

Lions, Tigers, and Beers

Kate is off on a three night camp out as training for a possible Kilimanjaro attempt. At 19,500 feet, Kilimanjaro is not only the highest mountain on the continent, it is about 12,000 feet above the point at which most of us begin clamoring for air. Everyone I know who has attempted or accomplished the climb speaks of it tones of reverence and respect. Kilimanjaro is a very serious mountain, rising in solemn isolation from the heat of the Serengiti plains to its ostentatious and improbably snow crested peak.

The school offers students a graduated, self-paced, program that needs to be accomplished in order to earn a slot on the annual "Kili Climb". Kate has completed the initial tryout, which consists of an overnight in the school soccer field. The main exercises for that first one are communal cooking and the handling of tents and other essential supplies. I am expecting her back shortly from the second step, a long weekend of camping and hiking in the Morongoro mountains, three hours to the west of here.

With overtones of that ominous bumper sticker: "24 hours in a day, 24 beers in a case" coincidence? I think not! Kilimanjaro is also the name of our preferred local beer. And here, where the drinking age is apparently unspecified (I have yet to order a drink in public and not have the waiter assume Kate — at fourteen — was going to partake), Luke retrieved one all on his own in a personal first for the day (admittedly, not a great milestone as those things go, but it is a trick I have grown tired of trying to get Alike to do and I was perhaps overly encouraged when Luke did not give me Lika's "cocked head of confusion" at my request). Then again, it is possible that the young man would have been at less risk had he joined his sister on the Kili try-out (though he is not eligible to try until next year).

Which all brings to mind the article in yesterday's paper I quote from it here: **Headline: Tunduru Lions Strike Again.** The wave of attacks by lions on human beings in Tunduru District continued this week when the beasts killed and devoured a ten-year-old boy. Selemani Ali was attacked after coming out of his parents' house to answer the call of nature; the lions pounced on the student as he was walking to the toilet 20 meters from his house; the boys remains have not been found yet but the villagers saw the traces of his blood and the footprints left by the lions. It was the third time in under a month that the lions had devoured a human being in the district. The animals attacked a man as he was chopping wood earlier this month and only his skeleton was discovered after the beasts ate the rest of his body.

Here, "the ghost and the darkness" remains very much alive. While the article ends with the note that "game wardens have cautioned Tunduru residents against venturing out in the dark alone", it does not repeat the story of the man whose wife was killed a couple of months ago. He chased the lions away after they killed his wife but then had the stoic bravery to lure them back and kill them — although to do it he had to use the remnants of their fresh kill as his gruesome lure. Man-eaters, they say, must never be let get away.

Got to run. Kate has just walked through the door – filthy, but inspired to do more. StatCounter - Free Web Tracker and Counter