

Aggressive slavers take a rainforest tribe into slavery, one escapes.

**Almost Alone - An African Story in the era of Slavery**

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# **Almost Alone**

**an African story in the era of  
slavery**

**Author: Ross Phifer**

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## **Chapter #1: The Taking - January 10<sup>th</sup> 1751**

It was the darkest of nights. No hunter's moon; in fact, no moon at all.

Tall, massive teak and mahogany trees populated the low, undulating hills that rose from the coastal savanna to the ridge line that marked the edge of the upland plateau, where large herds of noteworthy African animals roamed freely. Here, below the ridge line, under the dense leafy canopy of the taller trees, was the tangled vegetation of bushes, young trees and gnarly growth of many kinds of plant life, all thriving in the damp, soft soil of the rainforest. The only herds here were monkeys and peccary. Yet the abundant life around this place was fast asleep save the occasional solitary, nocturnal hunter foraging through the darkness.

There was movement. Through this place came a group of men. Each ran along the narrow trail with the long gait of a hunter. Eight held flintlock rifles in their right hands, each with a powder pack slung over his shoulder and a club in his left hand. Most of the rest had machetes in their favored hand and a club or short whip in the other. Several followed the rest going slower with heavy bundles.

Although the pace was fairly swift, the steps were deadly quiet. The forest slept as they passed by silently without disturbing the soft hum of the night.

The path flowed through the trees, never straight for more than several steps. Left of this tree, right of that, left, left, right, they silently progressed onward toward the village. There was no need to speak; everyone knew the actions that would follow. They had done this many times. Always the same, the plan worked. Stealthily they progressed with certain conviction.

They rounded a twisted growth of bushes and the high tree canopy above broke open. Gray light spread in shards, layering upon layer, each just a tad lighter than the one before. Sparkles of dust and insects diffused the light as it spread downward, in mellow contrast to the shadowy darkness between the layers. Although close, the plan was to

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begin before first light. It required precise timing and had to be swift, shocking, and complete.

A raised hand! Everyone halted and gathered in close, sufficiently near to listen to the quiet whispers of their leader.

Softly, he said, "Time is short. The plan requires that we be on site just prior to dawn. The pace must quicken, but not so fast that we arrive tired. Let the first twenty go forth swiftly. Ajayi, you lead us and set the pace. Omar, lead the rest at the pace we have been moving. Does anyone have a question?" With none, he turned and followed Ajayi up the path. They hurried now between two massive trees and back into the darkness of the rain forest.

Shortly the path widened. Shoulders had been touching forest leaves on both sides; now there was room for two side by side. Yet they continued to move one after another ever so quietly, ever so quickly.

Now there were sheets of first light streaming through the trees. Left of this huge mahogany, right of that crooked one, then between those two smaller trees, they approached. Left of that one, up that hill, left, then right.

Birds were up early, launching the new day with song. Yet there were so many different kinds of birds that their song was a jumbled cacophony of chirps to those up and moving. The darkly clothed travelers did not care; it was all part of the plan. Footfalls were masked.

Clearly this mission held evil intent. These armed, dark men, in dark clothing, moved silently with the precision of a well-trained army.

Suddenly, the trees opened. Light began to dominate while the shadows retreated. The sleeping village lay ahead. Two advance scouts came out of the dark tree-lined border; each put a finger to their lips to signal everyone to be quiet, while directing the swift and silent movements, spreading troops quickly around the village.

The first sound was the crash of the chieftain's door, quickly setting off noises everywhere: shouting, shots ...



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This one went as planned. The rousted villagers followed directions and were herded into the central square of the village. They were pressed further into a cramped circle surrounded by armed troops. The troops wore dark uniforms and had bearded faces. Few villagers wore clothes; most wore sleeping garments.

“GET DOWN! YOU THERE, GET DOWN!”

The clap of the gun was quite loud. The chieftain was shot. Dead! One blast of shot was sent into the chest at close range.

“Gasp!” “NO!” “NO!” There was a collective gasp.

“QUIET! QUIET! Get DOWN!”

“Obey or you will be shot!” Silence followed. And they obeyed.

“Quiet! OBEY OR YOU WILL BE SHOT!”

“Go where you are directed!”

The leader stood quietly to the side watching the progress. Without direction the troops began to squeeze the villagers into a line.

This leader was a broad black man, not tall, but massive and very strong. He was balding, with a meticulously trimmed goatee, yet he had beetling eyebrows, an odd contrast. Steely dark eyes darted back and forth, checking the status of the progress of turning these people into slaves. He carried no weapon and moved with cat-like quickness; very sure of what needed to be done. His was a foreboding presence, he held the power, and enjoyed it. His men followed, also knowing what was planned.

The leader began the separation and grabbed a young girl saying, “You, by that tree!”

To an adult woman, “You; get by that house!”

He directed three children to the tree. Fear inundated everyone. One could sense the panic in the air. Fate loomed over each and everyone.

A guard pulled a baby from its mother and quickly killed it with a knife. “My baby! My baby!” The guard tossed the baby down and

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reached for its mother, slapped her to the ground and shouted, “Shut up! If you cause a disturbance, you will be shot!” The mother was directed toward the house. Sniffing, stifling tears of terror and fright, she stumbled toward the house. The vice-like rule left no alternative but to obey. And obey they did.

Another mother held her young son; both were clubbed to death.

One set of guards was close in around the villagers. Through gaps one could see a second circle of darkly clothed, armed men poised to prevent any escape.

Meticulously, the youth were segregated to the area of the big tree, guarded by a few armed troops. The men were herded toward the corral by many troops. Young women were sent to sit by the house on the left, guarded. Adult women were sent to sit by the house on the right. Older women were told to sit tight. There were guards everywhere.

The elderly were shot or stabbed to death on the spot. Brutally and swiftly the voiceless decisions were enacted.

Everyone was splattered with blood. The ground in the square was wet with it; stench was everywhere.

New troops arrived, carrying large bundles – large and heavy, covered with fabric. The loads were released by the animal stockade. These men swiftly broke the bundles apart. The noise was loud. There were chains. The chains were callously tossed, each falling upon the others with the unmistakable sound of shackles.

Under heavy guard, the men were arriving at the corral. Whips cracked. A few were clubbed for not walking straight or for other minor infractions of rules that had not been outlined. The men walked a narrow corridor between lines of guards that faced inward. It was a short distance to the corral. They were met by troops who affixed fetters foot-to-foot and hand-to-hand, while the men stood. They worked swiftly, addressing the larger males first. The word was never spoken, yet so quickly each man knew his fate. They were enslaved.

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The leader approached the younger adult women and ordered, “Check them!”

There were screams and sobs as these girls had their virginity assessed. Virgins had a blue rope tied around their neck. Others were tied with a red rope. They also checked for female circumcision.

“None circumcised!” was announced by one of the checkers.

With that the leader smiled. “Our information was good, very good!”

The adult women were similarly segregated and marked with red ropes around the neck; they were assumed to not be virgins.

A youngster ran. Whack! A guard standing apart struck him blindly. In his panic, the boy never heard nor saw the vicious baton swing across his face. He was dead, twitching twice after he hit the ground.

The Chief’s wife was located, and roped with both red and blue.

The leader spoke as the activity neared completion, “Bring that one to me!” He had already looked them over closely and selected a very pretty young woman. He’d spotted her early. She was striking, beautiful, young. He noted the expressive eyes and slender youthful curves. “You come with me.”

“Men, help yourselves to any of these older women in the square! Keep a watchful eye on the rest!” Half the troops stood guard. They would have the chance next time. About half the men released and quickly approached the women in the square.

Commotion arose. Several of the shackled, new male slaves were clubbed to quell the ruckus in the corral. The numbed villagers returned to silent staring, facing downward, blank minds unthinking. Events had happened so quickly, so forcefully, they could not be set in focus, so many minds simply and collectively shut down.

The leader turned to his aide and said, “Ajayi, this went easy! Keep things under control. We do not want to waste any more.” He grabbed the wrist of the young girl and pulled her toward the house behind him. She struggled. He slapped her, without comment, and pulled her into

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the darkened home. Ill-prepared, the girl screamed with each thrust. The screams went on and on. Endlessly. It was brutal, vicious and repeated. Numbing. After a while there were only agonizing moans.

The dozen older women left in the square were savagely attacked, repeatedly raped. There were some scuffles at first as half the slavers picked through the spoils. The screams were so loud they drowned out those coming from inside the house. Later, groans of grief and pain.

The dead were left. Everyone old had been killed; everyone who could not walk was killed. The killing numbed all the new slaves. It happened so quickly; they were helpless, trapped, and utterly defeated.

“Men, take what you want!” With that order, the homes were ransacked. Everything of value that was light was taken as spoils. Half the troops participated and kept the spoils.

All the animals were slaughtered and quickly cooked with other foodstuffs found in the village. Hurriedly made without spices, the food was plainly bad. Everyone was fed and some meat packed for later.

As the sun rose a third in the sky, the leader reappeared, freshly dressed. All the eyes were upon him, numb but observant. “Ajayi, what are the counts?”

“Fifty-seven, with twelve dead, it is forty-five to go.”

With no comment about the numbers, the leader shouted, “Let’s move! Torch this place!”

## **Chapter #2: The Asanwerri People - August 1750**

As a youth, Kusi was precocious and well-liked. Although a dreamer, Kusi was the one who put thoughts into action. There was simply an enormous attractiveness about him. Even as a young adult, heroic dimensions set him apart from the others.

Always lanky but broad in the shoulders, Kusi participated in the activities with his pals in the village. Some were stronger, some faster, but none more graceful. Kusi did most things quite well and was considered the leader of this young group.

His best friend was Num Kofi. Both were three hands old, but Num Kofi was shorter, stronger, and being trained by his father to make drums and to play them.

Several years back, Kusi and Num Kofi spent a couple of months in the wet season making talisman to wear for protection. Kusi chose an oddly-colored river stone he had picked up as a child. Num Kofi had an irregular piece of ivory.

That season they drilled each item to make a hole. Num Kofi brought a tool his father had built from a supple branch with a taunt string of sinew. The sinew was wrapped twice around a metal rod, such that moving the branch back and forth spun the rod. One had to be careful to make a neat hole. It was quite difficult at the start. Num Kofi's was easier, so he went first. Kusi's hole took weeks. Num Kofi spent the time smoothing the edges of his ivory. When Kusi finally broke through, he had more work making the hole smooth on both sides. It took about two months till both talismans were perfect. They braided sinew to permit hanging the item around their necks. That day they paraded proudly; for as hunters and warriors they then felt that they were now protected by the Gods.

The boys had few chores and thus time to hunt, explore and joke around. It was not that they had no rules; rather that the rules were clear and not to be broken.

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Asanwerri had proverbs, seemingly for everything. The proverbs or stories were often repeated and always enforced. Punishment was not harsh. The application of any punishment was shameful. Honor was valued. The mechanics were simple and effective.

Women were respected, and youth listened. When entering a room, the seats went to women first. Children sat next. The men were gracious that way. So Kusi naturally grew up respectful of elders, especially kind and considerate to women. Asanwerri males were hunters, warriors and gentlemen. Kusi had never been to war, but excelled in hunting and was the consummate gentleman.

They were schooled. There was a Catholic outpost nearby, which the youngsters visited twice per week. Kusi excelled, enjoying what he learned. He asked questions, particularly about the religious teachings of the nun, Sister Mary Clair. She was a sprightly older lady, short and stocky, but with a lighter brown skin than that of the villagers. Only on the very hottest of days could one tell the Sister had dark hair. With a pleasant, round face, she spoke proper British in a precise fashion, seemingly carrying a melody in her voice. That melody carried over when she used the Asanwerri language. Kusi considered her very wise and on occasion visited after he completed his schooling.

Much of the Christian teaching fit what Kusi knew, but he was troubled by things he did not see in his world. The Great Flood was one of the Bible stories beyond his belief. The nearby Soenna River ran down the gentle slope of the land. When rain was very hard the stream did overflow, but in a few hours, the slope of the land took the excess away. From the hilltop at the ridgeline, or scarp, one could see the forest dropping off below as far as the eye could see. The other view had the flat prairie extending to the horizon. Filling up beyond the very tops of the ridgeline was surely unthinkable. Noah was therefore not possible.

Kusi knew that all the stories of the Asanwerri were not true word for word. Some animals talked in the stories, but that was merely technique used by the storyteller to relate the facts or message. The stories wove civics into their everyday life. But with Noah, there seemed to be no

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point in killing all but two of each kind of animal. Surely the trees would also die. And why wouldn't other men think of building boats? Yet he enjoyed the Bible stories and saw the lessons in most. Comfortable in his belief, those Christian stories fit in for the most part.

In Kusi's family, his mother Dakoo Maanu led the cooking. She was slight and short, yet clearly served as the lead when her husband, Ofori, is away. Dakoo happened to be somewhat shy, and although very well-liked throughout the tribe, she led quietly by working first. On seeing her effort, others would join. Those that hesitated eventually felt Dakoo's glance and jumped to do some work.

Dakoo was one of the favorite cooks in the village, and there were other girls and women, in Kusi's family, who participate. In the normal sense, the girls learned from the older women; cooking skills, as well as gathering food, weaving, and making clothes. The men knew that if passing through the village during the day, they would be supplied treats for sustenance while they hunted.

Kusi's father, Ofori, led his family. While they often ate from a communal bowl, Ofori ceremoniously served portions of meat to each member. Supper was a fun time during which everyone had a chance to relate the tales of the day. Work, except for the cleanup, would be done for the day, and there was ample time to share blessings. Ofori or one of the uncles told tales after dinner relating the passed down history of the tribe, of great hunts, of wars, and of cultural values that he felt needed refreshing.

Ofori was a tall, strong man, an accomplished hunter and one of the tribal leaders. In his youth, he proved to be the clan's greatest warrior in the last battle fought against the Wome. He rose from just one of the fighters to leader on the last and victorious day of that battle.

The Asanwerri lived at the bend in the river Soenna, just below where it turns between two hills at the ridgeline that creates the upland plateau. It was an ideal spot as the river formed a small swamp on the morning side of the river a short wade across from the village. The Asanwerri found rice there when the tribe took up residence years ago.

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It had been cleared of weeds over the years and yielded a goodly supply of rice for the tribe. Over time, they had built up the earthen dam between the swamp and the river.

The rice area was bounded by a thick, tall grass not unlike bamboo called manioc. Boys peeled off the finger-like leaves and made spears of these stalks, but they were not sturdy enough for hunting. These reeds invaded the planting area as well as the area reserved for making clay pots and bricks. The younger boys worked to clear the reeds from the garden and clay areas, just as they cleared young trees from the village grounds.

Fish were plentiful, and they used round-bottomed canoes to spear fish and frogs. The fish were sun-dried on stakes located on this afternoon side of the river.

The rainy season was a month away. Kusi looked out toward the Soenna River. He knew it came from the Plateau above. The river flowed steadily past the Nun's post, where it took a bend toward the village that was built where the river is wide and slow. The falls were downstream, a quarter's day hike.

He recalled hot days when he and his friends had gone to the falls and spent the day playing in the stream. There was a large pool under the falls, where the water cascaded after dropping perhaps twice the height of a man. The pool was deep and fairly wide. The boys jumped from the trail that overlooked the scene, at a spot almost all the way up the height of the falls. They had to take care to swim to shore because beyond the bend the river was rough for a spell.

Kusi knew the river continued on to the ocean, which he had never seen. Sister Mary Clair told him of the ocean. He thought he would see it someday, although his father simply said he had not gone that way. The river was important; it brought life to the village. Fish were part of the diet almost every day. The pool beyond the falls was their main fishing area.

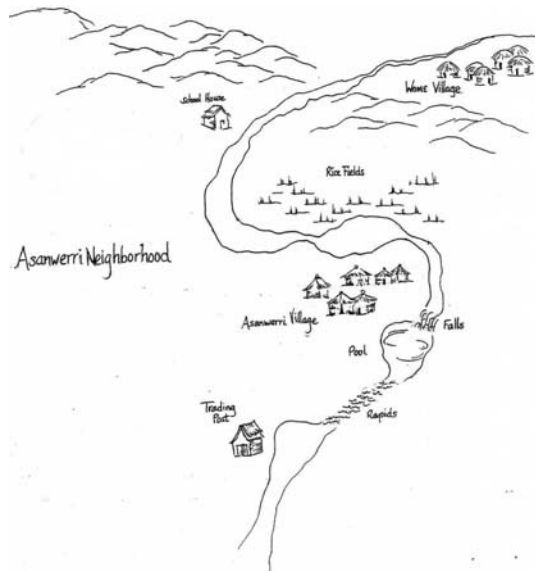
He recalled that fish were the first game he caught. His father and the other men had shown the boys how to hunt. Yes, the instruction started



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with fish, then frogs, then turtles, then some small game; gradually they, too, became hunters. It was as it had been in the days of his father's father and before.

Kusi's clan or tribe was called the Asanwerri. They were one of the Akan tribes living in the rain forest in the part of Africa called the Gold Coast, known also for ivory and pepper. For a period of more than a hundred years the rainforest area, between the coastal savanna and the rocky outcropping called the Kwahu Scarp yielded a goodly amount of gold annually.



Akan people populated the coastal area, the Akan/Fante tribes near the coast and others like the Asanwerri further inland higher up the gradual slope. The ridgeline formed the edge of the upland plateau. Various semi-nomadic tribes called Ashanti lived in the dry, grassy upland prairie, with lions, zebra, elephants, giraffes, hyena & jackals, hippopotamus, and many types of antelope.

The Asanwerri and the Wome lived a day's walk apart, but had little contact day-to-day, and in fact were very different in life style. The Wome village was on the upper reaches of the Soenna River, the,

which was a water source for both tribes. However, the Wome were semi-nomadic in that they traveled when the herds migrated to other areas of the upland savanna.

The Asanwerri homes were simple, drab, foursquare structures of wood, earth and straw. They were often windowless or with a hide or drape over the opening. Plentiful sticks dictated a foursquare design built to maintain a fairly consistent temperature. They were only used for sleeping and storage. Each family member had a sleeping mat. In Kusi's home there was a cot for his elderly uncle, who still preferred to sleep on the floor.

The homes were clustered by family, and consisted of several units for sleeping and keeping the very few possessions they had. For most, it would be a change of clothing or two. A few larger homes had a central courtyard for animals that had no roof. Many of these houses had a room for storage of grain and other foodstuffs. There also was a corral where many families kept stock.

The family was extended. Aunts, uncles, and cousins were part of the family unit. Occasionally a single non-relative would be welcomed as part of that group if they were elderly or otherwise alone. There were no loners among the Asanwerri.

They snacked through the day and had one large meal. The Asanwerri ate an hour before dusk in family groupings. Occasionally, when it is very hot, they did take a long break during the day and ate then.

Supper began with the pouring of libation. A few drops would be poured to the ground, with appropriate remarks regarding the memory of deceased members of the family and also of diseased leaders in the community. The King would also, invariably be honored. Once that was completed, the drink would then be passed to guests and around the group. Youth of two hands and above participated, but they were not considered adult until they have completed the manhood or womanhood ceremony. At other times kola nuts would be passed in this manner, although the youngsters did participate in eating the nuts.

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For cooking, the Asanwerri had an outside veranda with a thatched roof on posts and no walls. Just outside that small roof to cover the cook, they would place three stones upon which the earthenware pot was placed, with the fire bounded within the stones. Other meats or items would be cooked on hand held sticks that had been soaked prior to use. Most meals would be considered boiled stews or soups. They included the fare of the day; root vegetables, yams, potatoes, other vegetables gathered that day, rice, plantains, plus a variety of meat and dried fish. There was always a spicy element, and pepper would be commonly used. The taste would be strong rather than hot on most days, but occasionally the meal would be made with hot spices, varied by day and by type of fare. Dessert would be a seasonal fruit or perhaps mixed fruit.

Thus in the dry season of 1750, life among the Asanwerri was flowing in its natural routine. Kusi, Num Kofi, and one other young man had just completed the manhood ritual. The fact they were officially men had not yet solidified in the minds of many villagers. The new men had not yet acted differently.

### **Chapter #3: The Visitor - August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1751**

A great hunter came through their land. Albert Swengate was his name. He came with dozens of helpers, very strange people looking different from those of this village; they were quite tall lighter-skinned Africans. These people carried a village as they went along on a hunting expedition. Swengate was white, and from America, the first American Kusi recalled seeing. Swengate was tall and burly, and spoke quite stiffly. He had many guns. The man's favorite had been a long flintlock rifle with two barrels. This man had a greater presence than that of the chief of the Asanwerri.

That morning Kusi and his friends were having a late start. His father, Ofori returned to camp with a stranger and said. "Kusi, stay with me. Num Kofi, beat the big drum for everyone to come home. Anane and Akua let the Chief know we have visitors, and also let the villagers know."

"Kusi, this is Bamfo. His group will be along shortly. They are traveling through our land to the high plateau where they will hunt lion."

As Ofori was introducing Bamfo to the Chief and letting the villagers know of the visitors, the travelers began to emerge from the forest.

Albert Swengate was big, broad shouldered, past middle age, wearing hunting clothes unlike any Kusi had ever seen. Three men carried racks of guns. Others, less than four hands count, carried voluminous packages of different sizes and shapes. There were a few others as well, whose purpose was beyond Kusi's imagination, or for that matter beyond his understanding to this day. All these people were supporting Mr. Swengate's hunt.

The Asanwerri hunted in small groups, often alone. Their goal was to feed the village for a day, perhaps two days. What was this hunt expecting to do?

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As the packers were dropping their loads, Albert Swengate asked if anyone in the village spoke English. Coming out from behind his father, Kusi had offered, "I do!"

Albert Swengate had responded, "I need someone who can speak English while we are on the hunt."

Cringing, Kusi recalled the rest of that conversation. "I'm a hunter too!"

Swengate further inquired. "Have you hunted lion?"

"Yes, of course," was the lie in response.

Swengate noted. "But you do not appear to have a weapon."

Kusi had simply looked down at his hands and lifted them unconsciously.

"Oh, you hunt lions barehanded, do you? In that case, we surely need an English-speaking, barehanded lion hunter on our team!"

Kusi had never said those words, but surely his new story would be added to the stories of the tribe. One did not brag, yet there was no way to refute the story. It was over quickly. The conversation moved to other matters. Kusi was going on the hunt as the interpreter, so he could not argue the point about hunting barehanded. Its moment had passed and was quickly beyond Kusi's ability to insert the truth. No one really thought he had killed a lion with his bare hands. Yet his nickname became Lion Hunter. It was not necessary to add, 'bare handed,' Lion Hunter was enough to generate the laughs.

There were lions on the plateau, but they rarely ventured off the plateau down the slope into the rain forest. Lions enjoyed the warm, high plains, rather than the damp rain forest of the Asanwerri. The tribe had stories of lion, yet in reality those were rogue animals and quite rare. Some of the older men had hunted lion years ago in their youth.

"Well, Lion Hunter, please tell your tribe we are here for just a short stop. Tomorrow the main party will leave for lion country. Three of us will stay and catch up a day later. I'd like to spend some time hunting

Golden Cats. Lion Hunter, do you also hunt those cats with your bare hands?"

There was laughter all around. Most of the tribe understood and spoke English to some degree. Kusi stood as the interpreter because he had spoken first, though he did in fact know English best, and could both read and write. Kusi responded, "Golden Cat is much harder to hunt than Lion, you might not see one in just one day."

"We should like to try while we are here. I can afford a day and later catch up with the main party headed into lion country. But surely the lion is more dangerous, thus that hunt would be harder."

"Our tribe has stories of hunters walking up to lions, who sleep in the open when the sun is hot. They are dangerous up close and surely so if they are rogue males forced out of the pride. Golden Cat, on the other hand, fear men, actually fear any larger animal. They are no larger than a small dog, so they avoid danger. This is precisely why they are harder to hunt. The cats have keen eyesight, very good ears, plus they are very quick. It is difficult to find them and even more difficult to spear them."

Kusi continued. "We tell of a large dog that cornered a cat. As the dog bore into the cat, it twice swiped the muzzle of the dog, bloodying both jowls. The dog pulled his head back and up, and in that instant the cat raked his claws across the dog's chest and neck, killing it almost instantly. The cat was gone before the dog hit the ground."

"Impressive; can you tell me more? Do they have spots?"

"Yes, these cats are golden in color, much like a lion, but they have spots on their flanks and a belly that is almost white. The fur grows forward on the front and there is a tuft or ridgeline at the shoulders, such that the fur grows backwards behind that tuft. With four paws, they can move quietly."

Kusi, explained. "My father has told me that a man can only stand on one leg for a short time, thus must put that other foot down. Thus man has trouble walking quietly. The cat can have three down and find the best spot to step into. The back legs simply go into the footfalls the

*ALMOST ALONE*

front feet vacate. So they run silently. They can easily climb trees to hide. And they can jump down and land running. We have seen them swim as well. They are very efficient in tracking and killing for food.”

Swengate inquired. “How does one hunt them?”

“It is almost impossible to catch a young cat. But like lions, they like to sleep in the sun. There are a few places in the rain forest where the rocky scarp catches the midday sun. Sometimes one can see them there. We do not hunt in that area, because the cats are there first and game is scarce. With spears, we cannot catch them. You might get close enough to shoot one with a rifle.”

“Very interesting. I like the challenge.”

“Older cats sleep more than younger ones and they are slower. It is likely that if you do shoot one it will be older.”

“Such a cat would make an interesting trophy.” Swengate observed. “I would need to shoot carefully not to spoil that tufted ridge in the pelt. And given that you say they are that quick, I would not have any chance at a second shot. What is your name Lion Hunter? You speak well and do know a lot for your age.”

“I am Kusi Abdado Piesie. This is my father, Ofori Abdado Piesie. And our Chief is Nyameke Yaw Manu, standing here.”

“I am very pleased to meet you all. My name is Albert Swengate” he said as he turned and extended a hand to the chief. “I hail from Maryland, a Crown Colony in the new world. I’m here to test some new rifles on some big game. Chief Nyameke, if you can supply a few men to help with our hunt tomorrow, I’ll give you and your tribe a few gold nuggets.” He turned to Kusi to be sure his words were understood.

Chief Nyameke also turned to Kusi, “Kusi, your father should lead this. You and Num Kofi can join to carry supplies. Both of you stay away from the guns and do not get into the hunt.”

Ofori injected, “I’ll leave my rifle in camp. There is no need for it, and we can travel light.”

*ROSS PHIFER*

Turning to Swengate, Chief Nyameke continued, "I agree about our guns. We are honored to simply assist in the hunt. Where will all these people sleep tonight?"

"We have tents and supplies. We happened to have shot two duikers this morning; perhaps we can all eat together tonight. Do you have vegetables?"

Chief Nyameke replied, "Surely. We shall have a grand celebration. You and your men should set up your tents and relax. We will make the feast!"

These were common duikers, small deer-like animals with tan chests, light brown sides and gray buttocks. One was large and the other average in size. With that, the visitors set to make up camp and the villagers set to make the meal.

Kusi guided the travelers to an open area near the corral, where they could set up their tents. He watched the men set the rifle racks down and asked, "Are all these guns for you, Mr. Swengate?"

"Yes, I'm testing these rifles for a company in Connecticut. Let me show you a couple. This one has a double barrel. I will have a second shot without waiting to reload. It can be dangerous as both barrels can ignite at the same time, which can really hurt. I must be careful and know what to do. I have been hired to try these guns on some big game, where more than one shot may be necessary."

Kusi, "That might be very helpful."

"This one has a special barrel. It is not loaded, look down the barrel; you can see the spiraling."

"You mean that twisting on the inside? Father, come look at this!"

"Yes, the shot fits loosely, but the rifling makes the balls spin which makes them more accurate. These also have longer barrels, which carry that accuracy further. I'm giving these a real test in the field and will record how each performed in a journal."

"What will come of it?"



*ALMOST ALONE*

“The best features will be used to make better rifles.”

“We do not do anything like that. I do not know a word for it.”

“Actually Kusi, you probably do know words for it. One is ‘organization.’ Think of it as a way to shorten the time it takes to make a change for the better. I get to do the testing because I happen to be a very good shooter, plus I’m big enough to handle these longer and heavier rifles.

Mr. Swengate continued, “My home is in Maryland, where I have a horse farm.”

“What’s a horse?” inquired Kusi.

“It is like a zebra. But horses can be trained and ridden. Horses also pull plows, which turn the dirt to plant crops and pull wagons loaded with supplies or harvested crops.”

“Amazing!” exclaimed Kusi.

Ofori motioned to his son and remarked. “Kusi, we need to help out here. You will learn more tomorrow when we hunt.”

“Thank you Mr. Swengate.” said Kusi turning away from the bustling men. Kusi and his father completed a task for the chief.

During the meal, Mr. Swengate asked the chief about the clothing worn by the tribe. “Your shirts are quite interesting and seem well made. Please explain the process.”

Chief Nyameke replied, “We make bands of cloth on peg boards or on a narrow loom. Generally we use leather from animals and wool, but we can get cotton, and sometimes silk, from the trader, thus it is often a mixture. The mix makes it more comfortable when the sun is hot.

“The cloth is woven. We use a loom that is tall and thin. It can be easily carried and then used when the woman has time. Some leaves and other materials are included in the weavings.

Continuing, the chief added. “The strips are then joined edge-to-edge. The design makes a comfortable shirt, one that permits ease of

movement. You can see the design is different for men and for women. The women wear more of a wrap rather than a shirt. This material provides protection from the flies and such. We wear them both in the dry season and in the wet season. The shirts are, however, mainly for formal wear. I put mine on when I heard that visitors were approaching.”

“As I said, the design differs for men and for women. They are made to be comfortable in use, and men do different things than women. The men’s leggings are made from hides. This gives protection from thorns, so it is best. As you can see, these leggings are made from pieces. Unlike the tribes that live on the plateau, many of the animals we catch are smaller, so we use pieces. There are differences incorporated into the material for each person, just so they are not all the same.

“Women wear a long piece, separate for the bodice and skirt. It is wrapped around.”

Impressed with that information, Mr. Swengate commented. “Well, they are made very well. Different from any I’ve seen elsewhere. I’d like to trade one of these shirts I wear for one of those; can we do that?”

“Surely. Mr. Swengate, if you give me one that fits you, I’ll have my wife change one of my shirts to fit you. She’ll have it ready tomorrow when you get back from the hunt.” Chief Nyameke was not the same build as Swengate. The Chief was a portly, fleshy man with chubby hands. His shirt size was broader than that of Mr. Swengate, who was quite tall, a large man. Clearly, the chief’s wife would have work to accomplish.

At the end of the meal, Ofori advised Mr. Swengate that they could sleep late the next day and get an easy start. It would take just a quarter of a day to reach the site Kusi had suggested, and they should try to arrive midday. Swengate advised that one of his men, Kofi Manu, would join the hunt to carry his guns, while the other guide, Bamfo, would remain in the village and rest.

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