

ROBERT C. RUARK

has also written

GRENADINE'S SPAWN

ONE FOR THE ROAD

I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS LOADED

GRENADINE ETCHING

HORN OF THE HUNTER

The Story of an African Safari

by

ROBERT C. RUARK

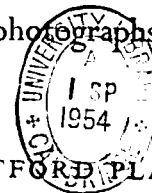


With drawings by the Author
and 50 photographs

HUTCHINSON STRATFORD PLACE LONDON

1954

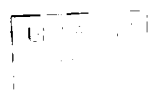
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PHOTOS BY TONY DYER

You have to love the rhino, his horn is so long, and he makes such pretty pictures. The only trouble with him is that he's half blind, mad all the time, and isn't nearly so clumsy as he seems. He turns swiftly and smells well, and if he is as close as he seems at lower right, then he's dead a few minutes later. Else he'd have the photograph of you. It's a thing people don't understand about photography. Somebody had to tell the animal it was time to quit charging, and it wasn't the photographer



started to off-load her, and a couple of them were chopping at the underbush with *pangas*. While they were setting up the tents, we strolled a few hundred 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 thirty feet wide, but it was swift and swollen by the rains.

"Take a look at that bridge," Harry said, pointing downwards 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 on to 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 twenty-five pounds of just-caught catfish strolled by. They said "*Jambo*" tentatively. They said the place was overrun with rhino. *Mingi sana faro. Doumi. M'kubwa 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 fourteen the first afternoon out. Shot a twenty-three-incher no 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 four o'clock you'd have to beat a path through them. We shouldn't be here very long before we collect the *faro* and go up into the hills, about eighteen 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."

We strolled back to camp, which was beginning to look pleasantly like home, with the underbrush chopped off and collected for burning. Katunga had been forcibly inspired by Juma to drag in an immense stockpile of dried logs for the fire. Ali had the cook fire going. Somebody had driven a wooden peg into the soft rough bark of one of the big yellow-mottled trees, and the banana bunch was

swinging happily from the peg. The tents were up. Juma was setting the table, and the canvas water bag was hanging off a wildebeest-horn hook. The bag had bottles of gin and vermouth and beer in it. A baby baboon was peering through a lofty crotch, scolding. Gathiru and Kaluku, the personal boys, were sweating petrol tins of water up from the riverbank, placing them on to a separate blaze to heat up for the *bathi*. Kidogo and Adam were squatting on a blanket alongside the jeep, field-stripping the artillery.

And the mosquitoes and the tsetses. They were there too. In companies and regiments and battalions and divisions and armies. It was mutual-aid hour, the hour before the tsetses knock off and the mosquitoes take over.

"Lots and lots of *dudu*," Selby said. "That's where the river gets its name, of course. I have seen insects all over this bloody continent, but the *dudu* here are incomparable. The tsetses have a special awl arrangement on their bills. They can take a firm grip with their feet and bore through three thicknesses of canvas. All the mosquitoes are four-motored. There are varieties of little squishy, fuzzy caterpillars that roam into your shirt and leave their tread marks wherever they pass. They burn and itch like dammit for a while. Then they turn black and yellow and blue, and then they ache like you've been beat up by the flat of a buffalo's horns. If you are interested in insects, I highly recommend this place."

I learned about insects at Mto-Wa-Mbu, hard by the lake called Manyara. Insects do dreadful things to me. When they bite me I swell. My face puffs, and my hands swell, and they always seem to bite me near to bone. They bite on the knuckles and the frontal bones and on the nose and under the eyes. They get me on the shins. And insects never seek fresh territory once they've staked a claim on my pelt. They bite on bites. And then they rebite the bites they've bitten on the bites.

We were lavish with the assorted mosquito and/or tsetse ointment I had bought, the stuff that Abercrombie and Fitch guarantees repellent to any creature smaller than a crocodile. Our *dudu* thrived on it. They got drunk on it. They whetted their spears on it. They went through layers of clothing like hot needles through vanilla ice

cream. After the first evening at Mto-Wa-Mbu, I was a man no more. I was a walking welt.

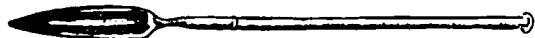
After dinner the first evening, we were sitting in front of the mess tent, washed, full, well-bitten, and just tired enough to dread the fifty-foot walk to the sleeping tents. Harry and I were talking idly of bullet weights versus something or other when he let out a shriek and started to fling off his clothes. He continued to shriek, shed clothes, and leap high into the air until he finally trapped something in his fingers and cast it to the ground, where he jumped on it.

"One of those dreadful woolly caterpillars," he said, and went shuddering, still near naked, off to bed.

"Some hunter," Virginia said. "Scared of an old caterpillar. Taking off his clothes in front of a lady, and him so shy."

"Each man to his weakness," I said. "Let's go to bed. We got a date to shoot a rhino in the morning, and I, personally, am afraid of rhino."

Surrounded by a cloud of mosquitoes—the tsetses had definitely finished—we staggered down the path to bed. Inside the nets, you could hear the mosquitoes banging against the sides like raindrops on a yielding roof. The whine was more drill press than insect, but I turned over and died.



We were up early and excited; at least, I was excited. It was still grey 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-wheel 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 reedbuck 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 underbush. 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 sixty when he came backwards out of the bush."

I could believe it. In that compressed wilderness of malignant growth there would be no place to go except backwards, 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 towards 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 swat 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. We rounded a point where some fishermen had erected a small palm-thatched lean-to, waved at the two scrawny locals who got up to stare at us, and passed through a point that looked exactly like the cedar and live-oak groves that grow, gnarled by the wind,

along the Carolina coast line where I was raised. It had the same shaly beach, the same scrubby trees, the same damp projection of a wetter wood. A herd of impala was gambolling under the grove. They stopped to stare. They were quite tame and moved off slowly. Harry killed the jeep on the point, crawled out, took his glasses, and scanned the shore line. "Nothing that I can see for a couple of miles," he said. "Anyhow, the wind's this direction. and the sound of shot won't carry. It'll be late when we come this way again, too late to shoot. I think you'd best get out and wallop one of those impala. In case we're entirely out of meat."

I took the .30-'06 and jumped out. The impala had worked into the thicker scrub, and the herd kept ambling tantalizingly just ahead of me. I could see the herd ram's big lyre-shaped horns pressing steadily through the bush as he drove his family ahead of him, but his horns were all I could see, and by the size, he would eat tougher than boot. I had all the impala I wanted for trophies, anyhow.

There was a wind-blown tree trunk lying at right angles to its stump, and I crawled up on it. The herd, about thirty or forty does and young ones, was no more than a hundred yards away in the bush. There was a bare place they seemed to be heading for. As they crossed it, one of the several two-year-old rams, with horns past the spike stage but not yet grown into the back-swept wonder of maturity, stopped and looked stupidly back at the herd ram. I suppose he was questioning Papa's right to hurry.

He was fat and pretty and bright gold as he stepped into the open. Balancing like a toe dancer on the log, I held and squeezed at his foreshoulder, shooting down through his back, and I managed to break his neck as he took a step away. He went over with a blat. Adam came running up with Mohammed's knife to make the kill religious, and I have no way of knowing whether the antelope was dead. Adam cut his head clean off and pronounced him fit. We opened him up and tied him to the bumper 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 on 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. Sticking out, farther on, as the inlet came around to another headland, was Majimoto, the hot-water mountain. Steaming 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 eighteen miles from Majimoto to camp. It took us, we learned as days passed, six hours a day to make the round trip of thirty-six 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, fifty or more, hooked up with the wildebeest, and our escort was joined.

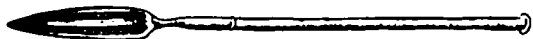
"Bloody reception committee," Selby grumbled. "They'll spook everything from here to Majimoto. If they don't, the blasted birds will."

"This," I said, "is known in my country as public relations. You announce the arrival of the honoured guests. You send out invitations. Then you run around, waving your arms and squawking, and mess 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 issue."

Clouds of waterfowl were rising along the oozy edges of Manyara.

The black-and-white Gypsie 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 clamour, 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.

"God!" Selby said. "What with one thing and another, any rhino worth shooting will be clean over the mountain by now, heading for Yaida Swamp. Look at those goddamned ostriches. They'll run the whole fifteen miles ahead of us, picking up new chums as they go. I don't remember it like this from before."



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 grey anthill.

"Faro," 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. This one's easy enough, so I'm asking Virginia along. Virginia? Care to go and collect a *faro*?"

"Better than that last time after the buffalo," Virginia said. "You left me sitting all by myself in this jeep and when I asked you what to do if the herd came my way, you said, 'Just stand up in the car and it's likely they'll run around you.' Yes. Harry. I will go along to shoot the rhino. Do I take the camera?"

"Sure," Harry said. "Let's go."

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 armour 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 tick-birds'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. Up on the Northern Frontier, Harriet Maytag——"

"Let's not start that again," I said. "Let's go shoot this rhino without any assists from the fair huntress."

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 armour 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. Virginia was just behind the gunbearers, carrying the Cine-Kodak. She looked a little pinched in the face. I noticed I was breathing with my mouth open.

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

"*Manamouki*," Kidogo breathed behind me. "*Moto*."

Ordinarily you don't mind shooting a rhino cow if the horn is good, and quite often the horn is better on the *manamouki* 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. Selby handed his gun back to Adam and took the camera from Virginia.

"Too bad," he whispered. "But the baby's young enough so she

won't charge and leave it. Let's go and take some snaps. You can cover me, if you will. Don't shoot her unless it's absolutely necessary."

The cow raised her head wonderingly. The tickbirds were quiet on her back. The calf nuzzled irritably at her udders. The big stupid face swung back and forth, testing the wind, which was blowing directly at us. Her little pig's eyes blinked weakly. She walked slowly towards us, still questing with her nostrils.

There was a shallow pool of water in a half-formed donga between us and the cow. Harry had walked up to the edge of the water, and the camera was whirring. The rhino didn't like the noise. But she couldn't see us and she couldn't smell us. Harry kept taking pictures. I glanced back at Virginia, and she was following closely, frightened to approach but scareder still to stay behind. We had come to within thirty feet of the old girl now, and she was visibly upset.

All of a sudden the tickbirds hopped straight up in the air. The old girl stuck out her nose and started a gallop, heading directly at us. Her tail was still up. She couldn't smell, but she was fifteen feet from Harry, and she could make us out dimly with her poor weak eyes. Harry whirled through the film in the magazine and pushed the palm of his hand gently backwards. I had the big bead of the .470 resting on the sore spot and was wondering less than idly if the famous rhino ill temper would conquer the mother concern long enough to take this one across that twelve-foot strip of shallow water, in which case I should certainly have to make an orphan of the child.

She made another half pass at a charge and stopped with her feet in the water. Harry was walking backwards now, and out to his left so was I. The old girl muttered, tossed her head, checked her child, slewed off in a half turn, and stood rigidly, looking at us. The baby had come up and was butting between her legs. We walked backwards another twenty feet or so and then turned, walking away but half facing her. After we'd covered a hundred yards Harry handed his rifle to Adam. I gave mine to Kidogo. Harry gave the camera back to Virginia. Virginia was white. A lady rhino looms very large at thirty feet when you are on the ground.

"I knew she wouldn't cross that water," Selby said. "Not and leave Junior unattended. A half-grown calf, yes indeed. But not the baby. Never the baby. Shame it wasn't a good bull."

Virginia was muttering, not unlike the rhino cow.

"Yes, Virginia?" Harry said politely.

"...idiots," she said, with something bitter ahead of *idiots*. "Tormenting mother rhinos and taking me along to share in the fun. If there wasn't any danger, why did I see my husband slip the safety catch on that damned cannon and square off at the lady's neckline when she started to come at us?"

"Pure precaution," I said. "It's an expensive camera. I didn't want Selby to lose it when the foot race started. You know his reputation with rhino. He who looks and runs away——"

"Something about the Duchess of Grafton, wasn't it?" Jinny said. "Except here we'd no brawanches for the young man to send me to climb. Nothing but this lovely ooze."

"Seems to me there was another story about a half-grown rhino chasing this young man too," I said. "All over the bars in Nairobi. Tell me, did you actually ever shoot a rhino?"

"Not if I could run from one," Selby said. "I leave the shooting to the clients. Let's get back in the jeep and see if we can't scare this lady into the bush. We've got to pass where she's standing, you know. No other way to get around the point, and she seems a stubborn sort. Off we go."

We slipped and slid the jeep through the fecal ooze, sticking her once, twisting on our own tracks, and finally coming out just abaft the rhino cow and her calf. She was still standing close to the water's edge, turning her head and testing the air. We came up obliquely in the car, and she picked up the scent and charged a small way, with very little heart in it. Harry swung the car. The wheels squeaked and slipped and slithered on the hardened grey crust of the reeking mud.

"We'll outmanœuvre the old lady," Harry muttered. There was quite a bit of muttering going on. In addition to Harry and the rhino, Virginia was muttering. So were Kidogo and Chabani and Adam. Playing with rhinos in open jeeps is fun if the ground is hard, but the way we were manœuvring there wasn't any place to go

except into the lake if she decided she didn't actually want to take her child back into the scrub.

Harry blew the horn. She swung her head at us again, facing us now, with her back towards the bush. The calf was beginning to totter into the thick low trees. Harry yelled and hit the door with his hand. The cow snorted. She made one more pass and then quit. She turned, rooting the calf ahead of her, and slowly and reluctantly walked into the bush. She gave one last snort and disappeared. We allowed her some time. We allowed her some time because we had to go through the bush she had disappeared into.

"Tricky terrain," Selby said. "Can't have any fun with rhinos unless you work on a terrain you can trust. This stuff we're driving on is suicidal. Never know when you'll stick or stall."

"That's nice to know," Virginia said. "Lead on, warriors, and don't mind me. I don't mind dying of acute rhino horn through the floor board of a stuck jeep. Let's go seek some more thrills, tomboys."

We picked up the wildebeest-ostrich-zebra convoy again and meandered down the shore line. My mouth was watering at the wildfowl. The ducks, black mallards mostly, were as tame as barnyard puddlers. They didn't bother to get up and fly. They just lifted themselves briefly from the water and flopped down again, gabbling contentedly. I didn't say anything about the shotgun. *Lèse-majesté* would be the best thing they'd accuse me of.

We came down under the lee of Majimoto. There was a broad green valley tucked under the mountain's steep side, angling backwards 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 centre, 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 amusement."

He started the car and drove, seemingly aimlessly, towards the general *mêlée*. 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 grunted disgustedly.

"Neither worth a damn," he said. "Young fellows. Neither one'll go better than fourteen 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. Oho! 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 Grummetti buff, and a peculiar reddish-black in colour. 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-coloured."

We looked at the fresh herd. Approximately fifteen hundred 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.

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

"Good God!" said Virginia.

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

The lady with the large child was in obviously 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. Let's have a bit of fun, though, so Mama can take a picture."

Harry used the jeep much as a bullfighter uses his *muleta*, to take the beast past him on quick swerves. The only difference was that we were all *in the muleta*. The old cow wouldn't quit. She came down on us in a fury, with Junior logging knots alongside her, and every time her stubby horn dropped for the uphook at the rear end of Jessica, Selby would spin right or left or put on a spurt of speed and leave the old lady with her forelegs spraddled and her dignity in a frightful state of frazzle. She made one last desperate, vengeful pass, missed us by six feet, and went grumbling off into the bush at full gallop, with Junior right on her tail. The young bulls ceased fighting and took off after her.

I had been bracing Virginia against the windscreen, pressing on the seat of her pants while she sighted the Cine-Kodak. When the rhinos chuffed off, I relaxed and let her slip back on to the cushion. Her face was pale, and you might have scraped her eyes off with spoons.

"Get a lot of good pictures?" Harry asked.

"If you mean close ones, I did," she said. "That old slut had her snout right in the spare tyre a couple of times. Oh, my God."

She turned and pointed the snout of the camera at me. It was still full of the tissue paper with which she so carefully packed the lens to keep it from getting dust-smear or scratchy.

"You're a great photographer," I said. "You forget to point it at the lions, and when we raise you some playful rhinos and buffalo and lay them right in your lap, you forget to take the blinders off that gadget. I wonder you bother to bring it along."

"It is just that I am not used to being charged by rhinos and lions every day," Virginia said with that watch-out-I-am-about-to-be-a-woman-and-cry expression. "God damn it," she said, "you two idiots may be a couple of Tarzans, but it is going to take some time to make a Jane out of me. Stop the car. I got to go to the ladies' room."

"There's a nice bush," Harry said. "Carry on."

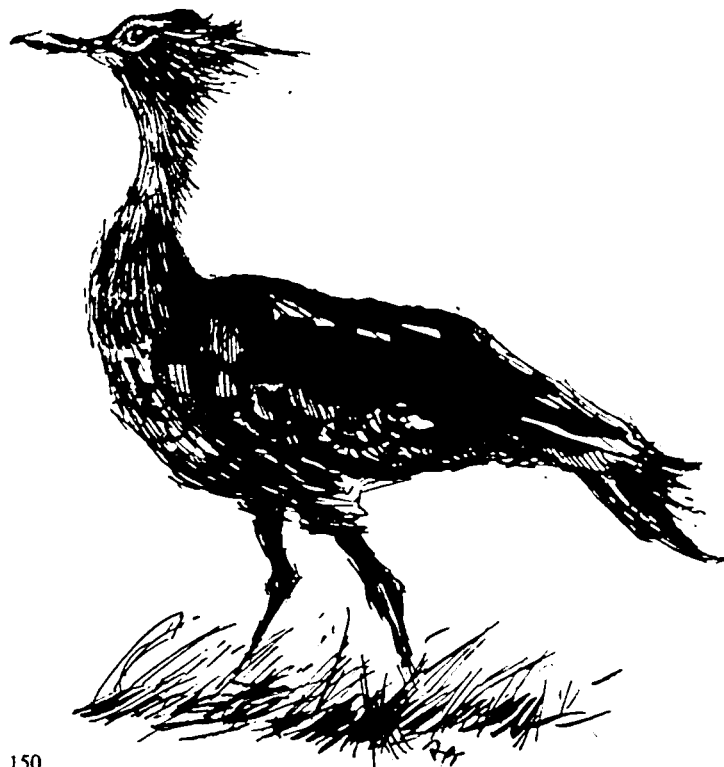
Virginia came back from her bush and we shoved the jeep on towards the point under Majimoto. The ground was soggy. It got soggier. We pushed Jessica as far as she could go. It was about eleven o'clock in the morning. The sun had finally come clearly from the clouds. It was very hot and bright. A small hesitant breeze was blowing, and tsetses 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 with the *memsaab* 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.

A little later I had a message which informed me that a certain amount of intestinal frustration was no longer frustrated. I snapped the .470 together and went off to find my own bush. I leaned the gun against a stone and became a vastly happier man. When I got back to the car my wife was—livid.

"You leave me alone in the car with this Kikuyu zoot-suiter," she yelled. "You leave me alone with no big guns, and you say nothing will happen. I can't shoot worth a damn and Chabani can't shoot nothin'. You send me off behind strange bushes when I got to go, in a place that's lousy with big ugly animals. I see the brave Selby take his gun when he passes through the same kind of bush I go unarmed to the toilet in. And you you—you—you—when *you* have to go to the john, you unlimber an elephant gun and take it with you! This one I am not likely to forget soon. 'Nothing to hurt you, Virginia,'" she mimicked. "'Just go over behind that bush. Don't worry about snakes. It's all right about the rhino. Just sit still and they'll go away.' But my hero takes his gun to his alfresco men's room. Wait'll I tell this around Toots Shor's when we get back. They'll read you out of the Campfire Club."

I calmed her down some and 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 picked up the blunderbuss and cut an eye at the old lady.

"Pray don't worry about me," she said. "I'll sit here in this zoo with nothing bigger than a .30-'06, and Chabani and I will swap recipes until you get back. If you don't find anything more than a few scraps of flesh when you return you'll know I died trying to save Chabani for the Communists to corrupt. I'll just be fine."

"For God's sake stay in the car," I said. "This place is crawling with rhinos. If you need us, shoot a gun. We'll hear you. Try not to hit anything with it, though. Only serves to make 'em angry."

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.

Half-way 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 twenty. The other one fed off into the edge of the bush. But there's twelve or fourteen bull buffalo there, too, and you could use a better buff if we miss on the *faro*. 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 grey 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 twenty 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 scrambled down a drop of thirty-five or forty 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 sixty feet to some jagged and unpleasant-looking granite spikes. The possibility didn't seem to bother him any. Presently he snored.

It was a magnificent day to be sitting on a rock. Manyara was a sheet of tin in the sun. Some crabbed but kindly trees were spreading a little shade on my rock. The breeze had stiffened now into a wind.

I pulled out an ancient copy of one of the gorier Raymond Chandler mysteries, which make wonderful reading for people with a slim library at hand and who drug themselves with words. The best thing about the modern detective story is that no matter how often you read it you never remember how it comes out, and you never know why it comes out that way. All you know is that the private peeper gets slapped silly and kicked in the face, and he is always shooting people in the belly and talking tough. He gets injected with dope and set afire, and the cops handle him rougher than the crooks. And there is always sex rampant and blood all over everything. For a long time there has been a Krafft-Ebing hookup between sex and criminal violence, but the Chandler-Hammett-Mickey Spillane

school just recently became aware of it. In today's detectives each man kills the thing he loves, and as painfully as possible. The over-all scheme is confused, but it saves thinking.

This salvage of thinking is an important new trend in the construction of the modern mystery. There was a time when the plot, though involved, was finally simplified by a rousing denouement, where the detective rounded up everybody in a room, eliminated all the likely suspects, and then turned with a snarl on the butler. The butler immediately leaped out the window, thereby saving the state a considerable sum in prosecution fees and electric current. The detective perforce was free to select a cigarette from his case, blow smoke whimsically from his nostrils, and send down for a dish of tea. The whole operation called for some fancy footwork with the story line and some small logic. You don't need that any more.

I defy anybody to step out of a modern hard-school novel and tell me simply what happened and why. The interlocking killings are always so tangled with the hero's libido, and there is so much necking, wrestling, and whisky drinking between kills, and there is so much cultism, archaeology, politics, abnormality, and frustration wound into the story structure that I am just forced to sit there and enjoy each excursion into sex or slaying as a separate peep show. All I am sure of at the end is that the hero will be battered. He will be standing waist-deep in corpses, and he will be languorously fondling the heroine, who, it seems, is also the villain, and shortly the police will come, take her away, and beat up on the hero some more. In looking backwards, you can never tell why anybody had to die, except for kicks, and you can never figure why the detective didn't settle for one of the earlier mattresses and save himself a whole lot of trouble. There have been no clues and no deduction—just gunplay and erotica.

I heartily approve of this sort of entertainment, because it is so much more like modern criminal-coursing than the old classics of Mr. S. S. Van Dine and the other neat clippers of loose ends. Everything ends in a muddle now, with the wrong people dead, the wrong people in love with the wrong people, the cops beating hell out of everybody, the obvious suspects slipping free to kill and kill

again, and innocent maiden ladies being coerced into conversation with rubber hose and matches under the fingernails. It is lifelike in that, after it's all over, nobody knows why or how, and when it ends on a sour note—well, hell, doesn't everything?

I was immersed in some wonderful dialogue that went briefly like this: "Sure, I loved her. But a private eye don't play it the way other people play it. I kissed her once, hard. I could taste her blood on my mouth. It tasted like saltiness. Then I threw her off the cliff. She bounced once and quit. Then I poisoned myself with another slap of Scotch. It tasted like iodine. I could feel it telling me that things were waiting for me to do 'em. They were weeping to be done. So I reached for the chopper. It felt sweet in my hands. I cut Joe in two pieces. I didn't like the way Pete's good eye was looking at me, so I shot it out of his head. I made Mike a present. Nine new navels. Then I went home. I belted myself over the head with another club of Scotch. It tasted like quinine. I set a fag afire. It tasted like old rags. I went to bed. It felt like a rock pile. But I was tired. It had been a busy day."

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 that made his shriek of the caterpillar incident seem a muffled squeak. He came off the rock, standing straight up, and seemed to soar upwards some thirty feet. He was white and trembling.

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

"God!" 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."

"You're a brave man," I said. "I have seen you go. But you have the leaping fantods when you run against an insect or a tired little snake. I don't get it."

"I don't like oysters, either," Harry said. "I'd rather take on a wounded buffalo in thick bush than one of those woolly caterpillars. As for snakes, I might remind you that while there is an anti-venom

kit in the jeep, the jeep is a touch better than two miles from here."

"I see your point," I said. "I beg your pardon."

We sat for a long time, watching the 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 four 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 that peninsula and maybe put up one of the rhinos on the other side. It's an old elephant wallow, and the *faro* 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 twenty 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 twenty-five 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 forty-eight 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 as 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 thirty 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 on to your weapon. This grass ahead is pretty thick, and we might jump something out of it."

I have mentioned a leg. Since they rechannelled the blood stream in it and removed certain essential portions of it, I have competed for no marathons. Selby runs up and over mountains for fun. He walks through marshes for fun.

This was a cute marsh. It was mostly of sword grass, which will take off a finger cleanly if you grasp it correctly. It was eight to ten feet tall. There were portions of this marsh in which the water came

armpit-high if you missed a stout tussock and your foot slipped. For two more miles we walked, swam, and crawled this marsh. The sun, hotter around four than at noon, was a brass ball. Sweat rolled down my face in solid sheets, blinding me. I staggered, fell, caught myself, crawled, pulled myself semi-erect on stalks of grass, cushioned my headlong plunges by falling with the rifle across my body. The Westley-Richards .470 double weighed about eleven pounds when I entered the marsh. It weighed two tons when we came out of the muck and water into just plain elephant grass, fourteen or fifteen feet high, and as nice a covert for rhino or elephant as you're likely to see. A cow buffalo snorted at close hand and scared me witless. We conquered half a mile of this terrain and came to the shore with its hard ground and rocky shale. Harry climbed a tree and looked long around him. He saw nothing. We walked inshore a few hundred yards and found an old elephant trail which, by our stooping under the low-hanging branches, made quick and comfortable walking back to our big boulder at the point of Majimoto.

We caught a blower at the bottom of the boulder and smoked a cigarette. I looked rather reproachfully at Harry. He looked a little apologetic.

"I really didn't think it would be that bad," he said. "But certainly I'd never have taken you into that elephant grass if I'd not been reasonably sure that at this time of day, at this season, the elephants wouldn't all be up on the side of the hills in the shade."

There was a crashing in the bush some five hundred feet up the hill and a few hundred yards to our left, between us and the long two miles to the car. There was more crashing, some squeals, and the thin trumpet of a displeased bull elephant.

"You see?" Harry said. "In the hills."

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.

"Back there a bit," he said. "I saw you start and look at

something. And then hurry a bit and come along. What did you see?"

"Nothing much," I said. "Only a cobra. 'Twasn't a very big cobra."

Harry squawked. "Why didn't you——"

"I didn't want to bother you," I said. "I know it would only upset you. Anyhow, at this season and at this time all the cobras are up in the hills with the elephants. This one was a little overdue. He was heading for the hills."

Actually it wasn't a cobra at all. I was just feeling a little mean. It was only a very few seconds later that one of the gunbearers let out a yip and jumped about five feet in the air, backwards. This time it was a cobra. I presume he was heading for the hills, like I said.

We were pleased to get back to the car, where the *memsaab* had obviously not been eaten by the fauna. She had sandwiches and Cokes and water. I don't suppose I drank more than a quart of the water.

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 tsetse wounds started to smart and ache and throb again. The plovers screamed like banshees 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 *kanzu* was beautiful. Even old Katunga as he came up to take the dead impala for skinning was beautiful, snaggletooth 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.

The next morning when Gathiru roused the *memsaab* she threw the *chai* cup at him and in clearly enunciated, beautiful concise words announced that her aching bones would remain in the sack, and that the Brothers Rover could go and hunt rhinos all by themselves.

This we did. We hunted them just as hard for the next two weeks. The days began at five and we crawled into camp at ten. We saw in that time some twenty-eight 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 five. 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 mungu,*" 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 Kiteti 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.

over the dwindled end of the escarpment, we came upon a small herd of kongoni, newcomers and tame. I walloped a young bull, and now everybody would eat hearty. The Tommy was for the white folks. The black folks got the kongoni, who was big enough to last at least three days, and the spur fowl we would save for the chop box, for lunch. We wouldn't have any more noise for a little while, anyhow.

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 twenty-five 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. Whoa!"

He stopped the Rover and screwed up his eyes to peer at the knobably green-and-granite hill on our right.

"Looks to be a rather decent steinbok up there," he said. "He may be all we'll have of this area. Better get out and do for him. Use the .220 Swift. It's plenty big enough. *Toa* .220, Kidogo."

The Nandi gunbearer handed me the vicious little gun, which I hadn't touched since I abused the hyena with it. I crawled across the track, sat down in the usual nest of thorns, and picked out the little fellow where he stood, poised like a corny table lamp, his four tiny feet jammed together on a rocky *kopje*. He melted into the side of the hill like part of the foliage, and you could barely see him without the scope. I held on what seemed to be his shoulder. The bullet made a soft whap and he jumped straight up off the rocky

knob. That's the last I saw of him. We toiled up the hill and found a clump of neck hair. There was no blood.

"I hate this bloody gun," I said to Selby. "It's bewitched. I was cold on that little beast. And don't tell me that I shot under him because I was shooting uphill. That's neck hair, off the top of his neck."

Selby shrugged. We got back into Jessica and drove on. We had gone possibly ten 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, "*Faro*." 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 three thousand yards away. That Kidogo had seen him at all was miraculous. The green valley was studded with grey rocky outcrops and pimpled with thousands of anthills, each one of which looked exactly like a feeding rhino at a distance. This *faro* was browsing under the lee of a little red, black, brown, white, and green hill. They have very picturesque hills in Tanga.

"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 twenty-eight 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 twenty 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 the 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 go 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 wallop 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 a hundred 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 faro. 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 hoof-prints the size of ash-can covers. There was plenty of new dung, and clear marks of his wallowing. The outlandish hoofprints led off towards 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 neighbourhood with feet that big. If he fits his feet, he's as big as an elephant, and he's got to be at least forty 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 backwards to counterbalance its weight. He had been in no hurry. He had used his own deep-worn trail. You could see the shattered clay uptossed 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 belaboured him in Wakamba. For our benefit they translated into Swahili. What they said roughly was that somewhere in those thickly interlaced bushes was the father of all rhinos, a great beast to see but one who unfortunately had been born without testicles. *Doumi-manamouki*, they called him, bull-cow. They mentioned in passing that he lacked the courage to find another female, and that, unlike all the other rhinos they knew, only this one would scurry off to hide instead of charging out like a full warrior. They accused him of *mésalliances* with topi cows. Adam called him a Nandi heathen. Kidogo called him a Mohammedan Wakamba. Then they both threw rocks. He didn't bust out.

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 how 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 rumpled 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 *faro*. 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 *faro* got lost.

We turned up late for camp again. Later than we'd planned. We stopped off at the Indian *ducca* to buy some cigarettes and have a beer to wash the lava dust loose from our throats and got hooked up with a local farmer and his Canadian house guest. They were feeling festive.

"If it's rhino you're after," the local said, "you must stop and pay a call at my farm as you go up past Ngoro-Ngoro again. My fields are simply teeming with the creatures. Buffalo, too, any amount. And elephant. Come and shoot over the farm a few days."

Selby put on his mysterious, displeased, wary-of-strangers look. Later he said: "Best never to have anything to do with these farmers. They see one rhino a year and make it into an epidemic. They hear an elephant in the bush and make it into a herd. All you ever get out of visiting anybody is headaches. You'll sit around and yarn all night long over a bottle of your whisky. They'll smoke all your cigarettes and then call you a boulder in the morning if no animals show up for you to shoot. It suddenly becomes your fault that the elephants tread down the mealies and the rhino breaks into the fencing. Let us bid these gentlemen good night and be vague. Else we'll have the whole bloody lot for dinner."

We drove down towards the camp, and as we went past the whore-house a familiar-looking native was running down the track, his khaki streaming in the wind, with some giggling girls coursing after him. We gave the fugitive a lift and foiled the pursuers. The fugitive was Chege, the lorry driver, the dude, the ladies' man. He was escaping with his virtue. Or else he was escaping without his virtue and without having paid for the loss of it. We didn't ask him. We just scooped him up and took him home to dinner. The fires glimmered beautifully in a small and jewel-like way as we approached Mto-Wa-Mbu. The butterflies fluttered before the headlamps. You could smell Ali, the cook, at work half a mile down the road. The big anthill on the right smelled like bread in the oven.

"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 twenty years aback. 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 twenty-seven 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. I had sent them after cakes with candles. They were short on candles but long on cakes. They had bought out the Indian's candle store. They had two candles and about twelve cakes. Ali had made one. Juma'd bought eleven more, of all shapes and sizes. They all tasted like browned sawdust with lard frosting. Birthdays are an unplumbed art form in Tanganyika.

The dinner was fairly festive. The *mem* had had Juma hard at

work on her coiffure that afternoon, and she showed up blonder and tighter-curled than usual. We had the ripened Tommy chops—Tommy had been dead a whole day—and we had stringy duck and some exotic bland canned goods from the Indian and a lot of Danish beer with the dinner and a lot of brandy after. Harry blew out the candles and manfully strove to eat the rubbery cakes, and then we had a ceremony. I summoned the faithful—Adam, Kidogo, and Chabani—the brothers in frustration. I was going to make a big gesture to celebrate Harry's birthday.

Juma was the custodian of coin, so I went and collected seventy-five shillings from him and fetched the faithful. We had been attempting an experiment of weaning the black brethren from their expected harvest of money every time the *bwana* shot something of woofed and warped celebratory stuff. That kind of free-handed dough-throwing can louse up a camp's morale, because the hunters are finally hunting for pound notes, and a lion is no longer a lion. He is bakshesh to the crew that collects him, and this sours the cook and off-browns the personals and curdles the rest of the camp. We had decided to pull a switch. I wrote the speech and Harry rehearsed it in Swahili.

Adam and Kidogo and Chabani came, like dutiful subjects awaiting the dub, and crouched by the fire. Harry dipped into my hat, which was resting on the mess table, and took out handfuls of silver. He blessed each boy with twenty-five shillings each. I am afraid that Harry was a little shikkered on his birthday. What he said was fulsome. This is roughly what he said:

"Oh, you bloody *nugus* and direct descendants of *nugus*. I am hunting with an insane Yankee *bwana* whose brains have been boiled to porridge by the sun and whose reasoning has been unhinged by a severe shortage of shootable rhinos. His kidneys now dwell under his armpits, due to punishment from Jessica, the jeep. He has hunted unavailingly for a fortnight, and now he makes a supreme gesture to prove that all Yankees are completely mad. He wishes to give you money for nothing.

"As trackers you could not follow a gut-shot hippo through the lobby of the Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi. As scanners of the mountains you could not see a greater kudu if it had radio antennae on its horns.

Under your care the guns rust and the bullets fly falsely due to leaving too much oil in the rifle barrels. A wounded dik-dik would send you all into hysteria, and I doubt very much if any of you could conquer a female guinea fowl in single combat.

"But for some strange reason this *bwana* thinks you have worked hard and hunted well for the last two weeks, although meat in camp has been short and all we have shot for trophy is *shauri mungu*. Although we have no rhino horn to sell to the Indians to make them look longer at women, although we have seen no *beisa oryx*, although nothing has happened at all worth remembering, this *bwana* wants to say *asante sana* for the effort you have put forth.

"This *bwana* has rewarded laziness with money. Lack of ability he pays for in pounds sterling. Bad luck he celebrates. He does not curse or kick you at the end of a day in which nothing happens but boredom. He is a very simple *bwana*, but he is not a *bwana* who wants me to shoot it or for you to lie about it.

"So you will be kind to the *bwana* in his madness, and you will be goddamned appreciative in your actions or I will take the toe of me boot to you all. He rewards you for nothing in the deliverance; he pays you for lack of performance. Twenty-five bob each the *bwana* gives you for what he calls in his strange language the good old college try. This is a new kind of *bwana*, and I warn you. If you don't drag your behinds into the ground from now on to get the *bwana* what he wants, you will all be left to starve with your whorish wives in Nairobi next trip out. Come get your money and say thank you."

Harry turned and looked at me.

"This'll completely bewilder 'em," he said. "They're used to the odd bob when you kill something big and difficult. They're used to drunken clients throwing money all over the camp. But never before have they ever been paid for *not* accomplishing anything. Being bonused for effort instead of delivery is a new one in the book, and they'll probably just accept it as white man's madness. But on the other side, they may start to think and wonder a little bit about what manner of man they've got here, and if they even have a germ of thought you have bought yourself a faithful retinue for a few lousy bob."

Harry was right in his latter estimation. A man who paid for intent instead of meat on the block was completely new to simple thoughts. Thus incentive pay came to Tanganyika. The only trouble was, thereafter I had a hard time getting the kids to quit at all. They wanted to work all night as well as all day for the peculiar *bwana* who showered shekels for muscular activity, with or without horns to sanctify the sweat.

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 on to the hardpan again, and cursed him and went back four or five miles to the car. We headed for the top again and came on to 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 hind-quarters 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 four-hundred-yard minimum. Have you ever noticed that nobody ever kills anything out here that wasn't a measured four hundred 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 desperation 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 *bwanas* 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.