

BEAST

Written by

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Universal Pictures
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Rogue (noun): A large wild animal having savage or destructive tendencies.

OPEN ON: *

Grass. Waves of it. We're low. Stalking, as if a predator. *

A distant GROWL. We push forward, the grass sways, the growl intensifies. Something's out there. *

As the sound crescendoes--we emerge from the grass to reveal: *

The grill of a 4X4 pulls into frame. The engine cuts. A boot squelches earth. *

Two MEN step from the TRUCK. One grabs a rifle. Behind them, the moonlit SAVANNAH. *

EXT. THICKET - MOMENTS LATER *

The men move cautiously through tangled Marula trees. Only the sound of their footsteps. Then the CRACK of a branch. Both men lower to a knee. Listen. *

Labored breathing, beyond the tree-line. The leader motions. *

LEADER
Sala, sala. *

His PARTNER nods. They stay low, sweating now. Reveal: *

In a CLEARING. A FEMALE LION. Agitated. She is eight feet from hip to jaw. 300 pounds. Her leg caught in a SNARE TRAP. Even still: *

There's a phenomenal presence about her. Acknowledged in both men's eyes. The leader raises his rifle. Pulls the hammer. CLICK. *

Her attention whips towards us. The leader fires. THWAP. A TRANQ DART. The lioness jolts, staggers, falls. *

The leader breathes relief. Hands his partner the rifle. They enter the clearing as: *

We CUT BACK to another POV. Something is watching them. *

ANGLE ON: The leader, crouched beside the animal. He releases the hinge on the trap, pulls the dart, checks the animal's teeth, underbelly--comments-- *

But we focus on his Partner, kneeling, listening-- *

A RUSTLE is the grass. Partner pivots, eyes the darkness. *

PARTNER

Je, umesikia jambo hilo?

Leader shakes his head. *No, I didn't hear anything.* Partner stands anyway--raises the rifle. Steps towards the shadows. Eyes searching. Then that RUSTLE again.

He stops--listens--until:

WHAM. He's hit from the side. Partner almost screams.

Then realizes. Leader has him by the arm. Grins.

LEADER

*Pata Kamba.***EXT. TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER**

Using ropes affixed to the lioness's legs, the two men heave the animal into the bed of the truck--

While Leader secures the ropes, his Partner jumps down--

Taps a cigarette from his pack. Glad to be done. He steps away. Puts the cigarette to his lips. Raises the lighter. VPPP. CLICK.

But it never touches the cigarette. A CRACK to his right.

ANGLE ON: The Leader as it happens. A MASSIVE SHAPE rips through frame. Leader turns. But his partner is gone.

LEADER

*Abduya?**(he stands, listens)**Abduya?*

Silence. He jumps down from the truck. Calls once more. Nothing. Grabs a flashlight. Scans the terrain.

Moves away from the vehicle.

LEADER

Hii sio ya kuchekesha?

Suddenly he kicks something. Looks. The man's expression. Oh. My. God. Then we see what he does:

A BLOOD SOAKED SHOE. Abduya's foot is still in it. And the grass beyond...

Like someone sprayed the Savannah red.

But it only gets worse. A deep, guttural, snarl from behind. *

Leader is almost too terrified to look. He slowly turns. *

But we only see the horror in the man's eyes... *

He BOLTS. Back towards the thicket. *

The Marula trees lit in bursts of swinging light. Branches whip his body. His face. And then: *

SNAP. DRAW. The man is ripped off his feet, as if grabbed by something... The flashlight tumbles. *

But it wasn't something--his own fucking SNARE-- *

He pries at his leg. Blood oozes. The monster is coming. *

We can hear it, feel it. *

Slowing as its prey has been immobilized. *

The man struggles in ungodly terror. But it's no use. So he crawls. Desperate. Until: *

The chain draws tight. And now he knows. Apoplectic with fear. He turns. *

A shape enters frame. Something massive. The last thing we see are the MAN'S EYES before the entire screen is obscured by the monster.... *

Though we can still hear him SCREAM. *

We hold. Then from the darkness one word emerges: *

B E A S T

FROM TITLES: *

EXT. AFRICAN SAVANNAH - DAY *

Gliding above the plains of Central Africa. Dark storm clouds curl against the bluest sky. *

A BUSH PLANE drops into frame. *

INT. BUSH PLANE - SAME

CLOSE ON: A silver WEDDING RING spun between fingers. Pan up to NATE SAMUELS, early 40's, reflected in the dusty window. Handsome, glasses, professorial if it not for the three day stubble.

PILOT (O.S.)

Coffee?

The PILOT is local--accented British-Afrikanese. A thermos with an extra tin cup. Nate considers--

NATE

Yeah, thanks--

He sips. Grimaces. Strong.

PILOT

First time to Zambia?

NATE

No. Not mine. But... Sleeping beauties back there--

Pilot looks towards two girls. Dead asleep in their seats.

The one with the headphones is JESS, 13. Awkwardly trapped between the girl she was and the woman she'll become.

The other is MEREDITH (MARE), 17. Honor student, UCLA bound. She snores softly.

PILOT

They seem very excited.

NATE

(smiles)

New York to London, London to Johannesburg, Johannesburg to Lusaka.

PILOT

And Lusaka to the bush. I have three daughters--I would not travel halfway around the world alone with them. You're a brave man.

Nate smiles again, reflexively slips the ring back on his finger. Then:

PILOT

Look here, off to out right--

In the near distance--ELEPHANTS emerge from a tree grove---

PILOT

Let's have a look, shall we?
(nods back to the girls)
Maybe we wake them up--

He grins, dips the wings--banks down so the elephants begin to run--Nate marvels--

As they glide alongside, the animals close enough to touch.

PILOT

They say God may visit everywhere
else... but he lives in Africa.

CUT TO:

EXT. TARMAC - LATER

A strip of graded sand. Chickens cluck on the tarmac. Pan up as the bush plane descends, scattering the birds.

JESS (O.S.)

I'm not saying I'm disappointed.

MOMENTS LATER

Nate helps the pilot unload luggage from the rear of the aircraft. Jess, still groggy, sits on a silver roller bag.

JESS

I'm just saying it's kind of anti-climactic when you step off the plane and the first wildlife you see are chickens.

They're back, clucking at her feet.

NATE

Yeah, but they're African Chickens.

Mare, knelt over her CAMERA BAG, half smiles, half rolls her eyes. Busy fitting a lens onto a beat up Nikon--

PILOT

Sometimes the Cape Buffalo sleep here--
(mimes the plane)
We must circle for hours until they wake up.

Nate grins, pulls the last bag from the back, glances at Mare.

NATE

What do you think, kid?

She stands. Lens fitted. Pushes her dark curls back.

MARE

I think it's an airport.

But her tone betrays the comment. A dream come true for her. Evident as she turns away. Takes in the air, the sky, the cracked-stucco building that serves as:

INT. TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER

Large fans pump air through the building. Makeshift vendors sell everything from sodas to "authentic" tribal masks.

Nate and Jess sit on a bench. Nate's head back. Eyes closed.

JESS

You sure he's coming?

NATE

Not really, no.

A joke. Mostly. He smirks. Tousles the hair on her head. She ducks away, as he looks towards:

Mare, who peruses the vendor stalls. Plastic animals, wood carvings, postcards of hippos and lions.

A car horn draws her attention. Nate and Jess too.

EXT. TERMINAL - DAY

A white RANGE ROVER, scraped and bush-worn, approaches in a swirl of dust. Nate emerges, pack slung, followed by Jess. Squinting in the sun drenched plume.

The man who steps out is MARTIN BATTLES. White. South African born. A bushman through and through. Nates grins-- the men are long time friends.

MARTIN

Umefanya, brother.

They hug.

MARTIN
How are you, *bruh*?

NATE
Good, man. Good to see you--
(stepping back)
You remember, Jess.

MARTIN
(to Jess)
Howzit, kiddo.

JESS
Hey Uncle Martin.

MARTIN
Look at you, girl. Last time I saw
you--

Indicating with his hand--a toddler at most. She smiles,
shy, there's the child, but only for a moment. Martin's eyes
travel past her--

To Mare. Pack, camera. Just walking up.

MARTIN
Meredith--

MARE
Just Mare--

MARTIN
Right. Wow. All grown up, both of
you--

The girls have that shy we know you but we don't vibe.

MARTIN
Alright, then.
(with a grin)
Welcome to the Luangwa.

As he helps with their stuff we hear:

MARTIN (O.S.)
It's the tail end of the wet
season.

INT. ROVER - MOMENTS LATER

Martin drives--Nate shotgun--Mare and Jess in back. The
latter watches the grass and the marula whip past.

MARTIN

--tourists haven't descended on the park just yet.

JESS

Is it true that the reserve has termite hills as big as houses?

MARE

She's literally dog eared three guide books.

JESS

Annotated.

MARTIN

It is true. Small houses though.

Martin glances at Nate, grins.

EXT. MARTIN'S HOUSE - LATER

A two story colonial, built nearly a century ago. Thick foliage surrounds the property like walls. An open air garage filled with mechanics tools, a half built motorcycle.

The Rover pulls in and parks. On Nate as he steps out. Takes the house in.

NATE

The place hasn't changed at all.

MARTIN

No, we're the only ones who manage to do that.

With a grin--

INT. MARTIN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Nate and the girls follow Martin inside. A unique mix of old world and bachelor pad.

MARTIN

Bedrooms are upstairs--

(points)

That's the kitchen, parlor, and in here--

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Once formal, now forgotten.

MARTIN

I'd guess you'd call it storage.

Dusty boxes. Framed photos and art stacked against walls.

MARTIN

I spend most of my time on the
reserve, so--

Mare looks back, but it's Jess who responds:

JESS

Like... Collecting shit?

NATE

Jess.

JESS

Sorry.

She's not. Martin throws Nate a look, grins.

MARTIN

Mostly I look after the animals,
sometimes the people--

Mare picks up a tribal mask--

MARE

What is all this stuff?

Before he can answer--

JESS

Mare. Look.

A framed photograph. Jess wipes the dust.

JESS

It's mom--

She hands it to Mare. Black and white. A woman in a cotton
dress, standing on a deck. This is Hannah Samuels.

MARTIN

(to Nate)

You remember that?

NATE

It was our last trip.

Nate, early 20's, leans against a wood railing, grinning at Hannah.

JESS
You're so young.

Jess beams at her Dad. He returns the smile. It's Mare who catches the heartbreak behind it.

MARTIN
And that Mare--

Indicates the small bulge in Hannah's tummy. The emotion from both girls is palpable.

MARTIN
Is you.

Mare looks at her Dad, then Martin.

MARE
You took this?
(he nods)
Where?

MARTIN
I'll show you.

They follow him--

MARTIN
I know the house isn't much--

He unlocks a french door, top then bottom--

MARTIN
It's falling apart faster then I
can put it back together, but--

He pushes open the doors to reveal:

EXT. HOUSE/DECK - CONTINUOUS

Two chairs on the peeling porch. That same hand carved railing under vaulted eaves. And beyond:

The ZAMBEZI RIVER winding through the Savannah--an impossible sky stretches into the horizon.

MARTIN
It's got a hell of a back yard.

It's an unbelievable sight. Reflected in both girl's eyes.
We hold on this tableau. This family. Just for a few
seconds more.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAVANNAH - DUSK

The sun falls over the plains. Impossible hues of pink. The
symphony of wildlife.

EXT. MARTIN'S HOUSE - DUSK

Dark now. Light glows from within. We hear laughter.

INT. DINING ROOM - SAME

Would be formal with a familial touch. It's not. A half
finished bottle of wine. Martin, Jess, Nate, and Mare, their
plates nearly empty. Radio plays local rock and roll.
Martin is looking through photos on Mare's camera.

MARTIN
These are all yours?

MARE
Yeah. Mostly just around our
neighborhood.

Photos of Brooklyn--

MARTIN
They're exceptional, really--

Mare glances at her Dad. Martin too.

MARTIN
You might have a starving artist on
your hands.

NATE
She can be whatever she wants to be
after med school.

MARTIN
Right. I heard. Following in your
old man's footsteps. UCLA. Long
way from home.

Mare glances at Jess. The little one looks at her plate.

MARTIN

What about you, girl?

NATE

Jess is the star of her club soccer team.

JESS

I'm a natural striker but they have me playing center-mid.

Martin grins. Looks at Nate.

MARTIN

Well, I daresay your Mom would be very proud of you both.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORCH - LATER

Where Nate stares out over the landscape. The buzz of fireflies and distant bats black against the purple sky.

The screen door squeaks. Martin emerges, two whiskeys, hands one to Nate, then nods towards the girls:

MARTIN

They put themselves to work in there.

Nate looks back. Mare and Jess wash dishes in the kitchen.

NATE

Mare will clean the whole the house if you let her.

Martin grins and raises his glass.

MARTIN

To Hannah.

They toast.

NATE

To Hannah.

MARTIN

I'm sorry it had to be like this.

Nate nods. The moments holds, then:

MARTIN

Before I forget--

An envelope from his pocket--

MARTIN

I had to pull a few strings, but--

Nate looks at the envelope, meaningful.

MARTIN

Have you told the girls?

Nate looks over.

NATE

I will. I just haven't found the right time.

Martin nods. The rumble of thunder.

MARTIN

You know, there's a tradition here when a loved one dies. The village men sit around the casket in the sand, while the women wail and beat their chests and throw themselves to the earth. Do you know why they do it?

(beat)

Because out here you can't just say goodbye--you have to let go.

This effects Nate deeply. He looks at Martin.

NATE

I'm not sure I can.

We hold on Nate. And it begins to pour.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Rain in sheets on the window. Pan down to Mare, reading in the lamp light. A soft knock on the door. She looks up.

Jess. Skinny in her dad's old T-shirt. From teenager to child.

JESS

Can I sleep with you tonight?

Mare smiles, nods. Jess climbs in next to her big sister. They settle.

JESS
It's weird, right?

MARE
Yeah, it's weird.

JESS
I wish she was here.
Then looks up at her big sister.

JESS
I don't want you to leave.
We hold on Mare, her little sister snuggled into her chest.

INT. NATE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Find Nate, unpacking his suitcase. Underneath the clothes is a small card board box.

He removes it. Sets it on the dresser across from him. Then sits on the bed.

Stares at the box. And the envelope sitting next to it.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAVANNAH - DAWN

The sun rises pink. Giraffe necks like palm trees against the horizon. Last night's rain already evaporating in the heat.

EXT. HOUSE - SAME

Nate loads his day pack into the rear of the rover. Comes around to find Martin, leaning against the open driver side door. CB handset on a spiral cord from the rover--

MARTIN
(on the radio)
Copy that, Banji, see you in a few--
Martin hooks the CB.

NATE
Everything alright?

MARTIN

Storm flooded out the main road--
all the Safari groups got shut
down. Gonna be just us and the
wildlife out there--

Jess and Mare approach. The former looks worse for wear--

JESS

It's not even 7am, how is it this
hot?

Both in tank tops and jeans, Mare's camera bag over her
shoulder. A long angle lens in her hand. To Nate:

MARE

My fifty mil has a crack--

JESS

You could use an iPhone like the
rest of modern civilization--

MARE

Whatever.

JESS

You whatever.

NATE

Keep it up, you're gonna scare away
all the animals.

Martin. The rhythm of family.

MARE

So where are we headed?

MARTIN

That... Is a surprise. Get in.

They do. Martin grins at Nate.

MARTIN

It's gonna be a good day, bruh.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAVANNAH - MORNING

A drive like nowhere else in the world. The rover on a single dirt road--herds of WILDEBEEST and ZEBRA run along side.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERBED - LATER

A RESERVE EMPLOYE, local, early 20's handsome, this is BANJI. He turns as the Rover pulls up.

Nate, Martin, and the girls pile out. Martin greets Banji in the native tongue. Introduces:

MARTIN

Banji, this is Nate, his daughters, Mare and Jess.

Opens the back of the rover. Pulls out a BLACK CASE.

MARTIN

Banji tracks pride movements across the reserve.

BANJI

A pleasure to meet you.

Thick accent. His eyes fall on Mare. She notices, so does Nate.

MARTIN

How's the family?

BANJI

Come see for yourselves.

Martin steps past Banji's truck. Nate and the girls follow. Reverse to reveal. A PRIDE of lions at the edge of:

EXT. LUWI TERRITORY - MORNING

No more than fifty yards distant. Eight females. Two large males, and several cubs at play... A series of large rocks embedded into the grass, dotted with Marula trees.

BANJI

Just finished off last night's kill.

MARTIN

Perfect timing.

(pointing)

The Luwi pride--named for the
matriarch there under the Marula.

He kneels down as Mare snaps off photos.

MARTIN

That's the alpha--Sepo--his brother
Tavo.

Two very large male lions. Tavo looks up, catches them in
the distance. Roars. Jess startles. Nate puts a hand on
her shoulder.

MARE

Holy shit.

MARTIN

It's alright, he's just letting us
know he's there.

(then)

See, while the females spend all
night hunting--it's the male's job
to protect the pride.

JESS

Protect them from what?

Martin glances at Nate, grins.

MARTIN

Other lions. They don't take
kindly to trespassers in their
territory.

Martin says something to Banji. Hand him the case. Then
takes off his jacket and radio. Takes one step--

MARE

Wait. You're going out there?

MARTIN

I'm not a lion, am I?

Martin winks. Then walks slowly towards the pride.

Immediately the lions take note. All of them. Their heads
turned towards Martin. We stay with:

NATE and the girls. Watching. The lone figure of Martin,
hands out stretched as if facing a loaded gun.

Mare notices that Banji has opened the black case and is assembling what looks like a rifle.

MARE
What is that?

BANJI
Tranq rifle.

He stands, looks through the scope.

BANJI
Just in case.

That's when, two males drop off a rock. Now positioning themselves between Martin and the females.

Jess looks back at her dad.

JESS
They're not gonna eat him are they?

INTERCUT WITH MARTIN

Who's no more than 25 yards away. The two MALES have taken aggressive posture, both stare him down as:

MARE
What's he doing--

BANJI
Showing them he's not afraid.

Back with Martin as he stops, kneels. Sepo roars. The sound like a cannon blast. Martin holds up a single hand.

MARTIN
(to the animals)
Okay. I hear you. This is far as I go.

His voice calm, soothing. Sepo, the lion who roared, takes another step forward. Martin's hand still up. He and the lion lock eyes. Martin smiles--

MARTIN
Njoo sema hello.

That's when the lion bounds forward. Martin holds his position. The lion closes fast--

Rears on his hind legs and Martin steps into it.

Catching Sepo as if in a hug. Which it is. Because immediately the lion nuzzles his neck.

MARTIN

It's good to see you too.

Mare, Jess, and Nate watch. It's an amazing sight, this man and a lion.

Martin scratches the animal's mane. As Tavo comes forward too. Banji lowers the rifle. Grins.

BANJI

He raise them from cubs, imprinted, set them out to the wild when they still young.

Martin kneels to greet them both. The familiarity, the love, the respect is unmistakeable.

The two lions rub their bodies against his. Like house cats when you've just come home from a long day.

Mare snaps another photo.

Back with Martin, his eyes look past the lions. Scanning the lionesses, the cubs. And then he spots something.

LUWI, the matriarch, the only lioness who has yet to stand. She remains in the shade of a Marula tree, licking a wound around her fore limb. Martin takes this in. Then turns his attention back to Sepo and Tavo--

MARTIN

What happened to your girl?

Rubbing their ears, his eyes back on the lioness as we go:

EXT. ROVER - LATER

Martin returns to where the family waits.

NATE

Show off--

JESS

That was so cool.

MARTIN

(to Nate)

You're welcome to have a go--

MARE

He's not much of a hugger.

Nate throws her a look "hey."

MARTIN

Banji--

Who just put the case back in Martin's rover. They converse in the Native tongue, Martin's expression is grave, then he explains to Nate and the girls:

MARTIN

The matriarch has a fresh wound on her dewclaw--looks like she got herself out of a snare trap.

BANJI

Many *wawindaji* now.

JESS

What's a *wawindaji*?

MARTIN

Poachers. They want at the Rhino and elephant, cats just get in the way.

Banji says something. Martin responds. Banji nods. But:

BANJI

(to Mare; mostly)

Very nice to meet you.

Heads back towards his truck. A beat.

NATE

What was that all about?

MARTIN

There's a village near here, someone might have seen something. I told him we were headed that way anyway.

NATE

You sure that's a good idea?

Martin smiles, unconcerned. Looks at girls--

MARTIN

You guys want to visit a real Tongan Village?

Jess nods. Mare steps forward. Snaps a photo of the matriarch. We hear:

MARTIN (O.S.)
It's gotten worse over the years.

INT. ROVER - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Heading further into the Savannah.

MARTIN
Used to be they killed the cats for bushmeat. Now they capture them alive, sell the animals to private reserves for trophy hunts. We lost over 300 last year alone.

JESS
That's so sad.

MARTIN
It's not always the cats that pay the price. Found some poachers over the years in various states. One body part in this state, another in that state.

Nate looks over at him.

NATE
Sounds like the lions might be doing you a favor.

Martin grins. *You might be right.*

EXT. ROVER - SAME

The Rover flies past. But we stay. Panning across the bush to reveal a TRUCK.

The same one from the opening.

Barely visible. Parked right where the two poachers left it.

Then we see the blood. Painted across the entire side of the truck with the vultures still bobbing for leftovers.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROVER - LATER

The air is thick, the heat oppressive. Nate hands each girl a camel pack.

The trunks slam. Martin comes around. Both girls notice for the first time. He carries a RIFLE. That's disconcerting.

MARTIN

Couple of ground rules. First thing, we keep together, no wandering off.

Nate shoulders his pack. Takes a WALKIE from Martin, who clips his on his belt.

MARTIN

Stay behind me. Single file.
(then)

Most predators are nocturnal--means they hunt at night and sleep during the day. You look, you listen, you won't hear anything I don't, no surprises.

JESS

How far is the village?

MARTIN

About a kilometer from here.

MARE

She's scared.

JESS

Shut up, I'm not scared.

Martin glances at Nate. Smirks.

MARTIN

Alright then?

WE GO WIDE AND ABOVE as they head off.

EXT. TRAIL - MOVING - DAY

What's left of the mud has turned to dust. A hot wind blows through sparse trees. Our family in single file. Martin and Jess chatting--

MARTIN
--the language is a form of Bantuu.
All these tribes use different
variations--

JESS
Mom was teaching me *Nyanja* before
she died--

While:

MARE
This is a good one--

Shows Nate a PHOTO on her camera of the lioness. Just
separate from Martin and Jess.

MARE
I like the way the light hits the
back of her neck--

He nods, then notices that Martin and Jess have stopped.
They're looking at something. He approaches.

NATE
Everything okay?

As he comes alongside, we see:

A GOAT. Standing in the middle of the trail. White.
Splattered with mud. A ROPE around its neck.

JESS
How weird is that?

Mare snaps a picture.

MARE
Hey there buddy.

It bleats mournfully. Martin kneels next to it--reaches out--
it flinches--he lays his hand to sooth.

JESS
He's cute, right?

Martin pulls the rope. The edge is frayed. Torn off. He
looks up.

MARTIN
Village is just ahead.

EXT. VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

A series of thatched roofed huts. Eleven in total. The group approaches. The goat in toe.

The first thing they notice is the silence. But for the wind. And a weird, rhythmic: WOOO KUNK. WOOO KUNK.

JESS

Where is everybody?

The village is seemingly empty.

MARTIN

I don't know.

MARE

You sure people still live here?

Snaps off a photo. Martin looks back at Nate. Not sure to what to make of it. Steps forward.

MARTIN

HABARI? HABARI?

No answer. Except: WOOO KUNK. WOOO KUNK. Martin crosses to a HUT, looks inside, as:

Nate approaches a small fire pit, leans down. The goat BLEATS. WOO KUNK. WOO KUNK.

NATE

Martin.

Who turns from the hut. Clearly no one inside.

NATE

Coals are still hot.

MARTIN

Where the hell did they go?

Suddenly the WOO KUNK stops. Martin turns. Mare stands over the WELL at the center of the village. She hold the BUCKET on the end of a rope.

MARE

Just the wind.

But they hear something else now. BUZZING. Martin walks past Mare. A small hill at the opposite side of the village.

JESS

Hey guys.
(they turn)
The goat's gone.

Nate looks at Martin. Both are unsettled now.

NATE

Maybe we should head back.

MARTIN

Yeah, just give me a second.

Martin ascends the hill. Nate watches, then looks at his girls. Mare scolds Jess for letting go of the Goat, the latter defends herself.

When Nate looks back. Martin is gone. We hold. The oppressive stillness. The heat.

MARE

What's going on?

Nate wipes sweat with his sleeve. Looks up the hill. *What the fuck?* The unease getting to him.

NATE

Come on.

They follow their father to the top of the hill. Where Nate stops. Looks down to reveal:

NATE

Martin?

He doesn't answer. Kneeling at the edge of the grass. The buzzing incessant. Nate descends.

NATE

What the hell are you--

That's when stench hits. He recoils, a hand to his face-- sees what Martin does. Thankfully. We don't. Only the FLIES. Martin looks back. No fear. Just anger.

NATE

Jesus--

MARE

Dad?

NATE

Mare, Jess, stay where you are--

Nate's seen some gnarly shit, but this--

MARTIN

There's another body over there--
what's left of him.

ANGLE ON JESS:

JESS

What are they looking at?

MARE

I don't know.

A lie. The village. The behavior. She knows exactly what they're looking at. She steps forward. Angle on Jess. A noise to her right. She turns. A flash of white. BACK TO:

MARTIN

Hyenas should've had at 'em by now.

NATE

What's that mean?

MARTIN

Means whatever killed them is still
in the area.

Then a SQUAWK from the sky. Martin and Nate look. Vultures circle above.

MARTIN

We shouldn't be here.

MARE

Dad--

Nate turns. Mare is halfway down the hill--looking back--suddenly frantic. It takes only a second to realize.

Jess is gone.

NATE

Where's your sister?

SMASH TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Jess moves through the grass. The huts in the background. The noise she heard--a snuffling--louder as she draws closer.

JESS
Where'd you go little goat?

Then movement, obscured by blades in the wind.

JESS
There you are--

Another step and the movement stops. Something looks at her-- we can't tell what. Jess freezes. A low growl. Then a yip-- whatever it was takes off.

Behind her, voices yelling her name. But she's compelled. Young, curious, stupid. She pushes forward. Hands in the grass. An object in front of her. Feels something--

Sticky. Red. Even she knows. Blood. A spray of it. The buzz of flies. Like a siren song. She parts the grass.

We don't see what she does, not yet. But her eyes tell the story. Her face drains of color. Pure fucking horror. She opens her mouth to scream--

But it never comes. She's ripped out of frame.

Reveal Nate, shielding his daughter's eyes. Looks back. Sees what Jess did.

The severed head of a man. His mouth locked in terror.

SMASH TO:

EXT. SAVANNAH - MOMENTS LATER

The rover zooms by.

NATE (PRE-LAP)
What the hell happened back there?

INT. ROVER - SAME

The mood is tense. The hum of the engine and the jolt of suspension over the rough road. Nate looks back at his daughters--Mare has her arm around Jess, the latter's dirty face streaked with tears.

MARTIN
I don't know--

NATE
Some kind of animal?

MARTIN

I don't know.

(then)

I've never seen anything like it.

NATE

What does that mean?

MARTIN

The only thing that makes sense is a lion but--lion's don't do that--they don't just tear people a part... at least not any cat I've ever seen.

MARE

You think all the villagers are dead?

Martin shakes his head. He doesn't know. Then:

JESS

I want to go home.

Small, tears in her eyes.

NATE

We are, sweetheart.

Looks at Martin. The man's eyes dead set in front. Then:

MARTIN

There's a seasonal outpost about 6 kilo from here.

NATE

Martin--

MARTIN

We're out of CB range, I'll use one of their sat phones to call it in.

NATE

No, call whoever you have to when we get home--

*
*

MARTIN

There were fifteen families in that village--if whatever did this is still out there--

Before he can finish--

MARE
What is that?

Both men looks to reveal:

A SHADOWY SILHOUETTE distorted in the waves of a heat--we're not sure at first... then realize--

A figure stumbles down the middle of the road. As they draw closer, it appears to be a man--his clothes half shredded--

NATE
Slow down.

Martin does. The man suddenly stops--turns--the whites of his eyes--he reaches out.

MARE
Oh my god--

And crumples. A stunned beat. Then:

MARTIN
Wait here.

NATE
Martin--

But he's already out. We stay in the car as Martin circles, pops the trunk and grabs his rifle.

He moves to the man. Scanning the terrain. Stops. Kneels.

JESS
Is he okay?

Nate watches. Then the doctor in him.

NATE
I don't know. Stay in the car.

MARE
Dad--

Nate gets out too.

EXT. ROVER - CONTINUOUS

He approaches Martin and the man--slows as he realizes the latter is more blood than skin. Martin looks at Nate.

MARTIN
He's alive.

Nate keels. Feels for a pulse.

NATE
One of the villagers?

Martin nods. A unbelievable anger rising inside of him.

MARTIN
His name is Mutende.

NATE
Help me turn him.

They ease the man to his back. The severity of the wounds reflected in Nate's expression. *Jesus.*

*
*

The man's eyes shift. Swim. Can't focus. The fact that he's even alive is a fucking miracle.

NATE
Get the aid kit.

But Martin clocks their surroundings. The high grass just beyond the road.

NATE
Martin?

Then the man speaks....

MAN
Ilinijia.

Martin's eyes snap back. Something haunting in this.

MAN
Ilinijia.

NATE
What's that mean? It came for him?

He looks back at Martin. Jaw clenching.

MAN
She...tani... Shetani...

NATE
Shetani? What is that? Martin?

Martin steps away. Something's out there. He can feel it.

MARTIN
Devil. It means devil.

Nate follows his eyes. He can feel it too:

NATE

We need to get this man in the
rover and get the hell out here.

That's when the man grabs Nate's collar. Pulls him down. In
broken fucking english.

MAN

...it's... still... here...

Then a rush through the grass. No more then 40 yards away.
Martin spins. The rifle up. Hold. Silence.

Nate looks at Martin. His eyes gone feral. *Oh no.*

NATE

Martin, don't.

A beat. Martin scans the grass and trees. Decides.

MARTIN

Stay here.

He moves towards the sound. Rifle poised.

NATE

Shit. SHIT.

Nate looks back at the Rover.... His daughters faces pressed
against the glass. Then back to Mutende--

NATE

I'll be right back--

Mutende groans. When Nate looks up. Martin is gone.

EXT. SAVANNAH - MOMENTS LATER

The rover out of sight. Martin creeps quietly through the
grass towards a collision of high bush and sparse trees. The
silence is staggering.

Rifle up. Wary of any movement that isn't his own. Squeezes
sweat from him eyes. Looks left, then right. That's when he
hears the strangest sound---

Almost like HOLLOW WIND CHIMES.

EXT. ROVER - MOMENTS LATER

The rear door opens, Nate rifles through supplies for the first aid kit. His daughters watch from the back seat--

JESS

What happened? Where's Martin?
Where did he go?

Nate finds what's he looking for.

MARE

DAD--

He looks up. Swallows the panic.

NATE

Everything's fine--
(off her look)
Just... see if you can get someone
on the CB.

MARE

Martin said--

NATE

Try.

She nods, okay. He shuts the trunk. As we go:

EXT. SAVANNAH - MOMENTS LATER

With Martin. The bush and trees are head height. Visibility fucking nil. Yet he pushes forward.

The sound is louder now.

Rifle on a swivel. He finally emerges:

EXT. WATERING HOLE - CONTINUOUS

The size of an olympic swimming pool. A mud beach on the far side. But here, the bush grows almost to the edges. A few CROCODILE slip into the water.

But that's not what gets his attention. He looks up. The source of the sound.

ANIMAL BONES hang from the trees. Hundreds of them.

And below. An ALTAR of colored stones and feathers and a painted buffalo skull.

He kneels. *What the fuck?*

That's when he sees it. Nearby. Fresh prints. A CAT TRACK.

And they're fucking huge. He moves.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Nate, dripping sweat, goes to work on Mutende. Blood spreads across the sand. The flies already buzzing.

Nate applies gauze to the neck. But that's not the worst of it. The man's wounds are everywhere. He's delirious. Fading fast.

MAN

Help me... please...

NATE

Hang in there.

He rips open the man's shirt. Reacts. *Jesus.* That's when Mutende gives a final heave. And goes still.

INT. ROVER - SAME

Mare, now in the front seat, has the CB working, but it's only static. She twists channels. Into the handset.

MARE

Is anyone there? Please. We need help.

Static. Jess, in the back, knees hugged to her chest. Looks towards her father who begins CPR.

JESS

Is that man gonna die?

EXT. WATERING HOLE - MOMENTS LATER

The question unanswered. Back to Martin. Along the water's edge. The sun dappling through. Moisture rises.

He stops. Across the water is old elevated structure, painted the color of the trees. A HUNTERS BLIND. Then:

SNAP. RUSTLE. Martin pivots. There it is again. Just beyond the trees.

GOTCHA.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON: Nate's hands. Blood slick. Rhythmically pushing Mutende's chest. One. Two. Three. Breath.

NATE

Come on--

Jess watches. One. Two. Three. Breath.

NATE

Goddamn it--

One. Two. Three. But it doesn't matter. He stops. Shirt soaked crimson. The man is dead.

He looks back once more--

EXT. SAVANNAH - MOMENTS LATER

Where Martin emerges from the trees. On the opposite side of the watering hole. The sun rages. The grass in waves.

THAT SOUND AGAIN. Just ahead. MOVEMENT. He steels himself. Cautiously forward.

Something is there. He sweats fucking bullets. Draws closer.

Reaches with the barrel and..... WOOOOOOOSH. He screams. Falls back--

INT/EXT. ROVER - SAME

Nate hears the scream, turns. The girls too. It echoes. Then a burst of quail scatter into the sky.

Nate moves towards the trees. Further from the rover. Everything's gone really fucking quiet. A beat.

NATE

MARTIN?

EXT. SAVANNAH - SAME

Who rises to his elbows. Breath in gasps. The birds flock towards the horizon. Somewhere in the distance:

NATE (O.S.)

MAAAARTTTTTTTIIIIIN--

Pulls himself together.

MARTIN
I'M ALRIGHT.
(beat)
Fuck me.

He looks. Finds. The rifle. He dropped it. Several feet away. He breathes.

Reaches. Stops. That's when it happens.

A HORRIBLE SOUND. Behind him. A low guttural snarl.

He doesn't even fucking turn.

He knows.

Looks back at the gun. A beat.

And lunges--

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SAME

On Nate. Eyes scanning the horizon. BOOM. Echoing in the stillness. BOOM.

Two gunshots. Hold. Then. A GUT WRENCHING SCREAM.

The worst sound he's ever heard. Terror. Pain.

INT. ROVER - SAME

The girls hear it too.

JESS
Mare--

Who looks from the radio to--

EXT. SAVANNAH - SAME

Nate scans the tangled growth.

NATE
MARTIN--

We hold. Then he sees it. Movement.

Bursting from the trees. 100 yards in the distance.

ANGLE ON MARTIN

Fast limping in abject terror. His right leg shredded. Breath in strangled bursts. No longer holding the gun.

Looks back, eyes manic as:

NATE

Steps forward. Can see Martin's bleeding. The men's eyes meet. Martin YELLS. Nate can't make out the words.

MARTIN

Desperate. His screams choked by rasping breath.

MARTIN

--BACK TO THE ROVER--

NATE

Steps forward again. Equidistant between the rover and Martin. Then he hears it:

MARTIN

--GET BACK. GO. GO. GO.

A moment to realize. That's when it happens.

Martin's feet are torn out from under him. He vanishes in the grass. An ungodly SCREAM. A brief glimpse of matted fur. A guttural snarl we'll never forget.

*
*
*

NATE

No--

INT. ROVER - SAME

*

The girls see it too. Mare pulls Jess away from the window.

*

EXT. SAVANNAH - SAME

*

Back to Nate. Suddenly paralyzed with indecision. The desire to help Martin. The safety of the rover.

*

Fight or flight mother fucker.

But the screaming stops. Silence.

INT. ROVER - SAME

Mare and Jess both watch in horror. Their dad. The grass beyond. Jess, tears in her eyes, on the fucking verge--

JESS
What happened to Martin? Where did
he go? Mare?

But Mare doesn't answer... because she sees something that takes her breath away.

MARE
Oh my god.

She pounds on the window.

EXT. SAVANNAH - SAME

Nate turns. Her muffled scream. Then she rolls the window down. Fast. The terror in her eyes.

MARE
DAD. RUNNNNNN.

NATE looks back. Now sees what she did. Something in the tall grass. Moving. Like a torpedo in the ocean.

And it's headed right towards him. He takes off as fast as he fucking can. The moment he does.

So does the animal. Though we only see flashes.

Sprinting through the grass.

Mare can see movement closing on Nate. As he runs like a bat out of hell towards the Rover.

But the movement is almost on him. Nate draws close.

Mare opens the ROVER door for him as he dives:

INT. ROVER - CONTINUOUS

Slams the door behind him just as:

WHAM. The Rover is rocked by a half ton of pure FORCE. The side window spiderwebs--

Jess SCREAMS in terror.

WHAM. It's rocked again. The door bends, plastic cracks. Mare too, both girls screaming. Nate on top of Mare, the two of them knocked to the floor.

JESS

DADDDDY.

He can see her curled into a ball.

NATE

STAY DOWN, JESS, STAY DOWN.

WHAM. The rover is literally lifted off its wheels before slamming BACK. With a groan and a crash.

Then silence.

CLOSE ON: Mare and Nate. He holds his hand over her mouth. Her dinner plate eyes. Looks at Jess. Hyperventilating. Tears streaking her dirty cheeks--you've never seen terror like this.

NATE

Shhhhhh.

But it isn't over. Not even close.

BOOM. The animal comes again, hard, fast. This time shattering the window. His massive paw inside the ROVER.

All CLAWS and blood stained fur. The sound is incredible--

Like being in shark cage. Nate torques sideways, Mare pinned beneath him. Drives his boot into the animal's leg.

We only catch glimpses in the frenzy. The animal trying to jam his way in--

Jess covers her ears, eyes squeezed, screams--

Nate kicks. The lion swipes. Claws dig into his boot.

The look on Nate's face. *Oh fuck.* He's suddenly yanked off Mare and towards the window. He plants his other foot. Catches himself.

MARE

DAD!

He strains. Claws dig in. He yells. It's trying to pull him out of the fucking rover. Mare grabs his arm.

But she realizes. They aren't gonna win this tug of war.

Clocks the keys in the ignition. She reaches. Fires the engine. RUMMMMMMM.

She lunges for the gas pedal. Floors it with her palm. The wheels spin, then catch.

The rover jolts forward. Moves. We stay inside. Can't see anything. Rocks, bushes, dust.

Hits 20, 25--

The animal suddenly rips free. Nate drops into the seat.

30, 35--

He sits up, tries to get control but it's barreling towards a dry river bed--

Too fucking fast. Barely time to brace as:

EXT. ROVER - SAME

WHAM. The Rover PLOWS into an outcropping of rocks with astonishing force. The back end lifts, threatens to FLIP--

Over the rocks and plummet into the RIVERBED.

But it slams down.

We hold on the rover.

The rippling heat. The front end crushed. Canted against the rocks. Steaming. Crippled.

We go WIDE. The rover. Tiny against the endless Savannah.

SMASH TO BLACK:

Hold. Nothing but the wind.

INT. ROVER - SAME

CLOSE ON: Nate. Forehead on the steering wheel. Sweat dripping with blood. He comes to. Gets his bearings. Sees Mare crumpled against the floor below the dash.

NATE

Mare--

Moves to her. She stirs. Opens her eyes. Looks at him.

NATE
You okay?
(she nods)
Are you hurt?

No. But there are tears. Nate spins.

NATE
Jess--

We don't see her yet. Just the look on his face.

NATE
Sweetheart?

There she is, curled in the seat. Trembling. Eyes wide.
Breath in bursts.

NATE
It's okay--baby--it's okay.

She looks at him. Eyes frantic. Can't get a breath. Nate
climbs in the:

BACK SEAT

Where he takes her hands.

NATE
Look at me--Jess.

Panicked. Sucking air.

NATE
You need to calm down.
(she can't)
Breathe--
(she can't)
In through your nose, out through
your mouth. That's it. That's it.

Mare watches her Dad. As Jess calms. The whole experience
suddenly crashing home.

NATE
Okay?

Jess nods. Throws her arms around him. Nate looks back at
Mare.

MARE
What the hell just happened?

He doesn't know how to answer. That's when Mare looks towards the trees... the grass.

MARE

Is he dead? Martin, you saw him,
right? Did it kill him?

NATE

I don't know. Maybe he's--
(doesn't finish the
thought)
We're gonna go get help, okay.
(then looking at Jess)
Everything's gonna be fine.

MOMENTS LATER

Back in front. NATE turns the ignition. The engine coughs,
WAAAA WAAAA WAAAA. Again. WAAAAA.

NATE

Come on.

Once more, but:

The rover is dead.

Nate sits back. Mare's eyes on him. The glare of the sun
through the dusty windshield.

MARE

Are we trapped here?

But Nate's just trying to catch up with his own raging fear.

NATE

Someone will come by, someone will
see us--

MARE

How do you know that? It was just
us--no one knows we're out here--I
tried the radio, it was all static--
(beat)
Do you even know where we are?

He doesn't, clearly. Not sure what to say, how to control
the situation... and then:

JESS

Dad?
(he looks up)
Is the monster gone?

And for the first time it occurs to him. The shattered driver's side window. Their exposure. He can't help but scan the grass.

We hold on this. The complete stillness of the Savannah.

Then:

A burst of static. Something that sounds like a voice.

Not from the CB, but--a radio--knocked under the seat--

Nate finds it. Turns the dial--

MARTIN (O.S.)
...ate...opy....do...

Adjusting the frequency.

NATE (INTO THE RADIO)
Martin?
(static)
Do you copy?

A little farther, until:

MARTIN (O.S.)
... an you ... ear me?

NATE (INTO THE RADIO)
We hear you. Are you okay?

A beat. The response forever to come.

MARTIN
I'm in bad shape, bruh.

NATE (INTO THE RADIO)
Where are you?

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

With Martin. He's sitting against a tree. His complexion near death grey. Splattered with blood. Soaked in sweat. Incomprehensible pain. His eyes fixed in front of him.

NATE
Can you see the rover?

MARTIN
I can't stand. My leg's torn up.

Every word a struggle. Radio laced with static.

MARTIN

He came out of nowhere, I lost my
rifle--I--Nate--

(static)

Are the girls (static) are they--

NATE

Everyone's okay. But the Rover's
dead, Martin--we're not...

(blinks away sweat)

We're not sure what to do here.

Martin either. Both men at a loss. On Nate--

MARTIN

I'm sorry, I didn't--

But he can't finish the thought, he tries to move but the
pain is too much--he groans through it--

MARTIN

I'm really messed up--

Nate looks back at Mare. A beat. Calms himself. Does the
only thing he knows how to do.

NATE

Okay... Listen... you said it's
your leg, right?

MARTIN

Yes.

NATE

Where's the wound--

Martin pulls back the torn pant leg. Cries out.

MARTIN

Fuck man... I don't know...

NATE

Are you losing blood?

Soaking the sand beneath his shredded leg.

MARTIN

...yes...

NATE

Okay. Use your belt, tie a
tourniquet at your groin, you have
to stop the bleeding.

Martin struggles to pull off his belt. Loops. Draws it tight. Cries out. We hear this through the radio.

MARTIN
Okay, okay--I did it.

Nate lowers the radio--looks back at his daughters. A decision to make.

NATE
(into radio)
Alright. Hold tight. I'm gonna come and get you, but I need to know where you are--

On Martin now. He shakes his head. Still staring ahead, we're not sure at what. Back to:

NATE
Martin?

MARTIN
(finally)
You can't do that, Nate--

Stay with the Nate and the girls.

MARTIN
I'm not...al... (static)

NATE
You're breaking up. Say again.

Static. Then clear as hell.

MARTIN
I said I'm not alone.

That's when we reverse to Martin's POV. We don't see it at first because of the grass. And then we do. Two golden eyes fixed on Martin. Only 20 feet away.

MARTIN
He's staring right at me.

Even though we can't see it, Martin can.

NATE
What?

MARTIN
Fucker's staring right at me.

NATE

I don't understand. Why would it--

MARTIN

If I'd didn't know any better. I'd say I'm bait.

Nate looks back at the girls. Then into the radio:

NATE

What do I do? Tell me what to do.

Martin grinds, finally:

MARTIN

Stay in the Rover. Wait for help to come--

Nate look out over the endless landscape. There is nothing-- least of all help. Into the walkie:

NATE

We can't leave you out there. The blood loss and exposure, you won't last more than a few hours.

We hold on Martin. Staring head, delirium taking hold. *

MARTIN *

I don't think you understand. We're in his territory now.

That's when the animal turns away. Disappearing into the grass.

STAY WITH NATE

Who lowers the radio. Looks back at his daughters. Big eyes. Then: *

MARE *

Dad--the tranq rifle. *

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BACK OF THE ROVER - MOMENTS LATER

Nate--on his knees, T-shirt ringed with sweat--rifles through the turned boxes and scattered items from the crash. Finds:

FLARES, ROPE, EMERGENCY BLANKET. AID KIT, SURVIVAL KNIFE. FLASHLIGHT. *

NATE

It's not here. You sure he put it
back--

MARE

Yes--

He stops. Then notices. A pad-locked METAL BOX bolted into
the side of the rover.

But he needs a key. Doesn't have it.

A beat. Then:

He rips back the carpet. The SPARE tire. The portable jack.
He works fast. Jams the jack inside the lock. Steadies with
his foot.

And cranks. It takes all his strength. Finally:

POP. The lock breaks. He opens the BOX. Inside is the
BLACK CASE. He opens the case.

In three pieces. STOCK. CHAMBER. BARREL. Also in the BOX.
A zippered pouch. Inside are THREE DARTS. Filled with
liquid.

JESS

You know how to use a tranq rifle?

Nate looks back Mare and Jess. Relief. No matter how
fleeting.

NATE

No.

(then)

Mare--bring the radio back here--

She does. Climbs in back. A beat later. Jess too. Doesn't
want to be alone. Into the walkie:

NATE

Martin, you there?

MARTIN

Yeah.

NATE

We found the tranq rifle.

(silence)

Martin?

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

MARTIN

No--Nate--listen to me--you can't--

Struggling to stay conscious.

NATE

We have to try.

(then)

Can you guide me through it?

Martin breathes. He's fading fast.

MARTIN

...Yes...

NATE

Hang on--

Nate hands Mare the radio.

NATE

Just push--

MARE

I know.

He nods. Go ahead.

NATE

Okay, we've gotta put it together first.

MARTIN

Snap the stock into the chamber, it's a lock-in mechanism.

NATE

Got it.

MARTIN

Screw in the barrel--it should click.

It does...

NATE

Okay, how do I load the dart?

MARTIN

Pull off the cap. Slide it into the chamber. Push the bolt forward, down, and then back.

NATE

Done.

MARTIN

That's it.

NATE

Just pull the trigger?

MARTIN

Yeah... But listen to me. You won't see him in the grass. You gotta get to higher ground--

Nate looks out. It's flat as far as the eye can see. Then:

MARE

Dad.

She looks up. The rover has a retractable sun roof.

NATE

(into the radio)

Alright, stand by.

Martin lowers the radio, it's almost too much just to hold the thing.

INT. ROVER - MOMENTS LATER

Nate cranks the SUN ROOF BACK. Both girls sweating now too.

NATE

(to Mare)

Okay.

She hands him the rifle. The dart pouch. He sets them on the roof. Back to his daughters.

JESS

You sure going out there is a good idea?

NATE

We don't have a choice.

(then)

You see anything move--

They nod. He swallows, breathes, emerges.

EXT. ROVER/ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Into the blaring sun. He shimmies all the way out. Reaches back for the radio.

Now laying on his stomach--sniper style. Exposed. The case with the remaining two trangs next to him.

NATE (INTO RADIO)
Martin, you there?

MARTIN
(static) Copy.

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

NATE
He still with you?

MARTIN
I don't see him.

NATE
Where are you?

MARTIN
The base of a Marula, about forty meters west of the watering hole.

Nate scans with SCOPE. We see the tree. The grass between.

NATE
I see the tree. Alright.

He lowers the radio. Back into the scope. A magnified view as he pans slowly across the Savannah.

Nothing but the wind and sound of CICADAS.

It could be anywhere.

Sweat drips into Nate's eyelashes. He blinks it away. The radio blares. It's shockingly loud.

MARTIN
Nate.

NATE
Yeah?

MARTIN
Look for shade. A tree, rocks, anything--

NATE

Okay.

He wipes the sweat with his collar.

WHILE BELOW

Jess and Mare both look out. Jess catches Mare's eye. The fear--

MARE

It's gonna be okay.

BACK TO

Nate. Still scanning. That's when he hears it. The cicadas have stopped. Even the wind. It's eerie.

A new kind of silence. Then:

MOVEMENT

Hard to tell what. Obscured by the grass. Looks like it's headed towards the tree, towards Martin--

MARE

Dad--

He ignores her. Finger on the trigger.

NATE

(to himself)

Come on--

Then it emerges. Or rather... they. THREE ANTELOPE. Munching grass. Not a care in the world. Nate relaxes.

MARE

Do you see it?

He lowers the scope.

NATE

No. I don't know. Maybe it's gone. Maybe it lost interest...

But he trails off. Sees something--

NATE

Wait.

He looks through the scope. The antelope are no longer eating.

Three heads pointed in the same direction. Their noses stretched into the wind. It's fucking creepy.

He follows their eye line. Panning to his right....

Slowly, slowly, slowly.

THE POV of the scope. He leans to the side. Scope to his right. Nothing but grass and then...

He stops. Hold.

Pans back. Even slower. Slower. Slower. He stops.

Something out of focus.

MARE

What do you see?

He reaches for the scope. Turns it. One notch. Two. Three.

CLICK. The image in focus.

It takes a second to realize. The lion, barely visible in the grass. Stalking forward.

Magnified.

NATE

Shit.

The rest happens fast. The lion charges. Nate fires. Misses.

Lowers the scope just in time to see:

A SHAPE EXPLODE from grass like a heat seeking missile. *

NATE

GIRLS GET DOWN!

Nate rolls. Off the rover. Slams into the dirt. He grunts. Stunned.

A BEAT.

He sees the case with the tranq darts in the dirt. About to lunge for them when:

MARE

DAD. HE'S COMING.

A RUSH of MOVEMENT. All Nate can see are it's legs. He rolls under the chassis as a paw swipe tears a chunk out of the tire. *

But the lion isn't done.

He jams his head beneath the rover like some possessed monster. Nothing but jaws and blood and spit. *

Nate scrambles back, pinned to the ditch, nowhere to go. Realizing he's out of reach, the animal swipes for him.

Like a kitten swiping for yarn under a door. Except this is a 1000 pounds of snarling lion under a one ton rover.

Now wedging itself deeper under the rover and closer to Nate. Still out of reach until... The lion's shoulders, how under the car, begin to LIFT IT--

INSIDE THE ROVER

Mare and Jess are tossed to the side as the vehicle tips. Jess screams.

BACK TO

Nate, desperately looking for a way out.

Then he sees it. His tranq rifle. By his feet. Using his foot, he strains for it.

Closer. Closer. Hooks it, pulls it up--

Nate swings the butt of the rifle. WHAM. Into the animal's nose. WHAM. WHAM. We hear a crack. The lion reels.

THE ROVER SLAMS BACK DOWN

The girls tossed. In the CHAOS.

Nate sees the DART CASE. He scrambles. Half under, half out from the rover. Grabs the case. Rolls back as the animal comes at him again--

The lion possessed. Nate fumbles with the case.

Opens it.

Only one dart inside. And it's shattered. SHIT.

The animal growing more frenzied. Wedging itself again.

THE ROVER TIPS

Mare braces herself. Looks for something, anything, she can use to fight if off as BELOW:

SWIPE. A claw connects with NATE'S shoulder. He screams. He kicks. Drives himself as far back as he can. Dust and spit and blood everywhere.

Recoils from the snapping jaws. Nowhere left to go. The animal is inches from tearing him apart. The rover heaves.

INSIDE. Mare braces. Then out of the corner of her eye.

She sees. Rolling across the floor.

THE THIRD DART. BACK TO:

NATE. The animal's head turned, going for his throat. *

Those gaping jaws. Nate is fucked. On the verge of being ripped apart. Nothing left to do:

But SCREAM.

And just as the lion surges, the jaws about to clamp down.

Nate closes his eyes. And....

WHAM.

The lion suddenly pulls back. The rover slam down.

And silence.

Hold on Nate. The dust. His face covered in it. What the fuck happened? *

He catches his breath.

Then two feet outside the car. Mare leans down.

MARE

Dad.

He looks at her.

MARE

It's okay, it's gone. *

He nods. Crawls out. To a knee. Still pulsing with adrenaline. Looks at his daughter.

NATE

What happened?

MARE

I stuck a dart in its ass.

He pulls her to him. Hugs her with everything he's got.
Then sees Jess in the open passenger door. Takes her hand.

Gathers. Finally:

NATE

Okay. Let's go get Martin.

CUT TO:

A pair of scissors on a blood drenched pant leg.

MARTIN (O.S.)

Sorry I missed it.

INT. ROVER - LATER

In the TRUNK. Martin is propped in Mare's lap. Nate kneels over the wounded leg. All of them are sweating. The safety of the Rover is a fucking sauna. Nate manages a smile.

NATE

Just hold still.

As he cuts away the fabric--

MARTIN

....how bad?

Our first view of the damage. Shredded skin. Bone. Muscle.
It's Jess who answers.

JESS

That's a lot of blood.

MARTIN

I can't feel it. I can't feel anything--

NATE

You're in shock.

(Martin tries to look)

Don't. Just look at me. Your tibial artery is severed--

(then)

Mare--

Come here. Reaching for the aid kit. Forceps. He digs around. Martin yells out.

NATE

Got it.

Pinches the artery. To Mare:

NATE

Hold this. Tight. Don't let go.

(she does)

I'm gonna tie it off.

MARTIN

Wait... Just wait.

In unfathomable pain.

NATE

Martin... we have to do it now.

MARTIN

Can I have water?

Nate nods, eases a bit into his mouth. Martin drinks. Lays back. Staring straight up.

MARTIN

Okay.

Nate goes to work. Martin grits back the pain. It doesn't take long. He bites the sutures with his teeth.

NATE

(to Mare)

You can let go.

Mare does. No blood pumps. Nate wipes the sweat.

MARTIN

That wasn't so bad.

NATE

Just relax.

But Martin looks at Nate, the girls.

MARTIN

(fading)

I'm sorry I got you into this... I never should have--

NATE

We're gonna get you out of here.

MARTIN

I never should have...

And finally, mercifully, he passes out. Mare looks at Nate. Emotional. Tears glisten against the dust on her cheeks.

JESS
Is he gonna be okay?

Nate. His hands covered in blood. Sweat soaked.

JESS
Dad?

Finally Nate looks at her.

NATE
If we don't get help soon, he won't make it--

MARE
What do we do?

Nate looks at his girls. The blood stained trunk. Finally:

NATE
Martin said there's an outpost with a sat phone six kilometers from where we stopped--that's about three miles. I think if we can find the road, we can make it there in less than an hour.

JESS
We're just gonna leave him here?

NATE
He needs a hospital, sweetheart--

MARE
What if we carry him--

NATE
Look, guys--

JESS
Dad--

NATE
We can't carry him three miles. Not in this heat. The best thing we can do for him is get help.

A beat. They nod.

JESS
What about the lion?

NATE

The tranquilizer in that dart
should keep him out five six hours.
We'll be long gone by then.

She nods. Looks towards the watering hole.

JESS

You think it's the same lion?
Killed the people at the village?

NATE

Seems like it.

MARE

Why would it do that? Why would it
just kill people?

That's when Nate sees something that he can't fucking
believe. Out the window, behind her.

MARE

What's wrong--

But when she follows his eyes, she see what he does. The
lion at the edge of the grass. 20 yards away. His face
mucked with dirt and spit and blood--his massive body heaving
with rapid breath. Staring right at them.

NATE

I thought you hit him with the
dart.

MARE

I did.

And as this statement lands. Nate's eyes locked with the
lion. The monster turns away, as if he just wanted to let
them know he's still there. Off Nate's look we:

SMASH TO:

EXT. SAVANNAH - DUSK

*

The sun hangs low in the sky. Grass blows. Waves of heat.

*

MARE (O.S.)

*

Hello, is any one out there, over?

*

INT. ROVER - SAME

Pan up to Mare. Her hair sweat stuck to her forehead.
Cycling through each channel on the CB.

MARE (INTO THE RADIO)
We need help. If anyone can hear
me. Please answer.

Static. But we knew it would be. Nate climbs into the front
seat next to her.

NATE
Alright... Listen guys, we have to
consider the idea that we might be
here for awhile--the rover's dead,
and as long as that thing is out
there--
(beat)
We need to conserve water.

MARE
How much is left?

NATE
The four of our bottles together,
about a liter.

JESS
Is that bad?

NATE
We can make it last. We ration.
One capful each--

He takes off his watch. Puts it on the dash. It's 6:03 pm.

NATE
--One every hour. That should last
us through tomorrow.

JESS
(sudden panic)
Tomorrow?

Nate turns back to console Jess. Her terrified eyes.

NATE
Listen to me. Help will come for
us. I promise you.

MARE
You can't promise her that.

Nate snaps her a look over his shoulder.

NATE

Mare, hey.

She's shakes her head.

MARE

What? You know you can't promise
us that. So just don't.

He knows she's right, but tries maintain a semblance of calm.

NATE

It's almost dark. Why don't you
try to get some rest.

Mare looks out the window. A defeated sigh.

NATE

What?

MARE

Like that's gonna happen.

SMASH TO:

INT. ROVER - NIGHT

The two girls. Asleep in the moonlight. Jess in the back.
Mare in the passenger seat. New sounds in the night.

IN THE TRUNK

Nate sits next to Martin. Vigilant. Eyes out over the
Savannah.

Martin stirs--his bandages blood soaked--lips cracked, a
brutal shade of looming death.

MARTIN

Tell me I'm home in bed.

NATE

You're home in bed.

MARTIN

(smirks)
And the girls?

NATE

Asleep. Here.

Nate squeezes water from a soaked cloth into Martin's mouth. *

MARTIN *

What about the cat? *

NATE *

Tranquilizer didn't work, but I
haven't seen him since before dark.
I'm hoping he gave up-- *

Martin shakes his head. *

MARTIN *

That's not in his nature. *

(then) *

Listen, Nate. I might have an idea
where this cat came from. A few
months back, poacher's went after a
pride on the fringe of the reserve,
killed the Beta. The Alpha
disappeared-- *

(beat) *

We started hearing stories. *

NATE *

What kind of stories? *

MARTIN *

Attacks in broad daylight--multiple
victims at once. We went looking
for him--but-- *

(beat) *

After awhile, the attacks stopped,
we assumed he was dead. *

(then) *

We call them Rogues, driven from
their home, their pride--most of
them starve or are killed by other
lions. *

NATE *

And this one-- *

MARTIN *

I think he discovered who his real
enemy is. We're easy prey, Nate,
and once a lion develops a taste
for human blood.... *

Hold on Nate. *

NATE *

You know, I think I would have been
better off not knowing any of that. *

Martin laughs. The night settles. Nate looks back at his girls. *

NATE *

I failed them, you know. When
Hannah died. I couldn't handle it,
I couldn't be the father I thought
I was. And you know the worst part--
they never blamed me for it--not
once. *

(beat) *

I thought if we came here, if we
said goodbye, that I could-- *

MARTIN *

Hannah's gone, Nate. She doesn't
need you anymore. They do. *

Nate looks at Martin. Nods. Then: *

MARTIN *

There's a hunter's blind. Other
side of the watering hole. There
might be a supply box--water, food.
There might even be a Sat Phone. *

Nate looks at him. *

MARTIN *

It's a last resort, you can't go
out there unless you have to--
understand--you and him-- *

(nodding out) *

That's not a fight you're designed
to win. *

We hold. Somewhere an animal calls. That's when Nate's eyes
fix on something. The hardest thing he's ever had to say: *

NATE *

Come morning, that lion won't be
our biggest problem. *

Martin follows his eyes to the bottle of water, a quarter
full--then back to Nate. The implication clear. The emotion
in both men's eyes. *

MARTIN *

I know. *

A beat. Nate takes his hand. The former's head falls back.
His mortality crashing home. *

We hold on this tableau...

SMASH TO:

EXT. SAVANNAH - DAWN

The sun's beauty unmatched by the impending horror it brings.

INT. ROVER - SAME

ON NATE. Asleep. A fly crawls across his lips. Hops up to his eye. The lid startles.

He blinks awake. Disoriented for the moment. His lips now cracked. His skin ever so sunken, stained by sun and sand.

He looks over at Martin. Unconscious once more. His breath short, but even. Nate rises, then to his horror--

Sees the bottle of water. It's been knocked over. Spilled everywhere.

NATE
No.... Shit.

He crawls over. It's all fucking gone. A moment to realize. Then the strangest sound.

Creeeeeeeeaaaaak. He rises. He looks. The passenger door. Opening in the wind. But that isn't the worst of it.

The girls are gone.

NATE
JESS? MARE?

Looking wildly. Panicking. Until... Holy. Shit. He crawls to the opposite side of the car. Both Mare and Jess are standing in the middle of the grass. Mare behind Jess. Her arms around her. Staring towards the horizon.

NATE
GIRLS. WHAT ARE YOU DOING? GET
BACK IN THE CAR.

Tries to roll down the window. It won't budge. He can't open the door either. He's trapped. Then a crash to his right, their left.

NATE
MARE, JESS.

Seemingly oblivious. She looks at him.

JESS

DADDY?

AND A SHAPE FLIES THROUGH FRAME, TAKING DOWN BOTH GIRLS AS:

INT. ROVER - NIGHT

Nate rockets awake. Sweating bullets. Realizes it was a dream. Gathers.

He checks his watch. 4:36 am.

The last few hours have taken their toll. Lips cracked. Dark circles. He looks stricken. Then:

MARE

You okay?

He looks up. His daughter turned in her seat.

NATE

Yeah.

MARE

You screamed.

NATE

I'm okay, sweetheart.

That's when he sees it. Just past Mare.

MARE

What?

She follows his eyes to the CB. A light blinks. Nate climbs across the back seat.

NATE

Did you turn the radio on?

MARE

I never turned it off, I just--

Nate spins up the volume. A burst of static. Soft. Then what sounds like a voice--though unintelligible.

MARE

Oh my god. They found us.

NATE

Hang on--

Nate adjusts the frequency, the static clears, the voice coming through--

MARE
What's he saying?

NATE
I don't know. I can't make it out.

Then it crystalizes. Male. Young. Not in English.

MARE
Tell them where we are--Dad--

He's about to... when: there's LAUGHTER. Something cavalier in it. That's when they see it, both of them. In the distance.

A burst of light. It sharpens to reveal headlights--two laser beams in the twilight.

As it eclipses a small rise, we realize it's a PICK UP TRUCK. Maybe a quarter mile away. Then strangely it stops.

MARE
What are they doing?

A figure jump out of the bed. Stands in the headlights.

NATE
Hand me you're camera--

She does. He zooms in. We don't see what he does.

NATE
That's not a rescue party.

He looks back at Jess. Something like desperation.

NATE
We need to hide. Right now.

MARE
What do you mean hide? Where are we gonna go?
(beat)
Dad, what's wrong--

But he's already climbing in the back.

NATE
Jess, sweetheart, wake up.

She stirs as Mare takes the camera.

HER POV: The man in the headlights carries a RIFLE.

Another in the back. The truck is a beat up Nissan, rust stains and scratches. A searchlight mounted on a makeshift lattice. Worse.

There's something in the truck bed.

BLOOD STAINED ELEPHANT TUSKS. At least eight of them.

MARE

Are those poachers?

That's when the search light turns on. It arcs across the Savannah. And lands on the ROVER. She turns to:

NATE

--Martin, I need you to wake, we gotta move--

But the man is Hypovolemic.

MARE

Dad, they've got guns.

JESS

Why do they have guns? What are they gonna do?

The pick up now descending the ridge and heading their way. *Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.*

Nate looks back. The SURVIVAL KNIFE.

SMASH TO:

EXT. SAVANNAH - MOMENTS LATER

As the poacher's truck growls to a stop. No more than fifty feet back. It idles a beat. We pull back to reveal Nate.

INT. ROVER - SAME

In the driver' seat. Hands clearly displayed on the steering wheel. Mare and Jess terrified in back.

Nate looks as two men jump from the truck bed.

One is well built, thirties, a worn Dodgers Cap--the dude with the Rifle. We'll call him DODGER. The other is SPECS, glasses, Jurassic Park T-shirt. Another Rifle.

They aim their weapons at Nate.

DODGER
PATA GARI YETU. PATA GARI YETU!

MARE
What do they want?

Nate doesn't respond. Dodger steps forward threateningly.

NATE
Okay. Okay.

A beat. He looks back at Mare and Jess.

NATE
No matter what happens... Stay in
the car.

Nate steps out.

EXT. ROVER - CONTINUOUS

Hands out-stretched. The two men evaluate him. Hold.

Then the truck door opens and a man approaches. Clearly the leader. This is LIKEZO.

INT. ROVER - INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

Mare and Jess watching.

LIKEZO
*Unapaswa kuwa nje hapa baada ya
giza.*

Nate's eyes snap from him, to the two other Armed men.

NATE
Unazungumza Kiingereza? You speak
English?
(no answer)
We need help. We were attacked--
wrecked our Rover.

Likezo raises a flashlight, clicks it into Nate's eyes.

LIKEZO
You are American. Long way from
home, American.

Nate squints, holds up a hand to ward off the light. Likezo moves the light into the Rover, illuminating Jess and Mare.

LIKEZO

Who are they?

NATE

My daughters. Please--my--friend
is injured--

The man holds the flashlight on Mare and Jess... as if evaluating.

We see the knife, tucked in the back of Nate's jeans.

NATE

All we need is a ride outta here.

Then he steps into the light. Blocking Jess and Mare. Likezo grins. He likes that.

LIKEZO

You should not be out here, this is
a very dangerous place.

Nate doesn't say it, but... *Yeah, no shit.*

LIKEZO

You say attacked. By what?

NATE

A lion.

Likezo looks out at the Savannah. To his men:

LIKEZO

Alisema simba fanya hivi.

They laugh.

NATE

Please. If we don't get help, my
friend will die.

A loaded beat. Dodger says something. Likezo responds. A brief argument--it escalates--the implications are terrifying.

NATE

I can pay you.

Likezo looks back. Dodger says something else. Gestures with the gun.

LIKEZO

Kutosha!

Argument over. Then turns back to Nate.

LIKEZO

This is a problem for us.

NATE

Please, we won't tell anyone--

But Likezo holds up a hand. It feels like an eternity.

LIKEZO

We take you as far as the village.
You pay us nothing. We save you
from this... Lion.

Nate nods, grateful.

NATE

Thank you.

Likezo passes--

LIKEZO

You say there are three--your
friend too--

That's when he shines the light inside the rover,
illuminating Martin. Recognition. And it's not good.

Everything suddenly changes.

LIKEZO

What is this?

He pulls his pistol, points it at Nate--

NATE

I don't--

LIKEZO

I know this man. You are from the
Reserve--

NATE

No--

But it's too late.

LIKEZO

Kupata msichana!

The rest happens fast. Dodger and Specs immediately move towards the rover. Nate tries to cut them off, but Likezo brutally pistol whips Nate to the ground.

He falls hard. His ears ringing. Stunned.

We stay on Nate. In the background, the men rip open the Rover door, they're yelling, but it seems so far away.

Nate rises to his hands and knees.

Mare is yanked from the rover, fights like hell. Yet, she's overpowered, thrown to the ground. Jess is next. Screaming bloody murder.

But that's not what draws Nate's attention. He looks. Beyond the lights. The edge of the shadows. Movement.

Oh fuck. He's coming.

Nate yells, but we hear nothing. Then again, but this time:

THE SOUND RUSHES BACK IN.

NATE
TAO. TAO. TAO.

The force of his voice. The men stop. Likezo turns. A beat. Then:

That's when it happens. Like a fucking bullet. The lion comes out of the dark. He grabs Dodger by the throat and literally carries the man screaming into the bush.

Likezo barely has time to aim and fire. BOOM. BOOM. BOOM. BOOM. But the cat is gone.

And the screaming stops.

Likezo scans the dark. Another sound. He spins. It's Nate. Standing now. Both men hyped. A beat. We think he's gonna shoot our hero. But:

LIKEZO
Get your family.

Nate nods. Helps Mare and Jess from the ground. While:

Likezo SHOUTS something to Specs. Who's on the verge of panic. Likezo leaves him, the flashlight held like a SWAT officer, pistol up. As we go:

BACK OF THE ROVER

Nate opens the door.

NATE
Come on, brother.
(to both girls)
Help me lift him.

Martin groans, his eyes flutter.

MARTIN
What's happening?

NATE
We're gonna get you outa here.

Trying to lift the man, who yells in pain--

MARTIN
Wait, just wait--

AS LIKEZO

Finds Dodger prone in the grass. Barely alive. His head and throat a mess of blood. Behind him:

SPECS (O.S.)
Je, yuko hai?

LIKEZO
Nisaidie kumpeleka.

Help me move him. But Specs is shitting his fucking pants. He looks back at the truck.

LIKEZO
NISAIDIE KUMPELEKA!

He grabs Dodger's arm. Flashlight in his teeth. Tries to pull him, while keeping the gun up.

Specs watches this. Again looks at the truck. Then shines his flashlight on Likezo--

SPECS
Umsie huko!

LIKEZO
Nisai--

WOOSH. The lion comes out of the shadows. A paw swipe, though we barely see it. Likezo is spun out of the light. The flashlight falls.

Specs officially freaks, as we go:

BACK OF THE ROVER

Nate and Mare lift Martin, but. We hear the TRUCK DOOR OPEN.
Mare is the first to look--

MARE
They're leaving us.

Nate sees Specs climb in the truck--the engine guns.

NATE
That truck is our way out of here--

MARE
Dad!

NATE
Stay here--

He sprints after it. We go with him. Hear the truck's gears grind. It starts to move.

NATE
Acha! Acha!

Accelerating. Nate sprints along side. Tries to open the door. Pounds on the window.

NATE
PLEASE!

Faster. Nate can barely keep up. Then he can't. He stumbles. Falls. Looks as the tail-lights recede--

Then back towards the Rover. Barely visible in the darkness.

And at least a 200 feet away. Might as well be in the middle of the fucking ocean.

He takes a step forward. And stops. His face filling with fear.

INT. ROVER - SAME

Mare slams the trunk door. Jess already looking into the darkness.

JESS
Where did he go, I can't see him--

Mare crawls past her. Grabs the FLASHLIGHT. Turns it towards the window--scanning, scanning, then:

Stops. We don't see what she does. Only the horror.

MARE

No--

Reveal:

EXT. SAVANNAH - INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

Nate. Where we left him. Now illuminated. Across from:

A HORRIFIC SILHOUETTE. The animal. The first time we truly understand the size of the beast. Approaching Nate at full height.

Yet still only a shadow.

Nate's a sitting duck.

The lion ROARS. Echoing across the grassland.

INT. ROVER - SAME

Mare and Jess watching in horror.

MARE

We have to help him.

Looks back at Martin. Unable to do anything. But Nate isn't alone out there.

EXT. SAVANNAH - SAME

We find Likezo, bleeding from his shoulder, crawling towards Dodger's rifle. He reaches for it. Rolls onto his back. Pulls the bolt as:

Nate. Backs away from the lion. Ever so slowly. Brandishes the SURVIVAL KNIFE.

Doesn't see Likezo.

Rise from the grass. The rifle aimed. Follows the light to clock Nate--

THE ANIMAL.

Mare and Jess look on.

MARE

Dad!

Nate raises the knife--

Likezo aims.

The animal coils to strike.

Everything goes quiet as:

Likezo puts his finger on the trigger.

LIKEZO

Don't run.

A beat. The animal charges. Nate YELLS. Likezo fires.
BOOM.

INT. ROVER - SAME

Where we'll stay. Mare and Jess. BOOM. Mare pulls Jess
away from the window. BOOM. BOOM. BOOM.

SILENCE. ROOOOOOOOOOOOAR. SOMEONE SCREAMS.

The light on the Rover floor. We hold. We wait.

JESS

Mare?

She looks at Martin. Then Mare grabs the light. Turns.
Reveal:

Nothing but grass. The horizon.

JESS

Is he alive? Do you see him?

Mare shakes her head. Tears in her eyes. A horrible beat.

WHAM. Against the window. Jess screams. But it's not Nate.

Likezo.

Covered in blood. His eyes in the throws of panic. Locked
with Mare's.

The man slides to the ground. Mare tries to hold it
together.

Then we hear a snarl. A sniff. And the sound of dragging.

Just in time to see Likezo pulled into the grass. The rifle
still clung in his grasp.

Mare, on the verge of falling apart. Trembling. Tears about to fall, until:

NATE (O.S.)
Mare? Do you copy?

From Martin's radio. She grabs it off the floor.

MARE
Dad? Are you okay?

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

On Nate. Crouched down, surrounded by a snarl of craggy trees.

NATE
I'm okay.

MARE
Where are you?

NATE
I'm at the watering hole.

MARE
What?

NATE
I'm going for the blind.

We reverse to reveal... across the way. A shape in the dark, the silhouette of a small, raised structure.

INT. ROVER - SAME

Mare lowers the handset. Turns to Martin. He smiles.

EXT. WATERING HOLE - MOMENTS LATER

Moonlight cuts through the foliage in rays. Nate negotiates gnarled branches--ever so quiet. We're sure at any moment the lion is going to explode from the dark.

But he doesn't. Yet.

Nate squeezes through. Drops off a felled tree. Pauses.

INT. ROVER - SAME

Mare, Jess, and Martin wait nervously. Mare grips the radio handset, almost willing her Dad's voice to come through--

MARTIN
He'll be okay.

EXT. WATERING HOLE - SAME

Back to Nate. Coming to the edge of a small, moonlit clearing. The water to his left. Has to cross it. Into the open.

About 30 feet. He looks back. Breathes. Makes his move.

Low runs across. His footsteps like thunder. Slides into cover. Waits. Breath held.

A painful beat.

Then exhales. Relief. But as he prepares to go.

His blood runs cold. A sound. Approaching--from his front.

The lion. Though it doesn't see Nate. And he barely sees it. Partially hidden in the trees.

Moving idly. Sniffing.

Ever so cautiously, Nate eases himself behind a stump. Above, a gust of wind. The crack of branches and the whoosh of leaves.

The lion looks up briefly. Painfully. Nate waits.

Then the animal passes behind--like a ship in the night.

Nate rises slowly, looks back. The animal is gone.

But the next step changes everything.

The radio. Hooked to his belt. Catches on a bush. He doesn't notices until:

KKKKSSSHHHHHHHHHHHHH

STATIC. The volume turned up to max level. He might as well have screamed. Nate kills the sound.

But it's too late. A crashing in the bush. He spins. *Fuck me.*

INT. ROVER - SAME

Mare looks at the radio. She heard it too.

MARE
What was that?

Martin shakes his head. A beat.

MARE
(into the radio)
Dad? Can you hear me?

EXT. WATERING HOLE

Close on the radio. Now lying on the ground.

MARE (O.S.)
Dad, answer me. Please.

But Nate is gone. We hold. Then movement in the background. Just the rattle of a bush. The lion emerges.

We crane up with his arrival to reveal Nate. Perched in a tree. The lion below him. The first time we've seen a bird's eye view.

You think Jaws swimming under the boat was spooky.

The animal is bigger then we could've ever imagined. Long as a car--the wire spun muscles visible in the dapple moonlight.

He stops to sniff the radio. Paws at it. Growls.

MARE (O.S.)
Dad?

INT. ROVER - SAME

The response comes in bursts. The weight of the Lion's paw keys the mic. Intermittently. But the sound is clear.

A low throated Growl. She looks at Martin.

MARE
It found him.

EXT. WATERING HOLE - SAME

Where Nate clings desperately to the branch. Muscles aching. The lion still below.

But only it gets worse. Nate isn't alone in the tree.

HISSESSSSSS. Coiled in the branches and on the move. A BLACK MAMBA. Nate freezes. The snake moves across the branch, now gliding over his hand.

He closes his eyes. The fucking lion still below. He can't move. He can't scream. A beat.

Finally, the lion moves away.

The moment he's gone. Nate grabs the snake. A lightning strike.

And tosses it:

To the ground. Where it lands. In the foreground. Hisses. And Nate drops quietly from the tree. Scoops the radio. And we go:

INT. ROVER - SAME

Where Mare is beside herself.

MARE

I can't just sit here.

MARTIN

There's nothing you can do.

The painful truth. As she looks back at:

EXT. WATERING HOLE - SAME

Not around. But in. The water is inky black. Like glass. And then ripples. We find Nate.

His head just above the water. Like Martin Sheen in Apocalypse Now. The back pack floats in front of him--the knife in his teeth.

He moves painfully slow. Carefully. The bank just ahead. The blind only fifty feet from it.

But it's exposed. He stops at the edge of the water. The lip of the bank about 3 feet up. He GENTLY lifts the pack and sets it on the grass.

About to climb. Then stops. Thinks better of it. The open space. Something about the surrounding bush.

Too exposed. He needs cover, a distraction, something like--

*
*
*

MUD. Black, sticky.

MOMENTS LATER

He's covered in it. His arms. His legs. Only the whites of his eyes.

Then he emerges. Pulling himself from the water. But he doesn't rise. He stays low.

Military style. Closing the distance to the BLIND.

But he's only half way there, when:

CRACK. A branch under his elbow. Of course. He freezes. A count of one. Two.

Then that the familiar sound. That snarl. Low. Nate goes still. Flat against the ground.

We stay CLOSE. We hold. Then a shape in the background. The lion. He comes towards us. Nate's a sitting duck.

Except. The animal doesn't see him. Can't smell him. A massive, clawed paw steps inches from Nate's face.

That's where the animal stops. Nate holds his fucking breath.

We pan up. The animal's jaws are directly above. So close that it's saliva drips onto Nate's cheek.

It's unbearable. The man. The lion.

Something has to give. And finally. Mercifully. It does.

Because in the distance. We hear:

WHAM. WHAM.

The lion looks.

WHAM. WHAM.

And trots off. Nate breathes. The sound continues and we go:

INT. ROVER - SAME

The source. Mare slams her hand on the door.

MARE

Come on. Come on.

*

*

*

A drum beat. WHAM. WHAM. WHAM. Then.

MARTIN

Mare. MARE.

She looks back. Static from the radio. A beat.

NATE (O.S.)

Mare, you there?

She grabs the radio.

MARE

Dad, I'm here.

NATE (O.S.)

I made it.

She closes her eyes. *Thank god.*

INT. BLIND - INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

Inside... A small room. He spots the lock box. She smiles with relief.

NATE

Gonna head back as soon as I can.

We stay with her. She lowers the radio. Looks at Martin.

MARE

Told you it would work.

The expression on his face. Not relief. Not even close.

MARE

What?

She turns just in time to see him. The lion coming out of the darkness. Full speed. He leaps. Right at the broken driver's side window. At Mare.

The force of it JOLTS the rover. Actually dislodging it from the ROCKS. She's throttled back. Slams against the passenger door. Jess and Martin tossed.

Mare pinned to the passenger side. But it's all gnashing teeth and razor claws. Trapped inside a tiny space. Our worst fucking nightmare.

The animal is trying to squeeze inside. She kicks at it. Jess looks on in horror. Her sister, screaming--

SUDDENLY THE ROVER MOVES. The lion is pushing it towards the edge of the river bed, the DROP OFF.

JESS

MARE.

MARE

HELP ME, PLEASE!

That's when a claw swipes her abdomen. She fucking screams. Then kicks hard at the animal.

MARE

FUCK YOU FUCK YOU FUCK YOU.

As Frenzied as he is. Suddenly he pulls back. And with him goes the entire fucking door.

INT. HUNTER BLIND - SAME

Close on the PAD LOCK. Nate shoves his knife between the lock and the wood. Then steps back. Kicks the handle. It cracks.

He pries it open... inside are blankets--

NATE

No...

Batteries... all kinds of useless shit. He pulls it all out with ferocity. It was all for nothing. A beat. He sees. A FLASHLIGHT. Grabs it. Turns it on. Has to tap it.

He searches the place. It's empty.

NATE

Come on, come on.

At a loss. About to loose it. When he sees something out of the corner of his eye. Not in the blind, but out.

He crosses to the little view box. As we go:

INT. ROVER - SAME

CLOSE ON: Mare. On the verge. Tears in her eyes. She looks down at her abdomen. Pulls her hand away. BLOOD. LOT OF IT.

JESS

Mare--

She looks. Can't see Martin. Only her wide eyed sister.

JESS

Don't move.

She turns. Sees the door is gone. Then a shadow in the moonlight. The animal approaches slowly.

Now he can fit inside.

EXT. BLIND - SAME

With Nate as moves away from the blind into the grass. Quickly. Then we see what he did. *

A splatter of blood. A strip of cloth. He turns, scans the grass.

There. He can't fucking believe it.

Reveal the rifle. Right where Martin dropped it.

INT. ROVER - SAME

A giant paw steps onto the seat. Mare, in catatonic horror, as the lion enters the car. Snarling the whole way. Mare can't look away. His golden eyes. *

Fucker's gonna slow play this. Within inches. His jaw hinges back. Her delicate neck. That's when it happens.

SCREAM--NO--BATTLE CRY. WHACK.

Jess nails the lion square in the face with the tire iron. The creature thrashes. Dislodging the rover. Pulls back.

We hear a groan. We feel the world move. The rover. Perched on the edge. Suddenly it tips. Rolls. Once, twice, into the river bed.

SMASH. Upside down. We hold. Then a massive ROAR.

EXT. WATERING HOLE - MOMENTS LATER

Nate looks up from the rifle. The ROAR reverberating. He realizes. Takes off back towards the Rover as we go:

INT. ROVER - SAME

Mare's eyes open. She sees Martin. A finger to his lips. He's got his hand around Jess's mouth.

Then she hears a groan. The animal is pushing on the car. We see its paws through the shattered windows. Sniff, sniff, sniff. Right behind her.

She's frozen to the spot. Her eyes locked on Martin.

Then he nods back. She looks at him, questioning. His face pale, but determined. Then one, whispered word.

MARTIN

Run.

That's when he climbs out of the rover as we go:

EXT. WATERING HOLE - SAME

Nate sprints through trees. The rover still isn't visible.

EXT. SAVANNAH - SAME

With Martin as he hobbles away from the rover. In ungodly pain. He looks back over his shoulder. Now a good distance away. He stops. Looks back. As:

MARE AND JESS

Emerge from the Rover. See Martin. A look between them.

Then they run in the opposite direction.

MARTIN

Watches them go. A beat.

MARTIN

WHERE ARE YOU? HUH. WHERE THE
HELL ARE YOU?

Then as if to answer. A growl. The lion approaches. Martin falls to his knees. The lion draws closer.

The size of him compared to Martin is unreal. Martin looks in his eyes.

MARTIN

Come on, you son of--

*
*

*
*

But he's cut off as the lion charges and takes him down.
Martin screams--

*
*

EXT. SAVANNAH - SAME

Mare and Jess hear him SCREAM. They stop. Look back. We hold on them. Exposed. Tears in their eyes. Then they're grabbed from behind.

Nate.

MARE

Dad.

NATE

Shhhhh. I got you.

Hugging them both. He looks back towards where Martin last screamed.

NATE

We need to run. Now.

EXT. SAVANNAH - MOMENTS LATER

The silence of the night a welcome respite. Nothing but Mare and Nate and Jess's rushing footfalls as they run away from the watering hole. The terror.

Miles of grass ahead of them.

Nate palms the rifle. Back pack over his shoulder, other hand holding Jess. But it isn't long until we realize.

He's practically dragging her, because:

JESS

Dad--

He turns. Mare stumbles, clutching her abdomen. She falls. He goes to her. She looks up, her eyes like moonlit dinner plates. She pulls her hand away from her mid section.

So much blood. We didn't realize how bad it was.

MARE

I'm sorry.

NATE

The outpost is only a few miles, we can make it, sweetheart.

MARE

I can't--

But the conversation is short lived because:

JESS

Dad--

He turns--sees what she does. The lion on a bee-line. 250 feet and closing fast. Nate drops the pack. Raises the rifle. Stands.

The lion in his sights. For a moment he hesitates. But he has no choice.

He fires. CRACK. The shot echoes in the vastness. Misses. CRACK. Misses again. The animal obscured in the grass.

One last shot. A deep breath. CLICK.

The lion still coming. Full sprint.

Nate lowers the weapon. But he doesn't tear his eyes away.

No more than a hundred feet away. Charging.

Nate tosses the gun. For a moment we wonder if he's going to take on this fucker hand to hand.

But no. There's a reason humans are the top of the food chain.

Nate reaches in the pack and pulls a flare. He pops the end. The lion like a blood soaked predator torpedo.

We go WIDE. PROFILE. A man with a flare facing down a charging lion. An epic game of chicken. Back on Nate.

Waits. Waits. And as the lion is about to go airborne. Nate tosses the flare into the tinder dry grass....

WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOSH.

It goes off like a match book. The lion skids. But it's engulfed in flames. It roars.

The fire spreads fast. Like the great wall of Africa.

Nate watches the world burn. The lion with it. He turns back to Mare and Jess.

Their eyes reflected in the firelight. It's over. The moment holds as we:

SMASH TO:

INT. OUTPOST - LATER

BAM. The door is kicked open. The family in silhouette against the FIRST LIGHT OF DAWN. Mare's arm over his shoulder. He guides her inside and helps her into one of two chairs.

Takes the other chair, shuts the door, and jams it under the broken handle. Then flips on the lights.

We're in a visitor's center. National park type photos on the walls. A desk. Behind it is a door marked STORAGE ROOM.

Two hallways lead back into the building. One door with EMPLOYEES ONLY, the other is open, a sign indicating RESTROOMS this way.

Nate immediately crosses to a FIRST AID BOX on the wall. Rips it open. Grabs the KIT--

Then a SMALL fridge under the desk. Bottles of water.

Mare watches. Hand covering her blood soaked tank top. He moves back to her. Hands them each a bottle.

NATE

Small sips, okay?

They both drink as Nate opens the KIT.

NATE

Let me see.

Mare takes her hand away. The GASH is a jagged six inches. The aid kit is rudimentary. He pulls gauze, places it on the wound.

NATE

Stay here, keep pressure on it.

(she nods)

I'm gonna find a Sat Phone.

(to Jess)

You look after your sister, okay?

She nods.

MARE

Dad--

NATE

Yeah?

A beat. Now it's her turn. She can't find the words.

MARE

Nothing.

He nods. Crosses to the Employees Only door. Mare's eyes on him. He looks back one more time.

Then pushes open the door:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

And flips on the lights. A long hallway, several doors on either side. He checks the first door, but it's locked. The second too.

But the third to his right is open. As he enters we go:

INT. VISITOR'S CENTER - SAME

On Mare. She stares ahead. At what we're not sure. She stands with a struggle. Jess crosses.

We reverse to reveal:

Those national park photos. Animals. With descriptions, physiology, mating, etc.

She focuses on a photo of a male lion. It's mane. Looking regal. This affects her.

JESS

They don't look so scary now, do they?

MARE

Mom used to stay that lions see the world as if from space, in blues and greens and whites.

Jess looks back. Smiles then sees:

JESS

Hey. You hungry?

A vending machine--

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Back to Nate. Going through cabinets, the desk drawers already pulled out. He comes up empty. Turns and we follow him: *

INT. HALL - CONTINUOUS

To the next office, the door is locked. He pivots, a final office. The door opens. There on the desk, a SAT PHONE. Thank god. He goes:

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tries to power it on. But the PHONE'S dead. Several batteries in a charging station. He pops out the battery, replaces it.

He pushes the power button. Nothing, tries another batter. Nothing. The final one-- *

The LCD screen comes alive. Searching for signal. *

NATE *

Come on-- *

That's when he hears it. A door in the wind. Nate steps out. He grabs a mop handle and breaks it off. Uses DUCT TAPE to create a MAKESHIFT spear. *

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Looks back where he came from. But that wasn't the source of the sound. CREEEEEEEEAK. It's coming from the other direction. The end of the hall. We follow him: *

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

But don't see what he does. Only the blood draining from his face. The back door open in the wind. *

Then another sound. This one farther away. SNUFFLING. *

Oh shit. He turns. He raises the radio-- *

NATE *

Mare, Jess, you okay? *

INT. VISITOR'S CENTER - SAME

CLOSE ON THE RADIO. We see the light blinking. But the sound is turned down. Rack to:

Mare and Jess unaware of their father's discovery. Jess has her arm in VENDING MACHINE, trying to get chips--

Success. She grins.

JESS

They're all covered in dust.

MARE

Martin said this place was seasonal, maybe it's only open part of the year.

Jess tries a chip.

JESS

Oh my god.

Mare grins. Tries one too.

MARE

So good.

That's when she sees something in the reflection of the vending machine. Movement. Down the hall. Off her look:

JESS

What's wrong?

INT. BACK HALLWAY - SAME

With Nate, moving deliberately. The HUNTING KNIFE, his only protection.

Pauses. Darkness to his right. Then:

That sound again. Shuffling. There's a wetness to it.

He locates the light switch. Turns it on to illuminate.

TWO HYENAS, looking up from something on the ground. Their blood soaked muzzles, gristle hangs from jaws. They growl--

NATE

GO ON. GET!

The hyenas take off. When he looks back....

NATE

Oh no.

The ground is covered with bones. Zebra, antelope, buffalo.
Human. He realizes, already on the move:

NATE

(into the radio)

Jess. Mare. If you can hear me.

We're in it's den.

(starts running)

We're in it's fucking den!

INT. VISITOR'S CENTER - SAME TIME

Empty now. The girls are gone. We hold. Then the door
slowly opens to reveal:

Our lion. He limps from the gunshot wound in his right
shoulder. His fur is matted black. A burn scar on the side
of his body. His face.

We pan across. Mare and Jess hiding behind the couch. In
gut wrenching fear. They can only hear what we can see.
Whispered horror.

JESS

It's getting closer.

But Mare is looking at a small trashcan, just within reach of
her foot.

WITH THE LION now. As it sniff the floor. The chip wrapper.

THE GIRLS

JESS

Mare?

MARE

Run when I tell you.

Jess nods. Mare breathes. And kicks the trash can. The
lion pivots--

MARE

RUN.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Nate stops. He heard that.

SMASH TO:

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Mare and Jess in mid sprint. Lion behind them. Running for their fucking life. No idea where they're going. Hit the end of the hall. Take a hard right.

The lion slip-slides on the floor. Smashes into the wall behind them. They keep going. Don't know where this leads.

MARE

COME ON.

Careen down another HALL. MORTAL TERROR. They reach the end... the door is locked--

The lion coming.

Jess turns. Another door. It opens.

JESS

Mare!

JESS

IN HERE!

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They try to slam the door behind them. But the lion leaps. Collides with the door--they're blasted backwards.

Hit the ground. The lion too. Ten feet away. It stares at them. Snarls.

They crab crawl back. Reveal ROWS OF CAGES. Some kind of holding. The lion CHARGES.

MARE

GO, GO, GO, GO--

They dive into an open cage. Slam the cage door just as the lion hits it. Snarls.

Like being in a shark cage. But the metal built to keep animals in--is keeping this one out. Mare pulls jess to her. Then they hear--

NATE (O.S.)
MARE? JESS?

And the lion turns.

INT. VISITOR'S CENTER - SAME

Nate enters slowly. Sees the girls are gone. The abandoned radio. Then he notices. Paw prints. Suddenly we hear--

Banging. Screaming--

INT. ROOM - SAME

Mare and Jess yell through the cage.

MARE/JESS
DAD HE'S COMING.

INT. HALLWAY

Nate on the move again--can't make out the words but hear them screaming--he finds the door. The one they went through. He pauses--listen--

Then pushes open the door. We hold on his look.

Then the LION LURCHES out, slamming Nate into the wall. Nate's thrust with knife. But he's too late. He screams.

INT. ROOM - SAME

We can hear it from outside. Mare slides back an interior door on the cage.

JESS
HURRY.

It leads to a shoot--just being enough to crawl through--where the animals can be lead:

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - SAME

The girls emerge. Jess looks up. A fire extinguisher.

INT. HALLWAY

Find Nate, on the ground. Realing. His arm bitten. He spots the knife. Crawls for it. Reveal the lion behind him.

Limping. Bleeding. It approaches Nate. Then digs his paw into it's ankle--

He can't reach the knife. He turns on his back. Looks into the eyes of the monster. Then:

PFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF

It's blasted with the fire extinguisher. The girls are there, they help him up, Nate grabs the knife as they run:

EXT. OUTPOST - MORNING

The glare of the sun almost blinding. What they thought was their salvation was something else entirely.

Now they're running into the wide open.

And only seconds later. The lion emerges. The grass is shorter, rockier. Their flight hampered by Mare's wound, Nate wounds.

Luckily the lion is wounded. Not as fast. But pursuing.

They reach the lip of hill, stumbling down. A dry river bed beneath.

Nate looks.

NATE

THERE.

A SMALL GROVE OF TREES. But they're blackened, the branches without leaves. Sentinels of the Savannah. Like gravestones.

They sprint towards the grove.

EXT. BLACKENED TREE GROVE - CONTINUOUS

The trunks whipping by until, deep in the grove, Nate pulls his daughters behind a tree.

Mare grimaces, doubled over in pain. This is as far as she goes and Nate fucking knows it. He hands her the Sat Phone.

NATE
Call for help.

MARE
What? What are you doing?

NATE
He's not gonna stop.

MARE
No. Dad.

NATE
He's not gonna stop, Mare. And I'm
done running.

Then movement behind them. They look. The lion visible.
Approaching.

NATE
Listen to me. Listen. This
belongs to you.

Reveal the envelope.

NATE
There's a place on the river, just
at the edge of the park. Find it,
take her there.

Their eyes locked. This is the way it has to be. And we go
to:

THE LION

In full light for the first time. Bigger then we ever
could've imagined. More horrific after what we've been
through. The worst of creation.

Suddenly he stops. Looks up.

Nate. Stands in view. His make shift spear. Dirty. Blood
stained.

NATE
COME ON.

The lion stares at him. Maybe confused. Because there is no
fear in this man.

Nate starts to back away.

NATE
COME ON GOD DAMNIT.

The lion steps forward.

NATE

That's it.

Still backing away, leaving the trees. And Mare. Who we will not see again.

Because this is man vs. Lion. A story as old as Africa.

Suddenly the lions ROARS. And charges.

Nate waits for it. As the lion lunges, he dodges. Stabbing the lion, the inertia, causes him to roll, breaking off the knife.

The lion rises.

Nate still backing away. As they emerge from the grove of trees, he looks behind him. We think we see a glimmer of water. He turns back.

The lion shakes off the pain. A little unsure now. Nate breaks the stick over his knee. Two halves. Two sharp ends. Back peddling slowly.

The lion limps forward. Ten feet and keeping the distance.

NATE

DO IT.

The lion charges again. Nate tries to dodge. But a paw swipe catches him, even though he manages to impale one of the sticks in the lion's side.

The animal is up fast. Nate too. Blood pouring from his shoulder.

Keeps moving backward. The animal charges fast this time.

Nate isn't able to get the stick up before the lion hits him.

The speed. The power. Astonishing. He falls under the animal's weight.

It bites into his collar bone. Skin, muscle.

He SCREAMS. But uses the broken stick to stab into the lion's side, once, twice.

The animal reels back--

Nate scrambles up. But he's really fucking hurt. His arm shredded from the swipe. The other side of his body mauled.

He stumbles away from the animal. Holding only the stick.

While the lion is hurt. Nate is shredded.

Woozey. Only a blood stained broken stick.

The animal stalks forward. Keeping pace. Nate waves the sick. It's feeble. The lion swipes. Misses.

Nate backs up. He swipes again. Now it's like the lion is toying with him.

Almost as if it knows it has the upper hand.

The animal's eyes on him. A low snarl. And for just a second, we feel something in his animal beyond instinct.

We feel hatred.

This is it... right now.

The lion CHARGES. Nate looks up. He lunges. Nate thrusts the stick.

The animal lands on top of him. The stick breaking off in his breast. The lion rolls still in the mud.

Nate lays there. Bleeding. Did he just kill this fucking lion?

He looks up. A second later. The monster rises. Nate turns. No longer has the strength to stand. Drags himself through the mud towards the edge of a WATERING HOLE. The lion slow-walking behind him.

Finally, mercifully, Nate stops. Rolls onto his back.

There's something familiar about this place. The rocks. The trees. We've been here before.

*
*

If Nate knows it, we can't tell. The lion approaches. Nate coughs blood. The shadow of the animal falls over him.

*

Nate looks into his eyes. And for a moment it doesn't attack. It stares at him. And that's when Nate says the most unexpected thing.

NATE

It's okay... It's okay.

And just as the lion's lips curl back. We hear something coming. A sound in the water. Both the lion and Nate look up to see:

*
*
*

ANOTHER LION

Racing across the water at full fucking speed. It barrels into the monster with a ferocious growl. The monster throws it off--

But a second one comes from the other direction. We won't know it until later. But the first was SEPO. The second is TAVO.

Yet we stay with Nate. As these two lions fight the Beast, who doesn't stand a chance.

This is nature at its most carnal, primitive. The sounds, the demonstration of unbelievable strength, these two lions dominating the former alpha--doing what Nate could not.

A final paw swipe and a bite to the neck.

The Beast is dead.

But we don't linger. We hold on Nate, who drops back into the mud.

We pull away from him. Into the sky. The corpse of the beast. The two male lion standing over him.

That's when Tavo ROARS.

**AND OUR SCREEN
FADES TO WHITE:**

We hold. Then new sounds. Beep. Beep. Beep.

COME UP ON:

Nate. His eyes open. We pull back. He's in a hospital bed. He gathers. Winces. Then:

MARE (O.S.)

Dad.

He turns to see. His daughters. We are:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The morning sun. Mare's wounds are dressed. Jess is showered, clean. The relief on his face is undeniable.

He can't hide the emotion. They embrace. It lasts. Finally.

NATE
What happened?

MARE
Trackers from the village found
you. They were out hunting the
lion.

NATE
Martin?

Mare shakes her head. Nate takes this in. It hits him hard.
Overwhelmed by emotion. His girls. His wife. Martin.
Then:

NATE
The lion. Is it dead?

She nods.

MARE
You lead him into the pride-land.

He closes his eyes.

MARE
Dad?

And he finally breaks.

NATE
I'm sorry. I'm sorry I wasn't
there for you like I should've
been.

Jess climbs into bed with him.

JESS
It's okay. You are now.

Mare's head on his shoulder And we hold on this tableau.
Bittersweet.

SMASH TO BLACK:

EXT. SAVANNAH - DUSK

The wind blows across the horizon. We pan across. This
beautiful place.

Our camera lands on Nate. He stands on the edge of a hill.
Healed now. The girls next to him.

Reveal two memorial tributes. Stacked stones, flowers. A photo of Hannah. A photo of Martin. And the cardboard box.

The one Nate was staring at.

MARE

Dad--

She hands him the envelope. He opens it. A pencil drawing of vista of the very spot they stand.

NATE

Mom drew it the day we left Africa.
It was a promise. One day we would
come back to this place--as a
family.

(he looks at the girls)
I wish she could have seen it
through your eyes.

The girls smile.

NATE

Martin made sure we could bring her
here.

MARE

Then it's time we let her go.

Nate and the girls take the cardboard box down the hill to
the edge of the river. The kneels.

NATE

Ready?

All three reach inside. Fine white ash. The wind seems to
kick up... And they let Hannah Samuels spill into the river.

Then stand. All three. And look. Across the river. The
beauty of Africa spread out before them.

SMASH TO BLACK: