The Hunter and the Hunted

Richard Johnson

Although the ride to Kimberley was a jolting one, the scenery was beautiful. Mountains were painted distantly on a sky of deep blue, and every color of the spectrum shone vividly in the sunlight. But Jake's car was a constant distraction from the scenery, for every half hour or so we would have a puncture or the radiator would boil. Hot, tired, and very dirty, Jake and I arrived in Kimberley ten hours after we had left Capetown. We finally found lodging for the night in the rear of a tavern. Jake carried my things in while I inquired about Henry Kingsley, owner of a trading post which furnished guides and supplies for lion safaris. My friend and old ship-mate, Charles Crocker of Capetown, had given me his card to present to Kingsley.

After breakfast the next day, I looked him up and settled on the fee for the fourteen day safari. After bickering over a price, the robust gentleman then turned to the door and shouted something in a dialect. Turning back to me he said, "You will leave for the lion country in two days, but before you leave I want you to meet your gun bearer and guide."

At that moment a black giant entered the office. The Negro, wearing nothing but a breech cloth, rose well over six feet five inches in height. His physical appearance was nothing short of overwhelming. His shoulders and arms were enormous and beautiful to behold. The taper of his chest to his waist revealed his excellent physical condition. A cat-like grace was apparent in every movement of the sleek, rippling muscles. I sat fascinated by the man. Kingsley blurted, "A splendid beast, isn't he?"

The Negro surprised me by speaking in clear, unbroken English. "Thank you, gentlemen. May I sit down?"

Kingsley said, "Mr. White, this is your guide and gun bearer, Indigo."

The Negro smiled. Kingsley then went on to say that Indigo was the best tracker in Africa, but a little too brave for his own good. The Negro smiled again.

While Kingsley detailed jobs to Indigo which had to be done before the safari could start, my eyes surveyed the giant once more. I was going to like him. Kingsley finished with: "That is all, gentlemen; you will leave in two days."

I rose from my chair and walked from the office. Once I was outside the office Indigo said rather shyly, "You go to your place and make things ready for the safari."

"Very well," I said, "I will see you in two days." I watched the fluid movements of his body until he was out of sight.

The first two days on the safari had produced nothing for me but a sunburn and two antelope shot for camp food. Indigo kept repeat-
ing, "Be patient, Mr. Ed. We will find a lion soon." The third day passed, and it got hotter. The fourth and fifth days passed with nothing to remember except the heat and the suddenness of African nightfall. Six days from Kimberley, Indigo and I found a zebra partially devoured. Indigo said excitedly, "The zebra is not long dead, the lion is close by." My blood quickened, and, much to my dismay, I shook slightly. Indigo went back to the main group and returned with a dog of nondescript pedigree. Upon reaching the zebra's carcass the dog began a staccato bark and ran into the waist-deep grass. Pointing to a tree Indigo said, "You go over there under the tree and wait; the lion will come that way." As I made my way to the tree, ten or twelve of the bearers began to run through the grass yelling and beating sticks together. No sooner had I reached the tree than the lion came into view. Automatically, I raised my rifle to shoot, but I could not. Perhaps it was the sudden resemblance of the lion's savage beauty to Indigo's. For twenty seconds or more the lion stood motionless, sniffing the breeze. Finally, he turned and ambled off into the tall grass. Only then did I pull my rifle down.

Indigo's voice surprised me, "Did you see him, Mr. Ed?"
"No," I lied. "I didn't see him."

Indigo then stated prophetically, "He will be easy to kill; his belly is so full his ears are dull. We will kill him this day."

After a light mid-day meal Indigo cleaned my rifle. The rifle did not need cleaning, but Indigo insisted on going over it once more.

"Do you like that gun?" I asked.
He replied, "A gun like this does not miss. I shall buy one when we return to Kimberley."

I stood up and said, "If you like the gun it is yours."

Instantly, Indigo's chest swelled with pride. "I will pay you for the gun."

"No," I replied, "it is a present from me to you." I offered him my hand, and he clasped it warmly.

Indigo threw the lion dog a piece of meat, rose from his seat, and said, "Come, Mr. Ed. We are going to kill a lion."

We had walked three or four miles from camp when the dog began to whine and tug at his leash. Indigo turned to me and whispered, "We are down wind of the dead zebra; it is the zebra the dog smells."

Not quite two hundred yards farther the dog began his staccato bark. Indigo turned him loose and motioned to the bearers to follow the dog. He was going with me this time. Now I felt sure he knew I had lied to him. We both walked to a slight rise of ground which was barren of tall grass; but all we saw was the kinky black hair and gleaming chests of the bearers, who were making an ungodly racket. Suddenly, the dog stopped barking, and the Negroes disappeared as if by magic.
Indigo whispered, "The lion will show itself soon now. Be ready and do not miss the heart."

My eyes scanned the clearing, but I could see nothing. Indigo poked me and whispered again, "I see his head over there."

First the head became visible, and then the lion sprang ten feet or more into the clearing. Indigo said calmly, "Let him turn broadside to you and aim behind the foreleg where the bone sticks out." I nodded and brought my gun to my shoulder, sighting carefully on the spot directly behind the foreleg. Hesitation gripped me. For a full half-minute I held the sight and then squeezed the trigger. At once the lion roared, jumped and twisted into the air, and landed on his back, then lay very still.

Indigo jumped up and ran toward the lion. Just as he was putting his foot on the lion's side for a victory yell, the lion rose from the dead. Sunlight reflected from Indigo's slashing knife as he screamed for help. Once again I put the rifle to my shoulder, took careful aim, and emptied the magazine into the lion's body. Now both the lion and my friend lay very still.

As I reached Indigo, his breath was coming in short gasps; his once proud body was now maimed beyond belief. At my first sight of him, my immediate thought was to turn and run, but I could not. Instead, I got my first aid kit out and sprinkled sulfa powder on the exposed bowels and on the torn stump of his right leg. From the extent of his wounds, it was apparent that Indigo could not survive. Only then did I recall Kingsley's statement, "He is the best tracker in Africa, but a little too brave for his own good." And then I saw Indigo's smile of pride.

**Tide**

Carolyn Crowner

The night is blacker than usual, or maybe it just seems to be. The clock on the night table reads 2:00 A. M. Could it be just an hour since it said one o'clock? Its ticking gets louder and louder in the tortuous stillness, but its hands move slower and slower. Each distant sound echoes through the still blackness: an occasional cry of misery, or the hushed whispers of the nurses as they efficiently perform their duties. I wonder how many others up and down the lonely corridors are wide-eyed in the darkness, and I wonder what they're thinking. In six hours the doctor will come, and I'll know my fate. Why can't I use these long but precious hours to make plans for my family in case the verdict is negative? Or, if not that, why don't I reminisce about a lot of things? Why do I go over and over it?

A cottage on Pemaquid peninsula and, most important, a boat. I had dreamed all my life of owning a cottage and a boat on the rock-