

*Samburu National Park, Kenya 1990*

## Samburu Lions

We start the game drive early,  
yawning, trying to focus  
in the dim light,  
willing the eye to see,  
searching shadows,  
noting the dik dik and  
spurfowl,  
the doves in the road dust.  
I'm unready when the spot is made.

Lions!

Through a gap in thornbush  
four buckskin-colored forms  
march parallel to our track,  
in the opposite direction.  
We turn and follow,  
snapping long-shots  
in inadequate light.

There!

A young female and three yearling  
cubs, nearly gawn,  
emerge twenty yards ahead  
coming straight toward us.  
Two lionesses pass,  
but a young male and female  
stay to nuzzle  
and rub tawny cheeks.

An explosion of dust,  
a shriek of fear and pain.  
Lion limbs flash and twist.  
The male sprints away,  
something small and brown  
hanging from its jaws.

The two lead lionesses,  
hearing the blood-cry,  
blur past in full pursuit,  
spraying sand as they cut  
around our fender.

We reposition the Range Rover  
for a better view.  
All four lions,  
shoulders tensed, legs braced,  
crouch over the kill,  
snarling and tearing,  
crowding and ripping,  
under a twisted tree.  
They wrestle away pieces  
and race off to consume  
their portions uncontested.

This is small fare  
for big lions,  
this meal of opportunity  
and they resume the march.  
Blood on fore limb and brisket  
glows in the growing light.

