Day 1

This is our 2015 Meat hunt for the Lesotho orphans. I got in bed the night before at 3:15 am, so needless to say, I wasn't gun hole about getting up before daylight. I did however get up in time to see the sun rise to a campfire the camp cook had started for us, Sidney. After several cups of coffee, we were in the jeep and on our first hunt of the week. I can't tell you how many animals we saw within the first hour. But I can tell you that we saw, kudu, wart hog, bles buck, impala, nyala, red hartebeest, blue wildebeest and duiker. We also saw common reed buck, zebra and mountain reed buck all within the first hour.
We were hunting a specific old mature impala that was a cull buck that had massive horns but narrow and short. Izak wanted him out off the gene pool. After glassing the umteenth herd of impala, our guide, Benton, located the ram we were after. The wind was perfect so all we had to do was stalk closer and get in position for a shot. After a short stalk we were close enough but the ram was hidden in the brush. He had a harem of females with him so it was just a matter of time before he showed himself clearly. Sure enough he stepped in the open well enough to take a shot. Only problem was there were too many females in front and behind him, after what seemed like two days, there was a clear shot and Jim took it. Jim's first African animal, an old mature impala. We got back to camp to discover that Andrew had also killed his first African animal and it too was an impala.
Day 2
I kept waking up every two hours thinking I had over slept. I don't know what it is some nights that make me do that? But anyway I was up well before daylight today. After my 8th cup of coffee, I was ready to go. I had the caffeine shakes, but I was ready. Not 30 minutes into our jeep drive, we spotted a lone broken horn blue wildebeest. We had been looking for him since yesterday. He was an old bull and would be a great cull to take out of the herd. We put a stalk on him but he was too smart for us. He winded us and took off for greener pastures. We tracked after him. After only about three hundred yards, we spotted a group of wart hogs. Among the group was a huge male with very large tusks. It didn't take much persuading to convince Jim that the wart hog was too good to pass on. After about twenty-four minutes of waiting on a clear shot, the large male was finally presenting a clear shot. Benton told Jim it was ok to shoot and it was on. I suppose I had too much coffee along with the adrenalin rush, but I couldn't control my right leg. It started jumping so such that I couldn't hold the camera steady. Especially with the zoom as high as I had it. I backed off the zoom hoping that would help,
but it didn’t. The footage was so shaky it was worthless. Right before Jim shot, a female stepped in the way and saved my butt. I’m so thankful for that female. Another twenty minutes went by before Jim had another clear shot, and by this time my leg had quit shaking. I don’t know what the difference was, but now I’m zoomed in and rock steady. Jim pulled off the perfect shot and now African animal number two is in the salt. Jim is two for two on his shooting ability and I have the makings of a TV show in the works.

We came in for a quick drop off of the hog and right back out we went in hopes of seeing a trophy kudu. After not shooting a Trophy kudu, we came back to camp for lunch and found out that Andrew had shot two bles buck with one shot, by mistake, but none the less. And Carey had shot a trophy kudu, which they did not find. After lunch, we rounded up all the trackers and went in search for Carey’s kudu. The trackers and Carey’s PH and ANDREW all got on the blood, while Benton, Jim and I took to the mountain to glass the valleys in front of them. After about 2 hours of tracking, they ran a trophy kudu and nyala right through the bottom of the valley we were glassing. I tried as hard as I could to find blood on that kudu, but to no avail. It was not Carey’s wounded kudu. The blood took the trackers over the mountain and to a different valley, so we hiked back to the jeep and took off to another mountain with a vantage point to that valley. In about 15 minutes we spotted 4 kudu cows and behind them was 2 trophy bulls. We could see glimpses of the bulls in the valley through the brush but couldn’t see any blood. Finally they both stopped in an open area and we could see both their sides and there was no blood. We assumed that the trackers were tracking those bulls tracks and weren’t actually blood trailing the wounded one. Benton radioed Andrea to tell him. Andrea assured us they were on blood. We found both bulls with our binoculars again, and there just wasn’t any blood on them. We figured that the wounded bull must have passed through this valley earlier and it was coincidence that these two were walking the same trail. If that were the case, that meant the wounded bull had already come through here before we got set up here. So back to the jeep and over to the next mountain. Once in place we immediately spotted 3 cow kudu. There were also 3 blue wildebeest. But no wounded bull kudu. We started walking to the east down the ridge back toward the trackers. Once we had cut the distance in half, we heard a shot. That meant as a minimum, they saw the wounded kudu and at best, they put another bullet in him. We ran to the jeep and drove to yet another mountain with the correct vantage point just in time to see the wounded kudu running down the trail, away from the trackers, back the way we had all just come. We saw him dart into the brush line and disappear. Benton radioed Andrea and told him we had seen him run to. They all ran down the trail to within 50 yards of where we had last seen him. They raised their binoculars and through my binoculars, I could see Andrea pointing. I knew then he had
spotted the kudu. Within 5 minutes, the kudu had given them a clear shot and Andrea took it. Finally, Carey's kudu was down for good. WOW WAS IT A NICE ONE! :-) We took pictures and video as the sun was setting before we even got him loaded into the truck.

That night at dinner I learned there are two kinds of people who visit Africa. The ones who can see it all in one day and the ones who can't see it all, in a lifetime. I happen to be the later.

Day 3
Today we replenished the molasses blocks at all the blinds knowing soon I would be hunting in one of them. We did this...
all the while we were looking for Jim a blue wildebeest or a cull bles buck. At about 8:00am we spotted a large herd of bles buck. The herd was too large not to have a cull in it. We got out of the jeep and began our stalk. Once we got a good look at the herd, Benton picked out the cull buck he wanted Jim to take. He propped up the shooting sticks and Jim set the barrel of his 30:06 in the groove. He took off the safety and started taking deep breaths. Benton told him ok Jim take the shot. No sooner had he spoken those words than another bles buck stepped right in front of the cull buck. Benton whispered, no, no, don’t shoot. Jim put the safety back on. Benton removed the sticks and the stalk was back on. We moved another 100 yards to our right, I think that was southwest but I’m not really sure. In any case, I know it was to my right. That I’m sure of. Anyway, about 100 yards and they were grazing again in an open area. With the sticks back up and the barrel of Jim’s gun back in place, Benton began to glass for that cull buck again. In about 27 nano seconds, Benton spotted the cull. About that same time, so did Jim. I barely got the camera zoomed on him when Benton said, take the shot. Then another bles buck stepped in the way only this time it was a female. Then the cull moved right and the female left and Benton said shoot. Ten seconds later, there was a shot. Not just a shot, but a perfect shot. The cull buck, bucked in the air hit the ground and tumbled head over heels. Another great shot. From that point on I started calling Jim, one shot Jim. Back at camp with Jim’s third animal by 9 am. Another one in the salt.

Back out after Mr. blue wildebeest. The day before, we had spotted a lone old bull but wasn’t sure it was a cull. Benton wanted to head back to the top of that mountain again to take another look. Once we drove the jeep almost to the top, Benton stopped the jeep and checked the wind. We got off the jeep and circled back down and to our left. Once the wind was right, we headed ever so cautiously in the direction we believed the beast to be. After only about 15 minutes of stalking, Benton saw the lone bull. He was grazing all alone about 200 yards in front of us. Benton set up the shooting sticks and in went the 30:06 gun barrel. About the time I got zoomed in and focused, Benton realized there was a huge rock blocking his vitals from Jim’s view. Up with the sticks and 50 yards closer we went. Heads ducked down of coarse. Sticks back up, rifle in place, camera zoomed in and focused. Everything was perfect and no other animals anywhere in sight to mess this one up. Benton says, take the shot and then, kaboom. He did. The beast kicked and bucked, ran about a hundred yards and toppled over. ONE SHOT JIM I CALL HIM! :-) After video follow up and pictures, we had to use the winch to get the beast on the jeep. I know Jim didn’t mind. And talk about food. This will feed Lesotho orphans for months. 😊
Back to camp for lunch and to make a plan. We decided that tomorrow we would go to another concession to take Jim's kudu, so this afternoon, it is my turn to hunt zebra with my bow. I knew just the right blind I wanted to hunt. By 3:00 pm we were all set up and ready to let one fly. A perfect blind where I was well hid. First, vervet monkeys came out. Then a nice cull ram impala. We were quite entertain for over 2 hours. Jim was with me filming. As I write this just now, it's 5:00 pm with only about 45 minutes of shooting light left. I sit here hoping the herd of zebra will come in as I'm watching the cull ram impala having a feast on the molasses block. About 5:15 the ram bolted off like something spooked him. Since we knew we hadn't scared him, we were hopeful that the zebra had. Then a monkey came running by and we knew something was about to happen. Why is it every time something is about to happen, I have to take a leak? Lol. I'm holding this one till it hurts. Finally, after about 30 more minutes, nothing came in and I had to go. Lucky for me, I had brought a large pee bottle. After relieving myself, I was back to hunting and wishing for zebra. Finally we got a look at what had scared off the other animals. It was a nyala. An adolescent nyala. He came in, got a couple bites of the block and went about his business. It's now 5:30 and I have 15 minutes of shooting light left. It's looking grim for me tonight :( . Wait I hear a bark of a baboon. I hear it again and its closer. 14 minutes of daylight left and I hear him again, even closer. You are wondering about now if I plan to shoot this baboon. Let me quickly put your mind at ease. Your darn tooting I am, if he keeps getting closer. It's now 5:40 and only five minutes of shooting light left, so you can breath a little easier. Doesn't look as though it's going to happen tonight. Although, I can still hear the baboon but now he's further away. It's now 6:15, 30
minutes after dark and I can hear Benton's truck in the distance. I guess I'll start packing my gear getting ready to start over again at first light. My mistake, it wasn't Benton, it was Andrea who picked me up. Andrew shot a blue wildebeest early and that freed Andrea so he could pick us up.

Day 4
I'm having a terrible time at night. Haven't gotten over the jet lag. I sleep for two hours, then I'm wide awake. Eventually I fall back to sleep but only for a couple of hours at a time. But last night, I woke after two hours and never feel back asleep. It was a long night. I'm in the blind now trying for a zebra. After this hunt, I plan to stalk that huge wart hog I saw yesterday. I spotted him in the same spot two days in a row now. He had probably 12 inch tusks. In any case, the sun is coming up as I sit here in this blind waiting for that weary zebra. By 7:45 I have had lots and lots of impala but by 8:05 I saw a herd of zebra in the reflection of the glass in the window and they were headed my way. I quickly started all three cameras as well as my voice recorder. I had some trouble getting the GoPro camera to cut on in the video mode. It kept taking pictures instead of running video. By the time I finally got the video rolling on it, the zebra where at the blind. There was about 8 of them and I was having trouble determining which one was a stallion. After about ten minutes, I had come to the conclusion that they were all female. By this time they were all bunched around the salt block. There was one of the 8 that seemed more nervous than the others. It was the third largest of the group. I glassed the biggest and then the second biggest, to make sure their genitals were consistent to being a mare.
After I positively identified them as females, I tried to glass the third largest. It stayed in the middle of the group and always had another zebra between me and him. Yes, I said him. When I finally did get a good look, he had an extra part. At the moment, it was about 4 inches extra. He kept leaving and coming back. If he eased away, the others would stay, but if he ran away, they ran with him. Then they would all stand and look at the salt block for what seem like hours. When he would start toward the salt and cautiously get about half way, the others would come on in and overtake him. Then he would ease in after them but always having at least one mare between him and me. We played this game for over an hour. Then some vervet monkeys came to the salt. It ran all the zebra off but not too far. After thinking about it for a little bit, it was like the stallion was afraid the monkeys were going to eat all the salt block or his manhood was being challenged. That was probably the case cause that extra part was now almost 2 foot extra. No questions it was a stallion. Whatever the case was, it made the stallion more eager to get back to it. This time he actually got there first, broadside, head down. I zoomed in and centered the closest camera to me, to make sure I had a close up tight shot of the stallion. I attached my release to the loop on my string. By the time I drew my bow, a mare had come in. As luck would have it, fortunately for me, she went to the other side of the stallion. She was still in the way of my shot should I get a pass through. Then she brought her hips further around to my left, keeping her head in a pivoting spot on the salt, just enough to get her whole body out of harms way. At full draw, I now have the green light and released the string. I watched the lumenok on the end of my arrow as it hit the sweet spot right behind the shoulder. The stallion ran 50 yards and fell over. All the mares got out of dodge. I radioed Benton and we filmed the recovery and took some pictures. We took the zebra to the skinning shed to be butcher. We got over 600 pounds of processed meat for the Lesotho orphans.

The evening hunt, we passed a large wart hog that we had seen twice the previous day. Pretty much in the same spot all three times. I wanted a trophy wart hog, that is an animal on my wish list. We drove past, got the wind right and planned the stalk. The hog made his own plan. After an hour stalk, turns out the hog's plan was better than ours. No bacon tonight. We left and finished out the daylight looking for a trophy kudu for Jim. That happens to be the last animal on his list. 15 minutes from too dark to shoot, we spotted a trophy kudu that Jim had seen that morning while I was hunting zebra. During that hunt, the kudu only gave Jim a frontal shot and Benton wouldn't let Jim shoot. Now he stands half way up a mountain and was looking at us. We made a stalk in his direction closing the distance to 200 yards. Benton put up the shooting sticks and Jim set the rifle barrel on them. The kudu is still facing us and again Benton tells him to wait. Ten seconds after he says wait, the kudu turns right, to our left, and stops, broadside. Benton says, take him! Jim squeezes the trigger. Snap, a misfire. Jim calmly pulls the bolt back, ejects the not spent cartridge, bolts a new one and takes aim. Before Jim can lock on his vitals, the kudu steps into the brush. We stalked further up the mountain when, Jacob, our tracker, saw the kudu bolt out the other side of the brush and down the back side of the mountain. Too dark now to do anything but head back to camp.
Day 5
We are after two different quarries today, trophy kudu and a large male wart hog. Both animals had been seen pretty much in the same area. While riding safari style looking for kudu, Benton and Jacob spotted my wart hog. We drove past him and started our stalk back to him. Problem was, the wind was wrong. After trying to circle and get the wind right, we were within sight of the hog. The thing is though, the wind was still wrong. The hog winded us and ran off. We had spent another hour of our time stalking and educating this hog. Now on to try and find Jim's kudu. We looked until lunch, about four hours. Although we spotted several kudu, none were old enough. At lunch, we made a plan. We went to the area where the hog lived and popped up my double bull blind. Then we poured corn out in front of it. I climbed in it at 2:00 pm and Jim and Benton went looking for his kudu. I sat in the blind from 2 to 6 & all I saw was some impala. But right at dark, I saw a hog about 100 yards in front of me. He stood ther until Benton came to pick me up. Turns out that Izak didn't know our plan and had some workers put corn on the road 100 yards in front of me. The hog outsmarted me again.

Day 6
Today I leave for Zimbabwe. The new camp there that we are driving to is a 26 hour drive. We plan to drive 1/3 of the way today and finish the drive Saturday and Sunday. So I got up early this morning to try my luck again on Mr. wart, hog that is. In the blind at daylight. Benton forgot the corn. I settled into the blind, while he went back to camp for the corn. All the corn he put out yesterday is gone. He was back in record time and put the corn right where I ask him to. At 6:53am, banana teeth showed himself. As he took his time creeping toward the corn, I was busy turning on 3 cameras and a potable Mic. At 7:05 he was eating the corn. I finally got all the cameras just right and I picked up my bow. 15 seconds later we're having bacon for breakfast, LOL :)

Now I have a 26 hour drive to Zimbabwe. We will stop in Pretoria for the night and start another long day of travels tomorrow.