

A Dose of Africa

by

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Grass: green, yellow, straw. Such quantities of grass; it overwhelms, it hides great beasts and creates great worries. He scanned the plain. His brow was comparable to the foothills of Mount Kenya, wet with the tropical pour.

Peter disliked the heat emanating from that sphere, that perfect sphere of flame. Well, no: nothing was spherical to exactness, nothing is exact. Maybe. But he could imagine, if he were closer, the sun an eye: its golden iris like the yolk of the most organic egg.

Quick, was that a sound?

Difficult with the length of the grass to differentiate grass from beast. From here he could see nothing but a Sand Grouse . . . a Superb Starling?

Ha: the colour of the starling was so bright; actually all life forms were dazzling here.

Imagine, say, imagine if an eye was there: green for a leopard, black for a lion. In amongst the high grasses it would be nigh impossible to spot.

A giraffe! Look!

But Peter didn't. His eyes, pinnacles, trapping as much light as possible stayed on lookout, a little feverish.

It was only a giraffe. He'd seen them before: large yes, but decidedly passive.

Silence. A noise? Surely . . . a hippo? It will be far away. Peter reflected on his nerves: frankly terrible, fragile and beyond reason.

The shadow of the tree makes the oddest shapes: he could imagine it was a hyena, yet it wasn't, was it? No, it was something else, something that reminded him of the garden:

The sun a beauty, a gem. But that was not significant, Victor remembered; it played only a minor role, a chorus, which added a touch of bliss, of nostalgia to his memory: wisteria on the walls . . .

Francis: their guard, a comforting angel, lank, skinny, stood from his hidden perch, stretched his ectomorphic limbs. Peter watched him, his head on his pillow. Francis moved to the steadily decreasing wood-pile and picked and placed a piece on the fire. When he loped back he was silhouetted a giraffe; when he crouched by a tree he resembled a cheetah.

Or was he a cheetah? Was he metamorphosed in the firelight to a cheetah?

The fire was embers now: glowing, pulsing. 4.00am. The sun had not quite risen.

Peter's face was a pit of adders, a piece of parchment, with hollow eyes: ruby red, sore, pus yellow. They were like two moons: milky with a sour venom that lapped about the surface of his sockets, danced into craters, stung.

Perhaps he was Judas punished by Lucifer. What for? For his weak brain whose walls were easily infiltrated by anxiousness, by irrationality which wreaked havoc?

Not like a metal bullet through the brain, no, too fast; instead like a bullet of inky truffle which melted and dispersed on its penetration. Comfort slipped his hand round Peter's neck; its ebony fingers tapped a soft rhythm on his chest.