

Alice String – Too close for comfort

There's a rumbling and a strong smell of well... animal. 'Oh Phillip!' I roll away and find myself squashed against the side of the tent.

My heart stops. There's something large, snoring and farting on the other side of the tent, centimetres from my face. I hiss at Phillip. 'Wake up! There's something out there. Shhhhh!' It's too dark to see but we feel the tent sway as something shifts and settles. We clutch each other believing these will be our last hours together.

We are shocked to hear the voice of 'God', our cheerful guide Godfrey. 'Morning! Tea's up!' he yells. Cautiously I stick my head out of the tent. 'Whoa! God says, you look terrible.' He looks at the dung. 'Ah, lion' he says. 'You're lucky we have Maasai with us. You do know no lion will ever come near the Maasai?'

I'm not convinced but as God guides throughout the day, we delight in giraffes, leopards, elephants and yes, lions living their lives in a world where we are irrelevant. It is gloriously beautiful. Exhausted we have one last stop for the day.

God takes himself off to the loo and we sit on the steps of the van relishing our cuppa. But not for long. As soon as God disappears, monkeys appear from nowhere and invade the van, stealing our food, hats, clothes, anything they can lay their hands on! We cower until with a loud clap of hands, God appears and they scarpers leaving us badly shaken. He grins. 'Well, we've all kinda got used to living together you know.' He shakes his head, 'but that white skin of yours ... well!'

Back at the camp we move our tent closer to the Maasai and make sure we stick close to anyone with darker skin than ours. Finally, we relax that is until we see an elephant snick back the latch on the safety fence and march confidently to the water tank. It sinks its trunk deep inside and drinks before beckoning its family to come and drink their fill.

'Em God. Where does our drinking water come from?'

He grins again. 'From the water tank of course, it supplies all of us in this animal kingdom. Sleep well!'