent as the cows mooing outside her tent. Should have stayed in bed longer, she tells herself.

No kudu that day nor the next, but rain is now falling regularly, slicking the surface of the dirt roads. In another week or less, dirt will be mud, and trucks will be unable to get the safari to the coast. Philip Percival, against best judgment, pushes his luck to satisfy his clients. On February 16, Ernest and his tracker take food and mattress by car into a far salt lick in order to be on the killing ground at first light and all next day if necessary. The morning he leaves, Charles and Ben, who have, for two days, been on their own at another likely spot, kill an enormous kudu. When Percival moves their camp to Kibaya, there are the horns, lovely, long, dark, and spiraling. Sad that Ernest has apparently not gotten his kudu and none too glad about Charles's getting one, Pauline goes to bed early. Thirty minutes later, she awakens groggy to shouting and banging. Dashing out in pajamas, she sees Ernest there in the car lights with natives singing and Percival clapping him on his shoulder. Then she sees the

horns, two pairs of lovely kudu horns and a sable for good measure. The next morning in a group photo, Ben, Charles, Philip, and Ernest kneel, smiling, each holding vertical a set of horns on a still-bloody skull: three kudu and Ernest holding his sable. Ben looks pleased, Philip relieved; Ernest grins. Charles, his face covered by one of the horns, seems to be looking somewhere else. Measurements are taken: the horns of Charles's kudu extend fifty-seven inches; Ernest's measure fifty-one and a quarter. The safari is finished.

Of the antelope family, they killed four Thompson gazelle, eight Grant, seven wildebeest, seven impala, two klipspringers, four roan, two bushbucks, three reedbucks, two oryx, four topi, two waterbuck, one eland, and three kudu. Of dangerous game, they killed their licensed limit: four lions, three cheetahs, four buffalo, two leopards, and two rhinos. They also killed one serval cat, two warthogs, thirteen zebra, and one cobra. Animals wounded but never found included two cheetahs, two warthogs, one eland, one buffalo, and one dik-dik. For amusement forty-one hyenas were also killed. There may have been more but these are the recorded kills.<sup>62</sup>