

been designed to twist in and out of the terrain so as to afford the best views at the best points. And although the visitor is repeatedly warned to stay in his car, there are those perverse souls who insist on getting out for a better look.

The tale is told of two American schoolmarms who came upon a lion lying in the road. Convinced the beast had been struck by a car and killed, the ladies decided to do a little souvenir-gathering. They alighted from the car, scissors in hand, intending to clip the lion's claws. When the "defunct" king of beasts suddenly swished its tail, the ladies solved their sticky predicament by passing out. They were rescued unhurt, and—the human tendency toward exaggeration being what it is—have presumably become legendary figures back home.

That morning, Cecil, not quite so foolhardily, halted the car on a back road for reasons of his own. There was no wild life in sight as he alighted; yet I watched with some trepidation as he walked away and disappeared into the bushes. My anxiety for his well-being was at least partially justified. From somewhere nearby came the unmistakable growl of a wild beast; and after an extended interval of perhaps two seconds, Cecil had the car in motion again.

Late in the day we arrived at the rest camp, where, instead of the rough-hewn stockade we had expected, we found all the comforts of home awaiting us. The camp was a fenced-in area with dozens of round, thatched huts in the style of a native village, but with such un-primitive features as tile showers, frozen foods, American cigarettes, swimming pool, long-distance telephone connections, and morning coffee delivered to your hut before breakfast. If we preferred to forego the excellent eight-course dinner at the camp restaurant, we were welcome to make use of the outdoor cooksites. But they, too, were far from primitive. A crew of native boys stood ready to prepare our grub, to grill the meat in special barbecue pits, brew the coffee in ever-bubbling urns, and wash up the whole mess with hot water. If we insisted on roughing it we could simply plump down on the ground and eat with our hands—which would have been rather silly, since both polished picnic tables and cutlery were available.

Much as we were ready for the

camp, it wasn't ready for us. Cecil and I had not made reservations in advance for one of the rondavel huts, and none was available. It was already dark, and getting to another camp miles away was out of the question, as traffic is forbidden on the roads at night. But Cecil adopted an "it's-their-problem" attitude. It turned out to be the right attitude; because we were soon directed to two emergency cots set up for us in a storage room.

Aside from a losing battle with waves of mosquitoes that flew all night sorties against us, our repose was further harassed by a cacophonous concert of grunts, screeches, and caterwauls emanating from just beyond the steel fence that encircled the camp. Between fighting mosquitoes and praying that the fence would hold up, we didn't sleep much that night.

THE NEXT morning at a groggy breakfast at the cooksite, Cecil mentioned to a group of South African teenagers that I was an American. Immediately they wanted to know if I knew Elvis Presley. Cecil assured them I did. From then on I was pointed out as another of the more exotic wonders of the park.

Elephant country in Kruger Park is easy to recognize. Uprooted trees lie everywhere. When the pachyderm has an itch on his thick hide, he leans back against a tree and wiggles. The trees become disposable back scratchers.

We had been advised while in elephant country not to travel fast around road bends, not to pass elephant cows out strolling with their calves, not to photograph cows and calves together, and, most of all, if an elephant paused nearby and began flapping its ears, to get going, and not to be inhibited by any 25 mph speed limit.

We crossed paths with more than a dozen elephants. In each encounter we abided by the rules and extended every consideration to the awkward, plodding creatures. Were we *that* afraid of them? What could really happen in a scrap between our minikin Austin and a 10,000 pound, tusk-toting jumbo? Scrap, that's what.

Besides the elephants, we sighted zebras cropping grass placidly—but with senses ever alert for that implacable killer, the lion. (When attacked, the little striped horses are nevertheless capable of putting up a good fight by kicking, slashing with

their hooves, and biting.) And each time I spotted a zebra, the old question came back to me: Is it a white animal with black stripes or a black animal with white stripes? Cecil's opinion was that in racially conscious South Africa the issue had better be dropped. Anyhow, he said, every zebra was different. Didn't I know that no two sets of stripes are alike in the zebra world?

Despite their dappled camouflage, we also spied out a number of the tallest of all quadrupeds, the spindly giraffe. With their foot-and-a-half-long tongues, the giraffes nibbled meditatively on choice bits of foliage at the tops of trees. When they tired of ruminating, they tilted against the timber and went to sleep. When they awoke, there was breakfast in bed.

As you might expect, the lion is the Number One star of the reserve. But he shuns the limelight for the excellent reason that his efficiency as a hunter would suffer by placing himself too much on display. And although there are said to be two thou-

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sand lions roaming the reserve, it is still quite an occasion when lions are sighted. To make matters worse, you don't dare admit that you have been to Kruger and not seen a lion. As one old-timer around the reserve said, "The less lion there is seen, the more lyin' there is heard."

Self-styled lion experts (those who arrived the day before you) freely advise where the yellow-maned brutes can be found. Lions travel in prides, they tell you, and smell out their favorite quarry—impala and zebra—near water holes that have nearby open areas—special haunts where there is room for the chase. The areas lions find unhealthy are those that have been heavily grazed over, where grass is replaced by thorny weeds.

Prides of lions hunt in organized fashion. The family that preys together stays together. Their tactics are, in fact, a masterpiece of practical togetherness. The lionesses and juveniles take up strategic positions, while (see LOOK WHO'S STALKING page 82)