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The flight plan from Livingstone airport in Zambia followed the Zambezi River downstream from Victoria Falls to land on an airstrip every bit as smooth as the dirt ones on New Mexico ranches. From the air, a few villages of cone-shaped thatch roofed huts appeared reminiscent of Jungle Jim's old movies. We might have passed over one road and did see a long bridge crossing from Zambia to Zimbabwe.

Dr. Livingstone assured His Majesty's Government that the waters below Victoria Falls were navigable to the Indian Ocean. The famous explorer was believed until he returned to the Zambezi outfitted to navigate the river. So the story goes from the Museum lecture, Dr. Livingstone cut across on land the first trip, fabricating the part about reaching the falls by water. On the next expedition, rapids and boulders blocked his path, infuriating him to the point that he kept hammering the prow of his boat into a rock embankment.

The airstrip was an hour and 45 minutes from camp over a winding, brushy road. However, our time was extended by a broken fan belt just as night closed in over the forest. Stranded on the dark of the moon in African bush tests a man to see if he is frightened of the dark. We had already seen more lions than on the rest of the trip put together.

Sitting in the darkness in the open-topped Rover, the grunt of the hippopotamus resounded over water like the heavy brass section of a symphony orchestra. Closer by, a pack of hyenas cracked the bones and ripped the hide of an

elephant carcass in an eerie tune of favorite menu of these fierce predators.

Embarrassed by the delay, the driver began to make calls, causing the lady on the back seat to order him not to bring the animals closer. I recalled that in the Namib Desert, after a guide assured us the snake he held by the tail was dead, this same woman laughed and said, "I know all about snakes. My mother and her sister charmed snakes."

So I knew if she was scared, it was time to start worrying.

Once in camp, a water buffalo bull blocked the trail going to my tent. Two of us were given flashlights to flick around in the bush and left alone in the Rover. In the 30 minutes we waited, I counted 56 shadows resembling a charging cape buffalo and 24 shadows the shape of a stalking lion.

No other experience matches awakening at dawn on the bluffs overlooking the Zambezi River, so eager to be off on a drive that you throw on your clothes. Hippos plunging off the banks 200 yards away, launching dirigible-like bodies to float and wallow all day. Hippo bulls opening their mouths as wide as the hood on a Peterbilt truck. Muddy buffalo bulls grazing cross stream, visible in the dim light from the white egrets perched on their backs.

On the right, water bucks big as mule deer trotted to water. Fish eagles landing in easy range forced blue herons to rise over the water. Baboons stopped and spun around on

their posteriors to check for a weak spot in the defense of the camp. (Baboons are vicious camp-wrecking bandits. Unafraid of women, a big male dropped down in a lady's open-topped bathroom and destroyed her toiletries. I gave the camp manager a choice whether to tell the truth how baboons are controlled around such avid animal lovers, or to allow me to guess. He studied the question and replied, "Think in terms of a sling shot.")

One the morning of my birthday, the 17th of June, my friend asked what I'd like to see most before leaving Africa. Without pausing, I replied, "A large herd of elephants." In less than an hour, our Range Rover parked in a breeding herd of 200 elephants. All around, alert mothers and innocent baby elephants grazed. Babies so small they hadn't learned to use their trunks to put food in their mouths. Babies so small they walked underneath the mothers, dragging the flanks with their backbones.

Lauren's Vader Post wrote in his book *Far Out Places*, "I don't think there'd be a plant or animal in Africa that wouldn't be relieved to see the last human." Parked in the Rover, the dominant female swung her head to express her fury at our presence. The most chilling moment, however, came when a huge bull circled us to the right, charged from behind and trumpeted within 40 steps of the Rover.

As he halted, I shot a quick photo head-on of his ears flared in anger. Pulses beat in my body, motored by surges of adrenaline. The Rover lurched forward to safety. After

escaping, I felt exactly like I had the night when the Long John horse fell in the railroad pens, and in the scramble to retrieve his footing, my boot came loose in the stirrup...