

Samburu National Park, Kenya 1990

Samburu Impala

Red-brown waves of impala
browse acacia,
step carefully among tawny
needlegrass, flinty stone
and spiny shrubs,
unafraid of our safari jeep.

The does alternately watch
and feed,
white tails tucked tightly
against smooth rumps,
coats glow in late slanting light.
Large soft eyes and mobile ears with black tips
are full frame in my Nikon.

Downslope, towards Samburu Lodge,
impala snort sharply.
The alarm call is repeated nearby
and sounds across the hillside.

Supple necks swing,
tight-strung bodies orient downslope,
all heads are up and level,
eyes fixed, converged
on the enemy.

The leopard, tail curled
over back,
wends through shoulder-high
oatgrass,
golden and spotted,
leading a caravan
of white safari vans
in the early sunset.

