

LIONS PLAYING FRENZY: THE SURRENDER OF ANTHROPOGENIC ENIGMA IN HEMINGWAY'S THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

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Abstract

Ernest Miller Hemingway (1899-1961)- the other name of the epitomising some of the extraordinary and sometimes, super-human attributions. From the careful reading of the series of Hemingway novels, and often short stories, one thing is insightfully clear; all his protagonists are supremely embedded with the seed of existential life-view and exclusive traits of personality. Be it Robert Jordan's solidarity in the Spanish Civil War (17 July, 1936 – 1 April, 1939) in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*(1940) or the resilience of Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), existentialism is the apt lens to envision the insight of the psyche of these characters. This, however, is a dissertation, which does take up Santiago, the protagonist, and his submission of anthropomorphic superiority. This humble attempt eventually renders itself as an endeavour, which relates and interprets the role of the lions in Santiago's dreams and commemorations with the essentially existential outlook of life from a post humanistic perspective. Lions are the most ambassadorial of all the felines and, besides its lovers and enthusiasts of several spectrums, they have always been a supreme choice for the literary renderers as well. Hemingway himself had been so fascinated by the lions from his visit to Africa that he could not resist himself from presenting the magnanimity of these felines in disparate modules. In this discourse on *The Old Man and the Sea*, mine is the effort deal with our central character of this modern novella, going deep inside his psyche and ally the notion of lions with his ambition and the daunting journey that he embarks. Post humanism is one of the latest area of enquiries which is gradually expanding itself to be superior to conventionally accepted supremacy of humanism and, eventually we will figure out our modern-day protagonist in that primitive ambit, rendering his humanly pride humble before the post humanistic epicentre of his dream-lions.

Keywords: Hemingway, Protagonist, Personality, Bravado, Existentialism, Post humanism, Submission, Animality, Dream, Lion

"Man is not much beside the great birds and beasts. Still I would rather be that beast down there in the darkness of the sea."(Hemingway 51) Did the utterance come in the mind of the old fisherman only as a mere gesture of thought, lost amidst the depth of his rapacious adventure? Or, can it be really interpreted in the light of animal studies, a budding inter-disciplinary branch of post humanistic enquiries? Much has been told and, repeatedly discussed regarding the psyche Ernest Hemingway's protagonists. It is also quite insightfully proven that the protagonists bear quite a close resemblance with the essence of their author's own life: "The protagonist of the book brings to full circle Hemingway's use of the mythic hero, for Santiago is again a hero with a different face. He is a modern adaptation of what Joseph Campbell has called "saint or ascetic, the world renouncer."(Wylder 32)A life, fully well-designated under the threads of a number of hardships. To borrow Campbell's words once again, just in order to reemphasis on the notion- "The ego is burnt out. Like a dead leaf in a breeze, the body continues to move about the earth, but the soul has dissolved already in the ocean bliss."¹ These are but

the attributions, cumulatively termed as code hero- the man, who prefers to lead a life of grace under several circumstances of pressure. But, apart from this sense of wholeness and commonality with one another, each of the individuals connotes their exclusively own multitudinous layers of personality. It is worth noting that the iceberg theory is as prevalent in Hemingway's manly protagonists' psyche, as it is in his celebrated narrative technique. As for example, all the sensible readers can well assume what on earth is immediately going to take place during the course of piercing the marlin and its aftermath in *The Old Man and the Sea* through the presentations of crafty utterances and punctuations and, through the foreshadowing technique of narration.²But, where lies the elemental significance of the lions, flashed in the course of Santiago's dreams and commemorations time and again? Is it only a denotative implication of his indomitable vigour in his old age? The visual reminder of his lost youth? Or, Hemingway deliberately chose the lions in the dream as a perfect vehicle in commemoration with the macho-like psychic state of affair of his hero? Well, finding out the author's actual intention is not my prime area of concern, although a number of other reference, which would eventually relate this particular essence with author's own life, experience and influence. Through this discourse my aim is to figure out the excellent interplay of animality within humanity, as well as, to trace out where the anthropogenic pride actually submitted itself to the primitive being. And, while perceiving the layers of his dream through a deconstructive study, one should be on high alert regarding the location of them (the discourse of the dream and commemoration on lions) in the narrative web of our current novella.

The first utterance of the lions we find during the preliminary course of the first day as the old man was having a conversation with Manolin, the sole companion, who considered him to be the 'strange old man,'(Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* 49)and, is considerably apt to a large extent. The strangeness is not only evident in his resilience, but is also embedded in his unconscious layer of psyche, which ventures out deep into the sea, contradicting his decaying physique and, alludes all the references of animals respectively. Here I would like to invoke an interesting assertion by Cary Wolfe at the very initial part of my argument to display a sort of omnipresence of animals, in animal literature in general and, in Hemingway in particular:

My recourse to that analogy is meant to suggest that “the animal,” when you think about it, is everywhere [...] In my field alone, there's not just, say, the starring role of a bear, [...] to imagine Ernest Hemingway without his fraternity of bulls, lions, and fish [...] And, of course there is the central place of the animal in non-Western literature and culture, written and oral, which would require another essay altogether.(564)

However, when we first encounter the aspects of lions, it is quite apparent an approach. There may not be found some deep traces of special regards. A simple commemoration of the past events so to say- the occurrences as he witnessed in his hay days as a fisherman, travelling to the different points of the compass. Lions abruptly find their first interplay amidst the conversation of the old man and the boy, which was eventually a conversation on baseball- something that Santiago loved and, also greatly admired by Hemingway himself: “When I was of your age I was before the mast on a square-rigged ship that ran to Africa and I have seen lions on the beaches in the evening.”(Hemingway 13)Incidentally, the conversation on Africa ran not for so long and they once again immersed themselves in the baseball. Here, we are to witness the sudden shifts from dream to reality- from the lions of dream to the Santiago, the hunter of the reality time and again. Our protagonist and the great felines are so innately aligned. Thus, another shifting gesture is underpinned and that is the shifting of two selves- the anthropogenic

one and the animal one. This apparent occurrence of lions from nowhere into the course of the conversation, or into the dream can roughly be suggestive of one phenomenon- somewhere deep in his heart, Santiago is a devotee to an ardently rapacious nature, a predatory instinct towards his achievement firmly backs him up to be considered as a beholder of post humanistic stance. As we know, post humanism, which is otherwise widely called as ant humanism 'denotes a philosophical position concerned with reconceptualising what it means to be human. Post humanism refutes all ideas of naturalness, and denies the existence of a transcendent 'human nature' asserted by humanism.'(Cuddon 551-552) Their manner conversation seems to be a direct swing from one object of conversation to another. Lions are neither confined here only as a sacred symbol of power, royalty and faith or a point of conviction as pointed by Joseph M. Flora: "Hemingway presents Santiago and the boy together as an embodiment of faith. [...] Both the boy's and Santiago's dreams of lions in Africa symbolize this faith." (107) So, there are something really connotative textures that profoundly require a digging. Relating to the ratio of asserted statements and hints, we may say that the lion-dreams can be reinterpreted since they incorporate the notion of a primitive inculcation of surrendering homocentric ethos to the primitive spirits. Since the beginning of the evolution, the earth has witness a host of constant natural spectacles. In the cradling stage of human civilization, human beings shared their space with enormous beasts. Fear came alongside their dwelling with the predators and that fear considerably turned out to be transmuted into reverence and honour and very soon, different species became associated with the ritualistic performances of our ancestors. Thus, gradually evolved the tendency of speculating the great beasts as the incarnation of spirit and, even further, the incarnation of Gods. Nowadays, a galaxy of incarnated animals is really to be found as the inseparable parts of a number of ancient cultural gestic. It is this inclination towards the performances that gradually inspired literature to elude animals from diverse perspectives and include them in the configurative essence of its plot.

The fragmented yet vividly visionary interplay of the lions in the text prompts us to consider Santiago as standing somewhere in a non-anthropogenic stance. Three different parameters are substantial for our assessment of this interplay-

- i) Presentation of the animal beings and the protagonist's affinity with those
- ii) Author's affinity with the animals
- iii) The impact of this whole circulation on readers

Currently we are on the first point and we will be dwelling upon the rest two for sure throughout the entire course of discussion. In his article "Becoming with Animals: Sympoiesis and the Ecology Meaning in London and Hemingway," Ryan Hediger mentions that Hemingway's own visit to Africa in early 1930s motivated and regulated him significantly to develop his affinity with animals and, no doubt, their manipulation in literature thus, turned out to be more matured. *The Old Man and the Sea* appears in 1952, so it is natural to expect a neatly saturated presentation of the issue that we are talking about. Hediger articulates that "Hemingway reverses conventional anthropocentric perspectives, literally making the "man" in the scene an it, part of an "object," a mere scent on the wind. To do this, Hemingway has relied upon the subjectivity of the lion to make his own text."(12) He takes out two works of Hemingway to illustrate his deliberation i.e. "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," a catchy short story, written by Hemingway after his first visit to Africa and, his 1935 work of non-fiction *Green Hills of Africa*, a work about his first safari. Here, my broader dealing is chiefly concerned with the appearance of the lions in the dream of Santiago but, that does not simply

mean that the submission of Santiago's anthropogenic self is only confined within the larger and loftier degree of lions. At one point, Santiago readily admits that "The birds have a harder life than we do except for the robber birds and the heavy strong ones." (Hemingway 19) He acknowledges that "Most people are heartless about turtles because a turtle's heart will beat for hours after he has been cut up and butchered." (Hemingway 25) Even to marlin, his prey, calling him 'brother', he says: "Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who." (Hemingway 71) All are but the instances of animal supremacy over the granted notion of humanity. However, the couple of works that Hediger takes out, can also well suffice my arguments quite significantly. Like Jim Corbett, Hemingway also hunted down animals for a number of times and paradoxically, nurtured a gradually sympathy for them. Hediger invokes Hemingway's passage from *Green Hills of Africa* where Hemingway allied his suffering from a severely broken arms with that of a wounded bull elk:³

Alone with the pain in the night in the fifth week of not sleeping I thought suddenly how a bull elk must feel if you break a shoulder and he gets away and in that night I lay and felt it all, the whole thing as it would happen from the shock of the bullet to the end of the business and, being a little out of my head, thought perhaps what I was going through was a punishment of all hunters.(148)

Now this human-animal alliance is the point where I would really like to specially highlight and will be manipulating its reverberance for a number of times while interpreting the dreams! Contrary to the theocentric notion of belief surrenders the human will power to the God, the posthumanist conviction submits its assertiveness to a number of non-human entities and, animals certainly are one of them. In other words, as "[T]he primitive scenes as contrasted to man-made societies in Hemingway's works seem to play the role of a giver of strength and purity." (Harada 90) The deep and innate references of animals are finding their manifestation as the steady conqueror of modern-day protagonist's soul.

The second occurrence of the lions finds its manifestation in an elaborate wistful dream and, unlike the commemoration, this is going to be embedded with much deeper ethos:

He no longer dreamed of storms, nor of women, nor of great occurrences, nor of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach. They played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he loved the boy. He never dreamed about the boy.(Hemingway 16)

How interesting! Why did not Hemingway omit the section? : "[...] he loved them [lions] as he loved the boy. He never dreamed about the boy." (Hemingway 16) What was the necessity of drawing a scale of comparison? Well, perhaps by not doing so, he would have deprived us from acquiring some of the golden chances of interpretations. We already came to be acquainted with the slides of Manolin's dearly dependence on Santiago:

"I can remember the tail slapping and banging and the thwart breaking and the noise of the clubbing. I can remember you throwing me into the bow where the wet coiled lines were and feeling the whole boat shiver and the noise you clubbing him like chopping a tree down and the sweet blood smell all over me."

"Can you really remember that or I just tell it to you?"

"I remember everything from when we first went together."

**The old man looked at him with his sunburned, confident, loving eyes.
“If you were my boy I’d take you out and gamble,”(Hemingway 6)**

Such was the dependence that prompted Linda W. Wagner to observe:

Even though Santiago is “clubbing” the fish, his action seems as natural to the boy as “chopping a tree down,” and heavy blood smell he recalls as “sweet.” That a five-year-old child had such a reaction to what must have been a gory and frightening scene shows clearly the trust he had in Santiago. (62)

One thing is quite interesting to note that the anthropocentric affection is denied and, surrendered itself to the love towards the magnanimous felines in dream. Though at times we have heard “I wish I had the boy,” old man said aloud. “I’m being towed by a fish and I’m the towing bitt. I could make the line fast.”(Hemingway 32) And again, “I wish I had the boy. To help me and to see this.” No one should be alone in their old age, he thought. But it is unavoidable.”(Hemingway 34)But, all these loud soliloquies are too much apparent, the designator of his weakness compared with the innate urge to be lost in the dreams. All are, in fact, the bearer of humanly commonalities and nothing else. Not much of the hints come next after the dream and the old man woke up for the business. Just a preparatory course is taking place before hunting down the regal fish. That immediately after the dream-discourse, there takes place the significant progression of the events, which are to be witnessed after every section of dream henceforth. Hemingway is craftily placing them in the discourse of the narrative just as the discussion on DiMaggio took place at the very first interplay of commemoration. The condensed form of Santiago, the fisherman, or, if we say Santiago, the hunter is, however, finding its manifestation in the active lions of the dreams, engaged in their play-fighting gambolling and, after the completion of the dream, the man wakes up and comes into the action. This is, in fact, a fine psychoanalytical braiding of the conscious and the unconscious. This implication of braiding is even clearer in the immediate subsequent discourse: “I wish he’d [the marlin] sleep and I could sleep and dream about the lions, he thought. Why are the lions the main thing that is left? Don’t think, old man, he said to himself.”(Hemingway 49) The answer may be found by analysing the Freudian theory of ‘dream work’.⁴Although a major orientation of Freudian psychoanalysis finds its base on the human sexual desires and a lot of repressions, but a number of other things, related to day to day life can find its manifestation in the dreams. Here, we may apparently apply the process of condensation in the formation of the appearance of the lions in his dream, where Santiago’s hunting self, ambition and all other excitements find their expression in the lions. His extreme will to make a big catch, which eventually turned out to be the greatest catch in his life, finds its manifestation in his unconscious through the lions, as if his own aged and weary will power is not substantiating him enough to render his effort without the trace of any mighty referential point. The urge to prove his exceptionality is even more dominant in times than the urge to simply embark an adventure. His own words are evidently powerful enough: “I told the boy I was a strange old man,” he said. “Now I must prove it.”(Hemingway 49) Proving is more importantly coming into the forefront than the natural intake capacity of the events. His intensity to prove his exceptionality brings his humanly pride or advancement down at the feet of circumferential agents. Certainly, the animals have been quite circumferential in the humanistic ambit. “The thousand times that he had proved it *meant nothing*. Now he was proving it again. Each time was a new time and he never thought about the past when he was doing it.”(Hemingway 49) And, that is why he strongly wished ‘[...] he’d [The

marlin] sleep and I could sleep and dream about the lions,'(Hemingway 49)He is tempted to invoke his dream-lions, much akin to the invocation of Macbeth to the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.⁵ Thus, the lions would come in his dream and, exhilarate him to accomplish his predatory mission. Quite clearly we may posit our agreement to Joseph M. Flora's observation that earlier we came across: "Both the boy's and Santiago's dreams of lions in Africa symbolize this faith. [Faith in relational bondage] As faith moves into the realm of action, hope becomes an important element." (107) Simultaneously, question may arise, which 'faith' is far more digging into the actions? Which one is digging out the hope?

We find an interesting juncture in the fourth occurrence of the dream-lions. During the course of the trials and tribulations with the marlin, Santiago's left hand was cramped and apparently it was quite challenging to be on the flow of predatory consistency that he has been maintaining so far. On the third day of his voyage, vast troop of porpoises came into his dream. Then he dreamt of his village. And, after that the lions come one by one, proudly:

After that he began to dream of the long yellow beach and he saw the first of the lions come down onto it in the early dark and then the other lions came and he rested his chin on the wood of the bows where the ship lay anchored with the evening off-shore breeze and he waited to see if there would be more lions and he was happy. (Hemingway 62)

And, 'He woke with the jerk' (Hemingway 62), providing us not with even an ample scope to witness and enjoy the serene feline beauty on the evening beach! The old man had fought a titanic battle with the marlin. Earlier in this discourse, I mentioned a point that the readers should be on high alert regarding the textual locale of the dreams. And, when we trace back that very reference, we obviously take a note of the three nights spent amidst the sea. All Hemingway heroes are quite afraid about the night and, we have noticed how Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*(1940) spent all his night in an awoken state, either involved in conversation or, engaged in passionate lovemaking with Maria. But night here in *The Old Man and the Sea* appears to be far more symbolic and suggestive of existential outlook presenting the beasts in the dream of the old man. The weary old man simply cannot afford to be awoken and keeping an eye on the involuntary movement of the harpooned fish. Lions do appear in his dream to provide with an essential companionship, a complementary role to the activities of sleepless nights in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is thus played brilliantly here by the lions here. We must not overlook two of the most powerful statements, suggested by the author: "I wish he'd sleep and I could sleep and dream about the lions,"(Hemingway 49) and, "They played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he loved the boy. He never dreamed about the boy."(Hemingway 16) No man is here to share the company, no human child is here to share the much needed warmth of support to the weary hands and heart. Only the lions, not for just once or twice, each and every time- every now and then to shape up a powerful presence.

Do the repeated surrender of Santiago to the lions (the surrender of a man to animals) find any pragmatic resemblance with the day to day practical world then? Yes, they do. The correlation of nature and culture plays a crucial role in a subcontinent like India, where ecosystems range from the Himalayas and the Gangetic plains in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south; from the Great Indian Desert or Thar in the west to the Sunderbans in the east. Nature and culture are so integrally woven in India that some of its vast literary masterpieces just cannot be isolated from the combined bondage of nature-culture compound. One such text is *The Hungry Tide*

(2004) by Amitav Ghosh. Ghosh, here, shows the web of life that is fabricated amidst the mangrove- a web of interrelation of human, nature and animals. Throughout the novel, tigers symbolize the immense power that the natural world holds in the Sunderbans, where even saying the word 'tiger', or 'bagh' in Bengali is a taboo!⁶ Although there are other dangers and disasters in the Sunderbans such as the marsh crocodiles and severe cyclones, the focus on the tigers are so strong that they are qualified as one of the strong symbols in *The Hungry Tide*. Obviously, an evil connotation of tigers is to be witness here in these mangroves. Hindus and Muslims, both the religion bow down their head in front of the brutish strength and man-eating cruelty of the tigers here and prior to collecting honey, firewood's, crabs and fishes, residents are obliged to convey offerings to *Ban Bibi*, as well as, to *Dakshin Rai*, the demonic tiger god who protects several parts of the forest. Offerings are conveyed with the crucial expectation for saving the life of the people. How wonderful it is to connect the practical transformation of the literal renderings! Although Santiago's was not the venture at the cost of his life. Neither he really conveyed an offering to the king of the beasts in his dream, nor was the question of saving life. But, sure enough, there was the question of preserving his dignity, which he admittedly glorified by conquering the marlin after three long and painful nights and days. But, what is left at the end of the day when *galanos* and all the *dentuso* scavenged the entire royal body? "Nothing," he said aloud "I went out too far." (Hemingway 93)

Surely, all Santiago's experience and anthropogenic enigma surrenders themselves before the grand royalty and discourse of the Nature. Nature, a vast entity which sets forth her own laws, rules and regulations. This is the realm, which is never to be fully understood. How can frail man dare to go deep inside her heart without a balanced support system? Lions indeed turned out to be the greatest of all the support systems that a man can afford to rely on. That is why it is apt to assert:

The lions which Santiago dreams about and his description in terms of Christ symbols further suggest solidarity and love and humility as opposed to isolated individualism and pride. So evocative and lovely a symbol is the dream of the lions that it would be foolish if not impossible to assess its literal definition. Yet it seems significant that the old mandreams not of a single lion, a "king of the beasts," a lion proud and powerful and alone, like the one from which Francis Macomber runs in terror, but of several young lions on the beach in the evening to play together. [...] the lions are "the main things that is left," and they evoke the solidarity and love and peace to which the old man returns after hunting and killing and losing his great fish.(Burhans 452)⁷

Peace prevails and the humanly pride diminishes itself when the old man 'was still sleeping on his face and the boy was sitting by him and watching him. The old man was dreaming about the lions.' (Hemingway 99) Thus, the surrender turns out to be absolutely worthy since "Our dual past stills haunts us. We hear a lion roar and the primate in us shivers; [...] as if our existence still depended on their presence." (Schaller 64) As if, unknowingly our modern-day protagonist realised:

Lions are not animals alone: they are symbols and totems and legend; they have impressed themselves so deeply on human mind, if not its blood, it is as though their psyche were emblazoned with their crest. [...] when you see the noble-looking calm of the mouth and nose, the proud authority of the bearded chin- the mysterious reminder of the faces of classic and mythological heroes- you

recognize to your marrow that you were born with that image already in you.

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11. Wylder, Delbert E. "The Old Man and the Sea as a Fable." *Readings on The Old Man and the Sea*. Ed. Bonnie Szumski. San Diego: Greenheaven, 1999. 32-41. Print.

1. It deserves a special regard as one of the apt quoted phrases that designates the true flavour of a Hemingway hero. Definitely, bearing all the notion of essentialities, it turns out to be true for Santiago as well. Quite befittingly used by Delbert E. Wylder in his essay "The Old Man and the Sea as a Fable," enlisted in *Readings on The Old Man and the Sea*, Greenheaven.
2. Foreshadowing, however, is a literary device in which a writer gives a well-advanced hint or suggestion of what is to come later in the story. This is an anticipating device that prepares the receptivity of a reader's mind. No doubt, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, there are enormous examples of foreshadowing, out of which the anticipation of the attack of the sharks is a remarkable one. Santiago senses the brewing trouble and eventually, it comes out as a matter of fact that 'The shark was not an accident.' (*The Old Man and the Sea*, Arrowbooks: London, 1996, p. 77)
3. Hediger rightly considers that the analogy of the wounded elk in the passage is a striking one. It reflects the second point of the benchmark of judging the human-animal correlation that I have mentioned i.e. the author's affinity with the animals, which would eventually back up our understanding how the characters response towards such affinity and ultimately, what impact it leaves on us.
4. Freud was the first one to analyse and interpret the role of the dreams in our life and, to a considerable extent, his *Die Traumdeutung* (1899), which, later on went on to be translated in English as *The Interpretation of Dreams* in the year 1913, respectively by A.A. Brill (first version), James Strachey (authorized version) and Joyce Crick (recent version), turned out to be a milestone in the arena of psychoanalytic criticism. The other category of 'dream work' includes displacement, where an entirely different image is the consequence of different real life experiences.

5. Macbeth's invocation of the witches in the famous Cauldron Scene (IV. i) was clearly shaped up from his earlier faith, embedded in the opening scene. His invocation was to fulfil his mission i.e. achieve the throne of England. I have drawn the analogy to mark the dependence of both the protagonists on the non-physical entities. Obviously, there lies the contrast. But, in different modules, both our protagonists' vision of life turned out to be nothing but tragic.
6. In both the Indian (covering the southernmost part of West Bengal) and Bangladesh, calling the tiger '*bagh*' in the local term is regarded to be ominous since there may increase the chance being grabbed by the big cat. This is a common believe on part of the dwellers. Instead, they call '*BarheMiyan*', '*Bara Sahib*' and the like. A typical surrender of courage and confidence.
7. The plot of "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber" quite efficiently highlights on Hemingway's effort to represent the anthropogenic pride in a humble state of affair. It is a story about a common man learning more about the game hunting in general and, learning the fear in a new way in particular. Macomber has to handle his fear alone- a typical Hemingway gesture of outlook. Additionally, Hemingway's inclusion of the Somali proverb saying "[...] a brave man is always frightened three times by a lion: when he first sees his track, when he first hears his roar and when he first confronts him." (p. 11, "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber," *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, New York: Scribner, 1987. 5-28). It underlines the terribly displaced state of mind of Macomber.
8. Extracted from *A Glimpse of Eden*, a wonderful book on African safari by Evelyn Perkins Ames, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1967 from the University of Michigan.

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