

Excerpt From “The Half Fast Hunter” by Bill Yung

Cape Buffalo hunting has to be one of the highlights of all my hunting adventures. I was hunting in Tanzania in the Slough, an area famous for Cape Buffalo. The morning was crisp and we had not traveled far from the camp when we spotted the telltale signs where a herd of buffalo had crossed the road. We dismounted and took off on foot. The spore looked fresh and it looked like a sizeable herd had crossed the road in front of us. We took off walking at a rapid rate in pursuit. At first, the bush did not look so bad, but just as I was thinking that, the buffalo took a right turn down into the thick stuff. We dropped down into the first deep korongo and fought our way down the slope, through the tall grass and up the other side. The bottom of the korongo was filled with intertwined tall grass, bushes, trees, sticks and who knows what else. It was so damn thick down there that I am sure the sun had not seen the ground there in the past century.

We followed them for a couple of miles. The spore kept getting fresher and fresher. The trackers said we were now very close. After we descended the slope of the second Korongo and had clawed our way up the other side, even I knew we were close because I could hear the buffalo talking amongst themselves. Twiga and the other two trackers were as excited as three pups in heat. The cover was incredibly thick and only small lanes were open where we could walk. We could only see a few yards in front of us as we walked these narrow lanes. While I was stretching my neck trying to see over or through the elephant grass, the shortest tracker, Dominique, snapped his fingers to get our attention. He was looking at an old dugga boy with his head hidden in a bush. As the rest of us looked in the direction Dominique was pointing, and we all saw him – even me – he was only about twenty yards away. Twiga quickly set up the shooting sticks, and I assumed the position over the sticks, looking directly at this guy through the scope. Pierre, my PH hisses, “Shoot, shoot”. Just as I started to squeeze the trigger, he recalled that order and hissed, “Don’t shoot, don’t shoot.” This confused the hell out of me. I lifted up from the scope and turned towards him and said “What?” Apparently a bit too loud, because the expression on his face could have melted ice. He stuck his fingers over my mouth to shut me up. Actually he damn near stuck his fist down my throat, or at least he wanted to. My confusion came about because when he first told me to shoot, I had a very clear shot at the shoulder; and I could not begin to understand why he hissed the “Don’t shoot” command. The “What” comment meant to be understood as “You out of your damn mind? I have a clear shot.”

As we exchanged faces and the like, it gave Mr. Buffalo time to step farther into the bush, and then I had no shot at all. I will not tell you what I was thinking about then for small children may one day pick this book up and read it. Mr. Buffalo just stands there with his butt exposed for a couple of minutes. Then he turns to his right, exposing his head and left shoulder this time. He was slowly moving and Pierre once again hisses – “Shoot, shoot, shoot.” This time I hurried up and squeezed the trigger before he could change his mind again.

To my surprise, Pierre’s surprise, the trackers’ surprise and even the bull’s surprise, I suspect, I hit him solid. There was the boom of my 458 Lott rifle and quickly thereafter, a whack as the bullet slammed into his shoulder. If you are not used to a lot of heavy recoil, well, it is sort of like strapping a howitzer to your shoulder and squeezing the trigger. But with all the adrenaline in your system, you don’t feel a thing. At the shot he lurched upward. I saw his entire body shudder or ripple as the bullet’s impact was absorbed. I quickly racked a second round in the chamber, at least quickly for me; and Pierre grabbed the barrel and put it on his shoulder and said, “Hit him again.” I expected him to raise the barrel like he had done before, but I quickly got off the shot before he had a chance to. Believe it or not, I think the second shot hit as well, for I heard the same whack sound as before; and once again I could see the impact of the bullet. He wasn’t down yet and we still had to follow him in the thickest tangle of elephant grass and thorn bush I ever want to be in. Our visibility was only five to ten yards. We had a wounded buffalo hiding in that stuff and could only imagine the revenge he was planning.