



# **RACE THE WILD**

## **SAVANNA SHOWDOWN**

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**SCHOLASTIC INC.**

# TO BRANT AND WILSON AND FURTHER ADVENTURES –KJE

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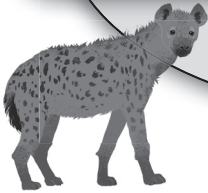
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# CHAPTER 1

## A DIZZYING DRIVE



**I** *can't believe this is happening. Again!*

Trying to fight off dizziness, Mari forced herself to close her eyes. It wasn't easy, shutting out the vast African landscape and the intense sun. The silhouette of a tree, its branches arching toward the sky, still burned in her mind.

Mari's stomach was feeling shaky, so she wrapped her right hand around her left wrist and pressed hard with her thumb. She had learned the technique only days earlier, but it had been

useful. The vibration of the double-decker bus pounded in her head. The ride was bumpy, and, on the upper level, the bus seemed to sway back and forth.

She had never had motion sickness before the race, but she had also never ridden on boats in the open sea or in tiny private planes buzzing over icy mountaintops. Racing around the world for a million-dollar prize was demanding. *The Wild Life* contestants were constantly on the move, rushing to reach the next landmark and answer the next clue. All five of the remaining teams were on the bus, crammed in with tourists who were anxious to start their safaris. The teams were anxious, too.

The bus slammed to a stop and jolted the sick feeling from Mari's stomach.

“What’s going on?” she asked as she stood and looked around. At once, she focused on a giraffe. It would have been hard to miss, since it was just about the tallest thing in view. Mari scanned the horizon and saw that the rest of its herd was far away, grazing across the flat grassland. She wondered why this one was on its own. Then she saw the answer: a lion. The great cat crouched on one side of the road; the giraffe stood on the other.

Mari pointed it out to her teammates.

“Oh, great,” Sage muttered. “Why’d they stop? I don’t want to see a bloodbath.”

“What makes you think there will be one?” Mari’s voice was hushed as she studied the scene.

“The lion’s a top predator with piercing teeth and sharp claws on its mammoth paws. Need I

say more?” Sage counted each point with a crisp flick of her fingers.

Russell and Dev, their other two teammates, remained silent as they watched the encounter.

Mari focused on the animals. The lion, a female, was crouched in the long grass. The giraffe stood tall.

“Giraffes are fast, right?” Russell whispered. “She should run for it.”

In an instant, the giraffe did run, but not to escape. It charged at the lion, taking three long strides to cross the road. The lion sprang into motion. Sage flinched and looked away. But Mari wasn’t surprised when the lion darted in the opposite direction.

“What?” Dev asked, his dark eyes clouded with disbelief. “What just went down?”

