

The Hunting Park

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October 20, 2899 CE

"Why do they call you 'white hunter'?"

I smiled but didn't grin. "It's anyone from somewhere else who conducts hunting for sport in Africa. I was born in Confinement Asteroid and raised in Ceres and Tahiti." He was wondering about my skin, of course. The parts he could see, hands and face, are jet black, from moderately black American ancestry subjected to three decades of raw sunlight in space and in the islands.

"Odd," said the kzin, but he waved a big furry hand, claws sheathed, dismissing the subject. Waldo had ordered hot milk with black rum; he slurped noisily. I'd ordered the same. He asked, "Why is it taking so long to arrange a safari?"

"First rule is, everything takes forever when you're gearing up. When you're out in the field, everything interesting happens before you can blink. That's when you find out what you forgot to take."

We studied each other. Waldo was big for a kzin, maybe five hundred pounds, maybe eight feet four or five inches tall. No chairs here could hold him; he squatted in a cleared space in a corner of the restaurant. His fur was marmalade, with a darker stripe diagonally down his chest and abdomen that followed four long runnels of scar tissue, and a shorter scar, also darkly outlined, that just missed his left eye and ear. A thong around his neck held a few leathery scraps: dried ears, I presumed. He kept his claws sheathed as carefully as I kept my lips closed. You don't show your teeth to a kzin.

I hadn't volunteered for this. What sane person would? It was October of 2899 CE; I'd hoped to celebrate my fiftieth birthday next year, when the century turned. I planned to quit the safari business and write.

Then again, who could turn this down? They were paying twice the going rate in Interworld stars, but that was nothing compared to the publicity value. I was wearing some recording gear. We'd have

the whole safari on tape, right up to my death, if it broke that way, and my daughters would hold the rights. If I lived, I'd have a tale worth writing.

Waldo was examining Legal Entity Bruce Bianci Bannett, a tall, long-headed black human male forty-nine years old, with yellow tattoos around the eyes and ears that make me look just a bit like a leopard. I guessed what else he was looking for, and I said, "I don't have any really gaudy scars except for the tattoos. It's because I'm careful."

"I should be glad of that. LE Bannett, our permissions still haven't come through, and I see no kind of a caravan forming."

"We'll have our permissions." This trip I wouldn't even need bribes; the United Nations had spoken. "I'm having trouble getting bearers."

"Offer more money?"

"Money isn't as powerful an argument here in Nairobi. I think they've lived too long with governments that can just snatch it away. They're all a combination of socialist and bandit. A good story, that's a lure, but a man only needs one fortune and one good story.

"But traveling with... there are four of you? With four kzinti, that's bad enough. You're not using guns?"

"No, not on a hunt. On a hunt we use only the *w'tsai*. You, though, you'll take a gun?"

"Several."

"Do not shoot another hunter's prey," Waldo told me.

"My point was, bearers would usually count on all of us, me or any of my clients, to shoot a, say, a leopard before he gets to the bearers. But there's only one of me, and you—you can't *throw* a *w'tsai*, can you?"

Again Waldo waved sheathed claws: a shrug.

"So it's not even a spear. I've hunted with natives who use spears. They have a point. A spear doesn't jam. So my bearers would risk you not being fast enough to save them, plus anything you might do in a rage because you missed your prey."

"But we have these," Waldo said, and I saw his claws, three or four inches long, exposed only for a moment. "Not just the *w'tsai*."

"What do you want out of this, Waldo?"

"Wave Rider and Long Tracks and I, we are brothers," Waldo said, "part of *Starsieve's* crew. *Starsieve* seeks treasures of the cosmos using ship's instruments. I operate the waldos, of course, the little hand-and-jaw-guided robots. It can be very dull work. We seek an adventure out of the ordinary here on Earth. Kashtiyee-First has been our teacher and First Officer under Prisst-Captain. Both would gain honor if we three gained partial names."

Names are important to kzinti. Most bear only the names of their professions. "Would this—"

"It would help. A hero's hunt is the story that defines him."

"What do you want to kill?"

"What have you got?" he asked.

"Not much. The Greater Africa government is solid Green. They tell me what they can spare. Some species are grown beyond the limits of the Refuge." I fished my sectry out of my pocket and tapped at it, summoning the current list, just in case it had changed in the past two hours. Sure enough— "Cape buffalo is off the list. If a Cape buffalo charges you, you hope you can duck. Elephants are out, of course. We can have a lion... or all the leopards we want. Crocs don't offer much of a trophy, but again—"

"Why are the, rrr, Greens so free with leopards?"

"We used to think leopards were scarce, even endangered. They're not. They're just shy, and really well camouflaged, and they're everywhere. If a lion turns to human prey, he's generally got a reason. Maybe he's hurt his mouth and can't hunt anything difficult. But a leopard, he kills for fun. Antelope, zebra, man, woman, whatever turns up," I babbled, and suddenly realized— "Of course none of that might apply to kzinti."

"What are the rules for kzinti?"

"Nobody's got the vaguest idea. We might not catch anything. Your scent might drive them all away." Waldo didn't smell

unpleasant; just really different. "Or bring everything in from miles around. Kzinti have never hunted on Earth."

"More's the pity," Waldo said lightly.

October 31, 2899 CE

Waldo is the one who speaks Interworld. The other three have translators, and I carry one built into my sectry. In Africa everyone speaks a different language, but with kzinti involved—I'd better buy a spare.

Wave Rider and Long Tracks bear wildly different markings from Waldo, though they're near as tall and about as massive. Wave Rider's a darker marmalade with no noticeable scars; he keeps his sectry open a lot, reading whenever things turn slack. It's Singapore built, with oversized keys. Long Tracks is sheer yellow, barring minor scarring close to the eyes and a missing ear. He wears a thong with one ear on it. Kashtiyee-First is smaller and older, brown and orange marked with a lot of white. No thong.

We've packed everything on floaters. Floaters go almost anywhere, but there are places where we'll have to carry everything. These kzinti will be carrying their share and the bearers' too, because we've got no bearers.

I don't worry about their stamina. Most of the kzinti-occupied worlds have Earth gravity or higher, and my clients look tough. They can port their own weight, but will they? Will they follow orders? I always worry about that. There's no sane limit to what a man is likely to do with a charged gun.

But they aren't men. Should I worry about those blades? In a kzin hand a *w'tsai* looks like a long knife crudely forged. In mine, it's an overbuilt sword. If they started swinging wildly—well, we'll see.

They've brought more medical gear than I'd expected given their macho background. It looks like equipment from a ship's infirmary. From *Starsieve*, of course. Where on Earth would they get kzinti medicines and stretchers? Kzinti forces never managed to invade Earth, not in any of the four interstellar wars (plus "incidents") that ended more than two hundred years ago.

They carry antiallergens and diet supplements. Earthly life doesn't quite fit their evolution.

Guns and ammunition: well, those are all mine. I can't carry everything I might need. One of the kzinti might have to be my bearer, but first I'd better test them out a little. It can turn sticky when the bearer runs up a tree with your gun.

Food: I've packed oranges and root vegetables and dry stuff. We'll make do with less cookware than usual, some canned goods, sugar, flour, condiments and so forth. That's all for me. Clients eat mostly meat, and we shoot that on the trail. Kzinti eat nothing but raw meat. I'll be doing all the cooking.

And of course I'm carrying nine kilos of sensory equipment spotted over my head and body: cameras, sound, somasthetic, scent.

Cape buffalo are back on the permitted list. I'll get them one before the Greens pull him off again.

November 3, 2899 CE

Three days into the brush. We camped by a river. It's low and yellow, and we're filtering the water. The kzinti drink a lot of it. I'm not carrying booze. It's hard on me, but I don't want *them* drinking.

Wave Rider wants to know why it's taking so long to get anywhere interesting. I waved around and told him to pick out a transfer booth for me. Long Tracks laughed at him, teeth showing. I've never seen a kzin's killing gape. I hope I can recognize the difference in time.

In fairness to Wave Rider, there are a few transfer booths out here, and we white hunters tanj well know where each of them is. They're big enough to pass a mini ambulance. We use them for medical emergencies, including veterinary work. I usually don't tell clients about them.

* * *

Waldo's been attacked by a lion.

He was sleeping outdoors. We set up a palisade, of course. I pitched my tent not too close so that I can cook without their complaining. Smoke my pipe, too.

I was updating my log when I heard the yowling. I got out there, armed, and barely glimpsed the lion smashing out through the branches of the palisade. I fired and got no joy of it.

Wave Rider's right front claws are bloody, but so's his ear, torn half off. He swung at the lion and scored, and the lion swung back, then kept going. But Waldo looks worse. The lion was stalking him. It found him asleep and attacked in a lion's favorite fashion: it tried to bite through the kzin's skull. Do that to a man, the prey barely twitches and the lion can just haul him away.

Waldo is big and the lion may be smaller than usual, though he sure didn't look it in mid leap in the moonlit dark. The beast's fangs didn't get through Waldo's skull. They tore off half his scalp. Waldo came awake with a screech, and I expect Leo had never heard anything like that.

I used antiseptic on both injured. They put up with it, but Waldo assures me that Earthly bacteria have little interest in kzinti. Waldo's half-scalping is the subject of much merriment.

November 5, 2899 CE

We're looking at a herd of Cape buffalo, maybe a hundred. The buff have made a nice comeback. "Once upon a time they were near extinction," I say.

Kashtiyee-First asks, "These are herbivores?"

"Yeah, grass eaters, but they're not rabbits and they're not puppeteers—"

"LE Bannett, we're familiar with oversized herd beasts who charge in numbers."

"How do you handle them, LE Kash?"

"Run. Hide. Climb rocks or trees. How shall we approach these? We want only one head."

"Right. Now that you've got the scent we could maybe track down a rogue. Or— How about that old bull grazing off to the right? We get his attention—"

"Yes, approach using that channel as cover. Was that once a stream?"

"Yeah. Will be again."

Kashtiyee-First speaks to the others. They move off on all fours and low to the ground. I'll stay where I am, on high ground. If a gun's needed, I'll need to see why. And never shoot a kzin's prey. And while I'm holding my secry to make this recording, I'll just check the lists.

Tanj dammit.

Stet. First I tap the open code. Answer, futz you! I can barely make out motion, but they've nearly reached the old buff. Their sectries must be buzzing—

Now there's motion. It looks like the kzinti are fighting each other.

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And it's night, and Kashtiyee-First may be dying, and it's been one strange day.

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I ran toward the kzinfight, but I zoomed my specs too. I was clear on this: I sure didn't want to get between two kzinti in a fight. If I saw the wrong thing I might want to run the other way. I'd already marked the best trees.

Too many kzinti? *That* wasn't a kzin! It was a she lion, and another, and a black-maned male, all dancing with the kzinti. The lions were bigger. That dry riverbed had been good cover for lions, too. Now Waldo and the male were in a wrestling match, rolling over in the dust. Claws and *w'tsais* swung. The male lion wrenched loose and turned tail, and the old buff charged straight into the fray.

Waldo dashed after the lion.

Kashtiyee-First saw the buffalo just in time to face its charge. He swing his *w'tsai* overhead and split the bull's forehead just between the horns. The bull kept coming. I saw the kzin officer bowled over, lost to view.

The lions were in full flight. The buffalos gathered their strength, seven or eight bulls in front of the pattern, then cows, youngsters in the center.

Long Tracks answered my call. "We're busy."

"Don't kill any more buffalo. They're off the list."

"Repeat. The rest have to hear." He turned his volume up.

I stopped near a mopane tree, nearly winded. "Buffalo are protected again. Kashtiyee-First, you killed in self-defense, but it ends there—"

All seven adult bulls charged.

At least the lions were gone. The kzinti began dodging, weaving, leaping. Wave Rider was on a bull's back, then off again. I'd got up the mopane tree somehow, and I watched, gun ready, license forfeit if I fired. The kzinti didn't seem to be in trouble. It was a dance, it was a wrestling match—what was Kashtiyee-First doing? Running backward, easing out of the fray, headed toward my tree. The others saw and imitated him, leading the angry males further and further, until in ones and twos they gave up and rejoined the herd.

Then Kashtiyee-First collapsed.

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I want to call for an ambulance. The kzinti won't have it, not even Kashtiyee-First. The old bull gored him deep on that first charge. The horn left an oozing hole in mid-torso, between Kash-First's crisscrossing ribs, below the lung. The other kzinti are tending him. Antibiotics into the wound, a little microsurgery around major blood vessels.

Kashtiyee-First says, "You must know better than to interrupt a hunt or battle with a cellphone call." The others weren't even speaking to me on that point.

"The United Nations wants this hunt to go right," I tell them. "I think they put pressure on the locals to get you a buffalo. But the locals don't like pressure, so they pushed back. I'm in the middle. Anyway, we'll keep the heads." The male lion, too. Waldo killed it: tore its intestines out with his feet. He gets the head. Long Tracks got a nice gouge from one of the buffs. So far so good, unless Kashtiyee-First dies.

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November 6, 2899 CE

Kzinti are impulsive.

Laughing at them would be bad.

Long Tracks jumped a porcupine. Just quick dumb reflexes, I guess. One of my cameras caught it. We've spent half the afternoon pulling spines out of his face and one hand. Come dinnertime, I'll go off by myself to cook. Laugh then. Otherwise I'm gonna die.

* * *

November 8, 2899 CE

We've been eating well. Under the Greens the veldt is in wonderful shape, much as it must have been a thousand years ago, in Rudyard Kipling's time. Besides lion and buffalo we've found and killed impala, capybara, some small stuff, and two hyena (which I did not eat). And leopard.

Leopards are usually unexpected. I hadn't seen any spoor. I've been armed at all times because the gun I carry is the only gun in the whole party.

We were watching a wonderful sunset, all of us. I must have heard something. I turned around and a leopard had launched itself at my throat.

I lifted the gun and I'd probably have got it up in time, but Wave Rider leaned way out and caught the leopard by the skin over his shoulders and swung him in an arc. I didn't fire because I would hit Wave Rider, and then because Wave Rider was winning. Then I saw the second leopard, so I shot that one, two for luck. What the hell, none of the kzinti had claimed *him*.

Wave Rider was juggling a yellow whirlwind; when he couldn't stop it clawing him, he just fell on it and then bit its face off.

The twenty-gram bullets were those I'd picked for buffalo: big. My trophy is pretty badly messed up. So's Wave Rider's. We're keeping the ears.

I didn't eat leopard; I shared it out. I didn't taste Waldo's lion either.

Wave Rider has some nasty scars. Waldo seems to like his well enough. The kzinti keep passing the mirror around, and Long Tracks is grumpy because he hasn't been touched, barring tiny puncture wounds like bad acne. I wish I hadn't brought the mirror.

Kashtiyee-First shares a float plate with several heads. He can stand up but he can't walk. He doesn't complain. The wound hasn't putrified, and he can use the great outdoor catbox without it killing him. The wound looks clean.

The other float plate still has room for my gear and food.

They're talking about taking an elephant.

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November 9, 2899 CE

I showed them elephants. I didn't have much choice: they scented the spoor themselves, so we tracked a herd of sixty. Now they've got the scent.

The kzinti killed a hippopotamus today. Fighting in water is not their thing, and there were crocs about, but the hippo was up against kzinti mass.

They're jubilant now. The hippo fed us all. I like hippo. As usual I ate apart so they needn't smell roasted meat.

I joined them afterward. I tried to explain that elephants were *never* on the Green list. It isn't that they're endangered, not any more. But their brains are as big as human brains or bigger. They haven't developed lawyers, like the cetaceans, but they've got some tool-using ability. They may well be intelligent.

That doesn't impress Waldo. Futz, his forebears used to hunt humans. "UN law does not list killing of elephants as murder."

"It's the African Protectorate that can throw us out. It would end the safari. Have you hunted enough already?"

I wish I hadn't said that. What if they decide yes?

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November 11, 2899 CE

Morning, not yet dawn. They're gone, all but Kashtiyee-First. I'm surprised.

I'm surprised that they got away without waking me. They must have gone around midnight, in silence. I already know how well they see in the dark. I can picture them crawling off, bellies brushing the earth...

Kashtiyee-First won't tell me anything. So I tell him. "Thing is, if my clients kill an elephant, they might be exiled but not jailed. You have diplomat status. Nobody would really blame the white hunter for what *these* clients might do. I might even keep my license."

"That is good. No kzin would blame us either. The lure is too great."

"So all you'd lose is the next week or so of hunting. Still, I've got to track them. They're my clients, and they don't know elephants."

"Are these tree eaters dangerous?"

"Beyond description. They've got *mass*."

"You're bluffing, LE Bannett. Elephants have never been on your permitted list. You never hunted them. You only know what you read. History books. Wave Rider has a sectry, too." And he laughed, though it hurt him.

I scouted around before I left.

The three took only their *w'tsais* and water bottles: at least I taught them that. I wonder if they expected to sneak *back*? Before I wake? On any normal safari I'd be up at four AM to prepare for the day's hunt. These days I've been dogging it a little: kzinti don't need breakfast and don't need the day's gear set out and explained to them.

I found something disturbing. A lone lion lay up in the brush near us. It must have had a good view of the camp. For a couple of hours last night I was asleep and alone but for the injured Kashtiyee-First. Where is it now?

I offered Kash-First a rifle. His finger won't fit into the trigger guard, but his claw will.

I've gotten here ahead of the hunt. It's a little past dawn.

They haven't attacked the herd. They're not that crazy, I hope. They have the scent; they tracked the herd. They found the same traces I found later without the help of a kzinti nose. A rogue, an injured bull has been living on the fringes of the herd.

I'm recording him now. Somehow he's torn off a tusk right at the root. In my mag specs his face looks infected. The pain's turned him rogue. He looks alert and nasty, and he's scented something weird, but he might not understand the danger. Kzinti scent is nowhere in his species' memory. It's just different, and different is dangerous. So he's backing away, sniffing the air.

Now he's heard them in the brush. They're trying to circle downwind, moving fast enough to make mistakes, and now he's running, and here they come. He's faster than they thought—just lumbering along, but so *big*. They're sprinters, the kzinti. Maybe he'll tire them.

I don't have a hope of catching him or them. I've jogged up a hill and I'm using my mag specs.

They're on him—two of them. Waldo didn't get there: he ran out of breath. The two are slashing, slashing. Jumbo is bleeding. Showers of blood, tens of gallons, brilliant red in the sunlight. Long Tracks and Wave Rider are dancing into the blood. Even lions don't play like that. I'm thinking of erasing this tape.

Then Jumbo's trunk catches Wave Rider and sends him spinning. Long Tracks jumps at Jumbo's neck. Jumbo's head whips around. The one tusk catches Long Tracks and flips him over. Jumbo charges Wave Rider. I can't see much through the grass, but it looks like Jumbo is stamping on Wave Rider. Then Long Tracks chops at his feet with the *w'tsai*, and Jumbo goes after Long Tracks.

Long Tracks is running. Jumbo is spraying blood. Waldo gets there and joins the attack. One swing of Waldo's *w'tsai* and the trunk flies loose, another and Jumbo goes down. Tries to get up and fails.

I've had my rifle sighted on Jumbo for all this time, and I haven't fired. One day I'll wonder if it's because kzinti are mankind's old enemy. I think not. They're clients—but they're clients who

positively don't want their guide attacking their own personal prey. And I'd better get down there and look at Wave Rider.

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Wave Rider's heart is still beating. The elephant stamped him into fudge, breaking ribs and limbs and internal organs. I'm not a doctor, but I know enough: Wave Rider won't live if he doesn't get to a hospital.

"The nearest transfer booth is forty kilometers away, if it's working. You never know with the Greens. I can summon a mini ambulance," I tell Waldo.

Waldo and Long Tracks are arguing about Jumbo's ears. Long Tracks just growls at me. Waldo says, "We will not cry for help."

"Stet, but we can take him in ourselves. We can get to the nearest transfer booth by forced march. We'll make a stretcher out of Jumbo's hide. You do the carrying. Kash-First can meet us. Take us the rest of the day."

Waldo and Long Tracks agree. Nonetheless they're in no hurry. Waldo gives up his claim: he attacked late. One big blanket of elephant ear goes to Long Tracks; from his thong it drapes like a cloak. One goes to Wave Rider, for his funeral if it breaks that way. They eat several pounds of elephant meat and pack a lot more. It's clear we won't reach the transfer booth today. I phone Kash-First and tell him what's going on. He agrees to meet us with the floaters.

The stretch of hide holds Wave Rider. He hasn't wakened, and that's both good and bad. He isn't screaming, but his snoring sounds tortured.

Kash-First zeroes in on our path. He's walking, not riding a float plate. The kzinti use their medical techniques on Wave Rider. We get Wave Rider onto a float plate, giving up some of my supplies. This will embarrass the poor kzin if he lives.

* * *

Rain starts near noon. We're wading through tall grass and mud, our strongest fighters burdened with a stretcher. If anything attacks us I'm going to shoot it, and to hell with what my clients think.

Dark catches us twelve kilometers short of the transfer booth. I'm using my secry's mapping system. They're prepared to keep moving

at night. Idiots. I set Waldo and Long Tracks to making a fence, over a lot of grumbling; they've worked hard today.

I claim a slab of elephant liver and another of muscle meat. I'm famished. I flash-cook them with the microwave. The kzinti don't complain, though we're camped together, between the float plates. They don't want to be alone, and I don't either.

* * *

November 12, 2899 CE

It's the same lion. I barely saw it, but I know. It came out of the dark in one long leap, arced over one of the float plates and had Waldo. He shrieked. The lion dragged him into the grass and would have been gone if I hadn't swung a light on him. I'm trying to hold the light with one hand and pick up a gun with the other, but Long Tracks is after him and blocking my shot. I jump on the float plate for a better view into the grass.

The lion turns to fight. Long Tracks swings one good swipe and then the lion is on him. They're wrestling; Long Tracks may have dropped his *w'tsai*. I can't see Waldo.

The lion wrenches loose and I have a clear shot. I fire at a point just behind his shoulder.

The lion goes down.

* * *

"Nothing in my secetry lists the lion as a cursorial hunter," says Kash-First.

It's dawn, and we're moving. Waldo's dead. Wave Rider is still breathing. He's swollen and discolored over most of his body, and his ribs bend inward where they should not. Kash-First is lucid and walking. His voice has a breathy, painful hiccup in it that doesn't get through the translator.

I'm not in the mood for a fight. I tell Kash-First, "Every hunter knows of a lion that stalked someone for days at a time and killed him at the last."

"Even I can't tell you that this one had a different smell. But do you *know* that this is the same lion that tore up Waldo's scalp?"

And stalked him ever since, until last night's kill. "Who else? Any other lion would take Wave Rider. Wave Rider couldn't defend himself. Lions are lazy. Waldo could fight back."

"He didn't have the chance."

"No." This time the lion bit into his skull and dragged him forty meters before Long Tracks caught him. My bullet tracked through one lung and his heart: a good shot.

Of course the trophy head won't be worth any more than the rest of our heads, which are all going to be ruined because the kzinti want the ears. We've got the holograms, though.

Long Tracks offered me one of the lion's ears. He claims the other himself. He won't talk to me.

* * *

And it's over.

We reached the transfer booth in four hours. We were at the Nairobi Spaceport just that fast, with access to *Starsieve's* lander's surgery ten minutes later. I pretended to help get Wave Rider into the cavity, but truly, he's too heavy for me.

"Take the ear," Kash-First said through his translator. "Long Track won't forgive you if you don't. You used your own familiar weapon in a personal hunt. He'll see that soon or late."

"How are you?" I asked.

"I can use some medical attention." But he has to wait. He's plugged into the peripherals, but he'll need the intensive care cavity when it's through with Wave Rider.

I said, "It was not my intention to lead you into such a disaster as this."

He shrugged, and winced. He sits bent over around the puncture wound. "A fusion bomb can kill any number of elephants. We use the *w'tsai*. Killing is not the point. Kzin against the elements, that is the point."

Truly, I agree. But maybe I've missed the point myself. There was an accident—

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An hour after we set out this morning, we were trekking into a gully. Kashtiyee-First was on the float plate that held Waldo's corpse, guiding the other that carried Wave Rider, and they just floated over the depression. Long Tracks got disgusted with my slowness and sprinted up the other side to meet his companions. I wondered if I was hurting them by slowing them.

They waited in a copse of trees. They were talking as I approached. They hadn't noticed me. My translator began picking up their speech.

Long Tracks: "It would be as easy for LE Bannett to die as for Waldo, or you. This insanely dangerous land could take him at the last. A lion?"

Kash-First: "Your teeth don't leave the same marks as a lion's."

I stopped thinking about revealing myself. I used my mag specs to watch Long Tracks pick up the lion's head. He clacked the jaws a couple of times. "Bite him with this."

Kash-First said, "LE Bannett has kept every promise expressed or implied."

Long Tracks was silent.

Kash-First said, "Recall why we came. We can hunt anywhere. Have we learned more of the human state? Can we give Prisst-Captain any hint of what our ancestors faced, to be so battered and humiliated in war after war?"

"Fool's errand. We have had only one human to study. He is far from typical. He kills as easily as we do, and revels in it."

"Yes, the human is not interesting. But the rest? What of Africa? Do we finally know the horrors this species faced in the ages before it expanded across its world?"

"Ur?"

"And then came back to hunt."