

Londi learns about Lions at
LIONSROCK

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Londi learns about Lions at

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*A tale of sorrow,
empathy and hope*

By RALPH RATSHITANGA

Illustrations By Julie Sneedeen

Dedication

*To all the children around the world and to my sons,
Mulondeni and Murendeni: grow up, learn more
about Lions, and live your own adventures.*



FOUR
PAWS

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Introduction

The age-old story of the African Lion can be traced to many places. The events in this book recount how Londi experienced this at LIONSROCK where he first heard the awe-inspiring roar of a lion. The sound rumbled all around him and reached into the depths of his soul. It was majestic and it told the story of Africa.

Taking walks at LIONSROCK and looking out over the savannah, he discovered more about the plight of lions. In the background the pride roared, telling their story and asking him to be their voice and the voice of countless other lions kept in captivity. Their roars will never be heard in the wild.

What Londi comes to realise is that the hope for ending the abuse of big cats is in the hands of the youth of the world.

This book shows young and old alike that compassion and care towards animals have a fundamental and positive impact on the future of us all, and that we can all do something, whether big or small, to help organisations such as FOUR PAWS create a world where animals are treated as sentient beings; with respect, empathy and understanding.

With these words, let's join Londi at LIONSROCK, sound the call to action and start to fight for the lions! Rise up and roar for lions!

The getaway

Not so long ago, Londi found out about canned hunting which is a plight faced by lions born in captivity. This is a story of sorrow and hope – and it all began right here...

“Every lion was born to rule the wild. Like a king of the jungle, it was born to patrol large territories. Its presence was marked by scents around bushes and trees. If one forgot who was king of the jungle, the reminder was in the roar,” Londi’s mom read to him as he lay in bed. The book was about white lions. As she finished the last chapter she looked at him and said, “If a lion is anywhere but in the wild, it is not where it belongs.”

Londi had listened as his mom finished reading the last paragraph, not knowing that those words would stick with him. As his mom was tucking him in to sleep, he couldn’t help asking her, “Mom, do you mean to say that all the lions that are in circuses don’t belong there?” His mom told him that it was a good question and perhaps they could look into the whole issue the following day. It was okay with Londi, for as long as they were going to discuss it again, he could go to sleep.

The day had been long and he was tired. Londi and his mom had been on the road from Pretoria to Bethlehem on their long-planned getaway, leaving behind Gauteng, the ‘place of gold’, to arrive in Free State province. They had been trying to decide on a holiday destination for a while until Londi’s mom saw an advertisement on television about a sanctuary that had been established to care for lions that were rescued from places of captivity.

She had been watching the animal channels and ended up settling for a programme about lions living in the African savannah. She loved lions and had lately been fascinated by tales of white lions. The advertisement that followed the programme, however, painted a different picture from what she had seen earlier. It was about the sanctuary in Bethlehem that cared for lions that came from different parts of the world, but that all had one thing in common – they had never been in the wild and they needed humans to help them survive.

Londi’s mom was struck by the fact that these lions depended on humans for shelter and for food.

She started looking into what the causes of their terrible fate were and began to read about the many threats lions faced. She was stunned by what she found.

It wasn’t long afterwards that she talked Londi into taking a trip to the sanctuary for their holiday getaway. Londi, being an animal lover, didn’t need much convincing. That, coupled with the fact that his mom assured him that there was lots to learn, made him reach his decision even quicker. Their holiday trip to the show grounds was postponed and

the sanctuary getaway took first place. Londi could feel that the visit to the sanctuary was going to be worth it.





Welcome to LIONSROCK!

The lion's roar woke Londi from his sleep with a jolt and he almost fell from his bed. The sun was already out and from the sound of things everyone was up and about, getting on with their day. Londi walked to the window in his room and looked outside. He was amazed by what he saw. Not far from his room, lion enclosures stretched out as far as his eyes could see. These were large enclosures set in the natural bush.

Another roar reminded Londi where he was. Suddenly he just wanted to be outside. He quickly ran to wash his face, dressed himself and as soon as he was done raced out of his room, heading for the exit of the lodge.

"Londi, stop where you are," said his mom. He was anxious to get outside but his mom had another idea – breakfast first. "Good morning, Mom," Londi said as she called him to the table. Only then did Londi realise there were other people with his mom, having breakfast.

He went to join them and was introduced to everybody around the table. He was surprised that they already knew a lot about him. His mom had told them about Londi and his friend Saint's wonderful deed when they had found a wounded baby rhino earlier that year. Now that Londi

was at the table, she added that Saint would have loved to be with them and it had been planned like that, but that he fell ill when they were about to leave and they had to leave him behind with heavy hearts.

A lady stood up and welcomed everyone. Her name was Fiona and she was in charge of the animal charity that saved lions. It was clear that she was happy to have visitors to the establishment. She also introduced her assistant, Yvonne, who stood up and greeted everyone.

She too was a happy and bubbly person.

Fiona then turned to Londi and said, "I have longed to meet you. I read in a newspaper article about what you and Saint did for that baby rhino. I believe your story is inspirational and shows us that each of us can do something extraordinary for the majestic rhino."

Londi's mom said a quick thank you on his behalf because at this moment he looked speechless.

Maybe that is what happens when you do a good deed from the bottom of your heart and unexpectedly people start hailing you as a hero, Londi thought. He only wished Saint had been there to receive this recognition as well. Fiona signalled for Yvonne, who brought in two bags filled with books and other gifts. She continued to say, "My son and I were moved to tears when we heard about the plight of rhinos. These books will teach you about the plight of lions and we believe that you will be moved by their story as well."

The bags were handed to Londi with the message that one was for Saint. He accepted the bags with a big smile as everyone applauded.



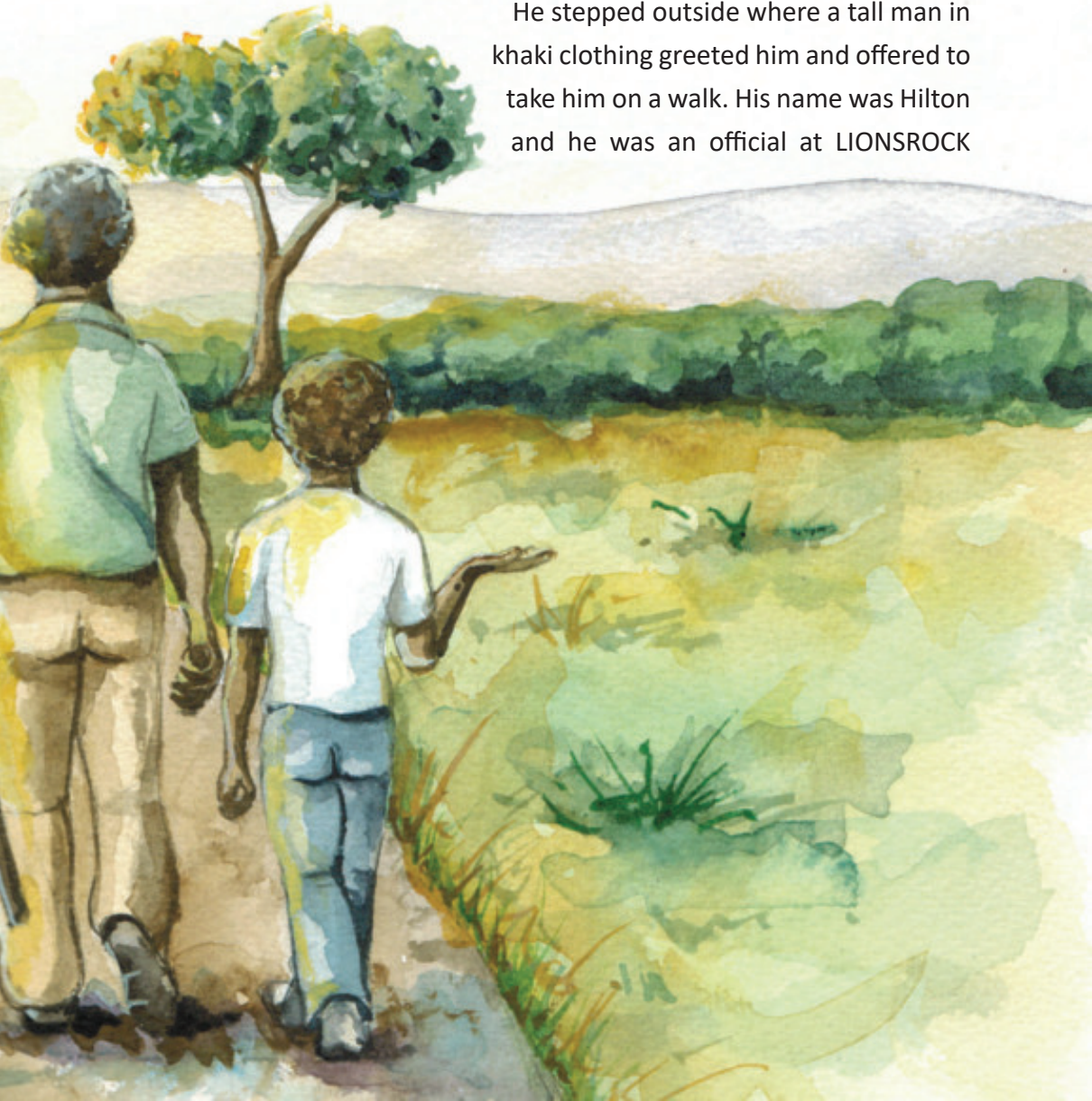
Yvonne then stood up and said, “We are happy to have you here. Welcome to LIONSROCK!”

Londi's walkabout



As soon as breakfast was finished, Londi remembered that before he had been last to join the table, he wanted to rush outside to see the lion enclosures he had spotted through the window earlier.

He stepped outside where a tall man in khaki clothing greeted him and offered to take him on a walk. His name was Hilton and he was an official at LIONSROCK

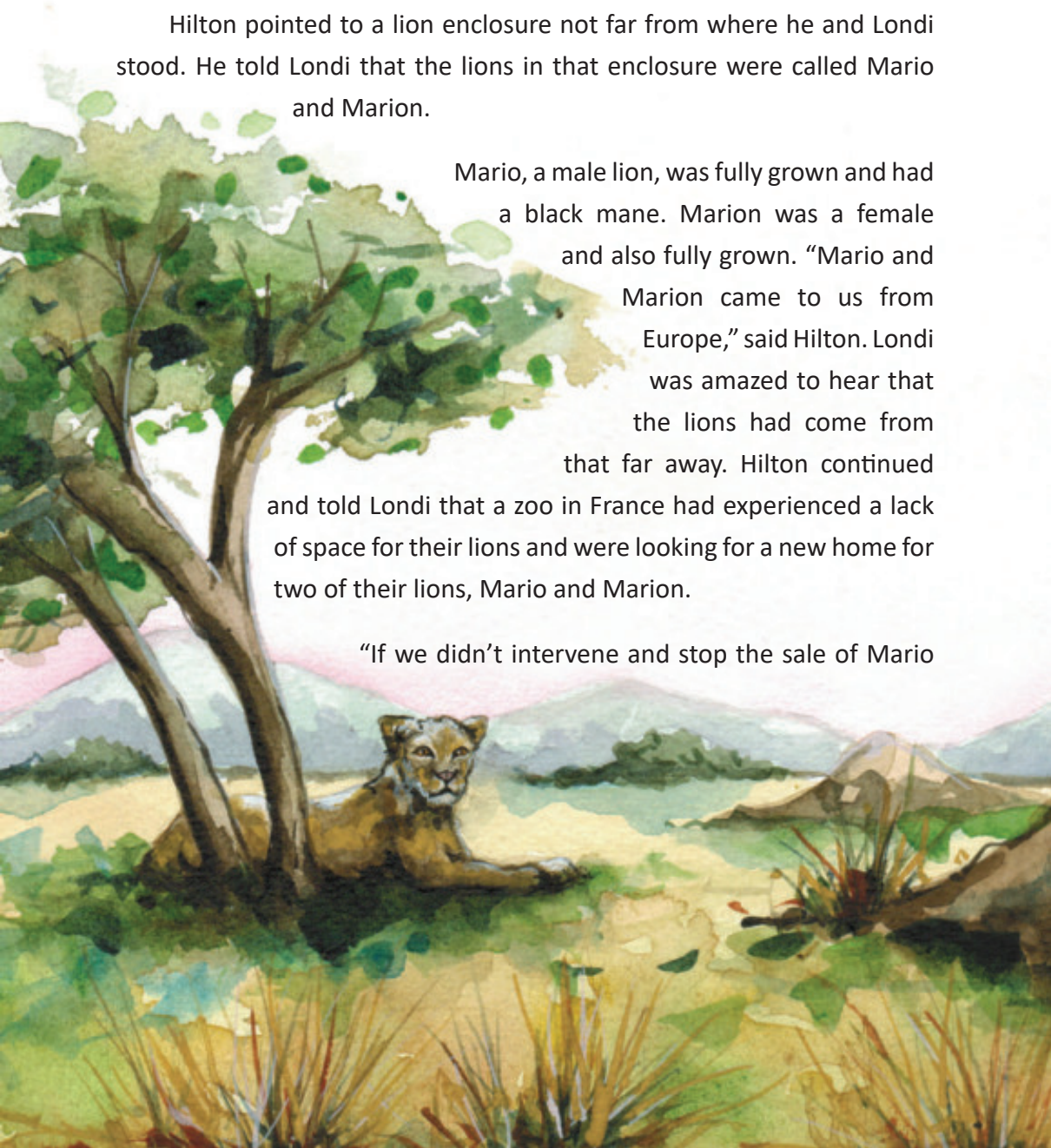


who was in charge of the lion enclosures. Londi was surprised to hear that the lions were given names and that Hilton knew all of them by heart.

Hilton pointed to a lion enclosure not far from where he and Londi stood. He told Londi that the lions in that enclosure were called Mario and Marion.

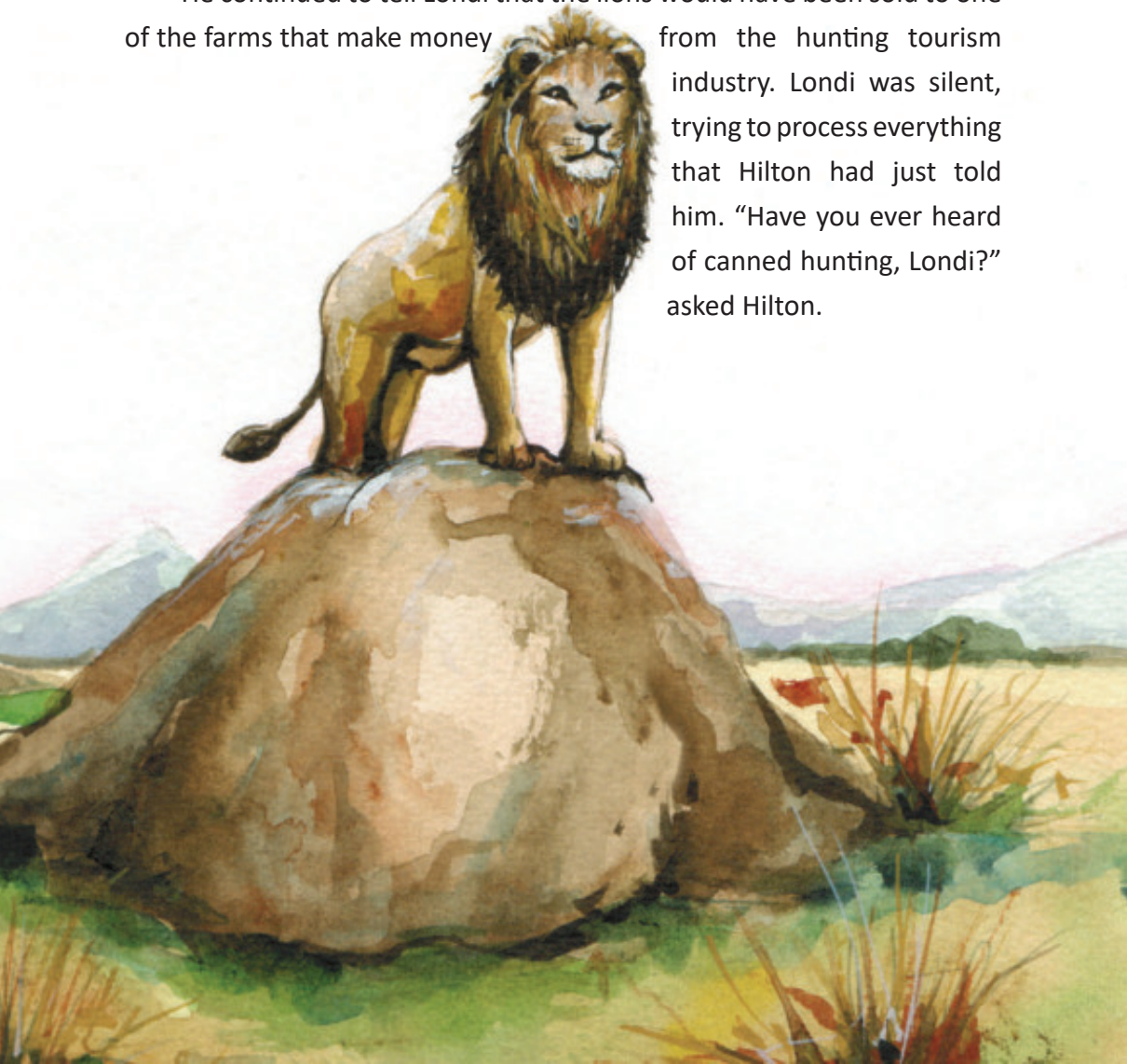
Mario, a male lion, was fully grown and had a black mane. Marion was a female and also fully grown. "Mario and Marion came to us from Europe," said Hilton. Londi was amazed to hear that the lions had come from that far away. Hilton continued and told Londi that a zoo in France had experienced a lack of space for their lions and were looking for a new home for two of their lions, Mario and Marion.

"If we didn't intervene and stop the sale of Mario



and Marion to a commercial lodge here in South Africa, they would be dead by now,” said Hilton. “Why, what do you mean?” asked Londi. “Mario and Marion were going to be sold to a commercial lodge,” Hilton replied, “but the transaction hid the real reason why the lodge wanted the lions,” Hilton said.

He continued to tell Londi that the lions would have been sold to one of the farms that make money from the hunting tourism industry. Londi was silent, trying to process everything that Hilton had just told him. “Have you ever heard of canned hunting, Londi?” asked Hilton.



A great lunch

Londi shook his head without saying a word. “It’s okay – I will tell you all about it tomorrow when we take another walk,” said Hilton. Londi nodded but his gaze remained on Mario and Marion. He couldn’t imagine why anyone would want to kill these beautiful animals. “Let’s end our tour here,” said Hilton. “Yes, we have been walking for a long time,” said Londi. “I am eager to learn about canned hunting tomorrow.”

They started to walk back in the direction of the lodge. Mario looked at them as they walked off and disappeared from sight. Marion lay relaxed in the shade of a tree.

There was no doubt that these lions were at home here. Their enclosure was large, had lots of space and elements of the wild too. There were short and tall grasses, shrubs and trees as well as rocks. As soon as they had gone out of sight, Mario went and stood on a rock that provided a vantage point. He looked in their direction once more.

It was as if he was inspecting his territory as he would have done in the wild.

On their way back to the lodge, Londi hinted that the walk had made

him hungry. They had walked to the furthest part of the sanctuary and it was almost afternoon. “Well, it’s a good thing that you worked up an appetite, because our lunches don’t disappoint,” said Hilton.

They both laughed and soon were approaching the lodge.

When Londi and Hilton arrived back at the lodge, the table was set and food had been brought from the kitchen, ready to be served.

Londi could smell that lunch was going to be good indeed.

He had only a few minutes to prepare himself and after all that walking wanted to wash his face before he could sit down at the table. He parted with Hilton and dashed to his room where he found his mom sitting on the bed reading one of the books about LIONSROCK. Londi couldn’t wait to tell her about his experience with Hilton and about Mario and Marion. “Londi, I know about Mario and Marion,” said his mom. She told Londi that they were doomed to die if they had not been rescued before their sale was finalised. Londi was surprised that his mom knew about it.

“Mom, how do you know about Mario and Marion?” he asked.

“Were you spying on my walk with Hilton?” Londi’s mom laughed and told him that all the information about the lions and LIONSROCK was in one of the books that had been given to him as gift.

“You should read the books when you have time – they are very informative,” she said and gave Londi a wink.

Londi quickly finished freshening up and accompanied his mom to the dining room to have lunch. “Mom, tomorrow Hilton will tell me all

about canned hunting,” said Londi. His mom smiled, but before she could say anything Londi suspected that she knew about canned hunting too.

“Mom, don’t tell me you know about canned hunting?” Londi said with a smile. “Yes, that too,” said his mom. “It is in that book I showed you.”

It was time for Londi’s mom to brag a bit. “I told you there was a lot to learn by coming here, remember?” Londi agreed. He knew that he had to use the opportunity to learn more about animals and the environment. Londi’s mom was delighted because she could see that Londi was happy and also showing an interest in learning more during their breakaway.

Lunch was a feast, as Hilton had promised. Besides the food, the company of the other guests made it informative too as many stories about the animals at the sanctuary were shared around the table.

Each of the stories related how the animals at the sanctuary had a tough life before they arrived and that they needed help from people if they were to survive.

After lunch Londi joined other children staying at the lodge at the playground in the front garden.

His mom and a few of the other guests went to relax on the balcony where comfortable couches had been placed so they could enjoy the view of the animal enclosures just below them stretching out the horizon where the sun was starting to set.

The sound of the children laughing and people talking was interrupted

as one of the lions in an enclosure gave a loud roar. The roar continued for a long time, as if the lion wanted to remind everyone that it was king.

Everyone fell silent and looked up, their gazes directed by the mighty sound. There, in the distance on the vantage point of a rock, they saw the king who was responsible for the roar.

There was no doubt that the roar was majestic, but even armed with that roar, sometimes a lion is still no match for man and his greed. Humans have been killing lions and other big cats to fuel their economic greed. They slaughter them for their hides and even their body parts. Lately they have used them on game farms to attract tourists with adventure activities such as walking with lions. But lurking just beneath the surface lies the canned hunting industry.

It is the final destination of young cubs that would have been taken from their mothers when they were just a few weeks old. These young cubs are hand raised and, when still young, used in petting programmes. Soon after that, when they have grown some more, they are used for walking with lions activities, and when they are fully-grown, they supply the hunting tourism industry.

The roar stopped and everything went quiet. Soon darkness fell and the guests moved inside, retiring to their rooms for much needed rest. All seemed peaceful at LIONSROCK.

Tragedy hits

It had been a busy day with a host of activities and it came as no surprise that silence fell over LIONSROCK as the guests soon turned in for the night. Every once in a while one of the animals would make a noise, but soon silence reigned again. Londi was tired from his walk earlier and that, together with their satisfying meal, saw him fall asleep as soon as he went to bed. That was also the case with most of the other guests. Everyone was sleeping, recharging their bodies for the next day.

Suddenly, in the still of the night, a gunshot went off. The loud bark of the gun woke up most of the guests and staff at LIONSROCK. Those who were not shocked from their sleep by the first gunshot, woke up when the second went off.

Everyone soon gathered at a point outside the lodge. Fiona and Hilton were already waiting outside. They looked as if they were inspecting something in the distance. The full moon was out and provided much needed visibility, the same visibility that spells doom for hunted animals.

“Everybody calm down,” Fiona said, motioning with her hands.

She continued to tell the guests that the gunshots they had heard

were not from LIONSROCK, but had been fired on a nearby farm. “There seems to be some hunting activity on one of the farms on the other side of the road,” Fiona said, pointing in the direction she had been inspecting earlier. Hilton was silent, trying to zoom in on the activity from a vantage point on top of a Land Rover, using binoculars that were adapted for night vision. “I can see a couple of people with guns, but I can’t make out anything more,” said Hilton. Everyone else was still in shock. The worry in Fiona and Hilton’s eyes showed them that whatever the gunshots were about, it wasn’t good.

The guests stood around for a while, feeling helpless, until Hilton told them that they should return to their rooms. “We will investigate and in the morning you will definitely know what the gunshots were all about,” said Hilton. The guests slowly went back to their rooms.

Londi was not at ease, but his mom managed to get settle him down. “Let’s not worry, Londi – in the morning we will know exactly what happened,” she said. With those words Londi went back to sleep.

Outside, Fiona also left for her room, telling Hilton that they stood a better chance of finding out what had happened in the morning. Both their faces looked grim. It was as if they knew that something terrible had happened Hilton stayed a while and then alighted from the Land Rover and made his way to his room.





Horror confirmed

The next morning, Londi walked in on Hilton, Yvonne and Fiona as they finished watching footage taken by one of the cameras strategically fixed on the perimeter around the sanctuary. The camera had a range that could capture events happening around the fence at LIONSROCK as well as the farm across the road. Hilton was pointing out to Yvonne and Fiona what the footage showed as Londi waited for them to finish their discussion. He could see the worry on their faces and knew very well not to interrupt.

“Good morning, Londi,” said Fiona. “It is as we feared – two lions were shot and killed last night in a canned hunting incident.” Fiona showed Londi a seat and he sat down. Thinking about what Fiona had just told him reminded him of when he and Saint had found the baby rhino. He remembered how he and Saint couldn’t understand why someone would be so cruel to that animal. Now he was finding out that almost all animals were in danger of the cruelty of humans.

“Londi, I guess your education about the canned hunting of lions begins now,” said Hilton. He told Londi how, fuelled by greed, people bred

lions to sell them to the hunting tourism industry. These lions get taken from their mothers when they are just a few weeks old. They become dependent on humans for their food and shelter.

In many cases that were investigated, cubs were taken away from their mothers within the first week after their birth. They are then rented out as pet lions or used to attract day visitors and volunteers to farms that claim to be involved in the conservation of lions. When the cubs are a few months old they move on to programmes like walking with lions.

When the lions reach adulthood, they are sold to different kinds of breeders. Most of them end up in the tragic canned hunting industry.

During canned hunting, the animal is kept in a small fenced area because that guarantees a successful hunt. After the kill pictures are taken of the hunter, his choice of weapon and the dead animal for the purpose of collecting memories.

Hilton had been resetting the computer with the footage as they spoke. Londi's mom also joined them and Fiona briefed her on what had happened and that the activity had been caught on camera.

Yvonne told Londi's mom that there was a possibility that more lions were still on the farm and that they would suffer the same fate if not rescued immediately.

They needed to act fast to save them.

Londi couldn't watch the footage because it was too gruesome for his sensitive eyes, but his mom did. She stood there in shock after she had

seen the two lions being offloaded from a van. They looked out of place and couldn't even walk properly. Hilton explained that it was the effect of drugs they had been injected with to make them easy targets. One after the other they were aimed at and gunned down along the fence. After that there was a lot of commotion when the hunters celebrated while posing for pictures with the dead lions, raising their guns in the air...

It was clear what the two gunshots that had woken up the people at LIONSROCK the previous night was all about. It was a cruel deed and it was all caught on camera.

As painful as it was, Fiona and her crew couldn't dwell on the sad event as they knew the race was on to save the remaining lions on the farm.

The rescue begins

The rest of the day passed with everyone in a somber mood. Londi's mom had painted a fair picture to him of what she had seen on the canned hunting footage. There was no doubt that Londi understood the cruelty that his mom had witnessed.

In the morning Londi was cheered up by a phone call from Saint. He had not spoken to his friend in a few days. After he told Saint about the sad news of the lions that had been killed on the farm just next to LIONSROCK, Saint shared some much needed good news about what was happening with him back home.

Saint had found a puppy that appeared to have been abandoned. He said his dad allowed him to keep it while they attempted to find out what had happened to it or until they managed to track down its owner. Saint told Londi the puppy was in a bad shape when he found it. It was hungry and dehydrated. Saint and his dad took it to Dr Schwan for treatment and the necessary vaccinations. Dr Schwan is an animal doctor in the community. She is the same doctor who helped them when they had found the wounded baby rhino. Dr Schwan treated the puppy and discharged it after two days. The puppy was now in Saint's care. Saint had

put flyers and posters around the community to see if someone would respond with a lead about a lost and found puppy.

Londi was happy to hear about it and commended Saint for doing such a good job with the puppy. They caught up on other news too since they had not spoken for some time, and ended their conversation with Londi telling Saint that he couldn't wait to see the puppy, if it was still there when he returned. Saint said he was keen to hear more about canned hunting when Londi got back. "Of course you will," said Londi, quickly stopping himself from telling Saint about the gifts. He didn't want to spoil the surprise for his friend. He knew that all the information about the plight faced by lions, especially the canned hunting of lions, was in the books the people from LIONSROCK had given them as gifts. Suddenly he knew that when he was back home he had a task – to get his friends together and unite against the abuse of lions, just as they did with rhino poaching.

He knew that they would have a great impact because they had done it before.

When Londi hung up the call he went outside to find Hilton and see if they could go for a walk. He found Hilton welcoming a group of people who had just finished parking their cars. They walked straight to Fiona's office with some urgency. Londi decided to sit outside and wait for Hilton. He didn't want to take a walk alone and thought he could read a book instead. The wording on the doors of the cars that had just parked caught his attention. Two of the cars had FOUR PAWS written on both sides. Londi remembered Fiona and Yvonne saying something about FOUR PAWS. It



sparked his curiosity to find out who they were and what they did.

A Great Start

The conversation in Fiona's office was heated. It was clear that the discussion was serious and that the people who were having the conversation agreed on most of the things being raised.

Yvonne came out from the office a couple of times to grab refreshments for the guests. Hilton also rushed out a couple of times, every time returning with a bundle of papers. After a while the visitors left Fiona's office and drove away from the sanctuary, taking the bundles of paper and what appeared to be a compact disc with them.

As if Hilton could see the interest in Londi's eyes, he sat him down and told him who the people were and what the discussion was about.

Two of the people were from FOUR PAWS, the organisation that managed LIONSROCK. FOUR PAWS focuses on the well-being of animals that are kept captive by humans, such as wild animals that are housed inappropriately. It aims to intervene directly and act fast to help these animals. Hilton told Londi that FOUR PAWS envisioned a world in which animals didn't suffer and where humans treated animals with respect, empathy and understanding. "That is the reason why FOUR PAWS is

doing everything in its power to ban the canned hunting of lions,” Hilton continued. Three more visitors were officials from the Department of Environmental Affairs, accompanied by another one from the local municipality. They were all involved with protecting wildlife.

Hilton told Londi that there was an urgent matter that needed to be addressed by the group who had just left. They had found out that there were four more lions on the farm that was involved in the deadly canned hunting incident. The remaining lions needed to be rescued as quickly as possible. Any delays could see them suffer the same fate as the other ones that were drugged and shot.

LIONSROCK, together with FOUR PAWS, supplied the officials with all the information they needed in order for them to take appropriate action.

They had given them all the documents they had managed to gather in their previous investigations of the farm. One of the documents had to do with Mario and Marion and included the sales transaction that LIONSROCK had managed to prevent when the horror behind it was revealed.

Now, more than ever before, there was hard evidence that the farm was involved in canned hunting. Hilton was sure that appropriate action would be taken this time around. He told Londi that the evidence on the compact disc would help a great deal to get the lions away from that farm.

He added that the farm could even lose its permit to operate as a game lodge since the authorities would now be aware that they had been deceived about the farm’s real intentions.

Hilton further explained that the officials would report to their superiors what they had found. They also needed to arrange for the necessary paperwork in order for them to remove the lions from the farm. Once that was done they could act with great speed before the four other lions were lost to canned hunting for good.

“Are they going to do as they promised?” asked Londi. “They are dedicated people and they care about the animals,” replied Hilton. He assured Londi that the visitors had committed to get back to them before sunset. Londi was inspired by the urgency with which they addressed the issue.

Hilton suddenly remembered that they had been supposed to go for a walk, and he apologised to Londi as it would no longer happen because of the latest developments. Londi understood and decided right away that he would go and ask his mom to join him for a walk instead. He said goodbye to Hilton and set out in the direction where he knew he would find his mom.

The people from FOUR PAWS and the wildlife officials acted swiftly as they had promised. They received the go ahead from their superiors and attained the necessary legal papers that gave them permission to remove the lions from the farm. Because the removals would only happen in the morning, a team from the HAWKS was deployed to keep a watch on activities on the farm. This secret operation was entrusted to a team that had special skills to respond immediately if the need arose.

Fiona was happy as she gave Hilton the news. It would remain a secret that would stay with her, Hilton and Yvonne for the time being.

Everyone else would only hear the news in the morning. It was a necessary precaution in case news of the planned raid reached the wrong ears. Their efforts would then be compromised, and the lions might end up paying with their lives.



The Raid

As the sun started to set, Hilton again used the night vision binoculars to explore the surrounds from his vantage point on top of the Land Rover. Things were going according to plan. He saw a few vans taking up position on the other side of the road. The tactical team from the HAWKS had arrived. They were the only hope for the remaining lions.

The night was going to be long. The teams were set to pounce on the unsuspecting farm owners in the morning, hoping to find evidence that would further strengthen their case. Midnight approached and marked the half-way point to the rescue of the remaining lions. At LIONSROCK everything was quiet, but not everyone was sleeping. Those involved in the rescue operation were preparing to jump into action the next morning.

The night was cold but it couldn't deter the brave men and women from waiting it out. They knew that they were the only hope standing between the lions and death should another hunt take place that night. The roars of the lions from LIONSROCK reminded them why they were there and provided the team with all the motivation they needed.

As morning broke, the long wait was finally over. Hilton received a

call from the team from FOUR PAWS informing him that they were just a short distance away from the farm. The people from LIONSROCK wouldn't join the raid but would stand ready should the lions have to be relocated there quickly.

The convoy of cars arrived at the farm at the crack of dawn before any of the suspects were out of bed. The FOUR PAWS team now joined the HAWKS' tactical officers that had spent the night at the side of the road to prevent any hunting activity.

The leader of the team knocked on the door of the main dwelling and introduced himself to the owner of the farm. He stated the reason why they were there and showed the owner of the farm the necessary legal paperwork that gave them the authority to do their work.

The owner of the farm had no choice but to take the team to where the lions were kept. When they reached the first lion enclosure they were left shocked, struggling to believe what their eyes were seeing. A lioness lay motionless on a cold concrete floor.

There was not enough space for it to move around, but soon it became evident that there was a serious problem with the lioness. She was barely alive and in a critical condition. Upon closer inspection it was also discovered that she was deformed. The FOUR PAWS team had dealt with similar situations before.

They knew that the reason the lioness was deformed was that it had been removed from its mother at a young age which would have resulted in malnutrition. Malnutrition coupled with age had caused her bones to

deform. The hard concrete floor had worsened it all and led to permanent paralysis. She couldn't stand up and was also having problems breathing.

In the second enclosure they found the same poor living conditions, this time with three lionesses kept together in the cramped space. The team couldn't believe it when they saw a white lioness with two small cubs. The cubs looked only a few months old, but they were not properly developed for their age. The lionesses in the enclosure were not properly fed either and it was worse for the white female as she also had to produce milk for her two cubs. The white lioness was truly in a bad shape.

The third enclosure provided evidence of the previous night's canned hunting. Two dead lions, a male and a female, lay on the concrete floor. Something sinister was immediately clear as the dead male lion was missing its two front legs. It appeared that they had been cut off and provided further proof that the farm owners were also selling lion parts to people who used it for rituals. The gruesome scenes the team found was clear evidence that the farm was not promoting lion conservation at all. Instead the farm was a brutal killing field for lions. Other enclosures were standing empty, but anyone could see that they were not at all suited to house big cats.

The FOUR PAWS team deployed their crew, which included animal handlers and veterinarians, to start removing the lions. The lions were sedated and put into custom-made crates for their relocation. Even though the relocation was only for a short distance, every procedure for moving big cats needed to be followed.





Sorrow and happiness

The tactical team, together with officials from the municipality, started to collect the necessary evidence and took pictures of the dead lions. The hunters from the previous night's hunt were located in one of the dwellings on the farm. They failed to produce the necessary permits for their hunt.

The raid was a success and everything went as planned. Soon the teams left the farm with their precious cargo. Upon reaching the main road the teams separated. The tactical team headed for their offices. They had gathered important evidence that would lead to the arrest of the hunters on charges of illegal hunting. They also had evidence that would see the farm get closed down for its involvement in canned hunting.

The team from FOUR PAWS made its way to LIONSROCK where a massive task lay ahead of them. First they needed to get the lions safely to their new home. The white lioness and her cubs furthermore required urgent medical attention and food. Although they were not in a good shape, the other two lionesses would be fine.

The biggest challenge facing the FOUR PAWS team was the deformed

lioness. The poor animal was in bad shape and it was becoming clear that she wouldn't make it. Her life of suffering had taken its toll and it looked as though she had been in a poor condition for a very long time. The FOUR PAWS team had a tough decision to make...

At LIONSROCK, it was a hive of activity as Fiona and the team from FOUR PAWS started to assess the lions that had arrived from the raided game farm. It was painful to see the lions in such a poor condition. Even though these teams had dealt with such situations before, they never got used to it.

Londi and his mom had seen the lions arrive and were anxious to know about their fate as well as the consequences for those responsible for their abuse. Yvonne told Londi and his mom that the lions' condition was not good but that they were doing everything in their power to help them. She also shared the teams' concerns about the deformed lioness that was struggling to breathe properly.

The FOUR PAWS veterinarians tried everything they could for the sick lioness, but despite their continued efforts they could see that her condition had worsened.

The prognosis was that she had cancer that had advanced too far and it was decided that it would be better for the lioness if she was put down. She would die in a dignified manner and with less pain. The decision, although painful, was the only option. The lioness' sad journey had come to an end. In her honour, the team stood next to her as the lioness took her last breath.



But there was no time to be sad – the remaining lionesses, especially the one with cubs, needed their full attention next.

The team worked hard the whole day, not taking any breaks. By late afternoon the lions were deemed to be stable but they would continue to be monitored throughout their recovery.

The white lioness and her cubs and the other two lionesses for the first time experienced true kindness and hospitality from humans. They



were all going to be fine at LIONSROCK.

In the evening the team retreated to the comfort of the balcony to reflect on the events of the day. Feelings of sorrow mixed with happiness welled up inside of them. While they were sad about the death of the sick lioness, they also rejoiced that they had managed to save the other lionesses and the cubs. It was because of successful interventions such as this that they would carry on doing what they did: to give captive big cats and other animals a better, dignified life.

Fiona introduced Londi and his mom to the FOUR PAWS team. She told them everything about the events of the day, including how sad they were that the lioness had to be put down. She also told them the happy news of the other lionesses that were stable and recovering, adding that there was a white lioness with two cubs. Londi's mom was eager to see a white lion in real life for the first time, while Londi was just as keen to see the two lion cubs.

Londi and his mom knew however that their recovery time was important to the lions and they didn't mind waiting until they were better before visiting them. They still had a few more days left at LIONSROCK. Londi looked at his mom who gave him a smile. He didn't have to say anything. She knew that he was just as happy as she was that the lions were rescued and that they would have a chance to learn much more on their sanctuary getaway.

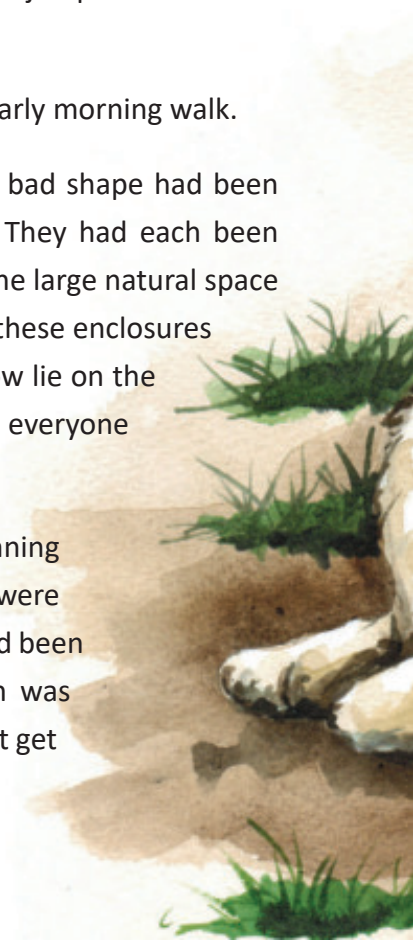
There is still hope

A few days had passed since the game farm had been raided and the lions relocated to LIONSROCK, when Londi jumped out of bed excitedly.

He was supposed to meet Hilton for another early morning walk.

The lions that had arrived at LIONSROCK in a bad shape had been nursed back to health and were recovering well. They had each been allocated to enclosures and were now at home in the large natural space among bushes, rocks and trees. Most importantly, these enclosures did not have concrete floors and the lions could now lie on the ground as they would in the wild. It was clear to everyone that the lions were comfortable.

The white lioness' cubs were thriving and running about as little cubs should. Ever since the lions were released from intensive care, Londi and his mom had been coming to check on them regularly. Londi's mom was delighted to get so close to a white lion and couldn't get enough of this beautiful sight.



Londi met Hilton with mixed emotions as he would be joining him for a walk for the last time. The day for Londi and his mom to leave LIONSROCK had arrived and their breakaway had unfortunately come to an end. Londi and Hilton walked in silence. Both of them were thinking back on the last few days and everything that had happened. They approached Mario and Marion's enclosure. Londi continued walking and stood not far from where Mario and Marion lay. Londi's movements caused Mario to stand up and he gave Londi a fixed gaze. Londi whispered something that Mario seemed to understand and agree with.



Londi's mom, who was accompanied by Fiona on a last stroll past the lions' enclosures, was struck by Londi's behaviour. She had come to say goodbye to the white lioness before they left and had passed Londi and Hilton on her way to finish packing their luggage into their car.

She was curious about what Londi had whispered to the lion. "I hope you learned something about lions since arriving here," Hilton told his young friend. Londi's eyes gazed over the enclosures close to them for a few final moments. He remembered how his mom had promised him that there would be a lot to learn. "Yes, I learned many things," answered Londi. "I now know that a lot of awareness still needs to be raised to prevent lions from going extinct," he said as he walked back to the lodge with Hilton.

Everyone said their goodbyes and Londi and his mom got into their car and started driving down the narrow gravel road leading to the main road.

Londi was thinking about all the possible programmes to raise awareness about the lions' plight that he and his friend Saint could introduce to their friends. He was looking forward to seeing Saint again too and meeting the puppy Saint had been taking care of over the holidays. Fiona had promised to visit their school to give a talk on issues related to canned hunting and other threats facing lions. She had also promised Londi and his mom that she would give them updates on the developments in the case against the raided farm.

They soon joined the main road and were finally on their way home.

Londi's mom looked at him and asked, "What did you whisper to Mario back at LIONSROCK?" Londi gave her a smile as he answered, "I told him that he must never give up hope; that one day we will be successful in our fight against animal cruelty."





Facts to know

The African Lion

African lions are found in the wild in South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Central African Republic, South Sudan and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

The African lion measures 1,4 to 2 meters from its head to its rump, and its tail is between 67 to 100 centimeters long.

African lions typically weigh 120 to 191 kilograms.

Male lions are generally larger than females and have a distinctive mane of hair on their necks and shoulders. The mane protects a male's neck during fights over territory or mating rights.

Their territory can range up to 259 square kilometers.

African lions hunt large animals that they stalk in the grasslands, including antelope, zebra and wildebeest, but at times they will hunt smaller prey as well.

Lions are very social cats and live in groups called prides. African lion prides consist of up to three males, around a dozen females, and their young.

All the females in a pride are usually related to each other because females tend to stay with the pride in which they were born. Males, on the other hand, wander off to start their own prides when they are old enough.

Females are the main hunters of the pride. They form hunting parties to catch their prey.

It also allows them to hunt animals much larger than themselves, and they can bring down animals that weigh up to 450kg. To kill their prey, lions use their powerful jaws to snap the prey's neck or strangle it to death.

Lions and tigers are so closely related that if you could have shaved off their

hair you wouldn't be able to tell them apart.

Lions can run up to 80 km/h for short distances and leap as far as 11 meters.

Humans are the lion's greatest enemy. Humans kill lions for their bones, skins and as trophies.

The number of African lions has been reduced by half over the last 20 years by poaching, farmers whose animals the lions eat, and trophy hunters (canned lion hunting). If we don't stop the killing of lions, they run the very real risk of becoming extinct in the near future.

LIONSROCK

- LIONSROCK encompasses 1 250 hectares.
- Their Big Cat enclosures have up to 65 hectares of space each.
- The lions and other big cats at LIONSROCK consume 3 500kg of meat per week.
- 82 lions call LIONSROCK home:
 - 24 lions already living on the property were adopted by FOUR PAWS.
 - Two, Savannah and Nyanga, were rescued in South Africa.
 - 29 lions were rescued from different zoos and private owners in Romania.
 - Seven were rescued from two zoos in Austria.
 - Mario and Marion are from a zoo in France and were saved from becoming canned hunting targets.
 - Six lions are from Jordan where two of them were confiscated at a zoo and the other four were rescued from illegal wildlife traders.

- Three were whisked away from a zoo in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Two lions were confiscated from a private owner in Serbia.
- Another two are from Bulgaria where they were confiscated from separate private owners.
- Finally, five lions were brought in from the Dutch Big Cat Centre, FELIDA.
- 19 other big cats – three leopards and 16 tigers – also live at LIONSROCK
 - Two leopards were already living on the property when it was taken over by FOUR PAWS
 - Seven of the tigers are from Germany where one was found living in a pet shelter (Tierheim Rüsselsheim), and the other six were part of the “Starlight Fischer” circus.
 - Three tigers were taken from Romania’s Onesti Zoo.
 - From Romania: 3 tigers from Onesti Zoo
 - The Dutch Big Cat Centre, FELIDA, handed over five tigers and one leopard.
 - Another tiger was rescued from Khan Younis Zoo in Gaza.

Canned Lion Hunting

- Over 8 000 lions are held in captivity in South Africa.
- There are over 200 lion breeding farms in operation in South Africa.
- More than 1 000 tourists pay to pet and get close to lion cubs every year.

- At least 1 000 lions are shot and killed in South Africa every year.
- The going rate to kill a captive lion on a hunting farm is R500 000.
- Not a single captive bred lion has been released into the wild.

How can you help stop the killing of our lions?

- Support campaigns to stop canned lion hunting.

