

ROBBING a Honey Tree

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #16 —

We discovered the bee hive quite by accident, while putting the stalk on a zebra in the bed of a dry sand river. This dead tree was serving as our cover when we noticed the bees buzzing over our heads – coming and going from their hive. After shooting the zebra, a plan was made to come back and rob the honey tree – bringing along some plastic containers to hold the honey. Three days later we made it back and proceeded to execute our plan.



Working as a team, our trackers smoked the bees and cut open the tree.

It all starts with smoke, which has a calming effect on bees. My dad was a beekeeper, well part-time at least – more as a hobby, you might say. He always had a few beehives out behind the chicken yard, and sometimes on a couple of neighboring farms. Dad would pay my brother Jerry and I fifty cents for each

swarm we captured as the colonies were dividing in the summer. We also helped with harvesting the honey, which was an interesting process, and a lot of work. Yes, we got stung a bit, but the pain wasn't unbearable and didn't last long.

My dad made smoke by burning cotton rags, but in the bush the trackers just used sticks and grass. First, they built a fire on the ground, so the wind would carry the smoke to the hive. Then, they made up a wad of dry grass and secured in inside some greener grass. The greener grass served as a handle, and blowing through a hole in the dry grass provided a billowing effect. The



This honey tree was in the middle of a sand river. The circle marks the entrance to the bee hive.

trackers made up a second of the 'hand-held' smokers for me, so I could stand close by and observe.

Now it was simply a matter of smoking and hacking with a corn knife till we got to the hollow part of the log, where the bees stored the honey. The trackers reached into the log and pulled out the honeycomb, full of honey.

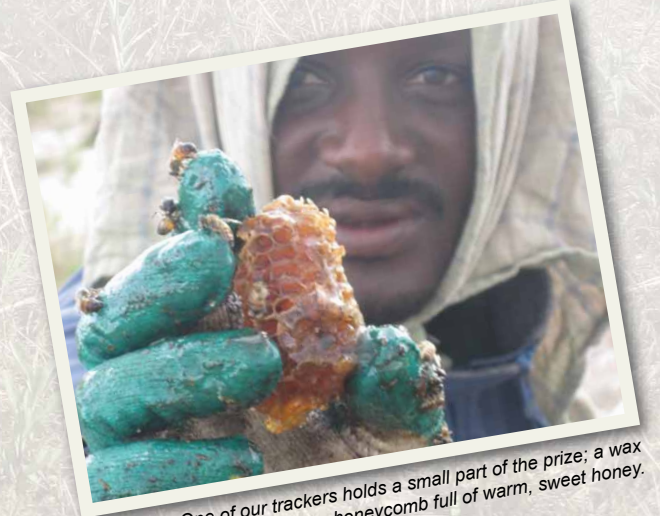
“... a plan was made...”

We ate our fill, chewing and sucking on the comb till all the honey was gone then spitting out the wax and getting another piece. What was left we took back to camp and shared. I do have to say that robbing honey trees is one of my pleasurable memories of hunting in Africa. This time, I got stung only once.

Midway USA

Larry Potterfield

Kibaoni Camp
Selous Game Reserve
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One of our trackers holds a small part of the prize: a wax honeycomb full of warm, sweet honey.