

West with the Night

By Beryl Markham [1942]

She was a bush pilot in East Africa in the 30's. Flying for hours without even seeing a spiral of smoke on the horizon [sign of man] causes sleepiness. The wildebeest is the least graceful animal when frightened [a plane flying over]. A pilot must not ignore his hunches. She looked for days until she found a fellow pilot who had to make an emergency landing in the middle of nowhere.

As a child she was attacked by a neighbor's lion [they raised him from a cub & thought he was tame]. He jumped her from behind & bit her leg, but others rescued her & the lion shot. Her & her dad moved to East Africa when she was young. He bought two steam engines to power a grist mill & two more for a sawmill. Then he raised thoroughbred horses. One night a leopard drug off her dog, but let it go after realizing it fought back. She learned to hunt from the local natives.

Most horses are born at night. One day her dad gave her a horse named Pegasus. Her dad signed a contract to deliver hundreds of tons of flour before a drought came & he lost everything. He left for Peru, but she was old enough & stayed in Africa training other's horses. She trained one that no one believed in, but set a track record. Her dad later returns to Africa.

In Swahili, 'hodi' means I am here, am I welcome? The response 'kaaribu' means come – you are welcome. British East Africa became Kenya in 1920. Lake Nakuru had millions of flamingos. Her friend taught her to fly a plane. There are down-drafts near mountains. Lions & elephants roar louder than you can imagine. She could scout for game from her plane. Mid flight the 1st fuel tank emptied at 2000' & she drops to 100' above the water before the engine comes back to life. The air intake froze & she crash landed in Nova Scotia.

1936 she flew to London & stopped in Khartoum, Luxor, Cairo, Benghazi, Tobruk, Tripoli, Tunis, Sadrinia, Cannes, Corsica & Paris. She was delayed by the Italians thinking she was a spy. There are miles of swamps in Sudd & then desert in Egypt. Then she was the first to fly solo non-stop from London across the Atlantic [wind is against you]. Flying west in the night.

Quotes:

"Talk lives in a man's head, but sometimes it is very lonely because in the heads of some men there is nothing to keep it company – and so talk goes out through the lips." (Arab Kosky)
"Silence is never so impenetrable as when the whisper of steel on paper strives to pierce it." "If a man has any greatness in him, it comes to light, not in one flamboyant hour, but in the ledger of his daily work." "He's a stallion, and the male ego kindles a courage that smothers the pain of his burning muscles." "I spend so much time alone that silence becomes a habit." "You can live a lifetime and, at the end of it, know more about other people than you do about yourself."
(Beryl Markham)

"Life is life and fun is fun, but it's all so quiet when the goldfish dies."

Definitions:

69	posho	cornmeal porridge
70	mahogo	coconut sauce
70	syces	horse stableman
72	escarpment	steep slope
73	reimpie	woven seat
89	lithe	limber
90	plebeian	commoner
99	hinterland	back country
108	nirvana	perfect happiness
109	sorrel	horse with a red-brown coat
111	abdicated	abandon
115	alchemy	chemistry
117	Abyssinia	Ethiopia
118	agog	eager
119	jinn	spirit
124	ebbs	recede
165	martingale	reins of a horse
167	incongruously	out of place
168	Mandalay	an old song
169	vacuously	foolish
178	acolytes	assistant
178	mullah	Muslim educated in Islamic theology
180	veldt	open grassland
180	euphemism	polite term
181	bier	a frame that carries the coffin to the grave
189	strabismus	abnormal alignment of the eyes
191	premonitory	predicts something to come
192	pedantic	dogmatic
192	misanthropic	antisocial
192	foibles	flaw
192	Voltarian	radical
208	credulity	gullible
208	snickersnee	knife
209	whit	trace
209	frond	leaf
209	terai	wide brimmed hat
209	barrel staves	curved wood boards of a barrel
212	anomalous	abnormal
212	conspicuous	clearly visible
212	ethereal	delicate
213	reconnoitre	military survey
219	posthumously	after death
219	propitious	favorable
228	gesticulated	gestures
229	longeron	longitudinal frame of a plane
229	sloop	small sail boat
238	spoor	animal scent
241	incorrigibly	uncontrollable

243	quintessence	ideal
245	malevolent	hostile
245	posterity	future generations
246	ignoble	despicable
246	brigandage	robbers
248	Morpheus	god of dreams
251	equidistant	half-way
251	dormouse	agile rodent
252	inscrutable	unexplainable
256	recumbent	lying down
256	vicissitudes	change
256	lachrymose	tearful
256	doughty	determined
257	maledictions	curse
267	laconic	brief
269	sordid	shameful
271	derelict	neglectful
271	indignant	offended
275	nomenclature	list of names
277	enigmatic	mysterious