

Unit 8 RICHARD TURERE

My Invention That Made Peace with Lions

Part 1

This is where I live. I live in Kenya, at the south parts of the Nairobi National Park. Those are my dad's cows at the back, and behind the cows, that's the Nairobi National Park. Nairobi National Park is not **fenced**¹ in the south widely, which means wild animals like zebras migrate out of the park freely. So predators like lions follow them, and this is what they do. They kill our livestock. This is one of the cows which was killed at night, and I just woke up in the morning and I found it dead, and I felt so bad because it was the only bull we had. . . .

So I had to find a way of solving this problem. And the first idea I got was to use fire because I thought lions were scared of fire. But I came to realize that that didn't really help because it was even helping the lions to see through the cowshed. So I didn't **give up**². I continued.

And a second idea I got was to use a **scarecrow**³. I was trying to **trick**⁴ the lions [into thinking] that I was standing near the cowshed. But lions are very clever. They will come the first day and they see the scarecrow, and they go back, but the second day, they'll come and they say, this thing is not moving here, it's always here. So he jumps in and kills the animals.

So one night I was walking around the cowshed with a torch,

and that day the lions didn't come. And I discovered that lions are afraid of a moving light. So I had an idea.

Part 2

Since I was a small boy, I used to work in my room for the whole day, and I even took apart my mom's new radio, and that day **she almost killed me**⁵, but I learned a lot about electronics. So I got an old car battery, [and] an indicator box. It's a small device found in a motorcycle, and it helps motorists when they want to turn right or left. It blinks. And I got a switch where I can switch on the lights, on and off. And that's a small torch from a broken flashlight.

So I set up everything. **As you can see**⁶, the solar panel charges the battery, and the battery supplies the power to the small indicator box. I call it a transformer. And the indicator box makes the lights flash. As you can see, the bulbs face outside because that's where the lions come from. And that's how it looks to lions when they come at night. The lights flash and trick the lions into thinking I was walking around the cowshed, but I was sleeping in my bed. Thanks.

So I set it up in my home two years ago, and since then,

¹ "fence" as a verb describes the act of having a fence up for protection and is often used in the passive voice.

² If you "give up," you stop trying.

³ The purpose of a "scarecrow" is, literally, to scare crows. Made to look like a person, it is a trick used by farmers to keep birds from eating their crops.

⁴ When you "trick someone into thinking" something, you use deception to make them believe something that is not true.

⁵ "kill someone" is used colloquially to communicate that the subject feels great anger toward the object.

⁶ "As you can see" is a common phrase used in presentations to introduce a comment about something you are showing your audience.

we have never experienced any problem with lions. And my neighboring homes heard about this idea. One of them was this grandmother. She had a lot of her animals being killed by lions, and she asked me if I could put the lights for her. And I said, "Yes." So I put the lights. You can see at the back, those are the lion lights. Since now, I've **set up seven homes**⁷ around my community, and they're really working. And my idea is also being used now **all over**⁸ Kenya for scaring other

predators like hyenas, leopards, and it's also being used to scare elephants away from people's farms. . . .

I used to hate lions, but now because my invention is saving my father's cows and the lions, we are able to stay with the lions without any conflict. Ashê olên. It means in my language, thank you very much.

This is an edited version of Turerere's 2013 TED Talk. To watch the full talk, visit TED.com.

⁷ When Turerere says he "set up seven homes," he means he set up his device in seven homes.

⁸ Something that is "all over" is in many different places.