

The Bother in Burmeon

Chapter 1: The hunter and the hunted

His senses were on overdrive. His arms and legs were tickled by the crisp brown and white grasses of the Savannah. His mouth and nose breathed in the smell of wild honey, of sun-scorched leaves and of distant rain. A smell so intense that he could almost taste it. His ears buzzed with cicadas in their thousands, with the rustle of wind across the plains and with a low, faraway drumbeat.

If he kept his head down, he could see Ajay immediately ahead of him, also crouched, motionless but tensed, like a coiled spring in the dry grass. Ajay was well camouflaged in his khaki shirt and shorts but carried no weapon, only his trademark camera.

If he looked up, he could stare into the infinity of the East African sky, burning blue and awesome, making him feel as insignificant as one of the tiny ants that crept now around his bare knees.

Ajay turned his head briefly, raised his eyebrows and nodded. That was the signal that the lioness had been spotted and they were to move on. Silently, crouched like two cats, they crawled onwards to where the grass began to thin out and give way to a few gnarled bushes.

And then, in the buzz of the heat and the vibration of blue sky, he saw her, the lioness, also poised, and packed with the energy and the pulse of Africa. He saw her through the brown and white grasses, not five metres away from them. She was intent on something not five metres in front of her. This was amazing: who was the hunter and who was the hunted?

Who, in the end, was stalking whom?