

When Lions Roar BOOK EXCERPT

‡ I marveled at just how intricate and necessary and intertwined we all are, how none of us get out of this alive, how dependent we are on one another even if we don't want to be, and all the magical things that happen in between. It made me weep. It was all so moving. When we returned to camp, a celebration was in the air. Although many different people had come and gone from the camp during the time that we were there, no one had seen a leopard until tonight, and that certainly called for a celebration.

‡ I began again, and my voice found me. As I started to share more about Hannah, I pulled on my robe and joined Akilah on the undersized sofa. Before I knew it, we were both laughing at the silly and wonderful things our daughters do. We've lived half a world apart, and yet the love and admiration for these exquisite young beings and our experiences as mothers were the same. The tears were still flowing, but they were tears of remembrance, tears of release, and tears of pure, untainted love.

If anyone saw us sitting there, they would think we were lifelong friends sharing a cup of tea and our deepest truths. I was beyond grateful for Akilah. I took her hands in mine and told her so.

‡ Raw the next morning, the euphoria of freedom had depleted most of my reserves. I did feel lighter somehow; I think it was the first morning I didn't curse God for keeping me alive. I still hurt, and there most definitely remained a huge space of emptiness and sorrow where Hannah should be. I couldn't imagine myself going home now. I couldn't leave until I knew for sure what had become of my sweet Hannah—an easy position for me to take, as there was nothing waiting for me at home. Plenty of money existed in my investment accounts for me to stay as long as I liked. The dazzling African landscape, with its equally captivating people and animals, was a balm for my soul, a reason to go on, a reason to heal myself back to whole.