



Our Friend Yambo

Our Friend
Y A M B O

By
André Mercier

1195



Souvenir Press
1961

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First published in the French language by Editions Mondiales, Paris, under the title of "Yambo, Notre Ami."

First English edition published in 1961 by Souvenir Press Ltd., 34 Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1 and simultaneously in Canada by The Ryerson Press of Toronto

Second impression: May 1961

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*Translated by
Mervyn Savill*

*Printed in Great Britain by
Clarke, Doble & Brendon Ltd.
Oakfield Press, Plymouth*

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"What's all this you are writing about me?"

Yambo wonders whether I can spot him. Even against this light underbrush, his protective colouring is not ineffective

As a cub he was suitably brave and insatiably curious, insisting on finding things out for himself

Thanks to his deceptive swerves, the boar managed to escape, although Yambo was far swifter

This may look sinister, but it just happens to be the natural place for a cheetah to grip his plaything

It takes a very rash creature to climb up on his back, but on this occasion Yambo permitted the liberty

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Exploring the refrigerator for the first time, Yambo discovers his meat and ours

What a disappointment for Yambo to find that buses are not for the use of cheetahs!

Fortunately his mistress has no such objections, and so they set out for an exhilarating drive

A child's watering can becomes an excellent toy to experiment with in the morning game

Was Yambo ill? The sniffles and a sore throat, perhaps; not really helped very much by the inhalant

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"I don't know what this is, but it certainly smells good"

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When Yambo decides to attack, you have to move fast! Here I just barely had time to get away

It was useless to try to move Yambo while he was taking his siesta. By a prolonged and determined silence he expressed his refusal to obey

Any cheetah-of-the-world naturally enjoys television, especially when the heroine is threatened by a tiger

Photographs supplied by Michel Serbie

Part One





CHAPTER ONE

A Cheetah Out of the Blue

I MET Yambo's master one morning—on the telephone.

"Hullo! This is Claude Gillier speaking. Since you are vice-president of the Dumb Friends Society I am ringing to ask you a favour. I have been in Paris for a week now with a cheetah cub on my hands. I brought him back from Djibouti for some friends who are away for the moment. I myself work for an Airline Company and have to leave to-morrow for Karachi. What am I to do with the creature? Abandon it to a Zoo? I could not make up my mind to do this. Could you find someone among your many members who would adopt him?"

"Bring him along," I replied on the spot. "We'll take him down to our house in the country."

A cheetah! My constant dream and the rarely satisfied dream of my friends from the African bush, administrators, planters, old colonials.

In the old days cheetahs were common throughout Africa and Asia, but to-day they are only found in certain regions of the savannah or steppe.

On the dark continent they are to be met with chiefly in the

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extreme south of North Africa, the Grand Erg, the Soudan, the north-west Niger, the north-eastern Congo, to the east of the former French Equatorial Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, to the west of the Zambesi, Angola, The Union of South Africa, the Rhodesias and the Transvaal. In Western and Southern Asia, they still breed in western Arabia, South-east Iran and in the Indian Punjab.

At Fort Lamy where I went^{*} on safari every year until 1951 before eventually abandoning my guns for a camera, I frequently asked the trackers and village chiefs: "Could you get me a cheetah? I would pay a lot of money for one."

The replies alas were always in the negative and now five thousand miles from Central Africa a simple telephone call announced the realization of a dream that had lasted twenty years!

I told my wife and Julia our maid of the good news.

"Get everything ready, we shall have another guest in the house within the hour." Then I flung my bombshell: "A cheetah."

They were not unduly surprised. My wife loves animals as much as I do. As for Julia, in the course of her many years service with us she has raised a lion, a panther and chimpanzee and dormice. I think she would even put up with a python. A cheetah would certainly be a novelty for her!

Growing suddenly suspicious, Julia asked: "What sort of animal is it?"

The question was apposite; if she was to receive a prince of the jungle she wished to be informed of his claim to nobility.

Drawing on my literary knowledge I enumerated some of the characteristics which have been attributed to this curious member of the cat family.

"The cheetah is a cross between a dog and a cat. Long-legged, with the cut of a large greyhound; in shape reminiscent of a dog, short spatulated paws, five digits in front and four behind, ending in non-retractable claws; the head of a cat, exag-

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geratedly small with regard to the total size of the body; moustache or whiskers, very sensitive tactile organs; a long powerful tail; a rather coarse fur spotted like that of a panther. Peculiarities: a short mane on the neck and protuberant shoulders, which form a kind of hump. The latter is a characteristic of the only species known (*Cynailurus gubatus* or *Acinonyx gubatus* according to the classification). The tear bags running in a broad black stripe on either side of the nose from the eye and framing the jaws appear like the trace of inky tears. . . . Records of this animal have come down to us from the mists of antiquity. In the Middle Ages it was known as an ounce, a pard or a leopard, the latter term signifying a spotted lion.

"The infidels routed the knights and pilgrims in the first crusade by setting their fighting leopards upon them."

"The cheetah under the misnomer leopard figures in the armorials of the English Royal House and also in the arms of the City of Bordeaux (the parded lion of Guyenne), presumably since the invasion of that province by the English troops under the Black Prince."

"It is one of the easiest of the wild animals to tame."

Since my description seemed a trifle pedantic I added: for good measure: "It has the reputation of being the fastest creature on four legs and can travel at more than sixty miles an hour. No prey can escape it. This is why the Egyptians used it for hunting. Certain old prints show it wearing a hood, crouching on a saddle behind a mounted hunter. The Indians carried them in chariots. When the game came in view the hood was removed and the beast released.

"In our days the Abyssinian chiefs use it like a hunting dog. As soon as it catches sight of antelope bounding in single file it pounces on one of them. Its speed does not prevent it turning or stopping dead in its tracks. Thus it can outwit the feints and twists of its prey and finally attack it in the neck; the final spring means death. Very little time elapses between the chase and the kill. The hunter catches up with the cheetah, which is

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not allowed to enjoy its prey except for the entrails, the hunter keeping the best morsels for himself.

"The cheetah is very delicate when in captivity. Rickets and polio with paralysis of the hind quarters dog this speed champion and lover of open spaces. Specimens captured as adults or tamed in the wilds thrive better when confined in a cage."

The young savage who had entered our country household and lives so deliberately was barely a month old. I had never seen such an ugly baby; he could have been mistaken for a hedgehog, a porcupine or a hyena had it not been for the traces of tears running down his nose. His body was covered with dirty grey fur. On his back, from the top of his head to the base of the tail his coat had grown into a coarse mane about five inches long.

He surprised us at once by his lack of embarrassment; he was already quite at home in the house when we took him into the kitchen.

On entering the room Futé, our beautiful Blue Persian was peacefully lapping his milk.

The cheetah rushed for him, took him by surprise, jostled him and without further demur emptied his saucer. In terror Futé lost his head and jumped up on the table. The intruder treated him with disdain. He then proceeded to explore the house from top to bottom. This was his proprietary tour of inspection.

All finished? Well, what could he play at next? He risked a feat by trying to jump on to a sofa covered with old tapestry. But his muscles were not up to the effort. He tried another method. Hoisting himself up and clinging on to the valuable material with his claws, he finally reached his goal, wobbling in a rather precarious balance.

My wife rushed forward to prevent him falling. Not a chance of making him get down!

The little creature had character; he spat, bared his teeth and jumped on to a nearby table, knocking over a bottle of

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aperitif and the glasses which had been put out for our guest. Then terrified by the noise of the broken glass, he slid down hurriedly and landed with a bump on the floor.

From there he caught sight of Futé on the back of the arm-chair. The cat in its curiosity had overcome its fear and was staring with great interest at the newcomer. The cheetah in turn devoured Futé with his eyes and hoisted himself up the back of the chair by his claws. Julia made him let go by slapping him with a duster.

The unhappy little fellow leaped for the stairs leading to the first floor and immediately discovered the advantage of this curious type of ascent. Admittedly he found some difficulty in negotiating the first few steps, for his claws slid on the polished wood; but he soon synchronized the extension of his back paws with a slight twist of his hindquarters and easily reached the top.

We followed to see what he would do next. Our curiosity must have betrayed anxiety for Claude Gillier obviously wanted to reassure us. "He's a little out of his element," he began cheerfully, "It would have been strange had he not been!" And to conciliate us even more he added: "But I'm sure with a little patience you'll turn him into a well brought up lad."

We remained silent.

Then, as though to soften our hearts or afraid that he would have to take the beast away again, our guest told us of his moving encounter with this "little savage" who, on his arrival in the civilized world of Barbizon, had already reinvented the sport of tobogganing by sliding down the stairs half on his paws and half on his belly.

"We had put in at Djibouti. On a visit to the market I spotted two cheetah cubs tied together with reed fibre. They were lying on their sides, exhausted by the sun and their thirst. Since I am very fond of animals, it distressed me to see them

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suffering. The merchant, a huge black devil buttonholed me immediately.

"How did you capture these cubs?" I asked.

"The man looked me up and down and probably thinking that a confidence would make me better disposed to buy them replied :

" 'It's a dangerous job, for mother cheetahs are very suspicious. In the villages out in the bush I have many friends who know everything that is going on. December is the time when the young are born. If they see a female frequenting a certain shrub they know that her cubs are hidden there. Then they tell me and guide me to the spot.' "

"What happens then? Doesn't the mother defend her young?"

"The merchant gave a cruel arrogant smile."

" 'If the mother is hunting a long way off it's easy to take the cubs, but if she is near the lair there is a great risk. At the least cry of alarm she runs up to her offspring at a bound with no heed for the number of her enemies. To parry her attacks my comrades and I kneel down and point our spears at the resolute beast, with the shaft held at arm's length. In her last leap to reach us she is impaled on our weapons.' "

"Considering that such a feat of arms had convinced me of his courage, he picked up one of the wretched animals, giving it a kick to show me that it was still alive, and seizing it by the scruff of the neck placed it in my arms."

"Indignant as well as moved, I asked him the price without pausing to reflect. That is how I found myself in the streets of Djibouti with the wretched little creature in my arms. I was very embarrassed. I went into a café and ordered some milk which it drank greedily. Since then he has displayed so much gratitude that he never leaves me in peace."

We were so interested in his story that our guest misinterpreted our silence.

"Are you disappointed with my protégé?" he asked. And

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as though to excuse his exuberance he added: "Last week he knew nothing of the life of humans."

Lowering his head the young man looked at us out of the corner of his eye. With a trace of hypocrisy he concluded; "If you won't adopt him my last resource is the circus, but that makes me feel sad——"

"My dear fellow," I broke in, "We are not hesitating. I was thinking of something quite different. All the text books maintain that cheetahs have non-retractable claws and I don't think this is true. I was watching him climb up the tapestry just now."

Reassured, Gillier pleaded an urgent engagement and left immediately for Paris. I suspect that he was not too anxious to witness the surprises in store for us by the extravagances of our young wild pet.

The four of us, ourselves and Futé, were left with the little monster whose antics on the tables threatened the china and flower pots which our Persian cat knew how to negotiate so delicately.

We suddenly realized the full imprudence of our spontaneous adoption. To be truthful we had had no such experience with the pets we had already tamed. At three months, our clumsy and peaceful lion cub, Bimbo, was only a big toy. Mouchette the panther although turbulent on occasions soon calmed down. Baby cheetahs seemed to be indefatigable. For a whole hour he rushed about the house purring, as we soon realized, with contentment.

To add to our worries he relieved himself right in the middle of the best carpet. In our anxiety to limit his destructive powers we had forgotten that in the jungle there are no boxes reserved for cheetahs. These incidents made us decide to take the necessary measures immediately. There was a general reshuffle: old rags, frayed chair covers, newspapers and heaven knows what were brought out to cover the chairs and carpets;

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all the fragile china was removed to safety. The flat soon looked like an auction room.

It was a hard winter. The inadequate central heating—it was an old-fashioned installation—had to be augmented by pullovers and a large fire in the living-room.

Our guest returned from the kitchen and stopped short in surprise at the sight of these unaccustomed gleams. With hackles raised he stood still for a moment and then leaped towards the fire, giving a series of menacing growls.

We jumped to our feet. But his reflexes did not desert him. Hardly had he touched the logs than he fled growling furiously and shaking his slightly burnt paws. He never forgot this unpleasant contact and in future kept the fire at a respectful distance. The dancing flames continued to attract him just as vividly after years of living with us as they did on the first day.

"I don't think there will be any more peace for us or for Futé," I remarked rather gloomily to my wife.

Her only reply was an indulgent smile.

I knew that the turbulent little creature had already captivated our hearts and that we were prepared to forgive him nearly all his transgressions.

CHAPTER TWO

Long Live Yambo!

NIGHT FELL. The cheetah had not rested for a moment. Julia was amazed at his vitality and strength.

"When on earth are you going to settle down, you little horror?" she cried.

I believe in the influence of names. He obviously resented the words "little horror". Even if he behaved for the moment as a savage, this little cheetah was destined to become civilized.

We took plenty of time to reflect.

The name given to a wild animal should be short and sonorous, and should contain all the inflections of the voice from the invitation to a caress to the most brutal intimidation. Names ending in "a" or "o" fulfil these requirements.

We had christened our lion cub "Bimbo". Since our new pet had a very marked individuality he must be given a name entirely to himself.

I dismissed such commonplace christian names as George or Alfred. . . . It would of course have been amusing to ask visitors: "Would you care to meet Jules?"

"Is that your son?" "No a rather curious friend"; and to enjoy their surprise. But we felt that it was bad enough im-

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posing our way of life on our protégé without foisting an ordinary christian name on him.

Julia suggested Attila. This name, I admit, would have suited the destroyer whose exploits forced us to turn the house into a caravan. We did not care for Attila because we still hoped to turn this little barbarian of the bush into a civilized young gentleman.

The "bush". The work evoked the National Park of Nairobi where at nightfall during a visit my wife and I came across a pride of six adult cheetahs. They were sitting in a circle on the top of a mound, each watching his own sector of the plain. We had been able to admire at our leisure these magnificent beasts whom our presence left completely unmoved.

At last, as though he had selected his hunting ground, the leader rose, stretched and, slowly and majestically, descended the slope. The others followed and they were soon lost in the bush leaving no trace except slight trembling of the tall grass.

This perfect picture of Africa had remained one of our most cherished memories. We had, of course, brought back with us many wonderful memories: the camp fire at night outside the tents when we listened to the long drawn out roars of the lions driving the game into the claws of their mates who were waiting in ambush; our encounters in the jungles of the Belgian Congo with the Pygmies, their shy welcome and their timid greeting "Yambo!" which means "Good morning" in their language, and a host of memories that would never fade.

I had heard this "Yambo" from Kikuyus in Kenya, from Masai on the Amboseli plain and even from negroes in Northern Rhodesia. "Yambo!" "Yambo!", and on replying with the same word we had the impression of uttering a magic formula to open the hearts of these peoples among whom we were trying to forget the sterile and soul destroying turmoil of Europe.

"Yambo" gave me the inspiration and the idea for an adventure story of Africa, so greatly did it evoke for me Africa,

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its mystery, its superb savagery, its immense plains where hosts of antelope and giraffe live in peace during the day and at night are terror struck at the slightest sound. Yambo! We had heard this word a thousand times and it was perfectly suited to our young pet. We agreed to give him this civil status.

We very nearly lost him soon after his baptism. An intelligent and keen observer, he had soon spotted Futé's food. Hardly weaned his little needle sharp milk teeth had only just emerged from his gums. His food was to be a major problem.

We tried giving him the same diet as the Persian: sardines, crushed hard boiled eggs and chopped liver made into a potage with milk and a spoonful of cod liver oil. His stomach rebelled against this diet which was perfectly suited to an aristocrat of the domesticated cat world. One morning we found him in the throes of a terrible diarrhoea and his fur completely lustreless. What was to be done?

The vets held out little hope. "He's too young," they insisted. "How can you expect to raise a cheetah of that age?" It was a challenge.

"Let's try giving him lacteol," suggested my wife.

There was no risk. The poor little creature had eaten nothing for two days and was in very poor shape. This remedy could not do him any harm. A chemist made up special vitamin pills with a dose of calcium for him.

Yambo ate ten lacteol tablets a day. After a week he was on his feet again. Once more from dawn to dusk he was rushing from the kitchen to the living-room and tugging at Julia's skirts as she brought in the breakfast, leaping onto the bed, knocking over the tray, mistaking the bedspread for his box, trying to hoist himself onto the dressing-table, knocking a bottle of scent flying and at the sound of the crash raising his hackles, rolling his eyes and spitting viciously.

Yambo had recovered all his vitality and had demonstrated his character and his courage.

CHAPTER THREE

Discoveries

LA FRANCHARDIERE, our weekend abode, was a ramshackled villa magnificently situated on the edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau about two hundred yards from the main road near Barbizon. It was a delightful spot.

From our windows we had a splendid view over the vast Macherin plain.

In June when the fields of corn and barley undulated gently in the breeze it appeared like a huge lake with silvery waves that changed in July to golden and shimmering rollers.

The sunsets were magnificent and on stormy days a painter could find noble subjects for his canvases.

The garden of our villa had no confines. It merely joined other plots of land belonging to other unknown owners. A broad avenue led into the forest and a wooden gate opened onto the Bornage, the name given to the ride which marks the bounds of the National forest. Actually this gate served no useful purpose because the walls around it had crumbled.

Herds of deer roamed the adjacent park happy to discover in the winter months plenty of fodder from the former lawns now overgrown with weeds and rank grass. We could watch

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them from the terrace on moonlight nights. They roamed at will grunting loudly, tearing up the tufts, rubbing their backs against the blue firs and disappearing at dawn.

Every morning a brace of pheasants pecked at the rice which we threw out for them on the great main drive.

Sometimes at night a fox in search of prey passed beneath our windows, barking. It would slink along the henyard where the chicken beat their wings in terror against the wire netting and then steal off into the forest.

All these noises intrigued Yambo. He would often cock his ears, jump up onto the window sill and stare out into the night in an attempt to unravel its secrets. During the day the farmer from the adjacent property ploughed his fields with a tractor. Yambo growled, grew very excited and followed the movements of the machine with passionate interest. There was a look of regret in his eyes when the man eventually drove off to the nearby village.

Our holidays lasted a fortnight and then we had to return to Paris. The presence of Yambo raised some problems; How would he behave in the car? Claude Gillier had brought him in a basket.

We wished to treat our little cheetah as a reasonable creature. He would be allowed to travel at liberty.

According to the laws of prudence which were instinctive, Yambo examined the inside of the car, sniffing in every corner and once reassured settled down on the back seat. In future this was to be his favourite place.

Lying there motionless he was indistinguishable from one of those plush panthers which car owners carry in place of a mascot.

In the driving mirror we could see the smiling or perplexed faces of the other drivers and their passengers who followed us in the stream of Paris bound traffic. When Yambo turned his head or raised himself to get more comfortable the car behind

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would draw closer. Many of the drivers in their curiosity passed us.

Shoulders and heads emerged from the windows. Everyone was only too keen to have a closer look at this living mascot. A host of questions ensued :

"Is that a tiger?"

"No, a baby chectah."

"Oh!"

The smiles that accompanied this "Oh!" Obviously for most people lion, tiger, panther, leopard, jaguar, chectah or cat all belonged to the same family. Were they distinguished by any particular features? They were all wild beasts, ferocious and dangerous apart, of course, from the domestic cat.

This encounter would become a lively subject for conversation.

"On the way back from Fontainebleau we saw a tiger . . . in a car."

"At liberty?"

"Yes, I assure you it's true. . . !"

Yambo's restlessness at La Franchardière made us a little circumspect in welcoming him to our Paris flat. We gave him the linen-room.

The window covered with wire netting allowed him to watch the comings and goings of the people in the courtyard below. At night he was given the freedom of the corridor and the kitchen where everything breakable was removed out of reach of his claws.

He was still too small to climb on the table without the help of a chair. The technique was to place them sufficiently far apart to force him to stay on the ground.

Our charming Futé was obviously distressed that he no longer had the fields in which to escape the buffetings of his ebullient comrade. The cat simply avoided him with increasing mistrust. But Yambo was a real little savage. He would

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jump on the cat's back and tear out handfuls of fur. Futé would protest with a dignified mew and in his irritation administer a few well directed slaps finally to take refuge on top of the refrigerator in the kitchen.

This piece of equipment was for a whole year an observation post where he was out of danger. Yambo intrigued him enormously. He would play with the cheetah by provoking him with a slap from his paw when he ventured too close.

We were very attached to our cat with the long blue fur and two enormous daffodil-yellow eyes which changed according to his moods. The pupils sometimes dilated until no iris was visible and suddenly as though dazzled by the sunlight they would close to narrow slits.

Futé who had been doctored had become very docile and had acquired the habits of an elderly bachelor.

Each morning as soon as he woke he rushed along the corridor chasing imaginary foes: this was followed by long games of hide and seek with the Hoover of which he pretended to be very afraid until worn out by this exercise he retired to sleep on our bed his four feet in the air not even bothering to emerge from his torpor when one of us tempted by his silky fur stroked his belly.

He could have been an ideal companion for our little savage. We were optimistic but the first attempts were not very encouraging.

After six months Yambo had grown into a fine beast.

From his observation point in the linen-room he continued to watch the comings and goings in the courtyard. It was an inside courtyard enclosed on all sides by tall buildings.

As soon as one of the tenants crossed it, Yambo peered intently and as he was about to disappear beneath the porch he would bend forward so as not to lose him from sight. If the person slouched or looked untidy he would give a growl of disapproval.

Our cheetah did not like to be left alone. His greatest joy

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was to accompany my wife about the flat. If she left him for fun he would start to cheep almost like a bird, a pathetic sound to hear from a wild beast's throat. Then she would have to reappear.

As he grew older his manners improved. We had noticed that for his natural functions he preferred spots where he had once relieved himself. Since he was punctual we placed boxes of sand about the flat. Yambo grew accustomed to this routine. Soon he was allowed to wander about the flat as he pleased because we no longer feared for our carpets and chair covers.

Every Friday we drove out to La Franchardière. Futé and Yambo always came with us. The cheetah now too large for the back seat sat in front between us. He loved the car and would sit quietly throughout the journey. Each time we met a horse or a dog he pricked up his ears, turned round, lowered his head, wriggled and growled.

The journey usually took about an hour. We were sure to hear his loud purrs of satisfaction and the mewling of Futé as soon as we approached the main street of Barbizon. Each of them recognized it and expressed his pleasure in his own way.

The nature of a wild animal usually justifies a certain amount of constraint being imposed on it by man. Normally one envisages him in a cage or, if he is not too dangerous, on a solid chain. Most people are unaware of his need for love and his profound attachment to his masters. Yambo considered us as his parents and constantly assured us of his affection.

At Barbizon for the sake of prudence we kept Yambo indoors. One day however, we decided to leave the door of the villa open.

In August the corn had been harvested; if he took it into his head to escape we should have every chance of recapturing him. Just before we embarked on the experiment my wife grew nervous; "Suppose he runs away."

"Let's try it out and see," I replied.

Yambo did not seem in the least impressed by his freedom.

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He stalked out calmly on to the terrace and then rushed back into the house frightened by the sound of the gardener's spade as he planted his seeds. Plucking up courage he went out a second time to try and discover the source of the noise, and made his way slowly to the hedge that separated the park from the kitchen garden.

He had undergone a series of transformations. To begin with he had lost his milk teeth, in the simplest possible fashion and painlessly in the course of eating or yawning. He swallowed some but naturally spewed them up again.

The long grey fur that ran from his head to the base of the tail had disappeared. Beautiful brown spots now appeared in a well defined pattern on his coat. Rings of black or buff coloured fur barred his long powerful tail, ending in a very decided black tassel. At the bottom of his neck and on his shoulders a short mane accentuated his protruding shoulder blades forming the dorso-lumbar hump which is characteristic of the cheetah.

When faced with danger Yambo lowered his head. His eyes normally flecked with gold turned slate grey and were imposing in their stare. His hackles rose particularly above the tail which seemed to grow double its size. Yambo was a disturbing sight when angry.

In this guise he set out to discover the origin of this unfamiliar noise. From a gap between two bushes near the hedge, he studied the man who was working and who had not noticed him; reassured, he came back to us. We had won and from now onwards Yambo was given his liberty.

The cheetah did not seem anxious to abuse his freedom for he followed us about like a young puppy. We appreciated this fidelity. He knew too little about the civilized world; the drone of a plane's engine, the chug chug of a tractor, the flight of a bird could make him run off into the forest where he could easily get lost.

What hunter in the Barbizon would not have been delighted

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to add a wild beast to his trophies and to be able to boast to his friends at cocktail time of his extraordinary adventure; shooting a two hundred pound panther in the Macherin plain after perilous stalking.

We decided that we would spare poor Yambo, the object of so much murdering envy, this posthumous glory. . . .

CHAPTER FOUR

Initiation

SOME OF our friends asked us rather mockingly: "What is there so interesting about your cheetah apart from the rareness of the species?"

For them an animal is a creature which acts according to the dictates of its own pleasure. Intelligence, affection, devotion and courage in their opinion are and remain the attributes of man.

With a certain condescension they will credit the animal with a few psychic faculties similar to our own which they call instincts.

Nothing surprises them. If we left for Fontainebleau by car and pointed out to them Yambo's despair, their reply was "He's hungry." How could one explain to them his anxious behaviour and his torment of waiting for our return.

Indoors he could not bear to feel himself isolated or even separated from us by an ordinary door. He soon discovered how to open them. At three months, too small to hoist himself up to the door handle, he would leap and rattle it until the panel opened.

For the sake of peace we changed this handle for a china

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knob. This change outwitted his usual technique. But he finally found the answer. He would seize the knob in his jaws, trying at first to draw it towards him and rip it off until he discovered that it turned. With great patience he tried to turn it to its full extent; in vain because the latch would not leave its socket.

One morning at breakfast time chance was on his side. The door opened! Delighted with his exploit he joined us in the bedroom purring with pleasure. He leaped on our bed and after a rapid lick stretched himself out at our feet. A bolt was added to reinforce the lock. Yambo would never learn the secret of this new type of barricade. To manifest his displeasure he scratched and tore at the door with his claws.

Our kitchen was at the end of the corridor. Access to it was through a pair of folding doors. This room was of particular interest to Yambo because his meat was kept in the refrigerator. When Julia opened it, it seemed to exercise a magical power on him. He might be upstairs with my wife. Suddenly we would see him cock his ears and rush down the stairs. Standing up on his hind legs, he pushed open the folding doors and slipped quickly through the chink because the first time they swung back and caught his tail in a vice. He gave a hoarse scream but immediately realized that a swift reflex action would save him from such unpleasantness in the future. He only needed to be caught once to profit from his experience.

When he was hungry it was easy to make Julia understand. He arrived and sat down in front of the refrigerator and with plaintive "cheeps" invited the door to turn on its hinges. Julia pretended not to understand. He then got up, followed her round the kitchen and rubbed himself against her skirts, purring loudly.

To tease him she pushed him away.

But Yambo could not understand her refusal and decided to finish the game. He attacked. Falling heavily to the ground he

INITIATION

pinioned one of her legs in his paws and bit at her felt shoes. Growing impatient Julia would slap him with her dusting rag. Perplexed, he stared at her for a few seconds, then trotted after her and repeated the performance.

Sometimes she resisted his advances. Then he jumped on the dresser next to the gas stove and watched Julia moving the pots and trying to attract her attention with weak cries in his very expressive language. Jaws wide open he started to whinney pathetically until Julia relented and muttered :

"Yambo you're a pest. You deserve a good smack."

Our maid is Basque. She is a typical truculent Southerner. Her violence towards the cheetah was purely verbal and was contradicted by the caresses she lavished on him.

Once she had decided to open the refrigerator our friend gave her a look of encouragement. The meat was on a plate on the lower rack; he never rushed for it but waited to be served.

Whereas cats and dogs rush for their food, he simply purred happily and walked round Julia. Sometimes growing impatient he stood still and butted her with his head. The gesture was very eloquent. It meant : "Hurry up. You're taking far too long."

"Stop it, Yambo," cried Julia. "It's for you all right."

He seemed to understand for he did not insist and with a very loud purr started to walk round her once more.

Our little wild pet was very well behaved. He took what was offered him with delicacy, carried it off and settled down on an old straw mattress before savouring it. He also liked to crack meaty bones which he took from our hand. Taking them between his little molars he masticated it resolutely and came back for more. But he wanted to be quite sure that we had nothing hidden in our palm; he sniffed at our fingers and bloodstained palms, licked them carefully and then sniffed them once more.

When they are satisfied his brothers in the bush lie down in

OUR FRIEND YAMBO

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When they are satisfied his brothers in the bush lie down in

OUR FRIEND YAMBO

the tall grass and remain on the *qui vive*. Lying relaxed on the kitchen tiles our cheetah digested his food in peace.

On the other hand if I lay on the sofa reading my paper he would come over and try to climb up on my lap.

At first he rubbed his head against my legs, stretched out his neck and started to thrust his muzzle against my trousers. Then two paws followed suit until he was lying on top of me with his whole sixty pounds. My wife watched the scene with an ironical smile. Would I give in to him? I understood the meaning of that look. She was waiting for me to weaken as she so often did.

I sometimes pushed Yambo away. My wife never could resist the little rogue and he knew it. He had for her the attachment of a pal with whom one does not need to stand on ceremony. Why bother? Everything was allowed. Maybe she wanted to dislodge him from some corner where, profiting by our inattention, he had taken refuge. He would yawn slowly and look at her mischievously.

"Get out, Yambo! Come on, outside!"

Wrinkled nose, a blink and a purr. She went over to him and wagged a threatening finger. This friendly finger was given a friendly pat from his paw as much as to say: "Come, come, no need to get angry with me. . . ."

He paid little heed to whistles. Besides, when force failed, greed got the better of him. My wife had only to go to the kitchen and call "Yambo! Yambo! Come and get it!" The little rogue raised his head, waited for a second summons and finally trotted up to receive the promised piece of meat.

Another way of making him move was to sharpen a knife. He had grasped the association of these two ideas; the noise and the meat he was to receive. Futé also knew the significance of this noise. He ran up with a bound.

My wife was his indispensable friend. When she was out he looked for her everywhere and watched constantly for her return.

CHAPTER FIVE

Farewell to Freedom

ONE DAY we really thought our lodger had been up to some prank. This is the story: the exceptionally beautiful summer day ended in a blaze of gold. Yambo was playing under a fir tree and trying to climb the lower branches to reach Futé, who was comfortably esconced above. Suddenly the cry of a cock pheasant rang out in the forest. The fine bird soon appeared on the path by the clearing, grave and majestic as a king in its bright scintillating plumage.

He was one of our regular visitors who usually perched at night on an acacia near the house. We all knew his silhouette and his proud cocksure gait. Yambo had often caught sight of him from behind the window as he walked across the newly mown lawn. That day the appearance of the game bird made him stop his play. He recognized the pheasant and stared at it intently. But the latter taking fright slipped into the undergrowth where Yambo tried to find it. The bird, the quicker of the two, flew off quickly.

We easily recaptured our pet, but this escapade served as a warning. We had in fact limited his playground to a part of the park bounded by fir trees. At the outset a few taps with

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the switch had instilled in him a respect for these fictitious confines. It was very amusing to watch him plunge resolutely in the direction of the corn, stop dead in his tracks as he came to his imaginary frontiers and stand there completely rigid.

The affair with the pheasant gave us thought for a revision of our conventions.

Yambo often turned his head in the direction of the forest. Sometimes he leaped towards the bush where the pheasant had eluded his claws. What lay behind it? Towards what mysterious horizons did this asylum lead. But despite the attraction of this mystery our cheetah left the riddle unsolved.

We considered it advisable to banish this urge to explore from his mind by appealing to his imagination. Armed with a few squibs I set out in an old raincoat and hid behind the bush which now so greatly intrigued Yambo.

The stage was set. What would the reaction of our little friend be? At the moment he was lying in the grass near the house. I drew his attention by giving a raucous scream and then advanced bent double. Yambo was disconcerted. His hackles rose and a threatening look appeared in his eyes. Then without hesitation he slowly approached, growling and with his eyes fixed on the enemy. He finally stiffened a few yards from me and watched my gestures. I lit a firework and flung it in his direction. Yambo panicked and fled.

This incident left a deep impression upon him. On the following days he had hardly left the house before his eyes turned towards the alarming bush. Later he would often stop in the middle of his play and stare at it for a long time. At other times, as though at the starter's gun, he would set off in this direction but pull up short at the half-way mark and wave his tail vigorously.

I repeated the experiment. To my great surprise Yambo did not run away before the grotesque shape. The adventure had made him bold. He walked with measured gait, superb with his

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hackles raised and whiskers quivering with rage, and scrutinized this enemy so much larger than himself. When the squib exploded he merely jumped aside, pounced on the smoking container and sniffed it without losing sight of me.

The result was inevitable. I could not make up my mind to admit that Yambo had won so I cheated like a coward; I ran towards him blowing a police whistle, a sound with which he was unfamiliar. He retired a few steps with honour without ceasing to face me with teeth bared and claws extended—magnificent in his bravery and terror. When my wife ran up to reassure him I took the opportunity of slipping away.

The experiment proved that Yambo's courage was tremendous. Our cheetah had met with the unknown and its dangers. Terrified to death, as we could see, he was capable of facing up to the unexpected monster. Would he part company with us fascinated by the irresistible appeal of the forest.

We drew our conclusions from Yambo's courage. It was a sad business for us and for the cheetah when we decided that he must not be allowed to roam about free in the fields as before. We built a little enclosure where the tall grass and a few firs would give him some illusion of freedom.

The morning that we left him alone behind the wire netting he thought at first we were playing. He made a swift tour of his prison, climbed the fir trunks and then bounded happily towards us. He banged against the netting. He then started to run round the enclosure in search of an opening. As we watched him we felt embarrassed and heavy-hearted. He repeated his performance several times and then sat down in despair facing us and gave a few pathetic little "cheeps". So as not to prolong his distress we opened the door.

During the day we repeated the experiment. Next day he seemed to have understood the significance of the netting the height of which he kept assessing. He crouched time after time trying in vain to reach the top. There he banged against

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the netting stretched over the top of the enclosure like a roof.

His prison was about ten yards from the villa and we had to take him there on a lead. This did not happen without some revolt. Used to rushing out of doors as soon as the door was opened he grew impatient at finding it constantly closed despite his cries. As soon as the door was opened he made for the entrance as usual only to find himself halted in his spring. He began to strain at the leash to the point of strangulation and started to cough . . . then a trifle calmer he set off once more at the gallop. Checked each time he gave up the unequal struggle.

We enticed him with a scrap of meat to follow the light traction of the leash. He soon grasped our intention and obeyed without demur for he hated the frustration of his bonds. As soon as he was let free he would trot round his enclosure and return to the door where we were watching him. Reassured by our presence he trotted round his enclosure once more leaped up a tree trunk half lying in the grass, descended and seized a large rubber ball, pushed it before him with both paws and rolled it round his prison with loud purrs of contentment.

Yambo seemed to accept his prison. We made it as easy for him as possible. He was to suffer at the start for this kind of speed was fundamentally miserable in confinement. The agile graceful leaps of this species always enchant the men of the bush when they catch sight of him pursuing a buck in the early dawn.

At the age of one, Yambo's new coat had transformed him into a real cheetah. His belly was now very pale buff while the rest of his body glistened like gold.

Circular almost black spots about the size of a 50 franc piece ran symmetrically from the tip of his tail to his muzzle separated from each other at intervals of a few inches by patches of white fur with a pale chestnut centre. Towards the upper part of his body these spots grew closer together. Finally

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the gold circle that outlined his small black almost round ears, made them appear even smaller. °

As we looked at this magnificent specimen we imagined our women friends saying "What a wonderful cape he would make!"

CHAPTER SIX

Games and Distractions

IN PARIS Yambo was given the freedom of certain parts of our flat. His vitality exploded in frantic imaginative yet destructive games.

We tried to remember to close the doors, but if we happened to forget his presence or to be too slow the demon would seize the opportunity of slipping nimbly through the narrow gap.

He then rushed off, a whirlwind in search of his comrade Futé, flew along the corridors and then made a tour of inspection of the drawing-room. No Futé! His rage was unleashed and he took his revenge on the huge plush tiger which mounted guard outside my study door. Although it was quite a heavy toy he took it in his jaws, rolled on the floor with it, dragging it from one room to the next, butting it with his head and paws until the head burst open and the sawdust and cotton stuffing trailed all over the flat.

His prey had to be forcibly taken from him. Fortunately Yambo was much charmed by a plush bear. When we waved Nounours under his nose his reaction was immediate: he abandoned the tiger.

In the same way as boys and girls, every young animal needs to play. This applies of course to adults as well.

GAMES AND DISTRACTIONS

Nothing is worse for an animal than seclusion. The sad far away look that appears in his eyes is a constant reproach to human indifference and is the most harrowing aspect of his condition.

What is he offered? The smooth walls of a cage, vertical bars which his eyes must find monotonous and which hamper his view. Is he given a log on which to sharpen his claws? Is he given a ball to play with? No, not even a see-saw to encourage him to leap.

In a menagerie the animals are often obliged to live herded together. Perhaps in a confined space where the least movement will jostle or disturb their neighbour forcing them to crowd against each other and synchronize their movements to prevent life becoming impossible. Occasionally one sees the poor creatures strive towards the air and the light thrusting their heads forward while their hindquarters perform a kind of ballet *entrechat*. No one who loves animals could fail to feel sad at the sight of this dance of boredom, the manifestation of despair and of suppressed strength rebelling against inaction.

And yet so little is needed to amuse animals.

I remember the panther which was presented to a Parisian circus by the wife of the Chad Commissioner on his retirement from the colony.

His mistress could not elude the constraint imposed by a great city on all creatures animal or human, for the panther had a voracious appetite and his presence disturbed the neighbours.

Suddenly deprived of his owners the beast grew vicious and aggressive. He was isolated in a horse box to remove all causes of irritation.

Each time someone approached him he growled and charged. When my wife discovered the unfortunate creature cowering in a corner far from the bars it came forward quivering with rage and threatening paws. Did it sense the presence

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of a friend? The visitor's voice must have had an immediate calming effect.

My wife picked up a wisp of straw and tickled its nostrils. This provocative game seemed to interest the panther; his eyes softened. Watching the wisp he tried to snap it as soon as it brushed his jaws.

During her daily visits these wisps of straw produced approaches, feints and somersaults. Gradually the animal shed the load of intolerable hours of loneliness and boredom. Did this animation revive in him familiar sensations not entirely suppressed and reflexes that had still functioned during happier days?

After his new friend had left the game continued. The beast juggled, leapt among the straw pretending to be afraid of these straws which had been left there on purpose, but which the attendant in charge of his cage soon removed. My wife noticed this. Reinforcing her request with a good tip she begged him not to touch the heap of straw. "What a peculiar idea!" the boy seemed to be thinking as he blinked at her. What good would it do? Would this dim-witted peasant ever have understood, even if it had been explained to him, the need of all animals even the fiercest to gambol?

For man there is no prison more terrible than a bare deserted spot. The panther was in this particular state. Neurasthenia or total madness is the lot of prisoners in solitary confinement. Is it surprising then that animals placed in the same situation cease to be tame?

Play is a natural action for free animals which from birth by spontaneous and outwardly futile gestures, train and develop their muscles with a view to future conflicts in a life which will be a constant search for food.

Play! It is a sign of health and good humour among both beasts and men. It is always a charming and moving sight whether it be a baby shaking its rattle or lion cubs having a noisy friendly scrap.

GAMES AND DISTRACTIONS

We once saw some lion cubs in Kenya and their comedy became one of our most treasured memories.

We had been in search of them in the Nairobi Game Reserve. There no one is surprised when one car driver stops another and asks "Where are they". The lions, of course, are meant.

No need to scrutinize the tall grass to discover their nonchalant and impressive forms. One only has to look for an unusual collection of cars to know at once that "they are there". A family or pride of lions either resting, sleeping, digesting their meal or gambolling will get up, sniff the bonnet of a car, run their muzzles prudently along the glass window while pretending to ignore the occupants of the various other cars.

We came across two lionesses and their cubs. These two "feline housewives" must have been very good friends for they administered admonitory slaps to the cubs irrespective of their family.

The cubs played exactly like children. One of them had discovered a dead branch and tried to carry it off. But the burden was too heavy and clung to the soil, making him stagger at each step.

His playmates, their eyes sparkling with malice appeared to be admiring his valiant efforts. Then tempted in turn they decided to give him a hand. And now a tug of war developed, each cub trying to drag it in a different direction. What a magnificent game. For half an hour it afforded them an opportunity for chases, rollings, scraps and growlings.

Our chectah also loved to play. From the age of one month his favourite toy was Nounours, the plush bear, which soon had to be darned, patched and tied up with bits of string. Yambo maltreated him but bestowed more marks of tenderness than of cruelty upon him. After biting him with his powerful fangs, he would lick him so lovingly and fervidly that the material was soon threadbare.

This bear was his exclusive property. If we pretended to take

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it away from him he would hold it tight-clenched between his jaws, determined not to relinquish it. But he quickly realized that we were joking. Instead of growling angrily he plunged his teeth deeper into the bear, arched his back and played exactly like a dog. If he managed to make us let go he was delighted and walked round us quite content. Then he would wait for a caress before carrying it off to the linen room which was now his domain.

He preferred this bear to all his other toys, although he loved everything that would roll; metal and tennis balls and even an old basket.

Nevertheless at night it was always Nounours, his trusty friend whom an excess of love had deprived of its fur, who had lost one arm and been half decapitated whom he took to bed with him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Barbizon Jungle

FUTE WAS well aware of the danger that Yambo represented for him. Between the two beasts as we soon noticed there was a certain common bond of education and character.

When the cat wanted to play, his paws brushed the skull of his tough companion almost like a caress; the latter replied with pats certainly given without malice, but with a certain violence that shocked Futé and made him mew.

Things were often worse for in his attacks the cheetah sometimes mounted astride the long suffering cat's back and held him at his mercy. Then we had to intervene to liberate the Persian who usually emerged unharmed. Yambo would bite into his long hair but invariably spare his neck and head. We were slightly nervous at this behaviour because he assumed the murdering posture of his race.

Fute too was frightened of these embraces from which he could not always escape despite his agility. His new place of refuge was the drawing-room. Yambo watched him. With a bound the cat installed himself on the mantelpiece from which the cheetah tried to dislodge him by stretching out his long paws. In the kitchen when on the top of his impregnable fort-

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ress, the refrigerator, Yambo could struggle in vain. Futé lay there calmly staring at him through the mocking slits of his eyes as though to say: "Come on. Tire yourself out. You'll never make it."

On Saturday evenings as soon as we arrived at La Franchardière almost before the gardener had opened the door of the car Futé sped off towards the enclosure. But about three o'clock in the morning hunger drove him back to Julia's room on the ground floor.

The half-opened window was a constant temptation, for a bowl of milk or some chopped liver were always placed on the window sill waiting for the cat. Julie who sleeps very lightly would hear his thud as he landed on the parquet floor. Then she pulled a cord attaching the window latch to her bed and the cat was safe indoors. He mewed with rage but soon resigned himself, slipped on to her bed and snuggled down beside her. Exhausted after his nocturnal rambling he slept like the dead.

At eight o'clock next morning he demanded his freedom again and we did not see him all day except in case of necessity or due to some unexpected adventure. This big tom had taken a long time to get house trained. We never thought that we should be able to make him clean. He was so used to seeing his box of sand that he could never be persuaded to go elsewhere. Sometimes from our room we would see him during the afternoon leaping through the grass on his way to the villa. His long hair enveloped him like an ample robe and the burrs getting in his fur slowed down his progress. Hardly had he entered than he relieved himself in his box and rushed out as quickly as he had come.

Our cat learned to revel in his natural outdoor life. He allowed no one to follow him during his peregrinations in the park.

If we went to the front door to observe him, he squatted down on his haunches. Should we go inside and watch him from behind the curtains? Deceived by this feigned indifference

THE BARBIZON JUNGLE

he dropped his mask of domesticated feline. His departure was like a whirlwind. Leaping in the air he reached the edge of the wood in a flash. On the alert he crawled under the flowering broom which made a patch of vivid yellow at the hour of dusk.

Futé's behaviour intrigued Yambo. Our cheetah tried to understand these comings and goings and kept under constant review the hole in the broom through which the cat had disappeared.

Beneath the gorse and broom that forms a golden fringe round the forest, behind which the great Macherin plain was soon swallowed up in the darkness, extends a regular city with avenues and streets leading into the woods. At night when life wakens in the undergrowth, these trails are inhabited by a host of wild creatures.

Everything that crawls, walks, flies, rustles or keeps on the alert, all the nocturnal denizens of the forest suddenly awake from their torpor. The pulsing blood makes their eyes phosphorescent and their limbs more agile, their bodies firmer or more supple and their flanks quiver with suppressed violence or fear.

At dusk, badgers, weasels, stoats and foxes sow fear in the hearts of their future victims: hares, rabbits, field mice, voles, shrews and rats. . . .

In the morning we loved to wander along the fringe of the great plain. On these lonely paths we were aware of traces of the forest's intense nocturnal activity.

Yambo sometimes accompanied us on a leash. He loved these walks and took the keenest interest in the spoors left by the large and small animals. Here wild boars had furrowed deeply in a field of beet; there the young corn nipped off by sharp teeth revealed the activities of a herd of young and playful deer. The peasants were constantly complaining of their depredations. The authorities however have forbidden the gamekeepers to fire squibs because the noise would scare the game at night

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or to put strips of cardboard saturated in creosote which the beast would have found malodorous.

Moreover in the spring these ruses would have no possible effect on the animals. We had had ample proof of this.

We sometimes left Paris late on Saturday afternoon. Leaving the Macherin road we used to take the narrow stony drive that lead to the property. We were almost certain to pick up in our headlights' beams a herd of deer and stag grazing in some field of lucerne fifty yards from our house. Silence might have scared them so we left the engine running to watch them at our leisure. Seated on the cushion at the back of the car Yambo seemed petrified by this strange sight.

When we drove off there was a flight reaction on the part of the herd which was quickly overcome. As soon as we had gone some yards the pretty creatures cocked their ears and listened to the bumping of the car over the stony path through the waste land.

In order to miss none of these charming images our little friend tried to climb on the back seat but he was too big. Then he wriggled and twisted, staring intently at the group of marauders which was soon swallowed up by the night.

On arriving at the house we had to drag him from his observation post so great was his inquisitiveness.

Futé seemed enchanted by this forest where the casual wanderer would find nothing but peace and silence.

Was he dreaming of the free violent world of the wild cats watching from the branches young clutches of nightingales or the even more vulnerable partridges, hardly camouflaged in the furrows or among the green corn?

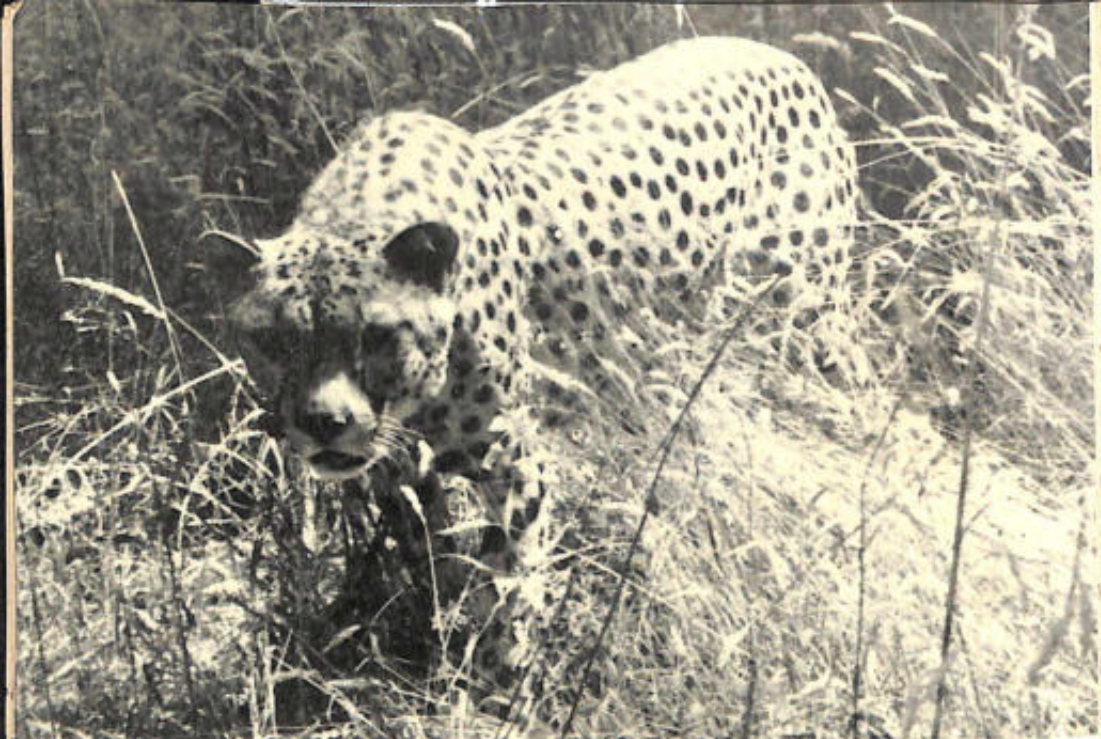
Did he ever envisage the dangers of liberty? Could he distrust man from whom he had received so much tenderness and love? Could he ever imagine that a hunter would treat him as a pest and shoot him without remorse if he came within range of his gun?

No, his head was filled with dreams. . . .

Part Two



"What's all this you are writing about me?"



Yambo wonders whether I can spot him. Even against this light underbrush, his protective colouring is not ineffective

As a cub he was suitably brave and insatiably curious, insisting on finding things out for himself

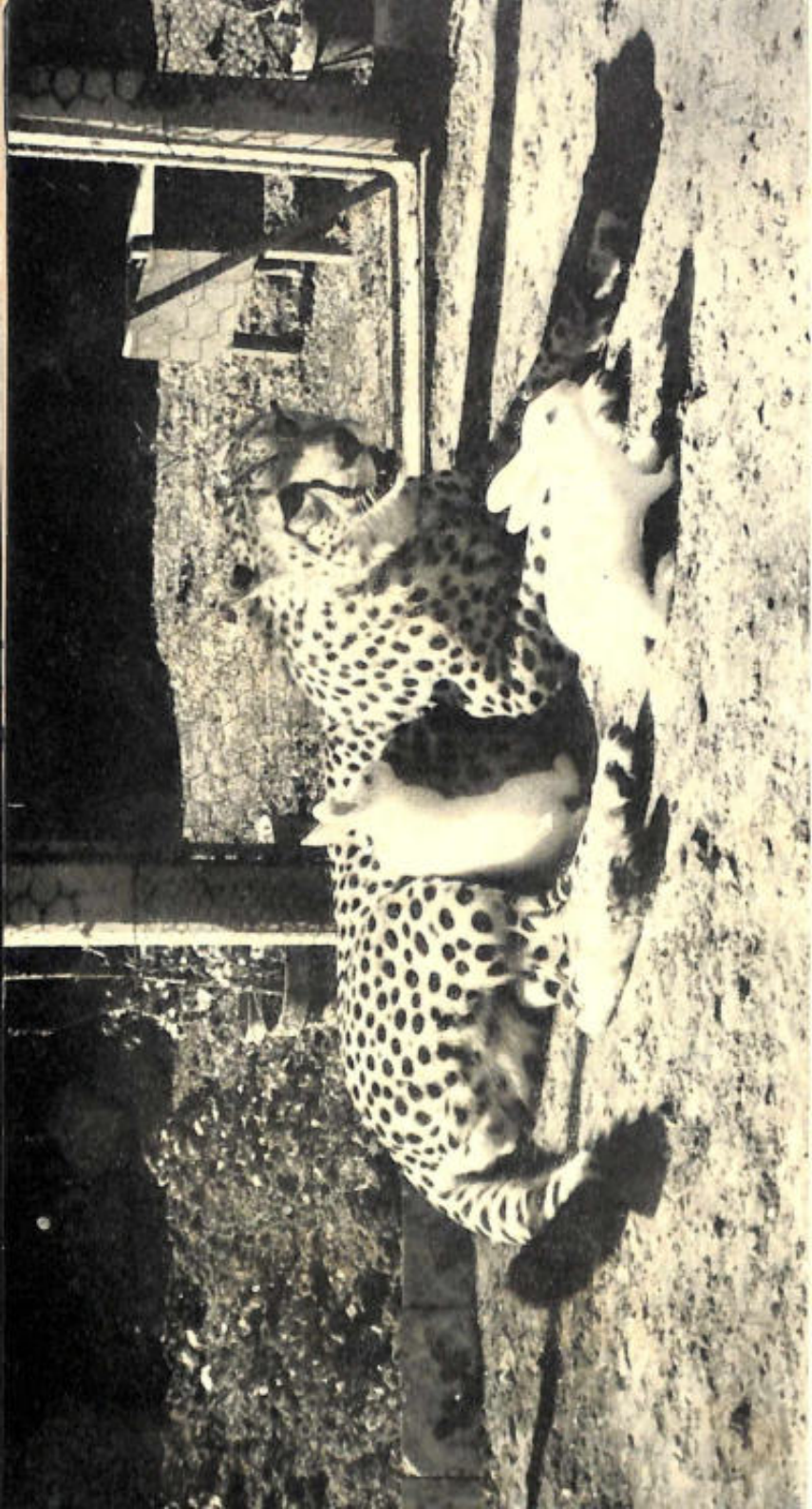




Thanks to his deceptive swerves, the boar managed to escape, although Yambo was far swifter

This may look sinister, but it just happens to be the natural place for a cheetah to grip his plaything





It takes a very rash creature to climb up on his back, but on this occasion Yambo permitted the liberty

CHAPTER EIGHT

The End of a Roamer

I WAS worried as to Futé's fate. He was as much under the spell of his territory of exploration as we were charmed by its noises, scents and the strangest of its changing face, so different from the countryside that showed the influence of man. But we knew that Futé could easily become a victim of this charm. We had noticed that the delight he took in his wanderings urged him to spend nearly the whole day out of doors.

"Our Futé," I once remarked to my wife, "is a great booby who knows nothing of the multiple ruses practised by the beasts of prey, a combination of intelligence and cold-bloodedness.

"The fox symbol of cunning and roguery is even capable of deceiving the crow, a bird with a well-established reputation for being suspicious."

I reminded her of the astonishing pictures from the Rossif film shown recently on television.

Two crows sat croaking on a branch. A fox passed beneath the tree in search of prey. He raised his head, stood perfectly still and looked at the crows. Then doubling up his body, he collapsed full length on the ground and held his breath. The crows evinced great interest in his behaviour. Observing this

apparent rigidity they hopped from branch to branch exchanging croaks of reassurance and finally flew down to the ground.

The fox really looked dead! However they first had to convince themselves that this was true. From a safe distance they circled the fox lying there on its back, cautiously approached, stopped, flapped once more towards him, almost touching him, watching for the slightest move on the part of this inert body.

It was motionless. The cunning fellow was still holding his breath. He really was as stiff as a corpse. From time to time however he opened one eye imperceptibly, furtively watching the scene of action.

The black "birds of ill omen" hesitated. They seemed to be vying with each other in politeness.

"After you," croaked the first, "please go first."

"I refuse," replied the second.

"I want to do you a favour. . . ."

His mate plucked up courage and with a bound landed on the back of the corpse.

More prudent, the other bird watched this contact.

There obviously seemed to be no danger. So why hesitate? He too, leaped on to the fox's neck to be nearer the eyes and tongue, those succulent and nourishing titbits with which most birds of prey usually begin their feast.

The wily one showed extraordinary sang-froid.

He allowed the crows to approach even closer, right up to his jaws which opened suddenly so that one bird was caught by the cruel fangs, while the second was laid low with a swift blow from his paw.

The robber then slunk off to a deserted spot in the undergrowth where he could eat at his leisure the two foolish birds, the beating of whose wings and cries were soon stifled.

We had deprived Futé of that training in defence which an animal in the wild state acquires. In this silent conflict even

THE END OF A ROAMER

wild cats sometimes succumb to the attacks of beasts more ingenious or stronger than themselves.

Futé did not realize that in this jungle the slightest crackle of a twig might denote a mortal danger.

Admittedly he had set off lightheartedly, but how long would it last?

Powerful instincts, put to sleep by his education, seemed to dominate him on the least occasion.

My wife is as obstinate as she is tender hearted. With a silent smile she rejected reason and refused to take the obvious precautions—to restrict Fute's freedom to roam.

One day of course, poor Futé was murdered.

The tragedy began, as all tragedies do, by one of those very ordinary every-day events. Every Monday evening we packed our bags and prepared to leave for Paris. We had to go and retrieve our Persian from beneath the broom.

That Monday Julia started to call him as usual. Futé appeared from his bush, stood still and watched Julia, his magnificent tail sweeping the ground with small swift movements.

By some unlucky chance at that moment my wife went to fetch Yambo from his enclosure to take him to the car. Our cheetah was docile and allowed his mistress to place his collar round his neck. Alas, the noise of knives distracted his attention. He turned his head to Julia, spotted Futé who was still standing on the alert by the broom.

Yambo bent his hind legs and gave such a violent leap that my wife was taken by surprise and dropped his leash. With a series of agile bounds, gracefully crossing his fore and hind legs the cheetah reached Futé's green palace. The cat had already disappeared into his mysterious cavern.

We discovered Yambo entangled in the brambles beneath which the cat had taken refuge. The cheetah returned with us to the car without demur while the Persian remained deaf to our calls.

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We hoped that the gardener or his wife would telephone next day to announce his return. Unfortunately by the following weekend we were bound to admit that Futé had left us for good. We kept calling him and a plate of his favourite food was left by the hedge in vain.

Two months later some hunters who were beating the undergrowth for pheasants told us that they had found remains of fur on the brambles near a foxes lair.

In these vestiges we recognized the pathetic remains of that marvellous silky fur which invited caresses. We would never forget the way he used to raise his tail and express his contentment by wriggling his hindquarters, how when he mewed he revealed teeth as white as pearls in the pink jewel case of his jaws.

What a tragic end!

Futé the luxury cat, a novice at roaming the woods was in the last analysis a victim of that grim law imposed by Nature in the free kingdom of the wild beasts: "Eat or be eaten."

CHAPTER NINE

An Exciting Experience

WE FINALLY left La Franchardière for good. We had at last found at Barbizon the property we had been in search of for three years in the Ile de France. It was actually very different from what we had imagined. I had wanted it to be quite large and surrounded by walls so that I could people it with African game: antelope, zebra, buck, etc. and thus to create my own game reserve under the cold European skies.

It was Jean Richard who at lunch with us one day dissuaded me from carrying out this plan.

"You will have great difficulty in finding a trained staff to look after your animals," he said. "Furthermore you must be prepared to face great losses. I myself have just had a very costly experience, the consequences of which might have been disastrous."

He told us of his bad luck:

"As you know I started a private zoo on my property at Isle Adam. Not long ago I was offered a rather unusual inmate, a bison weighing some two thousand pounds.

"I agreed to buy him. An enclosure was built to his measure with an entrance secured by two large beams. The bison eventually arrived by truck. He was quite docile and went

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straight into his enclosure where he found water and forage, in fact a hearty feed for a bison. My men and I, highly satisfied, went up to the house to drink a well earned aperitif. We had hardly sat down when a boy ran up out of breath: 'I've just seen an enormous bull jump the hedge and gallop off into the forest.'

"We ran to the enclosure to see what had happened. With his powerful head the huge¹ beast had smashed the beams and got free. That fine spring Saturday hundreds of Parisians would be strolling through the Isle Adam woods. We had to recapture the bison at all costs. The local innkeeper told us that he had caught sight of him in a field. Taking a supply of ropes we found him at the spot indicated.

"He did not appear to be in a savage mood. On our approach he merely trotted off towards the forest. We managed to steal up on him by dodging behind the trees. He watched us suspiciously but remained quite peaceful. It was a very different matter when we tried to pass a noose over his head, with the aid of a rod. What a pity we weren't cowboys! Our clumsy attempts only infuriated the bison. He snorted, pawed the ground, breathed more and more heavily and finally charged us. I have never been a matador but I think I now know what he must go through in the arena. It is impossible to remain unmoved when a mass weighing nearly a ton gallops at you, sweeps past a few inches away and turns round nimbly while you circle your protective tree.

"To avoid our bison causing havoc among the campers and picnickers I decided with regret that we should have to shoot him. While waiting for someone to fetch a gun we had to prevent the animal at all costs from straying. We provoked him with shouts and gestures and enticed him to attack us by dodging from one tree to the next. It was a frantic game of hide-and-seek. We risked at any moment being impaled on one of his horns, squashed to pulp against a tree or tossed like a shuttlecock into the tree tops.

AN EXCITING EXPERIENCE

"We had to wait about half an hour for the gun to arrive. We hardly had the strength to run and shout any more. I assure you that I was almost delighted when I finally saw the monster slump to the ground under the impact of the bullets. Your idea of starting a zoo here worries me. You must think the matter over carefully."

I followed his advice. Yambo had already given us a glimpse of the slavery to which we would have to submit if we decided to carry out our plans.

Our idea of a miniature Kenya was therefore abandoned.

At the Hameau Hortense our cheetah's curiosity was given new horizons. His reactions, which were now quite new, showed us the transformation of a personality formed by the needs of the species and revolt against the restraints imposed by domestic life.

The following question rose more and more frequently to the lips of our visitors :

"Aren't you afraid that his instincts will awaken, for after all Yambo is a wild beast?"

The idea that Yambo could be a danger to us was almost an insult. And yet we always had the lurking suspicion that it was probably impossible to make a pet of him, despite our constant loving care.

"Don't forget that the dog is descended from the wolf," remarked one of our friends, to encourage us to continue on the right path.

Yes, we had to admit that the dog has evolved considerably. He has acquired faculties, qualities and sentiments which are almost human. Most dogs have courage and stamina. In contact with men some of them display great intelligence and on occasions their attachment, fidelity and devotion to their masters amount to self sacrifice.

Nevertheless I have noticed that a cat or dog after being abandoned or after a few weeks of complete liberty will revert

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to their wild state. The forest of Fontainebleau is full of Paris cats whose masters have left them behind on leaving for their holidays. Driven by hunger, the charming companions of yesterday are transformed into fearful destroyers of wild birds, baby hares, poultry and domestic rabbits. Hunters kill scores of them all the year round.

These examples did not unduly distress us. We recalled that these animals had been abandoned and acted in this way from necessity. Yambo was always well fed.

We knew perfectly well that the expansion of the human race had forced wild animals to choose between two modes of behaviour—to become technophilic or to remain technophobic.

The former have adapted themselves to a restricted freedom, living among and off us and exploiting our resources; they have also been able to perfect their defence measures against our attempts to destroy them. This applies in our cities to the sparrows, pigeons, rats, mice, etc.; in the country to foxes, badgers, wild rabbits, crows, magpies, pheasants and game of all kinds.

The latter prefer to leave the field to man and to flee ever further from him. They are so scared of him that the very sight of him causes them to panic. The majority of wild animals may be cast as technophobic, and in particular the feline.

Our experiment started well. From the age of one month Yambo had been brought up as a child.

He was now one year old and as large as a spaniel. Although he had great character he had never shown the least signs of aggressiveness. On the contrary he was gentle, affectionate and playful. At one year old he corresponded in life span to an adolescent. He would attain his majority at two and be adult at three.

CHAPTER TEN

Great and Small Habits of a New Life

AT THE Hameau, we gave our cheetah a genuine domain of his own. He lived in a comfortable hut quite near the villa. A spacious, partly roofed enclosure for rainy days served as an extension to his little house.

He stayed in the latter, particularly at night. Through the windows he could see into our room until we went to bed. A log, lilac bushes and sand gave him the illusion of the semi-liberty he had enjoyed at La Franchardière.

In this new dwelling he obviously developed different habits. He was allowed to come and visit us in the winter about six o'clock in the evening and in the summer at eight o'clock. We kept him with us while we had dinner and at eleven o'clock took him back to his hut.

This was soon an established ritual. Yambo knew all the phases. If we forgot the time, he whined imperiously to remind us of our duties, planted himself in front of my wife or myself, looked at us eloquently and then made for the door and stood there waiting. He would put his head on our knees, rub his hard skull, purr, butt and grow impatient. When we held out his chain, he offered his neck without demur and prepared

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to set out for his hut without forgetting to beg a final piece of raw meat.

In the morning at about ten o'clock, as soon as the sun had dispelled the early morning mist, Julia opened the trap door between the hut and the enclosure. Yambo immediately made for the corner where on the first day he had obeyed the call of nature.

Now that he was no longer a baby, Yambo did not relieve himself in the same way. He still squatted to defecate but emptied his bladder to the rear in short rapid bursts. This detail caused us no surprise when we considered the actual anatomical position of his organs.

He was faithful to the spots of his choice even if they sometimes entailed the most impossible antics. He had an affection for a small log standing end up with two supports.

At six months he loved to climb it but he was soon far too large for this particular log. He would leap nimbly onto this perch and behave as if he were standing over his tray.

This position must have been very uncomfortable for there was hardly room for his paws. He sometimes slipped and fell before finding his balance but his incredible patience was eventually rewarded.

Having fulfilled his first duty of the day he set out to explore his domain, stood stock still whenever riders passed on the Borage road before resuming his pacing up and down his cage.

Our park was surrounded by walls and Yambo was therefore allowed an afternoon walk in our company. A thirty foot leash allowed him considerable freedom of movement. Usually he did not take advantage of this but walked like a faithful dog at our heels, keeping his eyes on us.

In this park he rapidly developed other habits. He would inspect the trees, dig his claws into the bark and scratch like a cat. An old gnarled apple tree which had grown with a forty-five degree slant was his favourite. He would judge the height and with a few bounds leap up into the branches.

A NEW LIFE

From his vantage point Yambo would scan the nearby streets and the rest of the park. Then satisfied with his reconnaissance he would descend in the opposite way to a domestic cat, head downwards.

One day he climbed too high and was afraid to come down. His fear made him tremble violently and start to wobble, until I was afraid that he would fall several feet and fracture his back legs. As is well known the lafter are very fragile in the case of a cheetah.

I stood close to the tree encouraging him to join me by stretching out my arms. My invitation seemed to reassure him. After a few abortive attempts he clung by his hind claws to a fork in the branches, stretched out his head towards me and then, with his fore paws solidly dug into the bark, slid cautiously down the trunk and only jumped off when near the ground. Yambo never climbed to the top of the apple tree again.

Having accomplished his daily climb Yambo would make for a pool of water and take a long drink.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Silent Foes

THE BARBIZON FOREST is very rich in wild flowers of all kinds. Its idyllic thickets overlook valleys filled with strange shaped rocks, some of them weatherbeaten into the form of giant skittles.

Unfortunately the forest lacks water. In the last summer months the wild animals are obliged to travel long distances to find their springs and pools.

The gardens, too, are singularly lacking in this essential element which provides so many decorative possibilities.

My wife and I both loved landscapes with water, clouds, trees and flowers to form pictures of ever changing colours. As soon as we settled at the Hameau we had therefore built a kidney-shaped basin some sixty feet long and fifteen feet wide. It enhanced the vivid red of the roses, the sky blue of the delphiniums and the orange of the marigolds.

A host of Italian red carp added a touch of colour to this silent world. I had never been particularly interested in fish except as a barbarous schoolboy when fishing was a mere sport. At that age I bothered my head very little about their intelligence.

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But Yambo's behaviour with regard to them aroused an interest in the habits of our fish and by observing them I began to understand them better. I found that they rapidly became tame, and that they were not such pacific creatures as I had once imagined. Their aggressiveness often made Yambo recoil.

Our cheetah was unaware of the aggressive nature of the fish and only discovered the fact after an encounter in which he was forced to beat a retreat.

Yambo was thirsty.

He squatted down by the basin, put out his pink tongue with the end like an upturned spoon to lap the water and prepared to drink.

Goldfish have a very acute sense of hearing. They suddenly swarmed round this foreign body, attracted by the rippling which barely disturbed the surface of the water. They rushed forward and gently felt the cheetah's tongue with their little leech like mouths.

At first Yambo was surprised to see these red bodies but then their contact started to terrify him.

Tail and hackles raised, he recoiled, began to spit viciously and bared his fangs. Then according to his nature he suddenly approached the edge of the basin and thrust out a swift paw to beat off his assailants. They darted away but returned to the attack as soon as the cheetah started to drink.

These goldfish made a deep impression on our pet. In future when he decided to visit the basin he made a preliminary inspection of the steely water. Should his enemies appear he would immediately open his jaws, but this usually failed to scare them away.

After this routine Yambo was impatient to be off and make a tour of the park. Now that he knew us so well his behaviour differed according to whether my wife or I held the leash.

His passion for horses had never waned. It was born during our trips between Paris and Barbizon and grew more acute here.

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After the interludes at the basin he would drag his mistress to the spot where to give us access to the forest we had lowered the height of the wall, providing an almost unlimited vista.

Yambo would climb on the parapet of the low wall and nervously watch the horsemen. He was always disturbed when they passed. He seemed to be thinking to himself: "What are those monsters?" In these modern centaurs he could easily distinguish two types of being known to him, but he must have wondered what type of spell had joined them together.

As soon as he cocked an ear at the sound of galloping hooves we prudently led him away.

The head of the Barbizon Riding School, M. Lorre, a magnificent horseman wanted to measure his power over a young chestnut hunter named Lansquenet, in the face of a grown cheetah.

The confrontation took place at first at some distance. Yambo, sitting on the parapet, his head pressed against the wire netting watched the horse which was standing in the drive some twenty yards away. The riding master encouraged his mount with his voice and his spurs. Head erect, ears pointed towards the cheetah, with a look of anxiety in his eyes the horse obeyed its rider with bad grace.

We were intensely interested in this scene because as any naturalist will realize we were to be able to verify one of the extraordinary observations made by the Swiss Professor Heniger on animal behaviour: "flight reaction".

He deals with this subject at great length in his book *Animal Psychology*. "'Flight Reaction' is the scientific term for a well-known natural phenomenon to be found even in a two year old child, for it is merely 'fear'.

"Every animal, even the largest and best armed species, has enemies. In all cases therefore when we study the highly evolved animals flight must be considered as most important behaviour from the biological viewpoint. To be ready to flee is the first duty of the individual in order to ensure his own

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existence and incidentally for the preservation of the species. Numerous species have become extinct because their tendency to flight became impaired, similar to a sick organ, and no longer corresponded to the exigencies of the moment. The giant sea elephant, the dodo and the toothed pigeons allowed themselves to be exterminated because they had lost their instincts to flee before men.

"Not every approach by an enemy provokes a reaction to flee because not every hostile approach is necessarily a threat. The situation only becomes dangerous when the enemy transgresses the actual 'flight distance'.

"When this flight distance, which varies according to the individual species, is infringed only then does the flight reaction come into force. The animal puts enough distance between itself and the feared enemy until the flight distance has been re-established."

In Africa and in countries where wild animal life is plentiful Heniger, armed with a decameter measured these flight distances and discovered that each species possesses its own. This is naturally subject to certain limitations.

In this confrontation of a cheetah and a horse, at which we were the interested spectators, the inviolate laws of nature and the science of man were in conflict.

M. Lorre has the reputation of being a superb horseman and has won countless prizes in jumping contests. We had often applauded his prowess in Haute Ecole and in jumping competitions where his mounts showed obvious good will and even pleasure in the sport.

The results of domestication and the training of a good subject are admirable, but that day a beast which his mount had never seen before would take him by surprise, and the beast in question was one of the carnivora. Which would get the upper hand? Intelligence, will power and the skill of the rider or the equine instinct of self preservation violently aroused by the sight of the big cat? Encouraged by his master's voice,

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flattered by his hand, he walked very, very slowly towards Yambo, who stood motionless on the *qui vive*.

The chestnut's mouth champed nervously on the bit until the white foam appeared and his nostrils quivered with emotion. The muscles ready to go into action swelled and rippled harmoniously beneath the sweating skin on which the veins began to appear like a contour map of the world.

The riding teacher exploited his advantage: He had already won a great victory, for a wild horse would have fled before it came within fifty yards of the cheetah.

The horse advanced jerkily betraying its tortured nerves. The voice of his master grew ever more cajoling, and encouraging; the spurs came into play and the rider's knees pressed into his flanks to get a better feeling of his reactions and at the same time to give him confidence.

Lansquenet suddenly reared up on his hind legs, turned in a flash and set off at a mad gallop through the trees. Thanks to his skill the rider was not thrown. In this rearing and the subsequent sharp turn followed by the dash over rocks and through the undergrowth, few horsemen would not have been unhorsed by this terrified mount.

Yambo for his part protested with fierce growls and wild leaps against the leash which we kept taut to prevent his following along the wall in the direction in which the fugitive had galloped.

But our equestrian expert apart from his virtuosity happens to love animals. The bit and spurs naturally serve since they are essentials in training horses, but his experience of animals and his love of horses in particular have convinced him that between animals and people trust will obtain what can never be achieved by force.

His horse once more under control he rode towards our little group using the pressure of his thighs and patting its shoulders, encouraging it with friendly and affectionate words. Despite its obvious terror the chestnut, its eyes staring out of their sock-

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ets, returned to Yambo at a sort of marking-time trot broken by countless hesitations. The cheetah close pressed against the netting was motionless and growling in a threatening manner.

The eight yards we had registered at the first attempt had been passed and at six yards the horse swerved violently. M. Lorre bent over one side of Lansquenet's neck so that his ears pointing stiffly towards the enemy he should more easily catch his reassuring words and see at close quarters the master whose orders had never brought him into danger. He also used his spurs very gently. Four yards . . . three . . . one yard. What a triumph!

Yambo's muzzle was literally embedded in the netting as a result of his acute interests. He uttered the siren cry we had often heard in moments of great stress.

The horse pawed the ground, advanced closer, stretched out his muzzle towards the cheetah and soon—a miracle of science! of comprehension, of the affection of the master and the confidence of his pupil, the two beasts were nose to nose. They sniffed each other for a long time. Admittedly the horse was prepared to retreat at any moment but, gradually gaining confidence, he remained and we were surprised when Yambo gave vent to a bark not unlike that of a dog. These new cries had been provoked by exceptional emotion and although for the moment they took us by surprise we thought later that they rather confirmed the theory held by certain naturalists that the dog and the cheetah have a common ancestor.

Yambo so close to this creature whose appearances had intrigued him since a cub, slobbered, growled and barked. Lansquenet's terror had given place to an intense curiosity; his beautiful eyes, now with no vestige of fear, examined intently this wild beast, his ancestral enemy and when the latter, probably bored by this uneventful *tête-à-tête*, slunk along the netting the horse still greatly intrigued followed him on the other side of the netting, this time of his own accord.

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How many misunderstandings between men would be cleared up if like the beasts they would agree to meet before starting to fight.

The chestnut had reacted as any animal would have done in his place. I might add, as the majority of humans would have done if faced with the same danger.

The phenomenon of fear has never unfortunately disappeared from our civilized world. In exceptional circumstances, when men's lives are in danger they react like the beasts by taking flight. The flight distance of our species can be measured with no more difficulty than that of an antelope according to our degree of evolution.

Not many years ago the unexpected arrival of a foreigner in some small French hamlet would have caused the children to run away and the women to hide behind their swiftly barred doors.

In Africa before the Second World War I sometimes entered a village lost in the bush only to find that the inhabitants had all fled. Inside the huts the mats still warm, the stools still round a fire on which the food was cooking proved that only a few moments before the family had been preparing a meal. What was the great danger that had urged these brave negroes to take to the jungle, abandoning all their worldly goods?

I learned after a few similar experiences that my arrival when unannounced by a friendly tam-tam had caused this panic. The natives in their fear had adopted their flight distance. Hidden in the bush they were watching me and would not return until they were assured of my peaceful intentions.

In other circumstances when their existence is not in danger, the phenomenon of fear persists in the human race and expresses itself by very definite behaviour according to the intelligence of the subjects. Is not antipathy merely the mutual reaction of two individuals' fear whose sentiments would en-

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courage them to fight and hurt each other if they had the chance?

The presence of Yambo, I must admit, gave us cause for much reflection on problems which without him we should not have considered or cared about.

CHAPTER TWELVE

One of the Family

WHAT ANIMAL lover has not flirted with the idea of introducing a wild animal whether it be a lion, a panther, or a cheetah into his every day life, as much as to give the illusion of adventure as to test the bonds of friendship that exist between man and the beasts.

It is a charming sight to see a clumsy lion cub playing with its master using its jaws and paws. When adult it will lie at his feet and will follow him on a lead to the astonishment of his friends and of the passers by. What a temptation!

This dream can be made to come true. As for the obligations which will ensue from its realization they are easy to imagine although their variety and nature are often forgotten.

With the arrival of the cub one is immediately plunged into reality, for even if its masters continue to dream it will soon manifest its demands in the most vigorous fashion. In this domain, many vocations are found to be still-born and most of the four-legged companions of these presumptuous masters end in the zoo or the circus.

Animals which have been abandoned often turn vicious and become a danger to keepers and tamers because remaining

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faithful to those who reared them they submit with bad grace to new influences.

When we adopted Yambo we knew what we were undertaking. We had already acquired some experience and learnt patience in the rearing of wild animals. But none of them lived in our house so freely or for so long as Yambo.

I have already related in one of my books¹ the story of several of these pets.

In short it must be admitted that we had never lived for so long on intimate terms with a member of the cat tribe. Since our former pets had been unable to adapt themselves to our character and way of life one question remained in abeyance: could we for our part tolerate those of a wild beast living a partially free existence?

Yambo as he grew up taught us the true meaning of the word "enslavement". Our habits were often disrupted but thanks to our affection we found a compensation for our miseries in the discoveries we made concerning his personality and the satisfaction we obtained from his trust and affection.

We all had our troubles. Now Julia began to moan and to heave great sighs. For no particular reason. She, so courageous, so active and strong minded. It was because. . . .

A feline itself has no unpleasant odour, although it sweats profusely. On the other hand its excrements contain ammonia deposits which give off an acrid odour that makes the eyes smart and irritates the respiratory channels.

Yambo obeyed the call of nature with a regularity that served as a barometer to his state of good health and with an almost military precision.

Once a day was not serious and the faeces could easily be swept up, but for his liquid release it was a more complicated affair. A zinc skirting protected the wall and sawdust was constantly laid round his box. Nevertheless the peculiar way in

¹*Je suis un assassin*, Amiot-Dumont, Paris 1954

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which a chectah micturates caused splashes on the lino and the urine ate through it like an acid. Yambo visited his box at least a dozen times a day and on each occasion the place had to be quickly swabbed down with a rag soaked in disinfectant. It was a great bore but it was no fault of Yambo's. That we had to admit. Cats are very clean and almost coquettish in this respect.

The toilet takes up a good part of the day in the life of a gentleman chectah. Very punctilious in the matter of hygiene Yambo took his time. He smoothed out his coat meticulously and then with great skill washed his head as cats do. This was one of his main activities in his enclosure. He was by no means averse to the ministrations of a female hand. He would listen intently as my wife or Julia got ready the loofah, the wire brush and comb. He would then purr with contentment and follow them obediently.

At the order, "Yambo, lie down," he complied, lay down and waited. Our feline friend knew every phase of the operation. He would obey the simple pressure of a hand.

The comb untangled the thick golden fur on his belly and the slightly silkier chestnut coloured patches on his shoulders and chest and finally the thick woolly fur on the other parts of his body.

Yambo simply adored being combed. "Turn over."

At this order he turned over on his back and offered the other side of his body. After this toilet he would straighten with his own tongue any hairs that had remained out of place.

This gesture always reminded me of the final touches a man gives to his hair when the barber has finished with him. Although some men without even glancing in the mirror murmur to the barber: "That's fine", others invariably say: "Pass me the comb", to rectify and put a final touch to some lock of hair which in their opinion is slightly out of place.

Despite these daily cares the carpets needed the Hoover every day!

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After his daily toilet Yambo always had a good appetite. He required, of course, a diet of raw meat.

In the wild state the big cats live on the flesh of the animals they kill and which provides them with all the protein their constitution needs. Their teeth are adapted to this particular food. The sharp incisors and razor-like canines are designed to tear the flesh of their kill and their intestines to digest the raw meat. The latter in the case of the carnivora measure 1.50 metres as opposed to the four or five in the case of the herbivora. The meat is very quickly digested.

To digest vegetables, on the other hand, needs considerably more time. It has however been accepted that a change of diet will cause an adaptation of the digestive passages. When an animal is given food rich in vegetable matter the large intestine, normally very short in the case of carnivora will extend while the smaller intestine shrinks, but lack of matter that corresponds to the need of the organism can cause serious nutritive and digestive troubles. The body grows weak as the resistance to diseases diminishes. To give a carnivorous animal nothing but vegetables will soon induce pernicious anaemia.

Admittedly domesticity disrupts the sanguinary habits of the wild animal, which no longer has to hunt its own food; the energy expended is less and in consequence it requires less food.

The problem that arose with Yambo was how to procure the meat.

To buy in the markets or from the slaughterhouses meat condemned as unfit for human consumption and sold at derisory prices I had to obtain permission from the Parisian veterinary authorities. Permission was refused.

In future I had to go myself to the market as an ordinary customer and get there very early in the morning.

Again to buy the meat wholesale I had to purchase a full basket containing about seventy-five pounds of inferior quality meat from which we had to subtract about twenty-five to thirty pounds of fat, for the latter gives the animal's liver and diges-

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tive juices too much work to do. We kept the balance in the refrigerator.

There was usually enough to feed Yambo for five or six days but this particular meat tainted the rest of our household provisions.

From time to time, to overcome this inconvenience which became a positive bane we stocked the meat day by day in small cuts from our own butcher. After this our fruits and vegetables were no longer impregnated with the sickly sweet odour from the meat. To our consternation we found that to provide for Yambo in this way doubled our weekly housekeeping bills.

The cheetah normally lives in a hot, tropical climate. When Yambo came to us like a bolt from the blue in the middle of winter 1957, we were not very hopeful of rearing him in the Ile de France which has the reputation of being fatal to any cub of his species.

His first trouble was 'flu. He caught this at the age of one. One evening we heard his raucous coughing. The boisterous little fellow was laid low and refused all food.

The vet came next day and examined him without undue difficulty. My wife had no trouble in taking his temperature on the first day but it became more complicated on the second day. Yambo looked at us intently. As soon as my wife put out her hand to lift his tail he growled angrily. We finally managed to accomplish this difficult task by making him play with Nounours.

The next problem was to thrust a swab of cotton wool soaked with the prescribed medicine down his throat. This was possible only twice because we took him by surprise when he happened to yawn. He lay on his back and fidgeted in his irritation. Forgetting our presence for a brief instant he unclenched his teeth and opened his jaws. We waited for this propitious moment to deposit the swab on his inflamed throat. Only my wife was patient and quick enough with her hands

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to succeed in this tricky manoeuvre. The last attempt made him react viciously. He bared his fangs, gave her a slap and we had to abandon this particular treatment.

The vet had also ordered us to give him six sulphonamide injections. But how was this to be done in practice?

In a zoo it is perfectly simple to treat an animal. The vet uses a shoe, a kind of cage on wheels with a sliding trap door which allows the patient to be imprisoned after it has been lured inside with a piece of meat. With the aid of an external lever the mobile sides can be closed to immobilize the animal so that it can be treated without danger.

When it is a matter of treating a very savage beast, to operate on him or administer medicine it is essential to use this shoe rather than let the beast suffer or die.

Many animals, particularly those of the cat tribe, possess an astonishing memory. The shoe is obligatory for them as well as for the others. The presence of their master does nothing to reassure them. On the contrary, there is the risk of complete loss of confidence, and it is therefore preferable that the specialist be left to act on his own. Then the master can come in to console the patient.

A shoe for six injections? Certainly not. This decision had far-reaching consequences. I amused Yambo while pinning him at the same time against the wall. In the meantime the vet was able to use the needle.

By the fourth injection Yambo had spotted my ruse. As soon as we came into the room he advanced in a threatening manner towards the vet who offered him his open palms. Yambo sniffed them for a long time. Persuaded that they held no syringe he grew calmer and allowed the vet to do his duty. This injection was also successful.

Next day Yambo was completely enlightened. He put up such resistance to our approach that we had to pursue the treatment with antibiotic pills. That was quite another story.

Since the start of his illness he had lost his appetite. A small

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piece of meat containing the pill finally tempted him and he swallowed it. Next day he sniffed it at the start and after chewing it spat out the pill. My wife had to invent another trick. She held out to him the first piece of meat. Confident of her integrity he swallowed it and did not suspect the second helping. . . .

Yambo had an even more serious attack of 'flu when he was eighteen months old. This time it was useless thinking of injections. He had retained a very disagreeable impression of the thermometer.

The pills wrapped up in pieces of meat were our last resource. The first and second morsel were undoctored and the third contained the pill. This was successful for three days but then we had to change the programme, starting with the first mouthful and constantly changing the sequence.

Useless. Yambo would now only take a very large chunk of meat in which the odour of the pill could not be detected.

We were completely at a loss how to treat him, but fortunately he got better of his own accord.

When you have a wild pet in the house it is almost impossible for you to go out. Holidays and trips? The question immediately arises, "Who will look after Yambo?" To-day there are places where one can board out cats and dogs, but none exist for wild animals. Our affection made us accept the inconveniences of the situation. We simply took it in turns to stay at home since this was the only possible means we had of looking after Yambo.

At Barbizon the trap of his enclosure allowed us to clean the soil and to give him his food without actually being in contact with him.

Since the character of Yambo was complex and often unexpected it is easy to see how difficult it would have been to entrust him to a stranger. We had desired his presence and he had the right to demand ours even if it resulted in our enslavement.

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When large dogs adapt themselves badly to life in a flat they grow fat and are subject to all manner of maladies. To confine a cheetah between four walls was to condemn him to rickets and paralysis. More than any other wild animal a cheetah needs space.

The Barbizon property offered us a compromise. From Friday to Monday evening Yambo could relax at his ease. The rest of the week he had to live in Paris with us. There he slept in the linen room and was also allowed access to the corridor and the kitchen.

We had to keep a close watch on him because he had a passion for open doors. His curiosity as he grew up constantly increased. Posted at a window he would watch for hours on end everything that went on in the street below. If only he could have gone down into that busy street! That most intriguing street. As soon as we put our hand on the door knob he was at our heels, begging permission to accompany us.

To avoid provoking a flight complex, for with animals as with children certain bans become invitations to transgress them, and to be able to catch him easily we sometimes opened the door on to the landing.

Yambo did not rush for the stairs. With an elegant paw raised he leant on the banister, raising his body and bending his head he became lost in contemplation of the lift. After a few moments without waiting for our order he returned to the flat.

It was advisable however to close all the exits to avoid any untoward dramas. We had once had the pleasant experience at Barbizon when despite all our precautions Yambo seized an opportunity of going for a walk or rather of chasing a dog through the village.

As a cub he had become familiar with dogs. From the car he always stared with interest at them walking on the pavements although for some time they had ceased to intrigue him.

But what would the cheetah do, we wondered, if he came

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face to face with a dog in the open? It was a tricky question the answer to which we were given in Barbizon.

One exceptionally cold December day we had allowed Yambo to come in to see us earlier than usual. According to his usual custom he climbed up to the first floor, made his tour of inspection of the bedroom, then slunk down to the kitchen, for even at that season the refrigerator in which his meat was kept still proved a great attraction. But the stove where his meat had been put to thaw interested him even more.

He therefore slipped between the two pieces of furniture and sniffed them in silence.

Angèle, the gardener's wife, was so preoccupied with her task that she did not notice the entrance of the cheetah. The door leading to the park was wide open, for a farmer had arrived and was unloading a wagon of peat. A prowling Alsatian tempted by the refuse bins put his nose inside the kitchen door, opened one of the lids and made it crash to the ground with a great din. Surprise made Angèle open the door quickly. Yambo seized the opportunity and catching sight of the dog rushed at him knocking Angèle out of the way. The dog startled by this sudden attack slunk away with his tail between his legs, howling with terror. With easy bounds Yambo followed giving him from time to time a slap on the hind quarters. The wretched dog thoroughly bewildered by these unusual attacks, for none of his kind had ever pursued him with such violence and in complete silence, left the park, turned suddenly by the garage of the Pléiades, the famous Barbizon restaurant and fled in the direction of the Town Hall. The effort had made him breathless, and in his exhaustion he slumped outside the municipal offices trembling but ready to defend his life to the end. Yambo arrived, sniffed to regain his breath and then his muzzle in the air, stared at the panting dog, sat down calmly on his rump and giving him little friendly pats seemed to say: "Had you that time eh?" Half dead with fright the dog was incapable of any reaction. This inert creature having

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lost all interest for Yambo, he stalked off and sat down between the paws of a stone lion at the entrance to the public gardens and began to watch the comings and goings in the street.

Warned by Angèle my wife immediately envisaged the two beasts tearing each other to pieces in a vicious conflict. In her excitement she forgot the famous leash but, with a sigh of relief, saw in the distance the cheetah and the dog sitting side by side in the most peaceful attitudes. Yambo delighted with his outing made no demur when ordered to return home.

This was his reply that day to the question: "What would he do when he met a dog?" "Have a fine chase, of course!" A proof of having been well brought up. In future before letting him out of his enclosure at the Hameau or from the linen room in Paris we alerted the household as the medieval watchman on his night round used to reassure the good citizens that all was well.

"Are all the doors closed?"

"Yes, everything in order."

Yambo was then free.

All our visitors evinced a great interest in our cheetah. After the inevitable: "How are you?" they always added, "And the cheetah?"

Both those who loved and those who detested animals were eager to go and take a look at him. The more enthusiastic insisted on a closer inspection. We would find them either at Barbizon or in Paris in the cage bending over this magnificent animal all eyes and ears, charmed by his indifference but even more delighted if he happened to give them a friendly lick with his tongue.

We soon caught on. To limit our anxiety and the dangers of an accident we removed the keys to his cage. But what could we do in the flat? On the alert we accompanied our friends constantly so as to cope with any eventual display of bad temper on the part of our pet.

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We had to admit that lovers of animals are often far too ingenuous. Some of them, reassured by his placidity would pull his tail while others lifted his chops or tickled his belly. We had the greatest difficulty in explaining to them that a wild animal is not a toy and that in any case no toy liked this form of teasing.

Yambo's toleration of our friends depended on their behaviour and on the fact of us being present, for he had a sense of hospitality. Like most dogs he was susceptible to sartorial correctness. Sometimes he would drop his reserve and go up to the visitor and sniff him. If he happened to find him sympathetic he would lie at his feet and give him a few provocative pats as though to say: "Well scratch me a little behind the ears."

Yambo was quick to sense who liked and who was afraid of him. The people who did not care for animals drew back their legs to keep out of his way or huddled back in their chairs with tense expressions on their faces; he would walk round them with a casual air and lie down some way off. His indifference was a pretence; looking down and whiskers trembling slightly he would subject them to scrutiny then pretend to fall asleep though in actual fact he was watching them out of the corner of his eye.

What was going on in his head? Was he wondering why these people, whom his masters had received, displayed so much coldness towards himself? Between animals and humans sympathy is as spontaneous as it can be between two members of the human race. It is established at the first contact.

Some people use words and make gestures that pacify animals, arouse their confidence, attract and charm them. Others have harsh voices and brusque movements like defence reflexes. They lack that gentleness which inspires the best attachments.

Yambo differentiated between negligence and imagination in clothes. I have a grown up son who sometimes pays us a surprise visit with young people of his own age dressed in blue

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jeans and gaudy pullovers. Their garb always surprised the cheetah.

He would sidle circumspectly up to the boys, sniff at them and once this curious "fur" proved to be harmless, would settle down at their feet.

Would he come to the defence of his masters should they be attacked by thieves?

We put him to the test. I disguised myself as a tramp in an old raincoat with a cap pulled down over my eyes and my cheeks blown out with walnuts. A few lines of stage make-up and a stick. . . . Thus disfigured and disguised, adopting a limp I appeared at the Hameau. Yambo was lying at my wife's feet off the leash.

The deafening noise of the front gate being banged, reached the terrace. I was hidden from Yambo's view by a hedge of oleanders. Alarmed, he gave a start then scrutinized intently this bank of foliage and waited. I appeared. Motionless and growling, lashing his tail and hackles up, his eyes filled with shadow and quivering flanks he watched me. His aspect was terrifying enough to scare away any intruder.

I decided to push the experiment to the limit. Would Yambo run away if I persisted? Would he defend his mistress?

Since I was wearing several garments on top of each other I was not taking much risk from a violent attack. I hobbled slowly towards him in silence. Yambo kept some yards away from me growling louder than ever as he recoiled. Continuing to advance I skirted the wall of the house but kept within reach of the gate ready to flee.

He surprised me completely by the speed of his charge and I barely had time to escape. He crossed the five yards that separated us in two bounds.

After removing my disguise I appeared as though by chance on the terrace. Yambo did not see me. Still preoccupied with his adventure he was roaming round the gate and raising his

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head towards the upstairs rooms to make sure that the mysterious visitor was not there. He displayed a certain amount of nervousness which continued that evening and during the next few days.

The result of this test of his courage spoke for itself. We were very proud of him.



Exploring the refrigerator for the first time, Yambo discovers his meat and ours



What a disappointment for Yambo to find that buses are not for the use of cheetahs!

Fortunately his mistress has no such objections, and so they set out for an exhilarating drive





A child's watering can becomes an excellent toy to experiment with in the morning game

Was Yambo ill? The sniffles and a sore throat, perhaps; not really helped very much by the inhalant





There's much to interest a cheetah in the street, including exciting shop windows



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

David and Goliath

OUR FRIEND Claude returned from Karachi bringing us a baby parrot—a beautiful bird with a bright green plumage and a coral red beak. His neck feathers formed a double collaret of black and scarlet. He answered to the name of Federico.

For the first few days we thought that he would never talk. My wife did her sewing or wrote letters near his cage and kept saying "*Bonjour*" to him, repeating the words with the utmost patience, for that was the best method of teaching him to speak. Bending his head forward his small round eyes gleaming with malice he listened and listened until one day he let forth a series of ear-splitting whistles and barbaric cries accompanied by a great beating of his wings and jerky movements of his head. This was his way of replying to our greetings.

Each day Federico was taken out of his cage. He spent the time speaking in his own strange language which consisted of a variety of screams which we failed to understand.

A single shadow lay over this idyllic scene: Yambo. How would he behave with the parrot? Would he tolerate it? Or what would happen if one day we left the door open by mistake? The parrot would be an easy prey for him because its

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reflexes were slow. His slightest movements were carried out very methodically. We were filled with anxiety.

Perhaps the best thing would be to give Yambo a test in our presence. That day he had remained in his enclosure. To control his movements I kept him on the leash and we entered the room together.

The parrot was perched on top of his cage. In surprise he stopped rocking, thrust out his small head, lumbered a few paces forward and looked at the cheetah over the edge of the cage. Yambo had already spotted him and adopted his attitude of attack. I saw to it that he was well secured on the leash. Yambo approached, spat softly and raised his muzzle towards the parrot in an attempt to sniff it. At this moment the bird suddenly beat his wings and screamed louder than usual. Yambo, thoroughly taken aback, beat a swift retreat.

Federico's initial victory did not reassure us to any great extent for we knew that Yambo with his great courage always liked to pursue matters to the end. He was an exceedingly obstinate creature.

He approached the cage once more where the bird had maintained his vantage point on top and stared at it without moving a muscle. As soon as the cheetah drew close Federico exploded with a violent beating of his wings so that Yambo was forced to beat a retreat a second time. Two setbacks like this were enough for one day.

Yambo repeated his manœuvres next day. Becoming bolder as a result of his success the parrot no longer contented himself with screaming; rocking gaily he walked to the edge of the cage and then burst out into a stream of parrot invective. The disproportion in size between the two adversaries was so great that the parrot amused us greatly by his boldness.

Yambo could not understand how so much noise could come from so small a body. Sometimes he ventured a closer inspection but always hesitated at the last moment, squatted by the door and was content to devour Federico with his eyes. The

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parrot, very much on the alert, was careful not to let his adversary out of his sight. This scene was repeated on several consecutive evenings.

The bird displayed obvious intelligence. He quickly learned the short phrases which my wife had enunciated with so much patience and constant repetition. It seemed to take a delight in them. One day we heard him cry hoarsely: "Yambo, Yambo. Monster!"

In his enclosure the cheetah cocked an ear and turned his head towards the house. This fantastic unfamiliar voice seemed to fill him with terror.

At dinner time when Yambo arrived as usual Federico was in full voice, practising his whole vocabulary. Suddenly he cried once more: "Yambo, Yambo. Monster!" The cheetah rushed into the dining-room from where this insult had come but the bird suddenly fell silent.

Intrigued by the silence he approached the parrot quite peacefully. They were soon beak to muzzle sniffing at each other. Presumably the result was satisfactory for courteous relations were immediately established between our two pets.

The audacity of the parrot now knew no bounds. As soon as Yambo entered the room he came down from his perch and staggered clumsily over to the big cat. Yambo sat down and considered with some amusement this feathered David who had the impertinence to disturb him when he was lapping his saucer of milk and to clamber on his back when he was asleep.

The parrot was a clown, always up to new tricks. As soon as he caught our attention he would start to show off and play the fool. Then he would start his acrobatics: somersaults backwards and forwards carried out on the bar, hanging upside down on one claw and regaining his balance by the sheer strength of his legs—in fact the grand circle . . . Yambo seemed thrilled by this performance and the parrot was obviously flattered.

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In his curiosity our cheetah shed his normal polished reserve when he wished to examine more closely some of the bird's antics, which he found particularly strange.

A miniature ladder had been placed on a table near a bowl containing a couple of goldfish. A tiny fishing rod hung on the rim encouraged Federico to perform a series of co-ordinated motions that astonished Yambo.

The parrot withdrew the ladder with his beak and one claw, placed it at the side of the bowl and hoisted himself up to grab the line. Yambo rose to his feet in an attempt to solve the problem, placed his muzzle against the back of his friend who let forth a squawk of terror and dropped the line in the water not without administering a mighty admonitory peck on the bewildered cheetah's nose.

This was the limit of their relations. Federico's aplomb amused and impressed the cheetah. Bluff was obviously successful since a courageous big cat had been held in check by the goldfish and a parrot, by silence and noise, two phenomena which often strike terror in the heart of a man.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Happy Medium

ALL METHODS of circus training stem from a sound knowledge of the character of the animals destined to take part in the act and of their physical possibilities in order to specialize in a particular turn, but the actual teaching varies according to the masters and the results they wish to achieve.

The kindly training so dear to the English is touching and gratifying for animal lovers although most circus enthusiasts prefer a brutal training which gives them thrills in the safety of their seats under the Big Top.

Both methods of training, the kindly and the violent, in any case impose constraints on the animals, some of which are very brutal; a chimpanzee riding a motor cycle, an elephant balancing on one hoof, a lion on a trampoline are amazing acts which testify to the patience used in training and the punishment the "artistes" have had to undergo before they could execute such gestures, so contrary to their natures.

We never tried to obtain such effects from Yambo. That is the reason why neither of these modes of training appeal to us. Nevertheless although we felt the need for a type of pedagogy appropriate to the nature of a cheetah of his species and to the

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place we reserve for him in our family, we were scared of exaggerating in an excess of liberalism stemming from over generous sentiments, the consequences of which are strange and unexpected both for the masters and their protégés.

It is a fact that love of animals when it becomes a passion assumes some very strange aspects. A sort of humanitarianism which we might call "animalitarianism" drives certain misanthropes to worship and idolize the animal. For them any furred or feathered companion is preferable to the best of humans. They are capable of depriving themselves of necessities in favour of a four-footed friend, while remaining insensitive to human misery.

The most fanatical would willingly sacrifice one of their own kind to save the life of an animal. By their excessive love of animals they have become the enemies of their own species.

Another form of humanitarianism leads certain human beings to busy themselves unduly with their pets. Authoritarian men and women, loathed by their fellows, find in an animal a convenient victim upon whom to vent their despotism. Others are merely harmless egotists; they ignore the natural needs of their four-footed friends, impose habits upon him alien to his nature and push their ingenuousness to the point of trying to instil in him moral and educatory principles.

These lovers of animals would be very surprised if you accused them of being torturers. Don't they spend a fortune on feeding and caring for a cat? Do they not sacrifice their time and leisure to ensure its well-being and happiness? Their intentions are often excellent but the belief that their own notions of comfort and happiness are the same as those of their cats and dogs is often the cause of cruelty committed in all good faith.

The mother of one of my friends nearly paid with her life because of a misunderstanding of this nature. She developed a tyrannical solicitude for her Alsatian.

This big healthy dog in its prime was forced from October

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to wear a hot woollen coat and prevented from leading his normal dog's life. His mistress treated him exactly like a child.

"Come Jacky, come! That's dirty."

Keeping him on a lead, she forced him to renounce his natural pleasure of sniffing the pavement or the trees.

If the poor beast met one of his race he was not even allowed to exchange that little canine greeting of politeness which has been the immemorial habit of dogs. The good woman found it disgusting that Jacky should stick his nose under the tail of some doggy friend.

At home the dog tolerated his mistress' attentions but not without a certain resentment. He was constantly brushed, washed and scented, and even had to sleep on a little Dunlopillo. He was never given a moment's peace.

"Jacky, what do you want now? A piece of sugar? You eat too much. . . . Have a piece of this cake, there's a good boy. You don't want it? You bad dog. . . ."

Out on a walk one day Jacky, flouting his mistress' lessons in comportment tried to sniff at a familiar wall. To prevent him the woman tugged slightly on his lead. Jacky reacted according to his nature; he leaped on her and bit her in the arm.

She was completely bewildered by the sudden revolt of her sweet Jacky. Why did he behave so badly? On her return, still horrified by the incident she took off her coat and went into the bathroom to attend to her bitten arm. She was surprised by growls of rage. As she came out she saw Jacky savaging the coat she had just taken off with his fangs and claws. She did not dare to approach the beast and called for her son. The latter shut the dog up and came to me for advice.

"Your mother's dog has exploded," I told him. "Frustrated in all his natural acts and habits he has conceived a bitter hatred for her. The destruction of her coat was a mere trifle. This animal which is no more vicious than any other, but has now turned savage, should be given to a more understanding master."

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My advice was taken. The new family that took him in lived in the suburbs. The dog had the freedom of the garden, slept in a kennel and barked at the passers-by. He was even covered with fleas, which did not disturb him until they bit too hard. He had never been so happy. Now at last he could lead a real dog's life.

As opposed to these unwitting torturers there are the tortured. These are the tender and generous-hearted with the gift for self-sacrifice who, never daring to offer these infinite treasures to someone for fear of being misunderstood, lavish them on some animal to whom they eventually become a slave.

Others, having had a raw deal in life take refuge in a world where the devotion and affection of an animal serve to some measure as recompense. They devote their care and love to animals, to the exclusion of their fellow men and are only happy in the presence of a bird, a cat, a fish or even a snake.

Some perfectly balanced people who respect the dignity of animals without neglecting their duties to their fellows sometimes unwittingly succumb to "animalitarianism". This is because wild or domesticated beasts are far from being the animated puppets we imagine. Animal personality has features and a power of attraction which are sometimes imposed on the masters as will be seen from the following story.

A vet and his wife took into their Paris flat a young chimpanzee only a few months old. From the very outset he displayed great intelligence and became violently attached to his adopted parents. They decided to keep him.

According to naturalists the chimpanzee, from the earliest age, has the intelligence quota of a child of four. Tests which have been given to both testify to this.

The animal soon showed itself superior to the child in the speed and accuracy of its response. A childless couple with the nagging regrets caused by their sterility, they were bound to

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become deeply attached to this gay, affectionate, malicious and demanding creature which chance had placed in their care.

Teddy, the newly adopted, soon learned to sit at table, to use a spoon and fork and to serve himself with a knife. At meal times he observed a cleanliness in his eating habits which babies do not learn until they are far older. His napkin knotted round his neck he wiped his mouth and, if he wanted a second helping of dessert, he made his wishes known by a series of greedy but discreet grunts pointing with his finger to the delicacies.

Apes have a reputation for being dirty and as a baby Teddy did not know that he was not allowed to relieve himself whenever and wherever he pleased. At the start his behaviour was precisely the same as a child's. But he was taught to use the lavatory and to pull the plug and after a time this became in the nature of a great game. He was so amused in actual fact that his masters had to come in and put a stop to his play.

Dressed as a small boy in a pullover and shorts he seemed very proud of his clothes and looked at himself with pleasure in the mirror.

When the shop bell rang the chimpanzee rushed to the door, opened it, closed it carefully behind the visitor and looked down his nose at the cats and dogs brought into the vet for treatment.

Teddy was thrilled by the radio as much as his parents. Cuddled in the arms of one or the other he enjoyed the music and expressed his pleasure or disgust at the notes which either appealed or offended his artistic ear.

The vet and his wife had unwittingly embarked on a path without foreseeing that they were about to be enslaved.

Teddy hated their maid. Each time he met her he would give her a pinch and tease her by giving raucous grunts not unlike the barking of a dog. The unfortunate girl gave notice. Most of the candidates for her place failed to return after the first interview. Those who made an effort to stay capitulated

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after a few days because the chimpanzee made their life a misery.

Would they have done better to give the ape to a zoo where he could get off some of his superfluous energy? In his case it was useless for when left alone he immediately began to howl. He was free to come and go in the apartment as he pleased, tearing the curtains and bedspreads, breaking rare pieces of china. His destructive paws grabbed everything he fancied. The couple removed all their real valuables and steeled their hearts to having the rest demolished.

This turbulent little creature whose actions called for constant attention influenced the couple's lives very profoundly.

Forgetting their professional and social duties, renouncing any idea of taking a holiday because they could not leave Teddy alone, they were soon ostracized by even their most faithful friends.

No subject apart from Teddy interested them.

They learnt to speak "chimpanzee", a mode of expression rich in tones and cries, representing various psychical and physical states of mind.

They understood this abstract language very quickly and were so delighted with the results that they hardly spoke any other.

Teddy and his parents addressed each other in a colourful language of "hee-hees" and "ha-ha's" and "grr-grr's" without the latter realizing that they must put a stop to this stupidity.

Thus, without being cognizant of the fact, they continued at times to communicate with each other in a language punctuated with these expressive onomatopoeia.

After dinner and at breakfast Teddy joined his masters in their bedroom and was cuddled by one of them. The vet and his wife patiently accepted all the chimpanzee's exigencies until he was four years old.

On reaching this age the ape displayed an obvious prefer-

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ence for his mistress. When the man frustrated his designs Teddy grew angry and showed his displeasure by cries and fits of rage.

Despite his paternal affection for Teddy, our vet had to threaten the recalcitrant with a whip and even to use it on occasions. The ape defended himself courageously. One day, ignoring the stinging lash, he leaped on the man and gave him a vicious bite in the hand.

Encouraged by this success he pressed home the attack after a hectic dispute.

The vet having learnt his lesson was put on his guard and in future used a knuckle duster instead of the whip.

This caused the ape terrible injuries to his jaws and skull. He recoiled and fled, whined for mercy and conceived such a terror of the weapon that it was enough to pick it up for him to behave.

The couple took every care not to arouse his anger so as to avoid having to punish him. They gratified his desires even more implicitly as he now grew to an imposing size.

Teddy, a bundle of nerves and muscles, a champion of agility knew his strength and realized the fear he inspired. He was frankly aggressive to his mistress when she refused to tolerate his caprices, but the unhappy woman accepted his threats in silence to avoid a disastrous conflict.

One morning the husband left for a consultation while his wife was still asleep. Imprudently he allowed Teddy to come into their bedroom. Two hours later on his return since the house was silent he called to his wife.

"Come up quickly" she cried hysterically, "I can't leave the room."

Sensing the danger he took the knuckle duster and entered the bedroom.

An earthquake could not have caused more damage. Pillows gutted, chairs overturned, broken mirrors. On the bed the woman still in her nightdress was weeping, her face was covered

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with bruises and one arm was streaming with blood. Handfuls of her hair lay on the ground together with the sheets that had been torn to ribbons.

Teddy ready to leap stood guard beside his mistress. Although the man was familiar with his outbursts of rage he no longer recognized this beast he had loved so much. The murderous hatred in the ape's eyes flabbergasted him. The vet advanced brandishing his weapon. With a roar of rage the chimpanzee jumped off the bed and fled.

What had happened to cause this terrible outburst of rage?

His wife related the facts.

After her husband had left Teddy had shown great pleasure; with deep gurgles of delight he had started to play amiably with his mistress throwing the pillows at her head, laughing uproariously and then rolling back happily on the bed as he often did. The woman was at first amused by his antics, but things grew awkward when she tried to leave the bed. The chimpanzee began to scream shrilly. When she paid no heed he started to punch her. The blows only encouraged her to elude his blows. This made Teddy even more furious. Seizing her by the hair he tore out handfuls and bit her in the arm when she tried to protect her face.

The couple realized to their despair that Teddy had become too dangerous and decided to send him to the zoo.

What was the cause of this tragedy? Too much goodwill on the part of the married couple or an excess of intelligence of an animal which his masters had elevated to a human plane? Teddy had adapted his conduct perfectly to these abnormal circumstances. The chimpanzee was fully matured sexually and was suddenly overcome by his powerful instincts.

Had the indulgence of his mistress for his antics and the fact that she was a woman made him feel his quality and authority as a male before whom in the jungle bachelors and women bowed without reserve? Was he intent upon punishing her for her disobedience?

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The hostility manifested on occasions for his master had more subtle causes. By aping the animal the man gradually lost his prestige as a superior creature and became a rival for the ape which as a result of repressed sex transferred all its tenderness to his mistress.

He grew jealous and lost no opportunity of settling accounts with his rival as he would have done with any other male of his tribe.

This explanation strikes me as being the most plausible. But can we be sure that it is true?

There are many other strange examples on this score. Some people have a horror of snakes; others adore them. This was the case with a certain married couple.

This good-natured childless pair kept two twelve foot long pythons whom they tended with loving care. The snakes slept in their bed.

I knew both the husband and wife quite well. To hear them talk of their lodgers no one could have guessed that they were snakes. But none of their friends cared for reptiles. So our couple lived an isolated existence and apart from their families. To hear them talk they did not seem to mind and insisted that they obtained enormous satisfaction from their strange pets. Since pythons feed on live animals their masters spent all their leisure in the suburbs hunting for guinea pigs and rabbits.

For their holidays the pair chose very deserted beaches so that their pets could have plenty of room in which to circulate.

According to our latest intelligence the four lead a very happy existence. Why should not a snake be spoiled and adored? Is he not in many religions the eternal symbol of wisdom?

I know of another case of the same type. Out of our acquaintances, the wife of a film producer, grew very fond of a fifteen-foot python belonging to Teddy Michaud. Her sudden passion for this snake caused her to commit the greatest eccentricities.

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When travelling she insisted that the snake should share her room, a whim which undoubtedly complicated the hotel service. The husband accepted his formidable rival with philosophy. Nevertheless he rebelled when his wife tried to introduce the snake into the conjugal bed.

The unhappy man was horrified. He tried to envisage what would happen to him with his weak heart should the snake coil itself round his body. He would certainly have an attack and the idea of such contacts gave him constant nightmares.

He decided to start divorce proceedings but never had the pleasure of hearing the judgment given in his favour, because he was killed in a car accident during the hearing. I have related his story in another book.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

We Give the Orders but Yambo Reigns

THE MORE captivating or more dominating the creature becomes the more difficult it is to preserve a balanced love with animals.

The best way of understanding Yambó, we decided was, if one might say so, to descend to his level. In order to subdue unknown races and to settle among them the great explorers began by adopting their customs and their language.

Was this dangerous? Naturally. Certain of them in an attempt to assimilate were in turn assimilated. Well, we should see! In the meantime we tried to reach the cheetah on his animal plane. But we had made up our minds to be rational and not to copy the excesses of animal lovers of whom I have told in the preceding chapter. But very soon we were out of our depth because Yambo assumed an increasingly dominant place in our lives.

Yambo displayed an astonishingly acute intelligence. His rapid comprehension and capacity for paying attention proved this to us.

Julia maintained that we should soon have to speak in a

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foreign tongue to escape his vigilance, for not only did he interpret our gestures but our words. He, too, "spoke" to express his moods: plaintive or timid squeaks, growls of excitement at play, whines of boredom, nostalgic sighs, loud purrs of contentment and tranquillity, sharp grunts of impatience, threatening snarls or spits of rage. We could easily interpret these signs and improve our relations with him. But he had an additional language, that of the eyes.

He put nuances into them which told us perfectly of the state of his mind. Sometimes his intentions could be read in these large handsome eyes even when he was silent. Tenderness expressed by a gentle glance filtering through half lowered lids. When in a jesting mood his pupils contracted visibly. Attention or inquisitiveness made him open them wide giving his eyes a fixed stare, the forehead wrinkled with two vertical lines running from the base of the nostrils, whiskers raised and the tips of his ears pointed at the unknown object. When he was sulky or displeased he wrinkled his nose and his mouth fell at the corners, with ears laid back he seemed to gaze at people and objects with a far away look in his eyes.

It is maintained that a person's character can be read from his hands and that his gestures will betray his state of mind. In the case of the felines their extremely mobile paws are just as eloquent. In repose the fifth claw, such a bane to our clothes and skins, is semi-retracted in its sheath of muscles; the others which we have blunted are soft; when he grew nervous or impatient the paws made dough in swift brusque movements and at such moments it was as well to be out of reach of them.

Yambo had a way of waking up very similar to our own; he would yawn, stretch and his claws would fan out, following the popular concept of the relaxation which follows sleep or when we are day-dreaming on the bed.

The gestures that followed this relaxation after a siesta were less amusing; our pet lying on his side the pads of his paws

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downwards started to claw anything on which he happened to be lying. This was of no importance to him, but in our house the carpets and covers would not stand up to such treatment and we had to be realistic.

Yambo's tail with a pompom at the tip, by its variety of movements, acted as a barometer for our observations on his behaviour.

Anger or displeasure inspired this portion of his anatomy to give a series of powerful and extensive swishes, capable of knocking a heavy flower vase from a casual table or even lashing our faces if they happened to get in its way. But when the tip wagged to and fro with short sharp jerks it meant that only his curiosity or attention were aroused.

In moments of reverie (Yambo was a great dreamer) or of indolence this pompom moved to and fro very slowly as though lazily clearing the air, just as aimless and incoherent as our doodlings on blotting paper during a tiresome interview when our minds are elsewhere.

When the pompom was completely motionless it was a sure sign that Yambo was really asleep.

Even if he could not speak French we could certainly understand "cheetah". We began to imitate his growls to intimidate him or his howls when we wanted him to follow us. Yambo listened, blinked and looked contemptuous. He seemed to be saying; "My poor friend, how badly you express yourself." Not to mention the diminutive to encourage him or to make him allow himself to be stroked. For André he was "You-You", for Julia "My pretty", for my wife "Crougnous" and for me "Boy". When we were displeased with him however we simply called him "Yambo."

My wife always found reasons to justify her benevolence.

"It's all very well for you to be stern," she would say. "You leave in the morning and come back at night. That's very simple. But Julia and I have to look after him all day. We can't

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scold him all the time." And she would add with an indulgent smile: "He's so sweet. So he is very spoiled."

He was allowed too many liberties . . . far too many. One afternoon I found Yambo and my wife having a rather unusual *tête-à-tête*. The vet had advised us to give him occasionally a newly-killed guinea-pig so that he could absorb the fresh protein. After killing the guinea-pig my wife skinned it, gutted it and offered the entrails to Yambo, seated at her feet. He did not even deign to use his paws to dismember it as wild animals do. No, he would gnaw a thigh and, still purring, wait for the other to be handed to him.

The skull was of course exceedingly solid; Yambo calmly watched his mistresses efforts as she broke it up. He took the fragments delicately from her hand, then reduced them to pulp with his impressive molars and canines. The scene was certainly not lacking in charm; our cheetah was being served as in a restaurant. I watched him with amusement but finally protested: "You're depriving him of the best part. The entrails contain half-digested substances containing vitamins not to be found in carrion in the quantities necessary to his organism. The gall bladder you have so carefully removed because to us it tastes filthy Yambo would have swallowed avidly together with the liver without being nauseated I assure you. On the contrary the bile would have acted as an excellent purge.

"As for giving him the guinea-pig skinned, it tends to upset a kind of instinctive mechanism of the cat tribe which enjoys taking possession of the victim thereby whetting its own appetite. The animal needs to sniff, lick and gut its prey. By suppressing this ritual you are depriving him of his jungle aperitif."

My wife gave me a mocking smile: "You're probably right" she replied. "In any case my experiments seem to have turned out fairly successfully. Look at his stature!"

In an attempt to convince her, I reminded her of the swift violent dramas we witnessed in the Queen Elizabeth Park in

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the Uganda during our recent trip to this British Protectorate.

It took place about fifty yards from our car. The victim, a zebra, despite its well known skill in being always on the alert, had been taken by surprise as a result of a clever ruse on the part of a lioness.

We should have liked to warn this foolish creature which was grazing on the plain where the tall grass reached to its belly. But the inviolate character of the game reserve forbade our interference. In this territory the wild beasts are at home and humans are merely tolerated—visitors who have no right to interfere or to upset the natural behaviour of animals in their natural state.

The lioness slinking forward with calculated slowness advanced towards the zebra. It was wary because it kept raising its head to scan the surrounding bush.

We hoped that at a given moment it would take refuge in flight. Had it spotted the yellow mass in the grass ready to spring? Ears pointed in this direction, it froze for a few seconds then, reassured by the silence, continued to graze. The big cat's natural mimicry was so perfect that we ourselves could hardly distinguish her form in the grass which the sun had turned yellow.

The lioness continued to crawl slowly forward until she was no more than ten yards from the zebra. A slight rustle made by her paws as the great beast collected herself ready to spring suddenly disturbed the ingenuous ungulate. He set off in a panic but the lioness caught up with him in a few bounds.

She leaped on his back seized his neck in her terrible jaws, and clinging on with all her might while she smashed his backbone she brought down her victim beneath her four hundred pounds weight.

The zebra put up a desperate fight. By pressing on the hind-quarters of her prey with her strong muscular forepaws she pinned him to the ground, waiting for the end, which took some time, she disembowelled the zebra.

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A body weighing about six hundred pounds offers a wide choice of titbits. We should have selected rump filets because the habit of eating steaks is instinctive to our natures. The lioness preferred to start with the guts, and liver and the pancreas. Temporarily satiated she broke off her feast to call two magnificent three month old cubs hardly weaned, but already possessing stout appetites.

Although my wife had been with me and witnessed the scene with her own eyes, she remained obstinate. The head keeper of a zoo persuaded her to follow my advice.

When even the door bell rang Yambo knew exactly what to expect. My rings are short and sharp, given at long intervals. I return home at all manner of odd hours. My rings caused him to leave the linen room or the kitchen and roam along the corridor. Halted by the communicating door he would watch the knob intently and cock his ears to listen for my footsteps.

One evening I announced my arrival as usual with three rings. Julia said as soon as I entered: "Yambo's waiting for you. Can't you hear him scratching on the corridor door."

As soon as I had greeted my wife I had to go and visit the cheetah whom I found seated by the door. A few pats from me, some friendly licks and great purring of satisfaction on his part. This was the routine each time I returned to the house.

Sometimes I would go straight to the study to make an urgent telephone call, but Yambo refused to accept this change of ritual. He would scratch the door, softly at first and then yowl impatiently and scratch more viciously. No turn of the knob; not a sign. He went on scratching and giving the most heart-rending whines. How could I resist him? The whole household was in a state of indignation. My wife kept on nagging: "Yambo's getting impatient. Surely you can phone later."

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On such occasions however, he knew how to show a certain humour. So I'd kept him waiting. Next day I would not find him in his place behind the door. The villain was skulking at the end of the corridor near the kitchen. He simply raised his head and stared at me. Surprised by this indifference I cried: "Yambo, come here Yambo, there's a good boy."

I had to repeat my request. "Yambo, Yambo!"

He continued to observe me without stirring. Julia was very amused by my persistence and remarked acidly: "Monsieur, you've called him at least thirty-five times."

I rather fancy my reputation as an animal tamer. That is why I continued to call him and he simply sat there and made mockery of me! In my indignation I made for a nearby room and not until Yambo saw me disappearing did he stand up and trot along at my heels giving my calves friendly taps before rolling over and purring at my feet. I teased him without malice by ruffling his great head and whispered in his ear in feigned anger:

"You hideous cat. You thought you'd got the better of me, eh? Well you see it was I who fooled you."

Yes, I had had the last word. No greater insult I imagine could be levelled at Yambo this proud son of the bush than the epithet "cat".

When I returned home at night worn out, particularly in the winter I sometimes had my supper in bed. I hardly had time to undress and lie down before Yambo was outside our bedroom door. He knocked in his own particular way by running his claws over the woodwork.

His mistress always took his part.

"Yambo's waiting for you."

Julia supported her. "Monsieur, he's there."

It was useless my replying. "All right . . . I'll see to him in a minute."

Yambo went on scratching and my wife alternately conpas-

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sionate and mocking asked: "Why do you have to keep him waiting?"

Julia approved and added with her usual directness: "The poor beast. So much affection to be met with indifference. Listen to him, Monsieur."

We waited for the slightest sign of weariness and when at last I put an end to their impatience the cheetah's rug was spread out on my bed and Julia ran and opened the door. With a bound Yambo was at my side. He sniffed and crushed me under his eighty pounds weight. I was nearly suffocated and as I struggled had to warn him to behave. Yambo released me regretfully and lay down beside me with his head on my shoulder.

He would remain while we ate, stretching out his muzzle to the dishes and sniffing them. I did not much care for this unseemliness, but my wife who always took his part was content to say: "But that's not for you, Yambo. You know you don't care for soup."

After the dessert he settled down comfortably to watch the "telly".

I am sure he appreciated the programmes. His favourites seemed to be the documentaries showing children and animals in action. When a horseman galloped across the screen the cheetah growled, jumped off the end of the bed and ran towards the set. After inspecting it from all sides, he touched the screen with his nose and with an enquiring snort or two gave a disappointed pat to the elusive figures. For a while he would continue to listen to the sound of the voices, then turn his back on the set, return to my feet and fall asleep.

When it was his bedtime we had to show him Nounours before he would consent to go.

My wife looked after Yambo like a child. She was always worried about the temperature of his enclosure, shut the window and checked the thermometer.

In their natural state, living not far from the tropics, his

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brothers of course can survive the intense heat of the days and the cold of the icy nights. Those who live in the hills can easily stand very low temperatures.

The five cheetahs in the zoo sleep out winter and summer, in rain snow and frost and seem to suffer no harm. My wife did not share this opinion and at night insisted on coddling Yambo indoors.

I usually waited for her to leave the room and then opened the window.

Surprise! Had our cheetah shut his own window again? No, his ally also knew how to wait and after we had gone upstairs always found some excuse to go and see Yambo to save him from my cruel treatment.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Altercations

YAMBO AS a cub was inquisitive, active and playful but at the same time quite docile. His education, however—if I may be forgiven for using this simple expression—needed as in the case of children tenderness comprehension and rewards, but also certain corrections which our cheetah did not take lying down.

His first punishment gave him a chance to show his dignity and independence. He received it at Barbizon. Some misbehaviour on his part—I can't quite remember what—caused me to give him a couple of taps with the switch which he did not accept with good grace. His body tense with hackles raised and his tail sweeping the ground he growled angrily and crouched ready to leap at me. This was a trial of strength and authority. I only stopped the punishment when his growls of rage changed to squeaks and he had virtually begged my pardon.

I then let him get his breath. His eyes gradually lost their stare, his chops fell, covering the threatening fangs and his flanks stopped quivering, as he thrust out a paw to administer a last half-hearted slap by way of saving face. Then I stroked

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his ears. A purr of contentment in reply to this habitual caress showed that quarrel was over.

As he grew up he was as demanding and capricious as a wilful child. While it is comparatively easy to chastize the latter, it is far more tricky to act against a full grown animal whose natural weapons render our hands and even our fists ridiculous.

When Yambo made up his mind to act as he pleased it was quite a job to make him see reason. When he settled down in a corner to take a nap it was pointless trying to dislodge him or to appeal to his nature. He would refuse obstinately to obey and adopt a deliberate silence. How can one actually account for this behaviour. Was it instinctive reaction? I took it to be a considered manifestation of his will which could be expressed as follows: "I'm perfectly comfortable in this spot. I'm here, and I'm staying here. Just try and make me go somewhere else. Why? I will answer your calls when it pleases me."

When everything failed—persuasion, seduction, soft calls of every tone and even the production of Nounours, the temptation of a piece of meat might still make him change his mind. When he persisted in his bad will we had recourse to the final expedient—the whip.

Do not let sensitive animal lovers be alarmed. Yambo was never a martyred creature. In our relationship it was often he who imposed his whims on us. In the bush he would have had to obey a host of duties and rules which regulate the relations between his species and the other wild beasts. Pitiless rules for the slightest infringement of them is sanctioned by the fangs and claws of the more powerful, inflicting wounds that were rarely fatal but which would have endangered our lives had we been the victims.

Animal trainers know that every animal fed and educated from an early age by parents of a different species associates them with his own species and reacts towards them as he would react towards his natural parents. In the case of a baby

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elephant or a lion cub his master is therefore considered by him as an elephant or a lion of reduced dimensions. Friends of these animals could but delight in this association could it teach the young animal that its physical weapons were more powerful and effective than those of his adopted father, a fact that is not without danger for the latter. In the bush the law of the stronger regulated differences among cheetahs. The master therefore must be the stronger and in default of fangs and claws operated by a swift and powerful musculature he will have to find substitutes for this deficiency such as the whip.

Ours was a dog whip with a moveable metal ring at the end of the handle which made a metallic sound when it was cracked. Yambo associated this sound with the idea of punishment and this threat usually sufficed to make him obey.

My wife occasionally threw her slipper at him but he must have mistaken it for his ball because it had very little effect on him. Julia never hit him. When he became obstreperous she would shout, jostle him and brandish a length of electric wire which he probably identified with the whip.

Between him and us relations were not always unruffled. At times all threats and cajolery were in vain. Yambo suddenly feigned to be totally deaf and blind. Then we had to take recourse to the strong arm. This was not always without a certain danger because Yambo was soon a very redoubtable opponent.

At the age of two he weighed a hundred and twenty-five pounds and measured two feet six inches from the ground to the withers and seven feet from the muzzle to the tip of his tail.

His method of fighting never varied but his weapons grew more powerful.

During one stormy argument he displayed a very effective technique of defence and attack in which I discovered the principles of Judo. I have practised Judo ever since it was introduced into France. Yambo knew the rudiments of this art without ever having been a pupil of the Japanese maestro,

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Kawachi. At the threat of the whip he would fall on his back and use his four paws to try and come to grips with his adversary. Judokas will smile as they recognize this very advantageous position from which to conquer.

As I have already said, the cheetah has semi-retractile claws, the tips of which are slightly rounded but which can tear, thanks to the lightning speed of the blow. The fifth claw is set very high and does not touch the ground when he walks. It is as sharp and trenchant as a dagger. Fear and rage will increase the animal's strength tenfold.

In a fight Yambo did not use his paws like a lion by thrusting them forward but in a circular movement like a scythe cutting corn. His speed in action and the length of his body called for considerable prudence.

For a long time we blunted the point of this dangerous spur but only very little because the cheetah's claws are very sensitive. At the age of six months Yambo refused categorically to submit to this benign operation; we had to tolerate the permanency of this threatening claw which proved disastrous to our clothes and to our skins which were constantly covered with scratches.

The claws of a feline living in captivity, in a circus cage or in the bush carry germs of extreme virulence. Although we kept Yambo extremely clean the smallest scratch threatened to turn septic for even if our pet had never held a piece of meat in his paws to tear it, he walked round the soil of his enclosure and gambolled in our park. In consequence we immediately disinfected the wound after allowing it to bleed copiously. This elementary type of therapeutics always proved quite successful.

Let me say that Yambo frequently had to be punished but never again did he show the will to attack after his first outburst.

Although he accepted punishment he would not take it from everyone. One evening he slunk into the maid's room and took possession of the bed, untidying it with obvious pleasure.

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Julia immediately rushed for him and Yambo prudently beat a retreat.

André interrupting his meal to tease his wife who was constantly abusive about Yambo as soon as the cheetah came within reach gave it a smack on its hindquarters.

Yambo resented this gesture and turned round with his hackles raised.

André leaped back in terror and slipped through the door to safety. Yambo taken by surprise by this evasion clawed the door unmercifully.

Safe behind the door André tried to pacify the angry beast with affectionate cries of "you, you", which the cheetah completely ignored. Calmed at last he returned to the kitchen. André followed him circumspectly. Yambo was still half angry and administered a couple of gentle pats which we took to be a warning: "All right, this time, but don't ever do that again!"

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Warning

JUST OVER a year ago we replaced the enclosure wall of our park by nine feet high wire netting. This decision gave us both security and pleasure. The unhampered view of the forest continued to attract Yambo. For us it was a window onto thickets where the sun spangled the dark green moss and grey, lichen-covered rocks.

In summer the cheetah had a right to complete freedom at dusk after the horses had returned to the riding school. Yambo's evening stroll at the peak of his physical powers was very instructive.

This pet whom we had cossetted since he was a month old, who preferred cushions to the hard soil, who opened doors, took an interest in television and enjoyed music, now discovered by instinct all the gestures of his wild brothers on search for game.

Lovers of the African bush we admired the perfection of his movements and conjured up pictures of our beloved Africa.

One afternoon Yambo and I were out for a walk. As usual, as soon as he left his enclosure he hurried off to a mossy corner and rolled voluptuously in the grass, sniffed the trees sharp-

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ened his claws on a chestnut trunk, climbed up the slanting apple tree from where he could see the deserted street and then descended. Suddenly he froze. What could he have seen of such great interest. I could see my wife picking mushrooms at the end of the park. I called out to her: "Yambo's watching you."

"I saw him. I have the switch with me."

A motor cycle on the road distracted the cheetah's attention for a moment. My wife took advantage of this to hide behind a tree.

Yambo with neck outstretched embarked upon a perfect stalk. I followed a few paces behind him. At first he kept his nose to the ground to be certain of his prey, then raised his head slightly and looked at the sheltering tree. Finally he crouched very slowly and launched a surprise attack. His movements were so slow that the grass was not even ruffled in his passage. The distance to cover, some fifty yards, gave me a good insight into his skill. Half-way there, judging the wind unfavourable he turned about and set off with legs bent to make better progress. Now he probably found the wind to his liking for he began to advance once more towards the tree.

His eyes fixed on his goal he froze once more with one paw raised, in the attitude of a pointer. The lashing of his tail betrayed his great excitement. He set off again and reached his target by stages.

Despite my extreme caution, I could not avoid a twig crackling underfoot. This sound halted him. He turned round and gave me a baleful look which filled me with confusion. My wife took this opportunity to go and hide behind another tree.

Our cheetah had not spotted the subterfuge. He continued to advance. At a few yards, sure of his advantage he crouched, judged his distance leaped and circled the tree. Surprised to find no one there he stopped in his disappointment, looked up in the branches and finding them deserted made several tours round the tree.

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My wife laughed at his discomfiture and showed herself. He rushed at her, nibbled her arms and legs, even playfully biting her bare arms. How was Yambo to know that a women's flesh would taste so good? His mistress had to wave her switch to put a stop to this game, from which she emerged covered with bruises.

Yambo had given us a complete demonstration of hunting, a rare sight even in the bush.

I have done a great deal of big game hunting in Africa. In one of my books, previously quoted, I explained why I exchanged my gun for a camera.

At Archambault I employed a Sudanese boy for three seasons. He was very tall and as gnarled as an olive tree. His fifty years were a testimony to his skill and courage. His name was Garrache and from the age of eighteen he had roamed the bush, hiring his services to Europeans who were in search of thrills on safari.

His references were written all over his body. Numerous scars testified to his encounters with elephant and lions.

In camp this tall African always wore a chechia which was replaced out hunting by a curious bonnet made of colobo monkey with the tail hanging down his neck like a Davy Crockett cap. My "war paint" he used to say.

One day he saved me from a very embarrassing position by enticing away an elephant who was on the alert and towards which I was advancing without suspecting his presence there. He warned me by a shout, suddenly loomed up in front of the elephant and attracted its charge.

In company with this man every phase of the chase enthralled me—in particular the stalking, for he was an expert in spotting the least detour made by the game and could bring it within range of our guns. He could determine the age of a buffalo, its height, weight, activities, gait and the time since it had passed by the size of the spoor, the broken branches, disturbed grass and the heat of the droppings. Garrache could

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read them like a book and the slightest indications allowed him to describe in advance exactly the type of beast we should encounter.

I also admired his way of approach and the excitement and suspense of the chase, for it was fatal to come upon a herd of buffaloes or elephant without having got into a close enough position to pick out the finest male.

That afternoon at Barbizon Yambo made me evoke these wonderful memories.

The parallel between the knowledge acquired by man and the innate science of the beast, both directed towards the same goal, the stalking of the prey, was strangely similar in its perfection and gestures.

But this perfection suddenly disturbed and worried us. When Yambo stalked his mistress was it only in play? It was only reasonable to take this into account for Yambo had changed a great deal.



After his walk, Yambo liked to quench his thirst in the ornamental pool

"I don't know what this is, but it certainly smells good"





When Yambo decides to attack, you have to move fast! Here I just barely had time to get away



It was useless to try to move Yambo while he was taking his siesta. By a prolonged and determined silence he expressed his refusal to obey



Any cheetah-of-the-world naturally enjoys television, especially when the heroine is threatened by a tiger

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Unpredictable Paths of Nature

NATURE DOES NOT love the weak and for the preservation of the species demands creatures capable of withstanding competition, or adapting themselves to their surroundings and of transmitting to their offspring the best aptitudes for survival.

Even among human beings, the transition from adolescence to maturity causes a veritable revolution in the domain of the personality in its various aspects. Certain incoherent or exaggerated actions on the part of young people can be explained by the revolt of living forces trying to make themselves felt on all planes simultaneously as opposed to the constraints imposed by the family, society or their profession.

Are we perplexed? We certainly are, as are all parents who observe the enthusiasms and inexplicable silences of their children who are at times capable of committing unexpected follies, of deliberately flouting the principles of a stern education, family traditions, codes of honour and ready to embark upon the most inconceivable violence; suicide or even the murder of a parent or a rival.

How would Yambo behave in future towards his masters? Our views on this subject had to be revised every day. Guided

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by our affection and experience we soon noticed with the utmost interest strange signs in the cheetah.

Until the age of two Yambo had displayed great ingenuity. For him everything was a game; a branch, an old ball, a trifle. He would often set off briskly round the park or in his enclosure and for no good reason leap and swerve in rapid hairpin bends only to collapse just as suddenly on the grass, his flanks quivering from the effort.

This need for being active with no precise goal was the expression of his youthful ebullience. After a time running no longer appealed to him. In six months he had developed twenty pounds of muscle mainly massed about his shoulders and thighs, giving him a strong body and powerful limbs. Later when we threw a ball to Yambo he would trot slowly towards it, give it a pat and then lay down beside it.

We had the impression that he slept a great deal. I say "impression" because the sleep of wild animals is the hardest thing to observe with accuracy. The absolute necessity for them to be constantly on the alert makes it very difficult to catch them unawares.

At the time I was hunting big game in Africa I managed to approach an elephant at rest leaning up against a tree. His enormous ears lashed the air like fans, the brusque movements of his head, tail or trunk chasing away the host of insects attracted by his massive body, proved that the beast was slumbering but not really asleep, or at least in the way we envisage sleeping, with a certain loss of consciousness. The breaking of a branch would have sufficed to put him to flight.

Yambo knew nothing of life in the bush. He evolved between the tranquillity of a civilized and unmenaced life and the vigilance he had inherited from his ancestors.

If he slept, the familiar noises of the house, our comings and goings, the chatter or the music left him unmoved, but an

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object falling on the tiles would make him rise to his feet on the alert.

The amazing potential of Yambo's subconscious in classifying noises which would provoke a state of alert encouraged us to try and surprise him while he was asleep. One evening we had been to a party in Paris and returned very late to Barbizon. We tried everything even to leaving the car a long way from the house and approaching his enclosure across the lawn on tiptoe. Yambo lying on his straw but on the *qui vive* greeted us in the usual fashion by purring.

The cheetah's senses therefore adapted themselves perfectly to the circumstances and surroundings which we had imposed upon him. The dark night, the noises of the forest, the barking of foxes and the hooting of brown owls probably reconstructed the atmosphere of the bush, or perhaps his instinct for self-preservation took over as though he had once lived there.

As a cub Yambo slept during a great part of the night. Julia whose room was next to the linen-room where we shut up our little friend frequently told us so.

After six months at Barbizon our cheetah changed his hours of repose.

His mistress finally agreed no longer to coddle him in a warm hut. This privilege fulfilled his most secret desires. He entered his domain through the door of his "house" but was so afraid of being shut in that hardly had he entered it than he rushed for the trap door through which he could gain the outer enclosure that was partially roofed with tiles.

My wife was distressed to find her "stubborn creature" as she called him, curled up on his heap of straw his nose beneath his tail, weathering the icy blast, the mist and the cold at 10° below.

True his fur was very thick on the shoulders and from three to four inches long on his belly; on the rest of his body it waved in sleek, tight curls.

Yambo although a native of the tropics loved the cold: in

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the winter he adored rolling in the snow and even in icy water. This régime surprisingly enough suited him as we could see by his stature and his appetite. By spending his nights in the open air he was only following the habits of his species which rest through the day and hunt by night. In the morning Yambo seemed very tired and remained on his straw until nine o'clock. He left it for a brief moment to sniff his favourite spots for relieving nature then lay down once more on his litter. After about an hour he stretched, rolled up in a ball, yawned and began his usual routine. First a tour of inspection round his domain then, pacing up and down at walking pace or a trot according to his mood and the objects that demanded his attention—the comings and goings of his masters, the gardener, the riders in the Bornage drive or the birds that were bold enough to come and peck his meat right under his nose. Sometimes he sharpened his claws on a tree trunk that had lost all its bark as a result of having served to relax his muscles. These tasks lasted until about one o'clock in the afternoon when he took a siesta and it was useless to disturb him until half past five. For the rest of the day he was as busy as he had been during the morning.

In the winter Yambo joined us at six o'clock in the afternoon having apparently exhausted his energy; this is why his presence was far less of a nuisance than that of a dog would have been.

His first steps naturally led to the kitchen; then he climbed up to the first floor merely to see that nothing had changed overnight and finally settled in the living-room, particularly if my wife happened to be sewing there.

At night on my return from Paris I loved to surprise this charmingly picturesque scene; my wife in an arm-chair near the fire which the gardener always lit before going home. I could catch a glimpse of her head and shoulders and her hands sewing, knitting or doing her embroidery. Lying at her feet in

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a vast pool of light cast by a table lamp which left the rest of the room in shadow Yambo seemed enormous and very impressive.

The glow of the flames as they consumed a dry fir log cast fantastic shadows on the walls of this unusual conversation piece; a picture calculated to disturb any ill-intentioned visitor.

During week-ends Yambo made a change in his daily routine. He had observed that I worked before supper in my study which I had installed in the wooden ch[^]atet. He would go into the dining-room from where he could see me through the windows and stay there watching my movements until I returned.

Sometimes his mistress touched by this solicitude would open the gate leading to the park for him. Yambo who did not wait to be asked a second time trotted as far as my hut, scratched, grew impatient and, as soon as I opened the door stalked into the room, sniffed round every corner and then lay down under the table until the bell rang for supper.

The slavery imposed on us by Yambo appears in retrospect to be the most natural thing in the world. As he grew up he submitted to our demands with good grace. This kind of gentlemen's agreement made our relationship comparatively easy.

But we realized a little more each day that it was not enough that we should feed lodge and care for him; that he should respect our furniture and also our friends, for this is the type of pact concluded by animals trained or domesticated by their master under a certain duress. We were neither trainers nor keepers, and Yambo also had his preferences, tastes, inclinations, aversions, hopes, principles and feelings. Most humans insist that animals are different from us. Although we did not entirely subscribe to this view we were aware of the many similarities that exist between humans and animals. For example, the most patient person in the world loathes having his nose tickled for a joke when he is asleep.

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We often took this liberty with Yambo without arousing any unpleasant reaction until one day his angry growls told us quite definitely that this "simply wasn't done". We should have thought of this before. We so often forgot that he was of another species as he must often have forgot that we were humans. This caused a number of misunderstandings and a few modifications in our behaviour towards him.

We had to give up teasing him when, lying on his back his paws ready to strike he defended his throat or neck from the threat of our hands. His ripostes delighted me because they were exactly the same—though perhaps rather more ingenious—as those of my Judo opponents when parrying the attack of an adversary from a recumbent position.

When despite his vigilance I could seize him by the throat, avoiding his teeth and paws, I was filled with pride. My victory was celebrated by scratching him behind the ears and forcing him to turn his head to lick my hand.

But the swiftness of my gestures to take him by surprise made him use both teeth and claws, and, since these were powerful, scratches, bites and torn clothes were the harmless consequences. We were fascinated by making Yambo chase us; he never failed to enter into the sport. We could not help admiring the grace of his bounds and his delight at being able to catch us after a few yards. We were never really afraid that Yambo would follow the example of his brothers and pounce when he caught us, for they of course only chase to kill. We had to avoid receiving—even when waiting for him with a firm stance—a hundred pound of muscle and sinew hurtling at us at a speed of 50 m.p.h. No one could have resisted such a shock.

For his part he still liked to practise the surprise approach and took advantages of the bushes in his stalking. On two occasions he thought that he had outwitted me, but I had been observing him in a mirror and I could catch him in my arms with no more damage than a good shaking. Yambo, proud of

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his exploit nibbled at my hands and then stalked off proudly with tail erect as the victor.

These games were soon barred for to be subjected to a surprise attack meant to expose ourselves to dangerous misunderstandings. Yambo seemed very surprised by our change of humour. He could not of course understand why we had suddenly forbidden him a distraction that we had previously enjoyed and encouraged.

He may have thought that it was necessary to perfect the rules, for as a result of his contact with humans his intelligence had been enriched by subtleties and a somewhat disconcerting art of dissimulation.

When out on the leash I turned my back on him and wanted to observe him, I had only to turn my head slightly for him to feel that my attention was upon him. To my surprise I found his eyes on me and that he was shaking his head trying to foresee my eventual reactions. His eyes seemed to say: "Can he or can he not see me?" He would hesitate, continue his walk sniffing at some old rag or biting off the heads of some weed as dogs do to doctor themselves.

My use of the mirror deceived him twice. He had approached to pounce, but when I turned round sharply and showed him the whip he swerved passed me two yards away, stood on his hind legs up a birch and pretended to be interested in something at the top of the tree.

The second time he shot past me as though ignoring me and slumped down on the mossy ground rolling over with half closed eyes in the sensuous attitude of a townsman who finds himself in the fields after a week's work in a factory. The hypocritical innocence in his eyes was remarkable.

From these two experiences he concluded that it was difficult to take me by surprise, and I realized the need to keep my eye on him.

Nevertheless under the bushes where he liked to hide at dusk the good-natured cheetah was instantly transformed into a

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magnificent statue of a sentry. He followed me with his eyes and if I pretended to lose interest in him for a second I saw him emerge from the foliage with his legs bent and his muzzle to the ground. Then I would have to warn him: "I can see you, Yambo." A crack of the whip and the sound of the metal ring confirmed my intention not to participate in the game. Then he rose with dignity and casually walked past me.

My wife had given up accompanying us on these walks for Yambo displayed very mixed feelings towards her. We were not entirely in agreement as to the cause of his behaviour.

"He only wants to play," she maintained.

In an attempt to interpret Yambo's behaviour I went to the zoo to observe his wild brothers and sisters. There were five of them in captivity—two males and three females.

Cheetahs are playful, boisterous and on occasions vindictive. Two of them for example may be playing when suddenly, for no apparent reason, they will growl, bare their teeth and paw the air viciously. I could not help thinking what effect these razor-blade claws would have on our pathetically vulnerable skins.

Would this be Yambo's new way of playing now that he was occasionally lethargic and morose. Perhaps. Alas we had neither his hide, his claws nor his fangs. We could not accept the punishment of this game or return as good as he gave. That is why we had to abandon it.

As a cub I recall that Yambo could not bear to be left alone even if only for a few minutes. He was maddened by our silence and tried to attract our attention by a series of squeaks. He never changed in this respect.

The starting of my car disturbed him far more than it had done at La Franchardière. The noise of the engine must have signified abandonment to him for he trotted and leaped in his enclosure and hurled himself against the small window through which he could watch the comings and goings in the house. He

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would stand there motionless for minutes on end keeping a distressed eye on all our movements.

When business obliged us to leave for several days we were hesitant because in our absence Yambo would refuse to eat. He watched for our return and it was touching to see his joy on seeing us again; purring, licks with his pink tongue, rubbing his body against our legs. We were apparently entitled to these demonstrations from a Yambo who immediately recovered his appetite and his jauntiness.

A proprietary instinct is quite common among animals. Men in their search for a better life have the most conflicting ideas as to how to achieve it. Some preach a community life, others individualism and private enterprise. The philosophical aspect of their ideal they attribute to the spirit and the intelligence.

In the animal world the most conflicting concepts are practised quite naturally. Certain very vulnerable animals such as antelope, gnus and zebras, driven by the herd instinct, group themselves beneath the authority and protection of the males so as to outwit their enemies more easily and thus have an easier life. Other more developed species such as monkeys organize themselves in troops in their joint search for food and, in common with most creatures, to ensure a more effective defence.

The lions who are the lords of the jungle usually live in prides. Those familiar with the bush know well how intelligently they organize their hunts to bring down and kill their prey.

The tiger and the panther, however, prefer to hunt alone and have a very developed sense of ownership. The tiger has well determined hunting grounds and woe betide the male or even the female—except in the rutting season—who dares to poach on his preserves.

Among the "vegetarians", the rhinoceros for example displays the same intransigence. He is king in his territory and will

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use his horn to good purpose against intruders. The hippopotamus, whose reputation for geniality is quite unfounded, lives in herds in the rivers and proves to be sly and intractable in the face of any infringement of his rights of ownership. The males obey the law "what I have, I hold" and are never content with theoretical frontiers.

Similar to our peasants whose attachment to the soil is well known, the hippo insists on a precise demarcation of his territory and in default of frontier stones uses his excrement. He piles his droppings at the foot of trees or under rocks and visits the site each day to increase the volume, in affirmation of his rights.

This claim staking is common to most animals, both wild and domestic.

It is the job of the males. They use the strong smelling natural products which nature has given them—the sweat from certain glands, urine or excrement left at certain spots or rubbed on a tree trunk or a rock—with the specific object of marking the region they consider to belong to them and of warning the males of their species that the land is occupied.

During our last trip to Africa at the Ruindi Camp in one of the Belgian Congo National Parks we were invited to dinner one evening by the regional commissioner. Our hut was a few hundred yards from his house. On entering his little garden we were surprised to find that the two gate posts were half hidden by hippopotamus turds. He was very amused by our surprise.

"Oh yes," he said with a laugh, "every evening a pair of hippos come and confirm their rights by a new deposit. When they meet there is usually a terrific scrap. What can I do about it? I put up with them otherwise I should have to kill them both if I wished to insist to a point of obstinacy upon my own rights."

The fidelity of the hippopotamus to his territory has allowed me to make observations as to the exact form of these "rights",

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and to discover that for a long time they have submitted to what the human laws of property describe as "easement".

This consists of an accord between several tenants. If for example difficulty of access to the rivers forces them to use the same path, the owner of the territory allows his neighbours to use this path but there the concession ends.

Sometimes these "easements" become complicated because several outlying tenants are obliged to cross several territories.

Between different species which do not threaten each other, the exclusivity of territory is not enforced with such intransigence. The representatives of these species have territories which are superimposed or interlaced and the result is a good neighbourhood which does not interfere with the habits of either.

To be fair, do we not act in precisely the same way?

The birds on the housetops, a stray cat or dog that crosses our garden, may amuse or annoy us because they trample down the flowers or eat the seeds, but let a stranger commit a similar intrusion and we should consider the fact as a trespass, and if he refused to leave we should possibly be prepared to commit violence to expel him.

The animal code is far more simple and swifter to enforce.

There are no lawyers or judges; the disputes are settled by combat and naturally the stronger triumphs over the weaker.

And what of sanctions? They can be read on the flanks of the mastodon, in huge scars on the hides of hippopotamus which testify that neither love nor vested interests can be trifled with.

Yambo had the same instinct for property. Although he was very attached to his plush bear he had also bespoken an old blanket which he dragged about the house. No one was allowed to touch it. True that it had for him a more precise significance of which we shall speak later.

The possessive instinct caused him in many other cases to adopt an aggressive attitude. He did not like strangers entering

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the park, our country villa or the Paris flat unless they were in our company. Only the family was allowed to visit the linen-room which was his own private domain. His enclosure at Barbizon was indisputably his. Yambo was faithful to his "boundaries". As soon as Julia started to remove his excrement with her dustpan and brush, he would rush for the utensils and bite them; his growling did not cease until the door put an end to his claims.

If we touched the pallet which we put in his hut in the summer as being cooler for him than ordinary straw he grew agitated and annoyed because it was impregnated with a very natural odour. He refused to allow a single wisp of straw to be displaced.

If he happened to be in the park and heard the noise of litter being removed from his enclosure to facilitate drying, he would cock his ears immediately and trot towards the hut to guard his property with rage in his eyes. The cleaning was therefore carried out in his absence, during his evening visit to us.

This well defined sense of property is also to be found among animals in captivity.

I have already told the tragic story of the keeper in the Paris Zoo who cleaned the big cats cages without expelling the occupants according to the regulations.

The beasts rebelled in their own fashion against this violation of their domicile. The lions roared, the bears growled, but the man, used to their complaints, paid little attention.

One morning, however a bear charged, disembowelled him and savaged his corpse.

Many theories were put forward to account for this beast going berserk. The unfortunate man had never ill-treated his charges or tried to frighten them. On the contrary he reassured them with his words before using his hose to remove their droppings.

Dirthe water jet perhaps terrify them by its unexpectedness.

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Anyone familiar with animals knows that they grow accustomed to noises and gestures provided they do not feel threatened by them.

According to our experiences with Yambo I think that the anger of the lions and bears was their way of expressing annoyance at the daily violation of their domicile by the keeper. The bear's murderous attack was an explosion caused by a long restrained exasperation.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Perplexity

IN OUR desire to understand Yambo better we were determined to be reasonable. We often discussed the matter.

We tried to interpret his reactions, some of which we found both enchanting and moving while others—his fits of bad temper for example—surprised us by their violence. Were these merely the caprices of a spoiled child or his weariness as a result of too much human company?

A pet Alsatian would have been a pleasant companion for him, for a common ancestor has bequeathed identical characteristics to his descendants—similar physical forms, aggressiveness, the need to run and leap, a peaceful temperament and a very similar type of intelligence. But we could not burden ourselves with a dog merely for the distraction of Yambo.

Our cheetah had lived on relatively good terms with Futé, the Persian cat; he got on extremely well with the intrepid Federico. But when he met them he was still a cub. For men as well as for animals infancy facilitates friendship.

We wondered whether his instincts as a hunting cat would suddenly manifest themselves now that he was adult if he were given an opportunity to meet other animals.

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Yambo's behaviour in the presence of other beasts would, we believed, reveal aspects of his personality which had remained hidden by the relative isolation in which we kept him.

Had we suddenly acquired a reputation as specialists in rearing members of the cat family? During one month we had three cheetahs to feed.

One of Claude's friends asked us to look after two cubs for a few days. They were both in bad shape and we immediately accepted.

That evening at about ten o'clock two skinny orphans, their bellies wracked with diarrhoea, were crawling clumsily on the kitchen floor. After giving them some treatment—a meal of meat and lacteol—we put the little fellows to bed in a rabbit hutch.

A fortnight passed. Their owner paid us a visit, noticed with satisfaction the improvement in his beasts, was loud in praise and left them in our care, not quite knowing what to do with them. They are still with us.

We were in no hurry to return these male and female cubs. They were very timid to begin with but soon learned to appreciate my wife's solicitude and to-day they never leave her.

To-day they wander all day through the park, choosing as their playground the petunia beds and, as an object to exercise their muscles, the delicate trunk of a weeping willow.

I was quick to prevent any damage to this tree. It was given a covering of straw and wire netting, which helped the cubs to climb it. They sharpened their teeth on the rose trees and the shoots of the virginia creeper. The lawn could not resist the ammonia content in their urine. Everywhere these little devils made water large circles of dirty yellow dead grass appeared among the bright green. These ravages were easy to forgive. We enjoyed the way they chased each other. There were wonderful fights, in the course of which the female always managed to beat her brother—by catching him behind the ear and keeping his head on the ground.

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Federico the parrot, when released from his cage, was a favourite object of attack. The bird kept his head and, lying on his back, thrust out his claws in all directions to keep his adversaries at bay.

We anticipated that the presence of our new lodgers would bring Yambo a certain amount of joy. My wife sentimentally imagined Yambo lying on the grass of his enclosure, playing gently with his young brother and sister, and at night offering them the shelter of his soft warm belly.

I was not deceived by these charming images. A lion tamer had told me that among animals there exists a certain sense of protection and even attraction on the part of the strong for the weak. A race horse sometimes needs in his stall the presence of a sheep or a rabbit to break the tedium; a cat will bring up mice, and a tigress has been known to adopt lion cubs, etc. Among animals, as among men, one occasionally finds warm hearts.

Yambo had immediately sensed the presence of the cubs. During his walk he froze, sniffed for a long time at the places where they had slept and had left their droppings.

The introduction was quite exciting. Protected by the wire netting behind which their big brother stood motionless staring at them, the two little creatures displayed a certain amount of courage. But Yambo raised his hackles and let forth a series of deep growls. The cubs squeaked and ran away.

The following morning the little rascals arrived of their own accord to have another look at their extremely inhospitable compatriot. We brought them up to him so that he could sniff and recognize them. Yambo immediately rushed at the netting, his eyes flashing with rage. We had hoped for quite a different reception.

Seeing them every day, Yambo's hatred increased. He gave a growl which began deep down in his throat and ended on a note as shrill as a siren. Despite this terrible threat the innocents still braved him. The wire netting afforded them solid pro-

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tection. They ran towards their elder with aggressive growls, their tails swelled and the hump on their shoulders increased out of all proportion. Having shown their courage in this way they retreated at the gallop in single file, trembling, skidding and tumbling. As soon as they had recovered they started to fight each other and this continued without a pause until night-fall.

Neither the call of his species nor the attraction of the sexes appeared to have any influence on Yambo. Rather the contrary. Had his dormant instincts been stifled by his change of surroundings and the existence he led? This was the mystery.

So that the cubs could enjoy a little of the evening cool we shut them up in an enclosure which had formerly been a barnyard. The chickens had made a number of nests where the cubs played about at their leisure, playing hide and seek with each other.

Yambo discovered them one evening when out for a walk. He had already passed the netting several times without noticing them, for only their heads were visible and at his approach they had not dared to move.

Yambo looked for them obstinately, sensing their presence in this corner of the property. He finally spotted them and we grew anxious once more, for we could guess his intention of killing them. The cubs were well aware of the danger that threatened them. They mewed and squeaked in their terror. Yambo charged, galloped round the enclosure, trying to dislodge them and to make them flee, for he knew that in a chase he would have the advantage. But the little ones had plenty of cunning. They stopped their squeaking, went more deeply to ground and watched peacefully from their vantage point the spectacle of their angry brother rushing round the enclosure.

Enemy? Yes, Yambo would be their enemy to the death. One evening as he was about to go for his walk he thought that he could see one of the cubs in his enclosure. Raising his head, graceful and supple, he embarked upon his classic approach.

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At the trot, increasing to a gallop, he sped through the open door and flung himself on his plush bear. The chestnut fur had confused him. Growling and seizing it in his jaws, he made several tours of his domain. Pacified at last, he squatted, placed it on his paws and sniffed at it. He must have realized his mistake, for he abandoned it instantly.

What impulse was Yambo obeying? Possibly jealousy. But we had often stroked dogs in his presence and this had merely aroused his curiosity. Was it male rivalry? This argument could be accepted, but in this case the female should have provoked a much more lively interest. Had Yambo mistaken the appearances. Possibly his virility, which was patently visible, had accentuated his instinct for ownership and this instinct had made him consider the cubs as rivals trespassing on his property. Why not?

In any case this animosity towards his brothers perplexed us because we could not really understand the reasons.

But other incidents surprised us even more.

The village of Macherin is situated about a mile and a half from Barbizon. We knew a farmer there, M. Lefaure, who supplied us with rabbits, chickens and eggs.

Yambo often accompanied my wife in the car when she drove there. He would look at the countryside through the windows and take an interest in anything that happened to move on the road. Horses above all made him turn round and shake his head with the gravity of a municipal councillor greeting his electors.

The chickens, turkeys and ducks in the barnyard captured his attention. His nose against the window, he followed their movements with the greatest curiosity. What appeared to intrigue him most were the rabbits which crowded in one corner of the yard.

What would he do were he free?

We tried an experiment on the leash by presenting a rabbit

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to the cheetah, which we placed under his nose. Yambo looked at it, licked it and turned away. The poultry also interested him for a few minutes but no more. Then we allowed him to roam free and he was allowed to make his own tour of exploration.

He wandered immediately to the poultry and inspected them calmly. Then his attention was diverted to the rabbits, which roamed free. The first one which lifted his pink nose was sniffed all over. He seized another, kept it between his paws and conscientiously washed it. After this careful toilet he trotted to examine four leverets. He smelt them, seemed to be amused at their sudden fear and proceeded to lie down lazily in the grass. Regaining confidence the rabbits played about between his paws. Two of them, growing bolder, actually climbed on to his back. Yambo paid no attention. But they had claws like the parrot. Yambo stood up brusquely and the little devils toppled down among their brothers, perplexed by this sudden dismissal.

The Lefaures kept a very intelligent and capricious goat, Biquette, who was always prepared to butt any importunate dogs or visitors.

Yambo had not yet met her, when she suddenly appeared in the middle of a field near the barn. With an enquiring eye, his muzzle to the ground, he made his way slowly forward.

Biquette was grazing. To the rhythm of her jaws her goatee kept time like a metronome. She raised her head, noticed this moving mass and waited impassively.

The cheetah continued to advance, swaying gracefully. As soon as he halted the goat, suddenly growing nervous, turned round and fled, but with a single leap Yambo caught her and leaped on her.

To keep her a prisoner, although she was bleating with terror, Yambo pressed on her spine and seemed very embarrassed by this dominating position when we ran up. His eyes seemed

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to say: "What am I to do with this creature?" He had used his paws to immobilize the fugitive but neither his claws nor his teeth.

I freed the goat by pulling Yambo off by the scruff of the neck and the tail. He offered no resistance and returned with us to the courtyard, where he was due to experience a more powerful emotion.

The farmers were raising a boar. He was ten months old and weighed two hundred pounds, answered to the name of Titi and lived in a sty with a low wooden door.

Yambo had not yet visited this part of the farm. He wandered off cautiously with neck outstretched and hackles raised in the attitude of a hunting dog.

Titi could not see him but he must have sensed Yambo's presence for his impatient grunts for food (feeding time was near) ceased abruptly. Standing on his hind legs at the door, Yambo was overawed by the sight. The shakings of his head followed the movements of the boar shuffling about in his sty.

Suddenly forcing the door open Titi fled in terror into the courtyard. Yambo leaped off in pursuit. Thanks to his deceptive weaving the less speedy boar escaped his attacks. Yambo skidded. Titi made up ground and took refuge in a shed, followed by the chectah. There was soon a terrifying din of cans being overturned. Yambo shot out as from a catapult and sped across the courtyard with Titi at his heels.

It was an incredible scene. This change of rôles was to say the least of it unexpected; the boar chased him into every corner. Losing his head Yambo cast a despairing eye at the height of the walls. Fortunately the door of our car had remained open. Panting violently he took refuge in it pursued by Titi who raised a threatening snout at Yambo now out of reach.

The pride exhibited by the Lefaire family appeared to us indecent. They gathered round the boar offering him carrots, cajoling him and all speaking at the same time praising his

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skill and courage. They even began to cast a slur on Yambo's courage and this thoroughly irritated us. In the car we planned a revenge on the lines of a boxing manager whose "golden boy" has succumbed to the blows of an unworthy adversary.

On the return journey I looked enquiringly at my wife. She avoided my gaze and remained silent.

We were disappointed I must admit and we resented as a personal defeat the flight of our Yambo before a common pig.

That evening we agreed however that the affair had its compensations. Did his aristocratic behaviour to the rabbits prove that our cheetah was growing more human or had his hereditary ferocity been put to sleep by our coddling? When he had held the goat at his mercy his embarrassment was clearly a proof of his innocence. Our cheetah did not know the purpose for which his powerful teeth and murderous claws had been given to him. One of his wild brothers would not have hesitated to seize the unfortunate beast by the neck and immobilize it for ever.

I put forward another explanation: the boar in our grief we had treated as a common pig has a reputation for courage as many hunters can testify. The African, Indian and Asian boars and their cousin the American peccary when in a herd can rout any of the large carnivora.

Woe betide the wild animal which to escape them takes refuge up a tree or on a rock. Besieged for days by these ill-tempered creatures he has only one choice: to die of hunger or to be gored to pieces if he attempts to flee.

Had Yambo's instinct warned him of his adversary's prowess? Had he shown great intelligence by breaking off the combat? But these explanations and excuses were made without much conviction, for each of us could read the fear in the other's mind.

Had we made a poltroon of this prince of the bush? A wet nurse for rabbits? A coward that fled before a determined boar?

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We felt that we were on the down grade for if we allowed our pride to run its course we should soon be reproaching our poor Yambo for not having killed rabbits, turkeys, chickens and last but not least the boar.

How tortuous is the mind of man and its reasonings.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Love—Passion—Jealousy—Despair

THE TRANSFORMATIONS of our adult cheetah always managed to take us by surprise. His individuality suddenly exerted itself on all planes at the same time, notably on the sexual plane.

Freud interprets human neuroses by psycho-sexual influences and sees in the behaviour of the virgin who sleeps hugging her pillow as a subconscious commencement of the sexual act.

Our cheetah was probably subject to the same influences as the virgin, for he could not sleep without his old blanket which he dragged about the flat, allowing no one to touch it. He would roll on its tattered folds with dreamy eyes and rub his head against the coarse material. Sometimes he seized it in his jaws and hugged it frenziedly with his paws while his teeth tore it into further shreds. His gestures were those which male cats use to dominate the queens.

To counteract this permanent exhausting excitement which persisted even outside the rutting periods, we removed the blanket when we went out to Barbizon.

The first day Yambo searched for it in the park and in every nook and cranny of the house. In the course of his investigations he would freeze and utter a kind of bleating which we

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interpreted as a call, listen attentively and then continue his search. Next day other worries preoccupied him.

The taste for ownership and violence, doubtless sexually inspired, manifested by Yambo in defence of his old blanket was transferred to his bear, his mattress or his droppings. With age this tendency increased and appeared strange to us. Yambo the solitary was perhaps instinctively seeking the smell of his own kind. A hundred times a day he would squat, sniff and sniff again for animal odours. But this examination was more methodical on Friday nights when we arrived at Barbizon for the week-end.

One day last April on our arrival at the villa I went in to him at nightfall to fetch him for his usual evening visit. I no longer feared that our friend would run away, but to prevent him getting the idea into his head of a walk on his own in the park, which would force me to look for him in the dark, I took him on the leash. The terrace lamps round the house were unlit, for the light from the front door which fell on Yambo's hut was sufficient for me to see my way.

As I approached the netting I found Yambo very preoccupied in reconnoitring one of his spots. I opened the door, went over to him, adjusted his collar and waited for him to finish his inspection; but since this looked like lasting some time I tugged lightly on the chain; when he took no notice of this invitation I pulled harder. Yambo coughed, resisted and finally consented to follow me. We had not crossed the threshold before I felt two taps on my leg from his paws. Without stopping I said to him: "So you want to play?"

But as we left the door, the leash tightened and when I turned round I was surprised to see a transformed Yambo with back arched lowered head and flashing eyes of almost unbearable phosphorescence. Surprise made me hesitate for a moment before calling to my wife:

"Bring me the whip. Yambo's playing the fool".

She ran up and handed me the instrument. Yambo im-

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mediately shrank to a third of his size and started to walk respectfully as usual to heel. He was his own charming self that evening as usual. But why that sudden hostility?

Yambo's new behaviour and his amorous airs when he looked at my wife were strange and disturbing. There was no doubt that he was in love with her. Naturally as a college boy is in love with the school teacher's wife, in other words without hope but not without passion.

He treated her as a pal and, as I have already said, he could not do without her.

In Paris when she worked in one of the rooms he would scratch at the door and insist upon being let in. Naturally she could not refuse to open for him. Quite content he would remain at her feet for whole afternoons.

At Barbizon during his free walk in the park he would listen for any noises that came from the villa. When my wife appeared on the terrace he would stalk towards her like an Indian taking cover behind each tree. To put a stop to this game, which we knew entailed risks, my wife would return to the house.

At the age of twelve months Yambo had already given us proof of the violence of his passion.

One morning after breakfast I went into the bathroom. I had left my wife abed. The cheetah, lying at her feet paid no heed to my departure. As soon as I had left the room he got up, approached her very gently and without the slightest provocation seized a mouthful of her hair which is fortunately very long. Tugging with all his might he enjoyed himself to his heart's content.

Getting the worst of the struggle his mistress called out to me. I had to threaten him with the whip to deliver her from this aggression.

From that day onwards when she allowed him to keep her company, she never forgot to keep the whip well in evidence on the coverlet.

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This behaviour on the part of Yambo surprised me. He had never tried to bite my wife although he had had a score of opportunities to do so. Her hair alone seemed to attract him. His behaviour differed according to whether it hung loose down her back or tied up normally. In the latter case he paid no heed to it but her loose hair exercised an irresistible attraction on him.

Did he find some vague resemblance in its volume with the short mane of the female cheetahs which in certain circumstances serves as a pawhold for the male?

This experience with my wife's hair was repeated with the two cheetah cubs at the Hameau. The female was only mildly interested but the male savaged it with his paws and teeth exactly as Yambo had done. True, the male cub although still young had already shown an adult male interest in his female companion.

Yambo was jealous of his mistress.

We had proof of this on the evening of July 14th during a television show of the Quartier Latin dance halls. When they played an old-fashioned waltz I invited my wife to dance. No sooner had I put my arm round her waist than Yambo rose from the corridor where he was asleep and landed with one leap at our feet biting our legs and encircling them with his paws. Since he was growing more nervous and excitable we broke off the dance.

I had several other experiences of this nature. Each time he displayed the same kind of sullen jealousy. In the morning we often stood at the window to say "good morning" to him. He immediately looked up at us, ran to and fro and recoiled angrily if we happened to be too close together.

One afternoon last winter we were sitting on the couch reading. I bent over to my wife with my head close to hers to show her a picture. Yambo probably thought that I was kissing her. He immediately climbed on my knee in a state of great

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agitation without appearing to threaten me. When I pushed him off he suddenly froze but catching sight of the whip lay down and rolled over several times before regaining his calm. None of our gestures ever escaped his notice.

His solicitude for my wife was such that he would run and protect her at the first call. I remember he was once on the second floor landing of the villa and when I teased my wife she threatened to call the cheetah.

I dared her to do this and she cried: "Yambo, Yambo, Help!"

I pretended to strike her. We heard him clattering down the stairs. He appeared in the doorway out of breath and suspicious. He examined us attentively. When I raised my hand to his mistress, he flung himself on me and gently took my arm firmly in his jaws. I stroked the faithful creature and my wife reassured him. He seemed to understand that we were joking for he sat down at our feet but kept us under observation.

We did our best to find explanations for Yambo's different moods and behaviour—gentleness, affection, boisterous love, a need for our presence and then a sudden hostility which, it is true, needed special circumstances before it was displayed.

I admitted our adventures and fears to the curator of the zoo.

"Your cheetah", he replied, "has long been mature. . . . Good meat and freshly killed guinea pigs. You keep him in unnatural surroundings. Solitude forces him to focus his dreams wherever he can—on his straw, on his blanket. He is of the age to found a family and to fight with other males.

"The meticulous Friday night examination of his den is merely to confirm his possessions. He is merely looking to see that no other cheetah has trespassed on his property. The hostility he displayed towards you, my dear sir, again on Friday evening was quite normal. You wittingly disturbed him and besides you are a man. The animosity or attraction of the sexes is equally manifested between the species.

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"As to his behaviour with his mistress, it has the same roots as one finds in male pets brought up by a woman. The only difference being that Yambo is wild.

"In the zoo", he added "the two males and three females are unfortunately sterile. There is no known case of a cheetah reproducing in captivity, for Nature has demands of which we are ignorant. Possibly with the collaboration of your Yambo we might create a zoological precedent."

We seriously thought about this proposal and discussed various solutions.

This last shot in the locker marriage would not be a happy one either for Yambo or for us. His sexual urges produced crises, in other words, he went through periods when he was frankly disagreeable, but once the storm had blown over we became once more his masters and friends.

In the event of our accepting the suggestion he would need several days to court the female and this would afford him an opportunity to get to know other members of his own species. He would burst into a world the language and customs of which he knew by instinct, and the company of his masters would have no further attraction for him in spite of their devotion, tenderness and self sacrifices.

The zoo curator's proposal made us examine once more the eventuality of parting with Yambo. This solution had haunted us for some time but the very idea was so painful that we could not make up our minds to envisage it and constantly postponed facing up to reality. It was essential, however, not to allow ourselves to be surprised by events.

Friends suggested that we buy a second cheetah, a female for preference, maintaining that in this way Yambo would continue to remain a trustworthy companion.

A pleasant but ruinous theory. When we considered the expense of keeping one what would it mean if we had to keep two?

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It was also a dangerous solution. For three years we had curbed and policed his wild instincts. During this association, even if we had adopted cheetah manners he had undoubtedly become humanized. A pair would resist better than a lone animal the nibbling away of his instincts by civilization.

Some years ago the Press recorded the terrible tragedy caused by two male bulldogs who, disturbed during their nap had turned on the servant and torn her to pieces. Moreover, she was no stranger to them. A single dog would have barked or growled, but the initiative of one acted as a stimulant to his mate. They encouraged each other by their barking and then as a team savaged her unmercifully.

This collective blood lust is not peculiar to animals. Certain scenes of violence perpetrated by humans serve to explain the persistence of primeval instincts even after centuries of civilization.

Had I been unaware of these dangers or had we arranged to take the necessary precautions to avoid them, I should as a lover of animals have rejected this idea of giving him a mate for the spirit of the species or the herd or sometimes pure friendship unites two animals so profoundly that to separate them is often to sign the death warrant of one of them.

Nothing is so moving, so pitiful and heartbreaking as to see an animal searching night and day, refusing all food, watching, waiting and calling for a companion who has disappeared. There have been many cases of carthorses in harness with a mate for many years who refuse to accept a substitute and die of despair.

An animal reared on his own—although certain of his natural habits are frustrated—transfers to his masters part of the feelings that dominate a pair.

One must not deceive oneself as to the depth of these feelings. Should the beloved animal have a chance to live for a certain time among his own kind he will quickly show his preference for them, and his interest and affection for his for-

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mer masters will wane proportionately as the months go by.

With a male and female pair genuine sentiments—love, tenderness, jealousy and the protective instinct—unite them in a world of their own where sometimes they tolerate their masters.

These feelings—if I may be forgiven for giving my own personal opinion—sometimes complete in violence and purity with the most sublime of certain human passions.

Tristan and Isolde? I am convinced that four-footed or feathered lovers are capable of versions as pathetic and moving as this marvellous love story.

Give Yambo a wife? The stories of the lion pair, Sultan and Dora, of the Great Danes Wallis and Violaine with their harrowing epilogues were too fresh in my mind to inflict upon our cheetah an end that might prove to be just as sad.

Twenty years ago I often used to visit the lion pair. Sultan and Dora of the Darius circus in the Paris Zoo. He was a fine ten year old male with a massive mane who plied his wife with the most charming attentions.

Their very roomy cage afforded them a certain freedom of movement, but they always kept close together. If Dora got up to drink, Sultan followed suit. Their lusty meals, so often a bone of contention among wild beasts, never disturbed the harmony of this lion *ménage*. The female often took pieces of meat from the mouth of her husband and he would merely growl for form's sake. If she started to tease him and bite his ear when he was asleep or rub herself against him Sultan, looking beatific would tolerate her teasing patiently.

The male's tenderness was expressed by gentle looks, caressing growls and strong licks on his mate's hard head. With eyes closed she offered him her neck and ears and, if he stopped licking, she would butt him with her forehead inviting him to continue this pleasant occupation.

All the lovers in the world and lovers of animals in particular would have been moved by this charming intimacy. It an-

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noyed the lion tamer, Darius, however because in the circus act the lion neglected his work to watch his mate. When the trainer's whip called him to order he quivered with rage on his stool, and growled. Twice he sprang, his eyes flashing with rage, not in the least intimidated by the fork which the man brandished to threaten his charge.

Darius decided to separate the two beasts hoping in this way to break a passion that threatened to make the lion despise the methods of constraint which were usually effective with even the most ill-tempered "cats". He left the lion in his place and installed the lioness in a travelling cage with boarded sides which prevented them from seeing each other.

In surprise the lioness paced up and down her cage coming to a halt near the bars to call her mate. The lion, mad with rage, trotted to and fro, breaking off his pacing to raise his muzzle in the direction of the lioness and to whine in despair.

The presence of Darius put him in a fury. A murderous glint could be read in his eyes. He stared at the man with hatred and his complaints turned to roars. Flinging himself suddenly against the bars he would thrust out a paw in an attempt to seize the trainer.

Sultan refused all food for several days. Weary at last of this eternal pacing up and down he lay down with his head turned in the direction of the lioness who no longer replied to his calls with tender purring but with growls, intermingled with passionate oaths and promises of vengeance.

Darius waited until the crisis was over before confronting the two beasts. After a few days of separation the male seemed to lose his animosity and merely ignored his presence. Neither offers of meat nor the threat of the fork would make him stir. On the contrary the slightest sign of life from the lioness, her purring and movements in her cage made him rise to his feet full of attention, his head turned in her direction.

The bewildered trainer maintained without much conviction: "Things are getting better." One morning to his amaze-

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ment he found that the lion in its despair had bitten through its tail near the hindquarters. When one considers that this appendage is the prologation of the spinal column and, in the case of a lion, as thick as a man's arm one can judge the appalling pain the victim must have endured and his savage will to finish with an existence he now found lacking in all savour.

The trainer tried to bandage the gaping wound, but the lion fiercely rejected his treatment. He leaped against the wooden panels in an attempt to break them down. Gangrene set in and the lion lay down completely exhausted. One morning Darius found him dead.

In death Sultan was still crouching by the partition, his head erect turned towards the lioness's cage. His wide open glassy eyes betrayed the last sign of his touching and tragic fidelity. The lioness, disturbed by the silence, turned restlessly round and round her box whining piteously for her mate.

Darius never understood the reason for this suicide.

Animals cannot of course send out obituary notices. Nevertheless from that day the lioness no longer cocked an ear to receive the messages from her mate. Lying in a corner of her cage she ignored the outside world. She stared absent-mindedly at people and objects while her thoughts were obviously with the tender lion whose big mane she would never again be able to tug.

To find some remedy for this lethargy Darius tried to introduce her into a lioness act. When she entered the central cage the despairing creature caused a riot among her companions. The lion tamer had to intervene to restore order. He was unsuccessful. As soon as he opened the cage door she leaped at him.

All attempts failed and he had to get rid of her, convinced that the inconsolable widow had sworn to avenge her husband.

In the circus where she works quite calmly to-day the lion Caesar pays her little attentions to which she does not remain insensitive. Her widow's coquetry is an offence to the memory

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of Sultan but after all do not humans behave in exactly the same way? However great a passion there is always room for others, so great a treasure of love does the human heart possess.

Two Great Danes had been daily companions for many years. Violaine the bitch, aristocratic and highly intelligent, inspired a great passion in Wallis, a huge friendly but rather clumsy male. His boorish attempts to please his mate amused us. Everywhere she went Wallis followed. To encourage her to play he would butt her with his head, bark and pretend to flee. She accepted his courtship and if she happened to be in a good mood consented to follow him or bared her teeth when the invitation did not please her.

One sad day Violaine was found dead in her kennel. Wallis did not realize that the tragedy had taken place. He sniffed the bitch, encouraging her to get up and could not understand why she did not reply to the friendly nudges from his muzzle. The corpse was removed. Wallis continued to haunt their familiar places, watched the doors and listened for noises expecting his mate to appear at any moment. He never grew used to his solitude. Lying beneath my desk he only went out in the evening to visit the housekeeper.

One day a small bitch arrived. She approached him with all her feminine cajolery and encouraged him with her gay barks. Wallis allowed her to approach but as soon as she came within reach he attacked and killed her. The very sight of a bitch aroused his murderous instincts.

What went on in the head of this Great Dane? Had he put all the passion and love of which he was capable into his relationship with Violaine? Had he taken the vow of celibacy in order to keep intact the memory of his beloved? Who knows? There are men who have a similar deep sense of fidelity that in future no partner can ever hope to inspire the same attachment as the lost one. Convinced that they have experienced the height of joy they hate those who try to persuade them of the

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possibility of a new happiness, and in particular the one who wishes to take the place of the departed, not realizing that it was an unique passion.

Wallis lost all his gaiety and taste for play. Like a disconsolate widower he may have tried in private to find some consolation for his loneliness. At the sound of Violaine's name he would get up brusquely and watch the door through which she had usually entered.

Within two years he had become an old, apathetic morose dog, hardly bothering to rise from his couch when I went to pat him. This Great Dane, so vigorous and bursting with good health in the old days contracted every possible disease. The vet told me that he had become neurasthenic and that I must try to find some distraction for him.

But how was I to distract him? Nothing in our power could change the course of his thoughts. He was waiting for deliverance from his nevertheless comfortable existence to join in his doggy Paradise the graceful Violaine, his tantalizing companion who, by dying, had taken away from him all pleasure in life, so greatly had he loved her. He died in the prime of life from a heart attack.

According to these two stories fidelity would seem to be a male prerogative. But I could relate an equal number of true stories proving that females can be equally self-sacrificing.

Experienced hunters in Africa know that when faced with a pair of lions or elephants they must always shoot the female. If the male is shot first, his mate will always risk her life to avenge him. On the other hand the male—either more philosophical or more selfish—will often choose flight.

In the animal as in the human world there are both cowards and heroes.

To return Yambo to the Kenya bush among his brothers, who frolic in bands at daybreak, was a solution of little attraction to a lover of animals. And yet at times we flirted

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with the idea. Yambo had never killed. Hunger would probably force him to recover the gesture that takes life. Without having learned them he knew other forms of behaviour such as the alert, the approach and the attack. But the jungle is a world where the slightest slip can prove fatal. The lords of the bush, the lions and panthers would surprise and menace our poor friend who was so ill equipped to face them.

Moreover he would meet humans similar to those who had reared, caressed and spoiled him and he would naturally make for them.

Why should he fear this being who had fed him, been his companion at playtime and even his friend? Poor Yambo! The hunters would not reflect upon the profound reasons that had attracted him to their village. A score of assegais hurled from behind the huts would pin him to the ground. In his death throes his eyes would still reveal the nagging question: Why?

We began to be filled with remorse. We had emasculated Yambo in all good faith by imposing upon him some of our habits and by depriving him of the joys proper to his own species. To send him to the zoo was the last resource.

We finally decided to try an experiment suggested by M. Nouvel—to introduce him to the cheetahs at Vincennes. If Yambo evinced any real interest in his own kind we would get rid of him after the summer holidays.

With the permission of the zoo authorities we took our cheetah on a leash up to the cages where the animals were playing or sleeping.

The arrival of Yambo made them rise to their feet, leave their place and walk towards us. Yambo advanced circumspectly, his hackles raised and a hard look in his eyes to examine the captives. Just as surprised as he the latter kept their distance then growled and slunk slowly forwards.

One of the males called Matthieu spat with claws bared and rushed for the wire netting. The two gentlemen sniffed each

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other for a long time. Then they stalked away with great dignity. Matthieu recoiled and Yambo pretended to charge. The wild cheetah advanced in turn. Taking a sudden interest the females who had hung back at the rear of the cage came up to support their mates.

Since we were disposed to give the animals plenty of time to get acquainted we waited a couple of hours without being able to notice any amelioration, neither tolerance nor any semblance of amiability.

As soon as Yambo retired from the wire the others charged. Yambo thus provoked, leaped in turn. Rage and nervousness made him froth at the mouth, tremble and roar. He gave his shrill very impressive siren call.

We tried one last experiment. Suppose we pretended to abandon him? Would fidelity triumph over his rage? Yambo's collar was loosened and my wife and I made our way to the car which we had parked some distance from the cage. Preoccupied by the insults of his kin he did not notice us leave. Suddenly he turned round, trotted off to join us apparently happy to leave these badly brought up companions. On the seat in the back of the car he recovered his calm and began to purr.

My wife was jubilant. "I'm so pleased," she said "that Yambo preferred us to his brothers and sisters. We are the family for him. I was so afraid that he would forget in a flash three years of affection and care."

I knew that this exciting encounter had furnished no conclusive proof. Cats have a very personal way of controlling themselves. In the country during the silences of these winter evenings which cats adore, mewing that begins as a complaint suddenly ends in angry spitting.

The big carnivora have the same nature and one can expect from them the same behaviour that one expects from one's cat. Feigned indifference on the part of the female; calculated boldness on the part of the male, teeth and claws worthy of respect and attention. The cunning of the seducer and the sub-

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sequent spring. Taps with the paw that make the fur fly and cause long tears in their hides. Their exhausting courtship can last several hours or perhaps two or three days; the rogue never gets his reward without a struggle. He takes his revenge for the rebuffs by a brutal possession in which the female pinioned by the powerful paws of the male, the scruff of her neck ruthlessly held between his teeth submits to the will of her conqueror.

This first exciting encounter of our cheetahs was only a prelude. After forty-eight hours of community life with a separating netting Yambo would be defeated.

Since I did not wish to disillusion his mistress I kept my opinions to myself.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Explosion and Resolution

AT BARBIZON during the week-ends we left Yambo in his enclosure from Friday to Saturday evening. Recent warnings had made us realize that the recognition of his chosen "places" made him nervous and irritable. We therefore allowed him plenty of time to become convinced that no rival had trespassed on his preserves during his absence.

Even on Friday, however, after the television programme we paid him a short visit to give him the traditional piece of meat and to say good night to him. My wife believed that he could not dispense with this visit and envisaged him pacing restlessly behind his hut window from where he could watch the house.

I often lingered on in the house busy with some task. My wife then went on ahead. I joined them later enjoying in advance the idea of breaking up this *tête-à-tête* which had become a ceremonial with its own ritual; Yambo crouching or lying on his side placed his head in the hand of his visitor who sat beside him on the straw. With half-closed eyes he purred, and to thank the fingers that stroked his thick soft chest turned to lick them with his warm rough tongue with such force that they were soon red.

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That evening my wife had once more preceded me to the hut where a trap-door allowed Yambo access to his open air enclosure. In one corner we had stored a thick cardboard carton in which some household appliance had arrived. About four feet high it served as a bin in which to keep the reserve of straw.

I made my way to the enclosure but the cheetah was alone. He looked very irritable. This change of routine surprised me. Why wasn't his mistress there with him as usual. I called her in vain.

Feeling a trifle alarmed I returned to the house. I looked for her on the ground and then on the first floor and finally discovered her in our bedroom very pale and with eyes closed, leaning against a chairback.

"*Mon Dieu!*" I cried. "What's the matter? Are you ill? Did you fall? Are you all right?"

"Oh, it's nothing. Only a rather lively dispute with Yambo."

"What happened?"

"I went into his hut with a jug of water. Yambo, very busy exploring his 'haunts', was pacing up and down the netting. I didn't think to close the trap-door. I removed the used litter and put down fresh straw. When I looked up I saw him standing motionless his body half in the doorway. He was looking at me with hatred. I started to tremble with anxiety.

"The carton was nearby and I cried: 'Be quiet, Yambo!'

"He advanced a step towards me and tried to charge, but, hampered by the carton, he could not reach me. In an attempt to scare him I threw the empty jug at him. Taking advantage of his surprise I took refuge behind the packing, but now he was in a real rage.

"I shouted: 'André bring me the whip quick', but the walls and doors muffled my shouts.

Yambo made his way round the obstacle looking for a new place from which to spring. I manœuvred the carton at arms length using it as a kind of shield to parry his blows. But he

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went for it and started to tear it to pieces with his fangs. Twice he crouched and grabbed me treacherously by the legs. As prompt as he, I barred his way with my defensive yet precarious weapon. Pushing it to left and right, following his attacks, I finally managed to get out through the door.

"I came back here to fetch the whip because we can't let the villain get away with this."

This incident fortunately ended by causing more fear than harm. My wife recovered her sang-froid and returned to Yambo's enclosure as she had decided to do, to settle matters this time in her favour.

This encounter disturbed us. It forced us to make a decision—to get rid of Yambo.

The cheetah who the following morning was rolling playfully at our feet in the park, muzzling against our hands to lick them, seemed to have forgotten the incident of the previous night and his punishment.

I informed my wife the same day that as soon as we got back to Paris I should ask the zoo to accept Yambo among its family of cheetahs.

My wife listened, lowered her eyes and said in a calm and measured tone, that she had been pondering over the question during the night and expressed her point of view :

"There's no hurry. We wanted to try an experiment and to carry it out to the end. We have had to change our mode of life and accept restraints imposed by a demanding creature which in return has afforded us a great deal of pleasure and shown us undeniable marks of his affection. Are we going to abandon him on account of a fit of bad temper?"

"But Yambo might have done you an injury. After all he is a wild animal."

"In spite of your experience with wild beasts you have retained that fear of the big cats which cave man has bequeathed to generations of his descendants right down to atomic man.

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Public opinion maintains that a wild beast driven to kill by his nature does it with pleasure when faced with a member of a different species. The Romans already exploited this belief to be assured of a good show in their circuses.

"Two thousand years later our circuses profit by this to ensure their box office takings. I also believed this fallacy. I had to accompany you to the African game reserves and observe, on the countless occasions, prides of lions at rest under the trees surrounded by herds of zebra, antelope or gnus lying or grazing peaceably, to be convinced that humans have maligned the wild beasts. Sometimes an antelope attracted by a tuft of grass would approach to within twenty yards of the lions. Naturally they watched him but the buck knew that lions only kill to eat and not for their pleasure; now these lions were obviously sated. Don't men know that they are the most modest animals in the bush?"

I remembered similar extraordinary scenes. I still recalled an unusual sight I witnessed one morning in Tanganyika on the Serengeti plain. A herd of impala was walking peacefully through the bush. I was amazed to see six lions marching in single file no more than five or six yards on the flank of these graceful buck. It was no different from a crowd strolling down the Champs Elysées on a fine spring day.

So the court-martial, with myself as the only member, was prepared to condemn Yambo to banishment. I had expected from his near victim a spontaneous and unqualified approval, and now this formality was transformed into a real trial and it was she who spoke in defence of her aggressor while I was playing the part of the public prosecutor. By her first remarks I thought she was pleading for him to be put on probation. I knew her indulgence, but the fact was undeniable: Yambo had attacked her when she was looking after him.

"I recognize the famous desire to kill only among men," my wife said ironically. "Among them there are some who kill for food and others who massacre for the sole pleasure of destroy-

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ing, out of pure sadism. Have you ever noticed how many people who look quite harmless have a mania for hitting, crushing or annihilating any live creature which come within their reach?

"It becomes a conditioned reflex. A foot crushes an ant, a beetle or a ladybird, a newspaper swats a bee or a butterfly; D.D.T. kills and definitely silences everything that buzzes or moves in the insect world. Thousands of privileged people each year buy the right to use a gun, and this right enables them to kill the maximum possible of what is called 'game'. But if you were to open the haversacks of certain Sunday Nimrods, instead of hares or partridges you would discover blackbirds, sparrows, robins—tiny pathetic victims cut to pieces with buckshot because their graceful movements had caught the attention of some authorized assassin.

"To kill and to kill! This rage for destruction simply for pleasure is confined to our species. As for man's conscious and ignorant ferocity we needn't mention that: it would be too devastating."

All this alas was only too true. Our race which has long considered itself superior sets a very bad example.

Among the Africans of the bush we were often given a lesson in wisdom. We constantly found that all their actions were inspired by a desire to survive. When a village organized a hunting expedition it was to provide enough food for its subsistence. They never went after new game except when their larders were empty. The detestable example set by the whites has recently changed the behaviour of the natives. During our last trip to the Congo in 1959 we learned that several villages had combined to go on an elephant hunt when there had been no necessity to protect their crops. Sixty-five elephants were trapped in a ravine and killed simply to gratify the hunting lust, 'to do as the white men', for the hunters cut off a few choice morsels and left nearly two hundred tons of flesh to rot.

My wife went on: "Did Yambo ever strike a vicious blow

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in the presence of our friends, relations and various animals such as rabbits, chickens and goats?

"There is a legend that a wild beast is savage, and as soon as it opens its mouth no one doubts its intentions of biting or devouring. Its slightest reaction is interpreted as a manifestation of its viciousness. But in what way is it more dangerous than an Alsatian or a Great Dane—and it certainly has not such impressive fangs.

"We both know certain watch-dogs not far from Fontainebleau which, when they bark and slaver with rage on their chain or behind bars, make passers-by take to their heels. So can't Yambo be forgiven for a fit of ill temper?

"Has a horseman ever given up a young mount because he pranced or stood on his hind legs and bolted the first day when the saddle and the weight of his master hurt his back? And yet each time he could have thrown and killed his master. Do farmers give up breeding animals because a cow or a bull sometimes gores them?

"You chastised Wallis, your dear Great Dane, the day he killed the little bitch. He did not accept your punishment and rebelled like a lion, charging you with teeth bared and a hundred pounds of infuriated sinews. To beat off his attacks you had to use a chair like an animal trainer. Did you ever think of getting rid of Wallis after this episode?"

"Certainly not, but I knew the reason for his misbehaviour, whereas we don't know why Yambo behaved so badly with you, and I find this ignorance disturbing."

"I've thought a lot about that point. If Yambo suddenly turned vicious he would be mad, but experience has proved that all his acts have a reason.

"It was a Friday evening when you met with a certain amount of hostility from him. He was busy on his recognitions, and you had rudely distracted him by tugging energetically on his chain. Yesterday was another Friday evening, and he heard his straw being removed—that straw which he arranges so as

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to make himself comfortable—and I was demolishing his handiwork.”

My companion broke off, looked at me provocatively and asked: “Are animals the only ones to defend their privacy?”

I grasped the allusion. The study which I occupy in the chalet is a place where the Hoover and the dusting brush are rarely seen, but on their rare appearances I insist upon supervising the disorder that they bring into my untidiness. This is how my wife refers to my work table, which is covered with books and bits of paper. Balls of paper lie all round my chair and the sofa is covered with files.

My wife and Julia find it astonishing that I can live in this muddle and are even more surprised when I forbid them to tidy things up.

Any man will understand. Who has not risked looking for a handkerchief in a drawer, of going into his wife's boudoir or even displacing some utensil in the kitchen without being reminded that men bring disorder into everything and that their place is not in the rooms where the woman is in command.

Beneath this faulty reasoning lies the imperative necessity for a place of your own common to man and animals.

We realized that Yambo was no longer a cub and not quite a wild beast. We did our best to adapt ourselves to his maturity and development, but like most parents we were always a little behindhand in following his intentions and behaviour.

We did not deprive him of care and tenderness but our attentions were often clumsy in spite of our loyalty. We forgot that Yambo enjoyed considerable freedom with us. These contacts which often made an appeal to his intelligence had humanized him. We recognized his intentions and he understood ours.

After a couple of warnings he knew what was permitted and what was forbidden. While he behaved as a guest, respecting the furniture, chairs, carpets and ornaments, bowing with good grace to our demands, we behaved in his domain as though in

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a conquered country. We were amused by his rages when he defended his droppings, which Julia's pan removed when she cleaned his room. His growls of displeasure and his rustling of the straw could be heard through the closed trap-door. He would put on an expression similar to a disagreeable old man by wrinkling his forehead and drooping his lip.

Yambo, whose growls of contempt or pleasure expressed his appreciation of the television programmes, who manifested to his familiars feelings that were graded according to their personality, character and the advantages he received from them; Yambo, so sensitive to the social hierarchy and our lessons, could not understand why we were so slow in interpreting his feelings. This refinement of his nature, which to-day is closer to our own, was precisely the final goal of our experiment. The results were surprising. To-day, in order to foresee his reactions, we merely have to ask ourselves what we should do in his place. In this way a lot of misunderstandings could be avoided.

His defender continued. "To be fair, he exploded as you did the day the upholsterer came in our absence to cover the chairs in your study. Do you remember how you raved on your return when you found all your papers piled up in a corner of the bar?"

"Admittedly I raved," I protested. "But I should not have felled the upholsterer to the ground."

"We fly into a rage according to the means that Providence has given us. The violent man bangs his fist on the table, shakes or slaps his opponent; the timid fellow stutters, blushes or turns on his heel. You have always maintained that a young animal raised by another species assimilates the characteristics of the latter. Since Yambo takes us for a mother and father cheetah he storms in the cheetah manner. Fear of the whip in this type of dispute restores the balance of forces and even gives us a certain superiority over him . . . and on Friday I had forgotten the whip.

"This forgetfulness was the sole reason for our passage of

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arms, which he and I both interpreted differently. A prey to our ancestral fear, which we feel without daring to admit it, we are always ready—you in particular—to look upon this incident as a tragedy. For Yambo it was only a lively dispute, believe me.

“Do not let us add to our ignorant pride the bad taste of a hasty judgement. For if the master, who claims omniscience, makes a mistake should he in self-justification accuse the pupil?”

“Very well,” I said. “Let us forgive this peccadillo. But to avoid a repetition of similar incidents Yambo will in future remain in his enclosure.”

My wife grew excited.

“As far as I can see you are proposing to put him on probation. In our society this is granted to first offenders. But Yambo has committed no offence. We are solely to blame for this outburst, for can we say objectively that we have been very good experimenters? To begin with did we not try sincerely to understand the nature of a wild animal, a thing which escapes most naturalists who are lacking in a permanent and trusting contact, or did we selfishly wish to profit by it? If the latter was your idea I could understand your decision. But if our intentions were honest would it not be cowardly to give up the attempt on the pretext that not everything went according to plan? Does a chemist abandon his experiments because a mixture of liquids or gases suddenly explode and injure him? Such incidents are sometimes the prelude to remarkable discoveries.

“In adopting Yambo we did not think of transforming him into a domestic animal like a dog or a pig, for domestication is the result of a slow constraint exercised on the habits of the species by generations of men.

“Even the dog and the pig sometimes rebel, and man who always sees himself as an apostle of truth is himself a prey to relapse provoked by the explosion of his own and of those

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natural forces which he discovers, captures and disciplines until the day he becomes the victim and slave of them.

"If human justice can understand that man, in certain exceptional conditions, can be driven to commit acts of violence and acquit him, why should we be more severe on Yambo who is to a far greater extent our victim?"

"Our little episode, if we know how to learn from it, will provide us with new discoveries about his nature, and at the same time be the source of much future satisfaction,"

A year has passed since this incident. Yambo is still with us.

Barbizon is now our permanent residence and Yambo enjoys it here. He has lost those restless, suspicious habits of those Friday evenings.

Our relations have taken on a certain form. They are fraught with affection, comprehension and a certain amount of consideration. We both know what pleases and displeases each other. Every evening he pays us his usual visit and remains with us until bedtime. The days pass calmly, without a cloud in the sky.

How long will this adventure last? There is nothing to suppose that it will not be a very long one, as we hope.

If one day circumstances force us to get rid of him we shall send him to the zoo, where he will find a tender, sensual, brutal and vindictive cheetah world. He will face up to Matthieu, who spat insults through the netting at him, and the three females from whom, thanks to his exceptional vigour, he will be able to make his choice.

But when he has gone we shall not repeat the experiment.

The monstrous proliferation of humanity restricts every day to a greater extent the significance of the magic word "freedom". There are no free men to-day. Admittedly there still exist a few in the jungles and forests— independent people free to come and go, to love, to fight, to eat or to die of hunger.

But very soon a leopard, a lion and an elephant will be

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anachronisms relegated to the reserves if, in any case, the new masters of the Black Continent accept the principle and accept its utility.

When travelling through them a few privileged tourists will be able to imagine that in the far distant past a world existed when beasts and men lived happily according to the dictates of nature.

Within a few years an elephant in a zoo or a natural museum will cause as much amazement as if we were to-day to discover a living mammoth.

Let the friends of wild beasts by inconsiderate love not deprive themselves of the short respite they have been given.

Let them ponder on our adventure, remember the enslavement and follow our own resolution. In future leave the wild animals to their native jungle.

