

# **LATE-LIFE SAFARI**

**A PLAY IN ONE ACT**

**BY**

**LISA HOLZMAN MARCIANO**

**SUMMARY:** In this playful comedy, four seasoned sisters are on safari in Botswana to "celebrate" their oldest sister's divorce. Left alone in their jeep by their driver, and near sunset, these bright women know it's dinnertime for the thousands of hungry game animals that surround them. How will they survive, who's in charge, and can the smell of coffee grounds actually deter a ravenous pride of lions? Is it possible for these four sisters, sitting alone in the Kalahari Desert out of their comfort zones, find a way to work together and survive? And, how old is too old to start over?

**CHARACTERS:** Four Sisters, ages approximately 40-75

SHEILA, the oldest sibling, fearful, controlling, divorced

LESLIE, the next oldest sibling, easy going.

JESS, the next sibling, the peacekeeper.

CARRIE, the youngest sibling, snarky.

## **PRODUCTIONS:**

Reading:

Little Dover Theatre, New Jersey - 2025

Script in Hand Reading:

Cast Iron Short Play Night, Brighton, England - 2025

Production:

Alcazar Theatre, California - 2023

## **CONTACT:**

Lisa Holzman Marciano

805-570-3770

[LHolzman1@gmail.com](mailto:LHolzman1@gmail.com)

4842 San Gordiano Ave Apt C

Santa Barbara, CA 93111

CHARACTERS: Four Sisters, ages approximately 50-75?

**SHEILA**, the oldest sibling, fearful, controlling, got divorced, wearing a safari hat

**LESLIE**, the next oldest sibling, easy going, uses binoculars, wearing an animal print shirt.

**JESS**, the next sibling, the peacekeeper, conservative attire.

**CARRIE**, the youngest sibling, snarky, wearing non-safari attire, eating snacks

#### **TIME**

The present.

#### **PLACE**

Botswana, Africa - desert safari.

#### **SCENE**

The four siblings are on safari, sitting in a "jeep." In the "front seats," from stage right to left is Leslie, then Sheila. In the taller "back" seats are, right to left, Jess and Carrie. There is no one in the driver's seat (*which can be implied with a jacket on the seat in front of Sheila.*)

#### **AUTHOR'S NOTE:**

The actors are able to walk down the inside and outside "aisles" of the jeep. No gun is used onstage, it is implied.

#### **SUMMARY**

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*(The jeep has stopped, and all actors are sitting in the jeep.)*

**SHEILA:**

I can't believe our guide just left us sitting here in the middle of the desert, unprotected.

**LESLIE:**

Stop worrying, Sheila. He just had to take a pit stop.

**CARRIE:**

Leslie's right. *(To Sheila)* What's wrong with you?

**JESS:**

Carrie!

**LESLIE:**

Jess, the guide wouldn't leave us if he thought it was dangerous.

**CARRIE:**

We are going to be appetizers for a pride of lions.

**LESLIE:**

*(To Carrie)* You're going to make Sheila freak out.

**JESS:**

Thanks for paying for this family trip, Sheila.

**CARRIE:**

And Sheila, those lions wouldn't want your old bones, anyway.

**JESS:**

Well, Carrie, since you're the *youngest* sister, they'll want your tender *baby* meat.

**CARRIE:**

Don't call me "baby."

**LESLIE:**

Could everyone just relax?

**CARRIE:**

Relax? Sheila hounded me for 3 months to "celebrate" her divorce by going on this stupid safari.

**JESS:**

We are supporting her in her grief, Carrie. It's not always about you.

**CARRIE:**

I didn't say anything was about me, although, it really is all about me, since I'm the youngest.

**SHEILA:**

And you remind us of that every chance you get.

**LESLIE:**

Where are all the animals we're supposed to see?

**SHEILA:**

I don't want to see any animals.

**CARRIE:**

Then why are we on a safari?

**JESS:**

Come on, you guys. Yay, Sheila's divorced. Carrie, what do you have to say and it better be nice.

**CARRIE:**

I always liked John.

**LESLIE:**

Oh, that's just perfect, Carrie. Can we just sit here and think good thoughts right now.

**SHEILA:**

Like, oh, we're sitting here in the middle of a desert - alone?

**LESLIE:**

We're not alone. There are all kinds of animals out there.

**SHEILA:**

Where is he?

**LESLIE:**

Wow, look at that bird.

**SHEILA:**

Where? Is it dangerous? I wanted an enclosed jeep. Why did they put us in this "come-right-in-and-eat-us" jeep?

**CARRIE:**

*(To Sheila.)* You must have screwed up the reservation.

**SHEILA:**

I did not.

**LESLIE:**

That bird is a lilac-breasted roller. Look at the color of its wings, like a rainbow.

**JESS:**

Why did you pick a safari in Botswana, anyway?

**SHEILA:**

I wanted to get as far away from John as I could.

**LESLIE:**

Come on, Sheila, you paid a fortune for all of us to go on this safari. Look around. It's like a dream. Enjoy it.

**SHEILA:**

Sh. I heard something.

**CARRIE:**

The sound of your old heart getting older? Or maybe it's your hearing aids buzzing again.

**SHEILA:**

I am going to shoot you with that gun I saw up front.

**LESLIE:**

Look, two rhinos! I cannot believe I'm seeing rhinos! I feel like I'm at Disneyland.

**JESS:**

It's like the Jungle Ride.

**LESLIE:**

But it's real.

**CARRIE:**

I don't remember Disneyland. I was two.

**JESS:**

Well, you're lucky you're 10 years younger than we are. It's hard getting older.

**CARRIE:**

I wouldn't know.

**SHEILA:**

They're staring right at us!

**LESLIE:**

Let's all stay calm.

**SHEILA:**

They're moving this way.

**JESS:**

*(Stands up, points and says loudly.)* They're humongous!

**LESLIE:**

They're amazing, spectacular! Did you know that when rhinos charge...

**SHEILA:**

I said be quiet. Now be quiet.

**CARRIE:**

It's all the drugs she did in high school.

**LESLIE:**

I was totally clean in high school. Now college, that's another story.

**SHEILA:**

Shut up!

**JESS:**

Uh oh. When Sheila tells Leslie to shut up something bad is going to happen. See! See! What did I tell you? One's coming this way.

**SHEILA:**

What are we going to do? It's going to ram us. I saw a video on YouTube - they ram the jeep and it turns over.

**LESLIE:**

That would be exciting.

**JESS:**

That would be horrible.

**CARRIE:**

That's never going to happen. Everyone just be quiet. We don't need our guide here to tell us to be quiet.

**JESS:**

That's right. He said the animals don't usually see these jeeps as a threat. It'll leave us alone.

**SHEILA:**

Oh, my God. It's coming.

**CARRIE:**

Shut up.

**LESLIE:**

No, you shut up.

**SHEILA:**

Everyone just shut up! It's coming. I'm too young to die!

**CARRIE:**

No, I'm too young to die.

**JESS:**

*(To Sheila.)* Yesterday you said you were too old to be bouncing around in a jeep. Which is it?

**SHEILA:**

Here it comes. Here it comes! (*Puts forearm over eyes and ducks.*)

**CARRIE:**

Did you know a white rhino can weigh 5,000 pounds?

**SHEILA:**

What?

**JESS:**

Wait. Look. They're leaving. What do we do if a lion comes at us? Or a snake? What'll we do?

**CARRIE:**

(*Stands and looks.*) There was a gun on the seat, right? Oh, my God, our guide took the gun. That's it. We're dead.

**LESLIE:**

We aren't going to use a gun. What a way to die, though, rammed by a pachyderm!

**CARRIE:**

Are you kidding?

**SHEILA:**

Shut it, Carrie. We're in trouble. The sun is setting, which means the dinner bell just rang for all these carnivorous animals. And we're what's for dinner.

**LESLIE:**

Sheila we can take care of ourselves.

**CARRIE:**

Yeah. We're all college educated. We could have saved thousands on tuition.

**LESLIE:**

That's it. One of us should go out and look for our guide.

**CARRIE:**

You go, Sheila. If a lion eats you, we'll mourn you and say, "she lived a good, long life."

**SHEILA:**

No. You go, Carrie. And if you get eaten by a lion, we'll mourn you and say, "she was such a baby."

**CARRIE:**

Stop calling me that!

**LESLIE:**

Stop fighting.

**JESS:**

Any ideas, Sheila?

**SHEILA:**

We need to get a gun!

**LESLIE:**

We're a bunch of left-wing pacifists. We have no idea how to use a gun.

**SHEILA:**

What else do we have to protect us? What do you have in your purse, Leslie?

**LESLIE:**

*(Looks in purse.)* I know I have a bottle of instant coffee and -

**CARRIE:**

You're carrying a bottle of instant coffee on safari? And, what? You're going to throw the jar at any incoming animals?

**JESS:**

Maybe they don't like the *smell* of coffee grounds. *(Looks in purse.)* I have wintergreen Tic Tacs.

**CARRIE:**

Because whatever's out there has bad breath? Really helpful.

**SHEILA:**

I have an extra pair of reading glasses, nail clippers, two nail files, and um, I think that's everything that might protect us.

**LESLIE:**

No guns.

**JESS:**

Well, it may be good to have just in case.

**CARRIE:**

Sheila said the guide took it.

**LESLIE:**

Good. I'm not touching a gun.

**CARRIE:**

Someone has to notice we didn't come back and they'll send another jeep.

**JESS:**

That's right. And in the meantime, we're fine as long as we're together.

**CARRIE:**

You actually believe that you three old ladies can take care of yourselves?

**SHEILA:**

I hear something. Get ready!

**JESS:**

We're not really that old. Are we?

*(Sheila is looking around inside the jeep, under seats, etc.)*

**LESLIE:**

Should I toss my coffee grinds.

**JESS:**

They're grounds, not grinds.

**CARRIE:**

Not helpful.

**SHEILA:**

Wait. Wait. *(Looking under guide's seat.)* There's a, it's a gun! An extra gun! Thank God.

**LESLIE:**

Jess, check the gun for bullets!

**JESS:**

Why me? I don't know how!

**LESLIE:**

Sheila, your bag weighs a ton. You don't have anything else?

**SHEILA:**

Yes, yes! I have my pepper spray. (*Holds it up.*)

**CARRIE:**

Really?

**SHEILA:**

And I have a ceramic bowl.

**JESS:**

Why?

**SHEILA:**

I bought it in the gift shop before we left.

**CARRIE:**

OK. Now you can go kill an animal, rub your nail files together to make a fire, and cut up the pieces of meat with your nail clipper. You wouldn't want to miss a meal, right?

**SHEILA:**

Is that a fat joke? Really? I've lost weight, if you hadn't noticed. You just sit there.

**LESLIE:**

So, Carrie, what do you have in your purse. Do you have anything to protect us? No. So you can just sit there, while us three *old* ladies save *your* life.

**CARRIE:**

Fine. Protect me. Good luck. You can't even protect yourselves.

**SHEILA:**

Carrie, at least see if you can find any extra bullets.

**CARRIE:**

Me? Why'd you pick me to do that? What am I a detective? (*She doesn't move.*)

**SHEILA:**

Do it. Leslie, check the jeep for any provisions, water, blankets, and anything else that we can use in case we get stuck here tonight. You're creative. You'll figure out how we can use everything.

**LESLIE:**

What are you going to do?

**SHEILA:**

I'm going to sit here and think for a minute.

**JESS:**

She does have the PhD. Carrie, she told you to check for bullets.

**CARRIE:**

Too bad. I'm just going to sit here and look pretty.

**SHEILA:**

Oh, please.

**CARRIE:**

(*Pulls out cell.*) Damn, I wish I had reception here.

**JESS:**

Sh.

**SHEILA:**

What? What's the matter?

**LESLIE:**

Why can't this family be quiet when someone shushes them? Crackling. Sticks breaking.

**CARRIE:**

Where?

**LESLIE:**

Sh. I'm going to pour my coffee crystals out. Toss your Tic Tacs!

**CARRIE:**

Oh, after dinner mints.

**SHEILA:**

I've got my pepper spray ready. Jess, check the gun.

**JESS:**

I don't know how to see if a gun has bullets. They show it on TV, but—

**SHEILA:**

Shoot the gun to see if it has bullets.

**JESS:**

But all the other animals will come see what's going on.

**SHEILA:**

That's not a bad point. Ok. Here's what we're going to do.

**CARRIE:**

Wow, Sheila. I've never seen you so confident.

**SHEILA:**

I've never had to be. My life is so easy.

**JESS:**

I'll never complain about my life again. I'm always so afraid to do anything.

**SHEILA:**

When in our lives are we ever in a position *not* to know what to do?

**CARRIE:**

My life is completely predictable.

**JESS:**

That's what happens when you get older.

**SHEILA:**

Especially with John. He would never have had the guts to come here.

**LESLIE:**

But our lives aren't boring, we are.

**CARRIE:**

Actually, I hate to admit it—

**JESS:**

Then don't.

**CARRIE:**

No, really. I've been watching you guys. I know I tease you -

**LESLIE:**

All the time -

**CARRIE:**

I know. It's just that with everything we've gone through today, I'm starting to realize how strong you are. I've never been in any kind of situation like this. I've got work and the kids.

**LESLIE:**

Well, we're boring old ladies, sitting in a jeep on safari about to see our last sunset.

**CARRIE:**

Well, I'm not boring. Not yet, anyway. That's it. I'm getting out and I'm going to find our guide.

**SHEILA:**

There's a leopard, a leopard!

**LESLIE:**

It's so beautiful.

**CARRIE:**

It's coming this way. Do something!

**SHEILA:**

*(To Jess.)* Get the gun. Get it. Shoot it!

**JESS:**

*(Doesn't move.)* I can't shoot an animal. No way.

**LESLIE:**

It's too beautiful!

**CARRIE:**

Well, it thinks we're tasty and it's coming our way!

**JESS:**

Now I lay me down to sleep—

**SHEILA:**

What are you doing?

**JESS:**

It's the only prayer I could think of.

**LESLIE:**

*(Notices key.)* We're so damn smart, we're stupid. The key! The key is in the ignition.

**CARRIE:**

*(Yelling.)* Go, go, go! Start the jeep! Start the jeep!

*(Sheila jumps behind the wheel.)*

**LESLIE:**

*(Yelling.)* Wait. Wait! There's our guide. There he is!

**SHEILA:**

Finally.

**JESS:**

Now he comes back?

**LESLIE:**

He's going to get eaten by that leopard and we're going to have to watch. No, no, I can't.

**CARRIE:**

Me, neither.

*(They all cover their faces/eyes.)*

**LESLIE:**

Can someone take a video for TikTok. I always wanted to be famous.

**JESS:**

Is he still alive?

**SHEILA:**

Everyone, get down. Get down! Brace yourselves. I love my sisters!

**LESLIE/JESS/CARRIE**

I love you guys/Love you all/this can't be happening. *(Cries)*

*(Silence. Nothing happens.)*

**SHEILA**

I don't hear anything I'm going to look. You all stay down.

**CARRIE:**

No. I'll look. *(Carrie peeks through her hands.)* Where's the leopard? *(Puts hands down.)* I don't see it. *(Leslie, Jess and Sheila slowly get up and look.)*

**JESS:**

All that yelling must have scared it off.

**SHEILA:**

That was kind of—

**LESLIE:**

Exciting. Wasn't it? Wow!

**JESS:**

Our guide is alive! And, I think he's asking us if we're ok. Let's all give him a thumbs up.

*(Jess, Carrie and Leslie give the offstage driver a thumbs up.)*

**CARRIE:**

Sheila, you were incredible. All of us. I love you guys. Why aren't you giving him the thumbs up, Sheila? What's wrong?

**SHEILA:**

I'm way past 60 and I've been sitting in this jeep for hours.

**JESS:**

I know. But everything's ok now.

**SHEILA:**

My bladder is going to burst!

**CARRIE:**

Use your ceramic bowl!

*(Carrie and Leslie laugh.)*

**JESS:**

That's not funny.

**CARRIE:**

She brought a bowl! Wait. What's that?

**SHEILA:**

Another animal? My heart can't take this.

**CARRIE:**

No. No. Over there on the other side.

**LESLIE:**

What is that? It looks like -

**CARRIE:**

See it? Through the trees? It's the lodge! We're parked right outside our lodge!

**JESS:**

Stop it, Carrie.

**CARRIE:**

Was anyone paying attention to where our guide was taking us?

**SHEILA:**

No. We were all talking the whole time.

**CARRIE:**

We're in the animal reserve right in front of our lodge. These are the animals they take care of. We weren't in any danger, at all.

**LESLIE:**

That's kind of funny.

**SHEILA:**

Not funny at all.

*(The all begin to giggle, then laugh out loud and hug each other.)*

**CARRIE:**

The guide must have driven us back, and figured we'd just get out and follow him to the lodge.

**SHEILA:**

He's fired.

*(The all start exiting the "jeep.")*

**LESLIE:**

Botswana really is incredible. I can't wait to go on safari again tomorrow. I wonder what we'll see?

**SHEILA:**

I'm going to see the back of my eyelids. There's no way I'm doing this again.

**JESS:**

Oh, yes, you are. We all are. This is your divorce celebration, Sheila.

**SHEILA:**

Let's face it, none of us are going to get any younger.

**CARRIE:**

Do I have to get old?

**SHEILA:**

You probably will, but that doesn't mean you stop living.

**CARRIE:**

Hey. I was just thinking that maybe we should go on another trip together.

**JESS:**

What?

**LESLIE:**

Yeah!

**SHEILA:**

Are you kidding? After all this?

**CARRIE:**

Yes. But, next time - let's go scuba diving!

**LESLIE:**

- with sharks!

*(Leslie and Carrie smile with thumbs and Sheila and Jess show a slight panic on their faces, and all freeze).*

*(Curtain.)*

*(Cut to Black)*