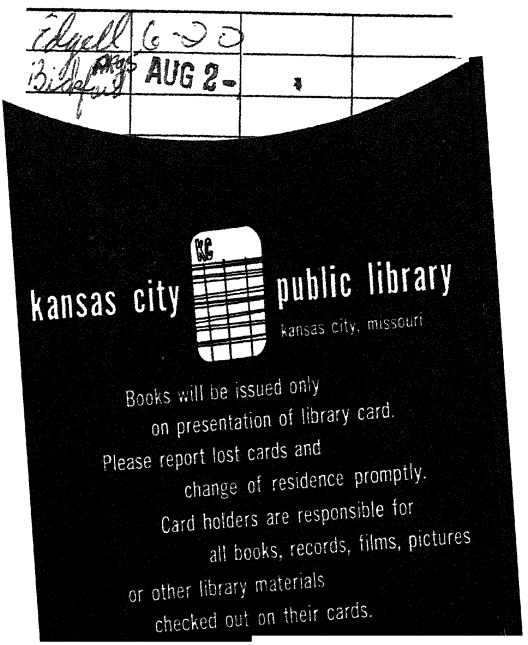

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FORESTS OF THE NIGHT

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TOO LIVELY TO LIVE

FORESTS OF THE NIGHT

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Jack Denton Scott

Photographs by Mary Lou Scott

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For Mary Lou who lived it,
and Frank L. Taylor who believed in it—

Gratitude to Will Yolen
for pulling the forces together . . .

FORESTS OF THE NIGHT

"If we were to look over the whole world to find out the country richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow —in some parts a very paradise on earth, I should point to INDIA . . ."

Max Muller

The cat

walked slowly, almost indolently, along the ribbon of yellow dirt, a road that bordered the tiny Indian forest village, sauntering as if on the way to one of the thatch-roofed huts to report in for supper and a nap. Mary Lou, sitting beside me in the jeep, gulped, and Rao cut the motor and gently brought the machine to a silent stop. Dusk was just beginning to seep into the jungles of the central province of Madhya Pradesh, a dusk that arrives like a sneak thief, and vanishes before you are aware of it. Then night comes down as if someone had yanked a curtain. The brazen cat was a leopard that had already entered the village of Bori and killed a calf tethered just outside its owner's hut. It had dragged the calf away, hidden it, and now was back to lord it over the unarmed villagers. Its assured, graceful stroll was a frightening thing to watch.

We were patrolling the perimeter of the village because the natives were terrified of the animal that seemed to have no fear of man, and Rao was afraid that the leopard might happen across one of the villagers. Then we would have real tragedy on our hands.

Rao just pointed his finger at Mary Lou. She looked steadily at him for a moment, slid across me, got out of the jeep and, with shooting vision already beginning to reach its dim and dangerous stage, she cheeked the .308 rifle, carefully following the walking leopard. The rifle barrel moved as steadily as if it were on a stand. When the sound came, it was a sharp, sudden crack that startled us even though we sat waiting for it. Almost instantly the spotted cat crumpled, kicked both hind legs, then was still. Rao, the driver and the forest guard immediately

started talking exuberantly in Hindustani, stood seemingly at attention for a moment, then bowed their heads slightly, in respect to Mary Lou's accuracy and calm. She wasn't watching them; her rifle was still at her shoulder and she was completely focused on the cat in the road, unaware of the noise of the four Indians, of the jeep, me, everything except the fact that she had a leopard on the jungle road and wasn't sure that it was dead.

With rifle jutting before her like a huge, pointing finger, she advanced toward the terrible, suddenly immense, figure of the leopard. Rao ran forward. "It is all right," he said. "He is dead! See?" He stooped, picked up a stone and tossed it at the sprawled leopard, striking it squarely in the midriff. It didn't move a hair.

Now it was dark and Mary Lou stood still a moment longer, watching the cat, then she brought the rifle from her shoulder and smiled. She was a lovely brunette who always seemed to have a golden glow about her, and she stood slim and elegant in her khaki trousers and bush jacket, looking for an incredible instant there in the wild night like a Bergdorf Goodman model showing a prospective customer how shooting clothes are supposed to fit. She was my wife, Maria Louisa, the name shortened by school chums to Mary Lou, but, for a moment, as I looked at her proudly, the whole thing seemed unreal, like something rolling off TV or romantically daydreamed.

It was real enough, we both realized as we stood on the veranda of our dak bungalow two hours later, watching the entire village dancing and cavorting before us, paying homage for the killing of one of the most terrible creatures in their jungles, the cunning leopard, or panther as they called it.

* 5 *

We had come to these dark jungles on sort of a mission: I am a professional writer and much of my work seems to appeal to sportsmen and has appeared in several national magazines and in a thrice-weekly column in the New York *Herald Tribune*. One day, early in 1957, the Government of India Tourist Office suggested that it might be interesting for me to journey to India and discover by first-hand experience what sports that country had to offer. They also said that it was the first time this offer had been made.

Ashoka Dutt, a slender, handsome, young Indian with velvet eyes, and a quick wit, was then publicity officer in the Government of India Tourist Office in New York. His understanding about visas, his planning of our itinerary, and his thoughtful, almost fatherly advice got us off on the right foot with his country and its people. He arranged to have Tourist Office representatives meet us at every stop in India, and gave us a list of what he thought we would need, even though his office didn't know too much about hunting and *shikar*. Shikar, which is Hindi for big-game hunt, is the same to India as the safari is to Africa. By working out the climatic conditions for February and March, the time of year that we would be in the jungle areas, we discovered that we would need both cold- and warm-weather clothing. We were grateful to Dutt many times late at night, as we shivered on a rough *machan* high in a palas tree, even though we were heavily bundled in alpaca duck-shooting coats and caps and lined shooting pants. Left to our own resources we probably would have taken only tropical gear into the jungles. Nearly everything we had read on India concentrated on its steaming climate. Writers like Jim Corbett never paid much atten-

tion to comfort. He believed in telling only the bare facts of the hunt and the killing of cats. He probably figured every damn fool knows about clothing and similar items. Or that no one was simple-minded enough to go after the big cats anyway.

We consulted with Henry Hunter, public relations chief of Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation, which numbers Winchester Arms among its companies, and went to the factory at New Haven to experiment, shooting various high-caliber rifles before we made our selection. This was terribly important; our lives and perhaps the lives of others could depend upon our choice. Hunter has a keen knowledge of people as well as guns, and he was helpful with detailed information on what Winchester rifles had accomplished in the field, both in Africa and India, although the Indian information was quite sparse.

Believing that one should stay with rifles with which he is familiar, and having respect for and a working knowledge of Winchester's bolt-action Model 70, we tested that model in the .458, America's most powerful big-game rifle, a whale of a weapon that hurls a .510-grain bullet. Technically the rifle has a muzzle velocity of 2,215 feet per second, with a muzzle energy of 5,110 foot pounds. We read documented reports of the rifle's knocking down an elephant with one shot. We didn't want to shoot an elephant and never have been able to understand why anyone would, but we did want to get the dangerous great gaur, some of them weighing in excess of 2,000 pounds. We also wanted enough gun for the tiger. The .458 might be a bit too much for the big cat, but I have always believed in over-gunning rather than under-gunning.

For lesser game, like the antelope, leopard, wild boar,

blue bull, chital and sambar, we selected the reliable and powerful .308, also in Model 70. Its muzzle velocity, with the 150-grain silvertip controlled expanding bullet, is 2,860 foot seconds; the corresponding muzzle energy, 2,730 foot pounds.

We also took along my favorite, a Browning superposed twenty-gauge "Lightning" shotgun and a Winchester Model 21 twenty-gauge for dove and the famous Indian gray partridge. I brought several boxes of the three-inch No. 6 shells for waterfowl.

I found that the Scandinavian Airlines System (Air India International wasn't flying into New York) knew a lot about sportsmen and their transportation problems, having trail-blazed the polar routes and instituted the polar-bear flights, so I talked with George Herz, their public relations manager. One of the basic reasons for the success of our trip was meeting and knowing people like Ashoka Dutt, Henry Hunter and George Herz, men who knew their jobs so well that they made ours easy.

Armed with a Government of India permit to take the guns and ammunition into their country, and a customs record of export, so we could bring the guns back into this country, we had little trouble getting them aboard the plane. There is on most planes an ammunition limit of 22 kilos per airplane compartment. That's about 48 pounds, and as we followed airline instructions and had all of our shells in the original wooden box, the whole business weighing about 40 pounds, we were all right on that item.

We learned later from Allwyn Cooper, Wardha Road, Nagpur, our shikar outfitters, that we could have contacted them and shipped guns, ammo and heavy clothing on ahead, say a month early, thus saving ourselves the

trouble of lugging the stuff with us. I'll probably do this if I tackle a shikar a second time. However, having had them misrouted on a trip to Mexico, I had learned that it is wise to carry your guns with you. Our rifles, bolts off, were in heavy sheepskin cases, and the shotguns in flat leather cases. We carried our cameras and binoculars.

We discovered that a vaccination certificate is required for a person who arrives within nine days of his departure from or passage through a yellow-fever endemic area. The Passport Division of the State Department gave us health cards which were filled out and signed by our doctor, John Street, who also, with the help of the Slone Brothers of New Milford, put together a kit of medicines, antibiotics, the latest and most effective malaria pills and the like. We were required to have smallpox, typhus and cholera inoculations. Dr. Street also advised typhoid, paratyphoid and tetanus shots.

We put off a couple of inoculations until the night before we departed. We were to be in Dr. Street's office by eight o'clock, but when we started out through nearby Bridgewater, Connecticut, on a snowy night, a house at the road junction was totally ablaze and fire engines and cars blocked us for about an hour. When we got to the office, the doctor was out on an emergency call; consequently we didn't get home until well after midnight. We were well punctured, but felt protected. The needles hadn't let our enthusiasm leak out. At least not mine.

But by this time, Mary Lou was beginning to think that maybe this trek to India was not such a good idea. It took me two hours to convince her that she had a form of stage fright and that everything was going to be all right.

"All that time up there in that plane," she said soberly. "I don't like it. I don't think I'll go."

Shaming her by snide references to John Foster Dulles traveling one hundred thousand miles in a year changed her mind, and we started packing at two thirty A.M. for a trip that would last months. In bed at four, up at six, and then there we were in Idlewild, to find that our SAS flight was five hours late. Finally, though, we were in Scandinavian Airline's big DC-7C, winging our way to Calcutta.

Fifty-three comfortable hours in the air, plus stopovers at Copenhagen, Dusseldorf, Geneva, Rome, Cairo, Karachi, totaling no more than six hours and SAS had us in India.

If you've never been confused by a city, I suggest that you try Calcutta, known even in India as "the city of confusion." The population, swollen by homeless refugees from Pakistan, is so vast that it makes New York City (even though it is larger) look like the suburbs of Cleveland. Your first impression as you stand at the Dum Dum Airport is that somehow you personally have kicked over a fantastic human anthill and the swarm is upon you: six coolies—in soiled red, dark blue and white turbans and *dhotis* that even at some long ago point were a dubious white—appear for each of your bags and jabber and gesticulate. A great tug of war starts, with children anywhere from six to twelve grabbing your coat, your sleeve, your lapel; asking—with smiles, eloquent brown eyes and palms outstretched for rupees—whether you want a taxi, a guide. They are not obnoxious about it, and you get the feeling that they have this privilege in this land where poverty is a way of life to be fought with any means.

The courtly Colonel M. D. Framjee, head of the local

tourist office, arrives. With his soft, assured English and the help of his two skillful assistants, K. K. Roy and K. C. Chakravarty, the confusion is gone, the customs cleared, the bags stowed and we are in a black Studebaker, brushing bullock carts, goats, making split-second, nerve-fracturing stops to avoid hitting oblivious people, chickens and sacred cattle (sacred because they were supposed to have been created on the same day as Brahmin). Through streets that teem with people—sitting, walking, sleeping on the sidewalks, preparing their meal of a wheat mash along the curbs—we make our way to the Grand Hotel, a gigantic, implausible pile full of equally implausible characters: smug, smiling, well-dressed Japanese businessmen; a few harassed-looking English; Ghurkas, Sikhs, Punjabis, Marathas, Madrasis; Russians in their bell-bottomed trousers and with bovine expressions; a few unquiet Americans, conspicuous in this off-tourist season. A page ripped out of an updated E. Phillips Oppenheim novel.

One day, one hearty mutton curry and one savory chicken curry later, we were back at Dum Dum Airport catching the midnight mail plane to Nagpur, the city known as the geometric center of India, and our jumping off point for shikar.

Once you've checked through customs (usually an uncomplicated and friendly procedure if you are a tourist), there is little trouble with baggage. Overweight is checked and paid for. Then the coolies take over, quietly, effectively. The Indians, as I was to realize many times, are a people with a highly developed anticipatory intelligence. They know what should be done, what you want, before you do.

Overnight I discovered that I was getting a reaction to

my typhus inoculation and my left arm was inflamed, swollen and painful. The plane contained only three-seat units and Mary Lou and I were separated: she jammed between two brightly saried women; I with a handsome but grumbling Anglo-Indian on one side and on the other a huge, silent, bearded Sikh, who smelled slightly of garlic.

As I glanced at the glossy beard of the Sikh, the Anglo-Indian (half Indian, half English, of a minority group that seems to be held in contempt by both races at this point in history) immediately went into detail on what the Sikhs were, much to my embarrassment and that of the big, bearded Indian. Nearly everyone in India understands English and most speak it. It seemed to me more of a national language than Hindustani.

"These chaps were pushed about in a bloody fashion by the Moslems a long time ago," the Anglo-Indian said. "They decided to give themselves that fierce look by growing beards and all that rot. Protective coloring sort of, y'know."

He was quiet for a moment, then staring directly at the Sikh, went on: "Their religion could be called the five Ks, if you like. *Kes,* the unshorn hair, held by the *khanga* comb, covered by the usually bright turban, the *kara* metal wristlet, the *kacch* underpants, and the *kirpan,* kind of a sword. Unlike most Indians, they can take a drink when they want to. And most of them want to."

On his lap the Anglo-Indian had a sleek calfskin mail bag with a brass lock. His mission in life he told me was to deliver the mail to an official at the airport at Nagpur, then return to Calcutta, carrying another full bag. The bag, from the intense way he clutched it, must have been jammed with money-mail or registered letters. He had

English features, with soft, brown Indian eyes—an interesting combination. As he chatted with me, he idly polished the brass lock with the sleeve of his tweed jacket. It gleamed like a diamond.

As he bumped against my arm that was ballooned and getting very sore, he told me that Nagpur was a good place to stop "for a half hour or so, chap. Excellent fresh orange juice at the port. But no place for a chap to sleep. Bugs, y'know."

I had developed a violent dislike for him and his habit of banging my arm every time he wanted to talk, and by the time the plane sat down I was hoping that something would happen to cancel his return flight so he would have to bed his pompous little self down with the bugs at Nagpur.

As we deplaned, a tall, darkly handsome, slender man, wearing horn-rimmed glasses, and dressed in the high-necked coat, the *achkan* of the Indian diplomat, stood on the tarmac just outside the entrance. He had been watching us from the moment we got out of the plane, and although there were two other American couples and two Englishmen with their wives, he walked toward us, and said, "Mr. and Mrs. Scott?"

When I said yes, he shook hands with me, and then placing his hands together before his face, prayerlike, in the graceful Hindu *namashthe* greeting, he half bowed to Mary Lou.

"How did——" I started.

"You have the look of a hunter," he explained smilingly. The ability to use astute flattery, intermingled with tact and good manners to the point where it emerges as sincerity, is another Indian talent. This was Vidya Shukla,

owner-director of Allwyn Cooper (Private) Limited, the shikar outfitters who were to handle our hunt. A member of the House of Parliament, a bright young Indian who knows his way around, Shukla will be heard from in Indian politics if he isn't knocked off by a tiger. Big-game hunting, especially cats, is one of his favorite hobbies—the reason for Allwyn Cooper, where he can mix business and pleasure.

As we sat waiting for our dozen bags to be gathered, we made conversation with Vidya Shukla. "We're looking forward to shikar," I said a little fatuously. "I've been wondering how it differs from African safari——"

He gave me a quick, inquiring glance. "It differs all right," he said seriously. "I think that they are a bit better organized, get more co-operation from their government than we do. But I also think they are more commercial. I believe I can give you a quote, a rather long one if you don't mind, that might answer your question." He hesitated. "Have you ever heard of Captain C. Forsythe?"

"Is that the man who wrote *Highlands of Central India?*" Mary Lou asked, getting an appreciative nod from Shukla and a surprised expression from me. She had spent hours in the New York Public Library before we left and had gleaned some amazing facts.

Then, quoting freely and brilliantly, Shukla said, " 'I will here speak only of the glorious field that India offers to the sportsman—incomparably the finest in the world. As a field for sportsmen Africa may be thought to be better, but it is not so if India be looked at as a whole. Perhaps, more animals in number or in size may be slaughtered in Central Africa; but that does not surely imply superior sport. In reading accounts of African shooting, I

have often wondered how men could continue to wade through the sickening details of daily massacre of half-tame animals offering themselves to the rifle on its vast open plains. In India, fewer animals will perhaps be bagged; all have to be worked for, and some perhaps fought for.

" 'The sport will be far superior, and the sportsmen will return from India with a collection of trophies which Africa cannot match. Africa and India both have their elephants. We cannot offer a hippopotamus; but we have a rhinoceros superior in a sporting point of view to his African relative. We have a wild buffalo as savage and with better horns than Cape species; and we have four other species of wild bovine besides, to which there is nothing comparable in Africa. In felines, besides a lion, a panther, and a hunting-leopard, almost identical with those of Africa, we have the tiger, and one, if not two, other species of leopard. Our black antelope is unsurpassed by any of the many antelopes of Africa; and besides him we have fourteen species of antelopes and wild goats and sheep in our hills and plains, affording the finest stalking in the world.

" 'Africa has no deer at all, except the Barbary stag which is out of the regular beat of sportsmen. India, on the other hand, has nine species of antlered deer. We have three bears; Africa has none. There is no country in the world that can show such a list of large game as we can in India. And for minor sport, what can compare with our endless array of pheasants, partridges, dove, pea fowl, jungle fowl and waterfowl?' "

"That's what we call quite a mouthful," Mary Lou said. "How can you remember it?"

Again that warm smile. "Many of my clients ask me the same thing: How does shikar compare with safari? The English hunter, Forsythe, knew his subject so well and wrote about it so eloquently, I thought it only a mark of respect to use his words."

I had never been entertained before while waiting through the dull routine of having bags sorted at an airport. "This is the best-timed example of soft sell I have encountered," I said. "Madison Avenue could learn something from you."

"I am happy that this gets us off on the right foot," he said. "I believe that successful and pleasant shikar is more important in making friends for India than millions of printed and shouted words coming from Parliament, and I have told Nehru so."

He drove us to the Mount Hotel, a verandaed, one-story tropical hostelry right out of an old Warner Brothers' movie. "I'd like you to breakfast with me," Shukla said. "I'm leaving tomorrow afternoon before you take off and I'd like to say good-bye and good luck over coffee." He bowed and departed. We were alone in the middle of India.

By now, although I hadn't mentioned it, Mary Lou noticed my arm and was terribly concerned. She tried to make the room bearer, a little, wizened brown man who appeared as if from a hole in the floor, understand that she wanted some ice. Failing to get her point across, she rolled up my sleeve, showed him the swelling and touched his hand to the blaze.

It was now that still hour of the morning, about three thirty, an hour when everything seems strange and exaggerated even when you are in familiar surroundings, and

the two of us felt not only exhausted but completely isolated, cut off from the rest of the civilized world. A rat scurrying in the far corner of our room didn't enhance this first night alone in India. But I pointed out to Mary Lou that we had bedded down in similar circumstances in remote Canada and Mexico, and that by daylight we would have our perspective back.

The bearer padded back in twenty minutes with some ice cubes and a couple of bottles of mineral water. Two things that we had been repeatedly warned about by old Indian hands like our friend, world-traveler Fred Rosen, were to skip all raw vegetables and to drink no water unless it was bottled or boiled.

The Mount Hotel room bearer also had a note for us: "Dear Scotts: We're on our way home and would like to see you in the morning." It was signed Dan and Marjorie Maddox, Nashville, Tennessee. It was the buoyant note we needed.

The whole thing had the familiar Hollywood touch: the Humphrey Bogart Hotel, the message from white hunters just out of the jungle, me with an arm that felt as if it was about to split open; an Indian who spoke little English, padding back and forth in a sleek, white turban and dhoti; the brunette (Mary Lou), who kept ice packs on my burning arm for hours; the beds with their gauze or mosquito-netted canopies; the large fan turning lazily and hopelessly overhead; the open spigot in the next room that served as bath, shower, water supply and tormentor as it dripped continuously.

Daylight did come, however, and the arm deflated. Coffee and tiger talk with Shukla made the day right, and he told us that he would send S. V. Rege, Allwyn Cooper's

officer in charge, to travel by train with us to Harda, the edge-of-wilderness town where we would be met by Rao Naidu, our *shikari* or hunter. Mary Lou and I were sorry to see Shukla go; he would have been fun and a great comfort to have in the jungle.

And then Dan and Marjorie: Dan was tall, slender, dark, and articulate; Marjorie, blonde, lovely and lively. They had gentle Southern accents and more enthusiasm than I have ever encountered. At first the talk was all jungle, all tiger. Then it got into the supposedly mundane things like food and clothing and weapons. But nothing is mundane with the Maddoxes.

"My deah girl," Marjorie said to Mary Lou, "y'all are just going to freeze if you park yourself on one of those machans. You goin' to do it?"

Mary Lou looked at me. "Yes," she said.

Marjorie went to one of her bags and rummaged, coming up with some long-john underwear. "You'll need these," she said to Mary Lou. "And these"—giving her a pair of canvas sneakers—"for around camp."

We then had some tea, made robust with Dan's priceless bourbon, and more talk.

"You're in for a surprise," Marjorie said to Mary Lou. "Club 21, the Carlton House, La Crémaillére a la Campagne should do as well. You'll be staying in the same dak bungalow we had, with the same staff. The cook, Motisingh, is so darn yummy that I hated to leave——"

"Blue bull," Dan broke in. "Ask for some of that loin of blue bull that I left. It is the best thing I ever ate——"

"Nope, suh," said Marjorie. "Peacock! That's the

greatest; simply the most delicious hunk of stuff in the world!"

After ransacking their bags again, they gave Mary Lou and me sweaters and heavy caps, telling us that the nights were bitter cold and we'd need them sitting up for tiger. Dan even offered to lend me his .458. I had one and he was relieved; he thought it was the rifle for anything big and dangerous that walked in the jungle.

"I took a trophy of nearly everything worth while," he said quietly. "There are two more tigers there in our blocks, I know, and a great bison that I missed that is a prize animal, a giant. I would have sworn that I hit him, but the shikari said no. That's Rao Naidu, quite a guy. Knows his stuff and you'll like him——"

"Dan got his tiger and his leopard and missed a beautiful tigress," Marjorie said. "I think he respects the leopard more than any other animal, and he's been to Africa and all over the place hunting."

"A testimonial," Dan said. "But she's right. I got more of a bang out of that leopard than anything, including the tiger. They're smart as hell, and really dangerous. They've learned to live closer to man than any other wild animal, and they know our habits better than we do ourselves. There are literally thousands of them and they've gotten to the point where they enter villages, and carry off cattle, kill people."

We had to meet Mr. Rege, get our liquor allotment —which Maddox told us was quite an undertaking— check our clothing and guns and get ready to board the afternoon train. The Maddoxes said they would see us off.

Mr. Rege, Shir S. V. Rege, was the officer in charge

of Allwyn Cooper, which meant that he was the man who took most of the responsibility of getting clients into the jungle and did most of the work at home base. He was short and soft-spoken, a gentle version of Edward G. Robinson, and he lugged a bulging, well-worn leather brief case that immediately gave the impression that here was one son-of-a-gun of a busy man. The impression was correct: He bustled like a Boy Scout leader with his first troop and shooed us around Nagpur getting our liquor permits signed, checking on our personal belongings, reminding us of items we should have.

"Kleenex," he said pensively, several times. "Don't forget this Kleenex. It comes in handy in the jungle." He was right.

It was as if Nagpur were a giant drum with the population jumping up and down on top of it, yelling at the top of their lungs: the lowing and bleating of cattle and goats in the streets and on what served as sidewalks; the constant blare of automobile horns, which seemed to merge into one long, consistent sound, never stilled, always shrill and irritating, as if horn buttons of one hundred cars had stuck simultaneously. And the color: turbans and saris of every hue; brilliant flashes of red, gold, purple, fine yellows and pale blues that stood out sharply among the brown and white bullocks and the black water buffalos; the squalid dirt roads, the rundown shops, lifting the whole medieval scene into one of fine art, limned forever in your mind.

That is the lasting impression of India: the incredible number of people and the fantastic color everywhere.

Our last stop was at a government office where we spent forty minutes with a high clerk (who wanted to be

pompous but didn't know how), filling out long impressive-looking forms, attesting (we think) that we weren't going to become alcoholics or sell liquor to the natives. Then we went around to the government shop and got twelve bottles of Indian beer (excellent!), two of English gin (horrible!) and one bottle of rye whisky, with a brand name we couldn't decipher (no comment!), and that was it. Rege was amazed that we didn't take our full quota. It wouldn't have been much more than we had, but he kept saying, "Americans always take their quota."

Back at the Mount Hotel the Maddoxes were waiting to go to the station with us and Dan, strangely enough for a big-game hunter, spent ten minutes effusing on the wonder of Nagpur oranges and how he didn't know how he was going to survive in the future without them. "You'll see," he said darkly. "They drug you with them. Then when they're gone, your life isn't worth living."

Our baggage had been sent to the station ahead of us and was there in a great heap, interspersed with wicker and woven-bamboo baskets that were filled with comestibles like eggs, oranges, bananas, and surrounded by a widening circle of staring Indians. This was India's Central Railroad and the antiquated train was waiting, shaking as if it were going to come apart at the rivets. Rege had reserved a huge compartment for us, with a stand-up type lavatory and a section for baggage. On the way, we had made one stop at the Ashoka Restaurant and Rege had bustled from it with a wicker hamper covered with a spotless white linen napkin.

Dan bent over one of the baskets, and brought out a handful of small oranges, gave us each one and we stood there in that incredible railroad station, eating the

sweetest oranges I have ever tasted, talking about when we would see one another again, and surrounded by what seemed to be half the population of Nagpur.

Then Rege bustled us aboard, got in with us, opened the windows of the car, and Mary Lou and I stuck our heads out, shouting good-byes to Dan and Marjorie Maddox, who stood eating oranges and waving. The entire crowd at the station made noises like a college-football cheering section as we rattled out of Nagpur.

"When we stop,

which will be often," Rege said, "don't let anyone into this compartment if I am not here. There will not be enough room on this train, and many people will try to get in here to ride with us."

That came to be known as the understatement of the trip. That train was alive with people: They crowded everywhere—on the edge of seats, on the floors, on the platforms; some sat on laps; some stood, some hunkered (a peculiar squat only Indians can master).

There was a neatly framed notice in our compartment, in English and Hindi, warning: "Do not purchase food and drink from the platform peddlers, as it may be drugged." This was designed, of course, for the protection of foreign travelers, but it had a disquieting effect that lasted throughout the train trip. We were glad that Rege was with us, and told him so several times. He just smiled and said, "It is my great pleasure, Mr. and Mrs. Scott. We at Allwyn Cooper want to see that you are delivered to the tiger safe and sound."

Rege told us that we were to travel about two hundred miles, that our first stop of any note would be Itarsi. There we would change trains for the last lap to Harda where we would be met by jeep. He would leave us there and return to Nagpur.

Rege had neat bedrolls which he spread on the berths and after we had been under way about three hours, he took the white napkin off the big hamper he had brought from the Ashoka Restaurant and laid a little buffet for us. There were both vegetable and chicken cutlets, each of the latter with a protruding leg bone. Both varieties

were spicy and delicious, among the consistently best dishes we had in India, and available nearly everywhere. Then hot tea from the thermos and the little hard Indian rolls, better than any we produce. There was also a loaf of bread shaped like a fish. "This is our sign of good luck," Rege said, as he cut pieces and served them. Later there were wafer-thin slices of fruitcake.

After a while, just after darkness, we slept. Fitfully. The train was a consistent yanker, and we had too much to think about anyway to sleep for long on this last leg of the journey that would get us into the jungles and after the big game we had come to stalk.

"Will there be insects and snakes in the jungle?" Mary Lou asked Rege, trying in a wakeful moment to make conversation and reassure herself at the same time.

He smiled. "Not this time of year. You will have warm, but comfortable days and cool nights; no bugs, no snakes."

"Any language barrier?" Mary Lou persisted, feeling for trouble spots.

Rege said that our shikari, Rao Naidu, spoke English and that a few of the staff, including Motisingh, the cook, could also speak English. "After a fashion," he said, in his own stilted, precise English. "But among hunters there is no language difficulty." He had us there. We didn't know exactly what he meant, but it sounded impressive.

The train made its way through the soft Indian night, sending its beam before us like a probing finger, reaching out and finding the dangerous spots that might lie ahead. It was a large, rugged engine, made by the Scotch, Rege said, and it tugged fifteen cars behind it. It snorted like a living thing and every now and then a burst of flame

belched from its stack, coloring the dark sky like a Roman candle.

Something historic should be done about this shikar train, something to lift it into the fame of trains like the Orient Express. It has a dogged determination about it that deserves recognition. Never—or seldom—traveling over twenty miles an hour, it crept across the broad face of Madhya Pradesh, through orange groves and the rich agriculture section, stopping about every ten miles.

The next morning the sun shone on the wheat fields, acres of beaten gold, and we could see bundles being cut, tied and stacked; much of it was being thrashed in the fields by burros, tied to the crude wooden thrasher which moved as they plodded in fixed circles, a method probably as ancient as India itself. The orange groves seemed neater, more symmetrically spaced than those we had seen in Florida and California, and many Indians in loincloths were at work among the trees, cultivating the ground by hand with hoes.

At one stop, the station master came aboard and chatted. He marched in and sat down beside us. "Shikaris?"

Rege said that we were.

"Why not stop here?" the station master asked. "We have tiger and panther, no more than three miles from this village, and we would like you to hunt them."

There was some shouting now, and we could see that the conductor had collared an old man and a boy and was throwing them off the train.

"They have no tickets," the station master said sadly. "Now I suppose it will be my burden to get money from them or throw them into prison."

The conductor came back and talked with the station master, who left us, waving his hand. "Good fortune on your shikar," he said.

The conductor was an excitable young man with even, almost pretty, features. He wore a fancy braided blue uniform. "Why, why, must they do this to me?" he asked. "Why must these people steal the bread from my lips and ride the train without tickets? I do not like to lose my temper with them, but what can I do? If officials of Central Railroad knew that we must be conductors, guards and policemen all at once, maybe they would be more generous when they count our rupees." Scowling darkly he left us to make his rounds, looking for free loaders.

This Central Railroad can be compared with the heart in the human body, pumping life into the towns, the primitive villages and huts that are miles away. Its narrow bed with sun-silvered ribbons of tracks is responsible for the life of much of Central India, the link that makes it possible for the people of the back country to move. They come from the inland villages, walking many miles to get to the railroad and squat, waiting for this train that will carry them to Nagpur, Itarsi and Harda.

The train continued to stop at every spot along the way where there was even a cluster of buildings, and after about three hours of this, we remarked about it.

Rege explained: "These people live again because of this railroad. It gets them the food and clothing they need, brings them to the cities, to the hospitals, the markets, the shops."

We couldn't complain after that if the train stopped

every five minutes. Rege had put it out clearly as India's lifeline.

That lifeline is the way to see the real India: children sleeping on the station platforms covered with flies and little else; men and women making their morning toilets on the edge of the platforms; men in disheveled dhotis and women and children in saris and other pieces of clothing that looked like long-tailed shirts or cast-off bed linen, sitting, sleeping, eating curds and a wheat mash that looked as if it had already been eaten and digested once; the gray-headed Indian house crows boldly swooping down among the outstretched people as they scratched themselves awake and began to stir. And at every station the loud cry of "Cha, cha ga rum," sounding as if the turbaned food-butchers were bullfrogs talking to the moon, but really meaning, "Tea, hot tea!"

Once, as our train stopped, we held our compartment door firmly against three turbaned men and a boy with thick oily hair and wild eyes, who tried to beat their way in. We looked out of windows—always open for ventilation, but also bringing dust and soot which covered us and everything in the car with a fine, black sifting of all the filth that was airborne—and saw three families awakening on the railroad-station cement platform. It was early morning and apparently they had been there all night. From beneath one large, voluminous sari emerged a woman, two children and a man. The woman had thrown the garment over her whole family—their protection from the outer world, the cold, the damp, the night. Two more families beside them were doing the same thing. It reminded me of that amusing circus act in which about six

large clowns emerge from a midget car that looks as if it would barely hold one person.

And always there was the food vender with that tremolo, "Cha, cha ga rum!" and his wooden-wheeled cart with its sickly-looking pale yellow and pink confections on open trays—soft candies that attracted the flies and the children. There were piles of big, shiny green leaves—actual leaves from trees—that were used as plates for a mixture of food: a sort of cottage cheese, messy mounds of cooked vegetables, the popular *papars*—thin fried pastry, resembling our potato chips—and *pakavras,* another fried pastry stuffed with a hot vegetable mash. The Indians would lever the food from the leaves with their fingers and pop it into their open mouths; or sometimes just open their mouths, tilt the leaf and let the food slide in. Mary Lou and I were always awed by this leaf-and-mouth procedure and looked for it at every platform. Actually, it was a very skillful maneuver. I've seen Americans at a ball game who make eating hotdogs a less appetizing procedure.

Where there is an Indian woman, there is a brass pot. As there are many women on any station platform, there were stacks of shiny pots everywhere. They use them mainly for water, Rege told us, and keep them sparkling by polishing them with wood ashes. It's quite a sight to see the morning sun striking sparks off the many gleaming, satiny surfaces, almost as if the platform was afire.

You can have your air-conditioned soot-free cars and impeccable time schedules. We were seeing India off guard as we made our way to the jungles, an India the tourist doesn't even know exists.

After thirteen hours, we reached Itarsi, which was

only about 150 miles from Nagpur. There we waited an hour for another train, waited amidst humanity that surged around us, staring, poking fingers at our luggage, but never bothering us. As a matter of fact, if we had been the Indians, we would have stared, too: at the mounds of luggage, unfamiliar clothing, city-pale faces.

Our second train was a little faster; we made the next stop, Harda, in five hours. As this was almost a hundred miles, we had the illusion that we were really zipping along at great speed.

My trained eye, as reporters in books like to say, wasn't too sharp at Harda. About all I can remember of the place is that it was full of bamboo and teakwood buildings, that it seemed to teeter on the edge of the jungle, was active, rather large—and welcome. Rao Naidu dims any other impressions of Harda for me: A tall, slender man with even features that looked as if they were cut out of bronze, soft brown eyes and the gentlest male voice I have ever heard. He walked up to us on the station platform with long, graceful strides, and said, "I am Rao Naidu, your hunter, sir."

Rege said, "This is Mrs. and Mr. Scott, Rao. They are the guests of the Government. We must show them some jungle cats and what shikar is really like." He grinned, looking more like Edward G. Robinson than ever. "You think there are any animals left?"

Rao Naidu smiled. "I have a few personal friends among the cats. They will be there."

Rao had a jeep and trailer waiting. The coolies loaded our bags and guns and the box of ammunition, and we said good-bye to Rege. Kanhaiyalal Tiwang, a broad, gray-haired man, the deputy forest ranger at the village of Bori, despite his overweight, jumped agilely up with the bags, and we were off. In ten minutes we lost civilization completely except for an occasional old Mercedes truck that lurched by, heavily loaded with bamboo that had been cut in the jungles.

Rao drove rapidly and skillfully, swerving around cattle that seemed determined to commit suicide or murder, depending upon the point of view. Dust trailed us

like a storm cloud and I could see it raining upon Kanhaiyalal Tiwang, painting his face like a clown's. When he saw me glancing back, he grinned broadly, exposing teeth stained a bright red from indulgence in the national habit of constantly chewing betel nuts (a slight stimulant, obtained from the betel palm tree).

"Did you meet Mr. and Mrs. Maddox?" Rao asked.

We told him that we had become friends in a short time.

"He is a good hunter," Rao said seriously. "Mrs. Maddox did not hunt, but she brought good cheer to our camp. The staff was sorry to see them go."

"I would think so," Mary Lou said. "We're running out of people like the Maddoxes."

Rao smiled. "I think that we have adequate replacements. Do you hunt, Mrs. Scott?"

"Yes," Mary Lou said. "It's my favorite sport. Wing shooting particularly and attacking small trout with a light fly rod."

"We won't do any fishing out here. The rivers are all nearly dry at this time of year," Rao said. "But there are plenty of game birds, four species of dove, gray jungle fowl, peafowl, some partridge. As a matter of fact, we are going to depend upon you to supply the camp with fresh meat. Motisingh, our cook, has a great desire for roasted peacock."

"These could be meatless days," Mary Lou said. "We'll do our best, but I hope the supply of canned goods isn't low."

Rao laughed. "No, we have adequate supplies. But the taste of fresh meat like curried dove or breast of peacock is considered a real treat by all of us."

We were penetrating deeper into the jungle now, with the road becoming narrower, the foliage thicker. Ahead of us I could see a big, gray monkey sitting in the road staring. He looked like a seedy old man patiently waiting on a street corner for a bus. He broke into the jungle as we got closer, loping on all fours, but still looking like a man.

"Langur?" I said to Rao.

He nodded. "The favorite meal of the panther," he said. "I believe there are many panther or leopards near camp, for the monkeys have been in turmoil most of the time during these past two days. A sure sign that the cats have been among them, killing."

We had driven about three hours, had entered and passed through two small villages, with mud huts and thatched roofs and silent, staring people in various states of dress and undress. Rao raised his arm and waved as we went through and everyone waved back, grinning.

"These forest people are happy," Rao said. "It is said that Nehru would rather spend his time among them than with the people in the cities. If this is true, our Prime Minister is really a brilliant man. There is no evil in the hearts of these people."

After a few minutes, he said, "I have heard that you are in India to investigate our many outdoor sports and report on them for your people." When I said that was just about right, he went on. "We need men like you over here. Our tourist attractions, which are many, do not get the proper acknowledgement."

"Why is that?"

"Confusion, I believe," he said soberly. "The Tourist Office is still part of Transport" (recently it became a

separate division and function) "and rather new. We have written the office at Delhi with suggestions of things they could do for people coming here on shikar that would vastly improve the situation. Although I understand the Director, Mr. Chib, is a very able man, we hear nothing in reply." Rao's English wasn't exactly of the Oxford variety, but it was good and his vocabulary was excellent. Vastly, he pronounced "vostly" and occasionally he stumbled over a word like "acknowledgement," but largely his English was superior to that of the majority of Americans, including me.

"We need an air-conditioned hotel or at least a motel in Nagpur instead of the Mount," he said. "Special liquor and gun permits that would be automatic as soon as Americans had signed with us for shikar, things of that nature. An air-conditioned compartment on the trains, better time schedules. All these arrangements are necessary if we are to attract Americans. That train to Harda is a disgrace. I warrant you have nothing in America to compare with it——"

"Don't be too sure," I said. "America isn't exactly the land of perfection. There is a railroad called the New Haven that doesn't do much better than your Central."

"You are joking, of course," Rao smiled.

We were approaching another small, mud-hut village. The group of men standing beside the road watching our approach were dressed in what looked like short dhotis, and had turbans wound carelessly around their heads. They were coffee-brown and lithely built. "What are these forest people called?" I asked.

"These in the Hoshangabad District where the Bori Range is located are aboriginal Gonds and Korkus, with

a few immigrants mixed in, people who came from Budelkhand, Marwar and Khandesh. The dates of these immigrations are supposed to have been in Akbar's time and in 1784."

Rao saw me scribbling in my notebook and stopped. "Please, continue, Rao," I said. "You have knowledge of this section that I have not been able to find in any printed book."

He seemed a trifle abashed at that and said, "I have gathered many facts about the people and the land around Bori. This is the country where shikar is the best, the place where we do most of our hunting and as that is my life and my love from this time on, I feel that I should know something of it."

Indians are inclined to speak sometimes as if they were lecturing, and their English may take on a monotonously unaccented tone which is often hard to follow accurately, especially if you are trying to put parts of what they are saying on paper. Rao was an exception. Except when he was talking about his great love of shikar. Then his words sounded like something he had rehearsed a long time and came out as if he had committted them to memory.

"That, I would say, is part of doing your job well," I said, gently brain-picking. "Knowing the people around you, the fauna, the flora, everything connected with an area in which you work."

"Yes, yes," he said quickly. "That is exactly it. I have made a study. Of the total population of the Hoshangabad District, about seventy per cent of the people are engaged in pasture and agriculture. The agricultural tenants form about fifty per cent of the population while the agricul-

tural laborers are about twenty per cent. Cottage industries like hand-spinning and weaving are also very important, supporting four per cent of this population."

He had slowed the jeep on the outskirts of the village while he was talking and a small brown boy, clad in nothing but a loincloth, broke from a group and dashed toward us. He got to the side of the jeep Mary Lou was on and, smiling as if his teeth were going to drop out with the joy of it all, threw four bananas into Mary Lou's lap and ran gracefully off. Mary Lou, almost immediately, had the skin off one, passed them around, and we talked between mouthfuls.

"How do you communicate with these people?" Mary Lou asked. "Mostly Hindi? Or do they have some other language?"

Rao had the fact for that one: "The principal language of the district is the Bundeli dialect of Western Hindi, which about sixty-five per cent of the people use and is what I use most of the time. The Malwi dialect of Hindi is spoken in the Harda tahsil. But the Kirs, a land-cultivating caste, have a peculiar dialect all of their own, which is a form of Marwari, I believe. Most of the Gonds and Korkus speak their own tribal languages, but they have learned forms of Aryan vernaculars current around them, and Hindi is the common language for our intercommunication.

"Most of these forest people are Hindus, Animists and even Mohammedans," Rao went on as he dodged three big, white Brahman bulls in the middle of the road. "The Gonds are mainly Animists; the Korkus, Hindus. Hanuman is the only God of whom any representation is attempted; the rest are just stones that are painted red.

Some of the very religious from these jungles do make pilgrimages to the shrine of Onkar Mandhata and the holy cave temple of Mahadeva."

I knew that what these jungle folk were wearing weren't dhotis, the apparel that looks and is worn a great deal like a diaper except it is longer, more voluminous. Rao explained that one for me as a result of the simple Indian expedient of reading my mind. He saw me staring at three villagers who were sitting under a large tree with violent red blossoms, and said:

"Those men are village elders. They are wearing *pagris,* a piece of cloth twelve inches wide and five yards long. The larger the man's pagri, the more respectable he is considered. Many of them also wear on the shoulders the *duppatta* or short cloth, three feet wide and twelve feet long."

Ahead of us now I could see a long puff of smoke rising into the afternoon sky. Coiling lazily, it drifted off followed by others. It was as if someone on the ground was manufacturing small, immaculate white clouds and sending them up where they belonged.

Rao saw me watching the smoke, and smiled, showing fine, even white teeth. "That is the camp. They have a fire going for us. We will sit there on the hill and talk before dinner."

Mary Lou sat silently for a moment. "I can't believe it. . . ."

I felt the same way. How many miles? Ten thousand. How many hours and days and thoughts had gone into this? They were uncountable.

Ashoka Dutt had told us of his country: "India," he said, "is a vast subcontinent covering more than 1¾ mil-

lion square miles and is isolated from the rest of Asia by the Himalayas, the 'abode of snow' in the north and north-east. The eastern and western boundaries are formed by the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.

"Distances by air from Delhi, 1,000 miles east to Sadiya in Assam, 1,075 miles south to Madras and 1,400 miles to Trivandrum, and 800 miles to Bombay on the west coast, may give you a small idea of the size of my country. And there are wide climatic differences: in Bikaner (Rajasthan) the thermometer rises as high as 120°F. in the summer, and in Dras (Kashmir) it has been registered as low as 29°F. in winter. Rainfall in my complicated country," he had said, smiling as only Ashoka Dutt can smile (a commodity that should be bottled and sold for the benefit of India), "is also extreme. It ranges from less than 5 inches in Jaisalmer (Rajasthan) to about 430 inches in Cherrapunji (Assam)."

And now we were almost at our destination in this vast, complex country, right smack in the center of it, its heartland of jungle where we would live with aboriginal people and hunt the most dangerous big game on earth, the leopards and tigers of the central forests of Madhya Pradesh. The man-eaters Jim Corbett had made infamous, the black panther, "Bagjeera," and the villian tiger, "Shere Khan," Kipling had captured in his great prose.

Another hour and we were there: A whitewashed, red-tile-roofed dak bungalow sat upon a little promotory overlooking the fifty-hut village of Bori, a half mile away. The staff was lined up before it, waiting to greet us. Standing stiffly erect, Rao made the introductions with the air of a front-line colonel reviewing his staff.

"The cook, Motisingh," he said, and we shook hands

with a tall, handsome, gray-haired man, who smiled shyly around an almost white toothbrush mustache; then the driver, Pathak, short, with widely spaced front teeth and an infectious grin; the clerk, Dube, short, dark, tense; the room bearer, Fakira, broad, relaxed; the houseboy, Govinda, slender, young, shy; the skinner, Chotelal, thin, with an untidy turban and a bewildered expression; the laundryman, Jajanath; the assistant cook, Laxman; assistant driver, Sampat, slim, elegant with the finest masculine features I have ever seen; and a short, swarthy, happy-looking Indian with a bright green and red, oddly shaped, almost pointed turban, which was his badge of office, Sardarkhan, the forest guard.

After Mary Lou and I firmly shook hands with each of them, Rao showed us around.

A broad stone-floored veranda, with a red tile roof that sloped steeply off the main roof, completely encircled the bungalow. There was one large room inside in which there were two mosquito-netted, canopied beds, two low tables, two chairs of the conventional kind woven with bamboo seats. There were also two large, plantation chairs, wide enough and long enough so that you could completely relax, even sleep in them, stretching your legs full out on the long firm, protruding wooden arms. These were strictly Indian. I've never seen anything like them before.

The floor was stone and there were two bright, varicolored cotton rugs spread.

"These dak bungalows are built by our Forest Department," Rao said proudly. "They are placed throughout the jungle and are used as rest houses by our traveling forest and governmental officers. Mr. Shukla leases them for our shikar and we have exclusive use of them, one dak

to every two shooting blocks. Only thing that could deter would be an official traveling this way. He has the right and privilege to rest here for the night."

Mary Lou and I looked at the two medium-sized beds in the narrow room.

It must have been obvious what we were thinking, for Rao immediately said, "But that never happens. Never has a client of ours been disturbed."

He parted the cocoa-colored cotton curtains shielding the other room. This obviously was the bathroom. It was bare, with stone floors, and had a wooden stand in the far corner with a washstand and a zinc pitcher.

"The *ghuslkhana,*" Rao said, his inflection confirming our thoughts. It was a small, square room with a small hole in the far wall, where a square parapet built of stone, no more than six inches in height, was occupied by a large zinc tub—our bathtub. Obviously when the bath had been taken, the water was emptied and flowed outside through the hole in the wall. I immediately thought of Kipling's mongoose, "Rikki-tikki-tavi," and of the snakes and scorpions that would perhaps find it convenient to use that water-exit hole as an entrance. Before the encircled tub was a wooden-slatted mat to stand on and a small wooden towel rack. In the far corner was a wooden seat with four legs. This was the commode, the "thunderbox" noted in English literature of India. The lid was snapped down, concealing the center hole. This was not exactly foreign to anyone who had ever used a Chic Sales in rural America. Protruding beneath this wooden contraption was a big white enamel pot, called, if I remember my Kipling, a "tophat."

"This is the work of the sweeper or houseboy, Go-

vinda," Rao explained. "Call him by name, or just *mehtar*, and he will come." Rao later explained to me that the people who handle the work in ghuslkhanas are the lowest of the outcastes, the untouchables, who inherit the odious task of dealing with ordure and can engage in no other employment. "I'm sorry to tell you this," he said. "I am of the group who think caste should be abolished."

We later learned that Govinda, the handsome, shy-looking lad, did little else except bring us hot water for the tub and for shaving and sit and watch the curtain that separated the bedroom from the ghuslkhana. When he saw it open, then close, he knew that the room was in use; when it opened and closed again, he entered. This system worked more efficiently than the plumbing in many hotels and homes I have stayed in over the years.

It would be dark soon, Rao told us and suggested that we use what light was remaining to sight in our rifles. "We hunt for cats by jeep at night. Our plan is to go out this night immediately after dinner."

He had taken our rifles and shotguns out of the cases and they were racked just inside his tent, which was set up beside the bungalow. This became the hub of our life, the center of activity. Everything was planned from and evolved around Rao's tent. We took the .308s, and the .458 and a handful of shells, and Rao instructed the forest guard, Sardarkhan, an eager little man, to run out and pin up a target. It was a standard 100-yard bulls-eye paper target such as is used on rifle ranges, and we shot from the jeep, which was driven down from the hill the dak was on to a point the other side of the dusty road that ran by the camp.

Both Winchester .308s had Lyman All American 4X

power scopes mounted on the Pachmayr Lo-Swing mount, making it possible to use the scope for distance shooting or swing it off quickly and use the iron sights should the necessity arise. The big .458 wasn't scoped. Mary Lou insisted that I shoot first. I got off three shots, cradling the rifle, and leaning forward on the jeep, which had the windshield down and made a convenient rest. The forest guard waved his hands, then held one up, showing five fingers, then holding up two on the other hand, which meant a seven, Rao said. Then he signaled, an eight and a nine. The bull on the target was ten, and I wasn't in it. "That is not bad at all," Rao said. "Now, Mrs. Scott."

Mary Lou carefully cheeked her own .308, using the same procedure I had, and got three shots off, but much more slowly than I. This time the forest guard unpinned the target and ran it back. Rao studied it, then came over and shook Mary Lou's hand. "It will be a pleasure to hunt with you, Mrs. Scott," he said.

Several of the camp staff crowded around, and one of them, I think Dube, the clerk, said, "Hip, hip, hurrah!" The shouting was about three shots flat into the ten, in the bull, two of them making one large hole.

"The rifle is sighted in all right," Mary Lou said. "Either that or I'm plain lucky."

"This is not luck, Mrs. Scott," Rao said proudly. "I have a skillful shot with me on this shikar." He looked at me quickly. "You too, sir."

"I'm happy that I was just anywhere in the black," I said.

"Are you going to sight in the .458?" Mary Lou asked.

She shot it first, the big gun knocking her 105 pounds

back after each shot as if someone had given her a fierce push. This time the shots were seven and two eights. I got two eights and a nine. "This is the first lady I have ever seen using a gun this big," Rao said. "It is surprising that she is so good, with a rifle with recoil like this."

I could see who was fair-haired around our shikar camp. My shooting would have to be spectacular to even get a nod from Rao and the staff. Three of them rushed over to help Mary Lou from the jeep, Rao held up one hand like a traffic cop, got out, walked around and gently helped her down. She is a person who refuses all male help when engaging in their sports, feeling that she has the capacity, the strength, the desire and the skill to do everything on her own. But now she accepted the helping hand with grace, and smiling sweetly at me, walked ahead of us back to the dak bungalow on top of the hill. Then suddenly darkness was upon us.

The fire was still going on the knoll twenty yards in front of the bungalow and Rao motioned to Govinda to bring more logs. The boy dog-trotted away and came back with several odd-looking, grayish brown logs. "From the Moka tree," Rao said, throwing them one by one on the fire. Sparks were starred into the night by a slight wind that had come up.

I mixed Mary Lou a whisky and water and I had a gin and lemon squash. Ice came from a small, Servel refrigerator that held one small tray of ice cubes. It wasn't working properly, however, and the drinks were only slightly chilled. We discovered that ice and ice cubes were held in small regard, probably a holdover from the British who like their drinks warm. Rao had a straight lemon

squash. "I will take a drink with you when you get your tiger," he said.

Below us we could see the huddle of fifty Bori huts as night first made them into indistinct blobs, then seemed to float them away into the nothingness that is the jungle after dark.

We sat there observing the ancient rite of watching the fire devour the logs and spit flame into the sky, and we talked about the hunt still ahead of us this night.

"We hunt the cats and the other night prowlers like the wild boar and even the sloth bear," Rao said. "We use a light and drive the roads. Many of our hunters find it interesting. Have you ever done it?"

"It's against the law in the States to hunt most animals by night," I said. "Of course we don't have the animals that prey on people and that makes all the difference, I guess."

"You will find that night is the element of the leopard and the tiger," Rao said. "You are meeting him on an uneven basis. He knows the roads, the forests, every ravine around Bori better than any of us. The light, however, almost puts us on equal footing with him. But not quite. These cats are animals that are always hunting, always on the alert. They may be hunting us before we know that we are hunting them."

"That's a very neat twist," Mary Lou said. "We go out in their own backyard, delivered in a jeep. What could be more convenient from their viewpoint?"

"Let us not forget the guns," Rao said.

"True," I said. "But neither of us is accustomed to shooting at night. I should think that would put us at a distinct disadvantage."

"The word is among the staff, and has reached the villagers," Rao said softly, "that Mrs. Scott has great control over her rifle. All of us have confidence in both of you. This is good to start with. Many people who come here on shikar are only fair shots and this immediately puts all of us at what you call a disadvantage."

"Now if we can only get word to the animals," Mary Lou said.

Rao laughed. Motisingh appeared on the veranda where he had a table set with a cloth and silver. "Dinner," Rao said.

Fakira served so deftly that he would put the finest waiter at the posh Carlton House to shame. His skill reminded me of an old Milton Berle chestnut about Lindy's where the waiters are known for their unco-operative attitude, and I decided to recite it for Rao. We suspected that he had an acute sense of humor and this was a test-firing.

I built the scene of Lindy's, telling Rao about the location of the place and the kind of people who inhabited it, then said, "These two men were having lunch. Neither had a watch. A waiter walked by. 'Pardon me, waiter,' one man said. 'Could you tell me the time?' The waiter stopped, stared at the man, looked at the table, and said, 'Not my table,' and walked on."

I was secretly a little embarrassed at telling one that old and hackneyed, but maybe this would be one of the charms of the jungle: no story would be too old. Mary Lou gave me a glum look, but Rao laughed so hard that he finally raised his napkin to his lips to smother off the sound.

When Fakira came back with the main course, Rao

translated the Lindy thing for him. He stared at me. I smiled. He said three or four involved-sounding words to Rao, wheeled around and left.

"Looks like someone didn't appreciate the sparkling recitation," Mary Lou said.

"We have our sense of humor," Rao said, "but we are also a serious people. Fakira, being a waiter, said he did not see anything to laugh about and wondered why the owner of the restaurant had not come out and fired the man immediately. He also said that he thought the waiter did not know his job and perhaps ought to be pulling a rickshaw."

Although this incident didn't conclusively prove it, Indians have an acute sense of humor and quickly catch the nuances in any situation. It did prove, however, their pride of accomplishment in their jobs. No matter what the task was, they did it well. But this took care of any so-called joke-telling for the stay in the jungle. Being a confirmed typewriter type, I wasn't much of a vocal story-teller anyway, and from that moment on we let the natural situations inspire the humor and the laughter.

Motisingh had prepared a delightful sort of chicken à la King, in a spiced cream sauce served over toast wedges. Our first meal in the jungle could have come from the superb kitchens of Gaston Lauryssen's Ritz-Carlton.

were waiting for us beside Rao's tent. One was slat-thin with a thick, black mustache, brown eyes with a merry twinkle, gold rings in his ears, and a tremendous, carelessly wound turban. This was Shobharam, our tracker from Bori. There was the driver, Pathak; Kanhaiyalal Tiwang, forest ranger of Bori who had ridden in from Harda with us; and Rao. We would be spending most of our time with these four. Kanhaiyalal Tiwang had taken it upon himself to accompany us. He would serve as sort of governmental buffer, he told us in his slow, uncertain English. He was fat and complacent, but comfortable to have around.

It was bone cold, and as we climbed into the front of the jeep, Mary Lou on the inside beside the driver, me on the outside, we were again thankful for Ashoka Dutt's repeated warnings. Rao, the tracker and the ranger sat in back on the hard metal cross seats. That was the way we would ride from then on, except that Mary Lou and I would occasionally change positions.

It was nine o'clock by my Hamilton on which the hands had been set ahead and moved back so many times we really don't know what time it really was. The three in the back were wrapped to their teeth in the duppatta, which they wore like a shawl, and Pathak drove as if he knew every hole in the road. He handled the jeep gracefully, throwing it smoothly into four-wheel drive when necessary to bump across the nullas, the dry river beds, and he was extremely careful as he tracked across the narrow spots where the banks broke away sheerly to deep unguarded drops below. We hadn't ridden with Pathak ten

minutes before we began to feel secure. This was half the battle, for we would be spending much time in the jeep, hunting at night.

Everyone was silent now and suddenly Rao switched on a sealed-beam searchlight and began probing the dark forests with it, looking for the burning of eyes; every head in the jeep followed the movement like spectators at a tennis match. Every head except that of Pathak. He needed full concentration at the wheel.

The moon was pale this night, frosted silver, and it ghosted the landscape—the trees and the stream that flowed far below us—into indistinct unreality. This could have been a dream sequence from a picture by Hitchcock.

Now ahead of us we could see bonfires, stretched along the road like a burning necklace around the dark neck of night, and the figures of people who were feeding the flames.

Rao whispered, "The Forest Department hires the villagers to burn back brush and undergrowth, not only to clear the road but to insure double safety: to prevent careless fires and to keep back the creeping jungle."

Then the fires were behind us and we could see eyes that glowed a few hundred yards off to our right. "Sambar," Rao said. "Sambardoe," Pathak corrected, running the words together as if they were one. But we did not stop. We would not shoot antlered game at night. Only the killers.

The cold was penetrating, strange to us in the heart of India, as we turned onto another road. "Hold on," Rao said, "this is the *kacharasta*" (rough road). It is not a road at all really, but perhaps a place where some carts and a few vehicles have passed. Pathak threw the jeep

into four-wheel drive and we slanted straight over a bank into a nulla and bounced across the rocks. Midway, the jeep halted. Rao threw his light off to the right. There was a large animal covered with white spots. It looked like a giant whitetail deer. "Chital," Rao whispered. "We will hunt them by day." The animal stood with head raised, its antlers looking enormous with the spotlight on them. Then suddenly it spurted away.

Shortly, without warning, we were at a village, "Lodhidhana," Rao said. The jeep stopped beside the largest mud hut, and we were immediately surrounded by men and children. These aboriginal villages, we were to learn, stretched across the jungle in a connecting link for thousands of miles. It was etiquette to stop and ask the *gaon,* the village headman, to go hunting with you and offer him a few rupees after he had acted as a combination guide and tracker. Supposedly these village elders knew the hunting in their own territories better than outlanders like Rao and the forest ranger. We had occasion to doubt this.

But now Pathak was out of the jeep, pouring us a cup of hot, strong tea from a thermos, and we nibbled on a bit of fruit cake that Motisingh packed for us. The villagers gathered around, smiling and staring. There was much jabber in Hindi, while Rao stood slightly apart, dignified, somewhat aloof, but still master of the conversation and the situation.

It seemed that three wild boars had been sighted not more than two hours before in a heavily forested area about eight miles south of the village. They had been rooting, and two of them had charged three herdboys from the village as they were driving buffalo back from the

grazing grounds. The boys had escaped by circling the buffalo, who faced down the pugnacious pigs.

The gaon, a slender man with an amazingly smooth face but faded old eyes and practically no hair, held his arms high and said several Hindi words to Rao. He was vehement and excited.

Climbing into the back of the jeep, Rao said to me, "He would like us to try to kill the wild boars. Not only do the villagers need meat badly, but these animals are about as dangerous as anything in the jungle. They charge without provocation."

While we were driving to the spot where the wild boar were supposed to be, Rao told of what one of the tusked monsters had done a couple of months ago. It seemed that a shikar client had shot at a boar, wounding it.

"This is our nightmare here in the jungle," Rao said soberly. "It is one reason I try to be very careful of people I take on shikar. When an animal like a boar, a bear or any of the cats is wounded, its danger to humans is increased by at least fifty per cent. Careless or too quick shooting can wound a tiger or a leopard, and it can prey on these unarmed villagers for months after the hunter has gone back to America. I know you will be sure of your target. The man who shot the wild boar was not. He flashed a shot at it as it headed for heavy cover. He couldn't really see enough of the animal to shoot, and he wasn't a good enough shot to try for the boar while it was running."

They had trailed it and observed blood, but couldn't find the animal. So they forgot about it. "There really wasn't much else we could do," Rao said. "I did search for it again, but it had penetrated deeply into the jungle apparently and we never saw it again."

But one of the village people did. One of the older men from Bori was returning from a neighboring village about ten miles away where he had been working at a charcoal pit, walking quickly along the yellow dust road, trying to make it to his hut before darkness fell.

"We never found out exactly what happened," Rao said. "There were long, deep, scuffs in the road where the man had apparently been dragged. From the tracks it was evident that it was a big boar. The man was dead, his stomach had been almost completely ripped out. He really never had a chance. Those animals are quick, almost as fast as a cat."

There was silence now and we watched the long beam of Rao's light as it pushed aside the patches of forest-dark. Then, suddenly, dramatically, as these things always happen, the light picked out two big, black animals. They wheeled immediately as the light hit them, charged toward us, then veered, making a sharp, right-angle turn. Sitting on the outside, I tried for them. Rao attempted to keep the light on their fleeing bodies. I swung, led the boar in the rear, and squeezed the trigger. It was a clear shot in the open and the big .458 boomed like a cannon, but the pigs kept on going and vanished in the thick tangle of ringal, a stunted bamboo growth where even the light couldn't detect them. I started to get out of the jeep.

"No," Rao said softly. "It is not safe to get out into the darkness with wild boars around. They are probably in there now watching and may charge."

We stayed there for another ten minutes with the Indians in back fingering their turbans and talking in disgruntled tones among themselves. I took it that they really

liked roast pork and were gravely disappointed that I had missed. It developed that I was right.

"Wonder where the third one is?" I asked Rao.

His face impassive, he said, "It could be a wiser animal, standing back in the thickets and watching us while the other two panicked."

"Are they that smart?"

"Smarter," he said. "They are a noble adversary."

They didn't look noble—what I had seen of them—with the long, black, hairy bristles, tusks shooting up, elongated heads, thick but muscular bodies. They didn't resemble their pink and white descendants, the Yorkshires, in the slightest. The butchers of New Jersey wouldn't have recognized them.

"Too bad," Rao said, motioning for Pathak to turn around. The moon was almost gone by now, faded into a dull silver, and night closed in around us. The jolting and the tight positions in the jeep had cramped my legs and I tapped Rao on the shoulder and indicated that I would like to stop and stretch. Five minutes later Pathak pulled over to the side of the narrow road and I got out.

To walk the kinks out, I went back from the road about fifteen yards. Then I started to return to the jeep that was standing with lights on, sending its beams into the road directly ahead. For some reason, I looked up. Coming down the road, heading right for me, was an enormous wild boar. Even though it was dark, the light picked up the coarse, black hair on the animal, and I could see the tusks curling up like bent blades. I didn't have my gun and the boar was moving too fast for me to reach the jeep before he got to me. He was ominously silent and moving as fast as a dog chasing a rabbit. Knowing in one dreadful

instant what it feels like to be the hunted rather than the hunter, I wondered if anyone in the jeep had seen the dreadful thing in the road. I glanced at the jeep. Rao and the Indians were sitting, frozen. Mary Lou had the rifle at her shoulder and I could hear sound crack sharply from it as the tusked monster kept on coming. He ran straight for me for about twenty feet, then fell, twitching, about fifteen feet in front of me.

I didn't say anything. I got to Mary Lou and put my hand on her shoulder, gripping hard. Rao said, "That was the coolest shot I have seen! That boar was coming so fast, the light was so bad that he had everything on his side."

I wished he would stop talking. I didn't want to hear details. My hunting days had almost ended there in that dark Indian night and I wanted to spend the next few minutes in silence, saying a prayer and thanking God for a wife who didn't scream and panic when danger came.

Mary Lou worked the bolt on the .308, ejecting the spent shell. "Glad I didn't need another shot," she said. "I don't think I could have made it."

There was silence as the men dragged the boar toward the jeep and hefted him into the back. It took four of them, with me hoisting one of the muscular legs, to get that giant pig into the jeep. They climbed in and two of them sat on him as we started back to camp.

When we got there, after two hours on the rough roads, the staff was lined up before the bungalow, and Motisingh held a glowing Coleman lantern while they took the black boar out of the jeep. Rao bent and examined it carefully, called us over and showed us a mark near the top of the left shoulder. It was more of a festering scab than a scar; it was a healing bullet wound.

"This is the bad one," he said. "This one could walk with the tiger. He hated man, probably everything that moved. I am sure he is the one that killed the old man from the village. He was with those other two that chased the village boys. When he heard us coming, he went into the jungle and followed us, waiting for his chance."

There was much talk as Rao and the driver excitedly told what had happened. The Gond word for boar, "*buddee,*" was used so often it sounded like a chant. The old man from the village of Lodhidhana, smiling and nodding, was still with us. He would take most of the boar back with him, leaving the head as our trophy and a hind leg for a meal for us. Everyone stood and stared at Mary Lou after the chatter ended.

There never is time in the central jungles to think or brood about what has happened. There is no past tense. Just as we started into the bungalow to go to bed, we heard a commotion and saw two men running toward Rao's tent.

"It looks like trouble," I said. Mary Lou just nodded wearily. She had had enough danger and drama for one night, but she stood with me on the veranda and waited while the men talked with Rao. He came over to us after about five minutes.

"A tiger has made a kill. One of the staked buffalos was killed, the rope tying it to the tree broken. I dislike asking you to come, but it may be the chance we are waiting for. With tiger you try to take them when you can." He looked at Mary Lou. "Why don't you rest? Your husband and I will go after the cat."

She shook her head.

It was close to dawn now, and we got into the jeep,

taking the two runners with us, and started for the place near the jungle where the young buffalo had been staked out.

"I don't think I like this idea of tying the buffalo out for the tigers and leopards to kill," Mary Lou said. "Isn't there any other way?"

"One," Rao said; "beating. But you must know where the tiger is to conduct a beat, and about the only way you can do that is by identifying his kill. The beat is done by getting about a hundred men together and driving an area where you know the tiger is. You sit in a tree and try to shoot him as he emerges from the jungle before the beaters. Other ways are sitting up over a fresh kill, or stalking. We will stalk this cat. Only skilled shots are ever permitted to hunt tiger this way."

"Save those pretty compliments, Rao," Mary Lou said. "I'm still not happy about tying up those buffalos."

"Mrs. Scott, look at it this way. We have plenty of buffalo, and we would rather have them killed than our people. Tigers and leopards in this region are cattle killers, and if we don't use baits to get them, they will enter our villages or attack cattle while they are grazing. That way we never know exactly where they are, what areas they are going to move in, where they will strike next. But when we give the tiger or leopard a bait, such as a staked buffalo calf, and they make the kill, we stand a good chance of their coming back to finish the meal, and then we can get them."

"It all makes sort of sound jungle sense," I said. "Find the tiger before he finds you kind of business."

The night had become a charcoal shade of gray by now. One native was waiting near the edge of the jungle.

"*Achya,*" Rao said—the Hindi hello, sounding oddly like "Hotcha," one of the favorite words of our roaring 'twenties. One of the men with us jumped out of the jeep and walked over to a large *mahwal* tree, or giant creeper, and pointed at the ground. There were scuff marks all around where a struggle had taken place, and a broken piece of rope was still tied to the tree, mute testimony to what had happened.

"We're going to follow the tiger with this fresh kill," Rao said. "It's dawn now and we can see what we are doing." And, suddenly, magically, as if his saying it made it so, it was. Pale color was in the sky, and we could hear the jungle coming alive: the cat cries of the adult peacocks as they stirred from sleep and got down from their trees; the shrill twittering of langur monkeys, sounding like a bunch of excited school girls; the faraway harsh bark of a sambar buck deep in the jungle.

"We'll follow the drag marks," Rao said, "and stalk this kill." He laughed. "I'd rather have you high in a tree in a machan, but we don't have a choice."

This was dangerous work. I had stalked a leopard in Africa once and the cat had almost outwitted us, knocking down and clawing a native. I could feel cold coming to my spine. The tiger could be lying ahead of us in bamboo tangle waiting to pounce. Playing cat and mouse is no fun if you are the mouse.

I had the .458 in a leather sling over my shoulder, Mary Lou carried her .308 and Rao had a .423 Mauser; the native trackers had no weapons. Shobharam, our tracker from Bori, wasn't with us. He was checking the six other baits we had staked out.

One native, a white-turbaned elder, was ahead, stoop-

ing to follow the track. Suddenly he straightened. A trio of frightened, chattering langurs leaped out of a tree and we stood, transfixed, rifles at the ready. This is the hard way to hunt the tiger, for if you press him too closely, he becomes annoyed and he will drop his kill, hide in the high rusa grass and wait for the pursuers.

Rao joined the tracker, who was moving consistently ahead, and they hunkered over pug marks. "A big one," Rao said. "Look, he isn't even dragging the buffalo. He has flipped it over his shoulder and only occasionally does a hoof drag the ground, leaving a trail."

The young buffalo had weighed about 200 pounds, but the big striped cat was handling it as if it were a pat of hamburger—which it practically was when we found it two hard hours later.

It was lying under a big *catechu* tree, and there was little left except the head and part of one leg. "Our men were mistaken in their timing," Rao said; "the cat was a monster. He was hungry. And he took the bait sooner than they thought. The runners were tardy reaching us." He turned to the two men who had come for us and there was much talk, with both of the trackers moving their heads from side to side in the negative gesture all Indians use, which means yes, maybe, or perhaps, and is as important for understanding the language as the spoken word.

"No good to build a machan here," Rao said suddenly. "We are several hours too late on this kill. The tiger will go for water, find a cool place and sleep.

"Then—probably during the early hours of the morning—he will kill again. Let us hope that we have news of this new kill. If we do, he will not have eaten so heavily

and he will return to it. This"—he swept his hand at the remains of the luckless buffalo—"he will not touch again."

Black vultures, their horrid naked necks red with excitement and anticipation, were moving in as we started back, retracing our steps carefully, watching every blade of grass, every clump of young bamboo, in case the tiger had circled and crept in behind us.

When we reached the jeep, the sun was bright and beginning to get warm and the gray jungle fowl were moving on the dusty roads, the light picking out the iridescent colors of their neck ruffs and breasts. They boomed away, quick as a grouse, when we got within fifty yards of them. Doves, by the hundreds—spotted, ringed, brown, imperial —were pecking for grit.

On the ride back we chatted with Rao about his family and his reason for devoting his life to the jungle and shikar. He was an educated man, who probably could have successfully entered any of a half-dozen professions. Why did he bury himself in these jungles?

I had learned a long time ago that direct questions, although honest, sometimes have the disadvantage of putting a person off. Rao was essentially a shy, sensitive man, so I tried to be as delicate as I could in finding out why he had come to the jungle.

"Mr. Shukla tells me that you studied engineering in college," I said. "Maybe that's why the Maddoxes remarked that you had the niftiest machans."

He laughed. "These clever forest people make the machans. You'd be pretty uncomfortable if you had to sit all night on one that I fashioned. Yes, I did my Inter Science in 1936 from Hislop College, and qualified as

Automobile Engineer from Technical College Dayal Bagh in Agra, and had first-division carrier——"

"First division?"

"Successful candidates are classed in three divisions in Indian universities. First, for those who obtain sixty per cent of the total aggregate marks; second, to those who get more than forty-five per cent, and so on. After I completed my course, I got married." He half closed his brown eyes and laughed. "I understand that's the way it's done in America, too."

He added soberly, "I am indeed a lucky man, though, Mr. Scott. Our families arranged for our marriage and we had never even seen one another before. But my father was thoughtful and Prabha, my wife, is lovely and a great person. We have two children, a son, Shankar Das, seventeen years old, and a daughter, Rajani, eight years old."

"You must miss them while you're out here on shikar, and they must be lonely for you," Mary Lou said.

"Lonely, for us both, yes," he said slowly, "but the peace and quiet of this life means so much to me that I believe I am able to communicate that to them when I return to Nagpur after shikar season is finished. I am with them during the rainy season and the hot spells, so in reality, I am with them at the important times. Then, I work at shikar headquarters in the city with Mr. Shukla, getting equipment ready, training staff men. I think this is a better life than I would have had as an engineer."

By now the jeep had jogged us to the dak bungalow and, as usual, the entire staff was lined up before the building, disappointment on their faces as they saw we had returned empty-handed. Motisingh had the breakfast table laid, and Fakira, the bearer, was waiting to serve.

Someone at Allwyn Cooper had gotten the idea that the dining table should be littered with standard American condiments: ketchup, A-1, Worcestershire, chili, two kinds of mustard—and with this combination stood a jar of Dugson's Nepal Honey. I never tired of reading the glowing words printed on the jar: "Not only delicious, refreshing and invigorating, but it is an immediate help for mental and nervous exhaustion at all ages. . . ."

It didn't seem to help me much. I had had three big dollops with my toast this morning and I sat there more exhausted than ever.

Just before Fakira served, Motisingh had come bustling out and placed two bottles, one of rye, one of gin, on the table directly in front of me. He had done this at every meal since we arrived.

This morning I decided to find out why. As we sat down, I asked Rao.

He fidgeted in his seat. He was obviously embarrassed. "I've wondered, too. I do not know."

There was one way to find out. As Motisingh hovered near the edge of the veranda, watching the bearer serve our shirred eggs, I motioned to him. He came gliding over, his weathered brown face anxious.

"Yes, master?"

"Motisingh, why do you place these bottles here before me at every meal?"

He shuffled his feet, then looked directly at me. "Master writer?"

I nodded.

"Motisingh cook for another writer, Master ———" —he named a famous American columnist who also did

a great deal of writing about big-game hunting—"and he want whisky-gin at each meal."

That was that. Motisingh thought that all writers had to have whisky-gin as soon as they sat down at his table. He was being thoughtful.

Mary Lou was grinning and Rao shook his head. "I should have known. That fellow he mentioned wouldn't make a move without a bottle."

Rao kept us so busy that mealtime was the only interval we had for conversation. We really had little time for much of anything besides hunting and sleeping. Not even for seeing some Americans who were camped about twenty miles from us. Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Carty had sent word that they were here from California, were about to end their hunt and would like us to drop over for a drink. We sent word that we would like to and would come as soon as we could. . . . Now Rao, without prodding from us, began talking about his career.

"You both will get your tiger, never fear. It may mean hard work, but I can see that neither of you mind that. And remember, even I got my first tiger when I was nineteen years old. If I could do that, I am sure anyone could."

I had noticed this modesty in most of the Indians we had met. They never bragged about their exploits or themselves, and they always played down their own accomplishments. Rao was an especially modest man, and I suppose that he would close up completely in civilization, but there is something about hunting and the remote places that does make people unfold, limber up, talk. I had hunted in Alaska with some old sourdoughs who did little except grunt and drink whisky when they were in town,

but after a few days in the big woods they opened up like old buddies.

"This life is probably about as close as I can come to doing what my ancestors did," Rao said. "In the outmoded caste system" (he always called the system outmoded when he spoke of it, ignoring the fact that it obviously was at work here in jungle camp) "I am a Hindu, a Kshatriya, whose original duty was to wage war and protect the Brahmins. Mr. Shukla is a Brahmin and by working for him in this way I am sort of fulfilling my destiny."

I couldn't quite fit that in, but he obviously wanted to talk so I kept quiet.

"My father, Narayan Das, was a government executive officer in this state, and he wanted me to follow him into government work. But he made one mistake. He bought me a Diana air gun, gave me a counted number of pellets and then had me account for them. If I did not have a bird or a good explanation for every one fired, he did not like it. What he was doing was working me up to the use of a shotgun. He loved hunting and shikar——"

"That's why you are in these jungles? Your father's mistake was that he taught you to love hunting?"

"I suppose that is it. That and my friends' urgings."

Motisingh had forgotten about the bottles. Now he padded silently in with an abashed smile and removed the "whisky-gin."

Mary Lou obviously was interested, now that Rao was talking freely. "How did your friends get you into the jungles?" she asked.

Rao smiled—a gentle, slow movement of the lips, that sent crinkles into the dark skin around his velvet eyes, giving them a soft light. He obviously was pleased and

flattered. "Oh, I did continue my engineering and was quite happy, I suppose. But I went hunting at every opportunity. Then one day two of my friends came to me with a newspaper and showed me an ad. It said that the post of shikari was open with Allwyn Cooper. At that time the name 'shikari' didn't appeal to me too much, at least not enough to cause me to change my profession. But my friends said that it was rare in this life that a person could do what he loved best, get paid for it and make it his profession. They insisted that the post of 'Gentleman Shikari' as they called it was a dignified and honorable one. Just to please them, and then only after several days' time, I sent in my application. Mr. Shukla sent for me; we liked one another. I became enamored of the job, and here I am. I had to learn as I went along. I owe much to my American clients, especially to a Mr. Herb W. Klein, from Dallas, Texas. He liked the way I conducted his hunt, made this known to my superiors and to his hunting friends. A Mr. Blickman did the same thing."

"What about that first tiger?" I asked. "And how many have you killed up to date?"

I suppose we should have been in bed. But it was pleasant here on the veranda with the morning sun warm on our shoulders and the Darjeeling tea hot and delicious. The morning sound of children singing in the one-room thatch-roofed, mud schoolhouse rose from the valley and touched us pleasantly, putting us in a relaxed, receptive mood. The sound of children singing is the same the world over, in any language, in any place, the song the world really lives by. The Bori children, deep in this remote jungle, were in good voice. This was probably the most peaceful, the most carefree moment either Mary Lou or I had

had in many months. Civilization was out there somewhere, rushing by, shouting, screaming, bustling, "Forty die in airlines crash!" "Revolt in Cuba. Twenty traitors to the July 26th Movement executed!" "Drink the best. Savarin Instant Coffee tastes as if it were made in a coffeepot!" "Only at A&P will you get pot roast like this! Don't miss this buy!" Do this, buy that, this is the best, no that is! Buy, save, drive, rush yourself to death!

Overhead vultures soared, strangely a relaxing, peaceful sight, their wings spread wide to capture vagrant air currents. They never seemed to flap their wings but hovered there like destiny, the beauty of their flight belying their revolting purpose.

A goat tied to the kitchen shed was bleating, and the high singsong chant of the skinner came from his tent out near the road. A line of women from the village of Bori labored up the hill toward the spring, single file, brass pots on their heads catching the sunlight and winking it back to us.

Peace, quiet, serenity. And yet, not many yards from where we sat was violent death, clawed murder padding about in the jungle. And Rao was talking about it.

"I shot thirty panthers the first year with that shotgun. That same summer, when I was nineteen my father and I were on a machan near a water hole, and I saw my first tiger. I mean the first that I saw when I had a gun in my hands. My father had a 500 Express and I thought he was going to shoot. We sat stock-still, and suddenly he reached over and pinched me. I took steady aim and shot the tiger on the temple and rolled him over. Without hesitating I shot him again in the chest and that was all. I was calm and did not lose my presence of mind, but later

I was so overpowered with joy and excitement that I was trembling. My father was proud of the way I handled myself. He said I acted like an experienced hunter." Rao stopped and shook his head, then with a wry smile; "But I didn't act like an experienced hunter on my third tiger. I had a bitter time with that one that made me decide never to try to shoot a tiger or a panther with a shotgun again."

He finished his tea, stretched his arms, in a quick, easy, catlike movement. He was like a cat in the way he moved across dry tattletale teak leaves almost without sound, and when we had stalked the tiger, Rao had scaled up a big gray *phetra* tree as gracefully as a langur. His movements were all relaxed, and his voice was so soft that at times you had to strain to hear.

"I'll tell you about this third tiger," he said. "It was my best lesson, one that probably saved my life and maybe that of clients. I was out in the jungle with my father and had shot a spotted deer, a chital. I returned to camp about nine A.M. and got news of a big tiger. The cat was near the village and had killed five buffalos there in two days. The villagers were terrified and wanted me to stop it. Not waiting for my father to return to camp, I left with my shotgun, my gun bearer and about ten villagers. The other bank of the river we had to cross was covered with dense underbrush. When we got there, the villagers pointed out three bullocks that the tiger had killed that very day. The cat had only licked the blood from their throats and left. I could not decide where to build the machan, so I decided to wait for the tiger on the ground near the kills.

"But the local shikaris advised me that the tiger would not return until nightfall. I had just about decided to re-

turn to camp and ask my father's help, when one of the villagers came running to me and, his eyes rolling white in his head, pointed. I could see the tufted ears of the big cat where he was resting in the grass about sixty yards away. Slowly the cat stood up, its tail switching, its back humped. Everyone fled except my gun bearer. I decided then to return to the village, but the tiger, in a quick movement had doubled back and now stood barring our path. Then, about thirty yards from us, the beast sat down and watched. So close I could see the yellow of its eyes.

"I was a little confused and decided that we had better climb into a tree. I made the gun bearer go first. I lifted my gun toward him, but he shouted, "Oh, Sheet!" (Oh, tiger!), and I immediately pulled the gun back. Swinging around quickly, I found the tiger had advanced and was standing a few yards from me. To my horror, as I stood watching him, he slipped behind a bamboo thicket. I at once felt that I was gone, that there was no escape from this experienced monster. I was perspiring heavily. Without taking my eyes from the tiger, I cursed myself for coming without waiting for my father, for getting myself into this predicament by listening to the excited villagers who wanted to get rid of this devil. I stepped back against the tree, keeping my gun on the animal. He crouched lower until his belly was touching the ground and started creeping toward me. I couldn't wait; I got excited and fired at the big head.

"The tiger jumped back. I immediately shot the second barrel while the tiger was running away. At once I gave my gun to the bearer and climbed up the tree with him. I reloaded the gun and we looked for the tiger, but couldn't find him. We waited a half hour more, then

climbed down and went to the spot where I had shot at the tiger. We saw his big pug marks and a few feet to the left some drops of blood. My bearer followed the trail and I was behind him with the loaded gun. As we moved on, the blood trail increased. The tiger seemed to have bled a lot and inexperienced as I was, I thought that it was badly wounded. My bearer had some experience and showed me the drag marks, saying, 'The tiger has a broken leg. See how he drags it?' We continued to trace the trail, at times, like fools, actually crawling through the heavy underbrush.

"Moving like that, sometimes walking, sometimes crawling, we followed the trail about two hundred yards toward the river. Then we lost the tracks, but heard one of the village Pi dogs barking. As we approached, the dog ran away. We looked in the heavy cover where the dog had been, but saw nothing. We started to move away when my bearer wheeled and said, 'There!' The cat had circled behind us and stood glaring, lashing his tail. I fired, and thought I had hit him in the midriff, but he gave a loud roar and ran in the direction of the river. I wanted to try a running shot, but there were too many trees and bushes. Again we followed the blood trail. Now everything—the dead leaves, the trees—looked like the tiger's stripes. I wanted to fire, but I restrained myself, told the bearer to climb into a tree and take some stones with him and throw them into the heavy cover. I hoped this would flush the tiger out and I would get a shot. The bearer hadn't been in the tree a second when he jumped down shouting, 'The tiger is dead!'

"Then the tiger roared, the bushes a few feet from us rattled, and I knew that the monster was going to

charge any minute. The leaves crackled and I thought, 'Maybe he is running away again.' But he wasn't; he was tearing through the bushes right for us. I thought I was a dead man. The tiger suddenly stopped—about ten yards from me. All I could see was the huge head and the bloody hanging tongue. The animal was growling deep in its throat. I leveled my gun to shoot, but then thought of something our friend, the late Mr. Borne, Collector of the District, had said. 'The tiger is infuriated at sound and movement, especially when it has been wounded.' So I decided to stand still and wait for him to come closer, so that I could stub the barrels in his mouth and fire both of them.

"Then my gun bearer went to pieces. He screamed, 'Oh, Lord, we are gone!' This foolishness made the tiger charge and he came at me with a roar that even now, more than twenty years later, I cannot forget. He was mid-air in his leap when I fired. He dropped right at my side, his neck less than three feet from my gun. I fired the second shot and ran for my life. I ran about fifty yards, stopped and reloaded, turned around and saw the tiger staggering toward the river bank. I moved slowly after him and heard him fall into the river.

"My gun bearer was lying unconscious where the tiger had charged. He was suffering from shock, and I brought water from the river in my hat and splashed it on him, got him on my back, and started toward the village. As I struggled, looking back for the cat every few feet, I finally got far enough so that the villagers came down out of the trees and helped me.

"It was dusk when I got back to camp and narrated the whole shameful tale to my father. He was very upset, but patted me on the shoulder and told me how proud he

was that I faced the tiger's charge. I knew he was worried, however, that the tiger was still alive and would attack people from the village. He went to the village and told them all what had happened, warning them not to go anywhere near the river until the next morning when we would try to locate the wounded animal.

"I didn't sleep; neither did my father. At dawn we were starting out, when a villager came running toward us, and I thought, 'Oh, dear Lord, the tiger has mauled someone and it is all my fault!' In the same breath I thanked my God for having spared my life yesterday. My fear turned to joy when the runner told me that they had sighted the tiger, floating dead on the river. My father was in a jubilant mood and embarrassed me with his congratulations. 'But, Beta,' (sonny), he said, pointing at his 500 Express, 'if you had carried this gun, you would not have run in that danger. But I am happy that you had this terrible and valuable experience so early in life.'

"On the way to the river he told me what I had done wrong. Just about everything. I shouldn't have shot the cat with the shotgun from the ground. It is rare for a tiger to be killed with one shot from so light a gun. I should not have trailed the tiger. I should have come back for help. It was just luck that the beast hadn't attacked us while we were crawling on our hands and knees through the grass. Anyway, we got to the river and there was my tiger floating downstream, caught on a sunken tree. A villager swam out, tied a rope to him and we brought him ashore. I had struck him with every shot, but none, except the last in the neck, had hit a vital spot. The enormous strength of the beast, its will to live, taught me a great lesson: fewer shots, all placed in kill areas, were necessary.

"But I never used a shotgun again for anything except birds or wounded leopards. More than a dozen times since then I've had to trail wounded tigers into the jungle, but I always used my .423 Mauser."

Mary Lou was quiet and a little pale after Rao had finished, and I felt cold, thinking, "What danger have I foolishly exposed her to?"

But Rao went on, reassuring us that he had just been a stupid boy at the time and had been saved by dumb luck. But he had learned much in the more than two decades since and had killed many tigers. It really wasn't a dangerous sport if you did what you were supposed to, didn't panic or act silly. He eased our tension with his quiet, confident voice.

S. V. Rao Naidu is like that. He can quietly inspire confidence even without saying a word. Perhaps he hasn't killed as many tigers as the famed Jim Corbett, but he is reputed to be the best professional tiger hunter in the business. To date he has personally killed forty tigers and more than a hundred leopards. More important, he has set up over two hundred fifty of the big striped cats for the kill, planning their deaths with a cold efficiency.

I noted this to Mary Lou as we stretched out for a nap before our next hunt. Rao had told us that Motisingh wanted us to take our shotguns and get a peacock for the pot.

"He dearly loves peacock and hasn't had one since the Maddoxes left. The party before them couldn't bag a bird. They are fast, smart and wary."

So was Rao Naidu. In a neat psychological switch he got our minds off the striped killers, and onto the innocuous subject of peacocks.

It was late afternoon when we started out, jeeping about six miles to a place in the jungle where Rao said peafowl were found. A narrow dirt road meandered through a thick, young bamboo forest, and Rao said, "Watch for them on the road."

If you've ever seen a peacock in a zoo or a tropical garden, marching proudly around with the sun flashing on its green, blue and emerald feathers, its long jeweled tail dragging the ground like a royal train, it may seem strange that this decorative bird is considered fair game in India. Called the *Mor* by the village people of the central province of Madhya Pradesh where we were hunting, it is not only considered a leading game bird, but also a great table delicacy.

"The peafowl is sacred in some sections," Rao said. "In Hindu mythology, Skanda, younger brother of Ganesha, and the son of Siva, is the god of war. He is supposed to have had six arms and to have ridden on a peacock. Many of our people also call him Kartikkeya. But these forest folk don't hold to these beliefs and they hunt the peacock for food and trap and sell them to buyers for zoos."

As he was talking, a peafowl and two large peacocks, feathers afire, appeared on the edge of the road about a hundred yards ahead of us, heads down, pecking grit. Rao motioned us to get out, me with the Browning superposed and Mary Lou with the Winchester 21. We walked slowly, carefully and—I thought—quietly, for about ten yards. Then the birds looked up, ran a few feet and took off,

flying grandly but quickly, their long tails flowing behind them. They were out of shotgun range.

"That's the secret," Rao said, smiling. "They look easy to hit. They are so big. The male stands three feet high and including his tail is six and a half feet long. But the trouble is that they are so alert it is difficult to get within shooting range."

We saw eighteen more within an hour, only one within range, and that a small colorless peafowl that I felled at forty yards. There were two Bori villagers with us and the tracker, Shobharam, and I had wondered why we had so many people along. They sat in the jeep while we tried to stalk the birds. I had noticed Motisingh talking excitedly with Rao before we left and he had gone out and come back with the three men.

Shobharam had laughter in his eyes from the moment he got into the jeep. I was convinced that nothing but tiger hunting interested him and that he looked down his nose at everything else, with humor, of course, but kind of a contemptuous humor. Now he rattled out of the back of the jeep, his skinny frame and legs making his dirty white turban look more huge and top-heavy than ever. He motioned to the two villagers, and they disappeared into the bamboo tangle.

"Motisingh is sincere about his taste for peacock," Rao said. "This next plan is his: he suggested that these men go into the jungle and beat the birds toward us on the road."

"We have one," I said. "Isn't that enough for a meal?"

"If we come back with a peafowl, not the big royal

peacock," Rao said, "Motisingh will feed us curried rice only. We must get the peacock, a young male."

Rao said that we would drive up the road, park the jeep, then walk about fifty yards and hide and wait. The plan was that the three men would beat in that direction, hoping to drive some birds out where we could get a shot. It sounded logical and my respect for Motisingh, whose plan this was, grew.

We waited for about a half hour, then, suddenly Mary Lou nudged me, and there sailing over the tops of the young bamboos were five big peacocks, the late sun striking rainbow-fire on their feathers, their tails streaming behind them, like a varicolored jetstream. At thirty-five yards, we both swung on the birds, leading and following as they flew, and both guns cracked. One bird faltered in the air, then, half beating its wings, went down. Either one of us had missed or we were both shooting at the same bird. I ran to where it lay in a clump of young bamboo and brought it back.

"Oh," Mary Lou said, "it is too beautiful! I'd rather have the rice!"

Rao laughed. "Not after you taste one! Besides, this is one of the jungle experiences. You can't come to Madhya Pradesh and not go peacock shooting." Only then did I notice that Rao had his Mauser. He had watched for the killers, the leopards and tigers, while we played the peacock game.

No more birds came and ten minutes later, when the men came out of the jungle, we got into the jeep and went back to camp. Motisingh was waiting for us, and his handsome face beamed as he saw the birds. He didn't touch the peafowl, but took the big, beautiful peacock.

One of the villagers took the peafowl, talked briefly with Rao and struck off down the hill toward Bori. The tracker went to Rao's tent and waited. He had had enough of this foolishness and wanted to make tiger talk.

"You might be interested," Rao said, "to know that a villager just told me they were going to try and net some peacocks tomorrow. It is very interesting and I told them you would come. We don't have word of a kill yet, but if we do, you can go with them in the morning, even if we do sit on a machan tonight."

"You're a hard man, Rao," I said. "You don't give us time to complete a clear thought. I haven't even shaved since we arrived. But it sounds interesting. How do they do it?"

"I'll tell you a little later," he said. "Shobharam wants to talk about tiger baits and a track he saw early today. . . ."

Over the

dark forests of the Bori Range spread a song. It seemed to come from the mountain peak, Suryadeo, that even with night closing around it, still lifted its knobby head proudly above the jungle. We stood on the knoll overlooking the village. Rao tended the fire, occasionally poking the logs, sending sparks into the sky as we stood listening. The song started as a sort of guttural bark, then rose into an almost drumlike call, not discordant, but alive and somehow musical.

"The tiger calls," Rao said. "Some think that it is the sambar, but there is a difference. That is the song of companionship for the tiger. It is a male letting the tigress know that he is near. Tigers make a variety of sounds and all of them mean something."

Later, when we sat high on a machan, disappointed because a tiger had failed to come, Rao would explain tiger sounds, but at the moment we all stood silently, listening as the strange call faded away.

The sky was clear, full of stars, and the air was crisp, like an early fall night in Connecticut. The weather in the daytime was a photographer's dream of perfection: every morning we awoke to a bright, clear, cloudless sky; the sun was bright but not too warm; the nights cooled off quickly and we needed blankets to sleep comfortably.

These hours around the fire just before dinner were probably the most pleasant we spent in the jungle. An open fire, whether it is inside in a fireplace or outside at camp, seems to do something magical to most people, relaxing them to that point where they are completely at

ease and conversation comes readily; the fetters of civilization and pressure-living drop off.

Tonight was such a night and Rao was explaining the caste system. I had noticed, when we brought the wild boar back to camp, that Rao had instructed the old village gaon how he wanted the head cut, well down on the shoulders so it would make a good trophy mount for us. He had also selected one back leg to be used as fresh ham. All this, when our own expert skinner, with the know-how and the desire to do the job, was sitting in his tent. Now I asked about it.

"These village people, even as badly as they need meat, would not touch a kill of ours if our skinner had worked on it. He is supposed to be an untouchable." Rao laughed, a little embarrassed. "The new Constitution abolished caste distinction and our Parliament, of which Mr. Shukla is a member, passed a law imposing fines and imprisonment for practice of caste discrimination. But it is an almost impossible task to carry this message to all of our five hundred and fifty thousand villages and our three hundred and sixty-two million people, one seventh of the entire human race."

I knew vaguely of the caste system, but now asked Rao about it and, though he hesitated, he finally explained it simply and clearly—something the schoolbooks never did. Mary Lou and I were developing a companionship with Rao that would have been impossible in New Delhi, Calcutta or Bombay, and we answered his pertinent questions about America, Rock 'n' Roll, juvenile delinquency (about which Rao had interesting ideas); he, in turn, did his best to clarify any confusion we had about his country. A difficult job, for India is a complex country. In its area

—which is two thirds the size of Europe, including Russia —with land frontiers of 8,200 miles, and a coastline of 2,900 miles, are to be found climatic conditions, people and customs more diverse than those of all of Europe.

"I'd say the caste system could be divided in four sections," Rao said slowly. "The Brahmins, the teachers, the priests, who many of us believe came from the head of god Brahma; then the warriors, my caste, the Kshatriyas who were born of Brahma's arms; the merchants and traders, the Vaisyas, who sprang from Brahma's thighs; the Sudras, the workers who came from the god's feet. Only the first three can wear the holy thread on their shoulder and are twice-born. And what will make this more confusing for you, each caste has subdivisions. Gandhi was a Vaisya, but he called himself a Bania (a sub-caste of the merchant caste). Below these four general castes are the Harijans, the untouchables, and the other Hindus consider themselves defiled if touched by one. The untouchables do the unpleasant work, as I explained to you about Govinda, your houseboy. They sweep the floors, clean the bathrooms, dispose of dead animals, work in skin and leather, take care of all the waste and refuse. But even among the untouchables, there are castes within the caste. I understand that there is a caste which now does nothing except care for the governmental rest houses and one that only pulls rickshaws." Rao smiled rather sadly.

"No one knows where this Hindu caste system came from or how it originated. We are doing everything we can to fight it, but even now just about every Hindu home has its sweeper, its untouchable, and they all admit that they don't know how they could get along without them.

Even the fifty million untouchables themselves are fighting against the breaking up of the caste system, fearing that they will lose their ancient right of employment.

"The thing I deplore most about the caste system—and Gandhi did and Nehru does also—is its hopelessness. The Hindu, born of low caste, must remain there until he dies. By leading a pure life, he hopes to be reborn a Brahmin. This fetish, this belief in reincarnation, is one of the big problems we have in India, and until it is corrected I'm afraid that there will always be this caste confusion, this dreadful waste of human life——"

He halted abruptly. "But enough of this. You didn't come on shikar to learn of the social ills of India. Let us talk of other things."

Mary Lou had been silent, shocked at the lot of the untouchables, but now she made a rapid switch in subjects. "What is this peacock excursion we're going on in the morning?"

"These villagers of Bori, and the others in this section, get much-needed rupees by capturing peacocks alive for the animal dealers who come here and collect them for the zoos. They don't do it often, but we are lucky. This is the time just before the religious celebration of Holi, and they are going out tomorrow."

"But those birds are so fast," she said. "How can the villagers ever get close enough to capture them?"

"That's what makes it interesting," Rao said. "That is what I want you to see."

But—perhaps because of the appearance of Motisingh on the veranda, signaling that dinner was ready—Rao kept us in suspense. We wouldn't learn until morning what the peacock-netting system was.

There was a clear soup—made from peacock, Rao said—better than any consommé I have ever had. It was served with *chapatties,* the flat, wafer-thin fried pastry, something like a giant unsalted potato chip. Then Motisingh staggered in, bearing a large platter with huge fresh ham. It was pearly white, and each of us sliced a piece as thick or thin as we desired. I was cautious, slicing off a piece as thin as a chapatty. But after I tasted it—sweet, moist, delicious; better than corn-fed pork—I used abandon on the next slice. Then came a large bowl of rice, cooked with spices and mixed with nuggets of sweet meat and nuts. "*Biriani pillau*" Rao said. "A Lucknow creation; very few outside of that city know how to do it. You like it?"

We nodded enthusiastically, mouths full.

"I don't understand how Motisingh turned out such a masterpiece with that wild pig," Mary Lou finally got out. "We believe in aging meat and any fresh meat that I have ever eaten—especially as fresh as this—was tough. What's his secret?"

"We like to live on fresh meat here in the jungle, as I told you coming in," Rao said. "It's a welcome change for everyone. Even our staff from Nagpur looks forward to these meals. We keep just enough for the day's meal and give the rest to the village people, who are starved for meat all of the time. 'Boily-brown' is what we call the way to cook this. Motisingh boils the meat first, with seasonings and spices that he won't divulge, and then he browns or sautés it in a pan with canned butter that we bring from the city. Usually he slices it first before simmering in the butter. But, I'm no cook, and exactly how

he did this leg whole I don't know. One thing for certain, he boiled it first with his seasonings."

Rao's frankness in the matter of food talk probably would have shocked another Hindu. Most of them avoid meat, especially beef. In the jungle apparently ill-conceived civilized taboos were off.

After dinner we looked at Motisingh's "kitchen." "I don't believe it!" Mary Lou summed up the scene. His oven was eight bricks; his fire, charcoal; his utensils, three pots of varying sizes and one large frying pan. On a rough wooden shelf above the raised cooking platform was an unusual array of spices and condiments, some were familiar, most were not. That was the kitchen from which flowed this unusually good food.

"You haven't seen anything yet!" was what Rao meant to say, but it came out, "Wait until you see *something!*" Referring to the dishes that Motisingh was yet to whip up for us.

It looked like a leopard the way it moved across the floor. It was even graceful in a boneless sort of way, but somehow it just didn't convince me that it was the killer cat. Then the skin fell off, and the man got up from the floor. It was the villager who had hurried off with the peafowl we had shot yesterday.

We had awakened that morning at four o'clock, and had tea with Rao while waiting for last-minute news that the tiger had struck. No word had come, so we went to the village to join the peacock hunt. When we arrived, three men were standing in front of one of the mud-walled, thatch-roofed huts, and Rao said, "They want us to step inside."

This hut was built on one side of a quadrangle; the other three sides were closed in by cattle and cart sheds and a sort of granary. The framework of the house was rough timber fixed in the ground; a heavy shield of clay had been formed around the frame, and the roof was thickly thatched with grass. There was a lavish use of cow dung inside on the walls and mixed with mud on the floor. The forest people believe that it keeps the hut clean because insects won't breed in a place plastered with cow dung. It was a toss-up which was preferable, the smell or the insects. I'd take the insects.

Some root vegetables that looked like potatoes hung from the ceiling in a long, woven grass bag to protect them from rats, and leaning against the wall in the far corner was a big russet bundle of dried rusa grass. A fragrant odor came from it, and Rao told us that an oil dis-

tilled from the grass is used as an external application to ease the pain of rheumatism.

Out of the shadows of this room had crept that figure that looked like a wounded leopard. "This is the way they catch peacocks," Rao said. The two men with him laughed heartily.

We must have looked completely blank, for Rao laughed and said, "They dress as leopards, creep close and then net the birds."

He went on to explain that the jungle people knew one of the weaknesses of the wary peacocks. They are one of the smartest birds in the forests. Being preyed on by about every carnivorous animal in the jungle, they fly into trees or wing out of any territory where they sense danger. "With one exception," he said. "They are fascinated by the spotted cats. The leopard really doesn't need to kill cattle and molest people. He does it because he is a vicious, nasty animal. He could live on langur monkeys and peacocks if he chose. I have seen an adult peacock stand still, hypnotized by a leopard, and let the cat walk up close enough to bat its head off. These forest people have profited by the bird's weakness and this is the way they catch them for exportation to zoos."

This is the way: Seven of us went into the area in the bamboo forest where we had been the day before, getting there just at dawn. Rao, with his .423 Mauser, hid himself in case a cat wandered close, and two of the men made a slow, steady beat, walking in deeply, then making noise on the turn on their way back toward us. I was with the other two men. Mary Lou chose to wait this one out in the jeep, not wanting to see the gorgeous birds trapped, I think.

Feeling pretty silly, I put on a leopard skin that fitted over me like one of those gruesome costume-party getups, and crouched low on my hands and knees. Cautioning me not to move but to remain in that position and watch, the two villagers each donned a leopard skin, and knelt on either side of me, perhaps twenty yards away. They each had concealed under their bodies a filmy, cleverly weighted net that they had woven from the husks of coconuts.

There were sounds like catcalls, then screaming alarm cries; then the birds, some slinking, bellies to the ground like cats, some flying. There were nine of them. Four—regardless of the fact that we were supposed to be leopards, animals that held a strange fascination for them—flew away. The others stayed on the ground, and like tame turkeys in barnyards at feeding time, started mincing toward us, getting within twenty-five yards. My friends in the skins started bellying forward and when they got within ten yards of the birds that now stood still and watched, they jumped up and quickly threw their nets, trapping the hypnotized birds; gripping the net firmly while the big peacocks flapped wildly, the men had all they could do to hold them. There were two birds in one net, one in another. I rushed forward and helped them wrap the nets securely around the struggling birds. The frantic peacocks ripped large escape holes in the nets and we hurried back to the jeep where we put them, still in the nets, into large wicker baskets.

In a few minutes, Rao and his helpers joined us. Everyone was smiling. It had been a good morning's work. They would get about five dollars apiece for the peacocks.

"I'm glad that it worked out this way," Rao said. "It isn't always so easy. Sometimes the peacocks seem to sense

something is wrong and the hunters return empty-handed. This has been good luck. This is more money than they make in two months." I later learned that the peacocks would sell for seventy-five to one hundred and fifty dollars in America and England. Some bird collectors would pay as high as two hundred for an especially beautiful, well-colored male with a perfect tail.

Apparently most of the peacocks, *Pavo cristatus,* that we see in our aviaries, private parks and zoos, come from India and Ceylon, and Rao believes that the majority of them are captured by forest tribal people. I remembered when I was a boy watching a big blue one at the Bronx Zoo spreading its trailing train and musically rattling its quills. I had written my first purple essay in the fifth grade on "Pride and the Peacock," the impression had been so great. Now pride had fallen; beauty had been betrayed by a man in cat's clothing. I felt a little sad as I heard the birds scratching in the wicker baskets in the rear of the jeep. They would bring badly needed money to the bird hunters and scintillating beauty to whoever bought them, but they would be gone from their green jungles where they were smarter than just about everything except leopards—and men.

There were three men from the village of Bori waiting for us at the dak bungalow. Rao's eyes lit up as he saw them, and I thought of Euripides' line: "Danger gleams like sunshine to a brave man's eyes." The three went to Rao's tent and in a few minutes he came back. "A leopard has made a natural kill right in the village while we were after peacock," he said. "A calf has been killed. They want us to come."

When we arrived at Bori, it was almost as if some Hollywood director had been there and set up the scene: A group was gathered around a skinny, gray-bearded old man with a doleful expression on his leathery, brown face, and they were all staring at a brown and white calf that was stretched on the ground. Rao bent and examined the animal. Calling me over, he said, "See here at the base of the neck, the two small holes? Fang marks, a leopard's. A tiger's are much larger and deeper." The calf was already beginning to bloat, and Rao gave instructions to cover it with grass and leaves so that the vultures and crows wouldn't discover it.

As we talked with the old man, his eyes flashed and he excitedly relived the scene for us. It seemed that in the late night he had heard a noise in front of his hut. He had a small paddock no more than fifteen feet from the hut, and a calf, which would one day be a priceless milking animal, was in the enclosure. He didn't permit her to wander around, he said, because of her great value.

In an aside to me, Rao said, "The *panch garya,* a way of life here, the five products of the sacred cow—curds, butter, milk, dung and urine. The loss of this animal was a severe one to this poor man."

The old man had come out of his hut quickly, carrying the only weapon these forest people have, a crude, hand-forged ax, the *kulhadi.* He saw a leopard on top of the calf. Screaming as loudly as he could and brandishing the ax, he had advanced toward the cat, an extremely brave—or foolhardy—thing to do, for the leopard, in one quick movement, could have torn out his throat or stomach. But the leopard—hissing and snarling, backing away slowly, now aware that the other villagers were coming

to aid the old man—had finally leaped the enclosure and vanished.

"We'll build a machan," Rao said. "The leopard's meal was interrupted. He will surely return tonight and try to drag the calf away."

There were no trees nearby, for the kill had been made brazenly almost in the center of the village. But there was a storage shed and Rao immediately gave instructions that a rough platform should be built atop it, raising the shooting elevation to about fifteen feet above the ground.

"This is dangerous," he said, "but we have no choice. If we moved the calf near a tree the leopard would not approach it. If a kill is moved, rarely will the cats come to it. The leopard can climb and jump fifteen feet vertically, so we will be exposed to his attack. He must be killed with the first shot."

"I think I have a date back at the dak bungalow," Mary Lou said.

Rao laughed. "All three of us will have rifles. This cat won't have a chance."

I didn't say anything. I had seen leopards move before and had hunted them in Africa.

Shobharam, our tracker, wasn't with us. He was out checking the staked buffalo baits. So Rao did the tracking. The pugs of the cat were still visible, and stooping low to brush aside some twigs and grass, Rao said, "See this?" The track of the cat showed that it had one toe missing. "He will be easy to identify as the calf-killer. Probably had a porcupine quill in the toe and bit it off."

"Could he have been wounded by a hunter?"

"I doubt it. This cat showed no fear of man, enter-

ing the village and killing in the middle of it. If he had been wounded by a gun, he would have been much more wary of man. There are few guns in these jungles anyway."

We followed the tracks until they disappeared into the dense jungle. Then we returned to the village where Rao gave instructions that the calf should be kept covered. He said we would return about four o'clock to climb into the machan and wait for the leopard.

The village priest, the *bhumka,* a squat, fat native with the face of a kindly bulldog, was with the man who had lost the calf. He looked with pleasure upon Rao and said a few words. After telling me who he was, Rao said, "He said the god Bagh Deo's blessing was upon us for our protection of the village."

We were getting ready to return to the dak when we saw Shobharam approaching, his usually cheerful face more alight than ever. "It looks like something has happened," Rao said.

It had. A tiger had killed a bait, dragged it into the jungle, eaten about half of it, left it and retired deeper into the forest to sleep until nightfall when he would return to finish the meal. Shobharam had followed the drag trail, found the young buffalo, covered it, and even now a machan was being built. He stood, awaiting orders from Rao, who told him about the leopard. Shobharam smiled and spread his hands like a merchant offered a bargain.

"We have a problem," Rao said to me. "We can come back here and sit up for the leopard, or we can forget the leopard and try to take the tiger——"

"No way of doing both?"

"No——" he began, then; "Perhaps there is. We

could do this: Go and sit up for the tiger at four o'clock, leaving instructions here that the leopard should be permitted to drag the calf into the jungle. The next morning we could follow the leopard, perhaps build a machan and wait for him that night, for he won't finish the calf in one meal. And we might even have luck in stalking the cat through the jungle——"

"I don't much care for stalking a leopard on the ground," I said. "But you're the shikari. We'll do whatever you think best."

"The tiger is most important. You haven't much more time with us. I think we should try for the striped one first, then come after the spotted cat."

He walked over to the graybeard and the priest and told them, with much gesturing, of our decision. Their reaction was immediate.

They both waved their arms, calling to the rest of the villagers, who circled Rao, haranguing him. The priest, holding up his hands, moved the crowd back. He wasn't dressed in the robes of a priest, but in the long *pagri* of the respected village elder. There was authority in his voice, however. The words, "*Kairea, Koola, Deedum, Puchna,*" seemed to sound more than any others. Then there was silence, and the priest approached Rao and spoke to him for about a minute.

"First, they're saying that if the leopard returns and perhaps kills a villager, the blood will be on my hands," Rao explained. "He reminded me of the priest's function. It is he who performs the yearly sacrifice to the village gods, and it is also he upon whom devolves the dangerous duty of keeping tigers out of the boundaries. When a tiger comes to a village, the *bhumka* goes to the god, Bagh

Deo, and makes his offering—a goat, a chicken, anything he wishes—promising to repeat it for so many years, on condition that the tiger does not reappear for that length of time. The tiger, on his part, never fails to fulfill the contract thus honorably made by his lord, for he is pre-eminently an honorable and upright beast, 'pious withal,' as Mandeville says, not faithless and treacherous like the leopard, whom no contract can bind.

"He reminded me that he can do nothing with the leopard and if I didn't help him that he would lose face and I would bring danger to all his people——"

"That's what we call putting you on the spot."

"Yes, I know. And I can't permit this or I will be doing nothing but traveling from village to village defending them from leopards, when my duty is to you and other shikar clients."

"What'll we do?"

"I'll just have to be as gracious as I can and tell them that we will come back and trail the leopard and make a vow that we will hunt until we kill him. That missing toe is a stroke of good luck, for now we can identify the killer when we deliver him back here."

Rao with his gentle voice and convincing manner talked with the old man who had lost the calf, not ignoring the bhumka, but not directing his conversation at him either. Finally the graybeard held up his hands, palms flat, and Rao came back to us. "They are not happy, but they thank us for our pledge to return and track down the leopard. I've told them to let the animal take the dead calf into the jungle, and we will follow the drag trail."

This all convinced me of something, I had long sus-

pected: The leopard is the most dangerous animal in the jungles, cunning, treacherous, unpredictable.

"That is true," Rao said. "The tiger follows a set pattern, makes a kill, returns to it; makes a big swing through the jungle, returning to a certain place almost at the exact hour each time. There are even tiger trails in the jungles that the big cats have used for years. Usually they have their own hunting territory and no other tiger enters it."

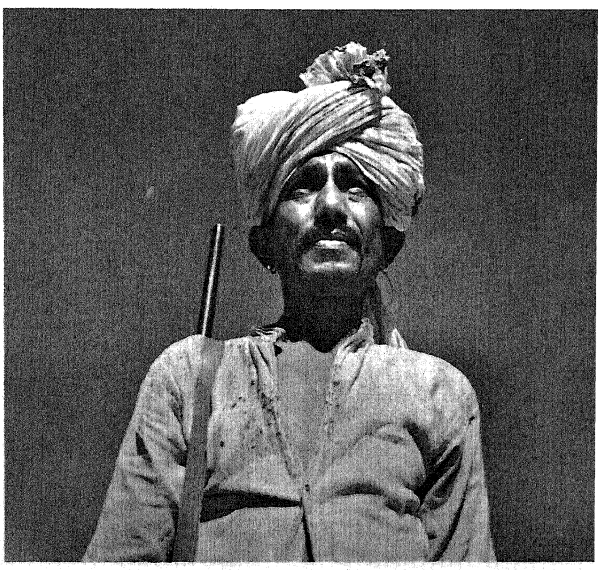
"I remember Kipling's Shere Khan," Mary Lou said. "The other animals held contempt for him because he hunted where he chose."

"Correct," Rao said. "The Englishman, Kipling, knew his jungles and his animals. But I think he was wrong in making the tiger the villain, and a black panther or leopard, Bagheera, the good one. The real villain is the leopard. All of the jungle people know this and really fear the animal. You can never tell what the spotted cat will do. They are on the increase here. Like the crow, they have learned how to live with civilization and are thriving, living on the fringe of the jungles, preying on cattle and people alike.

"When a tiger is killed, the aborigines, the *Madia,* the forest people, clasp their hands in piety, bow low and touch the tiger's dead paws with their hands, paying it deep respect. They also beg for tiger fat, believing that it is the best remedy for rheumatism, their constant ill here in the jungles, especially during the monsoons. But the leopard! They treat him with contempt when he is dead and great fear when he is alive."

When we got back to the dak, Rao said, "If you don't mind, I'd like us to go to the tiger's kill right away. I want to direct the building of the machan. Sometimes

S. V. Rao Naidu, gentleman *shikari*, Allwyn Cooper's top hunter.

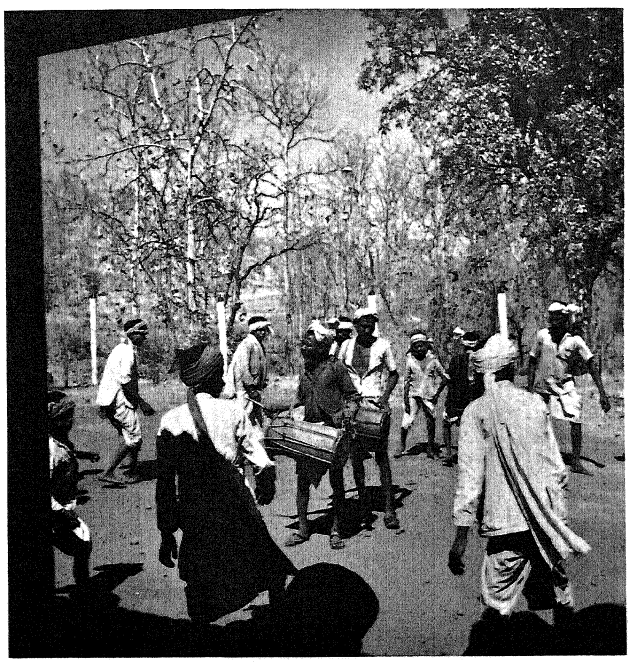


Shobharam, the tracker, from the village of Bori.

The wild boar that charged out of the night.

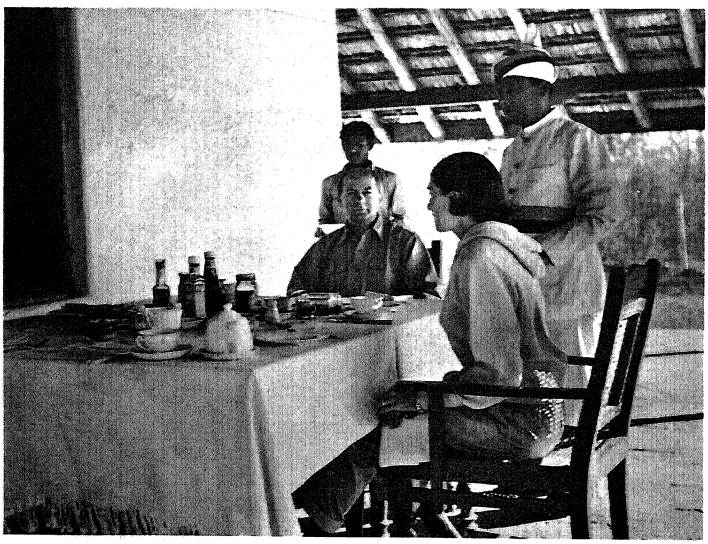
The buffalo calf killed by the leopard in the center of Bori.

Victory pose: the cattle killer will terrorize no more jungle villages.



The marauding leopard is dead; the dance of thanks begins.

The hunter congratulates the woman; the tracker sits and smiles.



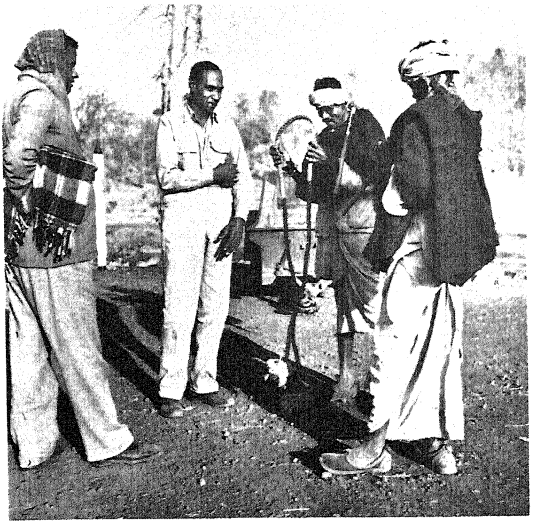
The days and nights in the jungle begin and end on the dak veranda with the houseboy, Govinda, and the bearer, Farika.

Motisingh, magician
with food, receives
the peacock
he helped defeat.

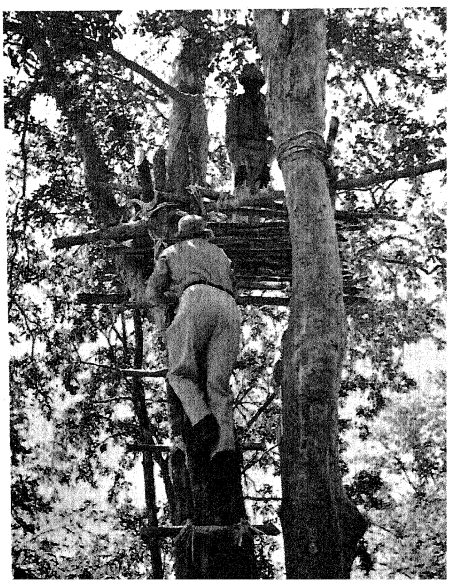
The *Madia:* the men of Bori help plan a full-scale beat.

A tiger beat is about to begin by the banks of the river Ganjal.

Tale of the tiger: The bait is taken out and tied to a tree.

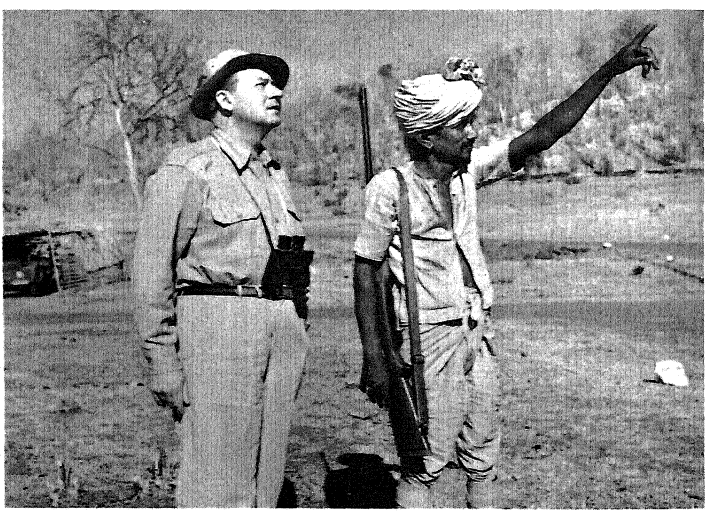


Next morning the *Hakawalas* (axmen) return with the broken rope the tiger left when he tore the tied bullock from the tree.



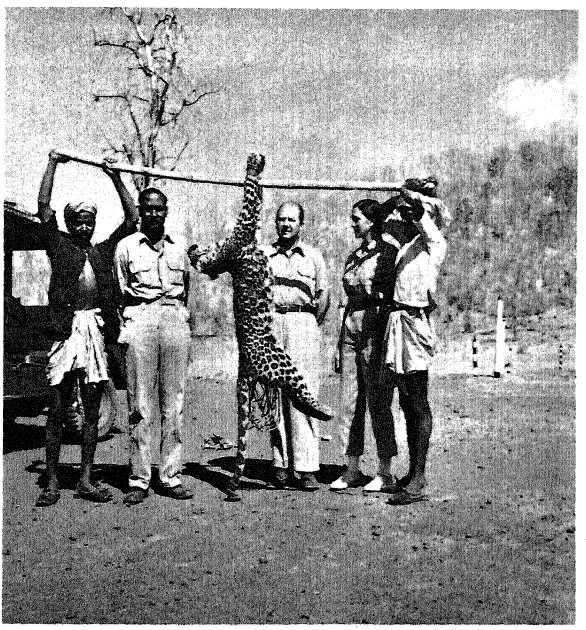
Rao Naidu stands in the machan awaiting the climbing author.

End of a tiger beat: Naidu; Sardarkhan, the forest guard; Kanhaiyalal Tiwang, the forest ranger; the young schoolteacher and a Bori axman.



The days begin with a plan; tomorrow the far mountain and the bison.

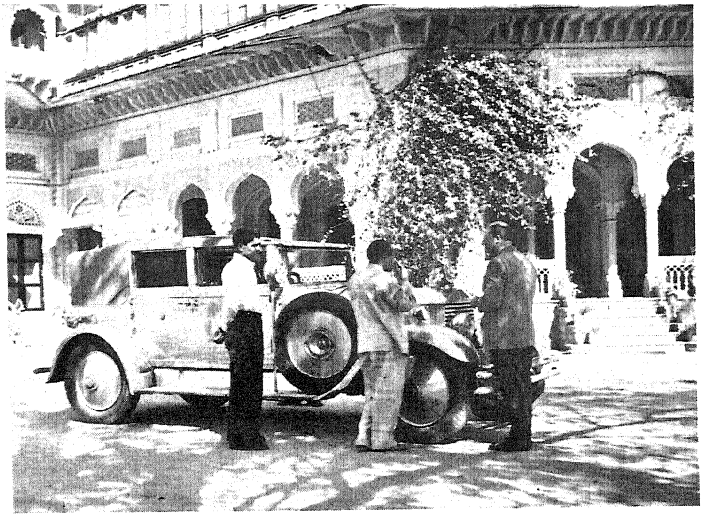
Shobharam, the big tiger man, disdainfully holds the two elusive gray jungle fowl the author spent a full morning chasing.



The crafty one that stalked the hunters in their machan.

This is the land of the rare trophy, the plains wrapped in the gauze of dawn, the race track of the world's fastest antelope, the black buck.

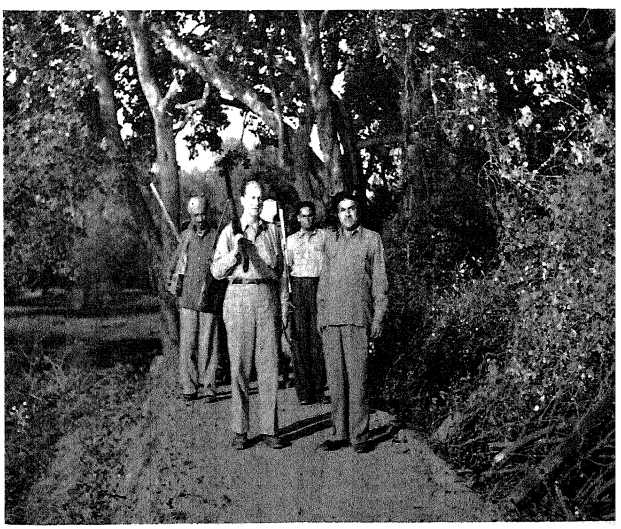
And then the adventure in the jungle ends, wild flowers are gathered, and you sit with those whom you have come to know so very well.



The royal palace, Moti Mahal; the aluminum Rolls Royce; the personal secretary, Om Parkash Gupta, and (center) the Prince of Bharatpur.

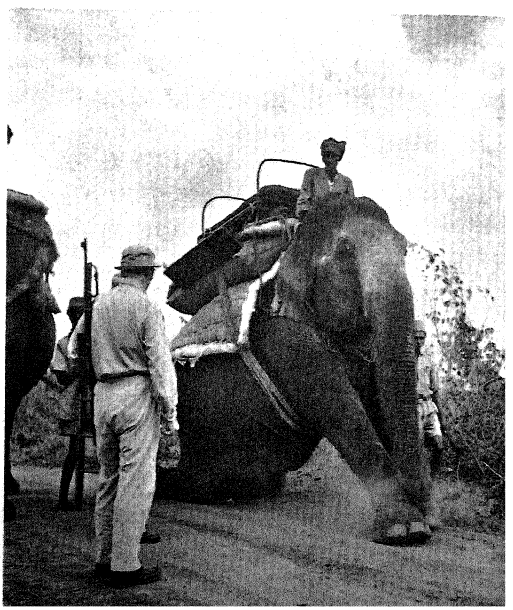
She who carried the camera is caught feeding the chital, or spotted deer, on the palace grounds.

At the end of the gray partridge shoot, the people of Chianpura gather.



The Maharaja leads us to the waters of Keola Dev Ghana and the duckblinds.

The Princess Parvat Kaur and two of her sisters sit with the Maharaja and the author in the sunroom of the great palace.



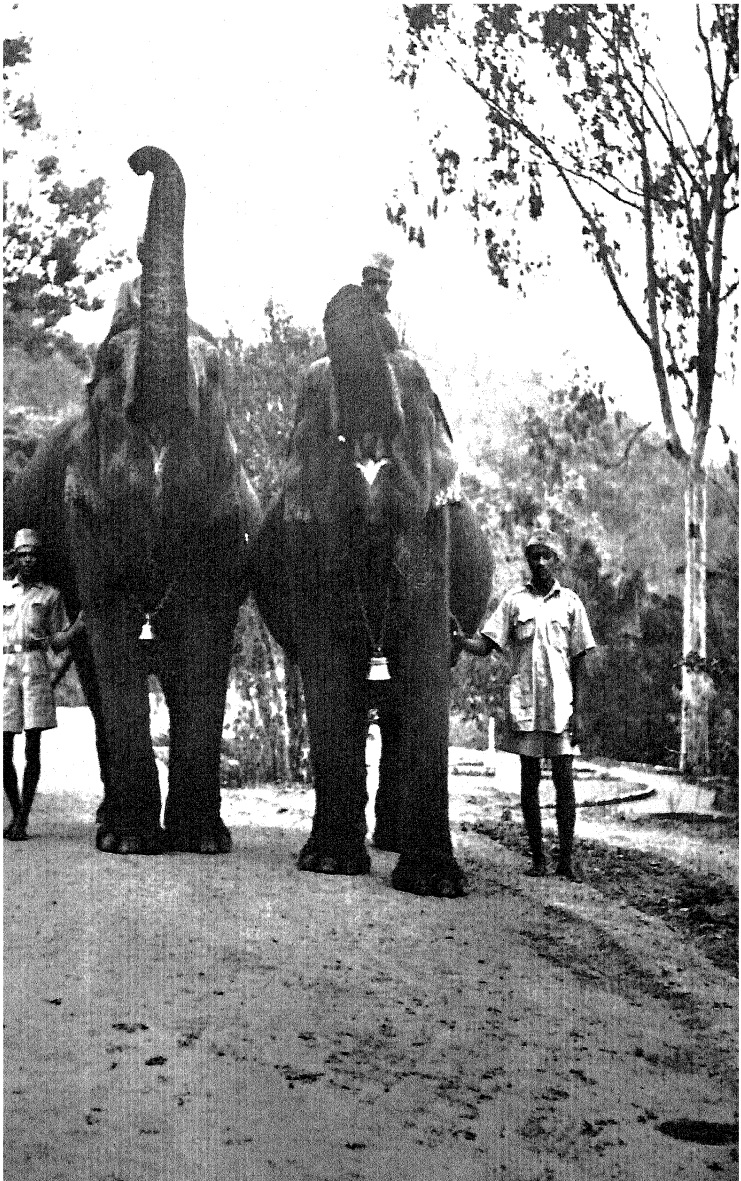
One of the Maharaja of Mysore's famed hunting elephants kneels so the hunters can mount and the search for the great gaur begin.

The trained elephants halt, the gunbearers wait, while the hunters approacl the gaur—or wild bison—where he is down in the tall grass.

The gaur was toppled with one shot, but a cautious approach was necessary.

The bitter old bull bison will charge no more villagers.

Down to earth again after the hunt ended: Gulah Singh, Ruth Stieff and the author get ready to leave their animated shooting platform.



Good-bye to the dark forests of Chamarajangar and the mountains of Kyathe-devera Guida where the wild bison roam.

they select the wrong tree, either too near the dead animal, or too far for an effective shot in the dark. I'd like to make sure . . ."

We took our heavy caps and gloves and alpaca-lined jackets. It was about one thirty when we left in the jeep, halting at a clearing in the jungle about ten miles from camp. Shobharam pointed out the drag marks of the luckless bullock. This was a fresh kill; the tiger could be hidden nearby, guarding it.

"I dislike having you walk through this bamboo with your rifle safety off," Rao said, "but it is better to be ready in case the tiger attacks."

The tracker went first, then Rao, then Mary Lou. I brought up the rear in case of a flank or rear attack. As we trudged up the hill, which was heavy with underbrush, I began to wonder what the devil Mary Lou and I were doing here. If I wanted to write about the participant sports, what was wrong with quail shooting in the southern United States? I have yet to hear of a man being attacked and torn to pieces by a covey of bobwhite.

We were cautioned to walk carefully and as quietly as possible. The tiger does not have a keen sense of smell, but he can almost hear an eyelash flick, and he can pick up strange movement at incredible distances.

Soon we saw two natives, sitting at the base of a big, black *Unjun* tree. Shobharam shook his head angrily, making his gold earrings dance. The two men he had left hadn't made much progress. Using their kukhadis they had hacked down the boles of young bamboo trees, peeled the bark from them, and started to lay the platform about fifteen feet from the ground in the crotch of the tree. The dead bullock, about half consumed, wasn't completely

covered, and Rao snapped a command that sent the natives scurrying for brush and leaves to cover the body so the crows and vultures wouldn't descend and spoil everything by warning the tiger.

"I'm sorry this isn't completed," Rao said. "Noise at this point is not good. It might warn the tiger that we are near his kill, and he will not return. But at least the trees are cut."

By that time the men had the animal well hidden and one of them hiked up the tree as easily as I tie a shoelace. It was impressive, watching how quickly and efficiently the Indians put the machan together, using nothing but know-how and the crude ax. Once the platform was laced together with the strips of bamboo and secured in the crotch of the tree, it was completely camouflaged with leafy branches, which were cleverly woven around both sides so that there was no exposure from below. Cats are the only animals that look up, and the tiger's eyesight and ability to see in the dark being what it is, this hiding of the shooting platform was most important. It could mean the difference between success and failure.

Rao scaled up the tree gracefully, sat on the machan, bouncing on it, trying it out, helping to put the finishing touches to the screening. From fifteen feet below it was almost impossible to detect him, except for the movement of the brown hands as they arranged a branch here, bunched more leaves there.

He came down as easily as he went up. "That *peepul* tree"—he pointed at a large gray tree nearer the kill—"would be better, but it is a sacred tree and these people refuse to climb it. We're all right, though. It will be about

a fifty-yard shot. I like it closer. These shots in the dark from a tree are not easy. But this will do."

One of the villagers lowered a rope ladder he had taken up with him and Rao said, "It's three forty. A bit early to sit up, but I think it would be wise for us to go up now."

Climbing the swaying rope ladder wasn't easy, but it was better than monkeying up as Rao had. We got comfortable, Rao in the center with his light, Mary Lou on his left with the .308, I on his right with the .458. The Indian slid down and Rao pulled up the rope ladder. We were in the tree for the night.

Rao said several rapid words in Hindi to Shobharam and he and the two natives started off, talking loudly and scuffing their feet. "I told them to make noise as they went," Rao said. "If the tiger is lying up nearby, he will listen, perhaps even follow them, and it will take his attention off us here."

"You mean he might know we are here in the tree?" Mary Lou asked.

"He could. If he is nearby, he could have observed this whole thing. But more than likely, he is deeper in the jungle and asleep. He will awaken hungry as night falls and come back here to finish his meal. At least that's what we hope he does. It is the routine a tiger usually follows."

We were talking in low tones but Rao said, "Let us whisper. True, the tiger perhaps cannot hear us. But some other animal can and warn him. When darkness comes, sit perfectly still. Do not talk. Do not move."

"We don't seem very high here? How high are we?"

"About fifteen feet."

"Can a tiger climb?"

"He can jump eighteen feet straight into the air and he can climb a tree if he is pressed, although usually he doesn't like to. He is king of everything he surveys in the jungle and he doesn't like to drop his dignity and get in a tree. But a leopard. He'll come up a tree like a flash."

"Any tigers been known to get into a machan tree?"

"Yes," Rao said slowly, "last year two men were killed by a tiger that climbed for them. The tiger was shot and wounded. He saw the men in the tree and went for them——"

"Let's hope this one doesn't join our party," Mary Lou said.

"I don't expect you to wound."

It was silent in the jungle now, and we sat watching the bullock that was lying unconcealed. The sun's dying rays fell like a weakly powered spotlight through the thick branches of the tree.

Then suddenly, abruptly, it was dark. It was the time of the tiger, the time to remain motionless, the time to listen for sound, to strain your eyes for movement, the time to be alert, the time we had traveled over ten thousand miles to live through.

Jungle dark is like no other darkness I have experienced. It is thick and tangible. If there is such a thing as velvet dark, this is it. The tree we were in was completely encircled by heavy undergrowth interspersed with bamboos and other trees we couldn't identify, much of it young stuff, standing eight to ten feet high. But it acted as an effective blockade, screening the rest of the jungle from us, and giving the clearing where the dead bullock was the effect of a stage.

But don't get the impression that the jungle is a si-

lent, mysterious place. Mysterious, yes. Silent, no. The immature peafowl, settling in their trees for the night, beeped like a Manhattan taxi; the jungle fowl's shrill, piercing call was like that of a rooster mixed up with his high notes, and the big peacocks' cry sounded exactly like the neighbor's cat howling at the moon from a backyard fence.

Finally, as the moon came up, gleaming above the trees like hand-polished silver, two animals walked onto our jungle stage: civet cats, gray-black, measuring about four feet from the end of the long, bushy tail to catlike heads. Their long hair formed an erectile ridge down the middle of the back and there was no doubt about their being carnivorous. Both began to pull at the bullock, biting off pieces of flesh, but they were quiet about it and from time to time they would stop, silently raise their catheads and look around.

Mary Lou timidly reached out a hand and touched me, then made a slight motion with her head. About five feet from her, directly behind and above, two eyes burned. I raised my rifle, but Rao shook his head, then quickly clapped his hands. Uttering a kind of gibberish scream, a big gray langur monkey fled from our tree, shaking the branches as he dropped to the ground and scampered off. How he had ever gotten up here without our knowing it was a puzzler.

The civets were gone now, too, and we sat as if graven for about fifteen minutes before the next sound came. It was a splatter of leaves, and a spotted animal, larger than a big dog, came into our clearing. A hyena, the untouchable of the animal kingdom. Their jaws are so strong that even a tiger will not face three of them on

a kill, but they are such revoltingly greedy animals that they will eat their own entrails if wounded in a fight or by gunshot. I had seen this happen in Africa and had absolutely no regard for this scavenging coward. This one, an especially large animal, with the black spots and the bristly yellow hide showing clearly in the moonlight, stood with horrid head raised for a moment, listening. He had probably heard one of us move in the tree. This was a good test, for if we could fool the hyena, it was possible that we could outsit and outwit the tiger. Now the big head went down and the hyena moved in curious little steps over to the bullock. Then came the sound of the cracking of bones, and a steady crunching. A sound that set the teeth on edge and started the nerves humming. This went on for about five minutes, until Rao suddenly flashed the light on the animal. It stood in a horrid frieze, head raised, slaver on its jaws. Then, quickly, it was gone.

"I didn't want to listen to that any longer," Rao whispered softly. "Also to test the light." It was a large, sealed-beam lantern, given him by one of his American shikar clients, and its ray was broad and powerful.

We had practiced for this night shooting back at the dak. Rao would shine the light on an object and Mary Lou and I would raise our rifles and sight it. Oddly enough, even though the light was not on the rifle barrel, you could see the target and sight on it. With the light off, of course, the rifle was useless. The tiger could see us in the dark; and we could see him as well—as long as our light batteries held up.

Edison Marshall, Robert Ruark and some of the other boys who stalk big game have written about sitting up in machans, but it seems to me that they underrate this night shooting from a tree platform. Let me put it this

way: You are to sit in a tree, on a hard, wooden platform, all night. You get in the tree at four o'clock in the afternoon and you stay there until six the next morning. But here's the rub: you can't move, scratch, cough, talk, stand up, eat, drink. You sit statue-still and you wait for the deadliest wild animal in the world to walk around the tree under you, wait while he approaches and eats the bait, then you try to uncramp yourself, take steady aim and shoot.

Without glossing my career, I have hunted in Africa, Mexico, Canada and many other countries. I have spent long hours in the most uncomfortable duckblinds known to man, have even perched in the crotch of a mangrove tree for hours in a blinding rain, waiting for ducks to come. I have crawled two miles on my hands and knees, hunting wild sheep and goat; I have waded through hip-deep mud in Cuba and Hudson Bay, hunting ducks and geese; I have been torn by the sisal cacti of Yucatan after quail—but never have I encountered anything that required as much restraint, patience and strength of character as sitting up all night on an Indian machan. How Mary Lou ever did it, and without complaining, is something I will never understand. Clement William Scott, unfortunately no relative, in his "Women of Mumbles Head," sang, "Bring, novelist, your notebook; Bring, dramatist, your pen! And I'll tell you a simple story of what women do for men." What we need is a poet to tell us of women who sit in Indian machans with their men. I can guarantee there aren't many of them.

Now the legs are cramped, the back aches, and you feel your body is giving a lie to the fact that you are in your early forties. Surely you must be at least ninety-five years old. The tree boles begin to bite, and it is bone-cold.

Jungle cold, in the early hours when the moon has gone, is damp and penetrating and the game doesn't seem worth the playing. If this can be called play.

But then the sound comes: a careful tread, and you know without being told that it is the tiger. Suddenly the body grows young and warm again; the heart beats loudly, the legs are no longer cramped. He walks in a measured tread around the tree, out about forty yards, stands silently and you strain to see Him. There, that is He . . . no, that is! But neither is. They are trees, mind-made into a tiger in the jungle dark.

He makes his measured circle again, there is sudden silence, and Rao shakes his head. You tip your head slightly downward and there he is, standing under the tree. You have seen tigers in zoos, but this animal looks at least twice as big. Cold touches your spine. Fear sits beside you. He is not looking up and he starts to move again, slowly, cautiously, and you wonder why—if you can see him—why Rao doesn't flash the light so you can shoot.

Then silence comes again like a great listening. You make a furtive movement to look at your watch. It is four o'clock. You sit stiffly, waiting. Finally, after a long time, you look at your watch again. It is four thirty. . . . The tiger has gone.

"Something is wrong," Rao whispers. "Either he spotted us in the machan, or he has forgotten where he placed the kill."

We sat silently for the rest of the night, hoping the tiger would return. He never came, but the dawn did, gray and chill. As we put down the rope ladder and swayed to the ground, I began to wonder about some of the tiger-

hunting stories I had read, written by men I knew. Something didn't fit. The big striped cats aren't so easy to take as some of the great white hunters would lead us to believe. One of these, who hits his typewriter overhard at times, had written in *The Saturday Evening Post,* after hunting in these jungles, that the end of the tiger was near. Perhaps needing a different angle or point of view, as all of us who labor over the typewriter do, he wrote that they were so easy to kill that it had ceased to be a sport. He must have been writing about some other terrain and some other breed of cat. Tigers like the one who had walked out on us will be around for some time.

Pathak, the jeep driver, and Kanhaiyalal Tiwang, the deputy forest ranger of Bori, were waiting for us as we reached the road.

"Now," Rao said, as we climbed into the jeep, "we have the leopard who killed the Bori calf to worry about."

As we rode, I asked Rao about the tiger. "I could see him fairly clearly. Why didn't you flash the light so we could get a shot?"

"The tiger would have run as soon as he saw the light. A running shot at night would mean a wounded tiger. That would be no fun trailing. I have never had a tiger shot or shot one, wounding it, that I didn't trail.

"When *sher,* the tiger, gets to the bait and starts eating you can flash the light on him and he will not move. When he is eating his own kill, he is afraid of nothing. That was what I was waiting for. I have the idea that he had forgotten where he hid the bait. His nose is not good. Also he might have heard that tardy building of the machan. Sher is a beast with a superior intelligence. Obviously something was wrong."

After breakfast, a wash and fresh khakis, with the warm Indian sun on our backs, we felt somewhat refreshed even though we hadn't slept all night, or the night before. As a matter of fact, from the constant activity and lack of sleep, both Mary Lou and I had dropped ten pounds, but we had never felt better.

The exhilaration of the hunt, the newness of everything in this central jungle were keeping us on the move. If, and when, the newness wore off, there was no telling what would happen: We would probably hole up and sleep around the clock for four days.

Right now we were on our way to Bori to discover what the leopard had done last night while we were on the machan. The animal had returned all right, just as Rao had predicted, and the villagers—without any great effort on their part, I'm sure—had permitted the cat to drag the calf into the jungle. Our plan was to follow the drag and find the kill, perhaps even flushing the leopard in the process.

Shobharam, with his stooping walk, led the way as usual, following the trail, with Rao then Mary Lou, and me bringing up the rear, in our customary formation. The drag-trail was clear even to our unschooled eyes and the cat had finally picked the calf up and carried it, completely off the ground, apparently, for after a quarter of a mile only the cat's tracks were visible.

After a half mile of this, even the sharp-eyed Shobharam looked confused and he kept stopping and fingering the gold earring in his left ear. "A sign that he is unsure," Rao said. He jabbered several words to the tracker

in Hindi, then said to us, "Wait here, please," and they went ahead. Mary Lou and I stood and watched them go.

"This is one smart cat, I would say," she said.

"The people in the village sure aren't going to be happy."

"Jack," she said, "how many more days do we have here before we leave the jungle?"

"Not many, why?"

"I love it. It's so restful, even when we're hunting, that I find I'm relaxed and at peace with the world all of the time. I haven't missed a newspaper or a radio, and I'm beginning to wonder if all that crazy rush and things like that TV nonsense are a dream. This is real. That other is——"

Suddenly the incongruity of it struck me and I laughed.

"What's funny?" she said, her mood disturbed.

"Here we are tracking a leopard in the jungle after sitting up in a tree all night, without sleep, watching murder walk the ground under us and you tell me that you love it. Characteristics like this should be foot-noted in the marriage contract: 'She likes the faraway places. You must promise not only to love, honor and respect, but you must see that she spends two months every year in the jungle hunting man-eating animals——' "

"I guess you're stuck," she said, smiling as if she had been caught counting the money in my billfold.

Rao and Shobharam were coming back. Neither of them looked happy. "Wonder what happened to the leopard?" she said, the smile going.

He got away. Clean. Cunning. Clever. Rao said that they now couldn't even find his tracks.

"As I told you," he said wearily, "the tiger follows a pattern, the leopard does not. This one may have hidden his kill by hanging it high in the crotch of a tree or burying it. Anyway, we will return. If I know anything about these creatures, this one will come back to the village."

The village gaon, the bearded elder, and the priest didn't look at all happy about the news. The old man who lost the calf tugged his gray beard and looked as if he were about to cry. I imagine that Rao told them the same thing he had us, that the cat would be back and then we would concentrate on getting it. The entire village had long faces as we left, and I half expected jungle jeers and hoots, but Indians are reserved and they merely registered disappointment as we drove off to the bungalow.

For lunch Motisingh had boily-brown breast of peacock, white rice with spicy gravy and a homemade mango ice cream that he had whipped up in that mysterious, no-questions-asked, Indian fashion. There was also a delicious-looking salad of thickly sliced tomatoes, but having been warned, we never touched it, or any uncooked fruits or vegetables. The only item that we found consistently unpleasant was the double-boiled water. It tasted like liquid smoke. But after that peacock lunch, our taste buds were so entranced that even the water was drinkable.

Mary Lou put it like this: "If you've ever had tender, young hen turkey, gently cooked in butter, then you *almost* know how good wild peacock is."

The meat is tender, fine-grained and juicy. Peacocks not having been fed chemically treated grains and antibiotic-fast-growers as our domestic fowl are, their flesh had a sweet flavor and enough firmness and body to it to make

every mouthful a savory experience. Nothing I have tasted before or since was as delicious.

Motisingh smiled for the rest of our time there, once I had asked Rao to translate what I thought of him and his peacock. Later he even asked if I would put it in writing. I'm doing that here, but I also did in a magazine article and wrote him a special note, recommending not only the dish but the chef.

This may seem an over-concentration on food, but we had been told by experienced travelers in India that food might be one of the big disappointments. As food is so important from an energy-building, esthetic, thought-stimulating, conversational, and about every other viewpoint, this—had it proved true—might somewhat have marred the shikar for us.

"Gourmet that you are," Fred Rosen had said, flatteringly, "maybe the curries will pall after a while, the chicken get chewy, the goat monotonous."

In the jungle nothing gets monotonous. Except, perhaps, sitting in a tree too often.

Now Rao insists that we take a nap. "After that, later in the afternoon, why don't you go out and shoot some doves for the table? We will go driving tonight for that leopard. I am not at all happy that we lost his trail."

The quality of Rao's English did not vary even under stress, and though he had guided a number of Americans on shikar, he hadn't picked up any of our slang or habit of bunching words like, "I'llbe seeinya." Now he said politely, "I do hope that you have a pleasant rest. I think that you will find the dove hunting much fun. They are also delicious."

I told him that we knew what they were, had eaten

them and shot them; that they actually were the most popular game bird in the United States, some nineteen million falling to the gun every year.

"Really?" he said, lifting his eyebrows in surprise. "Mr. Klein nor none of the others spoke of this. They talk of quail. Here, of course, there are so many doves that we do not even consider them a game bird and hardly anyone hunts them."

It was that quiet time of afternoon in the jungle when the sun lessens its heat and some of the creatures of the wild begin to stir from their midday naps, just as we stirred from ours. We took the jeep, and with Pathak driving and his assistant, Sampat, in the rear, holding my big rifle, went off looking for doves. "They will be in the roads now, pecking for the grit that they use as a digestive," Rao had said. "We will wait for you to return before Motisingh plans dinner." What he meant was that he was depending upon us to supply meat for tonight's table.

Before we started Rao insisted that I take the .458 for Sampat to carry and that I strap my Smith and Wesson .44 Magnum on my waist. "You might get out of the car to shoot a dove or follow a winged one down, and run into a tiger."

It seemed that last year a tiger hunter on a shikar in this very block had decided to break machan routine by taking an afternoon off and going dove shooting. He was doing well, was into his third brace of imperial doves, and was following the last one that he had winged into a mass of lantana where it had lobbed.

He was met by a big male tiger on the run. Luckily he had enough presence of mind to shoot and blind the

animal, holding it off long enough to allow him and his gun bearer to get into a tree. They had to sit most of the night before the big beast went away and someone at camp remembered that they weren't around and went to get them.

This was a new sport for us, hunting doves with a gun bearer and the most powerful handgun made strapped at our side. Rao was right, of course: The doves were on the road, but as we got close to them they burst into the air and jittered in trees on the edge of the jungle until we passed. We decided to hunt while driving. Mary Lou stayed in front and I got into the open back where I could swing the gun freely. Traveling at about ten miles an hour we would spurt up to the doves as they flew and try to get them on the wing. Mathematically, I don't know exactly how this would be computed, but it was difficult shooting. The doves were traveling at least thirty-five miles an hour, and we were doing fifteen to twenty, trying to get close enough, sort of paralleling them on the road. By the time we had downed four doves, using a full box of shells, we decided that the technique perhaps wasn't working properly.

I've never seen so many doves: the brown, imperial, spotted, the beautiful soft gray ringed, with the spotted (looking much like our mourning dove except for the black spots) in the majority. During the first hour—although it is difficult to deal in round numbers with wild birds—I would say that we saw at least two thousand birds. Paraphrasing that talented phrase-maker, Winston Churchill, never were so few doves taken with so many shots.

Then we decided that it might be intelligent to stick

with wing-shooting techniques that we knew. We suggested to Pathak that he lag behind with the jeep, while we, taking Sampat and the tiger gun, walked on ahead. That way, if we were quiet enough and quick enough, we might be able to get off in-range shots at the doves before they spooked into their protective trees. Neither Pathak nor Sampat could seem to understand why we didn't plink them off the trees. Trying to explain to them that the idea of wing-shooting as a sport was to allow the bird to get under full flight before you shot, thus making it necessary for you to call upon all your skill and shotgun know-how to bag the bird, didn't seem to make any impact.

The result of walking, almost tiptoeing, ahead of the vehicle was perhaps the best wing-shooting that Mary Lou and I will ever experience. We were able to catch the doves on the rise at about forty yards, thus giving both bird and shooter an equal break. We didn't fill Sampat's bamboo basket with doves, but we did collect enough so we wouldn't have to look the other way when Motisingh chose the ones he would prepare for dinner.

Rao was waiting for us when we got back to the dak, giving us that electric smile of his when he saw the results. "You will like what Motisingh does with them," he said.

Motisingh came gliding out, took a few of the doves out of the basket and pinched their breasts, smiling and nodding his silvery head as he inspected each bird.

It was dusk by that time and Rao suggested that we go back to the jeep and prowl the perimeter of the jungle near the village, looking for the leopard. "I am sure he will come," he said. Tiwang and his man Sardarkhan, the forest guard with the happy manner and the gay, peaked turban, got in back with Rao and Mary Lou, and I got in

the front seat with Pathak. But it was beginning to seem that no matter with whom we rode, the camaraderie was there, the total effect that of a smoothly functioning team. Little was said; Rao might utter a few words to the Indians occasionally, but we were discovering that conversation wasn't necessary for conviviality, understanding and companionship. Without a motion, without a word being uttered, we suddenly realized that we had been accepted. We were hunters; we were willing; we were there; that seemed to be enough.

As you will remember from earlier remarks about Indian jungle dusk, the way it arrives is a sudden and sometimes treacherous thing: it sits on the edge of darkness, the purpling of twilight, and then remarkably fast, as if someone yanked down a window curtain, dusk has fled, night has come.

It was during the mauve stage that we saw the cat. Rao stopped the jeep, pointed at Mary Lou. She carefully sighted her .308 at the leopard strolling near the border of the village. As she shot, he fell, sending a long spiral of dust into the air. His back legs twitched and then he was still.

When Rao had carefully examined the leopard, proving that a toe from the left front foot was gone, he had tied it across the hood of the jeep and driven into Bori where he had a long confab with the priest, the village headman and the man who lost the calf.

We left amidst congratulations, cheering and much excitement. "They will be at the bungalow soon to dance their respect to you," Rao had said.

"Why," I asked him, "were you so sure that this particular leopard would come back tonight? He must have

had a full belly; that calf was enough for a couple of night's chow."

He answered my question as we drove back to the dak. "The leopard is a vindictive animal. This one knew that the villagers would not attack him. He had entered their village twice, killed one of their prize animals, taken it under their very noses, and they did nothing. Being the conceited brute that he is, he came back to lord it over these unarmed people; helpless, he thought, against his clawed strength, should he want to use it."

"Do you really think a wild animal can reason that way?"

"I've read in your books and actually observed the same thing here, that crows will not fly from you unless you have a gun. They will make a call if you get too close, true, then fly; but if you have a gun, they utter a certain alarm call and fly away from a great distance. Isn't this true?"

"Yes, Muir, Thoreau and other naturalists have written words to that effect."

"If a crow can think, discern, when you carry a gun, that can do it harm, a leopard, the most intelligent of our animals to my way of thinking, certainly can reason under similar circumstances.

"Twice in my youth, when I sat hidden in the jungle with my father, I have seen something rolling on the ground, playing like a house kitten. The chital, the spotted deer, is a curious animal, and both times I watched a deer come to investigate. The rolling, playing animal was a leopard. When the deer got within striking distance, the "kitten" was up off the ground and on the back of the other animal so fast I could hardly follow the motion with

my eyes. There is little doubt about it. The leopard has a brain.

"I had to trail another 'thinking' leopard that a client of mine had wounded. We were out on a morning round when we saw a leopard walking along a forest road the way they do, with the air that it belongs to them. My client, an old gentleman, fired immediately and the animal crouched. I kept telling him to shoot again, but he seemed to freeze and didn't and the leopard got to his feet and staggered toward a nulla. By now my client had worked himself out of the funk and fired again and the cat seemed to roll into the nulla. Thinking that both shots had found the mark, we cautiously approached the spot where the animal had disappeared. It was gone, so we went back to where we first sighted it, found some blood and followed the trail back to the nulla. We saw that the cat had climbed up on the other side, wounded apparently only with that first shot.

"I had a .423 with me, but decided that a shotgun was a better weapon for stopping a wounded leopard on a close charge, and returned to camp to get it. Since my client was old and had a bad heart as well, I left instructions that he was to remain at camp. Our officer in charge, Mr. Rege, was there, and I knew that I could depend upon him to keep the man from coming with me. Then I got into the jeep and went to the village and arranged for some men to bring several buffalo which we would drive before us to flush the leopard from his hiding place. After making these arrangements, I went back to the place where the leopard had vanished and found Rege there waiting with the client. I was annoyed, but Rege said that the man had insisted on coming, that he had wounded the

cat and that it was his responsibility to at least join in the hunt before the animal did further damage.

"I acted as tracker, following the blood trail with a local shikari, another tracker, my client, Mr. Rege and two villagers. With so many people, how could we have silence and the surprise element that we needed? Following the trail for a hundred yards, we found that the cat was still bleeding badly and stopping for occasional rests. Despite the warnings I had given, the local shikari kept walking ahead of me as if he were in search of innocent horned game. Suddenly we heard a fierce growl and the shikari came running back screaming. I thought the leopard was after him and ran to his aid, but upon seeing me, the cat whipped around and retreated.

"I decided that this was the time to use the buffalo, sending them in before me to locate the leopard, who now was obviously in a killing mood. With the four buffalos in front of me, the local shikari and the tracker behind me, I started forward. I had convinced the shaken client that he should return to camp with Mr. Rege. I kept on the blood trail, always with the buffalo ahead. We had made slow progress in this fashion for about two hundred yards when an uprooted tree trunk stopped our progress and I thought I saw movement behind it. Driving the buffalo over it, I saw nothing to bear out the fact that the leopard was there. The first went across popping its ears out but nothing else happened; the second went without incident; then the third, so now I thought that it had been my imagination and I closely followed the fourth animal as it crossed the big log. The buffalo was across and I was following about six feet behind. As I started across, the leopard rose up from behind the log and in one quick

movement went into a leap. Immediately I fired. Then as it slowed in mid-air I fired again. I hit this cat in the chest and gave him eternal sleep. This was a cunning cat, indeed. He was bent on having me along, so he had not growled or charged when the four buffalo actually had to step right over him. Never had I heard of this before. But the worst part of the whole thing was that silent charge. There was no warning, just the leap. If I had had a rifle, I think he would have gotten me, but the fast spread of the shotgun shell knocked him back and gave me time to shoot again. This, too, was a thinking leopard."

The staff was lined up before the bungalow as was their custom, and they began to chatter excitedly as they saw the leopard on the jeep. We got out slowly, feeling something like the great white hunters, returning Hollywood-style after a perilous jaunt into the bush after a crafty killer. The bowing respect that followed as we walked to our room heightened the impression so much that by the time we got inside and closed the door, it was all I could do to restrain myself from shouting to Mary Lou, "That was great! A terrific shot! I'm proud of you!" I did say it, but more moderately. I stuck out my hand and said, "Shake, buddy! You killed the nasty old cat and I'm glad."

"So am I," she said. "I feel sorry for those poor, unarmed people in Bori, facing terrors like that animal all the time. I wish I could do more to help. Remember, though, my jungle pal, we're rotation shooting. The next shot is yours."

"I couldn't have shot if I wanted to. Rao calls the shots and he pointed at you. Remember, you're the fabu-

lous skilled rifle shot who made a two-in-one hole in the target. I've never done that in my life."

"Blind luck, and you know it. The next shot, no matter what Rao says, is yours. We'll stay even that way."

"Maybe. You're one up on me already, and with one of the big five in India. A leopard! A thinking one at that. How does it feel?"

"It feels tired and hungry. I've been thinking that I'm glad we went doving today. Bet they'll taste scrumptious!"

I never really knew what the word meant, but if it means spicy, deliciously flavored, fall-apart-at-the-touch-of-the-fork tender, then this word "scrumptious" deserves some investigation. I couldn't pay any more respect to Motisingh than I already had, so I showed my appreciation by eating six doves, curried as only the Indians can curry, served with tiny boiled potatoes and some canned corn that Motisingh had deceived into believing that it had sprung fresh from the earth. It was mixed with buffalo cream and some tiny, hot red peppers and it was sensational.

Sensational also was the dance of honor the villagers did for us after dinner on that dark knoll overlooking Bori, with the sounds of drums and singing filling the jungle night. It was a scene that I would have thought a trumped-up phony if I had seen it on a movie or TV screen.

It was like this: Two drummers, who made sounds and carried drums like the bongo man in George Shearing's orchestra, were in the center. The women formed a circle around them, bending low and using what looked like sheaves of wheat to sweep the ground as they swayed

from side to side in perfect rhythm. They sang, in high, schoolgirlish voices, a top-of-scale song that seemingly had no beginning and no ending. Then they stopped, went to the edge of the knoll and stood staring at us as we watched from the dak veranda. Then the men formed a circle, and it was immediately obvious that they were the more graceful. They would take long, forward, hopping steps, then stop, bend low and sway, then straighten and swing long, lithe legs to each side, all the while singing the same drumbeat song.

The drummers continued to smile and beat for about forty minutes, until Rao said, "They feel that now they have somewhat repaid you for killing the leopard. Bow a thanks to them and then walk into the bungalow."

We did and they left, singing and dancing all the way to the village, some carrying torches that lit up the twisting line so that it looked like a great luminous serpent undulating down the hill.

"Whew!" Mary Lou said. "That was something."

"I don't think they could last through many leopard killings," I said. "They really threw themselves into that."

"The Madia are sincere in everything they do," Rao said. "And I am happy you had the chance to see this. Few people from the outside world ever get the opportunity."

We had returned to the knoll and were watching the embers of the fire turn wood into glowing roses, when a native came running up. He passed a folded piece of paper to Rao, who read it there by the dying fire. If the moment had been carefully blocked out as a dramatic sequence by a script writer, it couldn't have been better timed or staged.

"From the forest department guard at Unchabari," he said. "This runner has spent four hours bringing this to us. A leopard has entered the compound of the village and made off with a calf. They have no gun and they are asking us to come. How do you feel about it?"

"When?" I asked.

"It's too late to do anything now. We can't trail the cat in darkness. Early tomorrow."

"What if Shobharam returns with news of a tiger kill?" Mary Lou asked.

"If he doesn't bring news tonight, it will mean that we will have time to go to Unchabari."

"I'd like to go," I said. "To be quite frank, I'm becoming more interested in leopards anyway."

"They're becoming your *frisson nouveau*" (new shiver), Mary Lou said. "Mine too!"

The huts of Unchabari were high on the banks of the road. Time, bullock carts, people and animals had worn the road down so much that it was four feet below its original level. It looked gutted out, as if by a flooding stream.

The forest guard, dressed in stiffly starched khakis and bush jacket—a small man with greasy, pomaded hair and a pert little mustache riding atop his lip like something with a life and movement all its own—greeted us. "Hallow, how you are?"

The gaon was also waiting. He was tall, skinny, dignified and old. He looked like an emaciated Lionel Barrymore gone native. As he shook hands with us, he talked, the words spilling out as if he had kept them bottled tightly for a long time, awaiting our arrival.

Rao translated, after making several respectful nods and replies.

It seemed that a leopard had entered the village late the night before, jumped the twelve-foot compound fence of tightly woven bamboo, killed a milch calf and, amazingly, leaped the high wall again, carrying the calf. All this apparently without enough noise to awaken any of the people of Unchabari.

Rao had a surprised expression as the old man continued. He translated after the gaon fell silent. "This is something I did not know until now. It happened earlier before shikar season, and I was not told of it. Late one night a leopard entered a hut in this same village where three young girls were sleeping together. He had to jump the compound wall to get in, but he came silently and took the girl from the center without awakening the other two, killed her and carried her over the wall to the jungle. This is bad news. This leopard hasn't been known to kill a human since then, but once one starts he never really stops." *Frisson nouveau.* Mary Lou had the right expression for our introduction to leopards of the man-eating variety. We hadn't talked of them since we arrived, sort of waiting for the propitious moment to bring up the grisly subject. That moment was here, and I wanted to find out how Rao felt about animals that stalked and ate men.

As we waited for the village tracker to join us, I asked how a man-eater got that way.

"One class is the old tiger or leopard who has lost his agility and ability to kill the fast, horned game, or to carry a calf from a village, and somehow finds humans easy to kill. Once he starts, he won't eat anything else but human flesh. Sometimes one of the cats, hunting in the

jungle, will mistakenly jump a man. Seeing movement, he will think that the person is one of his food-animals, and having made the mistake will eat the man. From that time on he will hunt almost exclusively for humans. Tigers and leopards that have been wounded and have recovered also become hunters of men; weakened, they discover man easy to pull down, and so concentrate on this soft, easy prey. An animal with porcupine quills in the mouth, a tiger wounded from a machan, a leopard with a leg broken from gunshot wounds—all these attack man.

"But what we of the jungle dread most is the female leopard or tigress man-eater. They will keep their cubs with them for over two years, training them in the horrible art of killing people. This can become a terribly vicious circle. Often the female young of the man-eating cub will in turn train her offspring to eat nothing but humans. We knew of one leopard that raised three litters to become man-eaters. It took almost the entire male population for miles around here many long, tragic months to get this horrible creature. She ate anything that moved—young, able men, children, babies, old men and women. Corbett wrote of a man-eating leopard that he considered worse than any tiger because of its intelligence. He told of this animal entering a hut through a two by two foot window, killing a girl and pulling her back through an opening that seemed much too small even to permit entry of the cat. Our leopard was even more of a menace than the one he wrote about. She would enter a village in broad daylight and carry away a child. She would hunt from trees and ledges, dropping upon anyone who walked below. We got her by sheer accident.

"It is a short step from cattle-eating to man-eating.

It needs only one wrong move. A man rushing to protect his calf or bullock, a blow of the paw, and there may be a new man-eater born. That's one reason I was so glad that Mrs. Scott shot that leopard near Bori."

The tracker came. He had a face of a well-tanned, hungry Eddie Fisher and looked about sixteen years old, but Rao said he knew his business. We followed the scuff marks of the drag-trail of the leopard for about four miles, finally losing it in the heavy cover the killer had entered. There was a long discussion among the three villagers, the forest ranger and the tracker, and it was decided that it would be foolhardy to enter the dense stuff after an animal that might be lying in wait.

"I wish we had found that kill," Rao said, his face set, his jaw muscles rigid. "This is one leopard I would like to build a machan and wait for."

It had taken more than three hours to make the stalk and return to the village. Rao told the gaon of Unchabari that we would be hunting chital and sambar and other horned game in his district soon and perhaps we would be lucky and find the leopard. The old man didn't look enthusiastic about the prospects, but very politely thanked us for coming and walked to the edge of his village with us.

It was well over an hour back to our dak where we found the staff waiting as usual. Shobharam came quickly to the jeep and helped Mary Lou from the seat. He took our guns, walked to the tent and stood waiting for Rao.

I joined them as they talked. Shobharam was gesturing, making his gold earrings dance a polka as he pointed back the way we had come.

"He has found no tiger kill," Rao finally said, "but he has discovered big pug marks about three miles from

here. He found them about an hour ago and says that they are fresh and that the tiger is in the big piece of forest near the river. He thinks that we should conduct a beat. With the luck we've been having, I agree with him. I hope that we can get the men of Bori to feel the same way."

"How many men does it take for the beat?"

"About one hundred. We'll need every man of Bori."

"How do they feel about a beat?"

"They enjoy it. I think that they will come."

And come they did. About seventy-five of them started out walking and the other twenty-five, the elders and the politicians and the young schoolteacher, rode with us. We attached a trailer and they piled in, twenty in a space built to hold eight; the rest sitting on laps in the jeep, leaning against one another, packed like jelly beans in a sack. They gabbled happily all the way, laughing like crazy every time a bump in the road threw them off balance.

This was the dry season and there wasn't much water in the Ganjal River that flowed turgidly between a narrow strip of forest and a dense jungle on the opposite bank. The plan was for us to build a machan on the near side of the river in a fat *Mhowa* tree, one of the most useful wild trees in India. It is never cut down when land is cleared and could be called the village liquor store. The fleshy corolla of its red flower, when it ripens and falls during March and April, is used to distill spirits that go down not unlike Irish whisky. We had a long taste and found it pleasant and full of jolt. The seeds of the flower have a candy-sweet flavor.

The men of Bori formed a single file and Rao gave each of them a round wooden chit. These would be re-

turned to him at the end of the beat and each man would receive a rupee (about twenty-one cents), even if we didn't see an animal. But if we made a kill, the amount would be doubled.

The beaters waded the river, and we went to our tree and watched Shobharam build the machan. We timed him as he laced the boles of young trees together with bamboo. It took exactly fifteen minutes to cut the trees, make the platform and secure it in the tree. We were to give the men more than an hour to walk to the other end of the jungle and start the beat back.

We climbed the tree. This time it was difficult since we had no rope ladder. As we got to the machan we saw langur monkeys in the trees around us, peering curiously, wondering perhaps what strange simians had invaded their tree-world.

One of the beaters, by slapping a tree with the flat of his ax, signaled that they were getting ready to start back toward us. Even at that distance it echoed and rang. Then the sound of their voices, faint and far away. The beat was under way. Starting deep in the jungle, the ninety men had formed a loose V, encompassing a large area and forming a sort of human funnel which supposedly would drive toward us all game hidden in the forest. Those on the point of the V were the stoppers; as the long back line moved consistently forward the stoppers would break off from their stationary point in the V, and join the others in the back line. On each side of us for perhaps a hundred yards there were men in trees; Tiwang and his assistant were on our right. How Tiwang, with that paunch, ever got up the tree, I haven't worked out. But he was there, calmly chewing his betel nut. Their purpose? If the game

broke out of the jungle and veered away from our machan, they would clap their hands to herd the animals our way with the sharp sound.

Making whooping noises like small boys playing cowboys and Indians and hitting the trees with their kulhadis, the beaters were getting closer when suddenly, from the nulla to our right, a mahogany-colored doglike animal came loping out, tongue hanging, bushy tail wagging. This was the dreaded *dhole,* the wild red dog. Rao said several words in Hindi that came out like curses. The dog lay down, resting his head on his front paws like a civilized collie before the living room fireplace.

"We hate them!" Rao said. "In packs, even the tiger fears them, they kill and maim anything that gets in their way. Seldom you see a single one like this. We can't shoot, though. It would alarm the tiger and send him back through the line of beaters."

In a few minutes, his head up, listening to the beaters, the dog got slowly to his feet and started trotting up the nulla.

In thirty seconds, without seeming to hurry or be alarmed, he was out of sight. The high, almost singsong chant of the native beaters suddenly became shouts. "They have flushed something!" Rao whispered. Then the wild shouting died and the chant was resumed. Breaking out of the jungle were two wild boars, behind them a huge, elklike sambar stag with a noble rack, his head high, turned slightly back, listening to the beaters. Flying ahead of them, looking as if they were afire, with the sun on their feathers, came three peacocks, making a good forty miles an hour.

Then the beaters emerged from the jungle, and the

men in the trees around us came down. Rao went down first, gracefully, fast. By the time we got to the ground he had some information.

"Bad luck," he said. "The tiger was there all right. He was driven out of a thicket where he apparently had been sleeping, but he broke back through the line of beaters. He took a swipe at one and just missed him. That was all they saw. They didn't know anything about the wild dog, the boars or sambar."

It was still early so Rao suggested that, inasmuch as we had the beaters already assembled, it might be a good idea to move ahead a few miles and hunt the area where he had last seen the big bison Maddox had shot at.

He spoke to the gaon, who then addressed the men. They wouldn't receive any more money for the next beat, but there was always the chance that we would bag an animal and their present fee would be doubled. All but six old men agreed and started walking. Again we took about twenty-five, with Rao making sure that they weren't the same ones who had ridden here with us.

There was a machan in a tree in the new location, one that Maddox had used, and we climbed to that. The slapping of the trees with the axes and the shouting started all over again. We sat there for another hour and a half before the men came from the jungle. They had seen plenty of sign, but no bison. And there had been trouble: one of the men, a youngster of about eighteen, had been struck by a snake. They thought it had been the small and deadly krait, but weren't sure because it had slithered away. It is rare for snakes to be abroad during shikar season. It is too cold. They like the heat of summer, and the dampness of the monsoon drives them out of hiding.

We had not only failed to sight a snake, but there hadn't even been any insects of any kind around. I can't say the same thing for some areas of the States where I've hunted turkey and wild pigs.

Our plan now was to get the boy back to Bori as fast as possible. There were no *gurus* in the jungle, those men —wise beyond all belief, according to the Indians—who can cast out a spell or save any man who has been bitten by a poisonous snake. As we drove, Rao, always the logical, the calm one, surprised us.

"It is too bad we do not have a telephone so I could send a wire to this guru I know of in northern India. That's all it would take. Once this wise man knew of the snakebite, the boy would be cured.

"Even if he didn't know what kind of snake or who the boy is or where the bite is?"

"I have seen it happen. Near Nagpur, a friend of mine was bitten. His family telegraphed the guru, so that he could use his knowledge to save the man's life. He did, and my friend recovered."

"He stopped the poison?"

"He did. It happens often. They know secret *mantas*."

"What will happen to this boy?"

"The Madia have their own ways of treating a snakebite. You can come with us and watch how they do it. I think this boy's life will be spared."

At Bori, the boy, looking pale and now unable to walk very well, was taken to the same hut where I had gone to look at the man in the leopard skin. Six chickens were taken from a coop behind the hut. They looked like wild jungle fowl and probably were. The boy sat down and one of the men lanced the snake wound with a primi-

tive-looking knife, sucked it for a while, then brought one of the chickens over and placed its anus firmly on the snake wound. It acted as a suction, Rao explained. All of the chickens were used as we stood there and watched; all of them died. The poison they drew out of the boy's leg surged through them eventually killing them.

"This boy will have to replace the chickens," Rao said. "It is usual that the number is doubled in gratitude."

"Will he be all right?" Mary Lou asked in a half-strangled whisper.

"Yes," Rao smiled. "A primitive system, perhaps, but it does work."

And the boy did walk away smiling. He still looked weak and pale, but he made it under his own steam.

We checked on him and he was perfectly all right the next day.

A deputation

from Bori had approached Motisingh, asking that we help them obtain meat. I was willing for several reasons: not only was it proper for me to help these forest people who had been so co-operative, but our camp larder was low and Motisingh was unhappy. Also I had promised Richard Campbell, a taxidermist in Watertown, Connecticut, that I would help him complete his Indian animal exhibit. He has one of the most complete private museums in the country and the school children of Connecticut make regular educational visits to view the animals, birds and fish that he has gathered from all over the world. So the stalking of any Indian animal, even if it wasn't eatable, was on my agenda. Bagging a food species would constitute a triple good deed.

Mary Lou and I were sitting in the broad plantation chairs, sipping chilled orange juice and Chotelal, the skinner, was working on our bird boots, cleaning away as skillfully as the shoeshine boy at the Plaza. He had, without a word, but with emphatic gestures, insisted upon this boot-shining routine every time we returned from a hunt. As a result our boots gleamed all the time; the leather was calfskin-soft and pliable. They never had it so good. We can report that, among other skills, untouchables really know how to strap a boot.

We can also testify that the emphasis Dan Maddox had placed on the small Nagpur oranges was justified. Since double-boiled water is not palatable, Motisingh kept two large glasses of freshly squeezed juice in the Servel, awaiting our return from jungle jaunts. Sweet, cold, it was something to look forward to when we clumped up on

the veranda, tired and hot after a long morning hunt. It would be a sad day when the orange basket was empty.

"I think chital would be good to try," Rao suggested, joining us. "We can drive in the jeep to where they are and make a stalk."

Stalk? The books define the action this way: "To pursue or approach game, stealthily. To walk or go stealthily along. An act or course of stalking game. . . ."

We drove about twenty miles from camp, parked the jeep slightly off the road and got our instructions: "The chital graze in the fields beyond this rim of forest," Rao said. "In fact I've often wondered if it might not be a dangerous thing for them to do. They are actually surrounded by forest here, with the grass they eat in the center, leaving them open for attack." At some long-ago time, he explained, someone had planted gram here and the ground around the Bori range is so naturally fertile that the grain continued to grow, and the spot became a favorite grazing ground for some of the horned animals like chital and blue bull.

"Complete silence now," Rao said. "We must move without noise." Then, walking as if he had just read the description in the dictionary, he made a catwalk approach. We were careful to place each foot softly on the ground and we watched that we did not scrape bushes or branches of trees. Finally, after about forty-five minutes of this "going stealthily along," we left the bushy jumble of the jungle and stood on the edge of the meadow clearing. Some three hundred yards away, near the opposite rim of the forest, was a band of animals. They were light brown with white spots and in varying sizes. One looked enormous and stood, magnificent antlered-head raised,

on the alert while the herd with him chomped away at the grass. Chital or spotted deer, guarded by a noble old stag. This is a deer found only in India and Ceylon, and while they are numerous in the Bori range, Rao had told us that the gregarious animals do especially well in the sub-Himalayas and that he had seen great herds, numbering several hundred in one collection, in the Naini Tal Terai-Bhabar tract.

It was my turn at the gun, but we stood silently for a moment before I raised the rifle to my shoulder. I wanted the big fellow. Not only would his head make a fine trophy for the Connecticut museum, but he would supply the entire village of Bori with food for a while and perhaps something in the form of a steak for our own table. That is one of the stern laws of the jungle: take only what you need, but select it carefully so that everyone will benefit. This obviously was an old stag and I counted three others, slightly smaller, that would soon be qualified to lead this herd of perhaps fifteen chital. Soon these young bloods would have their chance. There would be plenty of antler-scraping fights before the new leader was selected, but new blood is vital for the continued health of the herd.

I don't know what made me turn my head or why my scalp suddenly became tight, but I did turn, slowly, and there, no more than sixty yards behind us, stood two leopards. They were standing rock-still, not even the long tails switching. There was no choice. Mary Lou and Rao also saw them and I started to twist my body so I could get my rifle on the two silent leopards. But my movement, slight as it was, did it. Like a puff of smoke or a bad dream they were suddenly gone into the trees.

Before the shakes started, I put the .308 Winchester on the big chital stag, just behind and slightly under the left shoulder blade. The Lyman 4-power scope picked the animal up clearly: his white spots gleamed and his antlers looked like well-polished, curved dueling swords. I touched off the shot and the 180-grain silvertip worked its savage spell: the stag leaped and fell; the herd stood for just a moment, then vanished into the forest.

Now I was a bit shaken and I think Rao and Mary Lou were, too. Rao tried a light touch: "The stalkers being stalked. How does it feel?"

"I don't like it," Mary Lou said. "Leopards are the original creeps!"

"I don't know what made me turn," I said. "And there they were just watching. . . ."

"What probably happened," Rao said, "these two cats teamed up to stalk a chital, and we came along and broke up their game. It's not often that you see two leopards together that way. They were probably planning to cut a chital out of the herd by one cat's crossing over into the other patch of forest and exposing himself so the deer saw him. They would panic and come this way and the other, waiting here, would have an easy time taking any chital he wanted."

"They would have had an easy time taking any one of the three great hunters," I said. "They could have been on us in a split second and killed all three of us."

"Probably," Rao said slowly. "But they were after chital, obviously weren't man-eaters, and I think that curiosity got the better of them. They were wondering what we were up to."

"Let's bring someone along just to watch the way

we aren't looking in the future," Mary Lou suggested. "I like hunting, but I don't care for being hunted."

"Nor I!" Rao said. "I've wondered about this location. I think I said that it was a perfect spot for someone to stalk the chital and blue bulls. The leopards apparently agree."

We went back to the jeep and told Pathak and Sampat about the chital. They drove us to the dak, picked up four men from the village and we returned to get the spotted deer. It was a good head with a 34-inch antler spread, and the stag weighed 220 pounds on the old butcher's scales Rao kept beside the skinner's tent. Motisingh came over and examined the deer, indicating with the flat of his hand like a cleaver, what portion he wanted for his larder. The remainder was immediately taken by five men from Bori, who came with wicker baskets and sharp knives.

Outside the tent, Chotelal, the skinner, had an old oil drum filled with water boiling over some charcoal. Every once in a while he would walk over and stir the mixture with a stick, then go back and sit in front of his tent. He always had an amazed or bewildered expression and after discovering what he had in the oil drum, it was easy to see why. He was boiling heads. This went on all the time. Every time an animal was bagged he would take over, skin the head, preserving the hide. Then he would boil the skull until it was as white and bald as a pearl. He had just finished all of the heads Maddox had gathered, and now was busy stewing the wild boar's that Mary Lou had collected. There always was a weird, sweetish, sickly odor near Chotelal's tent and we soon learned to bypass it by long nose-conscious yards.

That night, Fakira, our bearer, served us steaks from the chital loin that had been quickly sautéd in butter. They were as tender as any prime filet aged by one of the Chicago or Kansas City experts.

There was a celebration in Bori that night, too. Tomorrow would start the week-long religious festival of "Holi," when bright-colored paints, obtained from wild plants, would be flung into everyone's face, and the nights would be filled with singing, dancing and drumbeats, and there would be much drinking of *Mahua,* a wine made from fermenting tree flowers.

After dinner we went down to watch the fun. Although Holi lasts a week, on one day even the humblest has the prerogative of the Holi festival to make the most respected person of the locality his victim, playfully throwing or smearing color—vivid reds, blues and oranges—onto his face. Evidently the Mahua had been flowing pretty well, for when we arrived a good half of the village had well-smeared faces and all over the place little bands of from five to fifteen were gathered in dance, sometimes joining hands in a primitive version of the polka; sometimes kicking heels high in graceful, exuberant individual displays of terpsichorean ability.

In the jungle, Holi is sometimes associated with another ceremony, the *gur tutna.* This is essentially an aboriginal festival and may last, Rao told us, until the thirteenth Badi of Chait. It was going on now. A stout fifteen-foot pole was driven into the ground like a flagpole, and a lump of gur with a rupee in it was placed on the top. Around it, the women took their stand, each with a green tamarind rod in her hand. The men stood on the outside of the line, with crude shields made of two parallel sticks

joined by a crosspiece, held in their hands. The men made a sudden rush and one of them wiggled up the pole while the women plied their rods vigorously. The man scaled to the top, took the rupee and got down and away from the flailing wands of the women as fast as he could.

This was done three times while we watched and the backs of the three who reached the top and got the rupee (replaced each time) were covered with angry red welts, but it was all accomplished in high good humor and obviously a good time was being had by all.

Rao seemed pretty glum about the whole thing. When asked why, he said, "We're supposed to have another beat tomorrow. That is, if any of these people have enough strength left to walk."

Apparently good sense or financial responsibility took over, for the drumming and the festivity suddenly came to an end and the village went to sleep.

When we walked outside the dak the next morning, about eighty men and boys were waiting for us, their faces still color-smeared like those of a bunch of circus hopefuls trying out for a clown role. And they were acting like clowns, gay and cheerful, the younger ones prancing around, still throwing color.

"About twenty didn't make it," Rao said. "But we have enough for a drive. Shobharam has reported that the tiger has not made another kill, and the big one that we tried to beat out of hiding is still in the same area. He only found pug marks going in, none coming out. As long as no kill has been reported, I think it is worth while that we make another beat. You haven't too many days left, and the tiger may leave to make his circle again and not return to this block for another ten days."

"I'd like to make the drive with the *Hakawalas*" (beaters), I said. "Mary Lou and you can sit in the machan. My muscles tell me I need a walk."

Rao argued against it, saying that the tiger or leopard or wild boar could swing back through the line of beaters and attack. Mary Lou agreed with him, saying, "Besides it's my turn to take the next shot, and if you go with the beaters you'll just scare everything and make them run the wrong way."

I went with the beaters. These Hakawalas fascinated me. Armed with nothing but crude axes, five of these men had faced down a tiger about a year ago. They killed the big striped cat, three of them being badly mauled in the process, but they still lived to tell of their bravery around the campfires of Bori. Besides, I reasoned, what if an animal does break back through the line and charge the beaters, wouldn't it be better if I were there with the .458? Convincing myself, if not Rao and Mary Lou, I started on the long walk. Twenty-five men had been driven in the jeep and trailer to the Ganjal River crossing. I insisted on getting my wooden chit with the rest of the Hakawalas. "I'll collect with the rest. And we want something bagged on this beat."

Rao and Mary Lou sat glumly in the tree as I waded the river with the gaon, following directly behind him. I would make the hour and a half walk through the jungle, then turn and make the sweep back at the rear of the V. The only way to see how a beat was conducted was to do it the hard way. I didn't want to be a hand-clapper, a tree-sitter or even a stopper on this one.

It was a long, hard walk, the slim Indians moving lithely ahead of me without any seeming effort, each carry-

ing their crude leather slippers in the left hand, an ax in the right. The bottoms of their feet were horny-hard, almost leather, the flesh had toughened from exposure and constant pounding against the ground.

I had the .458 on a leather sling. I wore a soft-brimmed khaki hat, khaki trousers and shirt open at the neck and ten-inch Russell bird-shooter boots. And I felt dressed for an excursion into the arctic wastes; everything, even the light hat, weighed heavily.

The Indians were silent as they moved. I had been cautioned: "Do not make noise going into the jungle and warn the tiger that you are coming. Try to move silently. The time to make the noise is on the way out, just after the beat gets started."

Finally we reached the outer edge of the jungle, made a long swing to the right, spread out, formed our loose V and started back, with the gaon signaling the beat was to begin by hitting a tree with his ax and shouting. Immediately everyone did the same thing and started forward. They began that small-boy war whoop and walked in distance-eating strides. I kept up with them, but not without effort.

Peacocks and gray jungle fowl fluttered before us and a few fleet-footed *chausinga,* four-horned antelope. When an Indian beater saw a langur, he would chase after him howling and laughing, and the monkey would flee in terror. The beat was noisy; but that was its purpose: to drive the hidden animals before us.

Suddenly, to my far left, two beaters started screaming; one threw his ax and a leopard darted out of a clump of ringal, streaking back through our lines with the two men screaming fearlessly after him. There were too many

beaters between the leopard and me to risk a snap shot, something I am not in favor of anyhow.

We had walked about a quarter of a mile when we reached a narrow, tree-filled ravine, a *shola.* Charging up out of the depression came three startled wild boar, bent on breaking back through us. Without hesitation three of the Hakawalas ran toward the pigs and one hit a lagging boar in the rear leg with his flung ax. The other two pigs stayed to their retreat, but the one squealed, swung angrily and started back for the three men.

One boar in a rage is a match for five men armed with crude axes, and his tusks can scoop out their intestines while they are turning to run. The man without the ax screamed, "Dohoka!" (danger). I started on the run for for them, rifle off the sling. The *junjli suwar,* the black wild boar, bristles up, head down, was full in his charge when I stopped, threw the .458 to my shoulder and squeezed a shot off knowing even as the gun roared that I had missed. The bullet ploughed a long scar into the ground two feet in front of the boar and he slowed, almost stopping, giving me the chance to shoot again. This time the power of the .458 Winchester 510-grain bullet seemed to pick him up, turn him around and dump him on the ground. He didn't even twitch a muscle. But I did, and I'm sure the three Bori villagers were twitching as they walked back and bent to inspect the animal.

The gaon came over to join us; pointing at the boar, then at me, asking, I thought, if I wanted the animal. I shook my head, and he immediately spoke several words to the three who had been charged. They started hacking away at several young bamboo trees, stripping the bark from their boles. I saw that they were going to make a

strong rope and drag the boar from the jungle. They stayed there and we continued the beat without seeing anything else except a jackal that stood and watched as we went whooping by, looking like open-mouthed, noisy fools to that wise little creature, I'm sure.

During the next three days, we made four more beats, but I tree-sat these out, climbing into machans twice more, once over a dead bullock; once—an experience I don't want again—over a live one that bleated and cried all night long. Nothing came out of the dark jungles either night.

I never think of Edwin and Doris Carty without the words of an old Indian hand surging back, as forceful, as true and as wise today as they were the many years ago when first set down.

"Let it be clearly understood," he wrote, "that the Russian is a delightful person till he tucks in his shirt. As an Oriential he is charming. It is only when he insists upon being treated as the most easterly of the westerly peoples instead of the most westerly of easterns that he becomes a racial anomaly extremely difficult to handle. The host never knows which side of his nature is going to turn up next."

The Russian has tucked in his shirt in India, but even so, in the big cities he seems to be faring well. Steel mills and dams are to be his specialty, and he is widely respected, though blunt and overbearing. One, in the Ashoka Hotel in New Delhi, where we were staying between hunting trips, emphasized his own language (which the desk clerk clearly didn't understand) by slapping the heavy palm of his hand on the desk several times in a resounding smack. He left after browbeating everyone in the lobby, in Russian, which we considered quite a feat.

"Although the Russians are doing well with the Indian pundits and politicians," Edwin Carty told us when we visited him and his wife, Doris, in their white tent, pitched about twenty miles from us on the edge of a heavy jungle, "I understand that the people in these remote villages don't know anything about them. Whereas quite a few Americans come to these jungles every year,

spreading good will and showing what sportsmen and good people Americans are."

"Edwin always has to talk politics even in the jungle," Doris Carty apologized politely. "Please don't be offended. He really means well."

That brought a resounding roar. "Mean well, hell! I *do* well!"

A blunt, hearty, well-set-up, gray-haired, intensely blue-eyed man, probably in his late fifties, Edwin Carty is a cattle rancher and a sometime statesman from Oxnard, California, and he had taken his wife on safari in Africa and polar-bear hunting in Norway, before coming to India. A putterer in politics, he is a personal friend of Earl Warren and Donald Douglas and has a forceful personality that makes itself felt even when he is dressed in wrinkled khakis, and sitting on a canvas camp chair on the edge of the jungle.

He had gotten his tiger, but not a leopard, which he bemoaned, and he had shot meat for the nearest village, shot when he was too tired to climb in and out of a jeep. Allwyn Cooper was also his outfitter and he praised them lavishly. The Cartys were soon to leave the jungle and we had come to visit them for cocktails and a chat before they took off. A few days earlier he had sent over to borrow some .308 shells and we had sent a box with one of our staff.

"We had a cocktail party for the villagers," Doris Carty said. "Edwin mixed a punch, using most of his liquor, and we had the chef whip up some cunning little sandwiches. I don't believe they had tasted either before."

"And Doris has gone around passing out her jewelry to the oldest women in the village," Carty said.

"Just the grandmothers," she said. "And we have our hunter translate that we are Americans and that we like them, and do everything in our power to prove it."

"They *are* nice people," Carty said. "They are simple and humane and they go out of their way to please you. But they also have dignity and a charm that I am beginning to like. Spread the word, I say. Spread the word that Americans are people who like people. True, as I say, the Russians seem to be making more of an impression in the big cities, but do you know, man, that there are almost six hundred thousand villages in India and that the vast majority of Indians live in places not unlike these jungle ones we are camped near?"

"I think American sportsmen can do an awful lot to help our cause abroad," Doris Carty said. "First by proving what good sportsmanship is, second by being helpful and friendly to people in the remote places."

"Yeah," Carty said, "and it's the people in these back places who get misinformed. Let me tell you, from what I have been able to find out, not one single Russian has been on shikar among these primitive people. Don't that prove our point?"

I think Carty could prove any point he turned his lungs and forceful, blue-eyed personality on, but I wondered how the cocktail punch and the jewelry and the supply of meat the Cartys had provided to the backward people would stack up against the soft calfskin billfolds with the Kremlin etched in black that visiting Russians had given some of the young, vocal Tourist Office staff in New Delhi. They had shown them to us proudly, remarking how thoughtful the Russians are. "Really nice. They like us, too," they said.

But this is not a political book and other than this encounter we had with the Cartys in their tent in the jungle, our politicking took the form of holding still while the people of Bori put on another dance for us and smeared our faces with the rainbow colors of Holi.

It was at the precise moment that I was getting some particularily vivid red Holi goo mixed into my nose by a wrinkled, toothless old woman, who was rather forceful but happy about the whole thing, that the runner had come from the village Dhega.

This business of native runners may seem somewhat hackneyed to you who read this from the comfort of your city home, but in the jungle runners and drums carry all messages. This one required an answer. There had been a natural kill of a full-grown buffalo on the outskirts of the village. Two tigers had made the kill, and the gaon of Dhega suggested that we get there as soon as possible and sit up for the return of the tigers.

I was getting machan muscles for sure, and I had noted without comment that Mary Lou got out of her chair a little stiffly these days and her weight was down from 105 to 90, but now I'm certain that, as the cliché goes, our eyes must have lighted up and given Rao his answer.

We were ready to go in fifteen minutes.

The buffalo, a large one, was lying about four miles from the village beside a nulla, and across the river bed, perhaps five hundred yards away, the remainder of the herd was milling about, lowing and blowing nervously. The tigers had sneaked up to where the buffalo grazed, a few hundred feet from the main herd, cut the animal down,

and with the tigress running alongside guarding, the tiger had dragged the big animal across the nulla. Defiantly they had started to eat the kill in full view of the herdboys and hadn't moved off until ten men from the village approached. They had slunk away slowly, in no hurry, even though the entire group shouted and brandished their axes.

Shobharam bent and studied the pug marks that were all around the body of the buffalo. Pointing out some that seemed to be apart, a bit farther back, he told Rao that the tigress had stood guard while the male had made a meal off one of the haunches. "This almost surely means that they will be back," Rao said happily. "It is now the tiger's turn to stand guard while his mate eats."

Ten men from Dhega came with us and set to work building the machan in a big *kowa* tree that looks something like our oak. Two of them began covering the buffalo with grass and branches, the old trick of screening it from the sharp eyes of the crows and vultures. One of the men had a dog with him, a village pi dog, a cur, representing a large portion of dogdom, with a collie head, a bulldog body and a beagle's underpinnings. The dog stood with his head turned away from the tempting body of the buffalo as if he couldn't care less about the whole thing. While we watched, he didn't look at the carcass once, and when his master was finished and the men climbed down from the machan, he trotted off to the village with them as if glad to be rid of the whole bloody, boring business.

Shobharam had taken the narrow *pugdandi* (footpath) that twisted like a coiled rope through the jungle to try to discover how far the tigers had gone and whether they were laying up nearby. Rao followed with his Mau-

ser, in case the tigers were waiting. "*Thikdeko!*" Pathak, the jeep driver, called after them, as they disappeared almost immediately in the thick stuff like a magic act worked for the benefit of those of us who stood watching. Within fifteen minutes they were back, Rao saying, "They are on the move into the deeper jungle. I doubt if they heard the building of the machan or the noise here around the kill. Shobharam thinks they will be back."

As we got ready to climb to the machan, Shobharam came over and touched me on the left shoulder, then did the same to Mary Lou, smiling and nodding his head and saying a few words. Rao translated: "He wishes you good fortune this night, and thinks that you will have it. He said there is a pair of tigers and a pair of hunters. The contest is even and that bodes good luck."

I suggested that the jeep, which could drive very close to where we were, return for us at ten o'clock or thereabouts. I had come to consider this machan-sitting as something intensely unpleasant and the platform in the tree as sort of a prison of patience. "If the tigers don't come by ten, they probably won't come," I suggested. "That seems to have been the case on every sit-up so far. Right?"

Rao nodded. "I think that is true. If they don't come back to eat before ten, they won't come back. They have eaten very little of this kill, having been driven off by the men before they had their fill. They won't wait until late."

At least that was a pleasant contemplation. But here we were in the tree at three o'clock, early because of the anxiety of the villagers to get the machan built and get away so we could start the sitting-up wait for the beasts that had killed their buffalo.

Just before dusk Rao went down and uncovered the buffalo and the wait really began. Eventually we heard a noise in the nulla and out bounced the village dog who had turned up his nose at the dead buffalo. Now he attacked it with savagery, eating in great gulps the flesh he tore off. He ate for a long time and than yanked off about five pounds of meat and trotted with it back down the nulla toward the village.

The show had started: Next came two jackals—cunning-looking creatures with small, police-dog heads—and one had his supper while the other watched. Just as they started to trade positions, the village dog came back on the run, snarling and growling, and the jackals fled. The dog, proving that he was not only a glutton but selfish to boot, picked halfheartedly at the meat, but finally left as a squadron of crows kept buzzing the carcass, eager to sit down.

It is just possible that we stumbled on a partial answer to that age-old question of the naturalists: "How does a vulture discover his meal?" The argument has been going something like this: "He discovers it by sight. He flies high, has incredible eyesight and finds his carrion by soaring in the sky." The other school of thought cites case after case where vultures have gathered before an animal died, then waited for the feast. "Smell," they say, "and some supernatural power beyond explanation account for the vulture's strange ability to find carrion."

There are three types of vulture in India: the long-billed, the white-backed and the black or king. We saw all three several times every day, resting in trees like a convention of undertakers, scrabbling at something dead on the ground, or soaring gracefully in the sky. Several times

we had arrived to sit up over a kill and had the vultures come in and spoil most of the bait. But—and this may be known to naturalists, though I had never read it—the crows were always the first in, and it seemed to be their coarse, swearing calls and the racket they made that brought the vultures. Once, to prove a point, we placed the entrails from a kill in the road a hundred yards from the dak bungalow. We had seen a treeful of white-backed vultures no more than a quarter of a mile from where we placed the entrails. Would they with their great eyesight, smell or whatever talent they had for finding the dead, discover it first, or would the crows? The crows were on it in five minutes; it took almost another ten for the vultures to wake up to the fact that their black brethren had made a find.

Here, now, at the kill the pair of tigers had made, the crows had arrived, making a noise like a bunch of delinquents in a street fight. The long-billed vultures came next, sitting cautiously in the trees; then the white-backed hovered over the crows; then the big, bold black birds, the kings, called that because they drive all other vultures from a kill, came and landed on the ground beside the buffalo. It was almost dark when all of them scattered and two hyenas came loping in, stood and stared at our tree, then, laughing weirdly, galloped off. King vultures were now in the tree with us, so close that we could see the scaly, naked red of their necks and the oily black feathers glistening. Rao stood and waved his light in the darkening dusk and they got clumsily into the air and flew away. The crows made a tight circle in the sky, growing higher and tighter until they were gone from view.

Now it was *rat* (night), the time for tigers to walk

from their jungle. Our routine was well established: sit quietly, alertly, and wait for the light to go on the kill; wait for the sound of the cracking of bones, the rending of flesh; then steady yourself and get set to aim carefully, calmly, for one shot would be all you would have. We had organized this shooting so that I would take whichever cat was farther away and Mary Lou, using the .308 with the expanding silvertip bullet, would try for a heart-shot on the nearer tiger. This, in case they both returned to the buffalo.

The only thing wrong with this procedure was that it was silent below. There was nothing down there. The tedium of sitting high in the tree with your limbs stiffening, the thought that no tiger would come, that this ordeal would be for nothing, caused a jingling impatience, and it was all I could do to muster enough will power to sit silently. Again I give it to Mary Lou. She took it without a grimace or a bad word. There were wellsprings of power and patience in her that I had never known existed, and I thought what a good thing (or bad depending upon the point of view and what happened) it would be if every man could take his woman into the wild jungles to find out what made her tick.

If it hadn't been for the presence of Mary Lou, I had to admit to myself I probably would have made the machan sits much shorter. But this one was nearly over. These tigers we had been sitting up for were outsmarting us; only one, the first one days ago, had returned and that one hadn't approached the kill or given us the chance to make a shot. Rao looked at his watch and said, "Five to ten. The jeep will be coming for us soon." He snapped his rifle safety on and so did we. Suddenly he said, "I'll give

one last flash for good luck," and quickly threw the light on the kill.

Standing beneath us, about twenty-five yards from our tree was a big leopard, his eyes shining like topaz. He hadn't paid any attention to the dead buffalo. He was stalking us. As soon as the light flashed, he started running. I had trouble finding the safety in the dark but finally shoved it off, got the rifle on him, and moving with his blurring shape, shot. Rao followed with the light, as he disappeared into the jungle. A loud wailing *awo-ooh!* came and Rao said, "He is hit. I have heard leopards make that sound before."

"The hell he is hit, Rao!" I said. "That wasn't a .22 I was firing. That was a .458 slug, 510 grains, spinning along at 2,125 feet a second, delivering a muzzle energy of 5,110 foot pounds——"

"Nevertheless," Rao said stubbornly, "I have heard that cry before, and I know it as the death call of the leopard."

"I'll bet you twenty rupees you're wrong!' '

"You've got a bet!"

"Maybe you hit him and the bullet was traveling so fast that it went right through, didn't expand, and the leopard was able to move out of sight." Mary Lou said.

"If I hit him with the .458, there would be a hole big enough to drive the jeep through."

"You are underestimating your skill," Rao said.

"Oh, no, I'm not. That was a surprise, my safety was on, the light was poor, the leopard was traveling at full speed. I've got plenty of alibis to cover me."

"Then why the howl?"

"I don't know. You're the shikari."

"I'm happy to hear that. He howled because he was hit."

In the distance we could see the lights of the jeep. It stopped about fifty yards away and Rao stood up shouting, "Don't get out. There is a wounded leopard here! We will sit until dawn. Come for us then." Turning to me, he said, "I am certain that the animal is hit, and I don't want to risk the lives of any of my men asking them to come closer. The most dangerous animal known is a wounded leopard in the dark."

Now he had me off balance, but I felt certain that I hadn't hit that streaking black and gold shape. "So we sit all night again?"

"Look at it this way. Perhaps the tigers will visit us."

"Besides," Mary Lou said, "you are welcome to leave. I'll even put the rope ladder down for you."

Rao laughed. "I think you hit the animal on the spot or just behind the spot where you always aim, that left shoulder, and it passed completely through him. I think that he traveled maybe fifty yards into the jungle and died."

"But you're not sure he died?"

"No. They are surprisingly strong animals. He could have enough life left to kill anyone who gets down from this tree."

No one got down until morning when the jeep came with Pathak, Sampat, Tiwang, his guard, and Shobharam.

"Thank God for Shobharam," I said. "At least we can try to track the animal now and I can collect my bet."

Shobharam had an old English Purdey shotgun, the correct weapon when stalking a wounded leopard, and we started the hunt immediately. I walked over to where

I had shot at the cat. There was a bloody splotch on a tree stump.

"He staggered and fell here," Rao said. "This is good! We have a blood spoor to follow."

With Shobharam and his shotgun leading the way, me next and Rao bringing up the rear, we went into the jungle. It was quiet, with a slight morning breeze moving the tall rusa grass and touching the leaves into motion. Every few feet there was blood. Every few feet we stopped and looked carefully around. Every swaying movement of a blade of grass could be the wounded leopard waiting to spring. This was not my idea of the way to start a morning. Then, Rao, twisting his head to the right, said, "I think I see him!" Shobharam and I stiffened, holding our guns in the direction Rao indicated. Slowly we advanced, and suddenly, there was the cat.

He lay in a clump of dried yellow grass, almost blending with it. He was an enormous male—and he was dead. He had been shot near the heart and the .458 had completely penetrated. I counted the yards back to where Mary Lou and the jeep waited. It was just under sixty yards. It had taken us a long twenty minutes to stalk that distance. Everything Rao Naidu had said had been almost one-hundred-per-cent correct. This was a shikari. I counted out twenty rupees without saying a word. Rao took them without a word.

"That was quite a shot with the leopard moving that fast," Mary Lou said.

"That," I said, "*really* was luck."

"I can never forget that cry," Rao said. "It is the death call of the leopard. I didn't think that I was mistaken."

"Glad you weren't," Mary Lou said. "It wouldn't have been healthy walking around in that heavy stuff with a wounded leopard waiting for you. As it was, I thought you were never coming out. I was just getting ready to stir up the boys and come after you when you popped out of the jungle."

The ride back was a triumph, with people in Dhega stopping us and showing great glee at the sight of the leopard on the hood, touching its paws, pulling its ears, but politely not mentioning our lack of luck with the pair of tigers that had killed their buffalo.

A dozen langurs swung and gibbered in trees as they saw the leopard tied to the hood, and followed us a ways along the road, scolding the dead cat. The staff, of course, was lined up at the dak, but this time with anxious expressions. They knew that we had sat up waiting to track what they thought was a wounded leopard, and being old-timers in this business of tracking killer cats, or serving those who did, they were relieved when they saw everyone was present and all right.

Two villagers were waiting for us when we got out of the jeep, men who helped stake the baits and build machans. There always seemed to be someone waiting with a message, someone there to ask us to do something. I was looking forward to some much-needed rest and anything that looked like an interruption was unwelcome. "Another emergency? We might as well belong to a fire department!"

Rao smiled. He, too, was tired. But we were his clients and by damn he was going to see that we got our money's worth. "Both bad and good news," he said.

"Well, give me the bad first, then we can enjoy the good."

"You know that bison that Mr. Maddox shot at and I thought he had missed? He has been found."

"You call that bad news?"

"Yes, there is only half of him. Apparently Mr. Maddox did hit him and he was dragged down by our tiger. One tiger could never kill the great gaur. He had to be wounded. These men have located the kill, built a machan and we are going to sit up and wait for the tiger to return to his feast. By my calendar this will be the last chance you have to get a tiger here. By tomorrow this one will be moving out of this block to make his twenty-five-mile circle."

"You have that news thing twisted," Mary Lou said. "You should have given the bad news of sitting up in a machan first, then told us about the bison. Mr. Scott doesn't think sitting in a machan is good news at all."

"I didn't think you knew," I said bitterly.

"Oh, this won't be so bad," Rao said. "Then we can try stalking blue bull and go for the most beautiful antelope in the world, the black buck. We can even drive the *kacharasta* at night in the jeep looking for the sloth bear."

"This will all have to come pretty fast, since we're about due to leave," I said.

"There is still time. I did forget, however, to tell you of another fast sport, that of shooting jungle fowl on the wing. It is said that they are even smarter and more difficult than peacock."

"If they're rougher than the peacock, we aren't going to establish any shiny new bag records."

"Chicken in the rough," Mary Lou said, "jungle-

style. Probably Motisingh is the only person who really knows how to handle them and then only when he has them cornered in a pot in his kitchen."

The two villagers who had brought the news of the bison had asked to ride a ways with us. One of them carried a small, slatted bamboo box, which he held as if it contained the Hope diamond. About five miles from the bungalow, Rao stopped the jeep near a roadside altar. It was made of rough gray stone and shaped like a Christian roadside shrine, but there was no deity in the center, other than a large stone painted a bright red. "They are making an offering to their god in the hope that you will get the tiger," Rao said.

Both men knelt before the altar. The slatted box was opened and a live fluffy yellow chick was removed and placed in the center of the altar. Both men touched their foreheads to the ground in a fast, jerky movement, then brought their heads back up, repeating this several times.

"This is the first time I have seen the villagers make this offering for a shikar client," Rao said. "You have done something that pleases them."

Asking Rao to thank them kindly for us, we left before they made the sacrifice of killing the chick for their god, and drove off toward the hills.

The Satpura Range is a continuous chain of thickly forested hills, intersected by a narrow plain some fifteen miles across which slopes gently toward the Narbada River. Flowing northward from the hills, several small tributary streams knife the plain in silvery slashes. Lush green *doob* grass grows beside the streams, giving much of the region the deceptive, almost civilized look of a well-tended pasture. The Bori Range where we were on shikar, is part of the Satpura which covers the southern half of the State of Madhya Pradesh. Our bison was northward in the hills, very close to the bald peak we could see from our dak—a peak called Suryadeo by the jungle people.

As we drove higher, the land began to lighten, the trees were fewer and there were swatches of hip-high grass, brown now and treacherous to walk in because of the natural cover it afforded anything but the big, black bull bison. It had been in this country that Dan Maddox had shot at his bison, keenly disappointed that he had missed. The bison or the gaur, especially the solitary bull, is a dangerous animal with a pair of widespread, simitar-sharp horns, sometimes as thick as thirty inches at the base, a brute body that can weigh more than two thousand pounds and a speed and agility amazing in an animal of that size. Technically, the gaur is the world's largest ox, and the cliché "strong as an ox" palls beside the feats that are credited to him. Elephants have been known to flee from an enraged gaur, and even the leopard will not attack him. It takes a pair of wise, skilled tigers to cut one down, and this is seldom done.

So this great beast, or part of a beast—lying in the

grass about eighty yards from our machan in a *semul,* a big red cottonwood tree—was legitimately Dan Maddox's, but his shot had not felled it; he had not known it was wounded and hadn't trailed it down.

But the tiger knew. Our tiger trailed it, and it provided him with enough food for several days. This, then, was the reason he hadn't been attracted to our baits during the past several nights. It was just freakish bad luck.

And what happened next was also just freakish bad luck, a bad break in timing. We had driven quietly, leaving the jeep about a half mile from the machan, and we hadn't uttered a word as we all stood there looking at that great animal that had been pulled down and partially eaten by the tiger. Suddenly, quietly, Rao touched me on the shoulder and turned his head slightly; his darting brown eyes gave me urgent direction.

There looking above the grass—grass that came to my hips, indicating at a glance how enormous he was—stood a black and gold tiger, his straight-up ears twitching. Except for the movement of the ears and a noise he made, he stood sculpturesquely still, fearful symmetry without motion. The noise was a deep *ahhh-hhh,* a moan, almost a cough.

Even in that dreadful instant a few classic words from some long-ago classroom flashed across my mind: "Do you know what fear is? No ordinary fear of insult, injury, or death, but abject, quivering dread, a fear that dries the inside of the mouth and half of the throat, fear that makes you sweat on the palms of the hands, and gulp in order to keep the uvula at work. This is fine Fear—a great cowardice, and must be felt to be appreciated. . . ."

I was appreciating it, gulping like a goldfish, and my hands were beaded with sweat.

We were in a lost position, almost a hundred yards from the tree and the safety of the machan. In a few quick bounds the tiger could be among us, sweeping his great paws. It would have to be one shot, and it would have to kill him—dead. Or else we would be. Now, suddenly the three of us had rifles at our shoulders. It was a long shot, at least three hundred yards. I had no scope on the .458, and all I could see clearly was his great head; the rest of his body as golden as the grass wasn't in good view. Rao's Mauser wasn't scoped, and Mary Lou's .308 wasn't enough weapon to kill an animal the size of that tiger unless she hit him in the brain or the heart. Even then his charge could kill one of us.

Again the tiger moaned, a bone-chilling sound, turned and in one sudden, graceful movement was gone in the *bir,* the tall grass.

Rao broke the silence. "Thank you," he said fervently, "for not shooting. I doubt if you would have killed him with the first shot at that distance and it could have meant one of two things. Both bad. He would have charged, or we would have to trail him and finish him off."

It took a while for my throat to moisten up again and my breathing to get back to normal, so I said nothing. Mary Lou was pale and quiet. There really wasn't much to say. Now we knew how death in the jungle arrived, silently, deadly, without warning. We had been coldly close to it in those few minutes. Roxbury, Connecticut, and our peaceful 150 acres had never seemed so far away.

"W-hy, why, was he here?" Mary Lou suddenly

asked. "At four o'clock in the afternoon? I thought tigers were nocturnal?"

"Let's get to the machan," I said. "We can talk there."

Without answering, Rao started a dogtrot for the red semul tree. We followed—faster than any of us had shinnied up to a machan since we had been on shikar.

"It was his treasure. Enough meat for several days," Rao said, answering Mary Lou's question. "I suppose he came to see that it was all right."

"And that noise," I said. "It was like a death rattle."

"Tigers make a variety of noises," Rao said. "All of them have a precise meaning and all the jungle creatures know what it is. In my twenty years I think that I've learned, too."

"The 'Master Word' of the jungle," Mary Lou said shakily, still a bit broken up.

"There is such a thing, I believe," Rao said, smiling, "I, too, have read Kipling. Often he made good sense, and usually he had his facts straight. Animals do communicate, I think. But the sounds the tiger makes are all different, all have a meaning. That is my belief anyway."

Right then I didn't have machan muscles; right then the boles of the tree platform felt firm and secure; right then I could sit up in the red cottonwood tree as long as anyone. There were no complaints. But there was a question. Mary Lou asked it.

"Is there a chance that the tiger will come back?"

"An off-chance. I don't think so. But let's watch carefully just in case he decides to inspect his bison again. Meantime I'll tell you a little about that moan." His voice, always soft and well-modulated, was just above a whisper and we had to strain a bit to hear.

"The tiger moans when he is disappointed or displeased; also to warn animals that he is approaching. The striped one doesn't like to surprise animals like an old she sloth bear with young, napping wild boar, or a pair of panthers in the bush. All animals fear and respect the tiger. But he doesn't like useless combat, so he gives that warning sound. I had one moan just a few months ago to show his displeasure at the rope I had used to tie a bait to a tree. He killed the bullock, but couldn't break the strong rope so he stood back and moaned. He did eat some of the kill, but he was put out because he couldn't have his own way. Mates will moan to let one another know location. Knowing this saved my life once when I was trapped between two tigers and didn't realize it until I heard the moans. They also use that moan to spook animals. A tiger will moan, driving the sambar or chital into the waiting tiger-mate's jaws. This one that we saw obviously was annoyed at seeing us around his bison.

"They also make that sambar-like bark, called 'pooking' by some. You remember hearing this one night? They are mate-calling, either to tell where they are, or where a fresh kill is. Sometimes they will make a loud roar just to vent their good feelings, or roar in peevish rage. The two sounds are different. They will also cough, much like a human with a cold. This is done to frighten an animal like a civet cat or a hyena away from the tiger's kill. Some hiss to warn animals from a kill. I have also heard a tiger whistle. I was on a drag-trail once and heard a distinct whistle. I later discovered that it was made by the tiger who had carried his kill into the jungle and whistled to attract his nearby mate.

"But the most vivid, unforgettable sounds are the ter-

rible roars the tiger makes when he is about to charge. He lashes his tail, up and down, not sideways the way American writers claim, and he gives out this series of short, barking roars, so fierce a sound that once heard you can never forget it——"

"I'll never forget that moan!" Mary Lou said. "Let's dub this the Maddox-Moan-Tiger. It was Maddox's darn old bison that caused the whole thing."

"Will you fire your .458 twice, please?" Rao asked. "Let's signal the jeep and return to the dak. I think this tiger will not come back tonight."

It was dusk when we got back to the dak and Rao asked us if, after dinner, we would like to make a try for a sloth bear, driving the jeep along forest roads on the off-chance that we might find one of the shaggy creatures. As time was running out, we agreed, although we were both tired and still somewhat shaken by the Maddox-Moan-Tiger experience.

"The mohwa is falling," Rao said, "and the bears will be out eating the flowers on the ground. It is one of their favorite foods, and sometimes they eat so much that they seem to become intoxicated. I've seen two of them, in a mohwa grove in March, staggering and rolling around on the ground as if they had been struck crazy." Rao was referring to the fleshy, sweet calyx that falls from the tree in late February or early March and is vatted in a primitive way and fermented into a peppery-potent alcoholic drink.

Dan Maddox, who had typically made a thorough study of Indian animals and talked with members of his Shikar-Safari Club about various techniques of shikar had told us about the sloth bear. I don't think he took one, but

he was impressed and had given us a vivid description. I think that he might have been free-quoting from Brander's Wild Animals in Central India, but I'm not certain. If so, he mixed up the quotes with his own inimitable language.

"It's an old jungle sayin'," he said, "that you never can tell what a sloth bear will do. A creature of impulse, he makes up his mind to do something and as quickly changes it. Like a woman critter. They tell me that instances where man is attacked, except when an old she-bear is protecting her cubs or thinkin' that she is, are due to sudden impulses, not a planned hatred or anything like that. But there is an interestin' case of an old she and two half-grown cubs terrorizing Chanda for over two months, killing and maiming over fifteen people. They tell me that he can't see too well, can't hear very good, and only has a fair sense of smell. That being the case, when he runs into a man in the woods, he is surprised, probably didn't even know he was there until he sees him, then he right away charges, knocks the guy down, tears the top of his head off and then beats it.

"Not like the cats, he doesn't know anything about natural camouflage, or concealing himself. He doesn't crouch, hide, then slink off like the tiger does. If the tiger reacted like the bear he would be fifty per cent more dangerous——"

At this point, back in Nagpur, Marjorie Maddox had interrupted. "Good crawlin' gravy, Dan'el, you're beginnin' to sound like my old socialogical perfesser, and he didn't know anythin' either!"

After beating her with a couple of carefully selected adjectives, Maddox finished off on the sloth bear. "I read of at least three hundred attacks in the Central Provinces

of the kind I just recited. The uncertainty of the animal, the kind of fickleness of character—nope, that hasn't caught it either—the unpredictableness, if there is such a word, makes the sloth bear (according to all the authorities I've read and talked with) the most dangerous character an unarmed, and in some cases even armed, man can meet in the jungle. And if they become vicious, as some of them do, they make it a career to follow and attack man——"

"Nightmares, too, aren't they, Dan'el?" Marjorie asked.

"Probably the Bowery Bum of the jungle," Dan said. "Messy, long hair, especially on the shoulders, with two long tufts on the back. He's blackish gray, has a white horseshoe-shaped spot on his chest and an old-man grayish face, creepy hairless circles around his eyes, dead-gray lips that stick out like a pout, and claws that shoot out four inches on the front feet. A nasty fella. Watch out if you go after him. . . ."

We were after him. It was dark this night with a high, silver coin, but not light-giving moon, and Tiwang, his guard Sardarkhan, Pathak and Rao all seemed somewhat glum as we took off in the jeep. Rao had told us that this was the first time he had failed on tiger, and the other three were sharing his disappointment.

"Don't feel like that, Rao," I said, "we are not here as tiger hunters. We came to look over the whole situation, live in the jungle, get to know the people, the terrain, find out what all the sporting aspects are like. Matter of fact, I've been getting bored with sitting up for tigers anyway, and this driving for bear will be a welcome change. We

had a bad break in that bison, and in all fairness we didn't give you enough time. We should stay at least another ten days if we want to get a tiger. Both Maddox and Carty had at least two weeks on us. If we could take the time I'm certain that we would have a tiger apiece. But we've got to move on and do some other kind of hunting in another part of the country soon."

"What you say is true," Rao said. "But I especially wanted you and Mrs. Scott to take a tiger from this section with me handling the shikar."

"We'll be back another year. This isn't the end of our shikar experience!"

At that he brightened. "We'll plan it well next time. More time. Less variety of game. Mostly the cats."

But even with the pep talk he wasn't happy and we were riding with a bunch of shikar-party-poopers as we started off to look for sloth bear or anything else classed as night-shooting vermin that we might chance across. We went to Unchabari, having the illusion that we were going through some kind of weird, earthen tunnel as we drove the sunken road through the village, stopping to get the gaon and two of his helpers to guide us through jungle they supposedly were familiar with.

We got off the regular route and took a narrow, twisting one, full of large rocks that we had to dodge by actually leaving the road, putting the jeep in four-wheel drive, nearly toppling over sideways several times. "A short cut," Rao said, "to a grove of mohwa trees where there may be bear."

Like all short cuts, this jungle one eventually ended up being much longer than the old direct way. The road kept getting narrower and more difficult to navigate. Trees

loomed out of its center. The village forest guard was with us and in his English that ran backward, somewhat like the stylized sentences of *Time* magazine, he said, "This way we go." The gaon shook his head, indicating that we should go another. This at the first crossing of roads. We took the gaon's direction and soon came to a dead end and a huge maidan.

We took off across the clearing, stopping to inspect the carcass of a buffalo, gleaming whitely in the moonlight. Rao said that it had been killed by a tiger and picked clean as ivory by vultures. There was no road on the other side. The conversation went like this:

"We should back up, then left turn."

"We go ahead anyway. There is a road somewhere."

"No, return to the village and begin again——"

I said, "Gentlemen, I take it we're lost?"

After driving around the large maidan several times, we found two Indians, evidently camped for the night. After much palaver they apparently cleared up the situation and we were back on a road that lay as straight as a spear in the moonlight and seemed to be going somewhere.

That somewhere was the mohwa grove. I could smell it as we approached, perfuming the night air like an atomizer. We stopped the jeep, cut the motor and made a slow, careful stalk, some three hundred yards to the grove. . . . Suddenly Mary Lou pointed.

A large black shape and two smaller ones moved quickly under the trees like a family gathering hickory nuts. An adult bear and two cubs were eating the fallen flowers like crazy, oblivious of everything else in the world. It would have been a simple matter to stand there

and pick them all off in the moonlight. I could see the white blaze on the she-bear's big chest clearly.

"No," Mary Lou said softly. "Let's go back."

"I'm with you," I said.

Rao looked at us, then smiled and we went back to the jeep where he apparently had quite an argument with the other Indians. Pathak as usual sat behind the wheel, saying nothing, but he smiled at us, nodding his head in approval.

It took about two hours to get back to the village, stopping for about ten minutes on the way, while Rao pointed out a small wild boar standing at the edge of a thicket of young *sal* trees. "Shoot it, please, for these people," he said to me. It fell without movement, hit in the heart region with a 180-grain slug from the .308. Sitting on the pig in back of the jeep, the Indians from Unchabari chattered happily all the way home.

"You very much they thank," the forest guard kept saying to me. "Forgiven you are the bears."

On the way back to the dak Rao explained that he had understood why we didn't want to shoot the bear and her cubs, but that the gaon from Unchabari had been completely mystified, then angry. He said that the bear was dangerous and probably would attack and kill some of his people. Besides his village needed the meat.

"And it could be that he was right," Rao said. "But you are the clients. In addition, I'm afraid that I agreed with you."

"I suppose that I'm silly, but that bear didn't look dangerous," Mary Lou said. "It would have been too easy. I never would have forgiven myself."

"I didn't want a bear anyway," I said. "That is unless he was a charging bear."

"Brave talk," Mary Lou said. "Besides you might have gotten your wish on that. And it might not have been a happy experience."

"It wouldn't be," Rao said. "This sloth bear is extraordinarily strong and most difficult to kill. In many ways I think he is harder to kill than even the tiger. He's covered with that queer hair that throws you off; sometimes you hit hair and not body. And I have seen a sloth bear charge after being hit in a vital region, charge over one hundred yards."

"Sometimes it gives you a good feeling not to pull a trigger," Mary Lou said.

I don't think Motisingh and the boys at the dak agreed after hearing the story, for their expressions were on the heavy side, but they all brightened when Rao said that we would go after blue bull in the morning. Apparently blue bull appealed to them. I know it did to the village elder who approached Rao just after dinner, asking if we had made a kill and if there was any meat for the village. He was a skinny old gent with a waist so slim that it couldn't quite hold up his loincloth, which he kept hitching up with his left hand as he talked, smiling and showing about three betel-stained teeth.

Rao laughed heartily at the old fellow, translating for us while the villager stood there smiling, pointing at his three teeth and shaking his head.

"He says to tell the sahib to shoot a young, blue bull, not one of the old ones. His teeth can't manage an old bull."

We laughed at the charming old character and told Rao to tell him that we'd bring him a nice tender nilgai.

We had been to the village often during mealtime and had seen that wheat, sometimes several inferior millets, *juar*, are cooked mashlike, eaten hot before the Indian goes into the field to work, taken cold at noon; in the evening the hot meal usually was *kodonkutiki*, boiled rice or broken-up wheat mixed with green vegetables. Armed only with crude spears and axes, or using ineffective traps and nets, the villagers had little opportunity to kill the fast horned game, or even jungle fowl or peafowl. Nothing stands still in the jungle. Consequently meat was scarce. Although I like to think that the cheerful people of Bori liked Mary Lou and me for ourselves, I'm forced to record that they looked upon us as providers, and, as such, would do anything in their power to help us.

Twenty-five were lined up in front of the dak, volunteering to go after blue bull with us. Rao narrowed it down to four, selecting husky young men who would be in charge of the detail of dragging the blue bull back to the jeep if we were lucky enough to get one; Shobharam and Pathak, Rao, Mary Lou and myself completed the larder-party.

I had done a little boning on Indian game animals and knew a few facts about the blue bull or nilgai, the largest antelope in Asia. Actually, found only in India, it is confined to the base of the Himalayas as far south as Mysore, to the eastern Punjab, Gujerat and the Northwest Provinces. It isn't found in eastern Bengal, Assam, anywhere east of this, or on the Malabar coast or Ceylon.

The bull nilgai is large and clumsy-looking, without any of the grace of an antelope, his one virtue being that he can run at high speed over rough ground. Oddly shaped, with high withers and drooping quarters, the length of his body is 6¾ feet from nose to rump with a 19-inch tail.

A big bull can scale over 600 pounds. The mature animal is dark bluish gray, with a white ring above and below each fetlock; his entire underside is spotless white. Grazing and browsing animals, they like the grassy places or sparse forest edges. And people who know have told us that, as table fare, they rank with the finest beef from a corn-pampered Hereford.

We were headed for an area where there was a huge grassy maidan, supposedly a morning grazing area for blue bulls. "I like that .308 you are carrying," Rao said. "But I don't know if it is enough gun for the blue bull. He is a powerful animal and I'm not sure that he isn't the toughest of all to bring down."

"I've used this on elk successfully," I said. "I believe that maybe it packs more wallop than you think."

Working on the premise that blue bull would definitely be there, we decided to park the jeep—leaving the Indians and Mary Lou, who wanted to sit this one out—make the stalk and take one animal out of the herd.

Rao was right as he is in nearly all of his jungle prognostications. The herd of about a dozen animals was there, the sun striking their slaty blue hides, some grazing, some prancing around like ponies. We were about a thousand yards from them, walking carefully up a narrow footpath that apparently led to the edge of the maidan, when Rao stopped and for the first time since I had known him I saw clear fright in his eyes. His voice trembled. "Stop! Don't move another step! We must go back——"

"Back? Why?"

He just pointed at a *salei* tree that stood about one hundred yards dead ahead of us. It was a common tree, an olibanum, and it had its roots partially twisted around

some outcroppings of gleaming black basalt rock. I was puzzled at Rao's fright, then looking up halfway toward the treetop I saw them: the busy, furious, terrible, wild black bees of India, Kipling's "Little People," that he considered the most deadly things in the jungle. Why he called them little people I'll never understand, these looked as big as hummingbirds and now, suddenly, they were making a frightful, buzz-saw racket. We both turned and ran.

We ran at top speed for at least three hundred yards, and then, walking fast, continued our rapid back-tracking to the jeep. We were both breathing heavily and soaked in sweat when we reached it.

When Mary Lou saw us, she quickly swung her slung rifle off her shoulder, expecting, I suppose from our appearance, at least three tigers close on our heels.

Rao did the talking. "We almost ran straight into a nest of black bees, the most terrible things in these forests." He went on to explain that nothing could live through an attack by the giant bees, that he had seen the results of a black-bee battle once where three men had died a horrible death. "You see, there is no way of fighting them back," he said.

Rao hadn't turned a hair when he saw that tiger standing in the grass watching us and the dead bison, but now I could see that he had had a distinct shock. He hadn't expected the bees. And the thought of what could have happened if we had both continued walking, even now, months later, as I type these words, gives me the cold shakes. An obit reading: "Big game sportsman clawed to death by tiger," isn't a bad way to be bowed out, but one saying that the big tiger-and-leopard man left this planet

cooled by a bunch of bees is something less than dignified and no way to go.

We got a blue bull anyway. And the .308 Winchester did an effective job. Rao knew another grazing spot for the big antelopes in the opposite direction. It took us three more hours and a long drive, but there was our blue bull, prancing around full of oats, young and, I hoped, tender enough for the old gent with the three teeth. We took some fat filets for our table. Blue bull, you were born to the knife and fork. What we had I think I could easily have managed with one tooth, it was that tender.

After dinner a runner arrived from Harda with two letters, one from Dan Maddox, one from the courtly Shir S. N. Chib, Director General of the Indian Tourist Office. Maddox's was light and amusing:

I have just gotten home and have been at my office long enough to realize that I would much prefer facing the tiger in the Indian jungle than the Eisenhower depression in Nashville, Tennessee. Actually, it isn't as bad as I make it sound, but I can't help being a little amused to hear all the moaning and groaning of my business friends, and I compare their living standards and the amount they work with the people there where you are in Bori village. I think if we could put all the leaders of this country over there for 30 days, we'd have less complaining and predictions of dire calamity. . . .

Shir Chib informed us that his personal friend, the Colonel His Highness Maharaja Sir Brajindra Sawai Brijendia Singhji Bahadur Jang, Maharaja of Bharatpur, wanted us to come and stay with him at his palace and

hunt ducks and gray partridge. We should be there in three days.

"Two things more you *must* do," Rao said. "Hunt jungle fowl and black buck, the fastest animal in the world. So fast that even the cheetah seldom catches one."

There is no question which came first the chicken or the egg as far as the jungle fowl is concerned. That agile, clever progenitor of our domestic chicken is number-one-boy in anything he does: flying, running or just setting where you can't see him. The gray jungle fowl is twice the size of those red and gold bantam cocks you see at country fairs and colored like them. They have an iridescent ruff and magnificent colors so vivid they seem to be freshly painted on. In flight they look like some sort of fantastic animated jungle jewelry. They are fast; they are smart, and we didn't bag enough to write three paragraphs about them. I understand there is in America an organization dedicated to good sportsmanship called the Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock. They couldn't have selected a more apropos symbol.

The pair of gray jungle fowl we got after a full morning of chasing them came out of Motisingh's curry pot chewy. It was remarked that they were even too ancient and tough to profit by Motisingh's magic, probably so full of old age that they might have been felled by hearts that just got tired and gave out rather than pellets from a twenty-gauge shotgun, and I was in no position to argue the point. I was tired. Chasing the elusive little jungle jewels through bamboo thickets and lantana tangle could be the roughest wing shooting I have tried to date.

We spent the afternoon getting our bags ready, deciding that we would take advantage of Rao's offer to ride back to Nagpur in the jeep with him, spend the night there and get the plane out the following day for New Delhi

where we would meet Shir Chib and his staff and entrain for Bharatpur.

But first, on the day that we were to leave, we had to get up at two A.M., make the long drive to the plains region, getting there before dawn so we would be in black buck country before the animals started to move into their grazing fields. Rao told us that he hadn't had a client take a black buck for two years.

"As I said before, they are the fastest thing in India. They also can jump twelve feet in the air, and even with a careful stalk in this country it is difficult to get close enough to make a shot count, or see one when he isn't in motion. They graze guarded by their harems and the does have sharp eyes. But I think we should make the try. This antelope is a noble trophy."

Rao reminded me of two men: my old football coach, a driver, who thought that it was absolutely *de rigueur* to give a fast pep talk before even a practice game, and yet Rao had the smoothness of manner and the gentleness of approach of one of the most successful and best-liked hotelmen in the world, Neal Lang. They both had that coin-clean handsomeness and an indefinable asset-trait that made every gesture seemingly one created especially to do you a favor. Somehow this always worked to their decided benefit, making you feel that you were in their debt. Actually we were in Rao's, for he had worked around the clock, trying to see that we sampled all of the varied hunting his green jungles had to offer.

It could be that Mary Lou and I were somewhat overly sentimental as we sipped hot tea laced with Dugson's honey at a quarter of two the morning of our last day in the jungles. We reminisced like two old India hands who

had been here for twenty years and mourned leaving a land that they loved. It probably was silly, but we shook hands and made a pact that we would come back within two years and spend at least a month in Madyha Pradesh and Assam.

Even the crows were asleep in their trees when we started for the plains with Rao at the wheel this time, Pathak and Tiwang in the back. Rao wanted to make time and he felt that he could push the jeep harder than Pathak. He was right. He drove like a Manhattan cabbie, confident, fast, sure of every foot of his road.

We were about an hour from the dak when it happened: Detroit arrived in the fastness of the jungle. We had, on some of the better back-country roads, seen old Mercedes trucks lurching by heavily loaded with bamboo. And some of the roads were good enough for any type of vehicle. These road beds were formed with crushed rock that is broken up by hand by the aboriginal women, and it was commonplace to see platoons of them on the roads every day socking away at the rocks, making little ones out of big ones. These were then placed on the roadbed and rolled in with an antiquated steam roller. These were the "metalled roads," named by the British, I suppose, for the type of rocks used that contained varieties of nonprecious crude metals.

But we weren't on a metalled road now. This was rutted, with a high crown in the center, making it impossible, we thought for anything but the rugged little jeep to navigate, often in four-wheel drive. We had often remarked about the jeep being the perfect vehicle for shikar and how impossible it would be to move in this country without one.

Now, out of the darkness behind us came twin beams and the moo-cow sound that could mean only one thing: A Model T Ford was tailing us, honking for us to lay over so it could pass.

So shocked that we couldn't even ask questions, we watched as Rao pulled off and the high-bonneted Model T sailed by. Tiwang reached over and honked our horn and the Ford stopped. We walked over to the old, open sedan. It was a 1929 model driven by a short, froglike little man with a beautiful Jerry Colonna mustache and a sparkling pair of brown eyes. This was Dhundshah, the forest contractor for the Hoshangabad District, and it was his job to travel the jungle and tag the bamboo that was ready for harvesting. Traveling over roads that were even difficult to walk, if ever a man needed a four-wheel-drive jeep it seemed that Shri Dhundshah was the man.

"Not a'tall," he said. "I've tried everything. The only car that can carry me without getting stuck or breaking down is this 1929 Ford. It's much more comfortable than that little object." He swept a hand at the jeep in contempt.

In another five minutes he was in motion again, riding high in his Model T. If ever the Ford Company needs a convincing testimonial, it should be that thirty-year-old car cruising the impossible jungle roads as if this were the terrain Mr. Ford had in mind when he turned out that paticular work of art. After that encounter, if we had seen a tiger riding a bicycle, I don't think we would have been surprised.

It was at least two hours more of hard driving before we reached the place of plains this side of the river Narbada and the Vindhyan Mountains that swam dreamlike

in the distance. It was close to dawn now with a light that made you think you were under water. Rao stopped the jeep. There on a hummock, crouching at the sight of us, was a leopard. As we sat there and watched that silent hunk of murder, I believe I understood how the people of France must have felt when Dr. Guillotine promised the National Assembly, "Avec ma machine, je vous fais sauter la tête en un clin d'oeil, et vous ne souffrez pas." (I'll take your head off with my machine in the twinkling of an eye, and without hurting you at all.) That was the beginning of "The Terror" in France. In the jungle, this spotted horror, the people's terror, was everywhere and had been there before they were. Probably the most effective animated guillotine in existence.

It was Mary Lou's turn at bat. She sat, cool as usual, the .308 at her shoulder, stock tight against her cheek. Just before the rifle cracked I saw the cat crouch farther down. Then he was gone on the other side of the knoll, and we were out of the car after him. But he had disappeared. I stayed with the jeep and Pathak while the other three went searching.

I was leaning against the jeep talking with Pathak when I saw it. The cat had come back, circling behind us, and there he was about two hundred yards from me, crouching but moving forward, seemingly almost on his stomach. Pathak was petrified. I had the .308 on him fast—too fast. My first shot rising dust spirals beyond him, the other, corrected too hastily, was a little lower but not low enough. Then he was gone. Hearing my shots, Rao came on the run, Mary Lou and Tiwang close behind.

"Two misses on one cat," Mary Lou said. "That's

too much! I can understand yours, the leopard was moving, but mine was almost a set-up shot. I should have had him——"

"He crouched again just as you pressed the trigger," Rao said. "You missed by a bare fraction."

"I had him in the scope clearly," I said. "I shot stupidly; too fast."

"Well," Rao said, "we aren't out after leopards today, anyway. We are here for black buck, remember?"

We started out for the plains again but hadn't driven five hundred yards when Rao said, "*Chausingha!* Four-horned antelope!"

It was standing about one hundred yards off the road on the edge of a patch of ringal. I got out fast, sighting on it as it broke into a peculiar lope, headed for the trees. At the shot it jumped ahead, turned to the left and fell.

Brown, with coarse hair somewhat like that of a white-tail deer, weighing probably fifty or sixty pounds, the animal had posterior horns of about four inches, anteriors of under two inches. It could be the rarest antelope in existence, occurring only in a few places in India. It looked like the little African duiker, so well-known to men on safari out meat-hunting for camp. But four pieces of bone lifted this animal into the rare class. It was destined for Campbell's museum in Watertown and the oglings of the children of Connecticut.

We loaded it in back and got going again, driving rapidly, for we still had some distance to go. Then we came to a place where the thick jungles were cleanly cut off as if by a hoe, and there was just a scattering of trees, sort of a last, defiant gesture of the jungle before the flat civilization of the plains. There was still a gauzy quality to

the half-light of dawn. We were on time. The antelopes would be stirring, moving into the grazing grounds and if we were lucky, we would arrive at about the same time they did.

Rao had turned the wheel over to Pathak and he was glassing the country with my Bausch and Lomb binoculars. Fat Tiwang in back was closely scanning the countryside. The word came from him: "There!" Rao stopped the jeep and he and I got out, moving quietly, carefully. The herd of antelopes, about seven, were at least a thousand yards off to our right, grazing like cattle, seemingly oblivious of everything but the grass they were cropping.

This was a hunching down, then a creeping, then a hands-and-knees approach. We worked to within three hundred yards when they seemed to explode, leaping ten feet into the air in a series of quick bounds that took them another fifty yards away. They stood for an instant looking at us, not long enough for us to sight, then they were gone, moving faster than anything I have ever seen on four legs.

"The does saw movement," Rao said. "I thought we were out of sight, but something was wrong."

Pathak and Tiwang met us with the jeep as we came out of the clearing, and we drove another five miles before we stopped again. This time I had the glasses and I spotted them, picking up the creamy coats, the chocolate-brown backs and the tall, twisting horns. Without a word, I took the glasses from my eyes and pointed. We started for them. These were closer, perhaps three hundred yards. Mary Lou, on my left, took a black buck arrogantly strutting in front of two does, his long horns laid back along his spine. There was no chance for a stalk here and we had

to be quick—but not too quick. Again I shot too fast, and my buck, a smaller one than the prancer Mary Lou was leveled on, expressed out of there. Mary Lou's jumped high as she shot and, for a moment, it looked as if we had both missed on this rare, elegant antelope. But Rao said suddenly, "Good shot! Mrs. Scott got her buck."

The combination of Mary Lou and the 180-grain silvertip had worked its magic again: the black buck, the first bagged in this area in some time, was waiting for us when we got to the edge of the far meadow. We drove the jeep to where he was, loaded him in and took off for Bori. It was our last day in the jungle.

We had marked paper chits with the amount of money we wanted to tip our staff, given one to each as they lined up before the bungalow. They would collect from Allwyn Cooper's Rege in Nagpur and we would reimburse him by check. We gave each of the villagers who had been helpful an amount suggested by Rao, and managed to press a token payment into Tiwang's hand. We also sat for a picture with the entire staff, draped in fragrant leis made of daisies and sweet peas. Having had the rich experience of the train, we didn't particularly want it again, so we rode back to Nagpur in the jeep, which pulled a trailer jammed with Maddox's trophies. Ours weren't ready yet, so the bewildered-eyed Chotelal was to remain behind boiling, salting, skinning out.

It was afternoon when we got away, driving under a flat bright sky, with the heat now in March beginning to grow in intensity. The trailer loaded with antlered heads sticking out from under the canvas, Pathak, Sampat and Fakira sitting with the luggage jammed in the back of the jeep, Rao neat as always in fresh khakis and a solar topi, Mary Lou and I leaning out, waving to the staff.

They stood, faces beaming, crying, "Hip, hip, hurrah!" with a gusto and a unison that would put the most skilled Ivy League cheering section to shame.

The sun was bouncing off the red tile of the dak bungalow, and below in the village buffalos were being milked beside the thatched huts by slender, graceful girls, who kept their figures by eating little and working a lot.

Bullock carts with their tremendous handmade wooden wheels were rattling on the roads churning up

dust, ancient dust ground into a mustard color, dust that liked the air and flew into our faces as we passed. The drivers waved cheerily and I thought with Kipling, "I have eaten your bread and salt," and felt a little sad at leaving. Perhaps not bread and salt, but we had eaten their young goat, called mutton, drunk the precious, heavy, fatty buffalo milk and enjoyed the hospitality of their huts.

Ahead of us returning to the village were three herd-boys in tattered turbans, carrying, in almost picture-post-card postures, long polished bamboo rods, with which they skillfully herded about twenty agile brown and white goats off the road so we could pass.

The jeep was open and the mustard dust flew. In the first half hour we were almost completely covered. If some-one had run beside us and sprayed, trying to cover every inch, they couldn't have done a more effective job. We passed through beautiful valleys wrapped in pre-evening grape-blue mist, through almost medieval villages where people stopped and stared open-mouthed at our strange caravan. The children ran beside us, pointing and laugh-ing at the antlers poking weirdly out of the canvas. Again, as on the train, we were seeing India without the gloss of a guided tour, an India of smiling people, an India some of the professional-carping type newsmen never see, or refuse to see.

It was a long, hard ride in the bouncing jeep and af-ter four hours we stopped at a dak rest house on the out-skirts of a large village, where the *khansamah,* a little brown old man with skin like dry paper, brought us warm water and soap. Fakira, the bearer, working quickly and dexterously like one of those clever sleight-of-hand boys in a magic act, produced *ratub,* a half-Indian, half-Eng-

lish meal, chicken, spicy rice, native bread and crackers, and somehow steaming tea.

As we left it started to rain; this mixed with the dust did a good job. When we got to the Ashoka restaurant in Nagpur where Rege met us close to midnight, we were tired, muddy messes. He led us to a back room where there were basins of warm water, soap and towels, and after a meal of *beckti,* a moist, white-meated fish, and some tender sliced beef, the owner proudly showed us a big, chest-type Westinghouse freezer. He had it on display in the front of the restaurant; it didn't work, and no one in the town knew how to get it into operation, but there it stood, a masterpiece of American ingenuity and manufacturing know-how, a gleaming, white porcelain conversation piece. "When you come again," the owner said hopefully, "it will be working and filled with all kinds of delicacies." He was a big, fat man who looked, in his swarthiness, more Greek than Indian, and he loudly bemoaned the fact that shortly after he had erected the Ashoka restaurant Nagpur ceased to be the capital of the province and his trade vanished. "Except for a few tourists and Allwyn Cooper's shikar clients, my tables stand empty." This, in itself, was a minor tragedy, for the Ashoka was perhaps the best restaurant we visited in India, including the fancy places in New Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta.

The next morning we caught the plane to New Delhi, with Rege and Rao at the airport to see us off; Rao sad and serious, shaking our hands and telling us that he considered us warm friends. We agreed to meet in Calcutta and spend a day together before we left for home. We kept that date and had a memorable evening doing that fantastic

city with Rao, pledging eternal friendship, promising to return in 1960.

Shortly after the plane was in the air, the saried hostess rushed forward two steaming tiers of brass pots, stacked one on the other and held in a metal frame, obviously the pilot's and co-pilot's lunch. Everyone else got an apple and a napkin. "Let's face it," Mary Lou said. "They are feeding the most important people. I'm not complaining."

My memory of New Delhi is never dimmed: It comes through as a full-color picture of pretty girls in gay saris, the Tourist Department girls; Mr. Chib, a clever man, believed in surrounding himself and visiting tourists with India's loveliest, brightest young women. A rewarding idea. His brightest perhaps was Miss Anjani Mehta who took over soon after our arrival, and a long lunch with Mr. Chib who told us all about his friend the Maharaja of Bharatpur. Mr. Chib left the following day for an official tourist meeting at some distant point.

New Delhi, differed from most capital cities only in that it was full of red, not white, stone buildings. Old Delhi was something else: in ten minutes you could cross the line from the modern world into another age of mosques, Hindu temples, streets of beggars—a tourist's delight.

Interested in getting to the ducks and partridge at Bharatpur, I brushed New Delhi off with a few quick black and white strokes: Americans at a cocktail party, Rockefeller and Ford Foundation and Embassy types, too immature, too all-knowing, shockingly ill at ease and cliquish; against the well-mannered Indians who spoke quietly and well on every complex subject arising alcohol-aided at

cocktail chitchat gatherings. We left that party feeling that someone should establish schools at home to put at least a patina of restraint, reserve and social ease on our people before sending them to these strategically important far-away places.

A talk with an important feminine family member of India's Chief of Protocol brought tempered criticisms against loud, smug tourists and the Luce publications, especially *Time* where too many Indian reports were thought to be overpolished by the bright young men and women on the desk back in New York who substituted style for fact, and used too much material out of context. She, smilingly, referred to *Time* as that "fact-fiction" magazine doing the United States harm. She praised our businessmen, calling them our best ambassadors. "They are your solid citizens," she said.

If the sandstone, colonnaded, royal palace at Bharatpur needs a shield from the world outside, it is the entire mud-walled old city of Bharatpur itself. The wall was built to protect the city from Moslem and English invaders; the palace—called the "new" palace, though very old in our meaning of the word—was built back behind the city; the old palace, now unused, is in the city itself.

When Mary Lou and I detrained, a tall, handsome, sleek-haired young Indian, dressed in a neat English two-button suit, stood waiting for us and escorted us to a shining aluminum Rolls Royce flying the state flag with what looked like erect purple figures of an elephant and a lion.

The young man, Om Parkash Gupta, the personal secretary of the Maharaja, quickly drove us to the palace, proudly telling us en route that the mud wall had protected Bharatpur well. It was one of the few cities of India that never had been conquered by the Moslem hordes; it had been opened to the English only by a traitor within the gates.

Shorten Ronald Coleman's stature, add a few pounds and you have the Maharaja of Bharatpur. Personally, I think he is one of the great Indian patriots and in his own unassuming way has done much for his country and Nehru. He greeted us warmly, introducing us to his daughters, Princess Parvat Kaur and Princess Renuka. The young princesses were standing stiffly behind him in the sunroom beside a gigantic full-mounted gaur with a magnificent pair of horns.

"I am so glad you and Mrs. Scott could come," the Maharaja said. "We will hunt ducks right away tomorrow

morning; the next day we will take out after the gray partridge. I am also glad you are investigating our country for your sportsmen. We have much to offer and too long have we been overshadowed by places like Africa. Did you enjoy the jungle? Who did you go with? What did you shoot? How long were you there? Did anyone annoy you?"

It didn't take a psychologist to point out that the Maharaja of Bharatpur, fourteenth in an unbroken line of royal princes to live in this palace, had a keen, questing mind; it was also evident that the questions, although sharp and constant, were well meant. When we told him that we had a very successful shikar in the jungles, taking virtually everything there except a bison and a tiger, he was pleased, but seemed somewhat personally put out that we hadn't come out of the forests with a tiger. We assured him that we weren't concentrating on tiger and that both of us were very happy with Allwyn Cooper and what we had learned.

"I wouldn't want you to think that I was saying this to please you," I said, "but I find India has more to offer the sportsman than any country I have yet visited."

"But it does please me. We must also see that this impression of yours lasts, even grows stronger."

We walked into a room covered with a gigantic rug made of tiger skins, so many that His Highness didn't even know the exact figure. He had shot them all, as well as those that were head-mounted on the wall, encircling us like a jungle nightmare. He told us that he liked hunting above everything else, had bagged everything India had to offer, adding, "But I do think wing-shooting is my favorite. A greater test of skill, don't you think?"

We agreed enthusiastically. We called him "Your Highness," even though he did ask us, later, after our friendship grew, to call him by the nickname, "Indu."

Easy and informal, he told us that during World War II he had entertained many American "Gee Eyes" and liked us, and that he continually threw the gates of his palace open to all those his government considered important. "The King of Nepal was here shooting not long ago, and the Shah of Iran and his Queen. Now you, and from about every viewpoint I can think of, your visit is one of the most important. I'm prejudiced, of course, being a sportsman, but I think if we can attract more people of the sporting type to our country, it will be outstandingly good for us."

We discovered later from government officials that he was modest about his part as host to the so-called famous. Nearly everyone of any political importance came to the palace to be impressed with his love of India, to shoot ducks and partridge and to be royally and warmly entertained. He was somewhat embarrassed by the fact that there were no motels or decent hotels outside of the larger cities and said that they were considering building a large motel near Bharatpur.

"The kastrel, the red-wattled lapwing, the red shank, the green sandpiper, the siberian crane, the sarus crane, the tufted pochard, and about every duck I can think of, are here in abundance," he said. "Some of the great birdmen, even your Robert Cushman Murphy, have come here to view our birds. And my chital park! That is also something very unusual. I think nearly everyone who comes to India would like to come out here and at least stay overnight and see our birds and spotted deer."

Enthusiastic about the possibilities of attracting people to Bharatpur, he pointed out that the city was ideally located, circled by some of the big townships of India. Talking like a real-estate operator closing in for the kill, he said, "It is the junction of the broad and metre gauges of the Western Railway from Bombay to Amritsar through Delhi and Ahmedabad into Uttar Pradesh and is served by three good highways: Delhi to Bharatpur via Kosi or Goverdhan and Deeg, only one hundred and fifteen miles; Mathura to Bharatpur via Goverdhan is forty miles, and the direct route is twenty-two. We are only thirty-two miles from Agra and the Taj Mahal; Fatehpur Sikri on the main road to Jaipur is only about one hundred and fifteen miles. So you can quickly see that everyone visiting India sooner or later passes by Bharatpur."

He kept interrupting his conversation with us to answer his telephone, which rang about every fifteen minutes. His high-pitched "Hallow, hallow!" to the long-distance operator became as constant as the musical bonging of the big chime-clock.

He was proud of his palace and had every right to be: Constructed of gleaming white sandstone, with incredibly delicate stone filigree separating some of the rooms like lacy portieres, it is one of the few palaces in Asia with an elegant craftsmanship utilizing the different architectural types of North India: gleaming white marble floors, graceful carved colonnades.

"My grandmother, Maharani Girraj Kaur, built this palace, Moti Mahal, in 1916," he said. "She was a grand, grand person and had excellent taste in everything."

While Mary Lou got acquainted with the young princesses—Parvat was fifteen, Renuka, twelve—the nana, a

quiet, dark woman, who looked almost Japanese, came into the room with two more little girls, also the Maharaja's daughters, probably five and six. We learned that his wife, the strikingly beautiful Maharani we saw in a large oil painting in the great living room, had died in childbirth. She had been the sister of one of the richest, most powerful princes of India, the Maharaja of Mysore, and was internationally noted for her beauty and charm. The Maharaja spoke sadly but proudly of her, and told us that the two older girls were being educated in a Catholic convent. They were sweet, beautifully mannered children, who were calling Mary Lou "Auntie" by the time the Maharaja and I left to look at the area where we would shoot ducks.

The water, shallow as a swamp, gleamed like dull pewter in the late afternoon sunlight, covering an area, encircled with ninety-two shooting butts, that would have taken a couple of days to walk around. "Seven thousand acres," the Maharaja said; "a favorite stopping-off point for wildfowl on their way to Siberia to escape the heat of India." On the way to the water he had stopped and explained a large upright white marble tablet with the names of viceroys of India, princes, the internationally famous, chiseled in the stone with the date of their shoot and the number of ducks bagged on each particular shoot.

"This is called 'Keola Dev Ghana'," the prince said. "It not only has been the favorite duck-shooting spot of my ancestors for over one hundred years, but Nehru has persuaded the provincial government to declare this a sanctuary for non-migratory birds." He hesitated for a moment. "Since Independence, as you probably know, all powers have been taken from maharajas. This is all right

with me. I want what is best for India. But this sanctuary is a pet of mine and the local officials of Rajasthan are doing what they can to thwart me. See where they are planting a certain grass that will choke the water, will grow so high that visitors won't be able to see the birds? They are planting along the road in my deer park also, so that people can't drive by and see the chital. Why they do this I don't know, for it seems to me that a development of this kind would be advantageous for everybody. But, who knows what these people think?"

He explained that these same officials had also had a rest house built near the water. "A barren place where no one would stay. I will show you." He did. It was a small, cheerless, inadequate building, with no plumbing to speak of, no heat, no air conditioning, poor ventilation. "Would you like to stay here?" he asked, then laughed. "They said sportsmen liked roughing it. Maybe I'm wrong. But I am a sportsman. They are not. Roughing it is fine while you are actually on the hunt, but when the day is finished, I believe comfort is needed. What do you say?"

"I could be wrong, but I don't believe our sportsmen would like to come nearly ten thousand miles to sleep here."

"Exactly!"

We passed back through the graceful marble arch of the Prince of Wales Gate that marked the entrance of the shooting area and returned to the palace.

I had discovered from Mr. Chib that, before Independence, the Maharajas of Bharatpur had a religious position considered almost divine by nearly twenty million Jats in the state, but in later years the area had been officially reduced to about two thousand square miles with

the population now under a million. Then, too, the government had recently merged Bharatpur into a union of several smaller states. This not only destroyed it as a powerful state, but the action also weakened, if not completely removed, the present Maharaja of Bharatpur's sovereign power.

We returned to a palace and a retinue of servants maintained by a yearly grant of about $125,000, a grant insisted upon by the British before they would agree to Indian Independence. Its owner had after his wife's death and the ruin of his once-proud kingdom, turned to religion. The first thing in the morning and the last at night his *puja,* prayers, were made. This was no mere quick mumbo jumbo, but a sincere, reverent action that took him at least three hours every day. In addition, soon after Indian Independence, he made an unusual pilgrimage, stretching his full length on the ground, rising to walk a distance the equivalent of his height, plus his outstretched arms, and repeating this until he had circled a sacred hill. This was a large hill and he had chosen the terrible month of July for his dedication. I had been told that this famous sportsman had seriously injured his health by thus progressively prostrating himself on the ground for several miles every evening despite the devastating heat. His followers had come great distances to see him at that time. It was evident now from their faces as we passed in the red Rolls (he had three others), state flag flying, that they considered him some kind of supreme being.

Dinner was served at a tremendous table that could seat fifty without trouble but seated only a dozen now: the Maharaja's uncle, Rao Raja Yadurajsing, a tall, erect man with gray hair and young gray eyes; the Maharaja's

personal secretary, two lesser secretaries, the governess, the four princesses, besides our host, Mary Lou and myself. A tremendous crystal chandelier hung over the center of the table; the delicate crystal stemware shone, and the enormous plates—square with separated spaces, looking something like cafeteria trays except that they were made of solid silver—sparkled. "Would you like Indian or English food?" the Maharaja asked. I took Indian, Mary Lou English. It seemed that the Maharaja maintained two chefs, one to cook Eastern food, one Western. When the Indian food was served into the various compartments of the silver plate, it became evident that it was to be eaten with the fingers. I waited for the knife and fork, but they never came.

The royal family ate the food with their fingers, dexterously rolling up tiny rice balls and popping them into their mouths. I made a mess of it, while Mary Lou, looking smug and superior, cut her roast chicken with a knife and then used her fork with what seemed to me like great ostentation. Huge fingers bowls filled with warm water and large linen napkins were brought. It was done with finesse, of course, but everyone practically took a bath—and dinner was over.

We went to bed early to get ready for the duck shoot, after the Maharaja had given us a heavy envelope closed with the royal seal of the House of Bharatpur. "This will tell you more about the duck shoot," he said. "See you in the morning."

I sat on the huge bed and read the document while two bats swooped in the dusk of the high-ceilinged room and seven lizards crawled up the stone walls. Printed in royal blue ink on fine parchment paper, it read:

Your Butt NO. 15

INSTRUCTION TO GUNS

Enclosed please find:

1. Map of the Ghana with butt indicated on it and the route thereto.

2. Cards for return of game shot and picked up. (Two copies, one for morning and the other for afternoon.)

Please note the following instructions:—

(a) No shot should be fired before the cannon sounds at 8:30 A.M. and after the gun sounds at 12. Shooting will recommence at 3 P.M. and will continue till dark.

(b) The coolies (pickers up) are engaged for the day and the guests are requested to pay them Rs——/each. The payment should be made on presentation of a card by each coolie. The card should be handed over to the A.D.C. on duty to avoid double payment to the coolies concerned.

(c) When you have finished shooting in the morning please fill in the appropriate "Return of Game" card and hand it over to the clerk at Prince of Wales Gate. Again on the conclusion of the evening Shoot "Return of Game" card should please be handed over to the clerk at the Prince of Wales Gate.

(d) Guests are requested to bring their own bags to Moti Mahal. Game will be supplied on request from A.D.C. on duty.

(e) Cartridges will be sold on cash payment at the price prevailing in Delhi and Agra markets *i.e.*, Rs——/per 100.

Cartridges once sold will not be taken back.

Cartridges can be had at Moti Mahal, Shanti Kutir and Kevladeo.

Record.

(f) Guests are requested to kindly note that if there are any metal rings on the leg of the birds shot they should make a note of the number and inform the Private Secretary. Note—Guests are requested not to shoot any four-legged animals in the Ghana Forest on their way to Duck Shoot.

The Royal Duck Shoot sounded like quite an operation. The map showed the lake and the position of the butts. The list of names on back of it read like pages ripped from a history book, leading off with H. E. the Commander in Chief Lord Kitchner, and ending with H. H. the Maharaja Governor of Mysore, the dates running from 1902 to 1958. The last shoot in this year had been in January when the flight of ducks was heavy. Now, in March, there still would be ducks, but not the concentration that there was earlier. The heat was poised now, ready to envelope the country like a damp electric blanket turned on its high setting; and the blast furnace that is India from late March right straight through until November, had its door slightly ajar.

"How did you sleep?" The Maharaja greeted us brightly at seven. He had been up since five making his puja. "No trampling of ghosts?"

We assured him that we had slept soundly. In fact, one of his twenty-five turbaned servants had had to tap me on the shoulder several times to get me going.

"Ylla died in that room," he said. "But I was certain

that there would be no ghosts clicking camera shutters to keep you awake."

"The animal photographer?"

"Yes, she was here last year. Stayed with me for a while. A charming woman."

"How did it happen? The magazines and papers said she died facing the charge of an elephant, some said a tiger——"

"All wrong. She fell from my jeep while photographing a native ceremony in Bharatpur. Struck her head on a rock. I got two of the best doctors and we thought she was going to be all right. But, no, she had a brain injury and died on the second day. A tragedy. She was a talented woman."*

"Her camera work with animals was sheer poetry," Mary Lou said.

"Because she worked hard, was a great technician. The day of the accident it was beastly hot and she insisted that her color film accompany her, resting on a block of ice. She carried so many cameras and so much equipment it took two of my men to carry it."

Then he adroitly changed the subject, asked us about our shotguns, whether we had shells. "I think that it is time to go. We should be there by eight thirty at the latest. We keep the ducks flying by shooting from the butts. No decoys or anything like that. I've asked the entire faculty of Bharatpur College to take the day off and shoot with us. They will have fun and they will help keep the ducks in the air. We will all have dinner here afterward. Duck curry. I think you will like it."

* Ylla's book, *The Animals of India,* was published posthumously early in 1959.

The shooting butts were woven of bamboo, placed in positions perhaps twenty-five feet from the water. The teachers had arrived and were already in the butts. We came in the Maharaja's jeep, a station wagon with a custom body large enough to seat a dozen people. Our "retrievers" were waiting for us, two to a butt, one to hand us a loaded gun, the other to wade into the water and deliver the downed ducks. The Maharaja moved to a butt about a hundred yards from me; Mary Lou was the same distance behind me in the butt the Shah of Iran had used a couple of months before. We were to wait for the Maharaja to fire first, signaling that the shoot was to begin.

He had a matched pair of Purdeys, twenty-gauge, full-choked guns. They were beautiful, slender, elegant, light, and in his usual generous way he offered to lend them to me. But matched Purdeys are somewhat like hashish: You can become addicted and then you are lost. I stayed with my favorite gun, the Browning superposed Lightning, chambered for three-inch shells; a gun that had become as much a part of me as my right arm.

Two sharp reports: The prince had begun. Then a series of blasts from a distance. The teachers were shooting. The ducks came in high and fast, spurred into action by gunfire, and they were not easy targets. Ducks never are. I have alibis. I'm a point-shooter over decoys, or a pass-shooter, but these ducks were in full flight, alarmed and flying high, but within gun range. I swung with one that looked like a blue-winged teal, and fired. He kept on going. My butt boys giggled. Gunfire was resounding from all over the place now, and the Maharaja and Mary Lou were blasting away. Finally I made contact and ducks be-

gan to fall. My retriever, a lad of about sixteen, rubbed oil on his legs and waded after them.

As my pile of ducks grew I tried to identify them. Some were teal, the bluewing and cinnamon, and strange types later identified for me by the Maharaja: whistling ducks, Andaman teal, pink-headed ducks. I must admit that the Maharaja kept his boys in the water most of the time, but mine didn't get too wet.

Then it was over and the Maharaja came marching back, followed by his butt boys, who were loaded with ducks. He had fired three boxes of shells, and had seventy ducks. The man was a master, probably the best wing shot I have ever known. I had twenty-five, Mary Lou about a dozen; the teachers brought in another fifty. Enough for dinner, which the Maharaja would cook.

Cold, vintage champagne and then the cooking: Sitting cross-legged on huge cushions in the center of the outdoor living room, the Maharaja had an American pressure cooker placed before him on an Indian charcoal brazier. I sat beside him. A dozen houseboys in pastel turbans lined up in front of us, each with a platter. The first one had ducks, so did the next two; then the curry, the herbs, the spices, the honey. Each boy stopped before the Maharaja while he took what he wanted from the dish, daintily sprinkled it into the pressure cooker, then dismissed the bearer with a wave of the hand. Finally he put the lid on the pot; the ducks began cooking and the smells began to fill the room, mysterious, tantalizing, Oriental aromas. The Maharaja and I sat with our backs to the guests while the cooking went on; Mary Lou was with the princesses and the two dozen teachers gathered in little chat-groups.

Once the Maharaja screamed for help when the cooker looked as if it were going to explode, and two of the boys rushed over and removed the lid. In less than a half hour the cooking was completed and we were at the giant table eating the best duck I have ever sunk a tooth into. I tried to get the recipe, but the Maharaja said that he would give it to me if I came and shot with him in 1960. I agreed; the recipe alone would be worth the trip.

While we were eating, the palace orchestra consisting of a half-dozen slim, elegant young men, dressed in form-fitting black jackets, fitted white trousers and pale yellow turbans, came and sat barefooted in a circle, moving long, slender toes in time with their music. The fast tempo and cross-rhythms and syncopations of the guitar-like sitar against the drummed tabla and the buzz of the tamboura and the high-pitched constant voice of a singer, brought sweet music, the like of which I have never heard. It was gentle, perfectly timed, soft music, the non-blaring sounds of another age.

The teachers were articulate and interesting and we talked for a while after dinner, and the Maharaja was on the phone a dozen times to the Tourist Office in Delhi, straightening out details of our itinerary that he didn't think were right: automobile instead of train, specific people to meet us at certain points; sight-seeing here, none there, until he was satisfied that we were going to do justice to his beloved India by traveling comfortably and being exposed to the proper places.

He got on the phone to his brother-in-law, the Maharaja of Mysore, the most powerful prince in India at the present time, and told him all about us, asking that we be permitted to hunt bison from elephant-back. Permis-

sion was granted apparently, for he turned to me after he had hung up the receiver, smiling warmly. "He is a most wonderful man! You two will get on famously. He is a great sportsman and he is also a writer. He says for you to come right away. Tomorrow we will hunt gray partridge and then one of the tourist people will come for you and take you there by car. This bison hunting could be the climax of your trip, and you might even be lucky and bag a tiger."

He left me for a few minutes, to talk animatedly with his guests. "Auntie" Mary Lou stayed with the princesses, playing a card game, talking about their schooling and the other inane things women discuss. Then, suddenly, the Maharaja got up from the chair where he had been sitting encircled by his guests and said, "Gentlemen, thank you, it has been a most pleasant evening."

It was the signal to depart and they all left, murmuring about how good the duck shooting and the duck curry had been. They bowed to Mary Lou and me, shaking our hands and telling us that they would like us to come again.

Next the prince dismissed the ladies. "It will be a hard day walking for the partridge tomorrow," he said to Mary Lou. "I suppose a good night's rest is in order."

Mary Lou didn't protest, and soon there was no one in the large room except the Maharaja and myself and his palace orchestra. The bats were scooting around the ceiling and the lizards had come out of their holes for their midnight scamper.

The orchestra moved closer to us and we sat cross-legged on cushions on the gleaming white marble floor, talking softly of many things: the state of the world, communism, castes, the Gita, sex, yoga, the future of India,

and I got the news long before the rest of the world that the Shah of Iran was going to shed his beautiful Queen for reasons that the press never knew. We also talked of tiger hunts and leopards and I attempted to elicit from him a promise to visit me in the States and go after brown bear. He thanked me warmly but declined, saying that he didn't believe he would leave his beloved India for a foreign land until he had visited every foot of it.

And so the evening went, the bats twirling in time to the music, the beautiful voice of the singer of songs never breaking a note as it grew higher and higher, the lizards motionless as ice sculpture on the wall, evil little heads raised, listening.

Dawn came through the tall, paned windows, pale and ghostly, as we sat there, and finally the orchestra arose, one man at a time, bowed in a low, graceful movement toward the Maharaja and departed. . . .

He looked fresh when I saw him at eight. He hadn't gone to bed, but had prayed until time for breakfast. Nevertheless he was in his shooting clothes, ready to go.

The drive took well over an hour; our destination Kishan Sagar, a man-made lake near the famous stone-producing Baretha hills. There was a wedge of geese over the lake, and the scene, with the morning sun on the water and the mist still rising, reminded me of a Peter Scott wildfowl painting. Rising on the far side of the nine-mile lake was Kishan Mahal, a vast white pile of frescoed sandstone, both the palace and the lake named after the present Maharaja's late father, Maharaja Kishan Singh. A motorboat was purring at the landing and as we climbed aboard, the Maharaja said, "I told you to bring your scoped rifle because we might see a mugger, a crocodile before we

get to Chianpura, the village where we will shoot partridge. Keep a sharp eye."

We did see one, resting on the shore, reptilian head raised, looking at us, but he scooted into the water long before we were within decent rifle range. "I like to shoot those horrible beasts," the Maharaja said. "It's astounding the amount of wildlife they destroy."

We could see people waiting for us on the shore at the far end of the lake, Chianpura villagers. When we got out of the boat, they approached the Maharaja, putting garlands of varicolored sweet peas around his neck and placing their foreheads on his feet. Rao Raja Yadurajsing, the Maharaja's uncle, was with us; the secretary and the other retainers remained with the boat. We walked through the huddle of huts that comprised this village and could see fields of wheat, tall as a man, and golden. "We will walk farther on," the prince said. "In some of the fields they are harvesting, the wheat is in stubble and the birds will be feeding. . . ."

Two villagers took Mary Lou's and my gun and walked beside us, self-appointed gunbearers, and about a dozen others, in a riant mood, walked ahead of us, spread out in an even line. They were the beaters.

"These are fast birds, these gray partridge," the Maharaja said. "They will be feeding in the wheat stubble and will make for the protection of the fringe of woods. You must be quick."

Quick? You must be electric! It was somewhat of a hazard to shoot with the villagers ahead of us in gun range. When the birds ran and suddenly flushed, we had to be careful where we swung. The birds boomed into the air at thirty-five or forty yards, and I missed the first four

shots, alibiing to myself that I was thrown off by the proximity of the beaters. As usual, the wing-shooting master, the Maharaja, was doing well. He missed a couple of shots in the beginning, but that was all. Finally, though, Mary Lou and I got on them and our gunbearers were kept busy passing shells.

After about forty-five minutes of walking and shooting, with the beaters still shouting and beating the brush ahead of us, the Maharaja called the shoot to a halt. We counted our bag. We had taken thirty-seven of the fast gray birds in under an hour. I thought this was somewhat of a record on birds this difficult to shoot, but the Maharaja said that it was only fair.

"Your guns are picking up skill," he said. "If you could spend another week with me, we would make quite a team."

We left half of the birds with the people of Chianpura and I gave each of them a rupee, which they didn't want to accept, but finally took after the Maharaja spoke to them.

We stopped at the palace, Kishan Mahal, on the hill overlooking the lake. A turbaned servant brought us warm Coca-Cola, a ghastly drink that would destroy that company's reputation overnight if served in that fashion in the States, and we admired the view of the lake with cranes and a few geese etched along the skyline over the distant shore.

"This is where we come during monsoon," the Maharaja said. "We are high and sheltered from the deluge and the creeping things that it drives out of hiding, and we enjoy the cool breezes from the lake. It is most enjoyable. We have been coming here since I was a boy. There

is good fishing in Kishan Sagar, too, and there is tiger and leopard hunting in the hills. You are going on to Mysore after bison, but the next time you come, we must try a tiger beat. We could stay here if you like. This is quite my favorite palace. I've offered it to our Prime Minister Nehru. It would be a pleasant place for him to come during the heat of the summer and rest. He works so hard, it is necessary that he listen to someone and try to slow down at times." He sighed. "But he is a dedicated man."

That night we had partridge, English-style, roasted and served with tiny boiled potatoes and a fine chilled Liebframilch. It was an easy evening with risible royalty, much lively conversation and an early bed. We left for Mysore the next morning.

The handsome white Hotel Krishnarajsagar sat on a hill twenty miles from Mysore, overlooking one of the loveliest gardens in the East, a beauty spot of gushing fountains and exotic plants from many parts of the world. It was illuminated now, the varicolored lights playing on the fountain sprays, pointing up the pinks and reds of the flowering plants. The garden is normally illuminated only twice on week-ends, but for the payment of ten rupees a guest of the hotel could see the sight any night. Tonight we paid, and Mary Lou and I walked through the huge garden and then went into the dining room. There were two other American couples there at separate tables, quite obviously tourists. One man, a distinguished gray-haired, florid fellow who sat with his wife, who was prettily clad in a red sari, was explaining Indian curry to the other couple:

"It's supposed to be hot. That's chicken you have there now, but I suggest you try the lamb or mutton. The Indians do something with that meat and Madras curry that is spicy-hot, but so darned good that you can't stop eating. And, say, when you get back to the States, stop in New York and go over to the Pierre Hotel. They serve curry every day, dished up by Indians in native dress and turban. The real thing. It will remind you of your trip. . . ."

Two hours later, after our Tourist Officer departed, (we had one with us everywhere except in the jungle and at the Maharaja's, and this one was Shri M. Ramaswamy who came from Ootacamund in the mountains to be with us in Mysore and presumably take us back to his bailiwick to fish for trout), I said hello to the woman in the red sari, who was standing on the second-floor balcony that over-

looked the gardens. She wasn't young, but she was pretty and she was slender.

"You're the famous and lucky Mr. Scott, aren't you?" she said archly.

"The name is right. But the famous and lucky are questionable."

"Well, the way the Tourist Office looks after you makes you famous. And our guide, one that we ordinary tourists have to hire, tells us that you are having all kinds of fun sampling the sports India has to offer. That makes you lucky. So you see I am right."

This called for laughter. I obliged. Her husband joined us and I got Mary Lou and we sat and talked until bedtime. They were Fred and Ruth Stieff from Baltimore. His family had owned the famed Stieff piano company but when he realized that he couldn't maintain quality with the uninterested, haphazard labor he was able to hire, he dissolved the company, and was spending his time traveling and writing a gourmet column for the Baltimore *Sun*. He had also written a book on Maryland cookery, *Eat, Drink and Be Merry in Maryland*.

"Compared with what we are doing, sight-seeing and the like," he said, "you're really having fun. What kind of sports are there here?"

"We're going after bison tomorrow as the Maharaja of Mysore's guest——"

"Bison. That like our buffalo?"

"No, it's a giant ox."

"Dangerous?"

"Yes, I'd say so."

"What say we trot along? Could that be done?"

"Have you ever hunted before?"

"No, but Ruth and I have done about everything. And I'd take it as a great favor if you'll count us in. It'll be the high light of our trip."

I told him that I'd have to check with the Tourist Office and the Maharaja and would let him know in the morning. I called Ramaswamy and he asked the Maharaja's chief forest officer, Gulah Singh. They both thought it would be all right.

The Stieffs were overjoyed, and we started at eight that morning, riding in two cars. Ramaswamy and Gulah Singh rode with us. It was a long trip, over three hours to the dark forests of Chamarajangar and the towering mountains of Kyathedevera Guida where the Forest Department maintained a dak bungalow and kept some of their hunting elephants. The largest herd of trained elephants in the world is owned by the Maharaja of Mysore, and Sabu, who became famous in Hollywood, came from his elephant stables.

We had met the Maharaja of Mysore after being cautioned by Ramaswamy that our audience would only last ten minutes. "He rarely sees anyone for longer than that. Vincent Sheehan was here a few months ago, and he stayed only a half hour."

One of the world's great patrons of fine music, with probably the largest private collection of records, the Maharaja of Mysore is also a noted sportsman and big-game hunter, and had established some kind of record in Africa last year. He also is the only one of the five hundred Indian princes who is part of the new political picture. In addition to retaining all of his holdings, he is the Governor of Mysore, one of the largest, most important states in India. His palace, undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and one

of the largest in the world, would take a full day to walk through if one were to view everything. We saw the game room with most of the species of Indian game animals full-mounted, and the room of swords where one specimen of every type of sword ever made is on display. It was still the time of the Holi when we arrived at Mysore, and the entire palace was lighted up that first night with probably a million bulbs. It was visible for miles, and from a distance it appeared that the entire city was aflame.

We found the Maharaja charming, not as relaxed as his brother-in-law, but hospitable and interesting. A huge man, weighing probably three hundred pounds, he has a soft, high voice, and he is shy. We sat for two hours drinking tea, talking of writing, shooting, and what a disagreeable lot book publishers are, boxing up the talents of men, then doing nothing to see that this talent gets into the public's hands. He had written a book on Indian religions and his publisher had not lived up to his word regarding its promotion and the Maharaja was miffed. He told us of his arrangement in intricate detail. He was interested in coming to the States to go brown-bear hunting. We left, promising that we would investigate it for him and report our findings. He wished us luck on the bison hunt, telling us that our Ambassador, Mr. Bunker, had also been here after bison just a few months ago.

"You will be with my best man, Gulah Singh, whose father before him was our district forest officer. He knows every inch of that bison country."

As we drove, Gulah Singh pulled the hunt into focus: "His Highness told me that he would like you to shoot a certain gaur. He's a wary old king bull, who is fighting to

retain control of his herd. We've watched him for years as he's picked up battle scars, wearing down his horns as he's defeated one young bull after another. But now he is a danger in the jungle, charging anything that moves near him. He has charged two villagers and three of our trained elephants in the last week."

B. H. Gulah Singh, is a soft-spoken Indian who had studied in Scotland and has a faint burr attached to some of his words. There was an air of great calm about him, and he was the sort of person who would sit and continue talking even if suddenly the car broke down and the seats fell apart. He was the sort of Indian that Kipling must have loved, the kind the English storyteller had listened to many a night around the campfires in the remote hills. He had been technical advisor for a movie on tiger hunting that had been filmed near Mysore recently and he had been amused by the English actor who starred in the American film.

Other members of the cast had gone tiger and gaur hunting, but every time the star was asked to go along he'd pull out a letter from his insurance company, which stated that his policy would be canceled if he went on any kind of bona fide hunt in India. It became his shield. "He was the great hero when the cameras ground away," Singh said. "But once he was on his own, without the director and the script, he was a lost soul. I felt sorry for him actually. The hills and the jungles were places he appeared in regularly in his films, but he really hated and feared the outdoors, I think. He should be a player of light comedy in drawing rooms."

While we wound up the narrow mountain road, he told us of the famous photographer from *Life* magazine,

who had talked the Maharaja into letting him photograph a charging elephant. The Maharaja had instructed Singh to go along with the photographer on the back of one of the trained elephants; the Maharaja and a friend of his, both excellent shots, would be on another elephant and stand off to the side near the edge of the forest. There was an old bull that grazed on a maidan at a certain time every morning. Elephants hate to be disturbed while eating and dislike noise. The plan was that the Maharaja would fire a shot over the head of the old bull, irritating him into a charge, Singh and the photographer would be out in the open and the bull would make for them. It was a dangerous plan. But the photographer, who had a good reputation, convinced them that the whole thing would be worth while and he would get the greatest picture of his career. Singh, against the Maharaja's orders, carried his own rifle. Everything went off as planned, with two exceptions: when the wild elephant charged, the trained one the Maharaja was on spooked and ran into the woods, leaving the two expert riflemen helpless and Singh and the cameraman in great danger. The old bull charged at them like an express. When he got within twenty yards, the photographer went to pieces, dropping his camera on the ground and weeping. Singh, with three shots, managed to kill the enraged beast, which fell so close to them that they were both bathed in blood.

Singh told us of his love for elephants, remarking that one of the facets of his job as district forest officer that he detested was killing the big animals that were placed on the dangerous and unwanted list. One such rogue had killed two villagers a few weeks before and charged anything within sight. Singh was ordered to destroy it. He

tracked the mad tusker and killed it after it had charged him, dropping the beast twenty feet from his own elephant. When he took the head to the Mysore taxidermist, Van Ingen, who wanted it for mounting, it was found that the "mad" elephant had about a third of a tusk buried deep in its head, barely missing the brain. A fight with another tusker had left him that memento. The animal had lived in dreadful pain. Singh believed that elephants are thinking creatures and never became rogues or killed without good reason. He always carefully investigated before and after dispatching one of the so-called villains.

He was ordered to get rid of another one that had killed a native beside a small pond. Apparently the man had been asleep in the shade of a big, rough-barked tree when the elephant appeared, put his foot on him and squashed him to death, then flipped him eight feet from the tree. Singh hid near the pond for days, waiting for the elephant to return, watching it come and go. The big beast went to the pond and drank and bathed, then came over to the rough tree, contentedly scratched its back, then went on its way. Singh killed it as ordered, against his own better judgment. He believed that the elephant really didn't want to kill the man, but the animal thought it owned that particular tree, that it was his own personal back-scratcher. The man was there, in the way, and wouldn't move when he approached. He just wanted to remove him from that tree so he could scratch his back.

Singh told also of a tame water buffalo that he used to stake out as bait to capture a tiger. The government commissioned him to get three of the striped cats alive for the Calcutta Zoo. He staked the buffalo a few feet in front of a sheer cliff, dug a pit in such position that the tiger

would have to make a direct frontal approach and would be trapped in the pit when it sprang to kill the bait. The buffalo had to stand tied to the tree, watch the dreadful cat approach, then listen in terror all night long as the tiger spit and snarled from where it had fallen into the pit. Through an error that Singh still regrets, the same buffalo was used twice more to capture tigers. The buffalo finally, although completely unharmed, became ill, wouldn't eat, lost weight and almost died. But Singh ordered it put out to pasture where the horrifying experience was forgotten and it recovered. Then, several months later, one of Singh's men took that unfortunate beast out for a bait again. (Singh later fired him for doing it.) The man led the buffalo past the same tree where it had been tied before when the three tigers had approached. It struggled to get off the rope as they neared the tree, made a strange bleating sound and dropped dead. This was one of the few cases Singh had ever experienced of an animal actually dying of fright.

"What horror must have been in that unfortunate animal's mind," he said. "And people say that animals haven't a brain, can't reason."

We were nearing the forest bungalow after climbing almost straight up through the mountains. Two elephants were waiting in front, lifting their trunks in a trained greeting as we got out of the car. The Stieffs arrived in another ten minutes. We were to hunt in terrain that stood six feet in impenetrable tangle and elephant-back was the only way we could negotiate the stuff.

I learned that only female elephants are so used in India, the tusker being undependable during breeding sea-

son, often itching for a fight. Singh told us it took fifteen years to train a hunting elephant and the *mahout,* the trainer, actually lives with the elephant during all this time, getting to know every facet of the big animal's personality. The elephant is ruled by a combination of fear and love, and his master, the mahout, rides his neck just below the head, carrying in his left hand a short iron rod with a hook on it, and in the other, a machete-like knife, which he uses to lop off branches that may snap back into the riders' faces.

The Stieffs were somewhat taken aback when they learned that they were to ride elephants after the bison, but listened to the plan carefully. They were told to be quiet, as talking would annoy the elephants and warn the gaur that we were coming. Fred Stieff was to ride with Singh's assistants. Mary Lou, Ruth Stieff and I were to go on the lead elephant with Singh.

The big beasts knelt, the mahout using the hook on the iron rod to pull one leg, indicating that the animal was to get on its knees so we could mount. A short ladder was brought out and we climbed into the *houdah* or saddle, which is made of heavy padded canvas; wooden platforms hang from either side and there is a slender iron rod attached to each which gives the hunter a handhold.

Mary Lou sat with Singh, I with Ruth Stieff, back to back. The elephant got up gracefully and suddenly we were suspended fourteen feet in the air. Surprisingly, it was not a rough ride; there was a long swaying motion as the elephant carefully picked his way down the hillside. After a half hour you become accustomed to the swaying and the elevation and you start looking for bison.

It was worth the effort to get to these mountains just

to watch the mahout control his charge with two ropes that hang like stirrups from the elephant's neck to the Indian's feet. He clutches the rope between his bare toes and, with a brisk movement of his foot, signals the animal to the right or left to avoid big trees or sudden drops.

Suddenly Singh whispered, "There! There is the herd. Careful now, we want only a certain bull. He will be the biggest and he will be dead black."

I couldn't see anything except the tall grass, then there they were, directly ahead and to our right, out about five hundred yards where the slope of grass ran down into a *shola,* a hollow grown thick with young trees. Three black shapes humped up and farther out, surrounded by several brown animals, was the larger black bison: the big bull was still in command, ringed by his harem, and the three young aspirants stood jealously off to the side.

The elephant behind—equipped with a cruder houdah than ours, with Fred Stieff bouncing as if he were riding an unbroken horse without a saddle, his pith helmet sliding over his eyes—continued to move toward us until the mahout, seeing us motionless, stopped his animal.

Singh had suggested that we try what he called the "matador" shot when we sighted the bull, which meant placing a bullet in the center of the neck. He hadn't seen a .458 in action and suggested a fast follow-up shot. "Get the animal off its feet," he had warned. "If he is wounded and charges, we will be in real danger."

Now I made my mistake. When I looked back, I could see the elephant Fred Stieff was on heaving as it stood, and that should have meant something. Singh pointed again as the big black gaur walked up the slope. I leveled the rifle, and just as I squeezed the shot off the

bison wheeled about and I could feel my gun moving up and down as if an invisible hand was trying to jar my aim.

The bison reeled, swung about and charged directly for us. I could feel the elephant tremble under me and Hindi curses were pouring from the men on the animal behind us. The hunting elephant may or may not stand to the charge of a wounded bison. In sudden fear she could have flipped us off her back, as a cow whisks off flies, and we would have been flat on ground that could have been our grave. Once down there in the thick, head-high grass and brush, in the element of the enraged gaur, we would have been finished.

Then, for some reason that Singh couldn't explain, the big bison slid to a stop, his harem milling behind him. Wheeling, staggering a little in a sharp rightabout, he took off again, the females behind him.

Singh whispered, "You should have waited until our elephant stopped heaving, caught his breath. His heaves threw your aim off. You hit the bison, but apparently not in a vital spot."

Then our wonderful elephant came into her own and the fifteen years of training began to show: using her trunk to pull trees and tall bushes aside, she started to make a circle to cut off the retreating bisons. It was rough going, with some branches escaping the mahout's knife and slapping back into our faces. Ruth Stieff pulled her dress up over her face for protection, leaving it there for the rest of the ride. Mary Lou was taking a banging, but she sat alertly, watching for movement ahead of her. Singh occasionally gave the mahout instructions for guiding the elephant in the right direction. With the mahout lopping off branches and catclaw that tore at us, we made our way

down a ravine. Suddenly we tipped up, very nearly sliding from the saddle, the incline was so steep. Then our great living ship righted herself and we were on level ground where tangle reached up over eight feet. We could never have walked in this terrain and even the sure-footed elephant stumbled occasionally, stepping into a depression, or into brush so thick that it twisted into a trap.

We rode for almost an hour that way, watching for the wounded animal that could rush us at any moment. Then we came upon a maidan, and there about three hundred yards from us in the grassy area was our great gaur, the sun glinting on his ebony hide as he grazed with his harem.

Animals, with the exception of cats, never look up, but somehow the bison spotted us, although he didn't seem to suspect the elephant. Perhaps that is the real reason he had stopped his charge. The two are jungle friends, often grazing in the same places, but now the old bull knew that something was wrong; he pawed the ground and snorted, trotting in a little circle around his herd.

We got within about two hundred yards of him. This time we waited until our elephant stopped her heaving, waited while the bison moved in his restless, agitated way, and then I sighted on the black hump on his back, moved down about one foot into what I thought would be the heart region, and slowly squeezed the trigger. Almost simultaneously with the boom of the .458, the big animal flipped to the ground as if his feet had been yanked out from under him. Singh stared at me in disbelief; seldom is the great gaur downed with a single shot.

Cautiously we moved in, sitting on the elephant until we were certain that the bison was dead. The elephant be-

hind us moved in and the men got down. Working rapidly, they cleared the area around the dead bison of grass, trees and brush. Singh measured the animal: stretching fourteen feet nine inches, his weight was estimated at over two thousand pounds and he stood six feet at the shoulder. The tape measured a full twenty inches around the base of the horns.

"This is one of the largest bisons ever taken out of these mountains," Singh said. "See how these great horns are worn at the tips from age and fighting? If we didn't get him, sooner or later one of the young bulls would have bested him in a fight and deposed him, and he would have become even more dangerous. The solitary bull bison is a bitter, deadly animal. You have done the people of the nearest village and the Maharaja a favor."

My first shot, aimed at the neck, but thrown off by the heaving of my living shooting platform, had clipped out a piece of horn near the base, an inch from the head; the second had been a lucky shot, dead-center in the heart region.

And then, as if by some strange black jungle magic, natives were beside us with wicker baskets and knives. The head was to be saved for mounting, but Singh told them to go ahead and strip the meat from the enormous beast. They would have the carcass ivory-clean and the meat ready for use, drying in their huts, in two hours.

As we started back, off perhaps three thousand yards, we could see the rest of the herd gathered on a rise looking at us. Soon a vital young bull would take over, infusing fresh blood, new life into the herd. It is necessary. It is the way of life.

Back at the dak rest house we had a laugh when one

of the drivers, a city boy from Mysore who knew nothing about shikar, said, "How many did you get?"

"Young man," Fred Stieff said, "one! And in a manner of speaking, sometimes one can be too many."

I had a recurrent nightmare in the jungles that went something like this: It is midnight; I am awakened by villagers rushing into our dak bungalow, screaming that a tiger has made a kill and for me to come quickly, that they already have the machan built. I am alone; none of the skilled and confident shikaris like Rao Naidu or Singh are around. The decision is mine alone. . . . I usually awakened, covered with sweat, to find Mary Lou stirring in her sleep in her bed on the other side of the room.

I don't know whether many hunters who come to India's jungles dream of situations of this kind and I haven't consulted a psychiatrist since I returned to determine if it had any hidden, dark meaning, suggesting perhaps that my courage was on the wane. But the dream did come several times, never varying in the fantasy-image that prodded my brain. Unfortunately, I never discovered how I would make out in a situation of this kind, for I always awoke just as the natives told me about the machan.

I was in a dak now, high in the Kyathedevera Gudi finishing up a column for the *Herald Tribune* on vultures and the cobra charmers we had seen in old Delhi; Mary Lou had broken her camera shortly after the bison hunt and she was in Mysore trying to have it repaired. We were going to spend a couple of days in this pleasant forest rest house while I caught up on some of my work, and perhaps have another hunt. We would leave India in about three days, flying to Bombay, then to Calcutta, where we would spend a night with Rao Naidu and catch the Scandanavian Airlines DC-7C. I had blocked out another column on

Fred and Ruth Stieff on how you find courage in the most unexpected places, and I was thinking of them now. Neither of them was young, neither had hunted before, or been exposed to danger from wild animals. Yet when that bison that I wounded had charged, Ruth had sat calmly, waiting to be told what to do, and even though the Indians on the second elephant were screaming Hindi curses at me for failing to kill the beast with one shot, thus endangering the lives of everyone, Fred Stieff hadn't turned a hair, and had called, "Better luck next time."

After the hunt was over they had been enthusiastic, telling me that this was the most exciting day they had ever had, that it had made their Indian trip. "The hell with this sight-seeing and buying junk!" Fred had said. "I like this idea of having offbeat, exciting things to do. Wish we could have been in the jungle with you. Maybe someday we could whip up another hunt? Alaska bear? Even tiger? I could take lessons and maybe handle a gun as well as you one of these days."

They were many miles away from these mountains now, probably at their destination in Kashmir, but the memory of them was close and very real. And then, shattering this pleasant reverie, came an Indian from Gudi whom I had become quite fond of in a few days. His name was Devi, but he had been dubbed "Fat Jack" by Mary Lou. He was one of the few forest people we had seen with any flesh on his bones, and Mary Lou had tartly observed that another few days with Motisingh and his kitchen magic and I could easily have looked like Devi. He became, as far as she was concerned, my conscience in a loincloth.

It was dusk as he came to the door and a bluish haze

that filtered the light seemed to seep in with him. He looked delighted. He was calm. "A tiger has killed a buffalo calf, master. It is early enough and I know you would like to have us build a machan so you can wait for this tiger to return."

This was not like the dream; it was a much gentler version. Perhaps I could even talk my way out of this. We had been told of a tiger that roamed these hills, a man-eater that had killed over fifty people, a dozen in the last two weeks. All of the skill of the forest officers had been useless against him. But this couldn't possibly be the same tiger: Fat Jack told me that the tiger had pulled the young calf down from a herd being returned to the village; the herdboy had circled his buffalos and driven the cat off. Even a tiger hesitates to face down a herd of angry buffalos. The boy had reported that the tiger hadn't been frightened of him and if he hadn't had the herd with him, he thought that he himself would have been attacked. But I didn't think it could be the man-eater. Normally they won't bother with anything except the soft pickings of humans once they get started in their horrible trade. But Fat Jack said that it could be the killer. I disagreed and also told him that by the time we got the machan built it would be too late, that the noise of making it would warn the tiger anyway and that it would be useless to wait.

He shook his head. "I knew you liked hunting the tiger and left word to build the machan."

By this time I certainly had enough practice sitting in machans. But who would hold the light? Fat Jack. What light? My big flashlight.

I pulled on a heavy sweater, took my .458 and a box of shells and Fat Jack took me to the kill. The calf was a

small one and the tiger had only started to eat. The machan, roughly constructed by three villagers who were inexpert at the task, looked nothing like the professional ones of Rao Naidu. It was about twelve feet from the ground in the crotch of a *palas,* a huge tree with fragrant red blossoms. I climbed a swaying rope ladder and Fat Jack followed and sat beside me.

The villagers left hurriedly, evidently glad to get away. For the next fifteen minutes I gave the Indian instructions in using the light, throwing it on the kill. Then I handed it to him, took my rifle and aimed, explaining that when we heard the noise, I would tap him lightly and he would flash the light and hold it on the tiger while I shot, not moving it, unless the cat moved. He nodded happily.

Night came and we sat silently. This was an old story and I certainly knew how to sit in a tree, probably was one of the most talented tree-sitters to ever visit India.

The stars were bright, thumbtacked tightly to the sky, and the cat cries of the peacocks in their trees and a drum far away in a mountain village, set a now familiar scene for me. The moon was pale this night; the sky dark. The shape of the calf was blotted out. So many things could go wrong: I could wound the tiger and he could climb into this tree with us; I could hit him and we could go down, thinking that he was dead and he could easily kill both of us. I could wound him and he would get away and I would have the creation of another man-eater on my already burdened conscience. But Fat Jack, oblivious to all of this, sat there smiling and proud.

The blossoms of the tree threw off a sickly sweet smell

that I will always associate with tigers, even though it actually has nothing to do with them.

Then I heard it, and I remembered what Rao Naidu had said about tiger sounds. We could hear the wind blowing across the stars, and, as darkness fell, the *kree--ee* of the Malabar whistling thrush as he screamed in flight, but there hadn't been any warning of an animal approaching. Now suddenly there was a loud hiss, then a sound like a bellows pushing air: the tiger. As Rao had told us, he was hissing to warn other animals that he had arrived and he was blowing on the dead animal to get rid of any stinging insects that might have collected.

Using reserves of will that I hadn't known I had, I restrained myself and didn't immediately tap for the light. And then came the sound that disturbs even the most seasoned hunter, the crunch of thigh bones being splintered by incredibly powerful jaws. It's a noise that knots the nerve ends and makes the blood stand still. I could see Fat Jack's eyeballs roll white in fear and feel the trembling of his body.

The tearing of the flesh and the cracking of the bones was so loud that I think I could have spoken in a normal voice to Fat Jack and the tiger wouldn't have heard it. But I didn't. I tapped him, and he flashed the light.

The cat was half facing us and his eyes were flame. He looked twelve feet long, and completely hid the small calf. I sighted just behind the left shoulder, hoping to make a heart shot, and, trembling, squeezed the trigger. The muzzle blast and the repercussion of the .458 must have nudged Fat Jack and he dropped the flashlight. He had never had a gun the size of a .458 booming two feet from his face and it scared him half to death. His drop-

ping the flashlight did the same for me. Now we couldn't climb down into the darkness. There hadn't been a sound when I fired, and I didn't know whether the tiger had gone as silently as he had come, or whether my bullet had knocked him down. We settled in the tree for the death watch.

It was a long night, longer than any I ever remember. When a weak dawn came, I could see the tiger stretched out on the ground close to the calf he had killed. I fired a shot, scarring the ground beside him, but he didn't move. He had finished his last meal.

It was fitting, I suppose, that I had spent my last night in the forests of India in a tree.