

CLOSE ENCOUNTER

with Lions

— LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #34 —



This is a young male, without a mane, and still showing some spots.

It was Russell who was after a lion and we had hung baits in many places but hadn't seen any lion tracks. Late in the safari, and a few days after the full moon, it was suggested that Russell and his PH might walk in on one of the baits after the moon came up and sit for a few hours, in case something came in. The other PH had a varmint call, and I suggested that they take it along and perhaps do some calling.

For this bait, they had set up a ground blind – a simple, three-sided affair facing the bait across the arm of a small lake. There were two chairs, but no back side to the blind.



In this part of Zimbabwe, giraffe are often used for lion bait.

The trail that led to the blind had been swept clean of leaves and sticks, so they could walk in quietly and possibly sneak up on lions feeding. They snuck in ok, using the light of the full moon, but there was nothing there; so they sat down and waited.

The PH had nonchalantly leaned his rifle up against a tree behind the blind and positioned Russell's rifle on a rest pointing at the bait – and actually tied it in position.

After everything quieted down, the PH set up the varmint call and turned it on. Of course it made a horrific sound, designed specifically to call varmints. In retrospect, perhaps the speaker should have been positioned nearer the bait, than the hunters.

After a few minutes, for whatever reason, Russell looked back over his shoulder and saw three lions coming up the trail they had just walked a few minutes before – two females and a male. He poked the PH with his elbow and told him there were lions behind them and to shut off the call. The PH

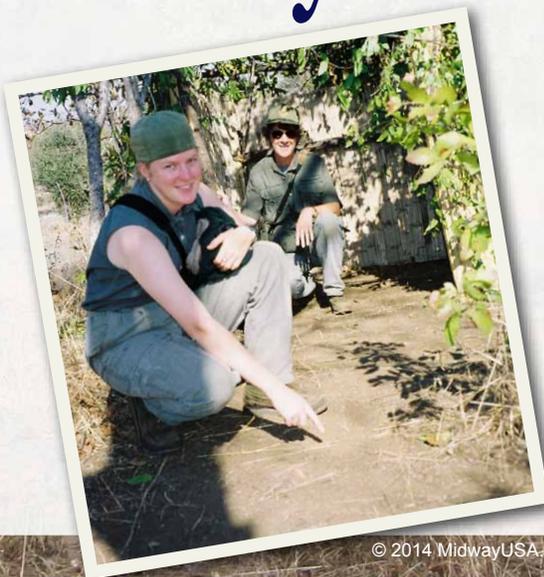
“...it made a horrific sound...”

couldn't find the on/off switch, but was able to turn the volume to its lowest setting. The female that was in the front stopped two steps from the back of Russell's chair. Russell still shivers when he tells this story!

The lions stood there for a while, then laid down for a few minutes. When they got up, they circled the blind a couple of times, until they discovered the bait and went for it. Russell shot the male lion, which was a fitting end to the story.



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Zimbabwe, Africa
12 July 1997



Sara points at the closest track with her mom and the blind in the background.