

SHADOWS IN THE DARKNESS

Somewhere concealed in mopane and teak
Lies the den of some friends whose habits we keep
On ancient sand and leaf-littered floor
Kind to tired bodies and soft to the paw.

*'Oh, Brother and Sisters of the Hlangabeza pack
Hamuka the Mother keeps our species intact
So follow our leader, Smoke searches in front
The moon is high and there's light to hunt.'*

Through thick understorey and soft patter on leaves
The painted shapes move with masks like thieves
For centuries maligned by humans unfair
They'll cross hostile farmland littered with snare.

With sensitive nose the alpha has paused
There's scent in the air and they will kill with just cause
Beyond the woodland on the edge of the vlei
Is impala, kudu or duikker their prey?

*'Oh Brothers and Sisters of the Hlangabeza pack
Fan out and seek for there's no going back
With stomachs empty we cannot survive
The new ones are our future and must stay alive.'*

Big eared and lanky, some gilded in light
Blending like shadows in the cloak of the night
The pace has quickened and it will be a test for the strong
They have sought out their prey and the chase will be long.

Exposed on the vlei the kudu dashes for cover
The woodland's his chance and he won't get another
Frantically turning this way and that
This creature runs swiftly with no vestige of fat.

We follow behind, plotting the course
As long witnesses to nature there'll be no remorse
Should he tire in the end his death we'll forgive
For he provides the means whereby others may live.

The run is long and the brush is stinging
And each fallen obstacle is closer to bringing
The pack to it's heels and the moment of truth
For the dogs as a team are masters aloof.

The hand of fate brings the kudu to bay
And the tireless hunters close for the fray
But for those that fall to the others foil
There'll be no epitaph on this African soil.

Tearing and ripping they quickly disembowel
Evolution has given them the only way they know how
No other predator can boast such success
But they will fill their stomachs with fear nonetheless.

*'Oh Brothers and Sisters beware of hyaena and cat
They're capable of robbing us without leaving a snack
Hurry good hunters make haste I implore you
And remember your manners for only a portion is for you.'*

The signal is strong and soon quickens its beat
As seven dogs leave to deliver their meat
With stomachs distended and no whimper or sound
On a course that is straight to the den underground.

Greg the 'Dog Man' as he is affectionately known
Drives fast and determinedly to race the dogs home
With telemetry radio and all that sort of gear
He lives in the bush amongst his friends without fear.

Deep in dark woodland of mopane and teak
Rests Hamuka the mother with puppies so meek
Safe in a den from many enemy eyes
They patiently wait 'til the leader arrives.

The silence is broken with unusual twitter
From an excited mother and expectant litter
They owe their place to their breeds prowess
And will soon lick and share the hunters' success.

*'Oh Brothers and Sisters its time to be giver
So empty your stomachs, regurgitate and deliver
The meat of the kudu to our weanlings and Mother
For it's the law of the pack to have no other.'*

Humbly in darkness we sit on the ground
Listening with Greg as he interprets the sound
Tonight we will sleep having experienced elation
With thoughts of a species that deserves admiration.

**Dedicated to the friends of Greg Rasmussen PHD
C.D.McCLELLAND © 2000**