

By Gareth Patterson

She stared around her with confused, amber eyes. The lioness, sleek and beautiful, had just been separated from her three young cubs. They stood calling their mother, divided from her by a tall, electrified wire fence.

Try to imagine that you have been separated from your children and are about to be shot, execution style.

What you feel was mirrored in those amber eyes.

Later, an impala carcass was used in an attempt to lure the lioness away from the fence, and away from her cubs. She followed the lure almost reluctantly, despite having been starved for the previous two days. She was a mother, and she turned back to be with her young ones.

The lioness walked alongside the fence, calling to the cubs. They, clearly as confused as she, called back.

Then she saw men approaching in a vehicle. She stared at them, without aggression, though with eyes that spoke of disbelief at the inconceivability of the situation, of being close to her cubs, yet apart.

She moved a short distance away from the fence, then turned back to her cubs. She stepped towards them.

A thunderous crash violated the gentle sounds of the bush. She spun crazily, high in the air, and tumbled on to the electric fence.

The wires bit at her, shocking her body and she shuddered down on to the ground, where young eyes witnessed a mother's murder.

The cubs fled. The last sound the lioness heard was the second crash. Then everything turned black. . .

Her death was a shocking testimony to the monster which greed and self-hatred make of some men.

The professional hunter and his German client approached the crumbled, lifeless form of the lioness. The client, typical of his kind, crouched next to the dead lioness, demonstrating the perversity of his sport by admiring and patting that which he had just destroyed.

He opened her jaws and turned his hypocritical face to the cameras. Shutters clicked.

Later, the lioness was taken to the skinning shed. There the trackers worked with skill as they removed her coat, the first stage of the process of her later transformation by taxidermists into a "trophy."

On the floor, as they worked, the mother's milk spilt from her teats and mingled with her blood.