

# HARPERS

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white, form-fitting, cut-out dress, is posing with her hands behind her head. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a light, textured surface.

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Guest-edited by  
Matthew Williamson

## Wild at heart

The lioness, the oryx  
and the sisters whose  
story touched Africa

## Natural beauty?

The truth about  
going organic

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Exclusive:

Tom Ford's dazzling finale





# The Greatest Game

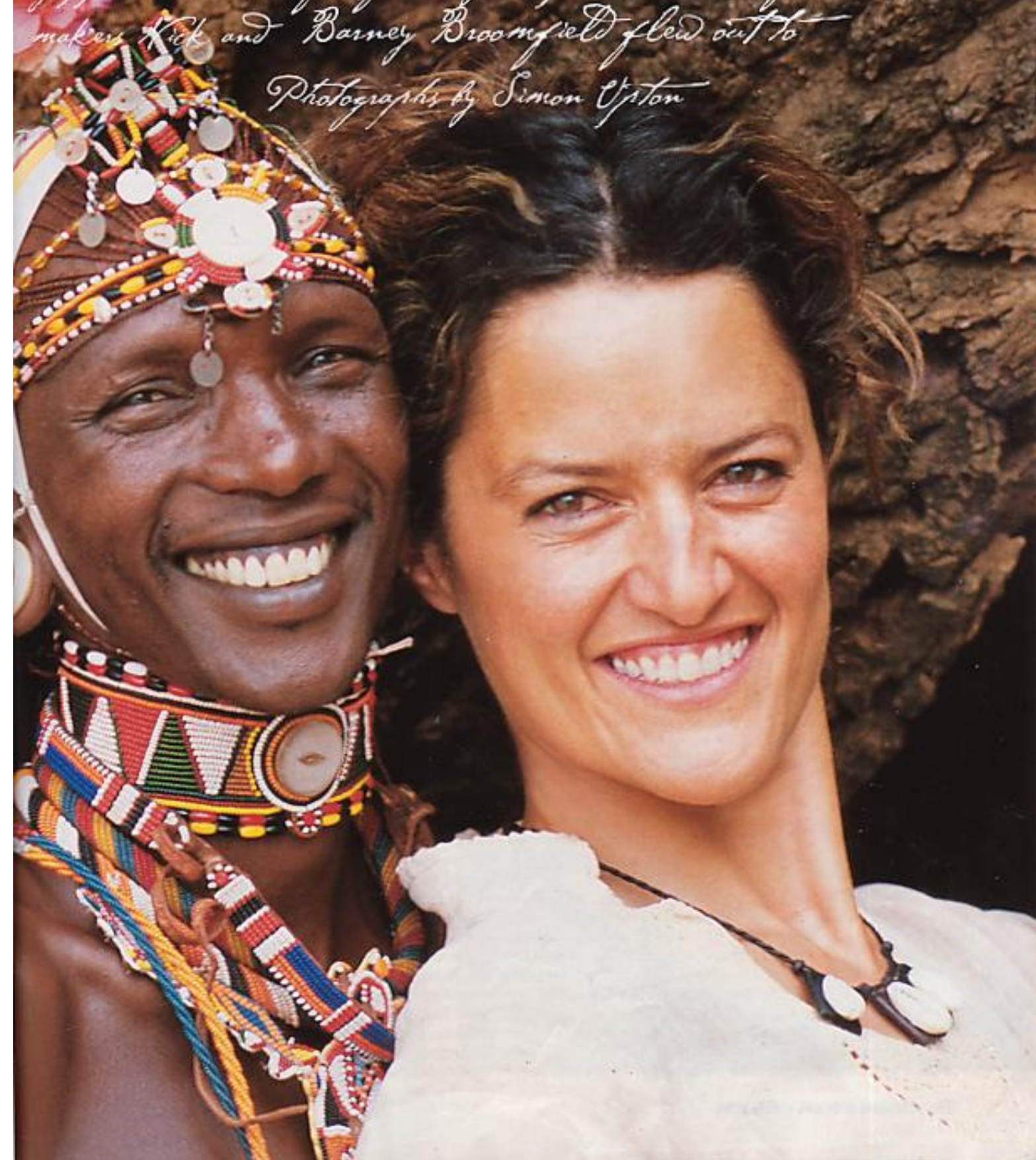
Film-makers Saba and Dedu Douglas-Hamilton were as  
who miraculously fostered six oryx calves. Fellow documentary  
meet the siblings whose film has become a parable for modern Ken





# Show On Earth

*gripped at the rest of Africa by the phenomenon of a lioness  
makers. Nick and Barney Broomfield flew out to  
Photographs by Simon Upton*





# W

hen we were asked to go to Africa to interview Dudu and Saba Douglas-Hamilton about their new film, *Heart of a Lioness*, I was slightly apprehensive. The Kenyan-born and -bred sisters are modern-day explorers and adventurers – they've lived with chimpanzees, travelled to the Antarctic and slept on mountainsides in fearsome blizzards. Such is their charm that when they ask you to do something, it is impossible to say no. The first time I met 32-year-old Dudu, a wildlife-documentary producer, at a wedding in Kenya, she persuaded me to jump fully clothed from a balcony into a swimming pool and then to swim across the Lamu Channel (I am the world's louisiest swimmer, and had to be picked up by a passing dhow). And 33-year-old Saba, an elephant conservationist and BBC wildlife presenter, is by all accounts made of similar stuff. Now I'm to spend almost a whole week with the duo at their parent's farm in Naivasha, in Kenya, along with Barney, my 22-year-old son.

**Barney: Saturday 31 January, Nairobi** I meet up with Nick in Nairobi right after I have finished shooting my first documentary, in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Northern Kenya. For my father, the change of scene is dramatic. He has just finished making a film with my mother, Joan Churchill, about the life and death of America's first female serial killer, Aileen Wuornos. Kenya's immense spread of land is a far cry from the linoleum-lined floors of Death Row. Landing at night, Nick stays awake just long enough to crawl into his hotel bed. When he emerges two days later, he stares in disbelief at an unusually red, bulbous foot. The early-morning sun had actually managed to burn the underside of his uncovered right extremity. For us, inhabitants of a cold, grey little island, it is our first exposure to the dangers of Africa.

**Nick: Monday 2 February, Nairobi** It is not a straightforward thing to meet up with the Douglas-Hamilton sisters. When I first contacted Dudu about hooking up in Kenya, she was climbing Table Mountain in Cape Town. 'I'm hanging off a 2,000-foot cliff; it's such an adrenalin rush,' she gasped down her mobile. The sisters had just finished editing their first film together, an incredible story of a young lioness, named 'Kamunyak' ('blessed one' in Swahili), that confounds the rules of nature by adopting an oryx, an animal she would have normally treated as prey. This extraordinary happening took place in the Samburu National Reserve, an area of land 130 kilometres square on the wild northern frontier district of Kenya, an hour's flight from the family farm in Naivasha. On their 16th day together, a rogue male lion ambushed the young oryx and ate the calf in front of its distraught foster mother. The lioness disappeared – only to be sighted five weeks later with a second baby oryx. Throughout that year, she would adopt a total of six oryx calves.

The story spread throughout Kenya, and the lioness became something of a national symbol: pictures of the lion and the oryx festooned Nairobi Airport. For Kenyans who have lived with the disappointments of President Moi's regime and its legacy of corruption, the story was immensely significant, with the pair symbolising a new beginning: enemies finding a way to forgive and make a future together. Saba and Dudu captured the whole story

on camera, often filming within a few feet of the lioness from early dawn until dusk in the searing African heat.

**Nick: Sunday, 3 February, Nairobi** We meet the sisters' parents, Iain and Oria Douglas-Hamilton, at the Nairobi offices of Save the Elephant, a charity they founded 10 years ago, which has done much to protect elephants and curb the ivory trade. Iain and Oria have been battling to conserve elephants and their natural habitat for 30 years. They first met in Tanzania, at the Lake Manyara National Park, where Scottish-born Iain had come in 1962 to do a zoology PhD on elephant behaviour. He stayed on and, in the late 1970s, became caught up in a one-man battle against the runaway illegal ivory trade. In the 1970s, the world's elephant population was estimated at 1.3 million; it is now as low as 500,000. Iain was to become one of the single voices warning the world of the threat to east Africa's big game. Because of increasing political disturbances, the Tanzanian border was closed in 1978, and the Douglas-Hamiltons left for Kenya. Soon afterwards, poaching in Manyara rose drastically, devastating the local elephant population. Iain then took on a new mission, to save the elephants of Uganda, and was given the task of restoring that country's three national parks. Under Idi Amin's lawless regime, poaching had become endemic and big game had been decimated.

Iain's work was dangerous, and poachers often shot at him – it was no place for two teenage girls, who were packed off to an English boarding school. Dudu admits that she hated the experience. 'It was terrible. We went to an awful girls' school, a huge redbrick Elizabethan house where they would never let us outside, so we would steal away and go and pee in the daffodils to remind us of life in the bush.' Saba went onto study African social anthropology at St Andrews, before following in her father's footsteps, first working in Namibia for the Save the Rhino Trust, then running a conservation programme for American undergraduates in Tanzania. In 1997, she joined her father's charity as executive officer. Dudu, meanwhile, studied economics and politics in Cape Town. After a spell in L.A., she returned to Africa, where she became a documentary producer.

Iain, who was recently awarded an OBE for his work, brims over with passion as he describes a collar he has invented to help track elephants by satellite. 'This will help to protect them, as well as providing invaluable information for conservationists.' Iain, now 61, tells us how he recently witnessed an elephant dying in childbirth; he was moved at how the other passing elephants paused, smelt the ground where she lay and paid their respects before moving on.

But life with the Douglas-Hamiltons, as noble and worthy as they undoubtedly are, is not quite as orderly as you might first expect. To travel in Kenya is famously to take your life in your own hands; to travel with this family is another thing altogether. We are already late for the airport, to take a plane to Lake Naivasha, where we will meet Saba and Dudu who are waiting for us at the family farm. Iain, dressed in a weathered Harris tweed jacket, waits patiently for Oria, who is busy giving numerous last-minute instructions in Swahili, French and English, all spoken with the same thick Italian accent, to assorted staff who cluster around the car.





#### PRIDE OF AFRICA

Sally Douglas-Hamilton with Samburu tribesmen. Clockwise from top right: the Samburu Reserve. Kamanyak the lioness, with one of her oryx charges. Nick and Barney Broomfield with Samburu friends. A tribesman



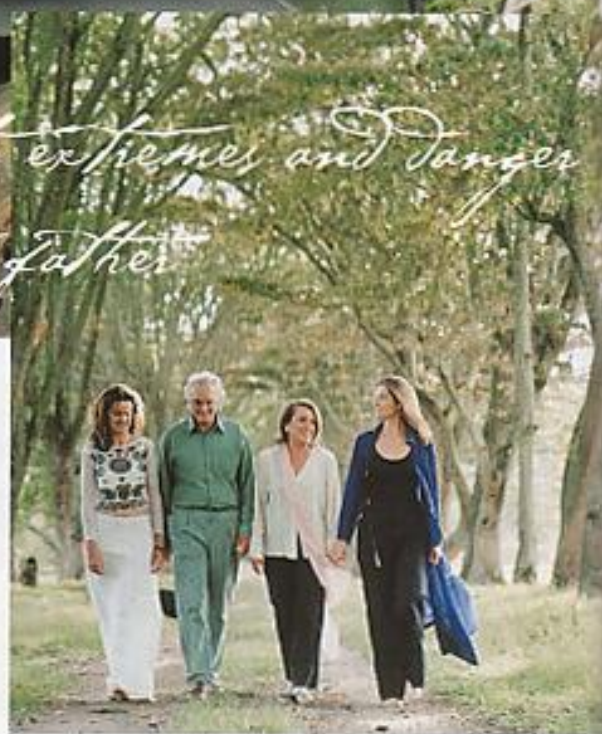
*The sisters are modern-day explorers and adventurers*





KENYA DIGBY  
Saba and Dudi on  
the road. Clockwise  
from below: Dudi  
and Saba with their  
parents, Iain and  
Oni. Saba with  
the Samburu.  
Photographs of  
family and friends

*Saba and Dudi's attraction to extremes and danger  
was encouraged by their father*





# Kenya possesses a beauty that boggles the mind

Once underway, it seems highly unlikely we will make the plane, as a new government law, issued that day, has clamped down on the *matatus* (the wonderfully painted taxis crammed with people), and now the roads are clamped with everyone in their own cars. The only people able to move at all are those driving in a kamikaze fashion along the edges of the road. Oria insists that Iain, who is at the wheel, join them.

**Barney** For Iain, however, the decision to join the exodus of rebellious drivers weighs heavily. It's not merely a question of gaining a few extra minutes. For him it's a moral crossroads at which he either upholds the remnants of British order, or simply succumbs to morning traffic rage. His bushy eyebrows press against the frames of his cracked 1920s-style bifocals, as Oria affectionately elbows him in the ribs. 'True,' he remarks. 'I could certainly save a few minutes if I join them, but then I would be in the wrong and no different from all these people here.' But, as is often the case, we quickly learn, in the Douglas-Hamilton family, Oria proves persuasive and, with less than five minutes to go till our plane takes off, she gives the order and the car explodes onto the outside lane.

Driving through the streets of Nairobi, one is immediately struck by the absurdity and chaos of Kenyan life. One hardly notices, for instance, that the decaying fence parallel to the road is the only rusty separation between you and the animal kingdom beyond. 'Lions kill at night on the other side of that fence,' says Iain, shooting a quick look in the rear-view mirror. 'But don't worry,' he says, with a mischievous smile. 'In Lake Naivasha, there are no fences – the animals are free to roam.'

The plane, a two-prop ex-military cargo vessel, is visible through the check-in window, slowly moving down the runway. It was the first and last flight of the day to Lake Naivasha, so there is only one thing to do – run. Laden with bags, we manage to cram our way onto the plane; the pilot reluctantly gives up the seat next to him.

It is hard to describe the torrent of emotions one feels when flying low over the bush. Kenya possesses a vastness and beauty that boggle the mind. It invites, or rather forces one, to wipe clean the notions we all hold so dear in that strange wilderness we know as the city. Ideas of safety must be revamped, an entirely new appreciation of time and distance is born; you become profoundly aware of how minute you are in the great span of things.

**Nick: 6.30pm, Lake Naivasha** Having flown over the area where Lord and Lady Delamere, of *White Mischief* fame, are buried, and past their enormous Moorish-style estate built on the banks of Lake Naivasha, we start to descend, past acres of greenhouses growing hydroponic flowers for British supermarkets, before landing at the lakeside. It was Oria's Italian father, Mario Rocco, who built Sirocco – the house and surrounding farm – in the 1920s, after he had eloped to Africa with Oria's French mother, an artist from Paris. Later, they would also breed racehorses. Driving along the pepper-tree groves, past orchards of oranges and lemons, it feels more like Tuscany than Africa. Iain and Oria have now turned the farm into a wildlife sanctuary: they took down the fences and allow the animals to roam. At night, hippos, buffalo and duiker can be seen emerging from the bush; just a few days earlier, a hippo fell into the swimming pool. The place has a very special magic, and is one of the few spots on the lake that has a preserved natural habitat. We drive past the mangled wreck of what we are told is Iain's last plane. 'He hit a zebra as he was landing – it ran out onto the runway just as he was touching down – and the plane somersaulted,' says Oria. 'It's a miracle he's alive.'

**Barney** From within the whitewashed art deco house at the end of the drive, I can just make out Saba and Dudu. In a flurry of perfumed hair, linen and laughter, they greet us and help unload the car. I get that very rare sensation that creeps up your spine

when you meet someone special: African life has instilled in the sisters an enchanting and almost magical quality. You can imagine that the phrase 'femme fatale' was invented to describe these two. For not only are they dangerously seductive, but their mere presence also guarantees that you will dice with death a dozen or so times.

If their attraction for extremes and danger was not hard-wired into their genes, it was definitely encouraged by their father. Iain, who I believe thought himself destined to preside over a family of sons, raised Saba (which means 'seven' in Swahili: she was born at 7pm in the seventh month in 1970) and Dudu (which means insect) not so much as boys, but as people fully equipped to deal with the often harsh realities of African life. His battle against the onslaught of oestrogen was apparent in every aspect of their upbringing. Instead of dolls, there were genet cats; instead of ponies or bicycles, the girls would spend hours watching elephants. In fact, 'eles,' as Saba and Dudu call them, are treated as part of the family, and the girls have inherited their father's passionate curiosity and respect for these giant beasts.

The sisters boast encyclopedic knowledge of Africa and its inhabitants. Not only can they read animal prints like the blind feel Braille, but they can identify and expound on anything that moves. On a brief tour of their home, Dudu points out childhood stomping grounds. 'When we were tiny,' she says, in a curious low, laid-back accent that owes a little to each of Italy, England and Kenya, and pointing to the spine of the roof some 30 feet above, 'our father taught us how to balance up there.'

We sit outside in the shade of a vast acacia tree and sip cold beers while Saba and Dudu tell us more about Kamunyak and the young oryx. It was in January 2002 that Dudu first heard about the lioness. She and her mother were up at Oria's elephant camp in Samburu when news first reached them of the extraordinary pair. A week later, some tourists showed them photographs on a digital camera, which confirmed the stories. 'We nearly fell off our chairs,' laughs Dudu. 'I called Saba, who was at home in Naivasha, and said, "You've got to get here straight away." She arrived the next day with her camera and we started filming. It was really the most amazing thing we had ever seen. I mean, no one could understand why this had happened. They were acting against every instinct they both had – the lion to eat, the oryx to run.'

The sisters spent the next 10 days filming. 'To begin with,' says Dudu, 'we weren't sure whether she was just keeping the calf, less than a month old, as a plaything – a snack she would later devour – but their bond soon became more apparent. It was clear she was not hunting, too nervous to leave the oryx unprotected, so they were both starving. There seemed no obvious resolution – we were really waiting to see which would starve to death first.'

Nature would take its course. Ten days later, Kamunyak let the calf out of her sight for the first time and, within minutes, it had walked straight into the mouth of a male lion that had been waiting for its chance in a nearby bush. The pitiful cries as the lion slowly devours the calf are the most shocking moments in the documentary. The lioness, too scared to intervene, has to stand and watch. 'We never expected it to end that quickly or in that way,' says Dudu. 'But at the same time it was amazing, because we saw Kamunyak react to the calf's death as if it were one of her own cubs – it is not rare for lion cubs to get eaten by lions from other prides. It proved that she really did think of the oryx as her own.'

A month later, the sisters set out to discover what could have driven a lioness to act so strangely, investigating other nearby lion prides and questioning locals and lion experts. 'She was too young to have had any children yet of her own,' says Saba. 'So the most likely scenario is that she had become separated from her own pride at a very young age, and that the trauma and subsequent



A full-page photograph of two women on a large, thick tree branch. The woman on the left is sitting, wearing a black long-sleeved top and black pants, looking towards the camera. The woman on the right is standing, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved top and matching pants, also looking towards the camera. The background is a dense, green forest. The text 'FAMILY TREE' and its description are in the top right corner. A quote is at the bottom, and a small credit is in the bottom left.

**FAMILY TREE**  
During the shooting  
of the film, Saba  
and Dudu became  
known to the crew  
as 'the lionesses'

*Making a film brings the monster out in you,  
but the experience has also made us closer*



# It was the wildest cast and crew I've ever seen

loneliness caused her to adopt the oryx as her own cub. The Samburu people think that she was barren and that this was God's way of giving her a child of her own.'

**Nick** Having worked with Barney on my recent film *Biggie & Tupac*, I wonder how the siblings survived working together on the shoot. 'There's a scene in the film where two lionesses find that they have latched onto the same semiconscious impala,' says Dudu. 'The two lions pull its mangled and bloody body to shreds in a gruesome tug-of-war. Ever since then, the film's editor referred to us simply as the "lionesses". At times, it really challenged our relationship,' Dudu goes on, smiling. 'Making a film brings the monster out in you, but the experience has also made us closer than ever.'

**Nick: Tuesday, 3 February, 4:30pm** Oria suggests we might like to go boating on Lake Naivasha to look at the hippos. The idea sounds delightful, and we take a bottle of wine and punt through the reeds onto the lake. A family of five hippos is splashing around nearby. It all seems placid and tranquil; however, the boatman suddenly becomes very agitated as a bunch of lilies assumes a life of its own and heads towards us. He starts violently stabbing the water with the oar, showering us with mud pellets. I notice Barney, at the front of the boat, turn a nasty shade of green. I glance backwards and notice rare flickers of fear cross the faces of Dudu and Saba. Iain, who is still calmly pouring out wine, flashes them a disapproving look, and Oria instructs us to whack the sides of the boat. Later that evening, Iain says it is the closest he's ever been to a hippo in a boat. (Hippos, it turns out, account for more human deaths than any other animal in the bush). We are very proud.

**Nick: Thursday, 5 February** Dudu and Saba fly on ahead to the Samburu, where *Heart of a Lioness* was shot, in order to arrange a screening for the local Samburus. The Samburu National Reserve is in the north of the country, in the hot lowlands beneath Mount Kenya. It's an area of unbelievable beauty that is largely untamed. We're to fly up with Oria on the next plane, but we somehow manage to miss it – the Douglas-Hamiltons' habit of leaving everything to the last minute has obviously started to rub off on us. It looks as though Barney and I will be left behind, until we come up with idea of borrowing Saba's beaten-up Land-Rover.

Our route takes us through the northern territory, an area the British never managed to control, and which remains lawless to this day. There are frequent police roadblocks, and our guidebook, which cheerfully describes the region as bandit country, warns against stopping, or even driving at night. I am totally jiggered by the thought of Somali bandits armed with AK47s, but Barney is just the opposite. He wants to talk to everyone we pass on the way.

Naturally, we become totally lost. For two hours, we drive around the game park, at one point seeing the silhouette of a large elephant. We stop for a pee, and I swear I hear a lion roar. We are only saved by a couple of British army squaddies on night exercise, who show us the way. We are closer than we thought. Finally, they point to a gateway with a low wall: a painted mural of the lion with the oryx lights up in our headlights. It's just a short drive up to the camp.

**Barney: 10pm, middle of nowhere** After 10 hours in a stripped-down converted military truck, our feelings of helplessness have affected our humour. The situation is not helped when Broomfield Snr manages to get lost again. I blame this on the tattered 1975 Geological Survey map given to us by Iain. Nick, however, blames me. Dudu and Saba must have heard us screaming at each other for, just as we start frothing at the mouth, they turn up in another vehicle and guide us to the camp.

**Nick** To call Elephant Watch a camp is not to do it justice. Rather, it is an eco-tourist lodge worthy of five stars. It rests on the bank of the Ewaso Ng'iro River, and was designed by Oria, who used only locally sourced natural materials. Fifteen Samburu warriors, in their

traditional red robes and ornate jewellery, greet us. Saba and Dudu grew up with many of these young men, and relied on them for help and support during the making of the film. The Samburu, relatives of the Masai tribe, essentially own the surrounding land. Without them, it would be near-impossible for Save the Elephants to run as efficiently as it does. In fact, many of the locals run the day-to-day operations of Iain's foundation. The success of saving animals in the wild is in many ways interdependent on the extent to which local communities can also benefit. 'We are all so passionate about the Samburu people and the wilderness,' says Saba. 'This place is our backyard; there is a connection between us. Our parents have imbued a tremendous sense of responsibility in us, and we feel we must give back to this place and its people, contribute to their survival.'

Soon after, under a canopy of trees full of screeching baboons, we all sit down to watch what we all suddenly realise is the world premiere of *Heart of a Lioness*. Many of the warriors had appeared in the film, and they sit in their bright robes, the light from the screen reflected by their jewellery, and laugh and chat throughout the film. It was the wildest cast and crew I'd ever seen. At one point, when a baboon on the film track blurts out a panicked scream, the baboons above us go completely crazy and, soon after, the whole bush erupts into loud screams and cries like demented applause.

**Barney** The film – which reveals a world usually conjured up by long-loved elders telling symbolic bedtime stories – shows how terrifyingly close Saba and Dudu manage to get to the creatures, and captures all the strange nuances that undoubtedly exist between two animals that would normally be sworn enemies. You are constantly aware that, lurking underneath the motherly instincts of the lioness, is a somewhat sadistic side – a side one notices in a cat with a defenceless mouse. Indeed, so far-fetched was the story that, as the film documents, people came from far and wide to witness it for themselves. Crammed into dust-caked *matatus*, hundreds of Kenyans made the journey into the bush, often competing with high-paying safari-goers, to catch a glimpse of what soon became referred to as a 'miracle'. Kamunyak's legend spread throughout the year, as she adopted another five orphans. She was even mentioned in parliament in the lead-up to the December elections, when President Moi was finally voted out. As Saba says: 'For Kenyans, it was rather like the biblical interpretation of the lion and the lamb lying down together – people said that it showed that two enemies could be friends. And, of course, the lion is at the centre of many Kenyan myths and legends, because it's seen as such a fearsome beast, and here it was showing them the way to peace.' At the end of the year, Kamunyak disappeared and has not been seen since.

As the screen fades to credits and our faces fall into deep shadow, I notice an unmistakable saline streak on Iain's face. He is obviously very moved by his daughters' incredible achievement.

**Barney and Nick** After the screening, we sit between Leram and Sumaro, two Samburus, who chat in their mother tongue with the sisters. Because it is our last day, they suggest we go for a walk to say our goodbyes to Africa. Drenched in the light of a full moon – by the time night comes, one is joyously relieved that the big gaseous ball of boiling magma has decided to scorch some other unsuspecting part of the globe – we make our way to the top of a small plateau overlooking the vast Samburu reserve. Facing the holy mountain, Ololokwe, we mimic Leram, Sumaro and the sisters as they pray to the full moon. Bowing seven times, circling three times, and then bowing seven times again, we make a moonlit wish – a wish for return. □

*Heart of a Lioness* premieres on the Discovery Channel on Monday 10 May, at 10pm. For details of conservation work in Kenya, visit [www.savetheelephants.com](http://www.savetheelephants.com). To arrange a safari with the Douglas-Hamiltons, visit [www.elephantwatchsafari.com](http://www.elephantwatchsafari.com).