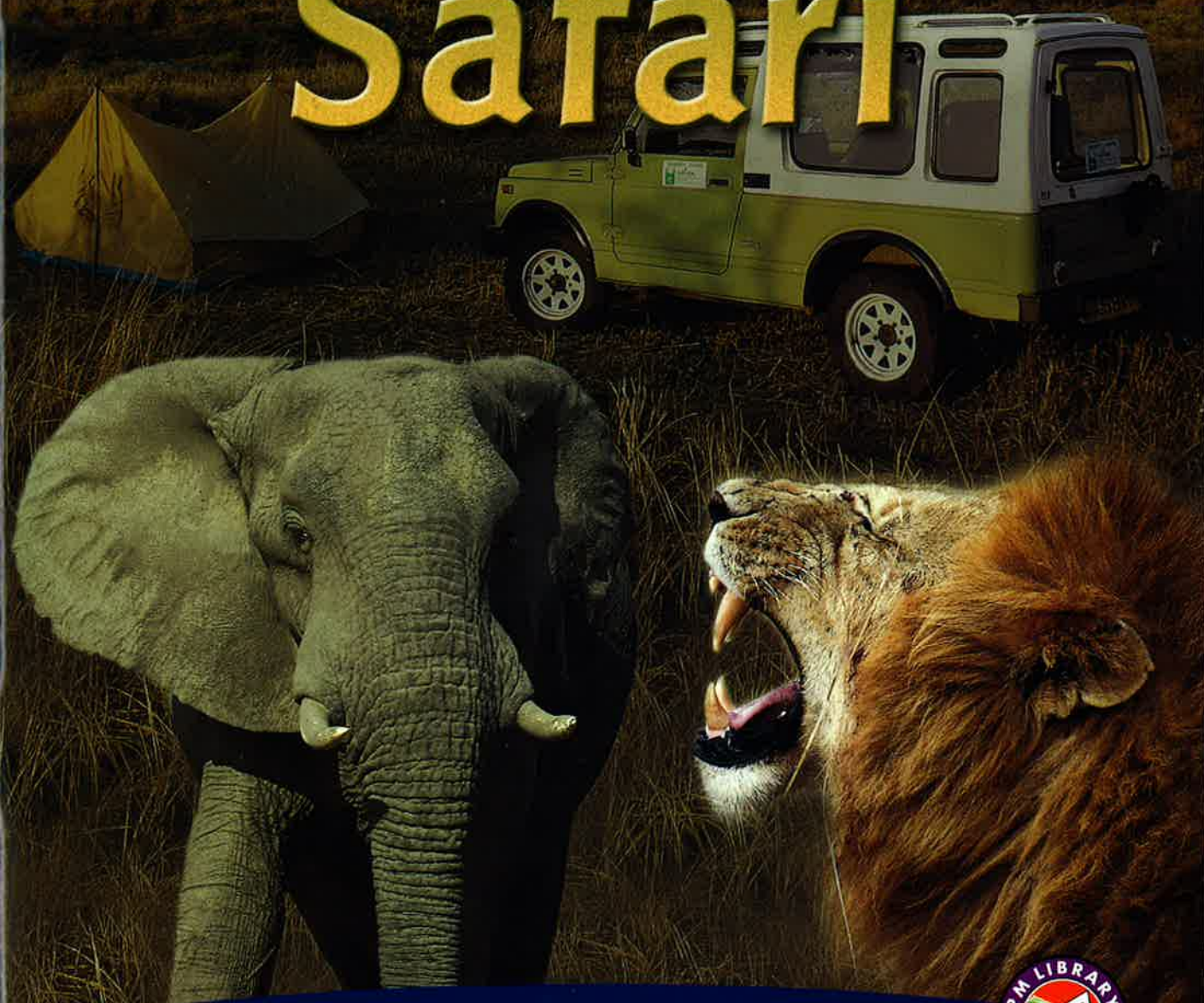
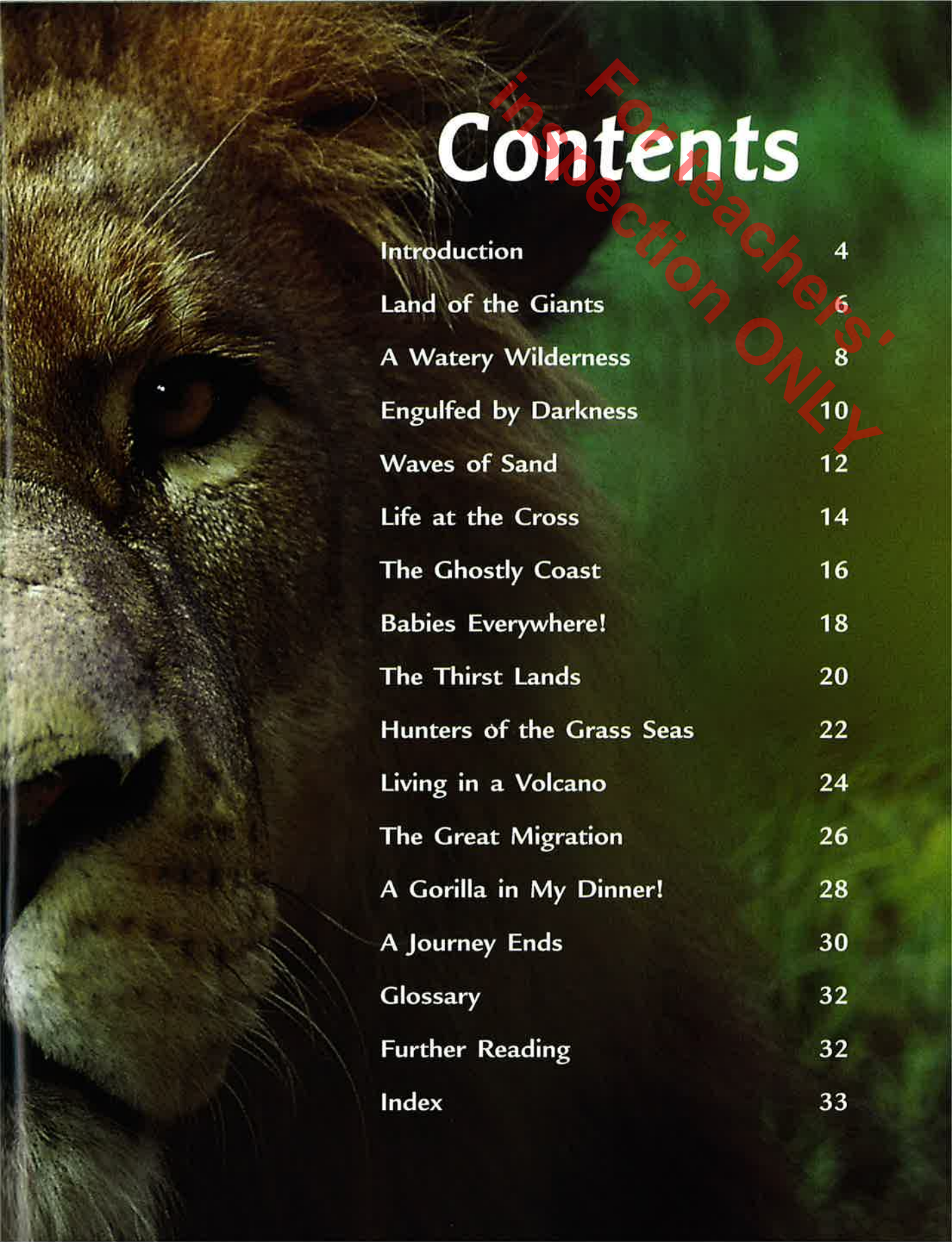


African Safari



Jason Edwards





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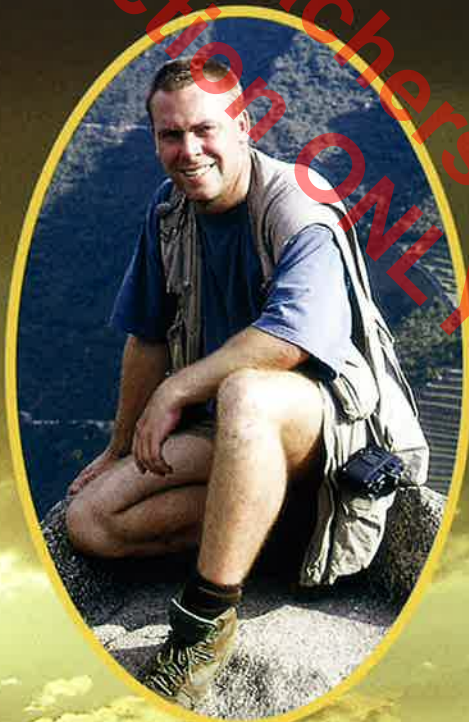
Introduction

Sitting by the roaring fire, I rest my tattered journal on my knees.
Outside the wind and rain rattle the windows, and lightning carves
a jagged path through the night sky.



As I turn the pages of my journal, memories come flooding back. Once again, I am trekking through the baking deserts. Once again, I hear the bugle calls of hippopotamuses. I hear lions roaring in the night and see giant vultures circling in the sky.

My African safari took me from Zimbabwe to the Democratic Republic of Congo; that's a distance of about 12,000 kilometres! Come back on safari with me, and explore the forests, swamps and grasslands of Africa!



Land of the Giants

Monday, 16 August

Today's journey began with a bumpy ride in a mutato (muh-ta-too) through drought-stricken Zimbabwe. My destination was Hwange (Wang-kee) National Park, which is home to 15,000 African elephants during the dry winter months.



I pitched camp near a small waterhole called Guvalala (Goo-va-la-la), just as the sun was setting. Soon, giant heads emerged from the scrub, sniffing the air cautiously.

The day had been hot, and the elephants were desperate for water. That night, over 100 elephants came to drink and play in the muddy pool.



The next morning, noisy doves bathing in the shallows woke me. All the elephants had vanished, but I could still smell them in my food, on my clothes, and in my hair!



African elephants are the largest living land animals. But their closest living relative is the rock hyrax, a rabbit-sized animal. Imagine if your relatives weighed 2,000 times more than you did!



Elephants are prevented from migrating to other areas because of farms that surround the national parks. An adult elephant can eat up to 150 kilograms of food per day, so it doesn't take them long to decimate the vegetation within their area.

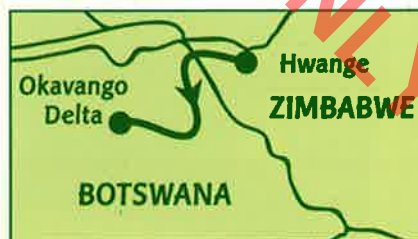


A Watery Wilderness

Saturday, 21 August

I hiked my way west into Botswana, through the dusty Makgadikgadi (Mah-gaddy-gaddy) Desert.

It was very thirsty travelling, but I finally reached the largest river floodplain in the world, the Okavango Delta.



The Okavango Delta is a watery wilderness riddled with channels, reed beds and tiny islands. More than 300 species of birds live here!

I decided to spend several days exploring the swamps in a log canoe called a mekoro (meh-korow). A local tribesman stood on the back of the mekoro and used a tall pole to push us along. His balance and strength amazed me. Even when a fish leapt into our mekoro, he didn't tip us over! But then a territorial hippopotamus chased us into the reed beds and the mekoro became stuck. We had to climb out and wade quickly through chest-deep water to escape the angry hippo.