by the same author

MEN, RIVERS AND CANOES

In collaboration with T. C. Robertson
BIG GAME

THE WHITE RHINO SAGA

Ian Player

Foreword by
ALAN PATON

COLLINS
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To MAQUBU NTHOMBELA and all the other GAME GUARDS, who have taught us so much

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Foreword

This is a book for every lover of the wild. Its story is not only set in the beautiful country of Zululand, it not only describes its animals, trees, and grasses, it also tells of the salvation of a rare creature from extinction.

In earlier times the white rhino was found from the coast of Africa in the north to the coasts of the Cape, Natal and Zululand in the south. But it is a mild and inoffensive animal, and was easy prey for the hunter. It was much wanted for its hide and horn as well as for its flesh. During the last century it was reported as still being seen in considerable numbers in Mozambique, Botswana, South West Africa, Angola, Rhodesia, Swaziland, and Zululand. But Selous wrote in the 1890's that he doubted if there were twenty left alive. In 1894 a shooting party shot six at the junction of the Black and White Umfolozi rivers. This stirred the authorities to action. In 1897 the Umfolozi and other areas were declared game reserves. In 1953 Ian Player made an aerial count of 437 white rhino in the Umfolozi reserve.

The presence of so many white rhino in a relatively small reserve of 72,000 acres now presented new problems. The first was the deterioration in the conditions required to keep so many animals healthy and alive. The second problem was external, the pressure of the increasing Zulu population surrounding the reserve, leading to poaching and to squatting – that is, illegal occupation of reserve land – and the intrusion of thousands of cattle.

The challenge of these problems led to two tremendous projects. The first was to repopulate the game reserves of Africa where white rhino had once lived. The second was to supply white rhino to the zoos of the world. And how were these things to be done? How does one capture and transport the second largest animal in the world, so placid when at

large, and so demonic when in captivity? It is the answer to these questions that forms the fascinating core of Mr Player's book.

Mr Player writes his story with a sure pen, simply and clearly, with now and then a joke, and now and then a touch of poetry. On to the stage comes Dr Toni Harthoorn, a British scientist of Dutch descent, working on the problem of the use of tranquillizing drugs in the capture and transport of wild animals. An American, Red Palmer, had already invented the Capchur gun which fires a loaded dart into some part of the animal, the shoulder for preference in the case of the white rhino. The danger of the captures, the disappointments, the ultimate success, make a splendid tale. As Mr Player writes, 'It could be said that the species had been saved for posterity.'

Mr Player has the gift of imparting to his readers his intense love of the wild. He will no doubt infect some of them also. The Wilderness Leadership School is teaching people, especially young people, to value the natural treasures of our earth. Our schools are doing their part as well. My grandchildren, the eldest of whom is eleven, are all conservationists. They repeatedly assure me that they are anti-pollutionist and anti-erosionist, and they mean it. They were born and bred in the city of Johannesburg, but the intensity of their enjoyment of the space and beauty of a Drakensberg farm took me by surprise. I can only suppose that this is the work of our teachers, and that it brings hope that the young people of the earth are going to save it and us from destruction.

Mr Player is one of these teachers and I do not hesitate to commend *The White Rhino Saga* to the public. I commend it especially to the people of Kwa Zulu, whose duty and privilege it will probably be to administer and maintain the game reserves of Zululand.

August 1972 ALAN PATON

Contents

		page
	FOREWORD	9
	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	13
	PREFACE	15
	INTRODUCTION	17
1.	White Rhino Territory	23
2.	Hunting the Rhino	30
3.	The Umfolozi Reserve	35
4.	Maqubu Nthombela and the Wilderness Trails	45
5.	Toni Harthoorn and Rhino Capture	52
6.	Early Experience	66
7.	A Long Day	74
8.	The Charge of Two Rhinos	78
9.	A New Phase	86
10.	Crating a Rhino	102
11.	Travelling to Mkuze	111
12.	Consolidation	119
13.	Another Taste of Wilderness	132
14.	Poachers	142
15.	Squatters	154
16.	Repopulating the Kruger Park	171
17.	White Rhino Mating	183
18.	Black Rhino: A Death	186
19.	Mona	194
20.	Troubles in the Bomas	201
21.	Preparing for Export	214
22.	America and Rhodesia	222
23.	The Fruits of Experience	230
	EPILOGUE	241
	APPENDIX: Movement of white rhino from 1 January 1961	245
	INDEX	251

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I must also record my deep appreciation to Mr G. H. Calpin and to Mr Alan Paton who gave me such valuable advice on the setting out of the manuscript.

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Drugs mentioned in the text are:

Flaxedil – gallamine triethiodide;
Scoline – succinylcholine chloride;
Prostigmin – neostigmine methylsulphate;
Largactil – chlorpromazine hydrochloride;
Themalon – diethylthiambutene hydrochloride;
Lethidrone – allylnormorphine;
Morphine – morphine sulphate or morphine hydrochloride;
M99 – 6:14-endoetheno-7a(2-hydroxy-2-pentyl)-tetrahydro-oripavine hydrochloride.

Photographs

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Preface

In this book I have tried to tell the story of how the white rhino were caught and redistributed in their former habitat as well as being sent to zoos throughout the world. By 1965 the International Union for the Conservation of Nature was able to declare that the animal had been saved, and it was removed from the Class A Protection List.

Rhino capture was necessary for three main reasons. Firstly, it was unwise to have all our eggs in one basket. Secondly, there had been a steadily increasing invasion by squatters of the unoccupied state-owned land adjoining the Umfolozi Game Reserve.

Lastly, the Umfolozi Game Reserve has been maintained primarily as a sanctuary for the white rhino. But the increase of other game subsequent to the tsetse fly extermination campaigns meant that there was less *lebensraum* for the white rhino, and although the number of warthog, zebra, and wildebeest were drastically reduced, there was still a deterioration of soil and vegetation.

Until 1962 there was no fence of any kind around Umfolozi Game Reserve. Fencing was impossible because, except for the western boundary, the Reserve lay between the two Umfolozi rivers, their junction being the apex of the triangle. White rhino moved freely from the game reserve into the adjoining crown land buffer zones. Intensive agricultural developments, the increase of population, and the invasion of squatters put a stop to the rhino wanderings. The white rhino became compressed into a smaller area. The allocation of part of the crown or state-owned lands in 1962 meant that fencing could begin. As soon as restrictive measure becomes necessary in any wild life area, a management policy becomes imperative.

There were only two courses open to save the game reserve and the white rhino. Either a considerable number

of rhino would have to be destroyed, which was unthinkable, or they would have to be captured. Fortunately for the white rhino and mankind, scientific advance made the latter possible.

Rhino capture has been written up in many scientific journals. Dr A. M. Harthoorn in particular has ably dealt with the subject in his wildlife monograph *Application of Pharmacological and Physiological Principles in Restraint of Wild Animals.*

Wherever possible I have avoided technical terms – even those elementary to the scientist – and have tried to write more about the small group of dedicated men who handled the early stages of this unique translocation of the white rhinoceros. I have also tried to describe the anguish felt by the men living in the Umfolozi Game Reserve during the struggle to have the boundaries altered to include ecological and administrative requirements.

If there is direct or implied criticism of other departments, the criticisms are included to convey the feeling of the times.

Introduction

WHEN I first visited Umfolozi Game Reserve in 1952 it was like entering a deserted world. Wherever I looked there was silent bush and mile upon mile of uncropped red grass. In a long walk through glades of scattered trees and waving grasslands, I saw nothing but a few solitary grey duiker. It seemed impossible that in seventy-two thousand acres of game reserve there were four hundred white rhino.

I camped out that night and no moths or other insects came to the lantern light. The aerial spraying with anti-tsetse fly insecticides had been too effective. In the morning only a few birds called. I was aware of a brooding sombreness, as though the land resented the intrusion of another human being.

It was not until the following morning, a dull overcast day, that I saw my first white rhino. Two bulls loomed out of the mist. I had a perfect view of their physical characteristics as they walked along a ridge. The mouth was square and the nuchal hump between the head and the withers bulged prominently. Flies clung to their flanks and steam rose from their backs. These were truly creatures from a bygone age. The two rhinos grazed as they moved, their heads swinging in a scythe-like motion as they fed on the grass. I watched them move through the grey nthombothi trees into a cluster of candelabra aloes, and disappear into the mist.

I had a sudden feeling that my life would in some way be bound up with these prehistoric animals. The mist lowered and it began to rain, heavy drops splattered on my khaki shirt and old felt hat. But I continued to stand staring towards the tall aloes hoping to catch another glimpse of the two white rhino. A soft wind blew towards me and I got a whiff of their body smell. This evoked another intuitive flash and I felt strongly that I had been here before. The mist lifted for a few

seconds and I saw the white rhino again on the crest of a small hill, they had stopped grazing and were looking back towards me, their heads held high and tails curled in characteristic fashion. We stared at each other for a moment, then the mist slowly enveloped them and I was left with the memory.

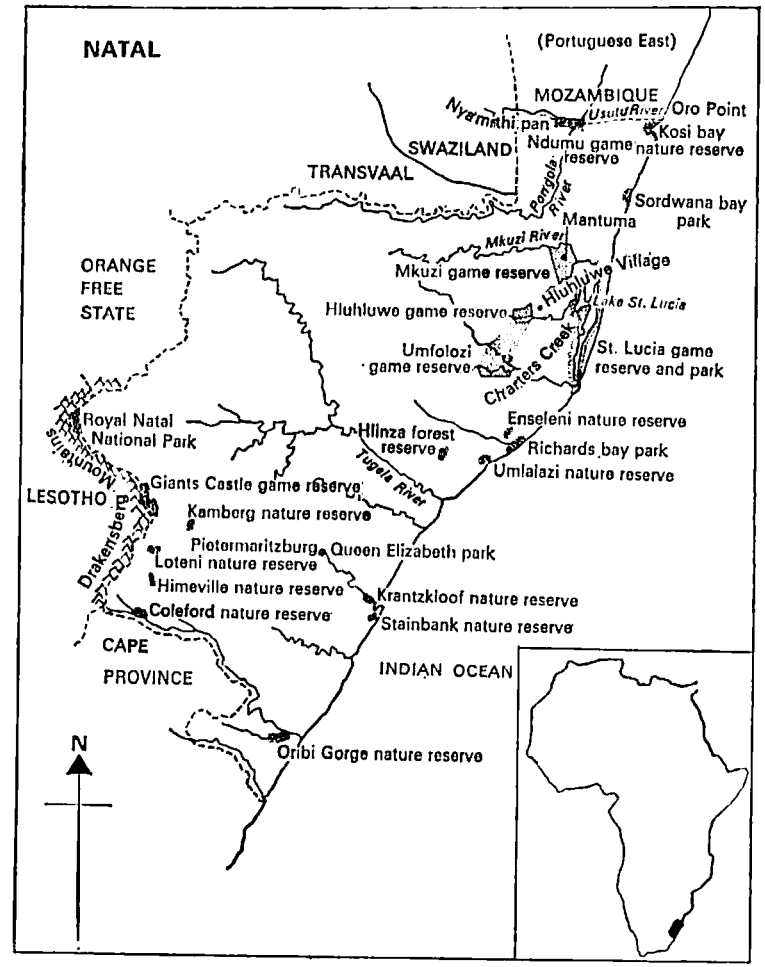
It had been a dry year and only a few pans still retained water. That afternoon I pitched my camp near a secluded water-hole and as it grew dark the great grey forms of the white rhino suddenly appeared, ghost-like, from the nthombothi trees. Doves scattered and hadedah ibis squawked in alarm. More rhino padded out of the shadows and made their way slowly to the water. The bulls rumbled at each other and a cow laid back her ears when they came too close. When it was too dark to see properly I moved to my camp fire and sat alone.

I could think of nothing but the white rhino. Never had I been so impressed and at the same time so strangely involved with an animal. I was puzzled and faintly disturbed by my overwhelming reaction but just before I slept I had one of those lucid moments which occur between sleep and waking and I realized that these animals could become a cause to which I could give my life.

I was twenty-five, unmarried, and I had been sent as a junior ranger to the Umfolozi Game Reserve by Colonel Vincent, then Secretary to the Natal Parks Board. Although Colonel Vincent was senior in age and position, there was a bond of understanding between us from the day we first met.

For twenty years the Department of Veterinary Services had been in charge of the Reserve, concerned with the elimination of the tsetse fly. As the Veterinary officers relinquished control, poaching increased. Now the control was about to pass into the hands of the Province of Natal, and it would be my job to deal with this situation.

I carried out extended patrols through the Reserve and into the adjoining crown lands. These crown lands were known as the southern buffer zone, the western buffer zone, and the Corridor. The latter adjoined the Hluhluwe and



Umfolozi Game Reserves. During the innumerable tsetse fly campaigns these open areas had been used as shooting-by-permit zones. In later years they became buffer areas between the stock farmers in the south and the Zulu Reserves on the west, part of them still later being incorporated into the Reserve.

After the 1914–18 War and the settlement of the land near the Umfolozi Game Reserve, various campaigns were con-

ducted to eliminate the game. This culminated in an intensive drive from 1942–50 when everything except the white rhino was shot in the buffer zones and in the game reserve. This was really blood lust and the story of it reveals the strange excuses that men will use to kill in the name of progress. It was one of the most disgraceful periods in South African history and the destruction of game did not eliminate the tsetse fly, as it was hoped it would. It took DDT and aeroplanes to do this.

On one of my patrols I went out into the western buffer zone, a beautiful piece of country stretching from the Mtunzini hills to the Hlungwana river. The red *Themeda* grass grew waist high and even during the driest times the two streams – the Hlinza and the Ngamazaneni – held water. White rhino wandered over their ancient footpaths as far as Nkonjane hill in the Zulu Reserve.

It was impossible to get a vehicle into the broken country so I tramped with a pack on my back, Lancer, my ridgeback dog by my side, and Alpheus Ntuli, my Zulu servant and companion, bringing up the rear. We camped each night near deep pools on the Hlinza or Ngamazaneni streams. Baboons screamed as the old dogs chastised the youngsters, nyala barked – a much deeper sound than the bushbuck – reedbuck whistled in alarm and white rhino snuffled and rumbled as they all came down to drink in the early mornings and evenings. Bird song came and went with the rhythm of the day. I lay rolled in my blanket listening to the orchestra of the bush while Lancer growled and whimpered at the nearness of the game.

White and black poachers hunted the area unmercifully. We came upon their signs, spent cartridges and snares which ranged from wire to unbelievably cruel spring traps. We had a brush with one group of Zulu poachers who had killed four lovely mountain reedbuck. I shot six dogs and Lancer killed another. When word of our presence got around all was quiet for a while. I knew there was little hope of getting the poaching under control without a big game guard force, so I concentrated on getting to know the country in preparation for the time when we would have more staff and would

be able to smash the poaching gangs. So I walked hundreds of miles making notes and detailed plans of where every game guard camp would be established.

I returned from Ndumu Game Reserve to Umfolozi Reserve in 1955 with Ken Tinley who had joined me at Ndumu as a junior ranger. Our first task was to recruit Zulus from the Tribal Reserve to increase our game guard force. We drilled them intensively. One of the guards had a bugle which he used to summon them on to parade, until a Natal robin began imitating the sound and caused great confusion.

The Tribal Zulu needed no training for bushwork and, of course, they excelled in tracking. Soon we were able to reinforce the outlying guard posts and begin to control the poaching gangs.

Jim Feely joined the Board's service later in the year and became an invaluable companion. He had an inexhaustible fund of technical knowledge and we soon nicknamed him 'The Brain'. In 1956, Hugh Dent, a tall lithely built man who had trained with the Rhodesian Police, joined the staff and took over the Game Reserve. Ken Tinley went to north-eastern Zululand to start his ecological reconnaissance, Jim Feely took charge of Richard's Bay, and I went to Lake St Lucia for a year to start the Research Centre at Charters Creek. In 1957 I married.

In 1958 Paul Dutton, an old canoeing friend, asked to join the Parks Board. I was delighted to recommend him, for he loved water and was able to take my place at the lake. A few months later Hugh Dent resigned to go teaching and I was transferred back to Umfolozi Game Reserve.

The results of the combined protective measures were now apparent. Poachers were more wary and the game much tamer. The white rhino, in particular, were seen far more frequently. They, too, were much calmer. In the past they would have fled at the sight or sound of man or vehicle, whereas now they carried on grazing peacefully. It became common to see baby rhino trotting across the veld in front of their dams.

A tremendous task lay ahead of me. From 1958 to 1964

there was no moment in which I was not concerned with the Umfolozi Game Reserve and the white rhino. But at the age of thirty and in the peak of physical fitness and moral resolve, I felt confident of overcoming any obstacle.

Chapter 1

White Rhino Territory

SINCE earliest times hunting, legal and illegal, had taken place in the Umfolozi valleys. Tshaka, the greatest of the Zulu kings, regarded the country in the lower regions of the two Umfolozi rivers as his private hunting ground, and he can therefore be considered the first game conservator. He conducted hunts with thousands of Zulus, extending from the Black to the White Umfolozi rivers. The warriors moved forward, chanting and beating their shields, driving the game to waiting game pits and concealed hunters. Hundreds of animals were slaughtered, some by Tshaka himself who rushed forward with the Zulu battle-axe and chopped at the tendons of fleeing giraffe. The Mhlopeni caves were sometimes his camping ground and in his despotic excesses he would have a man killed on the slightest pretext and had the body staked out on the bare ground across the river. He would then eat while the vultures circled overhead to land and feed on the corpse.

'The King's birds,' the attendant warriors would whisper as Tshaka watched the macabre antics of the vultures.

Tshaka was murdered by his brother Dingane, who in turn was murdered on the top of the Lebombo mountains overlooking the country of the amaTongas. Mpande, a pleasant, benign ruler, became king and the white man had an easier passage into Zululand.

Many men hunted in Zululand and you can read about their experiences. William Baldwin in his *African Hunting and Adventure* recalls that in 1852 he crossed the White Umfolozi river at Hlatikulu, then walked to the junction of the Gcoyi and the Black Umfolozi. He mentions passing King Mpande's Nondwengu kraal, and the presence of white rhino in this area. Today this is all part of the Umfolozi Game Reserve

and is still a high density area for white rhino. Of all the men who hunted in Zululand during the benevolent reign of Mpande, it was Henry Drummond who left the most comprehensive record of what is now the Umfolozi Game Reserve. In his book *The Large Game and Natural History of South and South-East Africa*, he recalls how he hunted the rhinoceros in the country between the White and the Black Umfolozi rivers. To a modern generation the slaughter of the big game, particularly the rhino, makes sickening reading.

But in the 1860's when all Zululand was a wilderness, every wild animal was looked upon either as an enemy which had to be killed in defence of human life, or as an object of sport. Where some present-day 'sportsmen' in Africa have used jeeps, hunting brakes, lorries, and in some instances helicopters, to kill game, the early hunter went in on foot. The tsetse fly took care of any pack animals and malaria kept hunters to a minimum. Drummond must have been particularly tough, for he records trekking across the Umfolozi valley for thirty hours without even being able to 'moisten our tongues'.

Then, as now, in the early spring water-holes are few and far between and when Drummond and his companions found a mud wallow, they stripped and plunged into 'the beastly stuff, that though composed of every nastiness under heaven, we dignified with the name of water'.

Camp sites were primitive to an extreme. Each man had a Zulu mat and a few blankets which a Zulu retainer carried with the cooking pots and salt. For the rest, the hunters had to wait until they got back to waggons on the high ground. The Umfolozi area in Drummond's time was as wild a paradise as any naturalist could dream of. Eland, bushbuck, impala, elephant, buffalo, and hippo were common. By the turn of the century elephant and hippo had vanished, the former from shooting and human pressures and the latter because the rivers were silting up.

But it was the rhino that Drummond and his companions were after and the Umfolozi river valleys abounded with the prehistoric animals.

After one particularly trying day Drummond was grilling

a bushbuck steak when a black rhino charged the fire. One warning snort and the animal was in the camp, scattering the fire in all directions and squealing with rage. Drummond surveyed the chaotic scene from a perch in a tree. Two great burning logs were smoking on the spread out bed and he could smell the smouldering blankets. The remains of a water calabash were strewn across the ground and the hard-earned bushbuck meat had disappeared, some of it trampled into the ground. Drummond's gun lay out of reach so he borrowed one from the nearest hunter. It was an elephant gun of six to a pound so he braced himself against the branches and fired at the shoulder of the trampling and squealing beast. Another hunter had a double-barrelled gun and he emptied both barrels into the struggling mass below him. He records: 'Its vicious temper was much sobered by the treatment it received. Ours were not, however, improved by the incident, and it was all I could do to prevent one of the hunters, who was almost speechless with rage at losing his supper, from giving chase on the spot.'

Drummond, like many other naturalists of his day, maintained that there were four species of rhino in Umfolozi, two of the so-called white variety and two of the black. He asserted that all rhino were the same colour, a peculiar shade of brown, except *Rhinoceros bicornis* which possessed a tinge of red. He admitted that to different observers and in different localities they did appear to be of different colours. William Baldwin even mentioned a blue kind.

Drummond classified the four species as follows:

(*a*) *Rhinoceros bicornis*, or upetyane;
(*b*) *Rhinoceros keitloa*, or unkombe tovote;
(*c*) *Rhinoceros simum*, or umkombe wogobo;
(*d*) *Rhinoceros kulumane.*

Drummond says the last one had not received a scientific name, or recognition, from the naturalists.

Scientists agree today that only the *Rhinoceros bicornis* or black rhino and *Ceratotherium simum simum* or white rhino, really occurred. There are, however, old timers and many Zulus who say that a sub-species of the black rhino –

mpunyane – exists. It is supposed to be more bad tempered than the ordinary black rhino.

Drummond classified his rhino by the length of their horns and nature of the animals, hardly a scientific method, but in every other way he was a first class observer. He must have had a good memory, for in those early days, keeping notes could not have been easy.

His description of the rhino are in many instances moving. He talks about the great white species being a noble animal when seen in undisturbed regions quietly grazing amid all the beauties of tropical vegetation with a flock of rhino birds (ox-peckers) lazily picking off an occasional tick, or a hornless little calf – a ludicrous miniature of its mother – running and gently being guided forward by the maternal snout. Scenes like this occurred towards evening on the edge of water-holes where the animal went to drink after the long heat of the day.

'Knowing no fear itself, and harmless towards all animals, it approaches the water in company with wild beasts of every description.'

He once saw a troop of lions walk past an old bull with its mouth buried in the pool, then they lay down and lapped the water a few yards away, each party ignoring the other.

Henry Drummond's favourite way of passing the nights was watching the game coming to the water-holes.

There was the charm of solitude and silence, broken by the companionship of wild animals, the noises of a tropical night and the expectation of the unknown. The lion, the impala or duiker all came at different times to drink. Also many other animals that one rarely comes across in the daytime, such as wild dogs, hyenas, leopards, jackals, and wild cats of many kinds.

There was one particular pool at which I spent many nights, sometimes when the moonlight was so bright that I could see the game approaching several hundred yards. At other times there was only the light of stars to assist my aim. When heavy thunderstorms covered the sky with black clouds I could only see when flashes of lightning lit up the scene. I found that buffalo and larger kinds of antelope avoided the water-holes during the bright moonlight, but it made no difference to rhinoceroses and to other kinds

of antelope, while the worst of the storm was the time generally chosen by lions to make their appearance. I remember once during a lull in a thunderstorm hearing the cat-like lapping of one of these great beasts and when the next flash came, I saw three of them crouched flat on the bank still drinking. I levelled my gun at the spot and waiting for the next flash, fired a snap shot at the nearest and when the lightning enabled me to look again they had disappeared.

Drummond found one pool which by his description I would say was somewhere in what is now known as the Corridor, the land lying between the Hluhluwe and the Umfolozi Game Reserves.

The pool was fed by a spring, never dried up and possessed such deep clear water, that game came long distances to it – preferring it to the river. It was about fifty yards long and surrounded by a fringe of thick evergreens, except at the upper end, where it was shallow and muddy. My hiding place was in the thick branches of a great cabbage tree. On one occasion I remained here without moving for two nights and a day, sleeping in the shade at the foot of the tree in the noonday heat and watching all night. A piece of sun-dried meat provided me with food. While watching from the hide, a little duiker antelope, its grey skin shining like silver in the rays of the setting sun, stole down and after gazing round for a few seconds, stooped to drink, the reflection of its head and tiny horns being quite plain on the surface of the dark still pool. A few minutes later another appeared on the opposite bank, followed by two more. Having all satisfied their thirst they returned to nibble the young shoots of grass in the glades. The next to arrive were a pair of reedbuck, mother and calf, which no doubt had been lying up in the long rank grass in the 'vlei' beyond.

The bush partridge, a species of Francolin, had for some time been uttering their grating cry among the surrounding bushes, and now made their appearance to drink, while dozens of partridges of other kinds, mingled with turtle doves and paraqueets and the little long-tailed pigeon, alighted on all sides, attracted by the common want.

Henry Drummond was a hunter and he came to Zululand to kill. It was the vogue. Men came from all over the world to kill in the name of sport.

Roualeyn Gordon Cumming, a Scotsman who hunted in a kilt and shot a white rhino with the world record horn (still standing) of 62½ inches anterior and 52½ inches posterior, wrote a book about his adventures. This stimulated others like William Baldwin to copy his adventures in killing, and readers are almost assured of a killing a page.

Drummond killed too, and was just as ruthless, but at the same time he had finer feelings and found time to describe the beauties of the bush and the game living in it. Yet when he described a killing he did it in almost revolting detail. He writes about shooting a black rhino.

Some hours had passed when I next awoke, half falling off the tree before I remembered where I was. The sullen gurgle of displaced mud warned me that there was something in the pool. Gently raising myself into a sitting position I saw, in the bright moonlight, a rhinoceros wallowing in the shallow water and mud, while its companion stood on the skyline on the bank above. Looking more closely, while my hand sought my gun, I saw by their small size and diminutive horns that they were both Upetyane (Black Rhino) – a species against which ever since I had been so roughly handled by one of them, I had always borne malice for their evil dispositions and vicious propensities and therefore though their horns were utterly worthless I was glad to get the opportunity to kill one. I could not at first decide which to fire at; for though the one in the pool was not ten yards off, it was lying in such a position that I doubted my being able to mortally wound it, while the other, unless it charged, would be out of sight the moment I fired and startled it. I fired at the latter. The bullet told loudly and the animal, puffing and snorting, disappeared while the one in the water, springing to its feet, sent mud spattering the surrounding leaves, trotted out and then wheeling half round listened for some indication of my whereabouts. I aimed as before at the shoulder and brought it to the ground, though it instantly recovered and charged for the place where it had seen the flash. Short as the delay had been, it enabled me to load one barrel and when it was within a yard of the tree I again fired down into its hump, making it swerve with pain. It lost its balance and fell bodily into the pond below. The water was deep and it floundered about for some seconds before it found its feet, enabling me to reload and again plant my balls

right and left in its shoulder. It rushed off scattering the water as it did so and going over the rise, was lost to view.

Drummond described how the one rhino died, then buffalo came down to drink and he shot at one. Not satisfied he fired at a group of seven white rhino which arrived at the pool. For the next few days he had an orgy of killing at the water-hole.

At the end of his book Drummond realizes that the game of Africa is not inexhaustible and when writing about elephants he says:

I cannot leave this subject without adding my protest against the wanton and wasteful wholesale destruction of these animals that has now been going on for so many years. It is utterly impossible that it can last much longer, as any one who glances at the statistics of the export of ivory from the east coast must at once see, slowly but surely this most useful animal is being extirpated, merely for the purpose of supplying Europe with ivory ornaments and billiard balls.

Drummond had visions of the African elephant being used in the same way as the Indian, as a draught animal. He saw it as the only animal capable of becoming a beast of burden through the tsetse and fever infected regions of the African continent, the only animal that the traveller could rely upon and enable him to dispense with the costly and troublesome retinue of natives.

Drummond continued his hunting of the white rhino in Zululand, not knowing that by 1890 no more than forty to eighty of the species would be left in the whole of Southern Africa.

Chapter 2

Hunting the Rhino

THE term 'white rhino' is a misnomer. The colour is grey rather than white. There are stories about the derivation of the name, ranging from the colour of the mud it wallowed in, to the theory that the old Boer hunters likened the white rhino to the white man because of its timid disposition as opposed to the black rhino which was wild and fierce, like the tribes of the interior.

The early distribution of the white rhino can be traced by the Bushmen paintings. These little hunters and artists drew the rhino on rock faces from the arid regions of the Tsodillo hills of Botswana to the caves in Rhodesia, in the Cape and Naukluff in South West Africa.

In former times the white rhino was found over the greater part of Africa from the coast of Algeria to South Africa. Algerian petroglyphs showed that the animal was contemporary with early man. South African stone engravings twenty-five thousand years old indicate that palaeolithic man killed these huge beasts with primitive weapons.

The white rhino was known to early colonists long before it was scientifically described by Burchell who saw a dead animal in 1812 at Kuruman in the northern Cape. Burchell noticed the flat snout and long head, made drawings of it and gave it the specific name of *simum* (flat nosed) in scientific literature in 1817. Other popular names were square-lipped, square-mouthed, square-nosed, but the term 'white rhino' has stuck.

By 1839 explorers noted that the animal had almost ceased to exist in the Kuruman district where it had been discovered. It was one of the easiest wild animals to shoot because of its inoffensive nature. A growing demand from oriental countries for the horn, where it was valued as an aphrodisiac, made hunting the rhino an economic proposition. This hastened

its end. It seemed unbelievable that such a widely distributed animal could disappear. Hunters and explorers had reported them from all over Southern Africa, in Portuguese East, Botswana, parts of South West Africa, Angola, Rhodesia, Swaziland, and Zululand.

Captain William Cornwallis Harris, in his book *The Wild Sports of Southern Africa*, mentions that in 1836 while travelling through what is now known as the Magaliesburg district in the Transvaal 'eighty were seen during the day's march, of which we were obliged in self defence to slaughter four'. About himself he was later to say, 'I have been taxed by the facetious with "shooting madness" and a truly most delightful mania I have ever found it.'

Sir Andrew Smith is also reported to have seen between a hundred and a hundred and fifty rhino, half of them white, in the same country.

But it was the French explorer and naturalist, A. Delegorgue, who first mentions seeing the white rhino in Zululand during an expedition in 1847. He reported their occurrence from slightly south of the White Umfolozi river northwards to the Mkuzi and Pongolo rivers. C. J. Andersson, who between 1850 and 1854 travelled in the country near Lake Ngami, mentions killing nearly sixty rhino of both species during one season. Other hunters in the 1850's in former Bechuanaland shot scores of white rhino from blinds erected near a water-hole. In this arid region, animals had to trek for miles to water and could then be shot at a few yards range.

F. C. Selous, one of Africa's most famous hunters, says, 'In 1847 or 1848 Messrs Oswell and Vardon are credited with having killed eighty-nine rhino, the majority probably white rhino.' The unfortunate defenceless beast, being unaggressive and living in more open country, was an easy target. The black rhino habitat, on the other hand, was in dense bush and the animal would charge anything at the drop of a hat, consequently it was not hunted too assiduously. The once big numbers of white rhino from the Cape to the Zambezi were seriously reduced. This increased the value of the rhino horn and the hides became greatly sought after as waggon whips.

In 1873, Selous hunted near the river Gwaai in Southern Rhodesia and found the white rhino plentiful. The following year he hunted along the Chobe river and still found white rhino common. Three years later he saw only the tracks of two animals. By 1879, during eight months spent in hunting in Bechuanaland, he did not see the spoor of a single white rhinoceros. It is not surprising. One European trader on the Bechuanaland border employed four hundred native hunters and rhino were exterminated in a big area through his agency alone. Selous wrote: 'His store always had huge piles of rhino horn, the spoils of a hundred animals at one time. They were sold to other traders and eventually made their way to England.'

The demand for all sizes of rhino horns was probably caused by the fashion in knife handles and combs. Whatever it was, it meant the end of the white rhino in most of Southern Africa. A host of Boer hunters, deadly shots and completely at home in the bush, shot the rhino left and right for sjamboks (hide whips). Many hunters would shoot a white rhino simply to eat the nuchal hump which was baked in clay and said to be most palatable. The natives and bushmen also obtained rifles and ammunition more freely and they lost no time in putting the finishing touches to the death of the rhino.

In 1892 Selous completed his term of service with the British South Africa Company and went after some remaining white rhino on behalf of a museum. He fell from his horse while chasing an ostrich and was unable to complete his mission. He said, 'Therefore the two white rhinoceros which I shot in 1882 are the last of their species that I have ever seen alive, or am ever likely to see and when I left Africa towards the end of 1892 I fully expected that these animals would become extinct within a short time and remain forever unrepresented in the collection of any European museum.'

But a few months later R. T. Coryndon and Arthur Eyre, members of Rhodes's pioneer column, came across a family of white rhino. They wounded the cow and the bull and killed the calf by mistake. The next day while following the wounded animals, they came upon another cow and very young calf. They shot the cow and captured the calf, but it

soon died. In 1895 Eyre tracked down and shot the last bull in Southern Rhodesia. It was presented by Cecil Rhodes to the Cape Town museum.

At the end of 1893 a few white rhino were said to inhabit the low, inaccessible, tsetse fly haunted country between the lower courses of the Black and White Umfolozi rivers in Zululand. Over the rest of Southern Africa they were extinct. The long and terrible slaughter was surpassed only by the extermination of the bison in North America.

So the dismal story went on, and Selous wrote in his memoirs:

> Thus it will be seen that the great square-mouthed rhinoceros, the largest of the terrestrial mammals after the elephant, which sixty years ago, was excessively common over an enormous area of country in Southern Africa to the south of 17° South latitude, and which even so lately as thirty years ago, was still very plentiful throughout many large districts of that vast country, is now on the verge of extinction. A few, a very few, still survive in one small district of Zululand, whilst perhaps a dozen others yet wander over the Mahobohobo forests between Angwa and Manyani rivers in N. East Mahonaland. But that twenty of these strange old-world creatures are alive today, I very much doubt, and in spite of game laws, which may be more or less efficient in Zululand, but in the nature of things must be entirely inoperative in an outlying district of Northern Mashonaland, I cannot think that the species will survive very far into the coming century.

Then in 1894 a shooting party in Zululand, of whom C. R. Varndell was one, shot some six white rhino at the junction of the Black and White Umfolozi rivers. The news had tremendous impact on responsible people in the colony of Natal. Sir Walter Francis Hely-Hutchinson became Governor of Natal in 1893. He had much sympathy with the preservation of wild life. In February 1895 C. D. Guise wrote a letter to the Resident Commissioner of Zululand, M. Clark, referring to the near extinction of the white rhino. He suggested that white rhino be put on the royal game list and that no permits be issued by the governor, and that an area of Zululand containing their habitat be beaconed off as a game reserve, and no shooting nor destruction of game be

allowed therein. The extent and limits of the area could be ascertained from parties who had hunted there.

Mr Guise's letter was minuted by the Secretary to the Resident Commissioner, who forwarded it to Sir Hely-Hutchinson, saying that he had instructed all magistrates on no account to grant applications to shoot rhino, that a proclamation was being framed to make rhino royal game, and that, 'I have before me all the papers connected with the proposed establishment of game preserves, and the question is receiving my consideration.'

On the 22 April 1897 a proclamation was issued declaring Hluhluwe, Lake St Lucia, and Umfolozi as game reserves. The area of Umfolozi Game Reserve was some 72,000 acres, situated between the White and Black Umfolozi rivers. The western boundary was the Manghlagazi footpath named after the Zulu tribesmen who used it.

By this time Sir Charles Saunders was the Resident Commissioner of Zululand. He knew Zululand intimately and had for many years, when he was still a junior official, advocated the creation of reserves. For fourteen years Saunders was the champion of the game reserves and the white rhino. He was a most active man and made long trips by horseback and waggon to all parts of the territory. The Zulu people of today still speak of him with admiration – a sure sign that he was a man in all respects.

The Lands Delimitation Commission of 1902–4 made provision for land to be opened up in Zululand to European settlers. This was notwithstanding many pledges from His Majesty's Government that the country would not be taken from the Zulus. The Zulus would in one way or another be able to take care of themselves, but the same was not true of the game. Serious trouble lay ahead. Just prior to his retirement before Natal became part of the Union of South Africa, Sir Charles Saunders wrote a letter to the Colonial Secretary recommending the appointment of a Game Conservator for Zululand. It was virtually his last official act and indicative of his concern for the wild life of Zululand.

Chapter 3

The Umfolozi Reserve

By October 1953, after eighteen months service, I had been to almost all the Zululand game reserves, relieving other rangers who were on leave or who were ill. But it was to Umfolozi that my thoughts kept returning. So I was overjoyed when Peter Potter, then Chief Conservator of Zululand, sent for me and instructed me to go to Umfolozi Reserve where I was to help old Willie Foster who had arranged for an aerial count of the white rhino.

My forefathers had been associated with Natal and Zululand since 1850. My great-grandfather had been a founder member of the Natal Carbineers in 1855, and my grandfather had fought at Inyezane in the Zulu War of 1879. Anything to do with the history of Natal and Zululand fascinated me.

I took the old track leading out at the Nqabatheki gate of the Hluhluwe Game Reserve down to the main road and through the Corridor, a strip of unallocated State land between the Hluhluwe and the Umfolozi Game Reserves. In 1905 Government Notice No. 93 had proclaimed this area a game reserve, and it stretched from the source of the Hluhluwe River to where the Mzineni stream entered Lake St Lucia. Foolishly, it had been deproclaimed a few years later. My old jeep clattered up the road towards Masundweni hill (Place of the Earthworm). I could see common reedbuck grazing on newly burnt grass and a few blue wildebeest and zebra on the hills. A population build-up in the Hluhluwe Reserve was forcing some of the game out.

As I crossed the Skovana stream (Place of the Owl), three light aircraft in exact formation flew low overhead. These were the tsetse sprayers, piloted by wild but most competent young fliers. Day after day they flew at tree-top height spreading clouds of DDT in the valleys. I did not know it but it was the end of an era. The tsetse fly was nearly wiped out

and with it was going years of terrible strife between cattle ranchers and game conservationists.

When I reached the Nagana (tsetse fly) Research Station at the bottom of Masimba hill, Will Foster was sitting in his rondavel, staring out of the door of his hut. Two Zulu game guards squatting in the shade of a marula tree greeted me. One was Maqubu Nthombela, a man who had been in the service of Umfolozi Game Reserve since 1918. Five years later he was to be my Induna (head) game guard, a close companion and the greatest teacher I ever had in the bush.

Will Foster greeted me ponderously. He was then in his seventies, a man who had given a lifetime of service to the Department of Veterinary Services, and who knew more about the Umfolozi Game Reserve and its history than any white man. We became great friends.

While we drank tea he told me he had arranged for one of the young pilots to do the first aerial census of the white rhino.

'This man is an excellent pilot and knows the game reserve,' Will Foster said. 'Hendrik van Schoor, the ranger at Gome, is coming in this evening, he'll accompany you in the aircraft.'

While it was still dark the following morning, Hendrik van Schoor and I waited at the airstrip while the pilot checked the small Piper Cub. Hendrik said it was his first flight and he was apprehensive. A tall man with huge arms and very strong calves, Hendrik could lift a forty-four gallon drum of petrol from the ground to the back of a truck. It seemed impossible that anything should worry him. We both laughed when I confessed that one tight turn in an aircraft was enough to make me sick for the rest of the day.

The pilot called us over, gave us maps and we climbed into the aircraft. The pilot explained that he would do the spotting and we would record the number of rhino and their distribution on the maps.

The hot October winds blew early in the morning so we took off soon after dawn. By 10 a.m. the light plane was being buffeted by the wind, and the stench from the DDT spraying tanks and high octane fuel made me dizzy and bilious.

The pilot saw me looking pale and shouted above the roar of the engine, 'If you spew down my neck I'll give you a ride you're never likely to forget,' and I immediately felt better.

We flew at 500 feet, counting every rhino we saw. Hendrik van Schoor looked from one window, I from the other. The pilot kept the map on his lap and recorded the numbers. There were moments when I felt so ill I did not dare speak and merely held up the appropriate number of fingers. The pilot watched me carefully and made gestures which left me in no doubt what would happen if I were ill.

When we could not determine the number in a group, the pilot would circle and dive until the rhino were flushed out like partridges.

There was no mistaking the difference between the white and the black rhino. The white moved slowly, keeping their heads close to the ground, hence the Zulu name umkhombe, meaning to point. The black rhino moved fast, its head held high.

After three days flying we counted four hundred and thirty-seven white rhino, the most accurate figure it was possible to get. For the next few days I camped in the reserve, writing reports and drawing maps.

One evening I drove to Will Foster's hut and encouraged him to talk about the early history of Umfolozi and Zululand.

'Try to imagine Zululand in its virgin state, before the advent of civilization,' he murmured.

I did, as you might do.

A beautiful country rising from the Indian ocean in terraces. First the dense coastal dune forest with its array of bird, insect, animal, and reptile life; then the coastal plains – a wonderland of flora; gigantic fig trees fringing the river banks, forests of acacia and fever trees and the wild *hyphaene* palm with its fan-shaped fronds, dotted across the plains as far as the eye could see. Then the fields of wild gladioli ablaze with salmon-coloured blooms, and the ground orchids which spring up after the veld fires. Game in countless number grazed or browsed. Long lines of elephant moved from pan

to pan, feeding in summer-time on fallen marulas. Tremendous herds of buffalo accompanied by flocks of amaHlalanyati, the Zulu name for ox-peckers, and meaning 'the birds that sit on the buffalo'. Groups of white rhino grazing, or making their way to water, there to drink or wallow. Lions and cheetah lying on the hillocks watching impala, wildebeest, zebra, or tssebe. There were hyena and wild dog, serval and leopard too, all part of the pattern of nature.

A few Zulu huts – the old ones, the real beehive shape – were dotted about. These people were outcasts from the upper class Zulu who lived in the highlands. Generally speaking they were degenerate, and riddled with malarial parasites.

Then there were the highlands, lovely country with clusters of huts on the windswept hills; forested kloofs with clear water running into the main rivers; bushbuck in the forests, eland on the hills, and oribi lying in the waving fields of red *Themeda triandra* grass; crowned eagles soaring above, their plaintive whistles rising and falling in a sad melody. It was in the high country that the Zulu kings concentrated their selected armies. Men walked the length and breadth of Zululand to build the great kraals and do their military service.

The old man sat silent for a while. Then he shook his head.

'Now compare this with the Zululand of today,' he said. 'Imagine seeing it from above, like a bird. As far as you can see the bush has been cleared and replaced by stretches of cane and cotton fields, a network of motor tracks and a snake-like railway line winding its way from the south. Masses of farm-houses dotted all over the land. Fenced off paddocks, grazed to the ground. Native reserves congested with people, their stock causing soil erosion. Streams and rivers running red with mud and the remaining wild animals confined to small game reserves.

'My life is ending,' Will Foster said. 'You young people have a long hard task before you. The increasing tide of people, both black and white, will soon be knocking on the door of the game reserves. They will demand that the land be made available for farming or native reserves. It is going

to be a long and bitter fight for you. I know what lies ahead because we lost many battles and the game was wiped out in the Umfolozi Game Reserve. But the reserve is still there. Now you must see to it that the crown lands are included, otherwise the rhino will not survive. Even if you save the reserves, people in their tens of thousands will be coming, and if you are not careful they will turn it into a zoo. You will have to fight hard to prevent this.'

It was dark now, and I could only just make out the shape of the old man.

'Tell me, what does the word "Umfolozi" really mean?' I asked.

'I have discussed this with many Zulus,' Will Foster said. 'The word "Umfolozi" is a corruption of mfulawozi, which means "rivers of fibre". The rivers get their name from *Urera tenax*, a fibrous bush of the nettle family which grows along the banks and is used by the Zulus in mat making.'

Will Foster spoke about an old Zulu of the Mbonambi regiment who told a little story about the two rivers.

'In the early days of the Zulu people,' he said, 'the Black Umfolozi was a narrow but deep and dangerous river. It was known as Mfulawozi Nketabewesi – the river of fibre which picks off the ferrymen. The old warrior coupled the two rivers by saying that the Black Umfolozi would only be crossed by the brave people, while the White Umfolozi was only of great strength in flood.'

I was camped on the Black Umfolozi opposite the Masimba krantzes and I went back to my tent to eat the meal Alpheus had prepared. Lancer greeted me wildly and we ran to the river to wash.

After I had eaten I took Alpheus back with me to old man Foster. We sat on the steps of the rondhavel in the darkness and listened to the early history of Umfolozi.

'I have been writing up the history of Umfolozi. You can have a copy if you wish,' the old man said.

He had written it in longhand. I accepted gratefully, but asked that he tell us the history too. For a while he spoke in Zulu, telling the story like a tribal elder. Alpheus sat, entranced by the faultless Zulu, and muttered to himself,

'Umuntu' (this man is an African). He shivered at the intonation and depths of expression as the old man told the story.

'The Mtetwa clan lived in the country between the two Umfolozi rivers, from the junction to the Mpila range of hills. This was at the beginning of the nineteenth century.'

'Their king was Dingiswayo, son of Jobe and grandson of Khayi after whom it is said that the word assegai originated, for it was Khayi who introduced the long-handled throwing spear.

'Dingiswayo, whose real name was Ngodongwana, fell foul of his father who tried to have him killed. He escaped into the Emawunzi bush and hid there. He was looked after by his sister while he made plans for an escape. The new name he gave himself – Dingiswayo – meant "he who is caused to want and is at a loss as to what to do". When he was well, he made his way to the Hlubi in the mountains and became famous for killing single-handed a lioness that had caused havoc amongst the cattle.'

Alpheus moved slightly and in the faint light I could see the intent expression on his face. He was entranced by the old man's knowledge of Zulu history.

'After many years absence,' Foster went on, 'Dingiswayo returned to lead the Mtetwe tribe. It was said that he had met Europeans and seen their soldiers drilling, because he introduced new strategy and tactics unknown to Zulus of the day.

'He built many kraals. One of them was on a ridge not far from the water pan Dadethu (sister). The king named the pan when one of his sisters was taken by a crocodile. After the tragedy Dingiswayo did not drink from the pan and his people followed his example. To this day the Mtetwas refuse to drink the water.'

We sat silent again while a lone hyena called from the side of Masimba hill.

'In the latter part of his rule, before he vacated the area between the two rivers, the king only kept his herd of white cattle. These white cattle were known as Inyonikayipumuli, after the cattle egret, because there were so many that the

birds never had time to rest. The white cattle were said to be less susceptible to the disease carried by the tsetse fly, which, at that time, the Zulus called *umunca*.'

As if anticipating my question, Will Foster gave a brief description of the possible derivation of the word which is now used throughout most of the African continent.

It is in all probability related to the Zulu verb, 'ku-naga', which means to care, or to be anxious concerning anything or anybody. Some animals infected with nagana appear to walk in the most deliberate manner. The actual cause of this apparent caution is sheer weakness.

'It is an interesting thing,' Will Foster said, reverting to the royal white cattle, 'that when we were carrying out experiments with the Harris fly traps in the 1930's it was soon obvious that the tsetse was not attracted to a trap covered in white material. In Dingiswayo's time, when the nagana outbreaks were bad, the cattle were driven to the Mpila range of hills.

The Mpila range of hills is where the present rest camp is situated.

'Do you know what "mpila" means?' Will Foster asked Alpheus.

'Health,' Alpheus answered triumphantly.

'Yes, that is so,' Will Foster said ponderously. 'But it is also the name of a little white daisy and this is what the range of hills gets their name from, because at certain times of the year, there is a carpet of white flowers over the slopes. The range forms a natural division between the eastern and western sections of the game reserve.

'But the Mtetwa left the area and moved south towards the Ensleni River because of the increase in malaria and the high mortality amongst the cattle. The king moved his kraal to a site at the source of the Mpapoza stream near what is now the Ntambanana farms. The stream got its name from one of his daughters who drew water from a pool. To this day when the stream dries up the people gather and pray and make offerings in the form of a goat to placate the long departed Mpapoza.'

I asked about the western section of the reserve.

Speaking in English and Zulu alternately, Will Foster went on with his story.

'The western part was at one time densely populated, probably by the Ndwandwe people. There are many old kraal sites and grinding stones. I have also seen exposed graves with skeletons showing. The old men of the Telapakati regiment state that they were born in the western area, so the reserve was probably occupied up to 1870–5. The men say that their forefathers were harassed and finally driven away by raiding parties of the Mandhlagazi tribe. This is the origin of the Mandhlagazi footpath which became the western boundary of the game reserve when it was proclaimed in 1897.'

'The fighting must have been bad,' Alpheus muttered.

'Yes,' Will Foster said. 'On the plains below Ntaba-amanina ['The Hill of our Mothers] men of the Mtetwa and Mandhlagazi fought pitched battles. When they stopped fighting they went to the women-fold on the hill – hence its name – and demanded beer.'

The old man laughed quietly.

'Even though they fought they were still gentlemen,' he said.

'Nondwengu, the original kraal of King Mpande, was also in the western area before Mpande moved to the Ulundi site. There are also many smelting sites where the old Zulu blacksmiths melted down iron ore for the manufacture of assegais, hoes, and axes. They were fine craftsmen.'

It was late when old man Foster had finished talking. The night sky was full of stars and a hyena moaned fromt he river. We drove back to my tent while reedbuck whistled shrilly from the conical-shaped Masimba hill.

Alpheus sat in the vehicle shaking his head.

'Hau! Mashiya' – Will Foster's Zulu name, which referred to his particularly bushy eyebrows – 'Mashiya speaks Zulu better than the Zulu people. He knows the old, old language,' Alpheus said.

Will Foster died in 1956. He had been a loyal employee of the Natal and the Union Governments, and a fighter for the survival of game in Zululand.

I returned to Umfolozi Game Reserve in 1958. While I had been stationed at the lake, a ranger's house and a rest camp had been completed on Mpila hill.

The view from the house had no equal in Zululand. To the south lay the White Umfolozi river with golden sandbanks and dark green sycamore fig trees. I could see waterbuck standing in the water and among tall *phragmites* reeds. Troops of baboons played on the sand or fed in the fig trees while grey duiker, bushbuck and warthog followed below, eating what the baboons dropped. To the south-east Dengezi hill ('the Place of Broken Pots', so named from Tshaka's depredations) towered above the river, its wooded slopes a favourite nesting place of the bateleur eagle.

Further to the south lay Mpanjane, Tjokolwane, Butulezi, and Gome hills. And beyond lay the Ntambanana farms and the Omendo hills.

To the east was the whole spread of the game reserve; rocky ridges, tree savannah and dense patches of purple nthombothi trees which grew so well in the clay soil. Siyembene hill which marked the junction of the two Umfolozi rivers stood out like the tip of a rifle foresight in the inverted V of the rivers. Beyond Siyembene was Ncebe ('banana palms') hill with the flat plains of Magayisa to the north-east. This was the favourite haunt of wildebeest and zebra.

Black rhino liked the dense bush along the Black Umfolozi river. White rhino colonized the open areas and used the thick bush to lie up in during the day. Beyond Ncebe hill and Mcacaso stream were the bare hills of the tribal reserve.

To the north-east was the Corridor, the land between the Hluhluwe and Umfolozi Reserves. To the west lay Little Mpila and Nqabaneni hill ('the fortress') and the wooded White Umfolozi valley ringed by Nqoloti, Lubisana, and the Mantianna hills. This valley had been the home of the Ndwandwe people led by the great Chief Zwide who had been defeated by Tshaka. Bits of old pottery, beads, forges, and smashed grinding stones could still be found if you knew where to look.

Beyond all this were the Mtunzini hills and the open plains where the white rhino concentrated. Ukuku and

Unoma hills dominated the landscape beyond Mtunzini but on a clear day I could see the mountain, Dingane's Seat, like a nipple pointing to the sky forty miles away.

Umfolozi Game Reserve cast a spell over every man who worked there, though some could describe it only in geological or geographical terms. It became a place with a distinct soul.

There was a tremendous difference between the two seasons; the roar and tumult of summer, thunderstorms, lightning and howling winds. Thick green foliage everywhere, choking dust storms, heat waves and mirages. Floods. Many times I saw the White Umfolozi come down in a raging torrent, brown waters hissing and roaring as they swept past the towering krantzes. Sandbanks vanished and reeds bent before the rush of the water. Logs, animals, pumpkins, and rubble were borne by the flood. Each year there was a toll on the white rhino, too, because unlike the black rhino, they could not swim. They would be lying on the warm sands, unaware of danger, and the flood would sweep them along. Some were washed as far as the sugar lands at Mtubatuba.

Then summer faded and the fire lilies of May bloomed. Winter came. Streams ran quietly or dried up, the sun was mild, the grass shortened and the insects disappeared. The White Umfolozi bared its broad white and gold sandbanks. Dry debris caught in the top branches of a sycamore fig was the only reminder of the summer violence.

In the past, many other men had crossed its rivers, drunk from its pans of grey water, made fires with its wood and heard the calls of birds and animals in the day and in the night. Primitive men using stone-age tools roamed the hills and deep bushy valleys. Their artefacts – hand axes, arrow heads, bark and skin scrapers – were still there. The brown, wrinkle-faced Bushmen lived there too. They had left their traces of occupation in rock paintings of eland in overhangs on the Nqutu ridge and Nqabaneni hill.

In the fourteenth or fifteenth century the Bantu migrations came down from the north, naming everything they saw with appropriate and poetic names.

Every hour in the game reserve had its charm and every section its attractions. The narrow Black Umfolozi river and the broad White Umfolozi river; the cool, misty Mpila hills; the stony kopjes and the barren, desert-like portions of the Thobothi country; the dense, closed bush of the Meva area, the wonderful outlooks from the top of Nqoloti hill and the humid, low-lying country at the junction of the two rivers where the fish eagle called with such haunting beauty.

Chapter 4

Maqubu Nthombela and the Wilderness Trails

MAQUBU NTHOMBELA was born in a kraal on the Ongeni hills which are situated midway between Hluhluwe and Umfolozi Game Reserves. As a small boy he had walked this wild stretch of country and he knew Umfolozi intimately. The reserve and everything in it was part of his life. He remembered seeing some of the last elephants in the game reserve, when he was a tiny herdboy looking after his father's goats. At twelve he was a guide to the white hunters who came shooting in the buffer zones near the Hluhluwe and Umfolozi Reserves. He joined the game reserve service in 1918 under Vaughan-Kirby.

Maqubu Nthombela was now appointed Head Game Guard. We walked and rode through the reserve together as I renewed my acquaintance after my absence at Lake St Lucia.

Maqubu stood about five feet seven inches tall, with strong chest and arms. He was a little bandy but his thighs were the most powerful I have seen on a man. His face seldom showed anger, but when it did the other guards were frightened. Rage made him stutter, and then become more angry. He was a Shembe (a Zulu religious sect) and would not drink liquor or eat pork or butter, nor would he accept any European medicines. He never told a lie, and would

stand up to any man and speak out if he knew he was right. He was one of the hardest working men I had ever known.

On our long patrols he was the teacher and I was the pupil. He was a historian as well as a naturalist, and knew the origin of every place name in the Umfolozi Game Reserve, as well as the history of the Zulu people from the time of the early Mtetwa migrations. He was an excellent mimic and I often watched him call up the honey-guide bird by imitating the grunting call of the honey-badger, then prove the legend by getting the bird to lead us to the honey.

Sounds of white rhino fighting and baboon calling were his specialities. Everyone would be in fits of laughter at his baboon mimicry, but he never lost his dignity or played the clown. He loved to sit round a glowing camp fire at night and tell of the warriors of old. He would stand up and demonstrate, with swinging arms and stamping feet, the frenzied charges of the Zulu impis as they swept down with their short, stabbing assegaais.

'Usutu! Usutu!' he would cry, lunging with an imaginary assegaai, making the sounds of rifle shots and cannon, and the dying gasps of Zulu and British as they fell below the sphinx-shaped hill called Isandhlawana.

He was a superb tracker, an artist in the field. He was a deadly shot with a rifle and could stalk so close to an animal that he never missed.

Maqubu hated poaching dogs. On one of our first patrols we bumped into a gang of poachers with a horde of thin, mangy dogs. He dropped ten with ten shots before I had my second. During his service he had to fight for his life when attacked by poachers, but he was afraid of nothing. After knowing him I no longer wondered why so large a British Army was needed to conquer Zululand in 1879.

Maqubu and I were together until 1964 when I was promoted to Chief Conservator, and he decided it was time to retire. But in 1969 when I was transferred to our Head Office in Pietermaritzburg and came to live on a farm in the beautiful Karkloof valley of Natal, I asked Maqubu to come

with me and look after my family while I was away on long trips. He agreed and once again we are together.

I will always be in his debt, for in every conversation we have, he teaches me something. He is a unique human being.

One of my first jobs was to recommend setting aside 36,000 acres of Umfolozi Game Reserve as a wilderness area. It embraced the country from the junction of the two rivers to Nqoloti hill in the west. It was an area where no motor vehicles were to be permitted, only people on foot or on horseback. In the interests of a good report I explored the proposed wilderness country. I told Maqubu to show me all the caves because I saw them as points at which future wilderness trailers – tourists on foot and not more than six in a group – would camp at night.

Maqubu first took me to the Mhlopeni krantzes.

From Nkonjane [Swallow] hill and the Hlungwana river junction, the White Umfolozi flows due east until it reaches the southernmost ridge of the Mtunzini. From here it abruptly sweeps and turns to flow west then east once more. Over thousands of years the continual flow has worn cliffs and caves on the south bank. It was in these caves, the Mhlopeni, that the Mandhlagazi tribe slept before their final assaults on the Mtetwa tribe during their periodic internecine wars. The cliffs are red, dotted with rich green strangler fig trees. In some places the vegetation is so thick that the mouths of the caves are closed, and give shelter to hyena and warthog. Birds abound – mocking chats, black saw-wing swallows, pied and black crows, hammerheads, mousebirds, kestrels, and owls.

We camped the night after a long walk through the dense thorn scrub of black rhino country. Later, after Maqubu had made a fire and I had washed in a pool of brown water, Maqubu told me tales of different tribes who had used the caves, of white and black poachers who had hidden there, thinking they were safe from the pursuing rangers. We talked until late into the night.

As we sat near the fire I wondered how long it would be

before the idea of wilderness trails caught on. It was new in South Africa. Jim Feely had first drawn my attention to literature about the wilderness concept in America. The more I read the more I was sure that without wilderness areas no game reserve or National Park in Africa would survive. I was convinced that by getting visitors out on foot into the reserve we would make far more friends for conservation. Tourists in cars never properly understood or appreciated a game reserve. The thoughtless actions of the many who threw refuse from their cars was evidence of this lack of appreciation. People who travelled along the trails were different. With few exceptions they appreciated how privileged they were to experience true wilderness.

A few months later, when the story of our proposed trails first appeared in a Sunday paper, we had over three hundred letters asking for details. No more proof of interest in the trails was needed. Nick Steele and I bought donkey pack saddles, billy cans, sleeping bags, air mattresses (which were soon punctured by thorns), bivouac tents, tin plates, knives, forks, spoons. Before a month was over I had taken out the first trail.

Maqubu was the guide. He walked in front, his rifle slung across his shoulders. Some trailers were foolish enough to try to make him walk fast. They did not know that Maqubu could walk as fast uphill as he could on the flats. I remember two women plunging into a rhino wallow, chasing out some warthog, and lying down to suck up the brown water with relish. They had tried to race Maqubu up Nqoloti hill.

Each wilderness trail was an experience for me. I never knew what people were going to be like. It was the first time some of them had ever slept out of doors, and one woman confessed that it was the first time she had really seen the stars.

Everyone looked a little disdainfully at the White Umfolozi water when we walked across in the first half hour of the trail.

'Is it safe to drink?' they asked.

But after a few hours in the dehydrating heat of Umfolozi they would flop on to the sand and gulp the water as though it were nectar. Some of the streams were crystal clear but so

1. Colonel J. Vincent, MBE – 'A Great Leader'

2. Maqubu Nthombela – 'philosopher, naturalist, and historian'

3. Norman Deane

4. Toni Harthoorn, with Capchur gun

5. 'Daisy' – the first success with new drugs

6. Mpila Rest Camp, Umfolozi Game Reserve

salty it took a strong stomach to contain the water. Trailers would run eagerly forward to a clear pool and splash the water into their mouths, only to spit it out. Maqubu would stand nearby, a polite smile on his face, and say in Zulu, 'You would not have believed me if I had said it was salt.'

Once a lion passed a few yards from the camp and roared loudly. The donkeys bolted and wilderness trailers stood upright in their sleeping bags and jumped like children in a sack race towards the fire. They babbled about the experience, a reaction I saw many times; the rush of adrenalin to the system had to be dissipated somehow.

On one particular trail we left early and made our way over Amatshenyama ('Black Rocks') towards the isivivane. I explained how the Zulus never passed an isivivane without picking up a stone, spitting on it, and throwing it on to the pile. It was a tradition. Maqubu maintained that during the times of the early Zulu kings men came from all over Zululand to do their military service. Many of the old ones died on the way, usually after climbing a steep hill. They were buried in a shallow grave with stones piled on top. From then on no Zulu would pass without adding to the cairn.

As we rested in the shade of a marula tree I told the trailers a story about an isivivane on Dengezi hill. Maqubu and I had been out on a long patrol and reached this isivivane late in the afternoon. I was tired and anxious to get home to my family, and I strode past the cairn. Maqubu called out to me.

'You have forgotten to pick up a stone, spit on it, and throw it on to the isivivane,' he said.

I said, 'Look, Maqubu, I am two hundred yards from the cairn. I am tired, thirsty, and soaked in sweat. We have walked a long way today. Home is still another five miles. Also it is your superstition. I do not believe evil will befall me if I pass it by.'

Maqubu stood firm and spoke loudly.

'I have taught you many things and you have always listened. It is important not to ignore the isivivane. It is the law.'

We stared at each other for a few moments. His eyes did not waver.

'It is the law,' he repeated.

'All right,' I said. 'I'll come back and do as you say, but do not think that I believe in your laws.'

Maqubu smiled.

I shambled back, found a small stone, picked it up, spat on it, and irritably flung it on to the heap.

'*Asihamba* – now let us go,' Maqubu said and he loped off along the winding mountain reedbuck footpath.

Lancer, my ridgeback dog, trotted nearby, his long pink tongue covered in white froth. It had been a long walk for him, too.

We had walked about a mile further and I was too tired to do more than concentrate a few feet in front. Suddenly between Maqubu and myself I saw the end of a black tail slithering through the grass. I was too late to stop myself and put my foot on the tip. In a flash a black mamba raised itself above the grass. It seemed to tower above me, but was probably shoulder height. It made a peculiar 'tsi tsi tsi' call and I saw the scales at the back of its head. This was an ndlondlo, the almost legendary crested mamba.

The snake and I stared at each other for what seemed an age to me. Then it dropped and slid off gracefully, practically on top of the grass. It was then that Lancer saw it, and rushed forward barking. Again in a flash the mamba turned, and came for the dog, who at once retreated to my side. I froze, unable to move. The snake stopped a few yards again, still making its 'tsi tsi tsi' call. It swayed slightly from side to side and I clearly saw the scales raised like hackles. It dropped slowly and moved over the grass to a patch of bush. This time I grabbed Lancer's collar and held on to him until the snake had disappeared. The whole incident had probably taken no more than two minutes.

Maqubu turned to me, a faint smile on his face.

'You see,' he said. 'The isivivane is important. If you had not returned to throw the stone, the mamba would have bitten you. But you showed respect and the spirits guarded you.'

It might have been coincidence but I never walked past a cairn again without completing the ritual.

I knew that in the wilderness areas we had resources that were vital to the well-being of the people of the world. These were like a fountain that they could return to for nourishment; a spiritual recreation, something desperately needed in the twentieth century.

In 1957 I had taken boys in their matric year into what were going to be the wilderness areas of Zululand. Some of them wrote to say that the experience had changed their lives. For the first time they had realized that a wild area was just as important to man as to animals. Each of them had gained something different from the wilderness.

This gave me the idea of starting a wilderness leadership school. I wanted to take out boys who had already proved themselves to be leaders and subject them to a wilderness experience, show them the effects of over population in game reserves and what it did to the land, then show them the same thing where human beings lived; show them soil erosion, muddy seas, pollution, and overcrowded beaches, contrasting all this with a wild environment, clear rivers, and lonely beaches.

I wanted them to appreciate the tremendous importance of every wild life sanctuary and how wrong it was that so few were now being proclaimed.

I hoped that from the young leaders who went out into the wilderness there would one day be some who would hold influential positions, that they would take the initiative and make their communities realize we had to live with nature and not exploit her.

In 1957 this was still a dream. Today the Wilderness Leadership School exists and is well on its way to becoming an international movement.

Chapter 5

Toni Harthoorn and Rhino Capture

In September 1957 Nick Steele was transferred from Hluhluwe to Umfolozi Game Reserve, and stationed at Gome outpost across the river. He had a fanatical love for horses and was responsible for the important part they came to play in rhino immobilization and in Zululand ranging work.

Communications were primitive until 1960 when we got radio. If I wanted Nick I sent a runner with a note, or a man on horseback. Nick would reply and the man would return. But I knew the southern areas were safe, for Nick did not spare himself or his guards. While he watched the south I looked after the west, the game reserve, and the Corridor. We met every month end for three days to pay the game guards and labourers. If there was trouble we joined forces and patrolled together. We did not know it at the time, but we were really happy.

One afternoon we rode for miles, discussing a series of problems, each one so vital to us at the time; poaching, the settlement of the crown lands issue, and the stream of squatters. The solution of these problems meant so much to us.

We were quiet, each busy with his own thoughts. As we rode I said to Nick that the white rhino population was increasing to a point where we would have to capture and translocate them to former habitats. Nick was horrified.

'Is the reserve safe?' he asked. 'Won't it be deproclaimed if the white rhino are moved? Without the white rhino everyone will say there is no need for the game reserve.'

I said it was a risk we had to take, our first duty was to ensure the survival of the white rhino.

'But how would we catch them?' Nick lamented.

I told Nick that I had recently met Dr Hans Nel, a geologist, on one of the wilderness trails. While we drank coffee

round the fire we had discussed the problem of moving rhino. I mentioned that while we were trying to chase hippo away from farms near Lake St Lucia, I had thought of drugging them. When I spoke to a local doctor and asked him how much morphine we would have to give a hippo, he replied irritably, 'A bucketful man, a bucketful.'

Dr Nel was interested and wrote to friends in the Mineralogy Department of Harvard University. A professor replied. He said although he had made many telephone enquiries, he could not get an answer to 'the rhinoceros problem'. He suggested I wrote to the Director of the Whipsnade Zoo.

I wrote immediately and had a letter by return of post. People were working on tranquillizing drugs, but the outcome of using them on wild animals was uncertain, particularly if a dart gun was used. But it was encouraging to know that experiments were being made. The next time I saw Colonel Vincent he told me that a Dr Harthoorn and a Dr Hal Buechner were working on the problem in Kenya. Later I read a magazine article about a man named Red Palmer. He and a group of professors at the University of Georgia had developed an anaesthetic gun. The gun was powered by compressed carbon dioxide gas and fired a hypodermic needle designed to inject controlled quantities of drug.

I enthusiastically told Jim Feely. He calmly said that he, like Colonel Vincent, had read in scientific journals of work being carried out in this field.

Colonel Vincent went to a conference of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in Warsaw in 1960. Here he met Dr Harthoorn and discussed our problem; too many white rhino in the Umfolozi Game Reserve. He invited Dr Harthoorn to South Africa to experiment with drugs suitable for white rhino capture. This meeting changed the course of wild life conservation in South Africa.

On the 6 December 1960 I drove to Mbuzane ('the place of the gnats') to tell Jim Feely that Dr Harthoorn was coming.

Jim was leaving soon for Zambia. After five years with the Natal Parks Board he wanted wider experience, and had

always longed to work in the Luangwa valley amongst big game. I was going to miss him very much. Jim was an intellectual. When he was asked for his opinion he gave it unequivocally, which was not always appreciated, but to me he was a very valuable friend because he could view problems objectively. We had grown very close over the years, and I always consulted him on any important issue; he could weigh up the pros and cons like a judge and come straight to the point. He had the rare ability of being able to talk, smoke, drink tea, and simultaneously work out the answer to a problem I had given him half an hour before.

I drove to Mpila after receiving a message that Dr Harthoorn and Mr de Burgh Whyte, the Parks Board Public Relations Officer, had arrived. At my office de Burgh Whyte, handed me a letter from Colonel Vincent.

After explaining that 'The following are the points I wished to mention to you – quite haphazardly put down and typed by myself', the Colonel had produced a lucid and detailed list of instructions which became a blueprint for rhino capture.

He said, *inter alia*: 'It is extremely important that you, Deane, Carpenter, and Clark learn as much as possible in the short time available. Much of Dr Harthoorn's information is technical and extremely important. I must implore you all not only to listen carefully but also to write copious notes.'

The Colonel said that we would have to do the bulk of the rhino work once Dr Harthoorn had left, and 'It has to be remembered that some losses may be incurred. The Board has asked Dr Harthoorn here because we accept that we are prepared to lose two or three rhinos – if in the outcome we can know in the future how to deal with the species.' He stressed that the visiting public must not overhear our conversations or see the experiments, 'because at this stage I do not want publicity or interviews. That can wait until we know what we are doing.'

I got a small clue to Dr Harthoorn's nature from the Colonel's penultimate paragraph when he wrote: 'D.H. is a man who quite obviously likes often to be quiet – I hope you

will ensure he has enough leisure in his rondhavel to write up his notes,' and he repeated the point about our writing notes of what we could glean from Dr Harthoorn.

In a postscript the Colonel said that Dr Harthoorn had a lot of information about the winching of rhinos on to lorries, and about tranquillizing the beasts in transit.

I read it twice then drove with de Burgh Whyte up the hill to Mpila camp and hut number four. It was an important meeting, but all I could think of as I knocked on the door was Jim Feely's remark, 'I understand he's tall.'

Dr Harthoorn was a most impressive man; he was over six foot tall, with light brown, greying hair, deep-set blue eyes and a mouth that suggested a ruthless streak. This was an energetic person, one who would keep working until he or we dropped. We introduced ourselves, he speaking with a slight accent, a trace of his Dutch upbringing.

After the inevitable tea and talk about game, I suggested we go to the western area of the reserve, the area of high rhino population. He agreed eagerly, and we drove to Maqubu's kraal. Maqubu ran towards us, buckling his belt. He stopped to slap the butt of his .303 rifle in a smart salute.

I told him that Dr Harthoorn had come from Kenya to show us how to capture white rhino.

As we drove out to survey the ground I pointed out the rhino grazing patches, the effect of shade on *Themeda*, and pans that had been deepened by years of rhino wallowing. We passed the artificial rhino pans and saw a herd of waterbuck and impala. These two species seemed to thrive in a deteriorating habitat.

Near the Thobothi stream we saw a fully grown rhino. Dr Harthoorn asked me how much one would weigh. I glibly said three tons, having been told this by many of the old-timers. Dr Harthoorn looked dubious, and with reason, as we found later. In the area near the Mtunzini range, which had been bush cleared during a tsetse fly campaign, we saw rhino in groups of two, three, and five.

We stopped below Sokwezela hill, got out of the Land-Rover and followed a pair of young bulls as they grazed along the hill slope. Dr Harthoorn made aiming movements.

'Would we have to get any closer?' I asked.

'No – this would be all right,' he replied.

His voice disturbed the rhino and they turned and blundered towards us.

'Run!' I shouted and we legged it to the Land-Rover. 'Harmless animals,' I said, 'but they can get confused and run over you.'

'Which would be unpleasant,' Dr Harthoorn added cheerfully.

It was getting dark, and fires from the squatter huts were blinking in the fading light. I pointed them out and told Dr Harthoorn how glad we all were that he had come, because only by moving some of the rhino out would the species be safe.

On the way back to Mpila I questioned him about the Capchur gun. He was not communicative that evening, so our conversation was on a question and answer basis.

'What powers the Capchur gun?' I asked.

'Two soda syphon type CO_2 powerlets which build up to a pressure of two thousand pounds per square inch.'

'What's the range?'

'Depends upon the size of the dart,' Dr Harthoorn said.

There was silence.

'The Colonel mentioned in his letter that the gun was erratic.'

'Well, it shoots better in the heat of the day,' Dr Harthoorn grunted.

'How do you unload a dart?'

'Use a long piece of grass – or medical forceps. Blowing down the barrel is not advised,' he said with a sideways glance.

'What drugs do you use?'

'Gallamine triethiodide has been successfully used by myself and John Lock on the black rhino. Succinylcholine chloride works on some of the antelope, like Uganda cob.'

The names were incomprehensible to me and I had to ask him to spell them so many times he became irritable. Eventually I memorized the names and looked forward to mentioning them casually to rangers the next day.

I returned to my questioning.

'Why do you have a telescopic sight?'

'Easier to shoot in fading light,' said the doctor. 'Possible to watch the flight of the dart – less losses this way. Once you are used to the size of different animals you are able to estimate the range with more accuracy.'

It was too dark to stop and write but I made mental notes and couldn't wait to reach home so I could write it all down. The Colonel's instructions were not to be taken lightly, and he had stressed the need to take notes.

That evening Dr Harthoorn came to dinner. After a meal he relaxed and we talked until the lights went out at ten o'clock.

Conversation turned again to the Capchur gun and darts. He said he had developed a great deal of affection for this weapon and although there were many who derided its uses, no one had yet perfected anything superior. Some people swore by the cross-bow, but in his opinion it was not as reliable. Difficulties had been experienced with the darts. The acid-loaded darts were difficult to carry in the field without accidental triggering of the activating mechanism, or creep of the plunger from acid leaking past the brass seal. They could only safely be carried needle up, which made stalking difficult.

John Page, then Secretary to the Parks Board, arrived late that evening. He had come to see the capture of the first rhino so that he could give a first-hand report to Colonel Vincent.

The following morning, on the Colonel's instructions, Norman Deane and Garth Carpenter arrived from the Hluhluwe Game Reserve. Norman, wiry and very fair, was an ex-insurance clerk and air gunner. He had spent some months in the Mkuze Game Reserve before being transferred to the Hluhluwe Game Reserve, where he had done an outstanding job. Garth was a recent employee, doing game control work at Hluhluwe.

Nick Steele rode over from Gome outpost and as usual arrived well before he needed to. During the years he had worked with me he had never been late.

Everyone was introduced to Dr Harthoorn and I was delighted at their looks of astonishment as the doctor expounded on drugs, the intricacies of the Capchur gun, and his modifications of the dart.

'Phew, this is a complicated business,' Norman said despairingly, as we walked to retrieve a dart Dr Harthoorn had fired into a grass-filled sack while testing the gun.

'Oh, not really,' I said. 'Gallamine triethiodide and succinylcholine chloride have a common effect in that they check the transmission of the nerve impulse at the neuro-muscular junction.'

Norman looked at me blankly and I had to walk away fast to stop myself laughing. It had taken me minutes of repetition to learn that sentence.

Dr Harthoorn gave us a lecture in the afternoon.

'I never understood one word from the moment I walked in until the end,' Nick said afterwards.

Dr Harthoorn explained the Capchur gun again.

'Because of its many defects and idiosyncracies it is doubtful whether it could be effectively used for all the game animals we hoped to capture,' he said. 'However, it has proved to be quite adequate for shooting darts into rhino, and it could also be adapted for marking rhino – but remember it is a dangerous weapon, and don't travel with it loaded. This is most important for it is all too easy for the weapon to be accidentally fired.'

Norman leant across and whispered, 'At least I can understand him when he talks about the gun.'

'Wait, he hasn't really started yet,' I said.

'The small darts have a maximum range of forty-five yards and the large ones, twenty-five yards. Experience has shown that they are easily deflected by wind,' Dr Harthoorn said, putting the gun on the table.

'As far as the darts are concerned, I have made some modifications to the original, but it's a simple mechanism.'

He pulled out a dart and stripped it down.

'There is the dart body which is made from aluminium; the needle, and the tufted nylon flight. Now for the drug to be injected into the rhino, we have a rubber plunger which

we grease with silicone then move it up and down the dart barrel to lubricate the whole thing. Into the recessed flight we drop a small ball bearing and a carbonate tablet, and seal it off with a piece of *Uganda Argus* – it has to be *Uganda Argus*.'

He paused, and continued. 'Then between this and the plunger we put in citric acid. Now on impact the split shot forces the carbonate tablet through the paper into the acid, a gas is formed, the rubber plunger is forced down the barrel, and the drug is injected. Simple, isn't it?'

We all sat quiet for a moment then John Page asked, 'Does that piece of paper have to be *Uganda Argus* – will nothing else do?'

Dr Harthoorn turned away as the rest of us laughed. John Page had grasped the intricacies of the gun and the dart while *we* had only appreciated that one piece of newspaper was the same as another.

Dr Harthoorn then gave a dissertation on the merits and demerits of the drugs he had experimented with in Rhodesia, Kenya, and Tanzania.

'Flaxedil – or gallamine triethiodide to give it its technical name – is the only drug we have used successfully on rhino so far. John Lock, my colleague in Uganda, and I have caught black rhino in the hunting areas of Tanzania and also at Kariba in Rhodesia.'

He digressed to tell us how he and Rupert Fothergill, the Rhodesian game ranger in charge of Operation Noah on Lake Kariba, had lashed a drugged black rhino to a raft of drums and towed it across the lake to release it on the other side.

He returned to the drugs and said the other drug that had been used on antelope was scoline, or succinylcholine chloride.

'How do these drugs work, Doc?' John Clark asked. He was leaning forward with pencil raised ready to take notes.

'Well!' Dr Harthoorn said. 'As I was telling Ian Player this morning, the two drugs have a common effect in that they check the transmission of the nerve impulse at the neuro-muscular junction. Gallamine triethiodide does this by

blocking the transmission across the myoneural junction or voluntary muscle. It paralyses the muscles of locomotion, causing the animal to lie down. It also changes the pattern of breathing. Scoline does it by persistent depolarization of the muscle and plates. Now the gallamine can be partially reverted by physostigmine or neostigmine. In other words this is an antidote to the gallamine.'

He quickly drew a diagram to show what he had just explained.

'There you are John,' he said. 'Simple, isn't it? Q.E.D.'

Someone behind me whispered, 'What the hell is Q.E.D. – another bloody drug?'

'What dose do you have to give a rhino?' John Page asked.

'Approximately point five eight milligrammes per pound body weight.'

'Can you tell me what this is in c.c.'s?' Norman Deane asked desperately.

We were walking out of the door when Dr Harthoorn said, 'I forgot the tranquillizer largactil, or chlorpromazine hydrochloride.'

Everybody groaned.

'This is too much for me,' Nick cried.

'You will be using this one a lot,' Dr Harthoorn continued calmly. 'This tranquillizer, because that's all it is, has a soporific effect and also counteracts the action of adrenalin. But don't give it intravenously because it may cause a fall in blood pressure.'

'How long before it takes effect?' John Page said without looking up and writing quickly.

'About twenty minutes, but be careful not to give it when the weather is cold, because it destroys the animal's ability to regulate temperature – this could be fatal.'

We trooped out like a bunch of schoolboys released from class.

'Thank God that's over,' Norman Deane said drily. 'Another five minutes and I'd be drinking the stuff to calm my nerves.'

By 8.30 a.m. the next day we were all on our way to the

western area. It was a beautiful December day, hot with scattered white cloud. Herds of reedbuck were on the open patches of green grass at the Madhlosi headwaters ('place of ancestral spirits'). The only jarring note was the sight of distant squatter huts and the goats and cattle on the ridges of Mtunzini hill.

We decided that only fully mature males would be darted until a dosage was perfected. Everything was a little hazy; none of us knew what to expect. As we entered the bush-covered zone Maqubu spotted two bulls slowly making their way towards the pans and shade. Dr Harthoorn asked us the weight of the biggest one. We all guessed. He filled a dart with drug mixture, transferred into Norman's open Land-Rover and drove towards the rhino.

The two rhino grew agitated. One trotted off rapidly to the reserve. The other ran towards Sokwezela hill then stopped. Tension mounted as we saw Dr Harthoorn raise his rifle only to lower it and point towards the rhino. Norman drove a little closer. The rhino swung round, uncertain. Dr Harthoorn aimed and fired. There was a 'clunk' from the dart as it struck the shoulder.

The rhino galloped forward a hundred paces, then stopped to turn towards the Land-Rover. I saw Dr Harthoorn put up his hand, and Norman stopped. For a full minute the rhino stared at the Land-Rover then it moved towards the reserve. Norman swung the vehicle round and raced after the rhino to turn it from the thick bush.

The rhino, by now panic stricken, ran northwards towards the Thobothi stream. Norman's Land-Rover jolted across the veld. Through binoculars I saw Dr Harthoorn gripping the door and bracing his feet against the shock of the rough riding.

The rhino was now running fast towards us. It crossed a donga and Norman could no longer follow close behind. We drove forward, hooting and shouting at the unfortunate animal until it was running parallel to the bush. By now seven minutes had passed and we expected the rhino to succumb, but it was going stronger than ever.

'That muthi isn't working,' Muqubu said matter of factly as he clung to the spare wheel.

We hit a hidden stump. The steering wheel jerked in my hands, but we kept going and turned the rhino. It now ran southwards towards the Icibiletank pans. Norman had crossed at the lower end of the donga, driven over the veld and caught the rhino up again, but it turned into the bush, disappearing in the long grass and trees. Everyone jumped out of the Land-Rovers and ran after the rhino, but it was a futile chase.

Maqubu, calm and collected as ever, took over and painstakingly began to track the animal. After half a mile he told us that it was still running fast.

'It's no use following it any further,' Dr Harthoorn said. 'We will have to step up the dose with the next one.'

As we walked back to the Land Rover I discussed the darting with Nick, and he agreed we could work out a more efficient way of following darted animals.

'We'll use horses and postmen with radio-telephones on high points,' I said.

Nick agreed. He said it would be hard following the rhino on horseback, but it could be done.

'Owen and I should be able to keep after them,' Nick said.

Owen Letley was a young ranger who had been recently transferred to Umfolozi from the Drakensberg mountain resorts where he had been in charge of jackal hunting. He was an excellent horseman.

The horses, the tracker, and the gunner were three essentials of capture.

I spoke to Dr Harthoorn about our plans.

'That's your side of the show,' he said, looking up suddenly from wiping a dart. His blue eyes were piercing.

This became the pattern. He respected our judgment on the practical side while we depended completely on his knowledge of the drugs. It was a good working partnership, based on mutual respect.

By the end of the first capture Dr Harthoorn was our hero and any passing scientist who dared to criticize him felt our wrath.

Dr Harthoorn sensed our affection for the rhino and soon felt the same way himself. 'Those splendid beasts,' he called them. He appreciated how urgent it was to move rhino in numbers to other areas to ensure their survival, and he supported my plea to have the animals sold to overseas zoos as an extra precaution. This view was not currently very popular. There were few conservationists who could bear the thought of seeing one of the 'splendid beasts' caged. But in 1960 the political future of all Africa seemed uncertain. If we had been forced to fight for our existence on the African continent against outside invaders, as well as keep down possible insurrections in our own country, wild life would have received little sympathy. The poor-sighted, gentle white rhino would soon have been exterminated.

Maqubu strode off to get the tea mugs and billy from the Land-Rover. We collected wood and soon had a fire going. The smell of woodsmoke and the sound of water boiling in a blackened old billy seemed to relax people, and soon everyone lay sprawled on the grass, sipping the hot liquid.

Someone asked Dr Harthoorn to demonstrate the gun again, and he was questioned about the drugs. Slowly we were beginning to get a grasp of what it was all about, and 'gallamine triethiodide' and 'succinylcholine' were bandied about by everyone.

Dr Harthoorn showed no emotion but there must have been times when he felt like laughing or screaming. To have five sunburnt, rugged game rangers muttering drug names like a litany and asking one another how many grammes in an ounce must have been too much for him, particularly when everyone, obeying the Colonel's orders, followed him with notebooks open and pencils drawn.

As we drove home that afternoon I saw some squatters against the skyline at Reedbuck Rocks on Mtunzini. They must have had a perfect view of us all day. Next day the game guards told us the rumour amongst the squatters was that we were going to catch all the white rhino so that they could move on to the land. It was a sad but dangerous situation.

It was late before we got back to Mpila but Nick im-

mediately set about organizing everything for the following day. Saddles and bridles were examined then loaded into the Land-Rover. A groom received careful instructions to take the horses out early and have them in position by eight o'clock.

By nine o'clock the next morning we were all up again. The horses were saddled at Madhlozi guard camp, then Owen Letley and Nick followed the Land-Rovers on to the plain where Maqubu spotted a rhino. I studied the animal through my binoculars and recognized it by its missing posterior horn. It was an animal we all knew as Onehorn.

Dr Harthoorn greased a dart and poured acetic acid into the space above the rubber plunger. He drew four and a half c.c. of drug mixture from a rubber-capped bottle and carefully squirted it into the dart with the syringe. These preliminaries took a good ten minutes. The rhino grazed peacefully.

When everything was ready the rhino was stalked from the Land-Rover. It took no notice of the vehicle. This was to be expected because since October 1958 more and more tourists had driven round the loop road and watched the rhino at close quarters. Nevertheless we tensed as Dr Harthoorn motioned the Rover to stop. He aimed, fired, and the dart hit the shoulder. Instinctively the rhino swung round, bellowed, then began running north below the Sokwezela ridge, disappearing now and then in patches of invading *Tarchonanthus* bush. Nick and Owen sped off on their horses, cantering fast after the rhino which had taken fright and gone towards thick bush along the Thobothi stream. I drove my Land Rover down the boundary road then over the veld to get between the rhino and the bush, keeping parallel with it for more than a quarter of a mile, until it crashed into my left mudguard. I braked hard and it got ahead. Norman and Dr Harthoorn took over and were able to turn it away from the bush. The rhino ran in a circle, and stopped close to where it was darted.

There were no visible signs of the drug taking effect. The rhino slowed down to a walk and was grazing again. We kept

7. A charging white rhino

8. A charging black rhino

9. Black rhino capture

10. White rhino bull caugh in a wire snare

11. The 20 cc dart; left to right: Maqubu Nthombela, Owen Letley, Garth Carpenter

12. Black Rhino – the final charge before drugs took effect

it under observation for a quarter of an hour, then Dr Harthoorn decided to dart it a second time.

The drug was mixed, a dart was prepared and the now skittish rhino was approached. This was not easy. It now associated vehicles with danger. Dr Harthoorn took a long shot. The dart went in and the chase was on. We managed to keep it away from the thick bush for five minutes then it crossed the Thobothi stream and vanished among the trees. Nick and Owen galloped after it, bending low in their saddles, and were soon out of sight. Half an hour later Owen appeared, leading his horse. We leapt expectantly to our feet.

'What's happened?' we asked.

'It kept going until it reached a wallow and now it's lying in the water,' Owen said casually.

We followed him on foot through the bush along narrow rhino paths. A grey duiker got up under our feet, frightening us; more than one pair of black rhino lived in this section of bush. We perspired freely from heat as we walked with bent backs. Maqubu was leading, talking to himself as he pointed out rhino spoor, hoof marks, and branches that had been broken by the fleeing rhino. The bush thickened and the trail was lost. We looked at Owen.

'I think it's over there – not far,' he said, and he whistled. There was a low whistle from Nick in reply. He came quietly through the bush and led us to the rhino.

It was still lying in the wallow. It raised its head as we approached. The hump and the back were covered in sweat, and flies were still present. We spoke in whispers. Did Dr Harthoorn want to dart it again?

He shook his head, staring at the rhino.

It was breathing fast, its heaving flanks making ripples that crashed in miniature waves on the edge of the pan. It shifted its position. Involuntarily we moved towards some trees, but the animal only wanted to drink. It lumbered to its feet, swaying a bit, then drank the dark brown wallow water in long draughts. We could see the neck muscles moving and hear the water being sucked into the mouth. The rhino flopped down again, still breathing hard. A cloud of flies buzzed above it, looking for a dry spot to land. There was a

strong smell of mud from the wallow and the dank scent of wet rhino.

'It does not care about us here,' Maqubu said loudly.

We all turned to hush him, expecting the rhino to get to its feet. But Maqubu was right. The rhino was indifferent to us and to our voices.

I moved to fifty feet away and took photographs. Everyone began talking in normal tones, laughing and discussing the darting and the chase. The rhino was ignored, and it was only when we heard water sloshing that we looked, and saw it move out of the wallow, have one last drink, then trot away into the bush.

Dr Harthoorn had been making notes on his leg with a ball point pen. This was a habit of his, though he sometimes favoured his arm. He transferred the notes to a small red notebook then looked at me and said, 'Well, what now? Not much point in doing another one; it's getting late.'

I was feeling the strain and the excitement and was glad to call it a day.

Chapter 6

Early Experience

THE next night John Page and Dr Harthoorn came to dinner and the doctor gave a resumé of events to date. He gave technical details of the imperfections of the dart needles, and the need for a further supply. John Page asked questions which showed he had soon grasped the mechanics of dart and gun. He said there was a chance of getting a Pietermaritzburg firm to make the needles and eventually the darts too. John Page's interest in the operation, and his technical ability, made him a useful ally when we needed equipment. Even if money was tight – and in the early days there was no special allocation for rhino capture – he would always find some vote which could be milked to supply us.

The lights went out before everything had been discussed,

but I had a feeling of relief. I knew John Page would take care of the organizing of supplies and equipment, and this left me free to work out the best areas for darting rhino – more efficient retrieval techniques – and other practical problems associated with the operation.

Next morning Dr Harthoorn dismantled the Capchur gun and showed us the component parts. The whole thing was far too complicated for me but John Page grasped its intricacies immediately. An hour later they had everything they needed for another try at the rhino.

We did not reach the Mtunzini area until after two o'clock. The rhino were lying up in bush near the cleared zone and were hard to find. We stalked what looked like a big bull, but it turned out to be a cow with a tiny calf which could not have been more than a week old. I pointed out to Dr Harthoorn that for about the first week of its life a white rhino calf follows the cow, like a black rhino calf. When it is a week to a fortnight old it runs in front of the cow. Many observers have missed this.

'What prompts it to do this?' John Page asked.

I didn't know, but Maqubu said it was because the cow knew the area in which it lived. When the youngster became familiar with its home range, then it preceded the mother. This seemed a reasonable explanation.

I had noticed many times how much keener the senses of the calves were. Whenever I stalked a group of rhinos to photograph them it was always the youngsters who gave the warning, if the ox-peckers were not there. The only way I could overcome their suspicions was to bounce along on my backside. It was surprising how close I could get to them in this fashion before they took fright. If I stood up or got to my knees they were off, trotting away with tails curled.

Sitting on top of the Land-Rover, Nick Steele sighted a bull.

Dr Harthoorn asked if it was as big as the one yesterday. Nick translated and Maqubu said '*Gefana*' – it was the same size.

The doctor poured out six c.c. of gallamine triethiodide.

'This is more than we used before,' he said. 'If this doesn't bring him down I'll be very surprised.'

He unscrewed the dart flight and poured acid above the plunger, put the flight back and loaded the gun.

Norman Deane drove him towards the rhino. We kept behind the two horsemen until the rhino stood up. I looked at my watch; half past three. We still had four hours of daylight left.

Dr Harthoorn aimed and hit the rhino in the shoulder – a perfect shot. The rhino galloped forward until Norman cut it off. It headed towards Sokwezela and stopped. Nick reined his horse in and held up his hand. Owen joined him and they spoke together. The rhino turned. We leapt into the Land-Rover and the horsemen were off at a canter, the light mane of Nick's horse waving in the wind. We bounced over the veld, hitting antbear holes and trying to avoid hidden rocks.

'It's going to cross the Thobothi,' Maqubu said. 'Turn here, nkosaan, and get across.'

Exactly as Maqubu had foreseen, the rhino went down a path and crossed the Thobothi. I accelerated and got alongside it. Sweat was already showing in beads on the nuchal hump and along the back. I managed to keep up with it but could not turn it. Then the Land-Rover hit a small boulder, I lost control for an instant and the rhino crashed into the mudguard. Instinctively I jammed on brakes. The rhino shot past and ran down a game path leading into thick bush.

We jumped out to run after it, but the horsemen passed us at full gallop. Minutes later we heard them crashing through the bush. We ran until we were out of breath. As we stopped, we heard the squealing of a rhino in distress. It is an unmistakable sound, a low moaning rising to pig-like squeals, pathetic in their intensity.

Owen came cantering up the game path, leaning low on the saddle to avoid branches.

'We've found it,' he said breathlessly. 'Come quickly, it's in a bad way.'

We all ran after him. The rhino lay almost on its back in a small glade of nthombothi trees.

'Quick, get it on its brisket,' Dr Harthoorn ordered.

We moved forward cautiously. This was an enormous rhino which to us was very much alive.

Dr Harthoorn rapidly filled a syringe with the antidote Prostigmin, moved in behind the rhino and injected it in two places. The rhino's movements had grown slower and we tried to roll it over. The scent of man revived it; it rolled over almost unaided, then lay quiet, just breathing.

'It's dying,' John Clark announced sadly.

'Artificial respiration,' Dr Harthoorn said crisply.

I looked at him incredulously. How did one give a fully mature white rhino artificial respiration?

Dr Harthoorn sprang on to the rhino and began to jump rhythmically up and down.

'Don't watch – get on with it,' he snapped.

Norman's face was a picture of amazement and horror.

'Get up!' Dr Harthoorn said loudly.

We sprang on to the belly. While Norman steadied me I leapt up and down. I glanced at Maqubu; for once he was at a loss for words. As soon as I tired Norman took over, jumping up and down in his big combat boots.

'Raise a vein someone – quick!' Dr Harthoorn said urgently.

Raise a vein? Everybody rushed about as though they knew exactly what the doctor meant, but their movements were aimless, except that each man carefully watched Dr Harthoorn. As soon as he moved towards the rhino's head we all followed him, almost jostling him out of the way.

He grabbed an ear; someone grabbed the other ear.

'Hold here,' he said.

A hand shot forward and held the rhino's ear in a vice-like grip.

Dr Harthoorn filled his antidote syringe, put a finger on a vein and as it swelled he stuck the needle in and injected the antidote.

'So that's what raising a vein is,' I thought.

John Clark and Garth Carpenter climbed on to the rhino, slipping on the sweat, to take their turn at jumping.

Dr Harthoorn knelt dejectedly near the rhino's head, his

hand just covering the animal's nostrils. The rhino had become an inert mass, quivering only as the boots of Carpenter thumped on its side. I could see by Dr Harthoorn's expression that there was no hope. The intravenous injection had failed to revive it.

He stood up and said, 'We're wasting our time.'

John Clark and Carpenter kept on jumping, their boots thudding on the hide. Their faces had a fixed look, as though they believed that their continued movement would bring the animal back to life. Now that the heat of the chase was over and we were actually touching the animal it became personal, and we desperately wanted it to live.

'It's no use, John,' I said. 'Come down now.'

The rhino lay still, a thin trickle of blood running down its ear. A few *Stomoxys* flies settled on the flank but the slightest movement made them disperse. A bloated tick the size of a ten cent piece crawled down a back leg away from the anus.

I heard a white-browed scrub robin whistling, and realized it was getting dark. The sun had already sunk behind the Okuku range. I became aware of other sounds; an isikwehle partridge calling, the high-pitched whistle of the mountain reedbuck on Sokwezela hill. It was strange to have been separated from it all in my concern for the rhino when, however subconsciously, I was used to having within me the rhythm of the bush.

'It won't be a wasted death,' I heard Dr Harthoorn say. 'We will have to come here tomorrow and weigh every part of this beast. It obviously got an overdose.'

As we walked back to the Land-Rover I thought how optimistic I had been. A little drug in a dart, injected into a rhino, and that was how it was captured. How foolish of me to believe that science was so easy. This was going to be a long hard task with many disappointments.

I looked at Dr Harthoorn walking ahead with his long stride, his head jerking backwards and forwards, his hands behind his back. We learnt that this was his pose when he was deep in thought. Someone was speaking to him but he was not really listening.

'Thank God he has come to help us,' I thought.

This was the kind of man who would not give up until he had found the answer.

We returned the following morning; *rigor mortis* had set in and the grey belly of the animal was distended. I ran my hand over the rhino's back and was surprised to feel hair. I looked carefully and saw tiny single hairs all over the body, which made me think of the woolly rhinoceros of prehistoric times. Nick Steele examined the horns and found maggots under the posterior horn which we later discovered were from the Gyrostygma fly.

'No wonder the poor blighters scratch their horns at every opportunity,' Nick remarked.

Dr Harthoorn was looking at its teeth and called us over.

'Look at this ridge on the lower lip.'

It was very prominent, running the whole way along the tip.

'This is because it grazes so close to the ground,' Dr Harthoorn explained. 'It can crop shorter grass than a horse.'

We started to cut up and weigh the rhino, and after half an hour in the overpowering heat we were all stripped to the waist.

Dr Harthoorn gave the rhino another careful examination and helped us to take measurements.

Point of horn to occiput	34½″
Half breast girth behind right shoulder	57¾″
Shoulder height	69″
Circumference left hind foot	34½″
Anterior horn	27″
Posterior horn	9″
Occiput along back contour to tail	111″
Tail, base to tip	25½″
Half greatest girth	71½″
Right front foot length	12½″
Right front foot width	12″
Ridge along lower lip	9½″
Width of ridge	¼″
Width of lower jaw	10½″
Ear	10½″
Overall length from mouth to base of tail	130″

This set the pattern for every animal captured. After the first inspection to see that the rhino was safe, it was always measured.

Maqubu, who had stripped to a sleeveless grey pullover and shorts, led the guards who were expertly cutting up the rhino.

The guards chanted quietly as they worked. Garth Carpenter and Norman Deane twisted a length of wire and tied the scale to an acacia tree red with blobs of resin. Dr Harthoorn spread out a canvas sail to catch every drop of liquid and blood. This was poured into a galvanized iron bucket and weighed.

A leg was dragged to the scale and weighed, then the head. There was a gasp of amazement when Norman said, 'Four hundred and ten pounds.'

All four legs and the head were now off. The body lay oozing blood with a horde of blue flies hovering over the exposed sections. Everything stank of rhino. Three hopeful pied crows flapped and squawked in the sky, and far away I saw the soaring speck of a vulture. They knew there was a feast coming. The blood spattered guards dragged the legs through the bush and threw them into the dry bed of the Thobothi stream. A few minutes later the crows swooped down and strutted round the bloodied meat.

The heat and the flies grew worse.

'All right Maqubu,' I nodded to the swollen belly.

Maqubu picked up a hand axe, spat on his palms and walked, chanting, to the rhino. Talking and singing to himself he twisted the axe then struck with quick hard blows at the chest. The meat and hide parted before the steel and he was into bone. Everyone waited expectantly for the stomach to burst.

Faster and faster Maqubu chopped, from chest to belly. Then he called for a cane knife and carefully slit the skin at the navel. White fat and body tissue showed. He cut deeper through the meat right to the stomach lining. Everyone moved a few paces back. A cicada began screeching in a tree behind and I turned to look when the cane knife went into the belly. With a sickening hiss the gas forced its way out,

tainting the air horribly. Fluid and bits of muck splattered over Maqubu but he laughed and flicked them off.

Dr Harthoorn stalked forward to peer into the rib cage.

'Tell them to be careful when they pull the intestines out,' he ordered.

Maqubu nodded when I explained. He took hold of a piece of intestine and began pulling. Dr Harthoorn helped him and they dragged the intestines out of the rib cage. If a piece stuck, Maqubu used his penknife to slit the connecting tissue. When it was laid out Dr Harthoorn explained all the related functions while we took hasty notes.

Two guards cut the penis out and carried it to the scale.

'Good God, look at this,' Norman exclaimed. 'Sixty-two pounds! Strewth, what a weapon.'

We crowded round the scale and stared at the dangling penis.

'Hau ndoda, what a man,' a game guard called out, his hand across his mouth in the pose of astonishment.

By one o'clock the weighing was finished. The stench was intolerable and we had to be careful not to open our mouths too wide or a blue fly would be trapped inside.

Maqubu swilled out the bucket that had been used to weigh the blood and liquid. He poured fresh water into it from a drum and we took it in turn to wash. Congealed blood stuck to our fingernails and had to be scraped off with Maqubu's knife.

Dr Harthoorn washed, then stood in the shade of the acacia tree and studied his notebook.

Norman walked across to us.

'That bloke is always so deep in thought,' he said.

Dr Harthoorn looked up, serious for a moment, then he smiled.

'The total weight is four thousand, four hundred and thirteen pounds,' he said. 'It is made up like this,' and he read out the weights.

Head	410 lbs
Pelvis	256 lbs
Penis	62 lbs

Nuchal hump and neck	425 lbs
Stomach	107 lbs
Intestine, small	64 lbs
Intestine, large	708 lbs
Lungs and heart	90 lbs
Liver	64 lbs
Kidneys	20 lbs
Spleen	11 lbs
Body	818 lbs
Left foreleg and shoulder	332 lbs
Right foreleg and shoulder	310 lbs
Left hind leg	265 lbs
Right hind leg	283 lbs
Liquid (including estimated loss in evaporation)	188 lbs

We were scribbling hard.

'Don't worry chaps, you can copy it from here,' Dr Harthoorn said, holding up his notebook.

Chapter 7

A Long Day

JOHN CLARK and Maqubu left early on the morning of the 10 December to find a bull rhino of suitable size. Nick Steele, Hugh Dent and Owen Letley left just before dawn on the horses for the Ncebe area. Nick alternated between two horses, Ben Gunn and Zoom, while Owen Letley used Boy or Bomber. The horses had become a vital part of operation rhino.

'The horses are our contribution to the saving of the rhino,' Nick said. 'But remember they can only take so much; the doc seems to think horses can go on for ever,' Nick groused. 'And you are catching on to his way of thought.' He nodded at me.

When they had left I worked in the office until John Clark's voice came over the radio.

'We have found a bull, about four thousand pounds, on Ncebe,' he reported.

I collected Dr Harthoorn and John Page and we headed or Ncebe in the Land-Rover.

I counted over forty warthog before we reached the Black Umfolozi bridge. Their population was exploding, and although we were shooting daily we were making very little headway. The warthog were dangerous in that they could overgraze parts of the rhino range.

A white rhino cow with calf at heel trotted across the road. We slowed down and a bull quickly crossed too. Dr Harthoorn studied it critically. He leant forward, chin on hands, his brow furrowed and his deep-set eyes watching every move it made.

'Really splendid beasts,' he said.

The female was coming on heat and she laid her ears flat when the bull approached too close. All three ignored us. The bull tried to get between the calf and the cow but every time he came too close the female would bellow and, with ears laid flat, charge a few paces. The bull retreated, pretended it was very interested in eating grass, then tried to get near again.

I explained to Dr Harthoorn that once the bull got between the cow and the calf it would immediately chase the calf away. I had seen them chase one for over a mile. This happened only with calves three years old or more.

We drove into the Corridor. As we crossed the Black Umfolozi bridge a herd of waterbuck came out of the reeds. This was another animal which was increasing too quickly. When the habitat at Hluhluwe Game Reserve began to deteriorate seriously in 1954, the waterbuck started to move out into the Corridor and the Umfolozi Game Reserve. In the Mbuzane section they could be found at any time of the day.

We found the horsemen resting in the shade of a grove of nthombothi trees on the Tjevu stream crossing. The horses munched grass, their bridles jingling when they swiped at the flies with their tails.

John Clark came down the hill in the Land-Rover.

Dr Harthoorn mixed the drugs. I checked the Capchur gun, my heart beating a little faster at the thought of creeping on hands and knees towards a big rhino.

Owen Letley saddled his horse quickly then stood watching Dr Harthoorn.

'What are you giving it, Doc?' he asked.

'Gallamine at nought point five milligrammes per pound; about five c.c.'

'Means nothing to me. I'll just follow the rhino,' Owen said, pulling himself into the saddle. There was a faint whiff of saddle soap.

When everyone was ready we drove along Ncebe hill to within eight hundred yards of the rhino. I stalked it on foot for five hundred yards then began crawling towards it. Maqubu followed close behind me, a reassuring presence. When we were seventy yards away I lay for a few moments to get my breath and take the thorns out of my knees.

Maqubu laughed quietly, his teeth still white and perfect although he was over sixty. There was not a trace of fear in his face. He had lived so long among wild animals that he knew instinctively how they would behave.

Moving along in an unaccustomed position soon made me pant. I looked back for the horsemen. They waited about three hundred yards behind, both men leaning forward on the saddles, staring at me. It was good to know that they were there. If there was trouble these men would not hesitate to gallop in and lure the rhino away. Behind the horsemen I saw the Land-Rover with the small group of men looking in our direction, some with binoculars.

I checked the gun again, wiped away some dust, then closed the bolt. The faint click was enough to stir the rhino and it stopped eating to look in our direction. I looked at Maqubu. He placed his finger over his lips and whispered in Zulu, 'Wait.'

I looked at the time: nine twenty-eight. At half past nine Maqubu touched my leg and we started creeping forward again. The rhino had partly turned its back and was grazing, unaware of the danger. A minute later we were forty paces away – still too far to shoot. I motioned to Maqubu to stay

where he was and began to slide on my belly as fast as I could towards the rhino. From my prone position it looked enormous, and the chomping sound of its eating was deafening. A zebra yodelled on the side of Ncebe. I froze, but the rhino took no notice. The sun was beating down on my neck, sweat ran into my eyes and tiny pepper ticks crawled busily along my arms.

The rhino now had its back to me and I wanted to shoot it in the shoulder. I wiped the sweat from my eyes, quickly checked the Capchur gun again, loaded it and hissed softly. The rhino swung round. I fired and the dart hit the shoulder. The rhino hesitated, then tore off in the opposite direction. The time was nine thirty-three.

'*Ushayile kahle* – you hit it well,' Maqubu said smiling and he shaded his eyes to watch the horsemen chasing the rhino.

Two minutes later a Land-Rover bumped across the veld to pick us up.

'Good shot,' Dr Harthoorn said as he busily wrote, first on his bare leg then on his bushjacket sleeve.

The relief from tension was wonderful; a surge of joy swept over me. These were important days and it was good to be here with a fine group of men.

'There they go,' John Clark shouted, pointing to the rhino being closely followed by the two galloping horsemen.

I looked up as they disappeared into a patch of yellow-flowering *Acacia karroo* scrub on the upper reaches of Tjevu stream. We followed immediately in the Land-Rover. Owen Letley rode across the open flats on Bomber.

'It's going down,' he called when within shouting distance, then turned and we followed in the vehicle. We reached the rhino a few minutes later.

'What time did it go down?' Dr Harthoorn asked.

'O-nine-forty,' Nick said, glancing at his palm where he had written the time.

'I gave it five c.c. of Prostigmin in the hump,' Owen said, handing over a syringe and a small bottle of antidote.

Dr Harthoorn quickly injected more antidote into the hams. Norman tagged both ears. The rhino did not appear to feel anything.

After we had been there for five minutes the rhino began to sweat, first in the folds of the skin on the nuchal hump, then under the neck and along the back. Soon it was sweating so profusely we could gather drops of the amber-coloured liquid in plastic bottles.

At ten-thirteen the rhino was on its feet. We stood in a semicircle at a safe distance while it moved slowly away.

Dr Harthoorn watched it very carefully.

'It seems that the animals that go down quickest have the best chance of survival,' he said. 'The large one that died was more inclined to fight the drug than this one was. I also have a feeling that the younger the animal, the greater the range of tolerance.'

'How does all this compare with the black rhino at Kariba?' John Page asked.

'We caught seven without loss, one of the reasons being that it was easy to follow them on the islands. In Tanzania we experienced considerable difficulty in following the black rhino in hunting areas.'

For the rest of the morning we searched for another rhino of a suitable size. In the late afternoon we found one which I stalked and darted, but the dart did not penetrate the skin. Nick and Owen were after it before we could call them back, and they followed it for half an hour.

It was getting dark when we returned to Mpila.

Chapter 8

The Charge of Two Rhinos

THE following day Nick and Owen left at dawn with the horses for Maqayisa in the Corridor. John Clark followed later and reported by radio that Torn Ear, a rhino known to many of us, had been located not far from the boundary of the tribal reserve. A cow and an immature calf accompanied him.

We got there an hour later. Cattle were lowing in the distance, and dogs barked, reminders of threats to our wilderness. A pair of crowned plover came hurtling overhead, screeching their call. This flat open stretch was a favourite place of theirs.

Dr Harthoorn quickly mixed the drugs as we watched his every movement.

'Is it the same drug?' Owen asked vaguely.

Dr Harthoorn had an intimidating habit of looking one straight in the eye, but not answering, when one asked a silly question. He did this now.

Nick kicked Owen softly and laughed. 'Of course it's the same drug.'

'How did I know? All these damned drugs look and sound the same to me,' Owen said despondently.

The rhino grew restless and the cow and calf trotted off. Torn Ear followed for a hundred yards then stopped. We followed in a Land-Rover and drew up close. Dr Harthoorn aimed and fired, and the dart went home. The rhino took off at a canter, running east towards the tribal reserve. The horsemen followed at an easy pace and we jolted along behind in the Land-Rover.

The rhino only went three hundred yards then collapsed. We roared past the horsemen, leapt out of the Rover, and Dr Harthoorn injected Prostigmin into a proffered ear vein. I was about to pull out the precious red tipped dart when the rhino got to its feet. It looked dubiously at us. Dr Harthoorn pulled his syringe needle out of the rhino's vein and a spurt of dark red blood covered the ear. The rhino shook its head and stirred.

'Run!' John Page yelled.

We vaulted on to the Land-Rover. The rhino trotted straight towards us. We jumped off just as it put its horn under the vehicle and through the tool box. It battered the Rover again and then stood up as though puzzled. I could see the unhappy beast was bewildered. In its partly drugged state it probably thought the Rover was another bull trying to take away its cow.

Norman Deane shouted and clapped his hands. Everyone

joined in and the rhino turned and lumbered off. It ran a hundred yards, then collapsed. We ran after it and tugged fearfully at the dart. Every time the rhino moved an inch we leapt back hurriedly.

'This rhino is well and truly down,' Norman said after we had run away a few times.

He took a pair of pliers and tugged at the dart. Dr Harthoorn watched him and said, 'Treat it carefully Norman, those things are precious.'

Norman withdrew it and wiped it on his khaki trousers before he handed it to Dr Harthoorn.

Antidote was injected at ten-minute intervals and after the fifth injection Dr Harthoorn remarked, 'This is most unusual – a much smaller dose of Prostigmin can kill an animal.'

He shook his head and murmured, 'This is something of a record.'

Large doses of penicillin were also injected. I winced each time the thick needle was pushed into the flesh. Dr Harthoorn held it between two fingers like a dart, then rammed it in with one quick movement.

Eventually, using some logs, we propped up the rhino on its brisket.

'It can damage the lungs and head if we leave it for too long on one side,' the doctor explained.

The rhino sweated profusely and Dr Harthoorn looked anxiously at the sky.

'We need water to cool this beast down,' he said.

We gathered water from a nearby spring in every container we had and poured it over the rhino. The south wind had been blowing softly all morning, bringing with it a smell of rain. As the sky grew overcast there was a great contrast in the colour of the rhino, its grey skin wet with sweat, and the bright green grass of the Maqayisa plain.

Later, squalls of rain swept across the veld and we sheltered under trees and in the lee of the Land Rover. The ox-peckers arrived and settled on the rhino's back and ran up and down the flanks, picking ticks out of the folds of the skin.

There was a symbiosys between the bird and the rhino. The birds provided a warning system while they fed on the ticks. They had a great variety of notes but when they gave their chattering alarm call both white and black rhino reacted at once.

The drugged rhino lay flicking its ears as one bird got right inside. I stood up to get a better look and the birds flew off with their alarm cries. The rhino reacted and tried hard to rise to its feet, its whole body shaking.

We waited another half hour then returned to Mpila. We got back late in the afternoon. The rhino had moved a short distance and was lying down again.

'I'd better give it another shot of penicillin to stop it getting pneumonia,' Dr Harthoorn said, walking with his long strides towards the rhino.

He was only twenty feet away when the rhino lifted its head and rose to its feet in seconds. Dr Harthoorn dashed back to the Land-Rover and leapt into the back as we jerked away in low gear, the rhino snorting behind us.

As I saw Dr Harthoorn running and the rhino coming, I had visions of writing reports to Colonel Vincent to explain how our visitor had got horned. It was a close shave.

We saw the rhino again as it was getting dark. It was trying to copulate with a cow.

Norman looked at me and laughed. 'Maybe there's more to that drug than you think,' he said.

The seventh rhino was the biggest bull I had ever seen. It ignored the Land-Rover when we drove up to it and only trotted away when I got out with the gas gun. I followed it into a gully and darted it in the shoulder as it climbed out on to the bank. The dart hit with a thud, knocking bits of dry red mud into the air. I signalled to the horsemen and they cantered slowly behind as it ran down towards the White Umfolozi river.

We sat waiting for one of the horsemen to return. Dr Harthoorn leant against the Land-Rover wheel writing in another red notebook.

We heard a shout and saw Nick waving to us.

'Action stations,' I said and we climbed into the Land-Rovers.

Nick trotted his horse up to us.

'You won't get the long wheel-base Land-Rover to the rhino. It's lying in the donga' (gully) – he pointed to the west.

Dr Harthoorn got into Norman's short wheel-base Land-Rover and Garth followed him.

Driving in bottom gear low ratio, I reached the top of the donga where we had a grandstand view of the rhino lying on the sand below. We watched Norman drive ten yards away from the rhino, then the three of them got out. Dr Harthoorn held up a bottle and drew some antidote with a steel syringe. Norman gripped the ear tagger which flashed brightly in the sunlight. Garth followed with a notebook and pencil.

They approached the rhino cautiously because it was moving its legs. Dr Harthoorn injected some antidote and Norman strained to clip in an ear tag. The rhino moved and they jumped back.

'They had better be careful, that damn thing is going to get up,' John Page muttered as he filmed the scene with his camera.

Dr Harthoorn moved forward again and was giving more antidote when the rhino stood up. The reaction was instantaneous. The three men dashed towards the Land-Rover. The rhino was bewildered for a moment then chased after them.

'Run, run!' John Page shouted, forgetting to film.

They all reached the Land-Rover together and I saw Dr Harthoorn's green shirt separate from the two khaki-clad figures and leap into the front seat. Norman was with him in a moment and Garth scrambled into the back. Norman looked round quickly to see if Garth was aboard, by now the rhino was alongside the vehicle. Norman let the clutch out and the vehicle shot forward like a rocket. At this critical moment Garth stood up to get a better seat and as the Rover jerked forwards he sailed over backwards and fell off, but somehow managed to grab the back flap.

Garth hung on for dear life but his legs were drawn under the mudguard and brushed against the moving wheels. The

rhino was still following the Land-Rover. Garth said later he was afraid to draw Norman's attention to his plight because if the vehicle stopped he would have been gored by the rhino.

We banged our Land-Rover doors, blew the hooter and shouted ourselves hoarse trying to draw Norman's attention to Garth.

Norman told us later that after he had gone a hundred yards with his foot flat down on the accelerator he heard a mild voice above the screaming of the engine: 'I've fallen off Mr Deane, I've fallen off Mr Deane – but I've got my notebook.'

Fortunately the rhino turned off and disappeared into the veld.

We ran down to the Land-Rover to find Dr Harthoorn, Norman and Garth in fits of laughter.

'Why is it that game rangers always laugh when someone nearly gets killed?' Dr Harthoorn asked.

Everyone immediately laughed more, and when Norman described how Garth had said he had his notebook, we doubled up.

Garth showed us his leg which was badly skinned with blotches of tyre burn, and we all laughed again.

We drank tea from chipped enamel mugs and discussed the capture.

'I can't say I'm happy with the drugs,' Dr Harthoorn said. 'It's not what we want, but we must press on and do a few more because we are learning something about these beasts of yours.'

We went out into the Corridor in the afternoon and darted a half-grown bull below the Ncebe hill. As the dart plopped in, the rhino ran off at speed. Nick and Owen followed on horseback while Norman chased after it in his short wheel-base Land-Rover.

John Page was with me in my cumbersome long wheel-base Land-Rover and we could not keep up with the other vehicle and the horsemen. By following the tracks over the flattened grass we managed to track Norman's vehicle and caught up with him five miles on at the Nyalazi river.

'It was still running flat out when we last saw it,' Norman said pointing towards Hluhluwe Game Reserve. 'I'm sure he's gone right into my reserve.'

The horsemen returned an hour later and reported they had followed it for over ten miles to the Nqabatheki gate, one of the old entrances to Hluhluwe Game Reserve.

'It's obvious the dosage was too low,' Dr Harthoorn said, looking up from his red notebook.

The way he said it made me realize that he had kept the dosage low because he did not want to risk the death of another rhino.

The final rhino was darted early the following day, but it disappeared into the bush. Maqubu tracked it for hours, and found it feeding peacefully in a glade. The dart was still stuck in its shoulder.

'But it will come out the first time he has a wallow,' Maqubu explained to me later.

On Dr Harthoorn's last evening we got together and he spoke brilliantly about the pros and cons of the drug, and about everything else that had happened during his stay.

We sat drinking beer in my lounge. In the darkness outside a nightjar whistled and the wind blew softly under the thatched eaves. The buddleia still flowered in the garden and its heavy scent wafted into the room. After days in the sun Dr Harthoorn's fair skin was burnt a dark tan, and his blue eyes showed up clearly.

'Three deaths in ten animals darted is not good,' he was saying, holding a can of beer which he waved slightly to emphasize a point. 'The three could have survived if we had administered the antidote as soon as they went down. This might be possible with increased experience but when you think of the field conditions we've seen, the chances of giving an intravenous injection within three minutes of the rhino collapsing are small. No matter how good the horsemen are, some rhino will escape them and get lost.'

He drank from the can and was silent for a few moments.

'One of the interesting facts is the difference between the

black rhino and the white rhino in their reactions to gallamine. The black rhino tends to develop respiratory distress soon after going down with large doses. The white rhino suffers respiratory arrest within minutes of only moderate doses of drug.

'Gallamine is generally tolerated better by the young animal than by the old. Maybe if we had darted young white rhino there would have been a greater range of tolerance than in the large bulls we have used in these experiments.'

He pondered this point for some time and drank slowly from the can of beer.

'No, the right drug for the large-scale immobilization of your white rhino has yet to be found.'

'What do you think of our chances?' I asked. I had had just enough beer to clear my head and enable me to grasp what he was saying. It was a rare state of mind.

'It will be found,' he said. 'The white rhino, unlike many other mammals, may possibly be captured more easily with a centrally-acting drug. The principal difficulty will be to find a drug that in high concentration has no caustic effect upon the tissues. We have also got to find a way of bringing the animal round from anaesthesia. I'll start working on it when I get back to Uganda.'

I asked why it was that when a rhino was darted in the shoulder it tended to go down quicker.

'I suspect that the larger mammals show some difference in the absorption rates, from different parts of the body. This is possibly due to skin thickness or extent of fascial layers,' he replied, then added, 'No one can complain about our shooting, only twelve darts were fired. We had to shoot that one bull with the bird dung on its back twice, remember. Then you missed that shot when you fired across the wallow. It's always difficult to estimate distances across water.'

'Another question,' I said. 'All the rhino we darted in the morning survived while the ones in the afternoon died. Now why is that?'

He pulled his little red notebook from his light khaki safari jacket and flipped the pages.

'Numbers three, six, and nine were darted at three thirty-

two p.m., three thirty p.m. and five thirty-five p.m. Yes, all these died, but it may be coincidental. On the other hand there may be a complicating factor, such as environmental heat and body temperature. We did some work on Carr Hartley's tame white rhino once. They underwent considerable fluctuation in body heat depending upon the surrounding temperature. The fullness or otherwise of the stomach may also play a part – gallamine is eliminated mainly by excretion through the kidneys. So the state of hydration could govern the absorption of the drug. On the whole it seems that the animal which goes down quickest has the best chance of survival. Some animals are inclined to fight the drug more than others. But if the rhino is swinging its head around with those nasty horns it's no easy matter to give an intravenous injection.'

We went in to dinner and spoke about music and books for the rest of the evening. He knew as much about these two subjects as he knew about physiology and pharmacology. I had developed a great affection for him and was sorry he was leaving.

'I look forward to seeing you back here soon,' I said when we shook hands.

'Don't worry,' were his last words. 'We'll find another drug and save these beasts of yours.'

Chapter 9

A New Phase

WITH squatter infiltration and possible outbreaks of anthrax, rhino and worry were synonymous. The effect of the rhino population explosion showed more each winter. Rhino eat a lot of grass daily, and every year the impact on the western area was clearer. This area had been cleared of bush in 1947 during a tsetse fly campaign. *Themeda triandra* (redgrass) grasslands had taken over, with the sweet grass, *Panicum maximum*, in the old shade patches.

The rhino had depleted the grasslands in the south-western Nqabaneni area by 1954–5, and had now moved into the west. But other game was moving in too and the warthog population increased enormously. Fires started deliberately by the squatters complicated the situation. Much of the soil in the high density rhino range was poor and infertile. Dry years hastened the deterioration while good rains hid the truth and induced a false sense of optimism in those who could not see the danger signs – 'It looks so green,' they said. The fact was we had a serious overpopulation of white rhino; if the range was to recover we had to move at least a hundred rhino as soon as Dr Harthoorn had perfected his drugs and we had worked out all the translocation snags.

Early in June Colonel Vincent phoned to say that Toni Harthoorn and his family had arrived.

I was delighted to see Toni Harthoorn again, and to meet his family. There was no superior scientist air about him – in fact he always credited you with more sense than you had, and his calmness and certainty were a tonic. He brought greetings from Uganda and said that Obongi, a young rhino we had captured, was fit and well.

We all had dinner together and on the following day I got the rhino capture team together – Nick Steele, John Clark, and Owen Letley.

'What have you got with you, Doctor?' John Clark asked.

'Well,' Toni said, and smiled at John. 'You remember the last drug I brought was not suitable. This time I did a whole series of experiments at the physiology lab in Kampala. I've collected nine drugs. One of them must do the trick.'

'What are you going to use first?' Owen Letley said.

'Morphine – which is a narcotic – as a base, plus others. A cocktail, in fact,' Toni replied. 'We've got a lot of work to do. I'm only here for just on three weeks and we must do a series of at least twelve rhino.'

We discussed our plans and decided that John Clark and Maqubu would go out into the Corridor early every morning to search for rhino while Nick Steele and Owen Letley would take the horses out. Toni Harthoorn and I would test the

Capchur gun and leave Mpila immediately John Clark radioed. This set the pattern – with slight variations as we got better equipment – for rhino capture; it still applies today.

For the rest of the day Toni spoke about his work with a formidable breadth of knowledge.

'Immobilization is going to change the whole picture of game conservation. Previously, if an animal put its nose out of the park, there was only one thing to do; that was to shoot it. Now if the animal is valuable you can catch it and put it back. In the same way you can get animals out of pockets of contested land, load them up and take them to a game reserve.

'We've just done it with the Kenya kob,' Toni said casually. 'We've caught and transported them to a game park three hundred miles away. And we caught some buffalo in the Queen Elizabeth Park and vaccinated them against rinderpest. I think this would be possible on a large scale if necessary.'

'This could solve our anthrax worry,' I said to Nick.

'If a wild animal has a snare round it, or is stuck in a hole, or is wounded,' Toni said, looking at each of us in turn. 'There is the possibility of immobilizing it and having a look to see if one could repair it. This opens up tremendously interesting possibilities for human interference with wild animals. We immobilized a large bull elephant in Murchison Park – Ian knows the place – a short while ago. It was lame. Unfortunately we couldn't do anything for it as it had been shot in the leg and the bone was splintered. If it had been a spear head or something sticking into it, one might have toyed with the idea of pulling the foreign body out and filling up the hole with sulphur powder and seeing if the animal would recover.'

Time passed swiftly as we talked about wild life problems. That evening Sven Persson and Jimmy Anderson, from the South African Tourist Corporation, came from Charters Creek where they were filming the documentary *Lake Wilderness*.

'My head office hasn't given permission yet,' Sven said.

'But I am determined to press on and film this darting of rhino. It's too valuable an opportunity to be missed.'

We began using the new drug on the 8 June 1961.

June weather in the Umfolozi Reserve is near to paradise; the days are warm, clear, and wind free, and the evenings are pleasantly cool. The mpafa tree leaves turn a vivid yellow among the purple-grey of the nthombothi trees. The White and Black Umfolozi rivers are lined by dark green sycamore figs and golden sandbanks as the water dries up. Wherever you walk the yellow-throated longclaw rises singing from the tawny red grass. On very clear mornings you can see the coastal dune forests in the east and the hill called Dingane's Seat in the west. It was worth suffering the blazing heat of summer for such perfect days.

Norman Deane came from Hluhluwe Reserve in his short wheel-base Land-Rover to help, and while John Clark looked for a suitable rhino I watched Toni fill the Capchur gun with the soda syphon sparklets and leave it out in the sun for the gas to expand slightly, for it then fired better.

I had just fired the third practice dart when John Clark called up. He had found a female calf estimated at fifteen hundred to twelve hundred pounds.

Half an hour later we met the horsemen and John Clark below Ncebe range in the Corridor. On the flat plain below Ncebe, John pointed out a group of four white rhino, one of them a young female.

Toni mixed Themalon, Sernyl, and hyoscine, shook the bottle and poured it into the dart barrel, then unscrewed the flight and put in acetic acid.

'Well, this is it, over to you,' Toni said, handing me the Capchur gun.

With Maqubu I trotted downwind through *Tarchonanthus* scrub into a grove of nthombothi trees with their sandalwood scent. A warthog scuttled out of its hole, looked at us, its head up, then ran quickly towards the sleeping rhino. It startled them and they were up, staring towards us, their bell-like ears straining for every sound. We froze and I heard Maqubu cluck, '*Hau, intibane* – the warthog.'

It was a long time before the rhino cow dropped her head

and breathed a sigh like a breath of wind. The bull stood twenty yards away, still alert, then he too flopped down. The calf moved round the cow trying to get at a teat and whining softly. It is a pitiful sound. I was to hear it frequently at the yet unbuilt bomas (pens, in which captured rhino were kept) and it always made me feel desperately sad.

Maqubu touched me and indicated we should go forward. I got on to my knees and began crawling. I had three hundred yards to go but rested behind grey boulders and rubbed my knees. Maqubu looked at me and smiled. I crawled another hundred yards and rested again behind an acacia tree. I could see Toni, Norman, and John Clark watching through binoculars. Nick and Owen stayed a hundred and fifty yards behind, both leaning forward on their saddles ready to move the moment I fired and raised my right hand to signify a hit.

I heard a bateleur eagle's weird cor-cor-corcor cry overhead. A reedbuck whistled downwind and for a moment the calf became alert.

It was a strain keeping the gun upright to prevent leakage. I pulled back the bolt and checked the dart. No sign of liquid. I started forward again, this time on my stomach, and kept going for fifty yards. Maqubu kept with me and we rested again behind a fallen log.

'Wait here now,' I whispered to Maqubu in Zulu.

I began the last twenty-yard crawl, at the same time searching for a tree to climb should the rhino come for me. At ten yards I clicked back the loading bolt. It was enough to get the rhino on their feet. The calf ran round to the other side of the mother. There was no chance of a shot yet. I dropped my head and lay dead still, my nose inches from powdered earth. I badly wanted to sneeze. The bull seemed to sense me and stared at me, its head lowered, but the wind was still in my favour so I knew I was safe.

One of the horses snorted and the cow trotted a few paces forward, leaving the calf exposed. Through the telescopic sight I took a bead on its shoulder and fired. The 'tonk' of the Capchur gun was matched by the thump of the dart hitting the shoulder. It was a perfect shot, but as the rhino

ran forward it bumped against a tree and the needle broke. I raised my right hand. There was a good chance that the drug had been injected. The horsemen galloped past, one heading for the high ground and the other going after the rhino. I checked the time; 2 p.m. That stalk had taken nearly three-quarters of an hour.

Norman, John Clark and Toni drove up.

'The needle broke,' I said.

'I saw that but there was enough time for the drug to go in,' answered Toni.

He made notes in his book, then stood beside the Land-Rover, drumming his fingers on the bonnet.

Hooves clattered and Nick came galloping up a game-path. His khaki shirt was torn down the back and he was bleeding from a scratch on his forehead.

'It's down!' he said.

'What time?' Toni asked.

'Two-thirty,' Nick replied.

Toni scribbled figures on his leg.

'Let's go,' he said.

We jumped into the Land Rover and followed Nick through the trees. The rhino had only travelled about three quarters of a mile. We came upon it lying on sand in a dry stream bed. Owen stood nearby, his reins looped over his arm.

'Hi, Doc,' he said. 'She grazed for about four minutes then walked here and flopped down. Her breathing is O.K. and she went down very gently in a normal sleeping position. She's been on her brisket all the time.'

I looked carefully at Toni and saw a flicker of pleasure in his eyes.

The sun was low by the time Toni had finished examining the Rhino. We then measured her and Owen Letley sang out the measurements to me as I noted them in the book.

Anterior horn	$9\frac{1}{8}''$
Posterior horn	$1\frac{3}{4}''$
Head	28″
Body along contour	76″
Tail	19″
Ear (inner measurement)	$9\frac{1}{2}''$

Heart girth	97½″
Standing height	51″

We tagged her right ear with a yellow and her left with a red tag. There was no flinching as the tagging machine crunched through the ear.

Owen examined the vagina and announced she was unbred. Norman made a ribald comment and Owen coloured.

I ran my hand along the body and felt the hair. This one seemed particularly hirsute. The third callous on the nuchal hump was well formed and there was very little sweating except for a few damp patches between the ribs.

Toni rubbed his hands and looked very pleased.

'Is it the answer?' I said.

"Too early to say,' he said.

Nick came up and said, 'We must get the horses back and feed them well, if they are going to be any good to morrow.'

'Certainly, you push on,' I said. 'We'll see this lot through and tell you about it later.'

We named the rhino 'Daisy'.

Toni had given the antidote Lethidrone intravenously after fifteen minutes, then again after tagging in case further drug was being absorbed. The breathing deepened, otherwise there was no effect.

'We can't leave until she stands up,' Toni said. 'And we must keep her warm.'

It was nearly dark as I sent John Clark with Maqubu in a Land-Rover to Mpila to bring sacks, a pile of grass, and food for us. It might turn out to be a long night. They drove off and I heard the Land-Rover rattling loudly as they crossed the boulders in the Tjevu stream. We waited another ten minutes and smoked a cigarette.

Then we started again, pushing, slapping, and shouting at Daisy, trying to get her on her feet. But she lay and snored. It was about nine o'clock when she slowly stood up and shakily began to walk forwards. We legged it for the Land-Rover, expecting to be charged. But she walked round in a

small right hand circle, heading dangerously near a deep gully.

'I'll cut her off with the Rover,' Norman said.

He started the vehicle and we jerked forward. Daisy pressed hard against the side of the vehicle and Norman drove slowly forward, guiding her away from danger. Then he reversed. Daisy walked in another circle and came bang up against the Rover again.

'What on earth goes on, Doc?' Norman asked.

'It has forgotten it is a rhino,' Toni said, chuckling quietly. He was delighted with the success of the drug combination.

On the next circuit Daisy got her horn against the front mudguard and pushed forward. It soon buckled under her weight. Her head and horn then slipped under the mudguard and the pressure she applied turned the wheels. We all laughed.

'It will be driving this thing next,' Norman said. 'Oh hell, there go the clutch pedal springs.'

Suddenly he sprang out of the driver's seat, ran round and grabbed the rhino by the tail.

'I've just remembered this vehicle is on my stock,' he panted. 'For goodness sake help me or I'll cop it from the Colonel.'

This was too much for us. We laughed until the tears rolled down our cheeks.

'You miserable bastards! Help me man, help!' Norman shouted as he hung on to the rhino's tail.

There was a splintering sound and Norman wailed, 'Oh hell, there go the brake pedals. Help me, please man!'

Toni and I were almost prostrate with laughter as the rhino slowly pushed the Rover back, various parts of the vehicle breaking with loud creaks and bangs. At last we clambered on to the bonnet and while Norman grabbed the horn we pushed the head from the other side with our feet. The rhino seemed intent upon getting its horn into the petrol tank, and this stopped our laughter. While Norman tugged we heaved and shoved, and freed the animal, but it kept on walking forwards. Whenever it headed for the donga we turned it by pulling the tail. In the pitch darkness with

only the parking lights of the Land-Rover glowing, it was an astonishing scene.

We were now so unafraid and blasé that Norman leapt on to her back; this started us laughing again. Our laughter was also a relief from worry. There was no doubt about it, this drug really worked.

'This is a reaction which I have not seen with any other animal, with any other drug. She is not excited, she is tractable and we can do what we like with her. This is the most important aspect of the drug,' Toni said happily as he leaned against the Land-Rover and watched Daisy.

'She seems to have lost her dislike for human beings,' he continued. 'Doesn't mind smell, doesn't mind us talking – to say nothing of laughing. This really surprises me because I thought she would be particularly susceptible to sound.'

We heard a Land-Rover whining down Mpila hill and the lights flickered in the darkness.

'John Clark's coming – let's pull his leg,' Norman said.

We turned our Land-Rover round so the lights would blind him as he came up. Then we pulled Daisy's tail until she was behind the Land-Rover with her head facing the other way. She had stopped walking and simply stood, making loud chewing noises with her big square lips.

'When John arrives we'll lean on Daisy, call him over and hand him the tail,' Norman said, and we burst into a fit of laughing at the thought of it.

As John approached we switched the lights on and successfully dazzled him. He came towards us, shielding his eyes from the light.

'Did you see the rhino?' I shouted.

'No. Has she gone?' he asked quickly.

Now he had reached us. Toni leant away from Daisy and Norman said, 'Hey, John, hold this a sec please.'

John Clark put his hand out and grabbed the rhino's tail.

'My God,' he said fervently. 'What has happened?'

We couldn't control ourselves any longer and burst into wild laughter. Norman and I had to support each other as John Clark stood there, a bemused look on his face, saying, 'No, oh no. I don't believe it.'

Maqubu and another guard came forward and stared at the rhino. They looked at Toni. 'This is witchcraft, witchcraft,' they muttered over and over in Zulu.

As we drove back to Mpila I reflected that, in spite of all the hilarity, history had been made today. In 1925 Dr Herbert Lang, an American naturalist, had urged the capture of white rhino and their translocation to former habitats. In 1927 another American named Harris tried to shoot a black rhino with a mercy bullet covered with a curare substance. Now at last immobilization had been achieved and we were on the verge of something new and great in the long battle for the white rhino.

The following morning we drove out to Daisy and found her a short distance from where we had left her. She had her head caught in the loop of a liana monkey rope and her feet were moving in a walking motion.

'Look at the ground, it's beaten flat,' John Clark whispered. 'She's been walking all night!'

We approached closer and could see she was very much more alert. Toni clapped his hands and shouted. She broke through the vine and galloped off.

'This proves another thing,' Toni said, delighted. 'If you dart them and they get away, they can still recover unaided.'

John Clark and Maqubu went to scout for another rhino and soon returned to say they had found two young males, probably twin calves, about Daisy's weight.

I stalked them and fired at the nearest one, but the dart passed over the top of the shoulder. The second shot went into the ear and fell out in under half a minute. The rhino trotted a few yards then stood. After a quarter of an hour there were some signs of ataxia; it had difficulty holding up its tail. I crept nearer to shoot another dart but it ran off with the others. I took a chance and fired as it ran past me, but the dart bounced off.

Toni quite rightly ticked me off for the running shot. 'Both drugs and darts are in short supply. I had to clean out the whole of East Africa,' he said.

'Sorry Toni, it was my blood lust,' I said, cursing myself.

We brewed tea out in the veld while John searched for more rhino. All he could find was a very young calf on the north-east ridge of Ncebe near the Mcacaso stream. The cow kept getting in the way. The calf was suspicious and trotted towards me, the cow following immediately. I shot when the calf was ten paces away, hit it below the withers and ducked out of sight as cow and calf thundered past me. It was a stoney area, difficult for the horsemen. Owen came back and said the calf had staggered after only eight minutes but had gone down near the junction of the two Umfolozis. We had to manhandle the vehicle to it. We found Nick sitting on his horse watching the young rhino which lay guarded by the cow.

'The old bitch has chased me twice. We're going to have trouble getting rid of her,' he said.

I walked forward, shouting and clapping my hands. The cow lumbered towards me, and I backed hastily.

We all threw stones and shouted, but it had no effect on the cow.

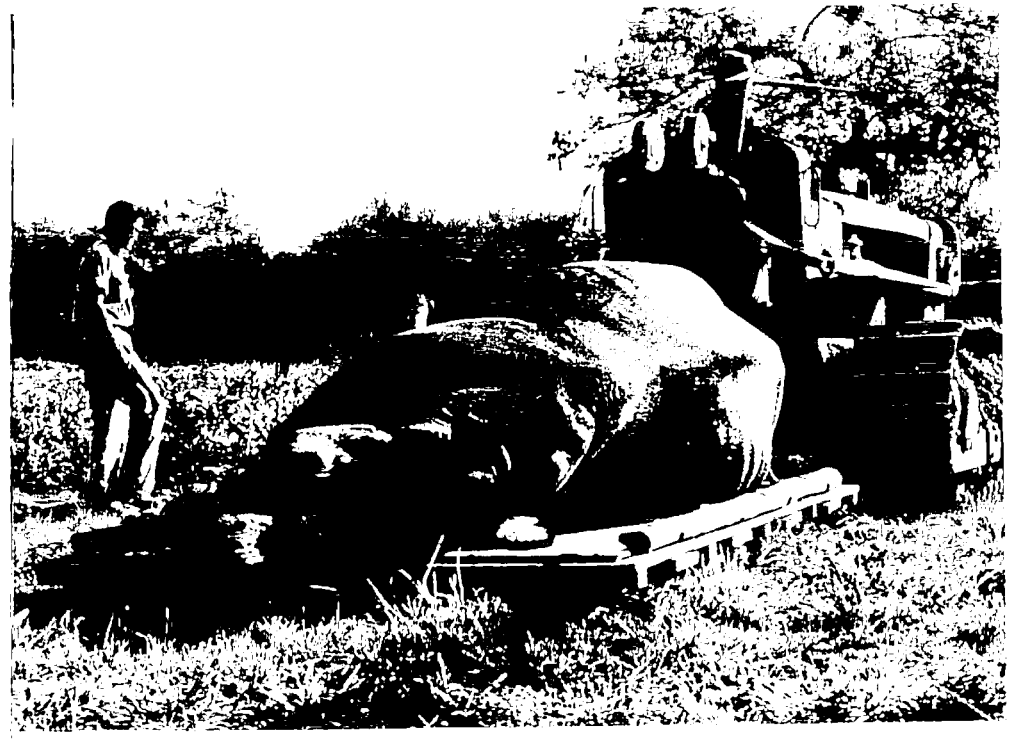
'This little Johnny is going to give us trouble,' Owen said.

So Johnny was the rhino's name. It had become a fetish which was to be permanent; not to name a rhino was to have bad luck. The name could come from an incident, the weather, the area, or a personality, but once named, it stuck.

'We've got to get at that little beast,' Toni said fretfully.

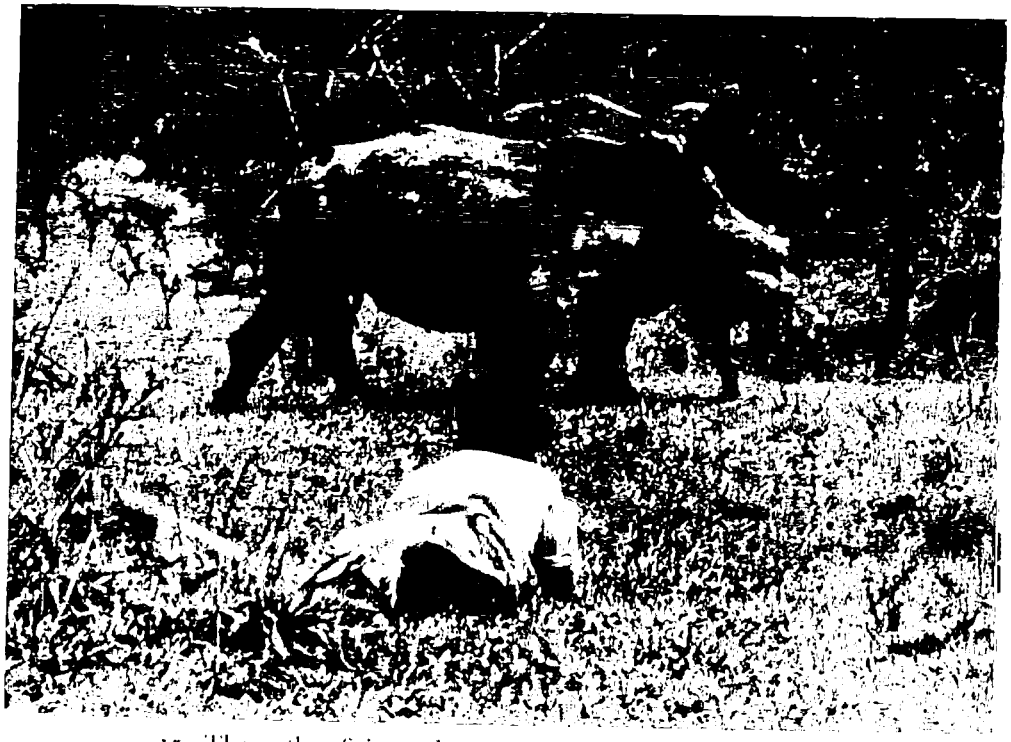
I asked Maqubu if he had any ideas. He loaded his .303 and we all moved forward, shouting. The cow came and Maqubu fired three quick shots into the ground. The cow hesitated and turned. We lobbed stones at her and Maqubu fired a shot into the air. This was too much for the unfortunate animal and she ran two hundred yards before she turned to watch us.

We reached the calf to find its breathing was quiet and shallow. 'A dangerous sign,' Toni muttered as he filled a syringe and injected twenty c.c. of the antidote intravenously through the ear. The breathing deepened at once, and we sighed with relief.



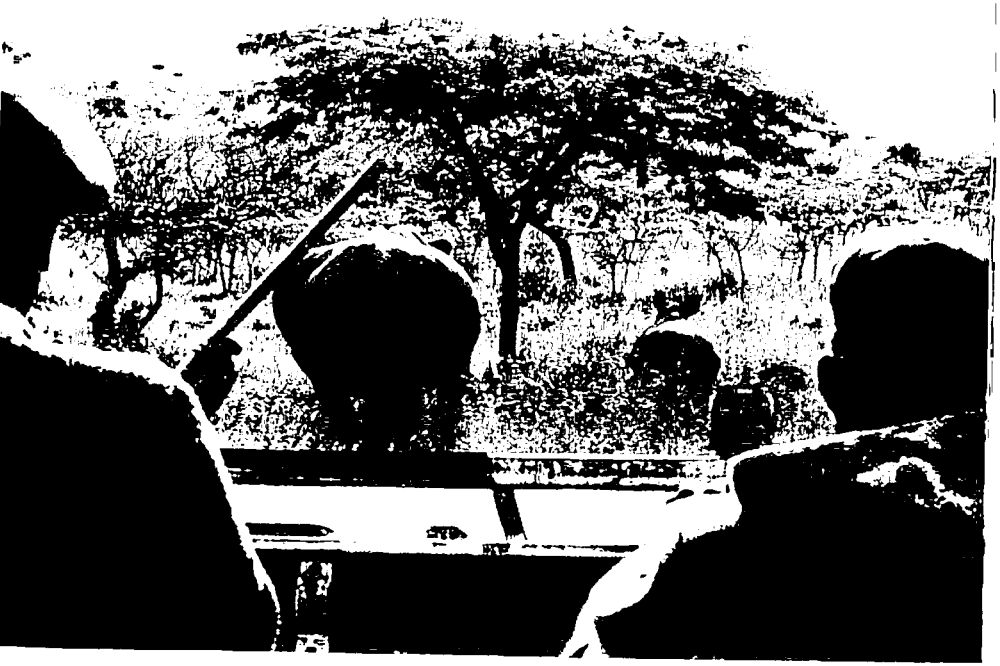
13. 'Mpandhlana, the Great Bull'

14. Rhino lorry and crate



15. The author firing a dart at a white rhino

16. Closing in on mother and calf



We later discovered it was possible to immobilize a full-grown bull with the same amount of drug that this little fellow got. Toni used 1¼ gm morphine, 375 mgms Sernyl and 60 mgms hyoscine. When we measured the animal we estimated the weight at only 1400 lb. Johnny had only two callouses on his nuchal hump, Daisy had had three.

Toni gave another 400 mgms of antidote in the caudal fold without effect. We slapped Johnny, shouted and pulled his ears to try to get him on his feet. We left him on one side for fifteen minutes, then rolled him over and found that the dart needle had broken off. John Clark tugged with a pair of sharp-nosed pliers to get it out.

Toni then ran out of antidote and someone had to drive back to Mpila for a fresh supply. He quickly scribbled what he would need in my bird notebook while I told Adriaan Erasmus, a ranger who had recently joined us, that as he was the most junior, he would have to drive back.

Adriaan read the note, which said:

1. Small bottle of 5 grammes Lethidrone on top of cupboard in the hut.
2. Large empty 8 oz bottle near it.
3. 100 cc plastic measuring cylinder on the table.
4. Bottle of distilled water from the office.
   Great care it is *all* we have.

'Don't worry, I will take care,' said Adriaan, and he was back within two hours.

Toni immediately injected 15 c.c. intravenously and the same amount in the tail. We tagged Johnny and he rose, a little unsteadily, then walked away. The following day he was tracked, found to have met the cow and gone to water, so all was well. We saw him many times afterwards trotting in front of his dam on the Ncebe plain.

The following day John Clark searched all morning and only after midday found a suitable rhino. I crept up to the calf and fired. It ran for a mile followed by the horsemen then the dart dropped out. Nick brought it back after the rhino did not go down. A piece of skin had blocked the needle. Nick said they had followed the animal into some thick bush then

lost sight of it, but they tracked for half a mile and found it alert and unaffected by the drug.

We searched for another rhino but could only find a mature bull and that not until late afternoon. It was on the southern side of Ncebe at a point known as Kandelndhlovu – the Head of the Elephant.

The area was broken with boulders and encroaching acacia scrub.

'What's its weight?' Toni asked, squinting at me in the sunlight.

'Four thousand pounds.'

'I agree,' he said, and began mixing the drugs.

He filled the dart with the same mixture that Johnny had.

'Now we'll see the range of this drug,' he murmured as he screwed the needle into the dart and handed me the Capchur gun.

There was plenty of cover so it was an easy stalk, but as I fired the bull moved and the dart went into the left knee. It trotted a few paces then stopped. I motioned the horsemen to stay back for it was confused and probably would not run. I moved forward slowly to some boulders on the hill slope. I had darted it at half past three. Eight minutes later it was staggering amongst the rocks, swaying dangerously, but we could do nothing. It fell, rolled on to its back, and was wedged between two boulders. It lay there kicking its legs in the air and bellowing.

'Get him on his side,' Toni shouted.

Everyone rushed forward and tried to push it over, but it was impossible. Maqubu stood back for a moment then ran off. I asked him where he thought he was going, he said he would be back soon, and ran on.

Toni gave the rhino some antidote intravenously and we pushed again. John Clark grabbed one leg but was flicked off like a fly on a wildebeest.

Maqubu came back up the hill, his body bent double under the weight of two nthombothi poles.

'A wise man,' Toni said approvingly.

John Clark grabbed a pole and pushed it under the rhino's hindquarters.

'Bring some rocks,' he said.

We levered the rhino up a little, enough to slip a rock under it. We worked hard for an hour and slowly jacked him up. By now it was dark and the zebra were yodelling with their dog-like barks as they made their way down to the Black Umfolozi river. A reedbuck got our scent and whistled shrilly below us.

When the rhino was up and out of the boulders, we could not move its head. This was not surprising as the head of a mature bull weighs as much as six hundred pounds. Maqubu came to the rescue again by making a rope of bark. This gave us more leverage and we got the rhino out of the dangerous position and on to its brisket. Our nerves were on edge. Every time the rhino moved we would rush away, expecting to be charged.

'This country is so bad, one of us will be horned if he gets up,' Nick said.

There was no chance of running with all the boulders strewn about, some of them hidden in the grass.

Toni gave it more antidote and the breathing improved. By seven o'clock there was nothing we could do except give more antidote and leave it.

John Clark returned later than night to check, but the rhino had gone.

John Page arrived from our Pietermaritzburg headquarters. He brought with him all the drugs he had managed to find.

At ten o'clock next day I was stalking a calf the same size as Johnny, but the dart contained half the amount of drug. The cow with the calf was on heat and a mature bull was making advances which were repulsed with sudden charges and a low rumbling call. I lay behind a lala palm tree, watching the love play of the huge beasts. The bull was sweating a little and I was close enough to smell the strong tang of rhino. Then the wind changed and the rhino trotted off with their bouncy run, as though they were on shock absorbers. In spite of their bulk they are graceful creatures.

I ran round and down into the sandy bed of the Tjevu

stream and used the high banks as cover to get close to the rhinos again. But I was at a bad angle and could not get a decent aim. The cow and the bull fought with rumbling snorts and the clash of horns and the thud of head hitting hard flesh. In typical fashion the calf ran behind the cow when the bull was close enough to mount. The bull would chase the calf a few yards then lumber back to the cow. There was more fighting and dust and the calf suddenly appeared out of the melée. I aimed but as I fired the bull rushed forward and collected the dart in the shoulder.

'Now that's really torn it.' I was so angry with myself I nearly forgot to indicate a hit to the horsemen. I waved them on and they galloped past, for the rhino was already out of sight.

'The big one, the bull,' I yelled.

Owen raised his hand in acknowledgment. His hair flopped over his forehead and his powerful back muscles bulged as he disappeared on his horse. There was a faint smell of horse dung and sweat which reverted to dust and the bush. It was quiet.

'That rhino is running,' Maqubu said, apropos of nothing, a habit of many Zulus.

Owen returned soon after half past ten. John Page finished loading his ciné camera and we jumped into the Land-Rovers. The rhino had run some five miles.

We followed Owen. His horse cantered easily. He had trained it in the Drakensberg mountains when he was huntsman and he rode like a cowboy, with long stirrups. The horse stumbled in an antbear hole, but Owen kept his balance.

'The boy can ride,' I said to John Page.

We drove through thick *Acacia karroo* scrub and found Nick watching the still standing rhino. It looked very alert which was not surprising as it had only had enough for a calf.

'There is another rhino,' Maqubu said, pointing with a closed index finger in orthodox Zulu fashion.

A bull came from the shade of a dark green *Schotia* tree and slowly approached the darted animal which was shuffling backwards and forwards in a bewildered way. The

second rhino charged with a squeal of rage and drove the darted rhino down a slope. It fell into a four-foot donga. John Clark ran forward, shouting and waving his arms, until the aggressor turned away.

It dawned on me that we had seen a territorial display, which proved that bulls did not only fight over cows.

The darted animal stood shivering and sweating in the donga. Rhino flies still clung to its wet back and flanks. We approached it cautiously but it took fright and tried to get out of the donga. Clods of earth and bits of grass and roots scattered as the rhino tried to pull itself up with its front legs.

'We must tag it, because it may not go down,' Toni said.

The rhino got halfway out of the gully and we ran for the trees. But the rhino fell back and stood, its body heaving and shiny with sweat. John Clark took the tagging machine.

'Forget it, John, it's dangerous,' I said.

'It's O.K., I'll get it in a jiffy,' John said as he ran forward.

His long pants flapped over his ankles and his shirt tails hung out. His black hair was reaching over his collar. He was lean and hard, with plenty of guts. He could trot after a wounded wildebeest for ten miles, barefoot, in rough thorn country. I had a great liking for him and as rhino capture grew he came to play an indispensable part.

He approached the rhino from the blind side and quickly grabbed an ear. The rhino shook its head and John sidestepped, the horn just missing him. He was not at all afraid. He grabbed the ear again and the tagging machine glinted. He moved round to tag the other ear but we bawled at him to come back. As he moved away the rhino snorted and with a mighty heave was out of the donga. It collapsed but rose and sent us running as we approached. It walked slowly into a thicket of spindly acacia. We followed in the Land-Rover as far as we could, then drove round the thicket. The rhino walked out unsteadily. It leaned against a tree and stood with drooping head like a city drunk leaning against a lamp post.

We got out and clapped, and the rhino started.

'Another small amount and we would have put him right down,' Toni said.

He had obviously learnt a lot from this animal: both his legs were covered in hieroglyphics.

John Clark followed the rhino in the vehicle. The rhino moved a little faster now and veered south. Nick cantered up to warn us there was a krantz ahead.

'If he goes over, it's tickets,' he said.

As he spoke the rhino crossed in front of us, heading for the donga. Stones and tree stumps prevented John from driving so he leapt out and ran after the rhino. Nick and Owen followed on horseback and they all reached the krantz just before the rhino. They drove the animal off in another direction.

The rhino was recovering every minute, so we left it and made for the Tjevu stream to brew tea. It was one of the few times we were all together and able to drink a mug without interruption.

Chapter 10

Crating a Rhino

We had for days been waiting for news about our first crate. The experiments had gone so well that Colonel Vincent authorized the removal of a rhino to Mkuze Game Reserve, a hundred miles away. But the carpenters dilly-dallied over how the crate should be made. We all fretted; Toni because he was due to go home soon and he desperately wanted to see at least twelve animals caught, the rest of us because we were terrified of the thought of Toni not being with us on our first journey.

We had successfully drugged our ninth rhino, tagged and released it, when the radio operator at Mpila called me up and said a crate had arrived at the rest camp. There was no time to lose. Nick and Owen unsaddled their horses; John Clark went out to look for a rhino; Toni Harthoorn mixed drugs and filled syringes; I drove to Mpila to collect the crate. John Kinloch the imperturbable camp superintendent

had the one and only three-ton truck in the game reserve.

I was back at the catching area an hour later.

'We've found a suitable animal,' Nick told me. 'It's a young female, about fifteen hundred to two thousand pounds.'

I studied the animal through binoculars. She stood grazing about eight hundred yards away among some young *Acacia karroo* bushes. It would be an easy stalk. I could use the Madhlozi stream bed then crawl a hundred yards through the grass. Maqubu agreed that this would be the best away.

'This is an important rhino,' Toni said as he mixed the drugs. He squinted at me and said, 'When last was there a white rhino at Mkuze?'

'A hundred years ago,' I said.

Toni poured the mixture into a 10 c.c. syringe and handed me the gun.

'Come, Maqubu, let's go,' I said and we walked east to the Madhlozi stream. It was hot in the valley and sweat soon poured down as we plodded through the sand, skirting the occasional pool of undrinkable water.

I kept nothing back from Maqubu and now admitted that I was sometimes afraid of the rhino. Maqubu and I had been very close for over three years and he had taught me more about the bush, about Umfolozi, and about game than anyone else had. We had crossed the burning plains, walked through the bush and over the shimmering hills of Umfolozi together, and we knew each other well. I wondered if he knew what fear meant. He had never shown it, and we had shared dangerous moments with black rhino, poachers, and a black mamba.

'Your trouble is you have only one and a half legs,' Maqubu said, referring to my wonky knee. 'In your mind you feel you will not run fast enough. This is not fear. You also want to do everything yourself. For ten days now we have been working. You are tired in your mind.'

The old Zulu was a good psychologist. He summed up a man quickly and his judgment was never wrong.

'*Wozani* – let us go,' he concluded, and we walked for-

ward at a fast pace. Abruptly he stopped and asked me if I wanted him to take the Capchur gun and shoot the rhino. I laughed.

'You old blighter – you can't shoot straight,' I said in Zulu, joking to hide my feelings. He had been shooting animals for forty years and was an excellent shot. He stared at me and giggled, his shoulders shaking with laughter. '*Lungile* – all right, you shoot it,' he said.

We had been talking for only five minutes but my fear had gone, as it often does if you talk it out.

Maqubu trotted along, his batats (sandals made from motor car tyres) leaving tracks in the sand. He leapt up on to the bank and jumped from boulder to boulder. For a man of sixty he was superbly fit.

We headed north for another two hundred yards, then he indicated that the rhino was just ahead of us. I looked over the Capchur gun, wiped the telescopic sight and rolled my sleeves down. My elbows were rubbed raw from all the crawling. As I slid off Maqubu tapped me on the leg and pointed south.

A mass of black cloud was moving. The old man had predicted rain, but I had not believed him. But he had been right.

'This will complicate matters,' I thought.

By this time the young rhino cow had grazed to the top of the slope and she was in open country. I crouched behind a spindly *Acacia karroo* memorizing the clumps of grass, the boulders and the small trees on the way to the animal. I had to keep very low to remain out of sight. I heard Maqubu's breathing behind me. It was not easy for a man of sixty, even one as fit as he was, to slide on his belly like a snake. I motioned him to stay behind. He looked hurt, but obeyed.

I crept forward again, cursing the pepper ticks. There was no mistaking that burning itch. I longed to stop, pull them out of my skin and crush them between my fingernails. Some had already got between my toes, one of the worst places. I rubbed my veldskoen on a rock, scraping my toes to try to relieve the itch a little.

This faint noise was enough to alert the rhino. It stopped grazing, turned its head and stared in our direction, its ears swivelling to catch every sound. Maqubu gave a soft bird-like call. I turned and he indicated I should go off to the left and stalk from the rear. He was expecting the south wind to come up. I scuttled crabwise to a clump of *Themeda* grass then moved quickly uphill while the rhino faced the other way. Small thorn trees were invading this area of grassland too, and the hooked thorns of *Acacia caffra* ripped my shirt and raised red weals on my arms and chest. Sweat dripped into my eyes. I had to wipe the rifle's telescopic sight repeatedly to keep it free of dust and grass chaff. My shoulders ached from holding the gun in an upright position, to stop the drug pouring out of the dart.

I looked back. The tall figure of Toni Harthoorn was silhouetted on the skyline. Nick and Owen had ridden to the stream to wait in a position which gave them a clear view of both me and the rhino. John Clark was perched on the cab of a Land-Rover. Glass flashed as he lowered the binoculars. John Page stood holding a camera. They all seemed so remote, in another world.

I crawled forward, sliding over the small bushes and identifying them at close range: *Acacia caffra*, *Acacia karroo*, marula, *Schotia brachypetala*, *Acacia nilotica*; it was only when you were on your stomach that the extent of the scrub invasion became apparent. This was going to have a marked effect on the rhino grazing lands. Some of the shrubs bore old burn marks, but fire had no effect any more.

I was thirty paces away. The rhino had stopped eating and stood in a characteristic position, head drooping but ears moving all the time. At twenty paces I aimed but it was just too far, so I crept forward another five paces and loaded the gun. The rhino swung round at the noise. I had a perfect view of her right shoulder, I fired and the dart thumped home. The heat had warmed the gun up and it was working at peak efficiency. I raised my right arm and the horsemen cantered up the hill. This set the rhino off and it ran out of sight. My job was done, so I instantly pulled off my veldskoen and socks and scratched the tiny ticks out of their refuge be-

tween my toes. My blood lust wasn't satisfied until I had crushed a dozen or so.

The Land-Rover started up and approached along the Mhlopeni track. We walked across the veld to meet it.

'Nice shot,' John Page said. 'But what made you take so long?'

'Pepper ticks,' I said.

Everyone nodded knowingly.

We waited awhile then followed the road below the Mtunzini hills and saw Nick galloping back. He said the rhino was in a dry ravine a mile up the road.

'She staggered for five minutes before going down,' Nick told Toni, who jotted it down on his leg. 'I think you had better hurry, she's lying with her head down a bank.'

I shifted gears as he spoke. We covered the mile quickly and were flagged down by Owen, who told us to hurry. Toni grabbed his veterinary box and leapt out of the Land-Rover. He slipped a needle into the vein we had raised and injected the antidote Lethidrone.

He glanced at his watch and made a note on his leg. The rhino stirred, lifted her head and in one movement was on her feet. Everyone except John Clark and Maqubu scattered. Nick and Owen led their horses to safety.

The rhino began walking away. I ran to the back of the Land-Rover and got a length of rope. John Clark snatched it from me. He ignored our warning shouts and tried to get the rope round the hind legs, but when he touched the animal she ran forward. At the third try the rope slipped round her legs and John rapidly tied it to a marula stump. The rhino struggled and squealed pitifully. John Page moved forward with a camera and tape recorder.

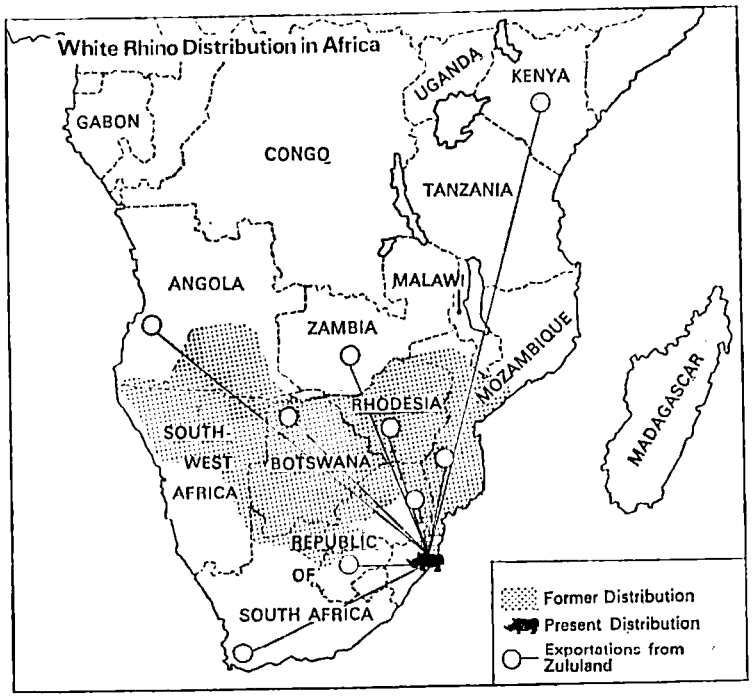
'What are we going to call her?' Toni asked.

'Well, she's an unbred virgin,' John Clark said after examining her.

'Forever Amber,' Toni said with a straight face, and so Amber she became.

Her whole body darkened with sweat as she struggled. She lunged and swung her head at anyone who came close.

'Seems to be coming round,' I said to Toni.



He nodded and mixed more drug. He gave her another injection and ten minutes later she quietened down.

We were all so intent on our purpose that it was only when John Page complained about the lack of light for his camera that we noticed how the sky had darkened. There was a rumble of thunder in the south and lightning flashed across the sky. Maqubu looked meaningly at me.

Minutes later John Kinloch's blue lorry came down the road. Toni examined the crate, criticized the open slats, but said that Amber would fit in.

It was now five o'clock. A strong south wind had sprung up, a prelude to rain. Darkness was falling fast. Black shadows stretched southwards from the Mtunzini hills behind us. Lubisana and Nqoloti hills to the south-west were caught in the glow of the fading light. The redgrass bent before the

wind, changing colours until it too was as grey as the rest of the veld.

We manhandled the crate off the lorry and with much swearing and profanity carried it shoulder high to Amber and dumped it in front of her. Everyone had a different opinion of the best way to get her into the crate. We argued so fiercely that only a squall of rain stopped us. There were too many senior officers present, so that each order was obeyed. At last the democracy of good sense prevailed. Ideas were put forward, discussed quietly, then accepted or rejected.

We had learnt that a drugged white rhino always walked forwards, albeit with a left or right bias so I insisted on having Amber's head lifted and put just inside the crate. Then John Clark tied poles to the side to act as guides if she veered one way or the other.

So our plan of loading developed, but we could not get the lorry into a good position. Nick, Owen, John Clark, and Maqubu took turns with a shovel to dig a loading ramp. John Page photographed the scene from every angle, cursing the fading light.

When everything was ready we called Toni. He filled a bright metal syringe with Lethidrone and injected Amber intravenously. We waited a few minutes then slapped and shouted at her to wake her up, like any patient coming round from an operation. She stirred, and everyone tensed. Then she sighed deeply and settled down again. Toni mixed more Lethidrone by the Land-Rover headlights and gave her another injection. When he pulled the needle out blood oozed in a dark stream down her ear and dripped on to her head.

'Will the penicillin you gave earlier be enough to keep infection away?' John Clark asked anxiously.

'Yes,' Toni said tersely. It was about the fifth time he had been asked the same question that day.

We had had nothing to eat or drink since breakfast and the cold rain sharpened our hunger. While we waited for the antidote to work I radioed Mpila and told the operator to

warn my wife that we would be passing through and would need food.

John Clark began shouting and slapping her again. This time she stood up shakily. I glanced at the time, it was nearly six o'clock.

Amber took a step forward then stopped. There was a flow of bad language. Only Toni and John Clark did not swear. Even Maqubu was exasperated enough to shout 'bladyfool' when Amber refused to move forward.

She swayed slightly, took another step forward and we all rushed to push from behind, then she leaned to the left. We pushed again.

'Hang on, hang on,' John Clark shouted. He had his hand jammed on the side of the crate. No one on rhino capture escaped without having their hands jammed at least once.

Amber leaned drunkenly against the crate. I remembered Daisy and grabbed her tail and pulled. She swayed forward into the crate opening and we pushed hard. There was a pungent smell of sweating human bodies wet with rain and the rank smell of white rhino. Amber stumbled forward to the end of the crate. She wedged her horn in a corner and stood breathing hard. Over the years it was to become a far too familiar sight, but we were too busy bolting the door to take much notice.

In the few seconds thankful silence that followed the tightening of the final bolt, we heard her strangled breathing. John Clark jammed a pole between the slats and levered her head into a better position and her breathing improved immediately.

We lifted the crate on to the bottom rung of the rollers with creosoted gum poles. It was incredible what could be done with poles. Without them rhino capture would have come to a quick halt, but we were constantly forgetting that the pitch burnt badly, especially if you touched your eyes.

The crate was lifted with two poles and more poles were put underneath to help its passage up the rollers. We then attached a length of cable to the U-bolt on the front of the crate, ran it to the top of the truck cab, and slowly hand

winched the crate up the rollers. More poles were laid on the truck deck and the crate was jerked a few feet further. The cable was unhitched and the crate, with its heavy load, was manhandled the rest of the way.

The taut cable and the weight of rhino and crate had dented John Kinloch's lorry. I remembered his admonition and hammered it back into a semblance of its former shape. Arthur Nyawo, the driver, stood alongside, his tall frame stooped more than usual in the wind and cold, wringing his hands and muttering, '*Hau, nkosaan, hau!*'

It was half past six. It had taken us half an hour to get the crate on to the lorry. We stuffed grass into the open slats near Amber's head to try to prevent her wedging her head or horn again, then Toni and I left for Mpila to get a tarpaulin and to prepare for the journey to Mkuze Game Reserve.

Beyond Mantianna the road passes through more sandy country and the heavy rains made little impression here. We passed the turnoff to the rhino pans and drove slowly along the winding road to Little Mpila. The lightning display was at its height and for a few seconds the whole of the wilderness area was brilliantly lit. I saw the winding White Umfolozi, Nqabaneni, and Dengezeni hill. In the daylight it was a view no one could easily forget; in the lightning flashes it was like a photographic negative.

The wind howled over the gap between the two Mpilas and the rain fell harder. Umfolozi Game Reserve was in one of her wild moods. The Land-Rover slithered and the wheels spun. Water dripped on to me from gaps in the door and the wind was cold.

'What a night to move a rhino,' Toni said a little wearily.

'Do you think we should go on?' I asked anxiously.

'Can you imagine getting it off the lorry and letting it go again?' he replied sarcastically.

I dropped him at his quarters and we arranged to meet at nine o'clock.

I ran up to the house in the pouring rain. My wife met me at the door and my two young children played on the floor. The warmth of the house with the bright lights was a strange contrast from the wild scene outside. Even as I hurriedly

changed in the bathroom I could hear the south wind whining, moaning and soughing past the house, and fierce squalls of rain lashed the window panes.

The rest of the men arrived and we filled up with thick, hot soup and coffee. I heard the lorry grinding up the hill to Mpila camp as we finished.

The crate was covered with a sail and lashed down with more rope. Arthur Nyawo had bad news: the truck starter wasn't working. It was too late to do anything about it, so we left as arranged. Toni and Nick were in my vehicle, John Clark was with the rhino, and the others went ahead to prepare Mkuze Game Reserve for our arrival.

Chapter 11

Travelling to Mkuze

SINGIE DENYER, the ranger in charge of Mkuze, was in his late fifties. He was originally from the mountain country of East Griqualand but came to Zululand when he was young. After running a trading store he joined the Veterinary Department and worked first in Umfolozi Game Reserve checking tsetse fly traps. He was later transferred to Mkuze Game Reserve, which became his spiritual home.

In the early days Mkuze was a hell hole of heat, drought and malaria. There were not many white men who lived on the eastern side of the Lebombo mountains by choice, but Singie Denyer and his wife Dawn adapted themselves to the isolation, the enervating heat and the attacks of malaria. He resigned from the Veterinary Department when the shooting campaign began. The butchery of the impala was too much. When it was over he and his wife were asked to rejoin and go back to Mkuze – the others who had been there had not lasted long. So Singie rejoined and went back to his Tongaland wilderness.

There were other worries besides the physical discomfort. Although Mkuze Game Reserve had been proclaimed in

1912, the threat of deproclamation was always hanging over it. The Denyers never knew from day to day what the fate of the reserve would be. Any official who visited Mkuze was always asked 'Is the reserve safe?'

The arrival of the first white rhino at Mkuze Game Reserve was a tremendously important occasion for Singie.

'When we have white rhino here the reserve is safe,' he said. 'Look how they saved Umfolozi. Everyone was afraid to deproclaim the Umfolozi Reserve in case something happened to the white rhino.'

His enthusiasm for the translocation of rhino was great, and he wanted to make sure the first white rhino came to Mkuze. He had the bomas built and the off-loading ramps dug in less than a week.

'I can't wait for the animals to arrive,' he repeated to everyone.

The road between the Black Umfolozi river and Masimba was bad and the lorry skidded on the corners. We peered through the wet windshield, anxiously watching the crate. Arthur Nyawo was driving at a good pace and we stayed just far enough behind to keep the crate in sight, our lights catching the back of the lorry in the rain.

Toni sat with his green canvas parka over his head, nodding rhythmically. It was a typical pose when he was deep in thought. It was also not a time to try to engage him in conversation.

We stopped at Macibini pans, undid the wet sail and looked at Amber. The air was warm but smelt strongly of urine and faeces. She had stopped sweating and stood in a good position. Her breathing was slow but Toni was satisfied with her condition.

By the time we reached Hluhluwe Game Reserve gate the rain had stopped and the journey up to the camp was uneventful, except that as we arrived there was great excitement among the staff. Everyone wanted to climb up and look at the rhino. The African staff were most impressed. They covered their mouths with their hands and muttered '*Hau!*' as Arthur Nyawo graphically described Amber getting into

17. John Clark and Game Guards with drugged rhino

18. 'Hyoscine dilates the pupils'

19, 20, 21.
Downing the
radio-tamed rhino

the crate and being loaded on to the lorry. A knot of visitors gathered round and began asking questions.

'Let's get out of here,' Nick said. 'These people will be cutting hunks off Amber for souvenirs if we hang around any longer.'

It does not take long for a gala atmosphere to spread and among a group of people there is always one who will behave badly. As we climbed into the Land-Rover one man asked us to remove the sail so he could take a flashlight picture. We ignored him and drove down the long winding road which passes Hlaza and Mkwankwa, then over the Mansimbomvu and out of the reserve towards Hluhluwe village.

Heavy rain began falling as we turned north on the main road. Cars, lorries, and buses had churned the road into a quagmire, and we were in for trouble. The lorry slid about and we had to stop and move the crate back into position. John Clark and Nick used long poles to get it on to a more even keel. Toni undid the sail, shone a light on Amber and peered through the slats. Steam rose, so she was warm enough.

We drove on following the blue lorry as it forced its way along the main road. A mile further on it slid into the left bank and within seconds was down to its back axle in mud.

'Have you a towing cable?' Toni asked Nick.

Nick looked in the back and swore. We had left it behind.

'It is something you might have checked on,' said Toni quietly. He never lost his temper.

Black rain clouds raced overhead and thunder echoed across the veld. The rain lashed us and an icy trickle had found its way down my neck. I pulled my beret on tighter. I couldn't do anything for a while in the lethargy induced by the heavy rain and cold.

Arthur Nyawo rattled around in the back of the lorry and brought out a pair of chains. He struggled to put them on while John Clark kept the engine running.

I took the other chain and with Toni's help tied it on to the the front bumper of the lorry and the tow bar of the Land-Rover. John Clark got into the lorry, revved the engine and

I jerked the Land-Rover forward. It moved the lorry a few yards then the engine cut out. The only relief was in bad language.

Twelve hours later the lorry was still stuck and the combined efforts of the two Land-Rovers could not pull it out.

We had gone on to Mkuze at half past two in the morning of 18 June for help, and at 11.30 had returned to find the lorry at a perilous angle and Amber's horn knocked off. She had to keep moving to keep her balance in the crate. I looked into the crate and saw very little blood. Amber appeared to be in no pain. It was eighteen hours since she had been darted and she was still drugged.

Nick was clambering over the crate and I heard him mutter. His voice was choked when he called me.

'Look at her back,' he said emotionally.

The sacral hump was raw flesh. With the crate at an uneven angle, every time she moved she rubbed her spine. I called Toni. He had a look and said: 'It's not doing her any good staying in this position. The sooner we get her into the boma at Mkuze, the greater her chances of recovery.'

Flies had come from nowhere and were massed on Amber's wounds. Blood oozed on to the floor of the crate where it mingled with faeces and urine. The stench was getting worse.

John Clark had driven to Hluhluwe to phone John Kymdell, the Parks Board road maintenance officer. He was to bring his caterpillar road grader and lengths of towing cable.

Another two hours of watching Amber moving up and down rubbing her wound, was too much for me. Peter Potter and I drove down the road looking for a farmer who might be prepared to help. It was still overcast though not raining, the farm roads were difficult to traverse even in a Land-Rover. Peter knew John Hassard who lived on a nearby farm. He said he would bring his tractor and with this to help us we dragged the lorry out of the mud and into the middle of the road.

Within minutes we were on our way again. We were soon overtaken by the grader. For safety's sake, we tied a towline

from the lorry to the grader and kept going. It was dark by the time we reached the entrance to Mkuze Game Reserve. The road deteriorated. The grader moved forward slowly, its huge tyres scattering mud into the air.

Impala stood in groups under the trees and wildebeest snorted in alarm at the long convoy. A jackal then a hyena crossed the road, their eyes brightly reflecting the headlights. Half an hour later we drew up in front of Singie Denyer's house. He emotionally shook our hands, saying how pleased he was to have the rhino. But we still had a long way to go to the bomas.

Singie got into the Land-Rover with us. We started singing the old, nostalgic war songs. John Page and Toni led us with their fine voices, and the songs we did not know we hummed. Then as suddenly as the singing had started, it stopped, and we grew quiet. The windscreen wipers buzzed and the rain slashed down on the cab. Singie began to sing again, but no one took up the refrain.

'What's the matter with you chaps?' he groused.

'We're tired Singie,' someone answered.

We waited while John Kymdell, who was driving with no cover except an old Parks Board hat and a weathered raincoat, reversed and manoeuvred to free the grader, then we drove through the bush to escape the sticky mud.

At ten o'clock we reached the bomas. A hole had been dug for the lorry so that the deck would be level with the boma. Arthur backed up and the lorry simply slid down. We all climbed out reluctantly, shivering in our wet clothes. Thunder crashed and the Lebombo mountains were lit by lightning.

'*Kom kêrels, kom!*' I shouted. 'John Clark, get the rollers off!'

Always willing and apparently never tired, John ran up to the lorry and organized the fresh Mkuze labour. In ten minutes we were all soaked to the skin. I noticed John Page standing shivering in the lee of the lorry. His face was blue with cold.

'Where's your coat?' I asked.

'Somebody's whipped it,' he said with chattering teeth. I

saw a ranger beat a hasty retreat and start pulling on some ropes.

It took us two hours to get the crate off the back of the lorry. With no winch and inadequate rollers – the gaps were too wide – we had to manhandle everything. And the back of the lorry was higher than the ground. It was a frightful struggle to get the crate to the door of the boma. Everything that could possibly go wrong had gone wrong from the beginning and our morale was low. If anyone had told us that all this was valuable experience which would enable us to catch a hundred white rhino in two years, we would not have believed it.

When we had pushed the crate the last few inches to the boma gate, we made sure Amber would not escape by tying the crate to the gate poles. At last we were ready and with much grousing and spanner twisting we undid the bolts, the crate door was yanked up and we stood clear expecting Amber to charge out. But she stood quietly in the back of the crate and refused to move. We tried everything to get her out, but nothing worked.

An hour later we left her, in the crate. This was the final slap in our wet and muddy faces, but tragedy was still to come. The forty-four gallon drum in the boma had not been sunk deeply enough into the ground, and in the early morning when she staggered out, she cut her leg to the bone.

We drove back to Mantuma, the reserve headquarters, in a daze, dried our soaking clothes before a fire in Dawn Denyer's kitchen and collapsed for an hour's sleep.

At first light, we collected the lorry from the boma and returned to Umfolozi Game Reserve. Nick and I shared the driving while Toni slept sitting up. The Land-Rover lurched all over the road as we put our heads out to keep ourselves awake. I drove the final stretch and woke Nick outside John Kinloch's office. He staggered off for food and a change of clothing.

The following day we altered the crate. John Clark sawed an inspection hole for easy access to the rhino. We washed the congealed blood and faeces of Amber out – I was sickened by the bits of flesh on the wood where she had rubbed her back.

In the afternoon we had news that she was lying down in the boma oblivious of the mud and water. The wound on her leg was looking worse and she had not defecated all day, but Toni was more disturbed when I told him she had not had a drink either.

'Her inability to stand has probably got a lot to do with it,' he said.

Early the following day, we captured Charlie, a young bull, and by eleven o'clock that night he was in the boma next to Amber in Mkuze Game Reserve.

Toni examined Amber who still had not taken water or defecated. She had spent the whole day on her side, unable to move, her breathing laboured. Her wounds were smelling badly. Moving round in the boma up to the ankles in mud with only torches and a hurricane lamp for light, hindered treatment.

'We have got to get her up on to her feet, or she will die,' Toni said.

We floundered in the mud, pushing and rocking Amber to try to make her stand. Every time she moved we legged it for the boma walls and climbed up like monkeys. We knew we could expect no mercy from her.

Nothing we did could get her up. Her squeals of pain were heartrending, but nothing we did worked.

'There is only one thing to do,' Toni said. 'We must get ropes under her belly, tie them to the tree, and pull her up. There is no other way.'

John Clark at once took a rope, flopped on to his belly in the mud, and pushed it through. Amber made an immense effort and got on to her belly, but she could not stand. John persisted until the rope was through. We passed two more under the front and the back legs, tied the ropes to an overhanging *Acacia mossambicensis* and with everyone pulling, we got her up. She bellowed in pain – the rush of blood to the wounds must have been agonizing.

Toni could now get at her wounds, clean them and fill them with antibiotics. I had to turn away from the leg wound where the flesh hung in rotting strips. There was a severe laceration under her jaw and her bottom lip was cut too.

Her stomach was swollen by intestinal gases. The hours in the crate and the foul weather conditions had left their mark. There was little else we could do except ask Singie Denyer to replace the ropes with slings of wildebeest hide in the morning.

We had news of Amber the next day. The wildebeest hide slings had not been a success. They stretched in the damp and their smell attracted blow flies. They had rubbed her skin and the abrasions were turning septic. She had been given Prostigmin as a purgative, but had violently thrown her head from side to side. Part of the boma had to be pulled down so she could not injure herself. But she had been given twenty gallons of water with a garden hose and had sucked the tube.

'That at least is good news,' Toni commented.

But Singie Denyer said her condition was weakening all the time.

It poured with rain again on 24 June. I got through to Norman Deane at Hluhluwe Game Reserve on the phone, an achievement in itself as it was a party line loud with mission hospitals, storekeepers and loquacious Zulus interrupting. I asked him to go to Mkuze to see how Amber was getting on. She was much on our conscience and we worried about her constantly.

Norman phoned later with a dismal report. 'It was raining cats and dogs when I got to the bomas,' he said. 'That poor animal has had one hell of a time. I had to get all of Mkuze's labour force to turn her on to her right side so I could examine her injuries. The wound on her leg is far worse – it's as big as a saucer now, if not bigger. There's another cut below this which is down to the nail and is rotten. The cut on her lower jaw is half an inch deep and there's another one on her lower lip.'

He was interrupted by a storekeeper arguing with the mission hospital about a patient. Norman asked severely if he didn't realize that a white rhino was much more important than any human being. There was a flabbergasted silence on the other end and Norman continued listing Amber's injuries.

'Her belly is an unhealthy white colour with several

hernias caused by grass in the intestines. She has only defecated once since we gave her the Prostigmin. There are pink raw bands left by the ropes and she has multiple bruises. It grips your guts to see all this and to hear her whimpering. She doesn't seem to mind human beings near her any more, which shows what condition she's in.'

I asked him what he thought we should do.

'I can only recommend that we shoot her, we can't continue to let her suffer like this. The rain is the last straw – that boma is a stinking mass of mud and there's no protection for her,' he replied.

Toni was sitting near me and I explained the position. He shrugged his shoulder.

'Norman's right. There's nothing we can do but put her out of her misery.'

Reluctantly I said to Norman, 'Tell Singie to shoot her.'

The old man would be terribly upset. This was his rhino, the first in a hundred years, and in his eyes an insurance against the threatened deproclamation of Mkuze Game Reserve. Amber had become a symbol of safety and now we had to tell him to shoot her. I felt desperately sad about it all. Singie couldn't bring himself to do it and sent a young ranger.

There was a depressing sequel to it. A few days later this ranger was told in Mkuze village how lucky he was to have the distinction of shooting a white rhino.

Chapter 12

Consolidation

WE caught our next rhino in the Cigqayana area of the Corridor. Sven Persson and Jimmy Anderson from the South African Tourist Corporation were with us to make a film of rhino capture.

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I walked down the eroded bed of the Mcacaso stream stripped to the waist in the heat. There was almost no wind, which made stalking difficult. Billy and his dam moved into thick bush. Vision was so poor I had to get seven paces away before being able to aim. I was about to fire when the cow roared loudly and made a rush at me. She had probably smelt the horses or thought I was a bull. As she charged I fired quickly at Billy, saw the dart go in, then fled. Billy ran, bumped against a tree and broke the dart needle. I climbed the hill and told Toni.

'Let's hang on a while, perhaps he got enough of the drug to knock him down,' Toni said.

We lay among the boulders at Itsheamabunu (Dutchmen's Rocks) and watched the rhino. They moved out into a clearing and began grazing, unconcerned by the earlier disturbance. On calm, windless days and nights it took a lot to disturb the rhino. Scent played so important a part in their lives that a man's scent on a windy day was like a physical blow to them.

Three quarters of an hour later, Toni gave me another dart. I banged the gun while creeping up to Billy – this must have set the dart off. When I fired there was a spray of drug and the dart missed. This was the last 10 c.c. projectile we had.

Toni made up a 5 c.c. dart and I shot Billy in the leg. Eighteen minutes later he was down. He only ran a hundred yards so the horsemen had an easy day. The cow ran off making that strange call peculiar to the white rhino. She circled and came back to the calf. She smelt it all over and became agitated when it wouldn't rise. One of the horsemen went near but she swung round and charged.

'Great, great,' I heard Sven Persson grunt as his camera whirred.

The presence of the cameraman had subtly changed the atmosphere of rhino capture. Hair was slicked back, and people seemed to be taking more chances. Willing hands were in evidence wherever the camera focused and everyone worked furiously while the camera churned. But within a week the glamour of being film stars quickly waned. The

continual re-takes irritated everyone. Sven Persson had become deeply interested in the whole capture but as soon as he approached with his huge Ariflex 35 mm camera slung across his chest, there was an exodus of rangers. Then we drove him to distraction by hamming it up unmercifully. 'You blady swines,' he shouted angrily in his Swedish-American accent, 'I hafn't efen got permission to make the film yet. You nearly get me killed and now you act like hams.'

The heavy camera slowed him down and twice he was nearly horned as we headed for the trees. But his film gradually took shape. In time, he became part of the rhino team, repaired vehicles, radios or guns – the only thing he would not do was ride a horse and carry his camera at the same time.

It was a beautiful, clear day, ideal for photography and Sven got some outstanding shots as Toni gave Billy the Lethidrone. Billy rose almost immediately and everybody clung to his tail as he moved off, but he flicked them off one by one. John Clark shouted for a rope. Nick slipped the halter off his horse and it was used with a stirrup leather to tie Billy's hind legs while a rope was being fetched. Billy stood after being tied and was easy to handle. He treated us as though we were a herd of rhino and grazed calmly while his statistics were noted. We guided him into the crate without any trouble. Toni gave him an injection of Largactil, a tranquillizer, and 3 mega units of procaine penicillin while we smeared his anus and the inside of his legs with tick grease. We loaded the crate on to a tip lorry and Norman Deane left with it for Mkuze Game Reserve.

An hour later he was back. Billy was dead. He had jammed his head in the corner and fought the crate until he died.

We were all depressed. Everything had gone so smoothly, but Toni softened the blow.

'There's no need to feel low,' he said. 'We can be glad that this drug is particularly suited for the translocation of rhinos. The way the animal goes down without struggling is so important. Also when it comes round it doesn't bang its head on the ground, doesn't hurt itself, is not excited and is very tractable. Usually the animals which come round from a

neuromuscular blocking agent suddenly become wild animals again and rush off or at you! These rhinos after being given the antidote are very easy to handle. There is also no pain, they don't even flinch when you put the ear tags in. They seem to have lost their dislike for human beings and don't mind the smell or the talking.'

Early the next morning I darted a young female rhino. The horsemen took off after it.

We waited half an hour but there was no sign of the horsemen. Toni and Norman Deane went round Ncebe hill by vehicle while I went with Maqubu as he tracked the rhino. I could see no tracks or signs but his short thickset body moved with an irregular rhythm through the trees and over the maze of game paths. He would hesitate for a moment, retrace his steps ignoring me and my questions, grunt and move on again speaking softly to himself. We came into an open heavily grazed glade. Here the tracks were more obvious and Maqubu began jogging, his head darting from left to right following signs I could not even see. A rhino path wider than usual, began at the end of the glade and wound past the eastern foot of Ncebe hill. The spoor was much clearer here. Maqubu increased speed and looked further ahead instead of at his feet. The path forked, Maqubu turned left. He ran fast downhill, stopped, and pointed to the opposite slope.

'*Nango* – there,' he said.

Owen was leading a white rhino calf up the hill by its small front horn.

'*Hau*, this doctor,' Maqubu said. 'This stuff that he has brought this time is *umthakathi kakhulu* – great witchcraft.'

Owen lead the young rhino which took small steps forward like a blind man walking to the edge of a cliff.

We crossed a stream bed. Maqubu pointed to flattened grass and blobs of mud and said the young rhino must have fallen into a pool we had skirted. Owen confirmed this when we caught up with him.

'She was staggering down the path and she stumbled into the pool,' he said. 'I managed to get her head above water

and gave her fifteen c.c. of antidote. But if she'd been another minute coming round I'd have had to drop her. Her head weighs a ton.'

We named her Babs. She was photographed and Owen rode her to demonstrate her docility under the drugs. Toni made many notes and looked very pleased.

'Curious, curious,' he said, suddenly looking serious.

'What's up?' I asked anxiously.

'Haven't you noticed she has a decided bias to the left?' Toni said.

'Yes,' I replied.

'Well, isn't this likely to get her into trouble in South Africa?' Toni laughed.

The lorry came jerking up the hill, its engine coughing spasmodically.

'We're taking a chance with that damned wreck,' Norman said, pointing to the lorry as it moved erratically over the veld.

Toni said he was concerned about the age of Babs. She seemed too young to be taken away from her mother.

'The lorry has no brakes and no starter, and if it stalls in any of the dongas we might have difficulty starting it again. Let's let the animal go and send the truck back to Hluhluwe for repairs,' Norman said in his blunt way.

I wanted to get as many rhino to Mkuze as we would while Toni was with us, but it was too much of a risk, especially after what had happened to Amber.

The question now was what would happen if we painted identifying marks on the young Babs.

'Being a painted lady will chase the boys away,' suggested John Clark.

Someone said heatedly that the cow would reject her calf then there was a chance of its starving to death. To stop an argument developing, I asked Maqubu.

'A calf is a calf and a mother is a mother: what difference will a little bit of paint make?' he said.

Babs was painted on the ears and forehead but we left two guards to observe the cow's reaction. She returned an hour later with a bull which prevented her from going near Babs.