

Colours burst and Elephants roar

a mini-collection



Alicia Hayden

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For Jacob,
thank you for Zimbabwe.

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Colours burst (and elephants roar)

Opening act

6am, the sun shakes itself awake
Cobwebs dancing off into an orange-tinted sky,
Just like clockwork, they erupt, a cacophonous choir –
A series of rapturous 'hello' and tuneful 'goodbye'.

Voices turned to maximum volume,
Pumping out scales and glissandos at the top of their lungs
'Did you know we survived the night?'
'Darling, would you like to have some fun?'

They call for food, for sex, for home,
They sing because they can!
The sun cannot compete with them,
It couldn't even if it sang.



The Falls

Thunderous

Is an understatement.

Their enormity

Is titanic.

Spray like jewels

Noise like horses of heaven

Stampeding through rains of
hell.

Macaques eat flowers in peace

Undisturbed by endless

spray,

Soft winds blowing bubbles

of water

Which burst on clothes and soak

us through.

A rumbling — like cars on a motorway

Except crisp and fresh — loud and louder,

A sound of beauty, not destruction.



Koko

She is so peaceful.

Her eyes are kind, aglow with empathy.

'They relate better to humans, the old ones', we are told,

Wise matriarchs, they understand the ebb and flow

Which come with life.

She weaves her trunk towards my shoes,

A smile bubbles up within – her curiosity sparks mine.

Does she see how time envelopes us, the trees that surround us,

Does she know how we are tied to this earth,

Bound, like pebbles to the shore.



Koko is one of the beautiful matriarch elephants at the Wild Horizons Elephant Sanctuary, Victoria Falls. She and Jock are two of Tich's favourite elephants, and while filming for 'Legacy', he told us about how they relate better to humans. His words, and my interaction with Koko while we were filming at the sanctuary, inspired this poem.

Stars



And while monkeys sleep,
Trees leaves fluttering,
Moonlight blushing down (shy, hesitant,
Then confident – almost outshining the sun).

Elephants turn their eyes to the skies,
Sands curling at their toes,
And stars glisten –
Sparkling; doors to the whole solar system.

I, the Gecko

While they sleep, I watch them go,

Tip, toe, tip, toe,

Over the beam, they sleep below,

Tip, toe, tip, toe,

I lick my lips, I spy – mosquito,

Tip, toe, tip, toe,

Delicious. A reward for I, the gecko.



Yellow No. 4 – Paint

For Tich

Golden sparks fly fast,
A blur of movement, splatter,
Can you see the splash?



Crescent moon



Crescent moon, you gleam, you glisten

Can you hear cicadas whisper?

Trees shake uncertainly in the evening breeze

And underfoot, blow autumn leaves.

Crescent moon, you shine so bright,

While elephants roar into the night,

A twirl of golden sand trails them home

Over trees and stones, they walk alone.

Crescent moon, in blushing sky,

You glow, a beacon in my eye,

Guide migrating birds to nests,

Your gentle light outshines the rest.

Ode to a Lemon Tree

Lemon tree, lemon tree,
How did you grow so tall?
Lemon tree, lemon tree,
Can you hear the baboons call?

Yellow fruit, yellow fruit,
I wish you taste so sweet
Yellow fruit, yellow fruit,
Drop to the ground, a drum beat.

Lemon tree, lemon tree,
I think I like you best,
Lemon tree, lemon tree,
Under your shady boughs I'll rest.



Racing / Goodbyes

Bags – packed

Taxi – here

Laces – tied

Running, we scamper

Out of the hostel

Out on the sand

Into the warmth

Waters – drank

Seatbelts – on

Ready – go.

Racing through

Dusty streets

Baboons shout

(Rowdy teens)



Pull - up

Get - out

Look -

around?

Not - here

Back - in

Where - to?

A new house

Lizards scamper

Desperation: 'have you seen him?'

'Let me talk to your driver.'

Confusion

Get - in

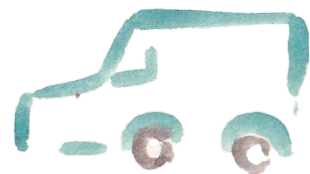
Hundred - yards

We see him!

Lazy butterflies flutter

Sweet goodbyes,

A lemon tree shade.



Colours burst

(and Elephants roar)

Sand.

Sand and dust, the colour of baking days,
Pinpricked with lemon-greens, sharp reds,
The mango-underside of a lizard
Scuttling (*they didn't see me, they didn't see me*).



A sharp blue flash – lightning strike –
The bird sings; staccato but melodic,
Hopping between gold-green trees,
Hiding behind spray and mist that is blue
But blushes pink.

Falls thunder,
A tree blocks a path, and we duck under.
Macaques giggle from the sidewalk,
Sheltered under hot green leaves, gossiping –
'Did you hear the baboons last night?'

An eggshell sky, fractured by plane lines,
A constant hum of cicadas, crickets, grasshoppers –
(*Find me! Come and find me – darling, dear!*)
Interweaving with the falls,
A coloured soundscape; a picture book filled in.

I said,

'Did you see the hornbills above our room last night?'

You looked to the falls, (a burst of colour),

And said,

'Did you hear the elephants roar?'



Acknowledgements

'Colours burst and Elephants roar' came to fruition because I was lucky enough to travel to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in May 2022, to produce a 12-minute film about Zimbabwean wildlife artist Tichaona Ncube, as part of my Master's in Wildlife Filmmaking at the University of the West of England (UWE), in partnership with the BBC Natural History Unit.

So, I would like to say a huge THANK YOU! to everyone who donated to my film fundraiser, and enabled me and Jacob to travel to Zimbabwe to produce my film – I was never expecting to produce a mini-collection about Victoria Falls, but it felt apt, so I hope you enjoy it!

It was also a nice little break from editing the film – which will be available to view online in 2023 – keep an eye on my social media channels and [website](#) for updates!

I am so grateful for the wonderful Tich for allowing me the privilege of telling his story, and for encouraging me to be bold with my own art. It has been a pleasure, and I can't wait to work with you again!

Thank you so much to everyone from Art of Africa and the Wild Horizons Elephant Sanctuary – particularly Kim Sparrow – who helped us meet the gorgeous ellies Tich paints, and was

integral in bringing the film together on the ground in Zimbabwe.

An elephant-sized thank you to Jacob for helping me out as a camera operator and assistant-producer in Zimbabwe; I couldn't have gone without you, and I hope this collection is a suitable thank you!

And, as always, thank you to my family – for always supporting me no matter what I do; and thank you to Will for always being there for me – no matter what's going on – I am eternally grateful.

Alicia xx



About The Watchman

“The Watchman” tells the story of Zimbabwean wildlife artist Tichaona Ncube, who uses art to educate local people about wildlife as an effective but passive conservation tool.

The film follows Alicia as she travels to Zimbabwe to meet Tich, and works with him to organise his first solo-exhibition within the local community of Victoria Falls.

Tich paints elephants from life, and the film explores how Tich fosters intimate relationships with the local wildlife – illustrated through an animated story of Tich and Sylvester the Cheetah – as well as how art is a family affair for the Ncube household.



About the Author

Alicia Hayden is a wildlife artist, writer, filmmaker, animator, and photographer from North Yorkshire, now based in Bristol.

She won the 'Human Impact' category in David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation's Wildlife Artist of the Year 2021 for her piece 'When the Whale Sang', and was awarded the inaugural Ingrid Beazley Award. Alicia hopes that by showcasing the beauty of the natural world, she will encourage more people to protect it.

'Colours burst and Elephants roar' is the seventh instalment in Alicia's series of free mini-collections exploring the beauty and mystery of our local spaces – however, unlike the previous instalments in the series, this one has an international twist!

If you enjoyed 'Colours burst and Elephants roar', please consider supporting Alicia through [Ko-Fi!](#)



Other works

Mini-collection series

Tales from the Forgotten Wood (August 2021)

Pastel dreams in Golden Skies (December 2021)

The Skylark splits the Sky (January 2022)

Every Dune is a Mountain (June 2022)

And in this Starlit Sea (July 2022)

Sing for me, your sweet, sweet song (December 2022)

Poetry books

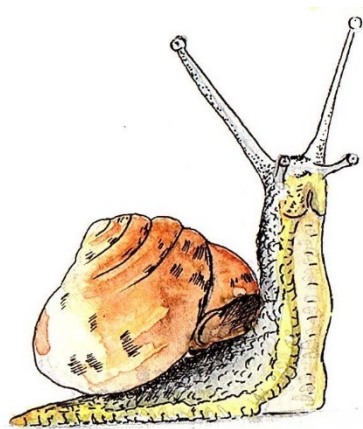
Rain before Rainbows (December 2020)

Collections and Anthologies

Connections with Nature: 50 moments of meeting the wild
(October 2021)

Into the Red (October 2022)

And through the Darkness, I see (December 2022)



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