



## once upon an oryx

Namib Desert, on the south-west coast of Africa, July 1999

A couple of hours before dawn, I have woken my friends, taken a cup of thick coffee and set off toward the dunes of my dreams. My first morning on the ground in Namibia, and I have vivid images of warm light, long shadows, and towering dunes etched in my mind.

Now I can taste the dust as we travel a rough road on the gravel plain between fields of 300-metre-high red dunes – the landscape is becoming discernable as the dawn approaches.

Where to start? Anywhere I guess. I begin to see pictures. Everywhere. The atmosphere is lightening. We must stop moving, so I can start photographing. I head toward a series of dunes that spill on to the gravel plain, near a line of sparse trees, where an ancient river once flowed.

And it's there that I happen upon an oryx – a chance encounter – somewhere in a 50,000-square kilometre sea of sand.

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