

# CHAPTER 9

## THE JOURNEYS END

It was 10 o'clock and they had arrived at the northern gate. Dad stopped the Land Rover, got out and collected the things he needed to work on the gate. As well as his tool kit and oil can, he carried a rifle. Working in the open meant that he had to be ever alert in case a hungry lion or angry rhino happened to be about.

Mum and the children stayed in the vehicle and watched Mr. Mbale work on the gate. Suddenly they saw a large cobra a few metres away. The children wanted to shout "Look out!" to their Dad, who had his back to the cobra and totally unaware of its presence.

"Be quiet," whispered Mum. "If you alarm the cobra it may strike."

The cobra came closer and reared itself into a striking position. Mrs. Mbali and the children could do nothing except pray. Then the gatekeeper noticed the cobra. With careful aim he took a shot at it with his rifle, and the cobra immediately fell to the ground. The gun shot echoed across the plains. Alarmed by the deafening sound, Mr. Mbali stood up, looked around and spotted the dead cobra.

"Thanks! You saved my life," he said to the gatekeeper gratefully. He ran over to the Land Rover, and the children told their Dad how they had seen the cobra but could not make a sound – only pray. They all said a prayer of thanks for God's protection and Mr. Mbali got back to work.

Soon the job was done, and they were on the road again. They set off for home, traveling on the main road that ran alongside the reserve. They drove faster now that they were out of the game park. The sun was high in the sky and everyone was getting hungry.

"There's a village up ahead," said Dad. We'll stop there for lunch.

As they approached the village they passed some women in brightly coloured dresses carrying things on their heads. A shop came into

view and Mr. Mbali parked the vehicle. The shop had many different things for sale. There were colourful blankets, pieces of material, beads and bangles, bags of yams and mealies, bananas, tinned food and bottles of water.

They bought some water and some tinned food and bananas, then drove down the road a little way and found a shady spot to have lunch. Mum got out the gas stove and a cooking pot, opened the tinned food and heated it. They finished off the meal with the bananas.

A little chameleon scampered along a thin branch, one foot in front of the other. They were used to seeing chameleons in their own village and knew how clever these animals were at changing colour. When they need to warm up, they become a dark colour, because dark colours absorb heat better than light colours. And when they need to cool down, they become lighter, because light colours reflect the heat.

“Who can remember some of the things we’ve learned from the animals on our safari?” asked Mum.

“I can,” said Serena. “The giraffe can see well and spots danger. And the Bible tells us that we can have special eyes to understand what God is saying.”

“The meerkats are the organized ones,” said Samson. “They teach us how to be good leaders – kind and not bossy.”

“The lionesses are my favourite,” said Mum. “It’s up to the mothers to do the hard work without complaining, to provide for their family. They are the givers.”

“And I also like the elephants,” continued Mum. “All the aunties care for the babies, whether the baby is their own or belongs to another Mum. And elephants care for the sick or injured members of the herd. They are the caring ones.”

“My favourite is the rhino and his little bird,” said Dad. “That little bird works hard at helping the rhino, getting the ticks out of his skin. Being a helper is very important.”

"I like the eagle," said Samson, "because it is like my name. Samson in the Bible was very strong, and the eagle is very strong. It is strong enough to take off from a high cliff. It can fly for a long time and not get tired. When we trust in God He can help us to be strong when problems come, and we can encourage others who have problems."

"And what about the monkeys?" asked Dad. "What do they show us?"

"I know," answered Serena. "They show us how to be good teachers and learners. The mother monkeys show the babies how to get food, comb their fur and how to stay safe from enemies. The babies watch and listen carefully and copy everything the adults do."

"Certain animals are good at certain things," said Mum. "and the Bible tells us that in the family of God people are good at different things. The things we are good at, we can call 'gifts' because they are gifts from God. One person might be a good leader, one person might be a good teacher, and another person might be a good helper. But what we all should do is to be available for God to use us in whatever situation we find ourselves. If there is someone who is hungry, then we should feed them. If there is someone who is sad, then we should encourage them. And when we meet someone who doesn't understand the Bible, we can help them to see with special eyes of understanding."

"It's a bit like that chameleon," added Dad. "We can think of the gifts from God as colours. The chameleon has the right colour for the right situation – a dark colour when it's cold, and a light colour when it's hot. Like the chameleon, we can use the right gift from God in the right situation. We can ask God to help us get better at using all the gifts for serving Him."

It was time to get back into the Land Rover for the last leg of the journey. The children were very tired and fell asleep for the last hour.

"Out you get," said Mum. "We're home!"  
Samson and Serena woke up and sleepily carried their sleeping bags into their little home. What a wonderful adventure they'd had, and there would be so much to tell their friends at school tomorrow. After

a quick bite to eat they were in bed, sound asleep, dreaming of Africa's amazing animals.

## CHAMELEON FACTS

- Chameleons are members of the lizard family.
- The name means 'earth lion'.
- Chameleons are "ectotherms", animals whose temperatures are controlled from outside their bodies.
- They eat locusts, mantids, crickets, and other insects, but larger chameleons have been known to eat small birds and other lizards.
- They have long tongue having a sticky tip on the end, for catching prey. Their tongue moves at lightning speed.
- Chameleons have teeth to grasp onto food. Their teeth are also used to help them crush and kill their food.
- They lay eggs in a 4 to 12 inches deep hole.
- They hear vibrations in the air, which help them find food and stay safe from their enemies. They are almost deaf, but can hear tones and feel vibrations.
- They can rotate their eyes and focus their eyes separately to observe two different objects at the same time. This gives them a full 360-degree arc of vision around their body.
- Each foot has five toes which are fused into a group of two and a group of three. With their specialized feet, they grip tightly to narrow branches.

