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**Cry of the
Kalihari**



Cry of the
KALAHARI



MARK *and* DELIA OWENS



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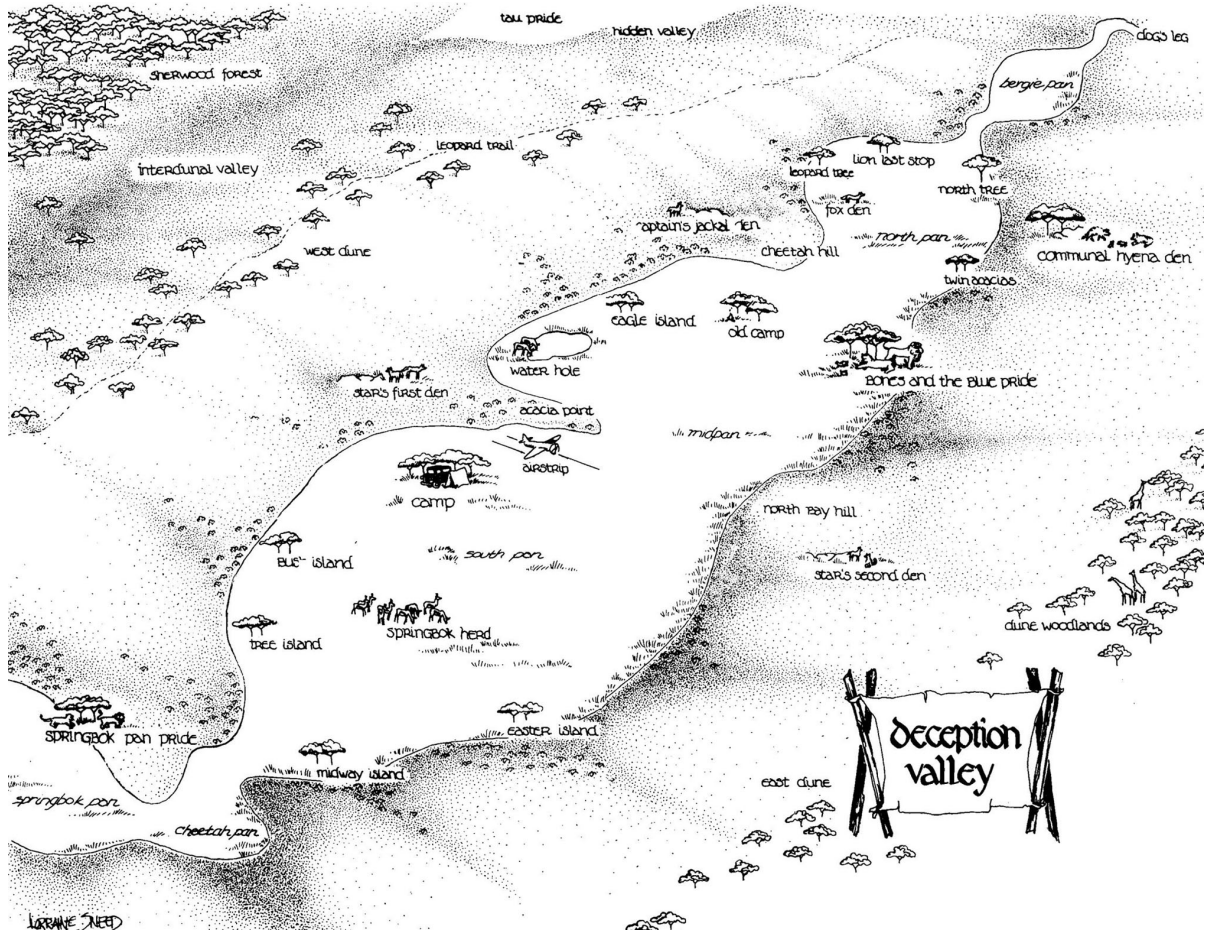
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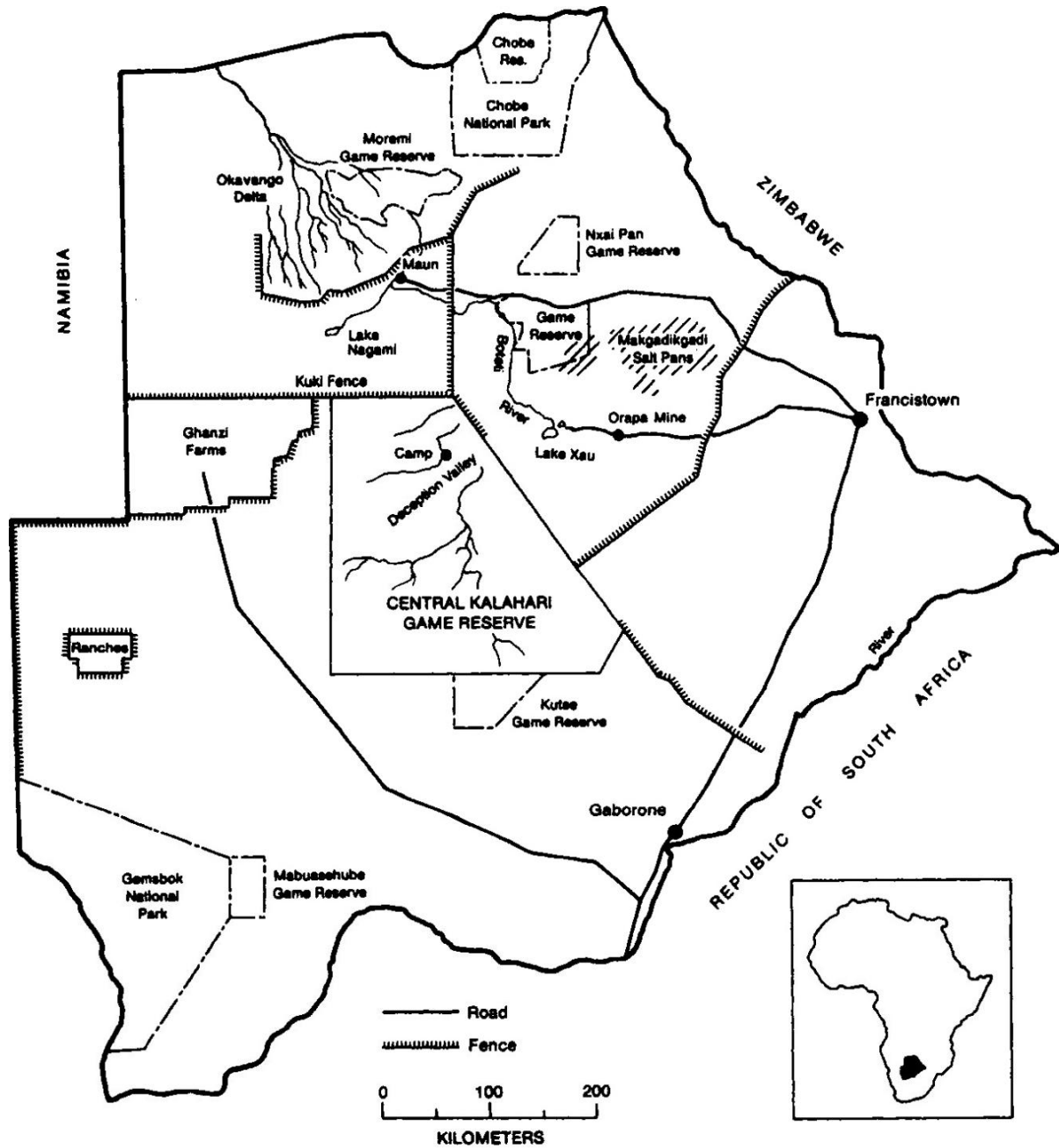
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We dedicate this book to
Dr. Richard Faust
and to
Ingrid Koberstein
of the Frankfurt Zoological Society
for all they have done for the animals
of this earth.

And to Christopher, who could not be with us.





THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

Prologue

Mark

MY LEFT SHOULDER and hip ached from the hard ground. I rolled to my right side, squirming around on grass clumps and pebbles, but could not get comfortable. Huddled deep inside my sleeping bag against the chill of dawn, I tried to catch a few more minutes of sleep.

We had driven north along the valley the evening before, trying to home on the roars of a lion pride. But by three o'clock in the morning they had stopped calling and presumably had made a kill. Without their voices to guide us, we hadn't been able to find them and had gone to sleep on the ground next to a hedge of bush in a small grassy clearing. Now, like two large army worms, our nylon sleeping bags glistened with dew in the morning sun.

Aaoouu—a soft groan startled me. I slowly lifted my head and peered over my feet. My breath caught. It was a very big lioness—more than 300 pounds—but from ground level she looked even larger. She was moving toward us from about five yards away, her head swinging from side to side and the black tuft on her tail twitching deliberately. I clenched a tuft of grass, held on tight, and froze. The lioness came closer, her broad paws lifting and falling in perfect rhythm, jewels of moisture clinging to her coarse whiskers, her deep-amber eyes looking straight at me. I wanted to wake up Delia, but I was afraid to move.

When she reached the foot of our sleeping bags, the lioness turned slightly. “Delia! S-s-s-h-h-h—wake up! The lions are here!”

Delia's head came up slowly and her eyes grew wide. The long body of the cat, more than nine feet of her from nose to tuft, padded past our feet to a bush ten feet away. Then Delia gripped my arm and quietly pointed to our right. Turning my head just slightly, I saw another lioness four yards away, on the other side of the bush next to us . . . then another . . . and another. The entire Blue Pride, nine in all, surrounded us, nearly all of them asleep. We were quite literally in bed with a pride of wild Kalahari lions.

Like an overgrown house cat, Blue was on her back, her eyes closed, hind legs sticking out from her furry white belly, her forepaws folded over