

## ROGGIE THE LION GOES TO AFRICA

Written by: **Igor Plohl**

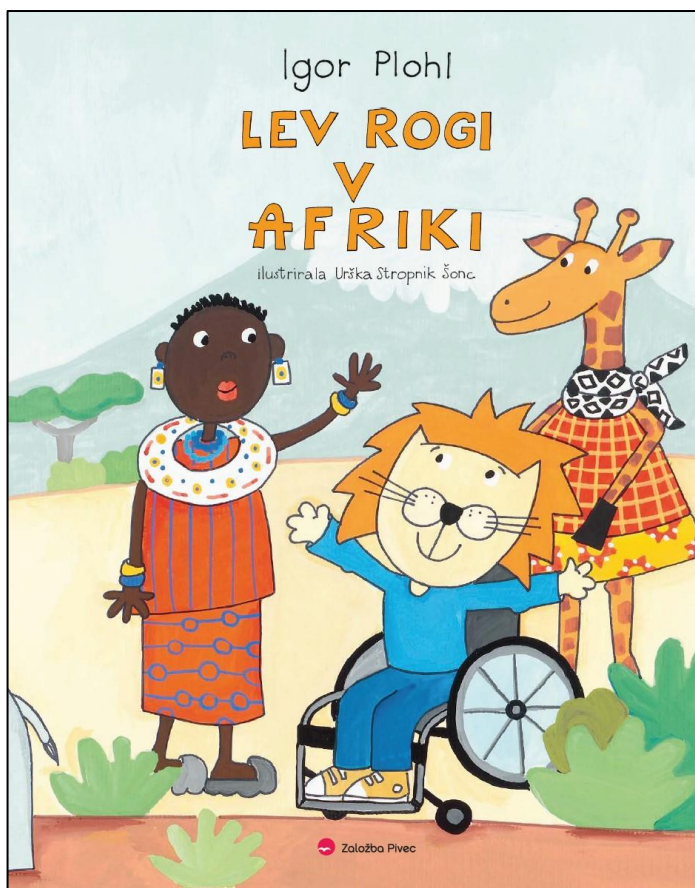
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Roggie the Lion, a little-less-ordinary lion, loved travelling before his accident. Out of all the things, he enjoyed admiring nature and the animals in it the most. He was also fascinated by high mountains covered with white clouds, ice cold glaciers, hot and dry deserts, as well as all the unusual people he met.

After his accident, he was convinced that he would no longer be able to go on trips to distant lands. But sometimes even the greatest wishes come true. Roggie found out that he could travel to Africa to go on a safari, meet the Maasai people and awe in the most beautiful and highest African mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro.

It isn't easy to travel in a wheelchair, but Roggie, brave and wise as any lion, overcomes any obstacle and goes on an unforgettable journey to the amazing continent of Africa.

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wrote for adult readers.

**Igor Plohl** is a teacher and an author of picture books in which he talks about being disabled. Roggie the Lion, his literary alter ego, came to life when Igor wanted to talk to his students about his painful experience when he had to deal with his new life in a wheelchair following a serious accident. He has also written about his experience dealing with his new situation in the autobiographic story *It Can Happen To You!*, which he

## Sample translation

### Spread 6 – 7

Roggie the Lion loved travelling and hiking before his accident. He lived in a town, but his favourite place was the mountains—covered in snow-white glaciers and topped with floating clouds. He would also dream of hot and bone-dry deserts, wild savannahs and interesting people. And he was especially interested in places where people still lived in the same way as our ancestors did. Without electricity, factories or paved roads. Where the skies are full of birds and the waters are crystal clear.

"Oh, how I would love to travel to Africa to see all these things!" he often thought to himself. After he started using a wheelchair, however, he realised that this would be nearly impossible. But sometimes the biggest and most unusual wishes do come true, and Roggie the lion also got lucky. Thanks to a TV show, he got the chance to travel to the other side of the world and go on a safari ride across the magical and colourful African savannah.

### Spread 8 – 9

Before setting off on this long and difficult journey, Roggie eagerly told his friends, "I'm going to see Kilimanjaro, the highest and most beautiful African volcano with enormous glaciers. I will drive around in a safari vehicle, see wild animals and visit the Maasai people." "Be careful so that nothing bad will happen to you!" his friends warned him before the trip. "You could get a dangerous tropical disease, your plane could crash, your wheelchair could get damaged or you could even get robbed." "Don't worry," the brave lion reassured them, "I'll make sure I'm well-prepared. Ansev the giraffe will help me. She has been living in Africa for a long time and she is in charge of organising the trip."

### Spread 10 – 11

The first thing Roggie packed were the tools he needed for his wheelchair, as well as spare tires and a soft cushion to use on the plane. Then came his clothes, binoculars, a big hat, a camera and a medical kit that would come in handy if he got sick or injured. To make him feel safer, his friend Veva the cougar and her husband Neno accompanied him.

Roggie, Veva and Neno flew to Africa in a plane that was as fast as lightning. In spite of this, the flight took all night. Good thing Roggie was able to sit and sleep in a comfortable seat. His wheelchair was taken away to be stored among the luggage. At first, the lion was a bit anxious, as he had never flown on a plane before, but then he calmed down and the thought of Africa made his fear disappear.

### Spread 12 – 13

"This is a disaster! Where is my wheelchair?" cried out a worried Roggie with a lump in his throat when they finally landed at the airport in the African country of Tanzania. They searched the entire plane but couldn't find it. "I never would've thought this could happen. How is it possible that you

don't know where it is?" fumed Roggie at the airport. "We're very sorry, sir," the employees kept apologising in embarrassment. "We really don't know where we lost it." Later, they realised that they had forgotten the wheelchair at the first airport. "I can't go anywhere without my wheelchair," explained Roggie. "Please help me find a solution!"

#### **Spread 14 – 15**

After a long wait, the airport staff brought Roggie an old and creaky wheelchair, so that he could continue his journey towards the home of Ansev the giraffe, where they were staying during their time in Africa.

Ansev welcomed the travellers warmly and cheerfully. When the sad Roggie told her what had happened to him at the airport, she simply said, "Hakuna matata!" "I don't understand," said the confused lion. "What does that mean?" "Hakuna matata means no worries," explained the giraffe. "In Africa, everything gets sorted out!" And indeed, Ansev made it so that Roggie's precious wheelchair was returned to him the very next day. When Roggie saw it, he almost squealed with joy.

#### **Spread 16 – 17**

At the beginning of their trip, the unusual band of tourists visited the village of Olpopongi—the home of the proud African tribe of shepherds called the Maasai. The villagers live in harmony with Mother Nature. They don't fear or hunt wild animals, but they respect them and have become skilful in protecting themselves against them. The Maasai welcomed the guests with joyful music and dancing.

The tribal warriors performed a jumping dance to the rhythm of the music, while the women with brightly coloured clothes and unusual jewellery encouraged them with their singing. "In our tribe, the roles are strictly defined by gender," a black guide told the travellers. "The men look after the cattle and protect the village from dangerous beasts. The women are responsible for raising children, collecting firewood, fetching water, preparing food and building houses."

#### **Spread 18 – 19**

"Women build houses?" marvelled Veva the puma. "How do they do it?" "First they build the walls with acacia branches and then cover them with a mixture of clay and cow dung. The roof frames are made out of wood from a special tree that is so poisonous even termites can't eat it. They cover the roof with dry grass and coat the inside walls of the hut with elephant dung that repels mosquitoes." "Extraordinary!" commented the puma. "The Maasai don't create waste, because they use only what comes from and is found in nature."

**Spread 20 – 21**

"Do your children go to school too?" Roggie asked. "Of course," replied the Maasai guide kindly. "Our children start going to school when they can reach with one hand over their head and touch the opposite ear. That is how we know they are big enough."

"Why are their heads shaved?" wondered Veva. "In the dry season, water is so scarce that it would be foolish to use it for washing their hair. And this way they don't get lice. Many of our women also shave their heads, and I must say that they look very beautiful."

**Spread 22 – 23**

The village was surrounded by acacia trees. These trees may look soft and delicate, but they are full of thorns that protect the precious leaves from hungry herbivores. In some places, mighty cacti stood among the trees, like giants with many arms. Sitting in his wheelchair, the lion kept glancing curiously towards the colossal volcano, hidden by the ever-moving clouds. "It's a pity I won't be able to see it in person," Roggie said to his two companions with a tinge of disappointment. "Maybe Kilimanjaro will reveal itself when we travel through the national parks," Veva and Neno, trying to cheer up the lion.

**Spread 24 – 25**

The nature in the national parks is nearly untouched by the hand of man. There are no fences, buildings or iron cages because there are no people. Animals aren't hunted or exploited. Only now and then are the animals disturbed by safari vehicles full of curious tourists from distant lands. Ansev the giraffe made sure that a special ramp was made for Roggie, so that he could easily board the tall vehicle with his wheelchair and transfer himself to a seat.

The animals must think that these vehicles are some big strange creatures with round legs that roll along the roads, carrying curious and often bothersome visitors on their backs.

**Spread 26 – 27**

On the first day, the group toured the national park that is famous for its birds with Adam the leopard as their tour guide and driver. Thousands of storks greeted the guests at the entrance. "Apparently not all of them fly to Europe," thought Roggie to himself, as he knew some of them were nesting in his hometown at the time. Near a tree by the roadside, they spotted a large troop of monkeys that were completely absorbed in what they were doing. The monkeys were busy checking each other's fur. They were looking for pesky fleas and happily munching on them. Roggie enthusiastically photographed the flamingos standing in the lake, the giraffes that skilfully tore tree leaves off the branches with their long tongues, and the many gazelles, wildebeests and zebras, as well as a huge herd of buffalos.

**Spread 28 – 29**

When Roggie saw a large male elephant by the side of the road, he took the opportunity and asked him to take a selfie together. "Leave me alone!" the elephant said angrily, rushing towards their vehicle. Adam the leopard accelerated and the group narrowly escaped the charging giant. In the following days, Roggie had more luck and was able to take a lot of great photos. Many of the animals were happy to pose—even the lions!

"Look at those strange trees!" said their guide Adam, pointing towards the baobab trees. It seemed as if they were growing upside down. Because of the approaching dry season, the trees had shed almost all their leaves, so their branches looked like roots that were reaching up into the sky. In addition, baobab trees are a bit strange, as they have broad trunks and small crowns.

**Spread 30 – 31**

At the end of the trip to the national parks, Roggie asked a friendly giraffe to take a selfie with him, noticing that birds were jumping all over it. The photo turned out amazing. He knew that whenever he would look at it, he would be reminded of his fantastic trip to Africa. "Why do you let birds peck at your neck?" asked Roggie. "You really don't know anything, do you?" smiled the giraffe. "I let them do that because they pick off the ticks and they also scratch me when I feel itchy. In the savannah, every thing and every animal has a purpose." "It's true," thought Roggie, "Nature is perfect. Here, everything is as it should be."

**Spread 32 – 33**

On the way to the airport, Roggie thought back to everything he had experienced on this amazing journey in spite of his disability. He was indescribably happy. He had completely forgotten that he hadn't been able to see Africa's highest mountain, which is also a volcano.

The moment the plane soared above the clouds, however, Roggie laid eyes on the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. He couldn't believe what he saw. At the very end of the journey, the mighty Kilimanjaro, with its crown of snow-white glaciers, appeared in all its glory. "Hakuna matata! Everything really does sort itself out in Africa."