

LEOPARD in the SUNSHINE

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #56 —

There was a time, many years ago, when some people thought leopard were nearly extinct; but this was before they came to understand that it was only daylight sightings that were rare – you see, the leopard hunts at night. So this one, in mid-afternoon, was quite unexpected.

We had just descended into the top end of a roadless and dry river bottom, planning to follow it for a few miles looking for buffalo. Lumbering along in the safari car, we came upon a small herd of sable and stopped to watch -- more for a break than anything else, as the bull clearly wasn't a shooter. I began looking around and caught a glimpse of what looked like a small lion moving through the scattered brush, about 175 yards behind us. The PH got a quick look also and pronounced that it was a leopard, not a lion – just before it disappeared in the brush.

As the leopard went out of sight, the PH noted that he had a varmint call and asked if he should give it a try. "Of course!", so we bailed out

and set up in the shade of a small bush near the safari car. It sounded like the distress call of a rabbit, caught up in some life-ending struggle. We called for only a short while and out of the brush came the leopard. Slowly he walked our way, stopping on occasion and sitting on his hind legs for a few seconds, whenever we would stop calling. When the squealing started back up, he would come again. It was cat and rabbit for several minutes, as he closed the distance. The safari car was in plain sight and we were concerned, but he was walking straight into the late



I swapped the 375 H&H for my Winchester 1895 in the 405, as we walked up on the dead leopard.

afternoon sun and the car never caught his attention.

The kill zone on a leopard is probably only six inches wide, as he faces you straight on, so we allowed him to keep coming. I was in the sitting position with the scope on him the whole time

**"Slowly he walked
our way..."**

and at 125 yards I was comfortable with the shot --the PH gave me the green light. The hold was good and the 300 grain Partition was effective. I swapped the scoped 375 for my open-sighted 1895 Winchester and we walked up to confirm the kill – a leopard in the sunshine.

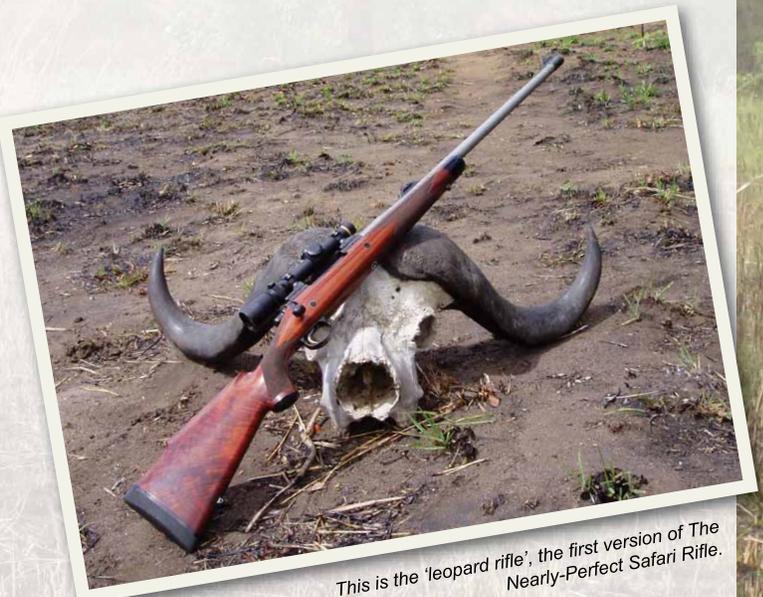
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The Selous Game Reserve
Tanzania, Africa
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We were watching this sable when I looked around and saw the leopard behind us.



This is the 'leopard rifle', the first version of The Nearly-Perfect Safari Rifle.