

Band of Brothers

Lithe and elegant, cheetah are the smallest and least cat-like of African big cats. Bridging the gap between social lions and solitary leopards, male cheetah sometimes form coalitions of brothers who live and hunt together for life.

On our first morning at Malilangwe, a magnificent private reserve in south-eastern Zimbabwe, we were privileged to watch one such coalition on a successful hunt which was played out directly in front of us.

As we watched, one brother whom we called Scar, hid behind a herd of impala while his companions flanked the herd on either side. Then Scar showed himself and chased the herd into the waiting arms of his brothers, who killed a male impala. After the two brothers fed briefly, they stopped and called their missing companion. We were surprised when the call sounded more like a bird's chirp than a cat's roar.

The two who made the kill allowed Scar to feed alone for a while. They then joined him to finish off the meal.

This drawing looks back to my earliest professional work, which involved detailed architectural studies. I invented a "carved stone surround" which helped to tell the Cheetah story. It features the *Acacia tortilis* tree where cheetah often shelter from the mid-day sun. With it are the leaping Impala which are some of the cheetah's favorite prey. Beneath the African sun are cheetahs in full stride, representing their role as the fastest land mammals.