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II. AJ ŤUK +BIL Laura Vilmošová Exploring Safari

## Exploring Safari

You could literally smell the beginning of summer. The air was warmer, the sky was brighter and people were happier as summer break was about to start in a few days. My parents and I weren't any exception as we had, far already started to pack for our vacation. Africa had been on my dad's bucket list since his childhood (pretty modest child, don't you think?) and this year was the right time to fulfill his dream. I wish you could have seen his face after our arrival to Kenya. All these years of waiting were definitely worth it. Mom's face wasn't that happy after realising we were going to spend next few days in a tent. Yes, a tent. Not a shiny all-inclusive hotel, but a tent in the middle of a nature where you could hear hyenas and monkeys sneaking around our dwelling during the night.

I knew what I had to do first - explore the area. Alone, of course. You might think, what an experienced young traveller. Well, not at all. I packed my backpack with the essentials such as candy, lip gloss, sunscreen, cell phone, more candy and then I was ready to go.

The moment I stepped out of our tent I felt like a real traveller. This feeling didn't last long because after a while of walking (without a map or signal) I got lost. Now what? Should I scream? Should I go back? I should definitely start to cry, so I did. Then I put my lip gloss on and started to think (shame I didn't do it sooner in that tent). In the middle of brainstorming about buying a new lip gloss, I suddenly heard a noise coming out of the bushes. "Who's that?" my voice was shaking, but no answer came back so I continued to stare at the bushes for a few more seconds. Then it struck me like a bolt – girl, you should run! So, I did again, what my inner self told me and again it was a mistake. After a few seconds of my run, or better said, attempt to run, a thick tree branch hit me. I decided a brisk walk would be better. Let's do this. Don't turn your head, just walk. As I continued to walk, I could hear steps that weren't mine. So, I turned around and there she was. A little girl staring and smiling at me with a big smile.

"Why are you following me?" I asked.

"Me – Zari, you – funny" said the little African girl.

"I'm clumsy, not funny. Trust me." I answered with sarcasm.

“Come, come” yelled the little girl at me as she was running and waving at me to follow her. As you might suspect, as a true traveller I really did so. I followed that little girl into the forest, we ran for a few minutes, a small village appeared in the middle of nowhere. It wasn't any ordinary village. There were small cottages that were really strange, what was even stranger was a herd of cows in the middle of the village. They were just standing there, doing nothing. The smell was terrible, probably because of the cows. There were so many people in the village. Everyone was wearing funny colourful clothes, except the children. They were fully naked and dirty.

“Take me back! I want to go home!” I said to Zari.

“Your name?” she asked with a smile.

“No name! Back home!” my eyes were filled with tears and heart was beating fast. It was beating even faster after I heard someone screaming. It was a woman screaming.

“It's almost noon, the women are about to sing” said the girl happily.

Then it happened, approximately twelve women dressed in those funny looking blankets came out of nowhere. The screaming transformed into beautiful singing. I couldn't move or say a word.

“Do they always do this?” I asked.

“Yes, it's a prayer we use to thank for the food and the sun” answered Zari “So what is your name?”.

I was absolutely mesmerized by the song. “I'm Liza” I finally said.

“Nice to meet you Liza, I'm Zari” smiled the girl

“Where am I?”

“You're in my village. It's a Maasai village.”

“A Maasai village?” I asked noticing how the children started to dance to the prayer.

“It's village occupied by the Maasai men” said Zari

“The Maasai men? Who are they? Are they those who are wearing the funny scarfs?”

“Yes, the Maasais are shepherds. They are also the owners of the safari. And the funny scarfs you were talking about, they're the signature scarfs only worn by the original Maasais,” explained Zari

“Oh, so that's why they are all dressed like that. And why are there so many cows here if they own the whole safari?”

“Well, we don't have a lot but one thing we have are cows. We used to eat them but then we started to grow plants and vegetables. Now Maasais are mostly vegetarians but we still keep

the cows for milk and blood. Keeping the cows in the safari or outside our village would be very dangerous, because of the wild animals so we protect them” explained Zari.

The day went by so fast. Zari introduced me to more Maasai traditions. I asked Zari if she could give me a tour around the village. It turns out, that it was originally four brothers who created the village, so it means that they are all one big family. They care about each other and they protect each other. She showed me the market that the Maasai women made to earn some more money. It looked amazing. Every single thing they sold was made by their own hands. Zari’s father explained to me how they make fire and their own medicine. It was wonderful to see how so many people can live just with so little and still be happy. I realized I had candies packed in my backpack. I took them out, opened the package and then suddenly, around 4 children were standing right next me asking about the tiny packages.

“It’s a candy” I answered while opening the first packaging.

“Candy?” asked one of a child wearing nothing showing me his empty palm. I put a piece of a candy in the middle of his palm and watch him while he tried the taste of a sweet for the first time. His eyes opened and a big smile appeared on his face. Every child from the village came to look at a white European girl with sweet candies. I offered one to everyone and it made me so happy and grateful.

I could have sworn that day everybody danced and sang until midnight. Zari explained to me what these dances mean. The traditional dance danced by the Maasai men is a competition. They make a circle a few of them go to the middle and jump as high as they can. Whoever jumps the highest wins. You can win either a cow, a woman or a house, but most of the time they do it just for fun.

Soon it was a night time and I still had no idea how to get back to my parents. I asked Zari if she knew a way to get to the camp. Her parents kindly offer to walk me back to the camp. As we were walking back Zari poked me and pointed at the tree.

“Look! This is the tree that hit your head!” she said while pointing to a tree.

“Really?” I asked.

“Yes, you run in a funny way“ laughed Zari.

“Well, Zari, that’s the reason why I hit that tree, I guess. I should practice more when I arrive back home “. Suddenly I saw a tiny light and some noises coming from behind the trees. MY CAMP!!

I couldn’t wait to share all those moments with my parents. Just by one day of observing these people in their own habitat and I realised how beautiful life can be. You don’t need brand new clothes or a phone. A happy and healthy family is everything you need. A simple

life can be also joyful, sometimes even more than our life filled with all the modern-age gadgets. I think I begun to understand how to live in the present moment and how to enjoy it. Zari completely changed my perspective and I will always treasure these moments in my heart.