

Style sheet

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Afrikaner

all right

Bushman

claypot

dining room

feast night

guardpost

highveld

kraal

Marula trees

rifleshoot

tom-tom

~~with~~

witch-hunt

worshiped

Dutch words

Keffir

Baas

VeldkornetLanddrostHeemradenvoorloopervoortrekkersskepselkistBiltong (Biltong Anna)broekcheeremaalffirboettie

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African words and namesNames of Dutch charactersBayete!

Kasper Jansen

Bangela

Kees

Barolong

Anna

Bhoya Chaka

Stefan

Dabula

Old Johannes

Dambuza

Martinus Van As

Dingiswayo Dingaan

Paul

Gubuza induna
Inzwinyeni
Lithele Kunena

Jafta Bezuidenhout

Lobengula

Karel Elst

lobola

Piet Retief

Langa

Hendrik Potgieter

Matabele

Nonnie Joubert

mbongi

Pieter de Melke

Mnandi

Hannah Steenkamp

Moshesh

Adam Schalk

Mzilikazi

Scheepers girls

Mkomozi

Nanda

Ndabeke

Ndaba

Ntombi

Ntongolwane

No-Menti

Rauwe

Tauana

Thaba Ncho Uminidi

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Books by Peter Abrahams

Dark Testament

Song of the City

Mine Boy

The Path of Thunder

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WILD CONQUEST

by Peter Abrahams

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK

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(Title) **WILD CONQUEST**

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~~This story is published
under the title of~~

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This book is for the South Africans,
who may fulfill old Mkomoti's dream and
"Perhaps, in the ages to come..." build
in hope instead of fear, live with love
instead of hate.

It is also for Dusty and Lyle.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love,
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love,
Is Man, his child and care.

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For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

inn. Innocence,

INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE *inn* BLAKE,

Cruelty has a Human Heart,
And Jealousy a Human Face;
Terror the Human Form Divine,
And Secrecy the Human Dress.

The Human Dress is forged Iron,
The Human Form a fiery Forge,
The Human face a Furnace seal'd,
The Human Heart its hungry Gorge.

exp. Experience,

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1. BIBLE AND RIFLE



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Poised in space, held between nothing and nothing, there floats a golden ball. Not only is it golden. It is blue as well, and red, and green, and brown, and grey^a. Touch gold and blue and red and green and brown and grey^a - touch them with love and there is poetry.

Such is our earth.

And high, very high up in the mountains, an old man broods over the earth. For want of knowledge we call him Wind. Eternally he sits up there and sighs and whispers, and, eternally, from age to age we hear his whisper and do not understand.

When the moon passes and the beasts are asleep, he whispers. Sometimes softly, sometimes loudly, but he whispers. When the brightest and best of the stars of the morning come out, he whispers, tenderly. When noonday sits high in the sky, he whispers in a voice almost beyond the reach of hearing.

The mountains respond to his whisper. The valleys pick up the echoes. The swaying grass-blades dance to its music. The brown-grey^a earth rolls over to listen. And the sky, the peerless sky, is partner with the whispering old man.

Only man is on the outside, alone and out of touch, not a part of this pre-conceived, preplanned order. Only man, poised between nothing and nothing, is the equal of the golden ball. Only man, between darkness and darkness, knows not the meaning of the whispering voice. So, only man is alone, haunted by fear and the echoes that flow from fear.

The golden ball, which is the earth, which is poetry and love, looks on while man grapples with his fear.

The old man whispers the answer.....

(C) 1-11 pt 14. 35 46310
The visible parts of the man's body had been burnt to a reddish-brown. His fair hair had lost its original colour and turned a reddish-brown too. Indeed, he was all reddish-brown, even to the whites of his eyes. The sun and air and rain and earth had transformed him into as near earth-colour as possible. Perhaps in a thousand years his children would be so transformed by sun and earth and air that they would have flat noses and full lips and kinky hair and dark, very dark copper-coloured skins. And perhaps his daughters of a thousand years hence would have the broad heavy hips and pointed breasts and round black ~~around~~ eyes of the African women. Perhaps.

Now, the reddish-brown man bent low over his saddle. His rifle was at the ready, its flint-lock cocked for firing at an instant. He held it more firmly than he held his reins.

Both horse and man were on the alert. There was tension in every ripple of the horse's muscles. His pointed ears were cocked for the slightest noise. And he knew the noise, would recognise the swish of the deadly arrow the moment it was in flight. The tension of horse and man flowed into each other and were one.

The man's eyes shot from left to right, sharply, searchingly. On either side of the almost vanished track, grass and shrub grew thickly to the height of a tall man's waist, so that rider and horse seemed to be swimming through a sea of grass. And the blood-flecked eyes of the man were trained on the flowing grass. The tall grass, and the shrubs and the mounds and rocks, these were the enemy. Death reached out from them with the swiftness of controlled lightning. The poison-tipped dart of a little Bushman. The sharp, well aimed spear of a black warrior. Death came swiftly with the faintest of whispers.

For a moment the man allowed himself the luxury of lifting his eyes from the grass. Quickly they shot into the air to focus on Kasper Jansen's mountain and measure the distance. A little while now, only a little while now. In a little while ~~now~~ he would pass between the two mountains that sealed off the valley from the flowing wilderness and he would be safe. In a little while now he would see the house and the people moving about. Only a little while now.

He turned his eyes to the grass again and scanned it searchingly. There must be no relaxing. His fingers tightened on the trigger of the gun. Watch every blade of grass, Koos. It might not be the wind that moves it. Test every sound, Koos. It may not be the whispering of the wind, or a bird in a bush, or the sliding of a snake on its belly. Watch and listen and look and do not relax, Koos.

He touched the horse's flanks with his heels. The horse had sensed the nearness of home and safety and needed no urging. It, too, wanted the protection of the valley. It gathered speed and rider and horse went flowing through the tall grass, still alert, still watching, still listening.

They had left the last farm as soon as it was light enough for the stars to begin to lose their lustre. Now they were near home.

Once they had sighted a band of roving kaffirs. They had made a long detour. Another time they had seen a bush move. A rare thing because Bushmen are such wonderful hunters. A well-aimed shot had stopped the bush. Koos had dismounted and kicked the shrubs away from the body of a fat, shiny little Bushman. And then, as he had remounted, the horse had suddenly reared up on its hind legs and ~~then~~ shot away at breakneck speed. A few moments later Koos had discovered the deadly little arrow embedded deep in the leather of his saddle.

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Now they were home. Old Johannes waved to him. Johannes was the head of the band of slaves who guarded the entrance to the valley. For the first time in the long ride, a hand came away from the rifle. Koos waved back.

Now there was time to relax; time to sigh and straighten your back; time to lift your eyes from the treacherous grass and look around you. Now there was time to breathe easily and freely. His hand crept up the warm, damp neck of the horse.

"Good Boy. You saved my life, Boy. Good Boy. We're home."

Handwritten: 5
A young slave ran forward and held the horse's reins. Another began to rub its ~~back~~ body down. Old Johannes came from the little shack that was the guard post with an earthen bowl filled with milk. Koos lifted the bowl, opened his parched lips, and allowed the cool thick liquid to flow down his dry throat. He handed the empty bowl to the old slave and squared his shoulders.

The old slave called out an order and a young slave stepped forward with a piece of rough canvas cloth. With this Johannes eased the arrow out of the saddle. He wrapped it in the cloth and gave it to Koos.

"Did Baas Koos get him?"

"I didn't see the little black bastard."

"It is hard to see them, Baas Koos."

Handwritten: another
"I had seen ^{another} one and shot him."

"And you got off to look?... That was bad, Baas Koos."

Koos noticed the "you" Slaves never addressed their owners as "you". Not even privileged slaves like old Johannes.

"You called me "you", Johannes."

Johannes saw the anger in the white man's eyes and lowered his head. A passing flash of anger showed then died out of the eyes of

the young ~~man~~^{slave} who held the reins.

"Forgive me, my Baas," Hohannes murmured with bent head.

"It is a privilege that I would not take know~~l~~^lingly. The word came before my brain or tongue could stop it. It means only, Baas Koos, that I, Baas Koos's slave, am so well treated that my love and respect for Baas Koos shows itself wrongly because I am a dumb old man."

I wonder if they know what's going on in Cape Town, Koos thought. In the past they always seemed to know what was happening in the world long before the white people. Perhaps they know this too. Better have a word with Kasper about it.

His eyes moved to the rifle rack by the side of the old shack. The six guns rested in their place. Six guns all in a row. And beside them, two boxes of powder. He had always been against the idea of giving the slaves arms and teaching them how to use them. But Kasper had said:

"How can they defend the entrance to the valley unarmed?"

9 So they had been armed and taught how to shoot. And during the number of kaffir raids Kasper had been proved right. But what now? Supposing they knew what was going on at Cape Town. Or if they didn't know now, they would find out later, and what then? He saw old Johannes looking at him and turned his head from the guns.

"All well at the house?"

"Yes, my Baas, all is well at the house."

"They know I am home?"

"I sent a runner as soon as I saw Baas Koos."

"Good."

Koos touched the horse's flanks with his heels. The slave who had held the reins jumped out of the way. Without a backward

look Koos rode off into the valley on his way home.

The young slave who had jumped out of the way clenched his fists and spat on the ground.

Old Johannes smiled.

"Your blood is too hot, my son."

"You are my father and I can call you 'you' but you may not call him 'you'."

"Yesterday you thought it natural, my son."

"I did not."

"But you said nothing."

"You teach us to say nothing."

"Now you ignore my teaching."

"If I did I would have pulled him off his horse."

"Be patient, my son."

"It is not the same now."

"How do you know?"

"Jan said so. He has just come from Cape Town."

"It is best to wait and see, my son."

"Always you tell us to be patient, father. Is it that you love being a slave?"

"All your life you have been a slave, my son. But I was free once."

"Or is it that you are old and do not care?"

The old man moved quickly across the space that separated him from his son and struck him across the mouth. The others looked on while father and son stared at each other. At last the son dropped his eyes and half-turned away from his father.

The old man turned his eyes to the rifle rack and spoke. There was an abstractly confessional quality in his voice. All the other

Winter,
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eyes turned to the rifles that rested in their places. All ears were attuned to the old slaves' words which seemed addressed to the rifles.

"They say 'he is old' and they murmur against me. They say 'there are only a handful of white people' and when I say 'no, the time is not right' they turn against me and my own son speaks against me. And my own son tells me that I love to be a slave. What does he know about slavery and how I feel and what is in my head? What does he know? Does he know how slaves are captured? No. He was born a slave, I was made a slave. I was free once. I looked on the earth as a free man. When the wind blew I was free, when the rain fell I was free. And then they came and made a slave of me. They took me from my home and made a slave of me.

"All the years that I have been a slave I have remembered what the wind and rain feel like to a free man. While I stood in the market place in Cape Town and they made offers for me, I remembered; While I laboured on the farm of some Boer, I remembered; I have remembered every day of every year.

"I ran away often. And as often I was brought back and the skin was beaten off my back. And all the time I remembered. Can you understand that? Everyday of my life I remembered the meaning of freedom. That is why I hold you back now when the moment is near. I know freedom and I have waited long for it..... That is enough."

He jerked his eyes away from the rifles. ~~and came out of his trance.~~ The circle of slaves around him dropped their eyes. He looked at them and what he saw pleased him. He was still their leader. They would obey him, no matter what Jan said. That was as it should be. Without knowing all his plans they would obey him. That was the great lesson he had learnt from the white man: never to tell

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all your plans.

"We will hear all of Jan's report," he said. He led them toward the shack. At the door he paused. "The white men may be back here soon. By then Jan must be gone."

His eyes ran over the men till they rested on a big, poek-marked black giant. He has no head, the old man thought, Jan's words would mean nothing to him. He spoke to the giant: "Samson, you will see to Jan's horse. It is hidden in the bushes behind the house."

Inside the shack, Johannes' wife, Old Ma Johannes, ~~looked at them as they trooped in.~~ She was flat on her back on a wooden bed built into the far wall of the shack. A pile of sacking and rugs made of animal skins trailed over the side of the bed and touched the floor. A dirty piece of white linen was tied across her forehead.

"He's gone," Old Johannes said.

Old Ma Johannes pulled the dirty cloth from her head and swung off the bed. ~~At the same time,~~ Jan crawled from under the wooden bed. He was a thin, wiry man of indeterminate age with a pale, lined skin and fiery, bloodshot eyes.

"I was getting worried," Jan said.

"You were long," Old Ma said.

"I had words with your son," Old Johannes said.

Jan's fiery eyes darted from father to son. ~~But he held his peace.~~ A young woman brought back the hurried hidden plate of food Jan had been eating. He took it and stuffed a handful of brown pappy food into his mouth. In silence the slaves arranged themselves in comfortable positions all over the shack. For a spell there was silence in the place. And all eyes were turned on the escaped slave, Jan, whose name and exploits had grown into a legend that slaves up and down the land hugged to their bosoms.

The stories about Jan ~~that passed from slave to slave~~ were legion. Sometimes his powers grew to the supernatural ~~in the process of the telling of his various exploits~~. The young men hero-worshipped him. To the young slave women he was the symbol of perfect manhood. He had challenged the authority of the white man and lived to talk about it. In escaping from his first master he had killed a white overseer. How many other white men he had killed was not known. But legend sometimes put the figure at ten, sometimes at a hundred. And sometimes, in rare moments of drunkenness, the carrier of the legend would talk in terms of hundreds and even thousands. The only point of agreement in the many descriptions of Jan was about the two pistols he carried in his belt. ~~They all agreed on that.~~ For the rest everything they said about him varied from ^{slave} ~~person~~ to ^{slave} ~~person~~. It could not be otherwise. Jan had grown into a symbol. Some slaves adored him. Others hated him. That too, was natural. He had done what none of the others had dared to do. Or if they had dared, they had failed. He had succeeded.

At last he finished eating. He gave the empty plate to the young woman. ~~she stepped forward~~. He wiped his lips with the back of his hand and looked round the faces that were all turned to him.

~~All right~~
"Alright, brother Johannes?" His voice was high-pitched and thin, almost like the voice of a woman.

~~All right~~
"Alright, Brother Jan."

"Where was I?"

"You were telling us that the order had come from across the seas that we should all be freed."

"Yes. That's right. I cannot remember if the great master who gives the orders from across the seas is a man or a woman but he or she says the slaves are to be freed."

"You are sure of this?" Old Johannes asked.

"It is all over Cape Town," Jan said.

"Not just talk."

"Not just talk this time."

"And the date?"

"That is not known but the rest is certain."

Old Johannes smiled.

"If it is so, if we are to be set free, why do you want us to fight, Jan? Why not wait and be freed? We have waited so long."

Jan's eyes flashed, ~~in anger~~.

"For some, to wait is good. But there are others who would free themselves. I thought you were one of those, Johannes. It may be that I am wrong. Perhaps slavery has destroyed your heart. But I am still a man and I would fight for my freedom. Perhaps some of your own young men feel the same, or perhaps, like you, they are for waiting. Let us see."

His fiery eyes challenged Old Johannes' son at the door. The young man looked hesitantly at his father and then at Jan. Suddenly he flung back his head and said:

"I am with Jan. I'm for fighting."

"Good man, Paul," Jan said. "I thought you were a man."

"And what will you fight for?" Old Johannes stared hard at his son.

There was a long pause, then the young man said:

"To be men."

"And will the fighting make you a man, my son?"

The young man's eyes appealed to Jan.

"Yes," Jan said. "Fighting for what you want is the way of a man. It is my way and I am a man. Fighting is the way to freedom."

"Even when you can be free without fighting?....~~11~~ And tell me, Jan, what is freedom? What do you mean when you say freedom? Tell me so that these others can hear too."

For a long time the two men stared at each other. The ~~basic~~ hostility that was between them, that they had ~~both~~ hidden, was in the open now. ~~It showed in their eyes and in the bearing of their bodies.~~

"I am waiting to hear you," Old Johannes said.

~~There was another long silence, then~~ Jan spoke in anger:

"Enough of talking! You have too many words Johannes. You are afraid and you hide behind words. Your son, Paul is with me." His eyes ran over the other men. "Who else is with me?"

Johannes turned to the others.

"Yes, who else, beside my son Paul, is with Jan?"

There was a long silence while nobody spoke.

"It is only Paul," Johannes said at last.

Jan's eyes flashed once round the room, then he straightened himself and walked out. At the door he paused and looked at Paul.

, "Coming, Paul?"

"You are free to go," Old Johannes said.

Paul cast his eyes from side to side, cornered and uncertain.

"You are free to go," Old Johannes repeated.

"I have a wife and a child," Paul said hurriedly.

"I will take care of them," Old Johannes said.

"Come, Paul," Jan said.

"No. I will stay with my people," Paul said.

Jan's lips twisted scornfully. Without a further word he walked round the shack toward his horse.

Paul looked anxiously at his father, ~~eager for a word of~~

only jumped into ~~these~~ ^{his} old eyes when they looked at the others in the shack.

^{asked:}
A little girl left her mother's side. She went to the old man and looked up into his face. Her round eyes were big and innocent.

"What is freedom, papa Johannes? "

The old man smiled and fingered his chin. This was the question he had asked Jan. What is freedom? He sensed that all the others were as anxious to know the meaning of freedom as the child who had asked. What is freedom? He tried to think about it. He knew it was something he felt, something deep inside him.

Val. 7 Having it or not ~~having~~ it made a difference to the way a man felt about the food he ate, about the words he spoke, about the wind and the rain on his face, about the way he looked at children in their play, about the way he kissed his woman and the way he walked and the look in his eyes. That he knew, but how to tell them that, how to make them understand that, that was the difficulty.

"It is many things to many people," he said slowly, but even as he said it he knew it meant nothing real to them. Suddenly a vision of the house in the valley shot into his mind. Yes, that would do it. That was the way he could tell them. That was the way he would tell them.

"Come with me," he said. "Come with me and I will show you what I mean."

He took the little girl's hand and led the way out of the shack. They went past Paul at the door, ~~without looking at him~~. The others fell in behind the old man and the little girl. Paul followed. And the procession that humbered fifteen of the twenty-five slaves owned by Kasper Jansen and his family, moved slowly up the side of

the mountain till they stood where they could see the whole valley, and, far in its recesses, the sprawling white farmstead ~~that nestled there.~~

The morning sun had climbed to a point almost directly overhead and beat down hotly on them and on the valley and on everything in it. It threw a hard and brilliant light over the land and some shaded their eyes as they looked. The blue of the sky was bright.

"Look at it," Old Johannes said. "Do not look at the house only. Look at the house and the earth and the trees and the beasts. All that you see belong^s to the Jansens, to Kasper Jansen and his family. Yet we, all of us, we built the house and tilled the earth and got rid of the weeds and planted the food and looked after the cattle.

"Think, my people. Would it be so wrong for that to belong to us? We made it.

"Before I was caught and made a slave, what I made was mine. If I built a house, it was mine; if I planted a tree, it was mine. And no one could come and take what I had made from me.

"Often have I heard Kasper Jansen and his friends talk about freedom. But for them it is something else. They have the valley and the house and the earth and what grows in it. Perhaps if we had it too, freedom might mean something else. I don't know."

He turned his eyes to the little girl and put his hand lightly on her head.

"The child says 'what is freedom, papa?' I say: when that valley belongs to us, and that house belongs to us, and when the things we build and the food we grow is ours, and when we and our children can eat and sleep in that house and there is no Baas Koos

and no Baas Kasper to take what is ours, I say that is freedom. That is the kind of freedom I want for my children and my wife and myself and for all of you. It is the kind of freedom Jan cannot understand. Jan's freedom says burn the house and the grain. Mine says let us live in the house and eat the grain."

"But will they let us?" the little girl's mother asked.

START
"Think, my sister, when we are freed there will be only three of them and a little child. They will have to till the earth to feed themselves. They will have to watch the cattle. And night and day there will have to be a guard at the mouth of the valley to watch for and fight off the attacks of Bushmen and other roving black men. You see, they cannot do that. If they have to choose between us leaving, and them leaving, they will go and all this will be ours. And there are enough of us to guard ourselves and work for ourselves. We have been doing it for them. When they go we will do it for ourselves."

"I have thought long of this, now it is here and this valley can be our own. That is the reason why I was not with Jan when he talked about the rising of the slaves on the lonely farms. There is no need for the slaves on the lonely farms to rise. There is only need for them to be together and to understand."

Paul, who had remained in the background, pushed his way forward till he stood facing his father.

"Forgive me, father, I did not understand."

"There is nothing to forgive," the old man said. "As you say, you did not understand. But when I die I do not want you to take my place. In that there will be great danger for our people. I have watched the young men and I will tell you who is to take my place. When I am certain that he will be good for my people, I will tell

you who he is. You are my son, but there is too much fire in your blood and not enough ice in your brain.... Now we will go back to our work. Everything must be as it has always been."

The people stepped aside and old ^{Johannes} Jan and the little girl led the procession down toward the slave shack.

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From the stoep of the house Kasper and his young brother, Koos, and his wife Anna, watched the procession of slaves moving down the side of the mountain.

"I told you they know something," Koos said.

"Just because they went up the mountain," Kasper retorted.

"They know something," Koos insisted. He remembered the guns.

"And it was you who taught them to use arms."

"And where would we have been in that first kaffir raid if they had not been here to defend us?"

"You said you could trust Johannes," Anna said, looking at her husband.

"Yes, I can, but I don't know how far. Let us understand all about this Cape Town affair before going further."

He moved back into the shaded part of the stoep, pulled up a rough hand-made chair and sat on it, back to front, his arms folded over the back-rest of the chair. The hard questioning light in his eyes eased a little as he saw his son playing out there in the warm summer sun with the little black boy who was Old Johannes' grandson. A part of his mind said: In a year's time I will give him Young Johannes as his personal slave.

Anna turned toward the door. ^{Kasper}~~Jansen~~ reached out and caught her arm. The intimacy that had begun that morning was still with them, still lingered over them and made their relationship seem as fresh as when it began that far-off day he first set eyes on her.

"Stay," he said. He wondered what made him say that. Her business was in the kitchen, not among the affairs of men.

Koos took out his clay pipe and cut a piece of tobacco.

Anna drew up the little bench and sat beside Kasper in the shade. With a graceful leap Koos was astride the broad veranda railing and perched there. Kasper reached into his shirt pocket and bit off a piece of tobacco.

Gal. 8 They sat thus. Silence was over them. Only the laughter of the two children, the black boy and the white, stirred the silence now and then. And as they played, the passing of time was shown by the changing and shifting of their shadows. At first the shadows were short and fat. Then, gradually, imperceptibly, they grew taller and thinner. The yellow sunflowers straightened their slim green bodies and turned their faces upward, to where the sun was. From all around came the gay music of the birds. They sang as though their hearts would break of sheer happiness.

Anna moved and looked from Kasper to Koos. It seemed that the two men would never start talking. Each ~~sat as though~~^{was} completely clothed in his own thoughts, a quiet that went beyond the quiet of silence seemed to flow from them. It was a characteristic that she had noticed even in their father when he was alive. She thought: perhaps I will become like them in time. She looked out to where her son played and wondered if he too, would have the quiet of the Jansens about him when he grew up. That brought her back sharply to Koos' return and the fright he had given her. He had looked out of the window and seen Stefan playing with the little black Young Johannes and said:

"Watch out for the blacks!" ~~everyone of them; even that little one.~~ ^{had} Something in his voice had shaken her so much it robbed her of all reason. She had dashed out of the room and only stopped to think when Stefan was firmly clasped to her bosom. But Koos was like that. That was the difference between Koos and

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Kasper. Kasper waited for things to happen; Koos was always reaching out for things, always saying they were going to happen before they did. She had not been able to understand his fears when Kasper armed the slaves and taught them to use the rifles.

Now she was beginning to understand. Yet there was nothing else they could have done. They would have been killed by now if they had not done so. Even Koos had to admit that. And there was little Stefan playing peacefully in the summer sun now. Surely nothing that happened in Cape Town could affect their peaceful and quiet life here. Cape Town was so far away. Things could not reach here from Cape Town. Surely things could not. Or could they?...She turned her eyes to the two men. Each was still lost in his own silent immobility. She had seen them sit like that for hours at the end of a day's work. She knew they could do it now. But she could not.

"What does it mean, Kasper?" To her, her voice sounded terribly loud as it cut through their silence.

Koos raised his head and looked at her in mild surprise. ~~It was not really surprise, it was just a habit of his.~~ Kasper moved in his chair, slowly, as he did everything. ~~It was just a movement, nothing else.~~

"We are so far from Cape Town," Anna said. "Can they reach us?"

"We must understand," Kasper said.

"Can they reach us?" Anna repeated.

Kasper ignored her.

"Now, Koos."

Koos said: "Ja."

Anna sighed inwardly and sat back. This was the way they did things. They understood each other. Koos who was fast and impatient

with everything and everybody else had limitless patience with the slow ways of Kasper. She had stopped wondering about the reasons for this. She leaned back, closed her eyes and listened.

"If I'm wrong. ~~h~~!"

"I will tell you."

"Good. The slaves are to be freed."

"Yes."

"They are to be freed and made equal with the whites."

"Yes."

"They are to be given our land."

"No."

"Then what."

"They are to be given a piece of land under the Government."

"Whose land?"

"Government land they say."

"Who say?"

"The Government."

"What do the Landdrosts and the Heemraden say about it?"

"They have no more voice."

"But they are our voice. Always have been."

"I can only tell you what I found out in Cape Town."

"And that is that we have no more Burgher Senate."

"Yes. And we must only speak English in court."

"Go on."

"If you want to write to the Government you must write in English."

"If not?"

"Then don't write. They will not read it."

Kasper turned to his wife. "Can you write English?"

Anna shook her head.

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"Read?"

Again she made the negative motion.

"Do you know anybody who can?"

"No."

Kasper turned to Koos.

"Go on."

"The slaves?"

"No, the other business."

"They now have a supreme court and judges will be appointed from England and we will not have any say. They will have only jurymen who can speak English and Worcester circuit court cases will go to Cape Town where people speak English."

"How are we to defend ourselves against black raiders?"

"It is a crime for Veldkornets to call on burghers to follow and punish black raiders."

"And the slaves are to be free."

"Yes. And our equals."

"In every way?"

"In every way."

"What does that mean?" Anna asked.

"Nobody knows," Koos said. "In Cape Town there are thousands of coloureds, blacks and hottentots wandering about. They don't have to carry passes any more. It is not safe for white womenfolk to be out after dark."

"When does all this happen?" Kasper asked.

Koos smiled bitterly.

"It has happened."

"Has happened?"

"Yes. Nearly a year ago."

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"My God!" Kasper said.

"Nearly a year ago," Koos said slowly and deliberately. "The law that makes Old Johannes and every black slave here free and your equal, brother Kasper, came into force. The exact date was the first of December in the year of our Lord eighteen-hundred and thirty-four, just under a year ago."

"What does this mean?"

"That many of us have broken the new law from England for nearly a year. It also means, Kasper, that Old Johannes and the other blacks can go to Cape Town and have us dragged before the Englishman's court where we will have to defend ourselves in English. And do you think the court will really listen to our side of the story?"

In the silence that followed Koos's last words, Anna looked from one brother to the other. To her and to them this was the end of their world. That much she understood without quite understanding all of it. Yet these two men of hers who understood the whole thing fully were talking as though they were carrying on a casual conversation. That she had never been able to understand. To do things calmly, yes. But to talk about things as calmly as they did, no. She thought: perhaps that is part of the difference between men and women.

"You said something about compensation," Kasper said.

Koos nodded.

"Yes, they are good. They are very good, these English. They say: 'All slaves are to be freed. But we know all your wealth is in your slaves so we are going to pay you for taking your slaves from you. We are going to put a little over a million pounds aside for you to compensate you for your slaves. Now, let us see: in the

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whole of the country there are roughly fifty thousand slaves, perhaps a little more, but let's say fifty thousand. Good. Now all you have to do is find the money to come to England and prove your claim for compensation and then we will let you have your share of the little over a million pounds that we have specially set aside for you."

"And that is what is to happen?"

"Yes, Kasper, that is what is to happen."

"My God! But they are devils."

"Amen," Koos said.

"But so many people will be poor," Anna said.

"Are poor, Anna," Koos said.

Kasper stared out across space to where his son was playing. Just a little while ago he had thought of giving Young Johannes to his son as a personal slave. Now the English law said they were equals and had the same rights. What was the meaning of all this? What did it mean and where would it end? What of this house they had built, this farm that was theirs? What of all that had gone into the building of this home? What of the slaves who were now free according to the new law?

As though picking up his thoughts, Koos said,

"We must do something about the slaves."

"Yes."

"Those rifles, Kasper."

"I know."

"They're all stacked up in a row."

"Enough of that!"

"You don't think I'm afraid, do you?"

"No."

"I could not help looking at them."

"I said enough of that, Koos."

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"But they are there, Kasper, they are there."

"Get out of here," His voice had a slight edge to it. "See what's going on in the mielie fields."

Koos jumped off his perch.

"I'd better take a gun," he said.

"No."

"A short one then."

"No."

Koos shrugged slightly, pushed his hands into his pockets and went off.

"He means well," Anna said.

"I know."

"Don't let him anger you."

"He doesn't."

"Kasper ~~...~~"

"Ja."

"What does all this mean?"

"Trouble, Anna, more trouble than we know."

"What kind?"

"I don't know."

"And our home, Kasper?"

"I must think, Anna, I must think... One thing I know. We should have died, all of us, rather than let the British take the Colony for the second time. That was our mistake."

He got up and went off the stoep. Anna sat staring into space, lost in the suddenness with which this life of theirs that was ^{so} full of order and quiet peace was coming to an end. Their slaves had been a symbol of security, their protection from marauding bands. Now their slaves were just one more danger and all security

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was gone.

Kasper paused and turned to her just before getting out of sight round the corner of the house.

"Anna," he called.

She turned her head to him.

"Don't be afraid. Keep your eye on the boy and everything will be ~~all right~~ alright."

After he had gone Anna leaned back and allowed the deep warmth his words had touched in her to overflow. Passion, compassion, love and a strangely peaceful feeling hung over her. She marvelled at this, marvelled that a few words from another person could do this to her.

"Don't be afraid," she whispered. "Keep your eye on the boy and everything will be ~~all right~~ alright."

There had been something in Kasper's voice that made those words special. Because of the something that had been in his voice, she knew she would carry those words with her ~~to the end of her~~ ^{for a long} time. ~~What it was and why she could not say. But she knew. She~~ repeated them again, rolled them over in her mind, fondled them and lingered lovingly over that strange new note that had been in his voice.

And while Anna dreamed, Kasper hurried round the house and entered a room by the side door. On tip-toe he went into their bedroom and opened the old Boer chest that held all the family's dearest possessions. From the bottom of the chest, he took two pistols. He examined them. Both were in working order. He pushed them inside his shirt. As quietly as he had entered the room, he left it.

Hurriedly he followed the direction Koos had taken. Even

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his haste had an air of slowness about it. ~~But it was only an air.~~

He passed two slaves at work in the potato field. When he had gone a little way he stopped and looked back. Both slaves had got up from their crouching position and were looking at him. His right hand moved feverishly. He was sure they could not have seen the bulge of the pistols or the meaning of that right-handed motion.

He wondered what they thought, and as he wondered, a great realisation shook him. He had never before thought of them as people with thoughts and feelings. Never wondered what went on under those dark brows. What had they been thinking all this time? What had they been planning? What sort of brains did they have? They didn't feel like white men, white men would never submit to slavery. White men were different. But what were their thoughts?

He turned and carried on past the orchards, past the horses' grazing ground, through the sheep-pens, and on, across the stream that flowed from the mountainside till he reached the mielie fields. In the distance he saw Koos standing over a bunch of slaves at work.

"Koos!" he shouted.

Koos looked up and waved.

"Come here!"

Koos walked hurriedly across the space that separated them. Overhead the sun was at its highest. A gentle breeze ran like a stream through the valley. It made the noonday sun bearable. A solitary eagle circled the valley twice then made off to the east. It climbed higher and higher, climbed till it was only a speck of dark blue against the light blue of the sky, climbed till it had become a part of the pale blue uniformity of the cloudless skies.

When Kasper turned his eyes from the sky Koos had covered the space that separated them. He took one pistol from his shirt and

front and gave it to Koos.

"Put it away."

"The post?"

Kasper nodded.

"The rifles?"

"And the powder."

"Good... I wish we had one more white man."

"Koos... ~~What~~ What are they doing in Cape Town about this? Are they lying down under it?"

They swung round and made for the stable. For a while they walked in silence. Koos, for all his speed of movement, had to hurry to keep up with the apparently slow Kasper. They crossed the stream, turned left, then right.

"I was waiting for you to ask, Kasper."

"Anna was there."

"Yes... ~~But~~ Slave-owners held a number of meetings before the law came into force. But it didn't help. Nothing they said or did or tried to do helped. Then a few families started trekking. And now, Kasper, in Cape Town the cry is: To the North! Away from the English, away from the rule of the Englishmen!"

"Then it is trekking again."

"Not just trekking, Kasper. A great trek. The trek of a whole people. You should have heard Predikant Smit, Kasper. He opened the Good Book and turned his eyes to sky and told about the Chosen People of God who went into the wilderness and made it a place of glory. He told how they left their bondage behind them and went out to look for a new land and a new home.... You should have heard him, Kasper. He was seeing things. And all around thousands of men and women and children stood.... And then he talked about the Kaffirs; and he

still
 cursed them with the word of God. And then he turned the word of God against those who want to make the Kaffirs our equal. And he said, ~~Y~~ Rather the last drop of our blood, rather the end of our people so that there is not a single Afrikaner left on the earth, rather the death of every well-beloved child of Afrikanerdom yea even unto the smallest babe, rather that than the degeneration of our people and the fouling of our blood and stock. Let others mix their blood with Kaffirs. For us there will never be any equality. Never! And from the people there came the deepest Amen I have ever heard.

"And then he told about the things we all knew, even describing the wagons and all sorts of little things. He talked as though he were explaining about us to somebody else. And even though we knew certain things, like about wagons, he made it sound as if it were all new to us. And it was new, and we listened."

And as he tried to tell Kasper, the images the preacher had built up ran through his mind. But what he said did not bring up the whole picture. He had no words for the whole.

No words with which to say that the population of the Cape Colony was, in the closing days of the year 1835, just over 26,000 people and that of these over 10,000 Boers pulled up their roots and moved, leaving homes and unharvested fields behind them.

He knew, and therefore did not bother to say, that they journeyed by ox-drawn wagons, a team of eight or ten pulling each wagon. The small, light wagons were familiar to him, with the rear end covered by canvas pulled taut over bent willow wands. He knew that would be the home on wheels, that there, under the canvas cover the women of each wagon would live and sleep and carry on the functions of a housewife. He did not bother to tell Kasper, as the

preacher had done with his audience, that the rear wheels were twice as big as the front wheels, and the wooden brake on the back wheels would be reinforced by chain locks in case of need. All this they knew for it was part of their lives.

He said only that there would be no kaffir voorlooper to lead each team. Young Boer children would perform the task. And where there were no children, women ^{or some} other member of the family would have to do it.

When he stopped speaking, Kasper asked:

"And all our people are trekking?"

"Yes. Even while I was in Cape Town families were moving out each day."

"All going North?"

"All going North."

"And who is the leader?"

"There is no leader."

"Just the people?"

"Yes, just the people."

They reached the stable. The stableboy ran forward, bowing with every step he took.

"Our horses!" Koos said sharply.

The boy hurried away and began to saddle the horses.

"And what are the English doing?" Kasper asked.

"Nothing."

The boy led the horse forward. The two men mounted and rode across the valley toward the guard-post at its entrance. They rode easily, knee to knee, like men who had grown up in the saddle. They did not speak. Each was wrapped in his own brooding thoughts. And

over them, brooding with them but remote from them, was the vast silence of the open. It was a silence that reached beyond the terrible, beyond the frightening, ~~and~~. A silence that was too powerful to have personality. It was unutterably cold, unutterably aloof.

When they reached the post the two slaves who were always on guard ran forward and held their horses.

"Where's Johannes?" Kasper asked.

Before either of the two men could answer, Johannes came out of the shack. Behind him was his son and three other young men.

"Why are they here?" Kasper asked, staring at the four young men.

"They are the night guard, Baas Kasper."

"Where are the others?" Kasper walked to the shack and looked into to it. It was empty.

"They are out doing their work, Baas Kasper," Johannes said.

Kasper led the way round the shack to the back. Old Ma Johannes and two young women were preparing the slaves' midday meal. Near them three children played.

"There are none who should not be here," Johannes said mildly.

Anger flashed in Koos's eyes. Kasper gave Johannes a cold look then turned back to watch the three women at work.

"Why three of them?"

"There are over twenty slaves to be fed, Baas Kasper."

It crossed Kasper's mind that three was a reasonable number to cook for over twenty. But the thought angered him. He tried to push it aside but ~~is~~ persisted. Johannes was right. But what right had he to be right? He was a slave.

"Are you arguing with me?"

"No, my Baas."

"I say three are too many." And while he said it he knew that it was a lie, that he didn't mean it, that he wished he hadn't said it. How to undo it?

"Yes, Baas Kasper."

"Well...!"

Johannes turned to one of the two young women.

"Flora, go to the house and tell Lena you are to do the washing"

~~Without a word,~~ Flora left her work and made off for the farm⁷ house. Kasper led the way round to the front of the shack again. His anger was at boiling point. The business about Flora made him hate Old Johannes with a bitterly personal hatred.

He noticed that Johannes' son, Paul, had placed himself in a position near the rifles while they had been at the back of the shack. His eyes ran over the other slaves. Altogether there were six of them as well as Johannes. The two women at the back didn't matter. From the corner of his eyes he saw Kboos leaning against his horse in such a way that his right hand was almost inside his open shirtfront. He turned his eyes ~~fully~~ on Johannes while his mind worked out how long it would take for Paul to reach a rifle and fire it

"Johannes."

"Baas Kasper?"

"I want to ask you something."

"Yes, Baas Kasper?"

Kasper paused and thought. After a while he said:

"Do you know about this Cape Town business?"

"About the slaves, Baas Kasper?"

"Yes, about the slaves," Kasper said sharply.

Johannes pulled himself up and raised his eyes till he looked fully at his master.

"Yes, I know about that."

Kasper noted the subtle change in ~~both~~ Johannes's words and bearing.

"You know you are free."

So it's already happened, Johannes thought.

"Yes, I know that."

"You know you've been free for nearly a year."

There was a singing noise in Johannes's head and he wanted something to lean on suddenly. But none of the wonder and bewilderment that was in his heart and brain showed on his face.

"Yes, I know that too," he said calmly.

"So...." Kasper said and paused. "And how long have you known all this?"

"A freed slave passed here last night," Johannes said.

Kasper's eyes bored into the eyes of the old man who had been till that minute, the leader and most trusted of his slaves. Always when he stared hard at the old man, the old man had dropped his eyes. He expected it to happen now. It would give him just that touch of submission he needed to force the old man back to where he belonged. No matter what the law said. In his heart and mind he was a slave and he would react like a slave. Let him lower his eyes. Force him to do so and after that he would say 'Baas Kasper' as he had done for years. No words on paper could alter that. He was a slave and he had the mind of a slave.... His eyes bored into those of the old man. He brought all the force of his will into the cold stare.

But those watery old eyes were not lowered. There was still respect in them, but they were not lowered.

A violent urge to strike the old man down took hold of

Kasper. He wanted to force the old man to his knees, to hammer him into submission with the cold force of his hard fists. But there were ~~six~~ other slaves standing by and it would not suit his plans. He raised his eyes till he looked at the point of a piece of rock that was in a line just above the old man's head. And in the shifting of his eyes he sensed the first victory of the old slave.

"So....~~W~~ The law says you are free now. What are you going to do?"

"We plan to go away," Johannes said. "We hear the Government is giving land to freed slaves. And if they work the land well it becomes theirs for always and their children can have it after them. We will go and get some of that land and work for ourselves."

"You and your family?"

"I speak for all of us."

"So.... And when will you go?"

Gulp
The old man answered as though thinking aloud.

"If we leave now you will be alone; just two men, a woman and a child. If there were Kaffir raids like the last two, what would happen? And three people cannot do all the work on the farm. So it was hard for us to decide about going till you had decided what you would do."

"But you are going?"

"Yes, we are all going. And now that you know, I think we will go seven days from today. That will give you time to make your plans."

"And between now and then?"

"I will see that everyone carries on his work as if nothing has happened."

"You can make them do anything, can't you?" Koos said bitterly.

"They will obey me," Johannes said gravely.

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"Tell me, Johannes," Koos said. "Are you sure you are staying the seven days out of concern for us? Or is it that you would like to see us out of the valley that you might rule as master?"

"Koos!" Kasper said sharply.

Paul made a move. Johannes steadied his son with his eyes.

"Get those rifles, Koos, and the powder," Kasper said.

Koos straightened up. Paul jumped, grabbed a rifle, and had it half-way to his shoulder when Koos fired. The pistol-sound tore through the silence and was then consumed by it. The half-raised rifle slipped from Paul's fingers and touched earth before his body did so. Kasper drew his pistol and centred it on Johannes while Koos reloaded his. On the ground, in a pool of blood that shrouded his head and grew larger by the minute, Paul lay dying. The pistol wound began low of his left cheek and climbed to his ear.

~~Electric tension was in the air.~~ The two white men kept their eyes on the slaves, ready for the first move. A move seemed inevitable. It was carried in the keyed-up tension in every single one of the five young slaves. They could not maintain that tension long without doing something. ~~The white men waited for that something, that move.~~ And with the passing seconds the strain of waiting grew taut. Something had to snap soon now.

"If any of you move Johannes dies," Kasper declared.

Johannes turned his eyes to his son and sighed. He lowered his head to his chest. We must watch our children die, he thought. Always, we must watch our children die. We must bring them into the world and see them grow up and watch them die. He raised his eyes to Kasper Jansen's face and his thoughts flowed on. And you, white man, I could take your red neck between my bare hands and squeeze it and squeeze it. That is what I would like to do. There is not

much you can do to me. Oh God! Let me live long enough that I might kill a Jansen....

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His old woman came round the side of the shack. ~~Without a word~~ She went on her knees beside her dying son and lifted his bloody head to her lap. Johannes looked at his wife and as he did so he could almost feel a new strength and stiffness creep through his body. It seeped into his fingers and toes, grew tight across his chest, and played a tattoo under his left ribs.

We want the house in the valley, he told himself. Once more he lifted his eyes to Kasper Jansen's face.

"You can put away your pistols, Jansen. You have killed my son. That's what you wanted to do. You've done it. Now you can put away your pistols."

"Get the rifles," Kasper said to Koos.

"They're coming, Kasper," Koos said.

Kasper turned his head hurriedly. Yes, they were coming, the whole lot of them. In a body they moved toward the shack. A solid body of slow-moving ~~black~~ slaves. Kasper turned slightly so that he could keep his eyes on both the oncoming body of slaves as well as Old Johannes.

"What shall we do?" Koos asked.

"Put away your guns," Johannes said.

The slaves were close now. Their bare feet thudded dully on the sandy earth.

"Stop!" Kasper roared.

The old woman on the ground raised her eyes to her husband and cried out pitiously:

"My son. My son. He is dead....."

"Witbooi," Johannes said. "Go to the house and tell Lena her

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husband is dead. Tell her to bring her son that he might touch his father's warm flesh before it grows cold."

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A youth detached himself from the body of slaves.

"No!" Kasper shouted.

"Go," Johannes said. "You are a free man now. Go."

Kasper raised his pistol deliberately. He aimed carefully for Johannes' heart.

"Listen," Johannes said. *His voice was calm.* ~~There was a calm dignity in his voice.~~

"If Kasper Jansen shoots me, he will need to reload before he can kill anybody else. Koos Jansen can kill only one other person. You are many. Kill them and then go to the house but do not touch the woman or the child. They have not harmed or spilled our blood. Send them out of the valley with nothing. That is my last order if Kasper Jansen kills me. Now go, Witbooi."

Witbooi turned and made off toward the farmhouse. Kasper lowered his pistol.

"You black devil," Koos spat out.

"You white killer," Johannes said ~~calmly~~.

"What are you going to do?" Kasper asked.

"You have killed my son. If you had not done so I would have stopped him from harming you and made him give you your rifles, they were yours. But you have killed him. He has bought those rifles with his life. The life of a free man has paid for those rifles. They are ours now. You will have to kill us all before you can have them."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, we will not harm you...." No, there is one more thing. All the slaves will be called in and none of them will go out to work again for you. They are not slaves any longer. They are free men."

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"Is that all?"

"Yes, that is all."

A feeling was born in Kasper Jansen that minute. ~~A feeling so powerful and positive that it drowned all else in him.~~ It took hold of him with the sharply painful pointedness of a needle pressed into man's most tender and sensitive organ. And like the pain in such an operation it spread to all parts of his body, to his brain and heart, to every sensitive little vein in him, it spread till it became part of him, part of the tissue and texture that went into the making of the man Kasper Jansen. That feeling was directed at the old man who stood facing him, the old man who had been his slave, the old man he had felt he could trust above all the other slaves. The old man's skin was black. For Kasper Jansen the old man became a symbol of all men with black skins. And the agency that had made it possible for the old man to stand facing him, to that, too, a share of this feeling was directed. But mainly it was directed against this old man whose face was black.

He had fed and clothed that old man. He had put him in a position of privilege. He, Kasper Jansen, had accorded the old man a position far above that, of a slave. In sickness he had gone to sit by the old man and speak to him as one man to another. In health he had shared his precious tobacco with the old man....

There was a bleakness in his eyes as he took a last lingering look at the lined old black face in front of him.

He pushed the pistol into his belt, turned, and made for his horse.

"Come, Koos," he said.

He swung into the saddle and touched the horse's flanks with his heels. The horse moved forward. Beside him and a little to the

rear rode Koos. The body of slaves was directly in their way. They made no move to let them pass. I am not going round them, Kasper thought. He tugged at his reins. The horse came to a stop. He half-turned in his saddle and looked at Old Johannes.

"Let them pass," Johannes said.

The slaves divided to make a pathway and the two white men rode through without a backward look.

When the two white men were out of sight all eyes turned to Old Johannes. He walked heavily to where the body of his son lay. He put one hand on his old wife's head and looked ~~at~~ the others who had come closer to look at the lifeless body of Paul.

"I told him," Johannes said. "I told him as I told you that only if we are united and act together would we win. But there was too much fire in his blood and no ice in his brain. And now he ~~is~~ ^{lies} dead. And it was a life thrown away....." The old man paused and closed his eyes, then he opened them and said vigorously: "I would be so angry with him if he were alive now!"

A woman came running along the sandy path that led from the farm-house to the slave shack at the outpost of the valley. Behind her hurried a man with a child in his arms. It was the slave-girl Lena, woman of the dead Paul and mother of Old Johannes's grandson, Young Johannes. She ran the last few yards. The body of people made way for her. And as she ran she called her man's name. Her voice was louder and more tortured each time she called:

"Paul! Paul! Paul! Paul! Paul!"

She fell on the body ~~of her man~~ and scratched it, and pulled it, and shook it, and slobbered over it, as though her frenzy might force life back into it. At last, as though it had

dawned on her that nothing can call back the dead, she relaxed. After a while she dragged herself to her feet, and turned to Old Johannes.

, "Let Young Johannes touch his father," the old man said.

Lena took the small brown boy by the hand and led him to where his father lay. She knelt down in the sand. She took the child's right hand in her own, and together, they pressed the lids over the staring eyes of the dead man. When they removed their hands the man's eyes were closed as though in sleep.

Old Johannes took the young child in his arms and spoke to his people.

"I am old, but I have lived to see the day of our freedom! I may not live long after this. But I have seen this day and I want to charge you with one thing. You, Lena, are the one to do this. But I want all you others to bear witness and see to it that it is done when I am gone. It is about this child whose father lies there.

"I want this child to know how his father died and why. I want this child, when he grows up, to know that his father bought six rifles and two boxes of powder with his life. I want him to know the name of the man who killed his father. I want this child to know that he was born in slavery and that on the day of freedom he closed his father's eyes. And I want this child to be charged to tell his child so that it should be known as long as there are descendants of Old Johannes and his son Paul who bought six rifles with his life....

"Now, my people, There is much to do. Much fighting and thinking and planning. Always now we must watch. The Jansens and the other white folk will not leave us in peace. Always we must watch or our freedom will go as quickly as it came. And the Boers will hate us with a hatred that is strong. Don't forget that ever. And don't let

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my descendants forget.

"Now for the work. There must be guards to watch the house. We must dig the earth here, near the mountain, for our food. When the Jansens have gone we will go into the valley. But first we will bury my son." The old man raised his eyes to the mountainside. "We will bury him where we were this morning when the child asked me what is freedom. And we will call the place The Place of Freedom."

Two men got spades and moved to the side of the mountain. ~~They were on their way~~ to dig the first grave in The Place of Freedom. Others ~~men~~ took up the body of Paul and took it into the shack where the women would wash it, for it is a strange custom of humans that all bodies be washed before they are returned to the earth from which they came.....! Wash me that I might be eaten by worms.....! Wash me that I may rot cleanly.... In life let me live in dirt.... In death, wash me.....

space > When Kasper and Koos returned to the house Anna was waiting for them. The sound of the pistol shot had worried her. And when the slave, Witbooi, had arrived and told Lena that her man was dead, worry had turned into alarm and anxiety. She ran out to meet her ~~men~~ as they rode up.

One look at Kasper's face told her that something very profound had happened. She had never seen him look so very much like Koos. That bleakness that was so permanent in Koos's eyes was in his now. And there was a strange, new, cold aloofness flowing from him. It flashed through her mind that here was a hard man, a man with steel in his heart. There was something knifelike about this hardness. It jabbed and cut at her as it would jab and cut at everybody else it made contact with. Hurriedly she looked at Koos. In his eyes she saw a new respect for his brother, a respect

amounting almost to open worship. Something tight pressed against her heart and was gone. In its place came a dull, disappointed sadness. ~~She knew suddenly, instinctively, that the intimacy of that morning would not come back again. It had taken nearly eight years to arrive at the point they had reached that morning. Now, she knew, it would not come back again.~~ Something new had entered into the personality of the man who had been her husband for eight years. It was something she had sensed in Koos. The very quality that had made it impossible for her ever to really like him or get close to him. That same quality was now in Kasper. Only, it was magnified to such a degree that it reached out and beat against her. It forced her to keep a distance between them; it pushed her eyes away from his so that they slid quickly past his instead of meeting them.

"What happened?" she asked heavily.

"That damned Johannes," Kasper said and went past her into the house.

"I heard a shot," she said.

"I got that Paul," Koos said. "He was jumping for a rifle."

She followed them into the house and got the food ready ~~for them~~. For a while they ate in silence. Suddenly Kasper pushed his food away ~~from him~~ and got up. Koos looked up briefly as Kasper went out then carried on with his eating. Anna left her place ^{and} went to the door.

"I should leave him alone," Koos said.

Anna hesitated, then went on.

"Really, Anna."

"She stopped."

"Why?"

"He has a lot to think about. Give him a little time. If you

want to know what happened, I'll tell you. Sit down. Carry on with your food."

Anna went back to her place and waited. Koos finished eating and then told her what had happened. When he had finished, she asked

"Did you have to kill him?"

"What else?"

"Perhaps you are right. But I wish you hadn't."

"Shoot first and speak afterwards. It's a good old Boer rule, Anna. Our forebears who had to fight the Kaffirs knew just how good it was."

"What will happen now?"

"That Johannes has his eye on this place, and he has six rifles. But for his own reasons he does not want to harm us now."

"So?"

"All they are going to do is to stop working for us. So that skepsel Johannes says. But they have the rifles. What we will do is what Kasper is thinking about. Perhaps we will trek. Perhaps we will stay and one of us will try to get some help, though from where, I don't know."

While Koos talked, Kasper came back into the room. He went to the window and looked out.

"They're on the mountainside again," he said without turning his head. "But they've also got a guard posted to watch us."

Koos and Anna joined him at the window.

"Over there," he said. "Look. By that big boulder to the left. You can't see him but you can see the rifle. See it?"

"Yes," Anna said.

"Yes," Koos said.

Anna raised her eyes to the mountainside.

"Looks like they're digging."

"Burying that Paul, I bet," Koos said.

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"Where is Stefan?" Kasper asked suddenly, looking at Anna.

"In the bedroom," she said. "Sleeping."

She looked curiously at her husband and wondered what had made him look at her so strangely when he had asked the question. And while she wondered, a part of her mind said: I wonder what he's decided. Really we all do what he decides. It's never been so clear to me before. Yet we've always been doing it. As a little girl we played house but it wasn't as it is now. How long ago it is since I played as a little girl. Little girls like to look at their frocks and prance around daintily. I was a little girl once. Little girl, play with your doll. He had a funny, rat-eaten beard, had the strange old Predikant who taught Japie and me to write. And such funny colour in it too. Japie, Japie you look like an Apie..... Apie, Apie, you look like Japie.....

She suppressed the gay smile that started ~~to come~~ from her heart and tried to pick out the words that Kasper had been saying. As she listened she realised she had lost some of them. She became a dutiful wife again, solid and firm and free of fancies. His words were the important things. On them hinged everything.

".....the sooner the better," he said. "And I have a special surprise for Mister Johannes. We will begin working on the wagon straightaway."

The trek, Anna told herself. The trek.

His voice came to her. "Don't let Stefan out of your sight, Anna. Watch over him every minute of the day. Rifles all the time, Koos. Pack everything you can, Anna. But remember everything will have to go on the wagon. Our plan is to leave the day after to-morrow!"

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"And the cattle?" Koos asked.

"With us," Kasper said. "You say we will meet other trekkers?"

Koos nodded.

"That is the answer, then. Till we meet other trekkers it will be difficult but after that it would be easier."

Koos nodded his agreement.

Anna thought of the other things, the little things that had no real value, that were not absolute necessities, but that went into the making of a home and that made the word ~~home~~ a special word with a special meaning. These were the things that had made up the little joys of her life; the things that made it different, therefore richer, than any other place that did not have those special little things.

Her eyes darted round the room and picked out some of these little things. Over there, near the window, was the clay flower pot Old Johannes had fashioned for her and in which she kept wild flowers. Its specialness came from the fact that while the clay was still wet, young Stefan had impressed his little hand on it. And there it was now. It would never change. Every time she looked at it, that far-off day when he had done it came back vividly and she could relive the past. Without the presence of that little hand on the claypot, it would not be the same, it could not be the same. It was the direct link with the past and the special link with that special day.

From the claypot, her eyes darted to his first clay wagon with its team of clay oxen. He had lost all interest in it. He did better wagons and oxen now. But that was the first set.... Then there was the doll above the fireplace. Her doll. The first one she had made for herself.... The house was full of things like that. Little

things that went into the completing of her world, little things that made it home. In her heart, she knew that most, if not all of them, would have to be left behind. But her heart rebelled.

"And the little things, Kasper?"

For a second it seemed that he understood ~~what she was talking about~~, then his eyes were bleak again.

"What is not necessary must be left."

What is not necessary must be left, her mind echoed his words.

The two men went away. In a dim, far-off manner, Anna listened to the sound of their movements and the other sounds they made in getting what they wanted. But it ~~all~~ seemed as though it all happened in a dream. She, Anna, was standing in the centre of the room, holding herself by gripping the back of a chair. Yet she was not really there. Or so it seemed. Really she was asleep or lost. Yes, that was it. She was lost. It's like a man walking along the road and suddenly finding that the earth is not beneath his feet and who does not fall but waits fearfully for the fall. And goes on waitin

"Wake up, Anna."

She knew it was her own voice, but there was an unreality about it. It came loudly to her, not from within, but from without, in ringing waves that echoed. She marvelled that the echoes should come toward her from the outside, instead of going to the outside from her.

The men came back into the room. They talked and she listened to their voices. She found herself answering them when they spoke to her. And yet it was not the Anna she knew who answered them. It was a strange woman.

Dimly her mind focussed on a small thing. It was a little round hole that seemed to come straight at her face, that seemed to force

her attention. The hole grew larger and longer, took shape and emerged in her mind as a rifle. Kasper was giving her a rifle. The new life fell into place. ~~(The earth was again beneath the feet of the man who had walked and suddenly found it not there.)~~

She took the rifle firmly in both hands. She held it a little away from her body, weighing and balancing it.

The two men went out of the room and out of the house with tools and rifles. ~~Automatically~~ She went to the little window. She raised the rifle to the ready and aimed at the spot where the black watcher was. She was alert yet completely relaxed. She waited.

The two men got warily off the stoep. Their bodies were bent double. They had their rifles ready for instant use. They moved forward a few yards like that. When nothing happened they straightened up and walked more normally, but they were still alert, still watchful. From the window Anna trained her rifle on the boulder behind which the black watcher was. And over the whole valley hung the unutterable silence that was now charged with a new tension.

The two men reached the ^{building} ~~outhouse~~ where the wagon was and went in. Anna turned from the window, walked to the fireplace and sat in Kasper's chair. Beside the chair was a little table. On this was the big old family Bible. Anna nursed the rifle on her lap and looked at the Bible. She recalled her father's favourite saying:

"With my rifle and my Bible, I fear no man, I fear no beast, I fear no spirit." She whispered it slowly.

She half-turned, reached over, and pulled the Bible till it slid onto her lap. It rested on top of the rifle. She turned the pages till she found what she wanted and read it slowly and softly:

"....God led the people ^{about} through the way of the wilderness...."

She read the rest in silence till she came to: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

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"He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, not the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."

She sat for a while staring at the words on the open page. And she and her family and all her people were the people about whom the Good Book spoke. They were going out into the wilderness and the Lord would guide them. Literally, He would guide them by day and by night. With my rifle and my Bible, her father had said. She knew now what he meant. It was not just a saying. It was a way of life.

She ~~folded~~ ^{closed} the Bible and replaced it. Carefully she put the rifle on a chair where she could reach it easily and quickly. She went into the bedroom and stood over her sleeping son for a while, then she turned away and began to get ready for the trek. There was so much to do. Much packing. Much sorting. Much digging to uproot all the years that had gone into the making of this ^{home} of theirs.

She pulled the old Boer family kist a little away from the wall, opened it, looked around the room, and brushed a loose strand of hair ~~away~~ from her forehead.

(Run on after 3rd paragraph on page 58)

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She thought of Kasper and his mountain. It was hard to ~~re~~ realise that it had all happened only this morning. Kasper and his mountain. Morning after morning, for years, he had climbed his mountain and stood like a tree against the sky till the early sun came ~~came~~ up. And this morning she had gone out and waited for him at the foot of the mountain. She had felt that if he were ever to tell her what went on in his mind up there, this was the morning. She had been right.

He had tried to tell her, awkwardly, why he went up there each morning. And through it, in spite of the awkward words, she had felt the sense of possession and power it gave him, ~~his~~ his contact with the earth, and his mastery over everything. And something more. Something she could only know by being up there with him and looking into his eyes.

His eyes had looked tenderly at her. For the first time in a very long time she had fallen in love with him all over again.

Then he had put his arm round her shoulders and said:

"If you like I will take you up tomorrow morning."

Her heart had warmed. For years she had want^{ed} that but she had known that he wanted to be alone up there.

Now she would never go up there with him, never know what magic his mountain held for him. . . .

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Night had fallen.....*mm*And it was the last night.....*mm*

She lay motionless. Beside her, Kasper turned. His snoring changed into a grunt, and then there was silence in the room. She listened to the silence. Every now and then the silence was interrupted by some little sound from the dining room. Koos was in there, keeping watch on the black watcher behind the boulder. In the corner, on his little bed, Stefan was fast asleep. He had slept all through the long night. But even his sleep was troubled. For a long while she had listened to his tossing and turning. Now he was peaceful.*mm*

~~She was calm now. At least, calmer than she had been earlier. There had been a time when her wakefulness had tortured her. She had lain there and tension had grown in her. A wild, desperate tension. It had grown and mounted till she wanted to shout out against it. Her body had grown hard and taut. Her heart had drummed loud against her ears. Her breathing had been disturbed. And her hand clammy with sweat. The bed had been hard and the pillow had hurt her neck. A strange restlessness had gnawed at her mind.~~

~~Now she was calm. The inner violence had passed suddenly. Just when she had tightened her fists and bitten her lip to keep her from screaming, it had passed and she had relaxed. Her body had flowed into the comfort of the soft bed. Her dread of sleeplessness had gone.~~

So now, she lay waiting for the dawn. She wouldn't sleep at all. But it didn't matter. It wasn't anything desperate any more. She was not afraid of not sleeping. Day would come and they would

move. In the meantime, she had to wait. That was all. (48)

In the other room Koos moved. ~~It was a slight sound but she heard it.~~ She closed her eyes and tried to fix his movements. He was moving away from the window. Where to? ~~Where?~~ Into the kitchen. Now it was very faint. Hardly any sound at all. He must have gone for a mug of coffee.... ~~Now he was back. It must have been for a mug of coffee.~~ That would help him keep awake. Only she didn't need coffee to keep awake.

These last two nights, tonight and last night, they were the only nights in all the long years of their marriage that Kasper had not been aware of her body.... A smile tugged at one corner of her mouth.... Always, in all the days of all the years, it had been the same. She would get into bed and he would come in and she would know. Every night had been like that first night. It had been different in a certain way, but underneath it had been the same.

That first night, now... How she had trembled. How violent had been the beat of her heart. Then he had come in. And suddenly she had been calm and quiet. He had been so much more worked up. He had been afraid. And when he had come into the blankets beside her, he had trembled all over. The beat of his heart had vibrated through his body. Funny how, because of his trembling and fear, she had known the right thing to do. It was something nobody had ever taught her about. But the warmth in him had called for an answer, and the fear that was in him had made her tenderly protective of his feeling. ~~(And when they did it, it was as though she had always known everything about it.)~~ And she had felt so good, afterwards, ~~when he lay spent beside her.~~ His weariness had been so contented. ~~That was how it had been that first time.~~

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The warmth of that first time had never left him. It had changed, become a little subdued, more controlled in his expression of it. And sometimes, she had sensed something new running through the warmth that was in him for her body. Sometimes, ~~at night~~ he had lain beside her and she had known that he wanted her. But he had stiffened his body and she had felt him fight against his desire ~~for her~~. She had lain relaxed, feeling the hardness of his body, sensing something like shame in him because he wanted her. Most times when he had felt like that he had ended by being rough in his lovemaking. ~~But he had never been able to resist it when there had been that sense of shame in him. The times he had not slept with her had been the times when he had not fought against the warmth he felt.....~~

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The big yellow moon ~~had~~ moved to a position from where its rays fell directly on the window. In the moonlight she turned her head slightly. Now she ~~could~~ look at the back of his head. The back of Stefan's head was just like that. They both tried to bore their heads into the pillow when they slept.

In the other room Koos coughed. He must be tired. Such a long time since he had taken over from Kasper at the window. Why couldn't she like Koos? She had tried ^{hard.} ~~to hard.~~

Gently, easily, not to disturb Kasper, she raised herself and climbed over him. There was no need to dress. Last night and tonight nobody had undressed. She went and looked at Stefan. He slept soundly. She went into the dining room.

The moonrays fell on Koos's face. Why couldn't she like him? "Anna," he whispered.

"I can't sleep. I'll watch. You go and rest for a while."

He was silent. She walked to the window and looked out. The

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outside ~~was~~ was bathed in a soft light that blurred everything.

"Sit with me," he said.

"No. You rest. There'll be a lot to do to-morrow." She did not look at him as he got up. It seemed a long time before he said:

All night
"Alright."

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"Is he still there?"

"I think so. You can't see anything except when they change guards. They've changed twice."

She took the rifle from him and moved so that he had to make way for her to get to the chair.

"Sure you don't want me to stay?"

"No. You go."

"Coffee?"

"No."

She listened to his light footfalls as he moved to his own room. ~~She listened to his movements till they faded into silence~~

She leaned back in the chair and looked through the window at the moon-blurred outside. Her eyes stayed on the rock where the unseen watcher was. The rifle rested lightly on her lap.

In a haze, her mind went back over the last two days. The life that had been theirs before had been their lives. Now? Now she did not know. Now there was no yardstick by which to measure life.

The last two days had been filled with tension. The black watcher behind the boulder had hemmed them in. He had pressed against their minds. He had been behind the words they had spoken. He had hovered over the meals they had taken. ~~(And, when she had gone to do her business in the lavatory, the black presence had been with her, driving her on, making it impossible for her to do it in~~

~~comfort.)~~ In the end it had robbed them of words for each other.
~~They had gone about without speaking. Words, too, had become~~
~~necessities, to be used only when they had to.~~

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Koos had been the first to show the strain. At supper, on the first night, he had jumped up and grabbed his rifle. He had said:

"I'm going to get that black bastard."

And Kasper, with something strangely new in him, had ordered Koos to sit down and finish his meal.

And later Koos had said bitterly:

"Why don't the devils attack us?"

She had seen Kasper's eyes straying to his mountain from time to time. She had grown aware of his ~~powerful~~ yearning to be up on his mountain peak. To be a tree up there. A tree on the highest point of the land.

He had promised to take her up there. He had promised to show her what he saw from up there. And she had promised herself to look into his eyes and see ~~from them~~ the things that made him go up there. But that was before their lives were no longer their lives.

And what would their ~~lives~~ be now? What would her life be?

She tried to think clearly and calmly..... How does one think of one's life? Can one hold it up and look at it and think about it? Where does one begin? And what does one use to think with?... No. That way she did not know how to get anywhere. There was only one way she knew... She had been brought to the valley as a young bride. Yes. That was the only way she knew. She had been brought as a bride. In the valley she had slept with a man for the first time. In the valley she had become mistress of a house. In the valley she had gone from room to room and known that these were hers. Here in this valley, pots and pans, mugs and plates, shirts and dresses; here wind

and rain and sand and pain, had taken on meaning that had become part of the substance of her life.

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Here she had felt Stefan come to life within her. Out there, in those days, she had sat in the sun and smiled wildly when Stefan had jabbed her inside....In this valley she had borne the pain of his coming.... Yes. That way she could do it. Thinking that way she understood....She had come as a young girl into this valley. In it, she had changed into a woman, a mother. Into this earth had gone a part of her. It had gone very deep. It had spread very wide. The life that was in her was a part of this valley. It was home.

Now, all this had come to an abrupt ~~and sudden~~ end. Soon, now, they would take up their things and go out of the valley.

Why was the hurt so dull, almost painless?

Why ^{wasn't it} ~~isn't it~~ as unbearable as it should be?

She saw a movement out there behind the boulder. The shadow of a man straightened itself. Another joined it.

To herself she whispered:

"They're changing guards."

To the east, a red haze curved its way round the hump of the earth. In front of it, it drove the shadows and wherever it passed, it bathed the land in light.

Morning was breaking.

She went into the kitchen to brew ~~a pot of~~ coffee.

> # <

Now it was morning. A clear summer morning with the sun beating into the valley. They were ready to move. Everything that was necessary was on the wagon. Anna had even found place for one or two little things that were not necessities. The cattle and sheep and

horses had been rounded up. Stefan was in the rear of the wagon, wedged safely where it would be impossible for a rifle~~#~~ shot to reach him unless the shooter was almost inside the wagon.

Anna, a ~~hand-made~~ sunbonnet on her head, stood waiting at the head of the team. She was the voorlooper. The rein of rawhide that was tied to the horns of the leading pair ~~and by which she would lead them~~, was slipped through her left arm and lifted so that it hung over her left shoulder, leaving both her hands free. In them, ~~her arms crooked across her front~~, she carried her rifle. Her index finger rested lightly on the trigger.

Behind the wagon, in a bunch, were their animals, the horses and the horned cattle. Koos on horseback was riding round the keeping them together. Near the stoep, ~~of the house~~ Kasper's horse was saddled. They were all ready for the trek. They were just waiting for Kasper.

Presently he came out of the house. He stopped briefly and looked back then went on and got into his saddle.

He ^{his} raised ~~the~~ rifle high above his head. ~~with his right hand~~. Anna tugged at the ~~rawhide~~ reins. The oxen came to life. The wagon creaked and moved. Kasper nodded to Koos. A grim smile flitted over Koos's face. He rode round and flanked the animals on the left. Kasper flanked them on the right.

By the time they neared the mouth of the valley the movement had ~~been~~ settled into a ^lrythm of its own. They neared the post. The only sign of tension was an index finger here or there moving ^{an} inch or so nearer the rifle trigger. For the rest it was just a movement.

Old Johannes ^{stood} ~~was standing~~ in front of the little shack as the

Jansen party came abreast. A few women and children were about, but none of the men were in sight.

Probably ~~laying~~ ^{lying} in wait to ambush us, Koos thought. His eyes swept from side to side and shot out to the open land outside the valley.

Kasper ~~lifted his eyes up~~ ^{his eyes scanned} the mountainside. Yes, he had been right. One of them was up there. He had caught the glint of the sun on a rifle. They are posted all around us, he thought. He straightened his back and rode on steadily. The temptation to look back at the house was great. But he knew it was out of sight behind the last bend they had taken. And besides, it might make others curious.

"I have something there for you, Mister Goddamned Johannes! I have something there for you!" He swore softly and bitterly under his breath.

The wagon was out of the valley now. Only the cattle. Only the cattle.

In front of the team, Anna kept repeating to herself: "With my Bible and my rifle.....!"

Kasper heard a loud voice that carried above the noise of the cattle. He knew it was the black who had watched from behind the boulder. He knew that his surprise for Johannes had been discovered. It shouldn't have happened yet. It was too early. They should have been a long way away. What would the blacks do now?

The booming voice drew near. The man was running as he shouted, and waving his rifle.

"The house is on fire! The house is on fire!" The man's cry echoed through the valley. Men showed suddenly from everywhere on both mountainsides. Some had rifles in their hands. Others had spears and other sharp instruments. One raised his rifle and aimed.

Anna turned, stopped her team and calmly raised her rifle to her shoulder.

Old Johannes's voice boomed out suddenly.

"Don't shoot! Let them be! The house! Put out the fire!"

The man who had raised his rifle hesitated then lowered it and joined the others who were hurrying down the mountainside. The women were already running toward the house. Anna lowered her rifle and tugged at the ~~rambade~~ reins. The wagon moved again.

Through the noise, Old Johannes heard Kasper's bitterly defiant laugh. ~~It had a note of triumph in it that echoed through the valley.~~

There was movement everywhere. Only Johannes stood still, remained where he had been. The Jansens were out of the valley now, in the open among the tall dangerous grass. Some of the ex-slaves had already reached the house and were battling with the fire. Slowly Johannes moved to the mouth of the valley and looked at the Jansens moving away.

Perhaps Kasper Jansen sensed that Old Johannes was standing there looking at him from the entrance of what had once been his valley. He stopped his horse and turned. For a while they stared at each other. Then Kasper raised one hand to his mouth, cupping it. He shouted:

"You will never lie in my bed! Black bastard!"

Then, suddenly, he raised his rifle, took aim, and fired. The shot fell short of Old Johannes. Kasper made as if to spur his horse forward, but the sudden whining of a rifle ~~shot~~ a few feet short of his horse's hooves stopped him. He raised his eyes from ~~Old Johannes~~ and looked at the mountain to see if he could pick out the marksman. The marksman was well hidden.

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"Kasper!" Anna called from far ahead.

Kasper raised his right fist high above his head and shook it angrily at Johannes. It was his last gesture. He wheeled the horse abruptly and rode away from the valley that had been his home.

~~That last gesture ended something for Kasper. A dream had been born when he and his father had ridden into that valley on that far-off morning a long, long time ago. The dream had been enriched when he had brought his young bride, Anna, into that valley a few years later. The coming of young Stefan, his son, had carried that dream a stage further. And on his mountaintop he had felt himself getting nearer to an understanding of the meaning of that dream. For it had been a dream without meaning, without pattern or reason. It had just been something growing inside him. It had made him feel big; a big person reaching out to something big that would one day burst inside him and flood his being with a quality calming and soothing, a tranquility that would make him feel alright. Now, with that final gesture, he was leaving it, unfulfilled, uncompleted, with all the other things that went into the making of his past, that went into the making of the past of one man.~~

He rode on till he was beside Anna. She craned her neck back and looked ~~steadily~~ up into his face without saying a word. For a short while they moved like that, Anna looking up at him and he looking down at her. Strength flowed from her to him. Behind them Koos urged the cattle on in a gentle, persuasive voice. He never cracked his ~~whip~~, and the cattle obeyed. ~~He had a way with cattle.~~ Inside the wagon Stefan ~~had~~ moved to a point where he could look out on the wide world. For him it was a great adventure. He had never been outside the valley and the world outside was wonderful. Kasper turned his horse and rode back to join Koos.

Kasper and Koos rode side by side for a while. Kasper pulled a map from his pocket and they studied it together.

"West for a day?" Kasper asked.

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"Yes. We will miss the mountains that way. Then north, north in a straight line. That is the way the main body is going. The other body is going east along the coast, but that Zulu Kaffir Chaka, has his kingdom there. And they say the black swob knows how to fight. Some say he's dead, killed by another Kaffir called Dingaan who has taken his place. It may be all lies. I don't know. What I know is those who should know say the English would wait until we are settled and then use the Kaffirs as an excuse for taking over again.

"What about the Kaffirs in the north?"

"There is a story about an Englishman who met one old fat oily Kaffir in a scarlet cloak. He's called Muzi-something. They say he's the only one there and he's always drunk. He likes coloured things. We can probably get a lot of land if we gave him beads or a piece of pretty cloth. But mostly the land is wild.

"And most of the trekkers are going north?"

"Yes."

"Good. We'll go north. Keep a good watch from here on."

They separated. Kasper veered left, Koos right. They were watchful now, and tense. Treachery might lurk anywhere in the tall grass.

Behind them towered the mountain that guarded the valley that had been theirs. At its entrance, Old Johannes stood looking after the Jansen family. He marvelled as he watched them

going.

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He marvelled because he had just caught the full force of Kasper Jansen's hatred.

But I have been the slave, he told himself. It is I, not he, who has been deprived of freedom for so many years. The richest years of my life have been spent in serving him and his, not me and mine. Why should his hate be stronger than mine? I am the slave. I have been robbed, not he. Yet, strangely, he hates and I do not. If heaven were to be asked; Who has cause for hatred? Surely, heaven would say I, not he. And as he thought, the marvel grew in his mind till it was a huge unanswered question.

~~All that was clear was the boiling bitterness in the man who had owned him and his family. The rest, the why and the how, was a big question that was too much for his wisdom.~~

He took a last, lingering look at the departing Jansens then made his way to the house where the fire was raging. They, the Jansens, were gone and now the valley belonged to him and his people. If necessary, they would rebuild the farmhouse all over again. That would be no strain. They would be building for themselves for their children. And then they would till the earth and nurse their crops and live like men in the world of men.

As he walked through the valley, plans took shape in his mind. There were many things to be done. They would have to build homes for the different families. They were not slaves any longer. They were human beings. And human beings liked to live as family units. A family to a room, and perhaps, later, a family to a house. All that had to be thought about. In the meantime, they had to be so arranged to cause the least friction. The Witbooi family did not get on well with big Samson's family. Well, they would

have to be kept as far apart as possible. A smile played over his face as he thought of the differences among his people. Well, all people are like that.

Start He thought of his son, Paul, and was sad. He pushed the sadness away and thought of his grandson. For Young Johannes he had great plans, great dreams. One day Young Johannes would be leader here. He wished it were possible for him to live to see that day. Yes, that day would come. The day of Young Johannes, his grandson.

He thought of a surname for his grandson. Some of the other slaves had surnames they had taken from their masters before they were sold to the Jansen family. The Samson family took as surname, the name of their previous owner, a man called Arendse. Well, his grandson will be Jansen. Young Johannes Jansen. The Jansens had taken so much from them. They would just take their name. Nothing else. Just their name.

When he reached the farmhouse everybody was fighting the fire. A relay of buckets kept moving between the well and the house. And big Samson and the elder Witbooi kept darting into the house with buckets of water. Smoke streamed from everywhere and flames could be seen licking away in the bedroom.

Johannes stood a little way back and watched his people at work. He was proud of what he saw, pleased with his people. He had and still expected some difficulty with them. It is ever so. When the whip, or any other incentive of fear, is removed, there is a tendency to relax, to let things go, to ease up or just not do anything. But they were doing well, better than he had hoped for, and he was pleased.

~~For him the fire did not matter. What mattered was the way in which they fought it, the easy order of their work.~~

He saw his grandson among the children who stood in a bunch, watching their elders at work. He went over to the children and stood among them and listened to their excited chatter. He put one hand on his grandson's head. The children clustered around him.

The fire was gradually being brought under control.

A wordless prayer, a prayer of feeling and desire and hope rose up deep within the old man and flowed over the children of the ex-slaves and over the ex-slaves and over the burning house and over the valley and the mountains till it reached up to the skies.

Wordlessly it said:

"That ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly."

When the fire was under control and the people turned to him, he said:

✓ "My people, now we can begin. The valley is ours...." ✓

Gal 19

✓

They were out of the tall grass, and on the flat rolling land. Ahead of them it sloped upwards in ever-^{widening} ~~lasting~~ curves that rolled on till they were lost in space. Behind, and to the left of them, it sloped down to the sea, falling away easily and gently.

The heat of the day had passed and evening was drawing ^{near} ~~high~~. And the land was wild. In the whole of that day's journeying they had seen no sign of any living being. Birds had flown overhead; rabbits and wild buck they had seen; snakes ~~had~~ slithered away. But ~~these were not living beings, for them.~~ These were just a part of the wild, ~~a part of the wide and sloping spaces, a part of the silence and the desolation.~~

All day they had moved in silence, watchful and on the alert. They had hardly exchanged a dozen words ~~with each other~~ since they had left the valley.

Once Kasper had called out to Koos and Anna and pointed back to a hill they had passed an hour earlier. In the clear African sunlight they had seen a tall black man standing like a statue on the crest of the hill. The blade of his tall spear flashed against the sunray.

They moved fast after that. For all they knew he might be scouting for a band. For all they knew the band might be trailing them, waiting for night to fall before attacking.

That had been the only human they had seen, and that had been many hours back when the sun had still sat high in the sky. Now the sun was down and they were out of the tall grass. They were ~~on~~ a wide stretch of open and it would be impossible for anybody to trail them without ~~their~~ knowing. But night was falling, and with night ~~fall~~ would

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come new dangers, new uncertainties.

At noon Koos had taken over from Anna as Voorlooper. Anna had gone into the covered wagon and prepared their midday meal. She had fed Stefan and herself. After that she had relieved Koos who had then gone into the wagon to eat. After Koos, Kasper had gone. Their meal was made up of bread Anna had baked especially for the journey, and cold meat. This they had washed down with sou milk. But they had kept on the move throughout. They had not stopped once since they had left the valley.

After Kasper had eaten he had taken over from Anna and she had mounted his horse to do the herding and scouting with Koos. Kasper had continuously urged her on when she was the voorlooper. Resentment that turned to rebellion had welled up in her. But when he had taken over the resentment had turned to admiration. He had set a killing pace and sustained it all through the rest of the day.

Now the shadows of evening were on them. Soon they would be completely wrapped in the darkness of the night. They would be in the open in the dark. Round them would be the things of the dark. Out of the dark might suddenly come the leaping figures of black savages with gleaming spears. The tension of the day reached a point of tautness in each of them.

Without telling either Koos or Anna, Kasper had hoped to strike either ^a ~~some~~ farm or some people on trek before the coming of darkness. That had been the reason for his hurry, ~~the reason for the killing pace he had set himself.~~

He lifted his eyes to the sky. It would soon be dark now. ~~Soon be too dark for them to keep moving with any degree of safety.~~ He felt pangs of hunger gnawing at his vitals, ~~and biting at his~~

~~arse~~. But they were very near that next hill. ~~now~~. And, perhaps, behind that hill, there might be a farm or there might be people on trek. He spurred himself on. He had long since run out of his supply of the day's ration of biltong Anna had doled out to each of them. But whatever happened, he would get to that hill. Darkness crowded in fast. But that hill had to be reached.

In the gathering dark Anna rode up to him.

"It's dark, Kasper," she said.

"Yes. We'll stop as soon as we've reached that hill," He pointed. She looked.

"It will be black before we get there," she said.

"We must get there," he said.

"We can't," she said.

"We will," he said.

She turned her head and looked at the dark as though she could feel and measure it. Then she turned her eyes back to him.

"Stop, Kasper!" she shouted.

"We must go on," he said.

She spurred the horse on a few yards then turned it directly in his path.

"Get out of the way," he called.

She remained facing him in silence.

"Who-o-a!" Kasper roared and turned his team.

The team lumbered to a stop with hardly any space between the leaders and Anna's horse. ^{He} Kasper was pressed between the leading oxen and the horse. Anna backed the horse a few paces.

He turned ~~deliberately~~ on her. She saw a blind, burning anger welled up in him. It was in his eyes. In them was everything that had begun that morning; Old Johannes; his valley and his mountain; the

76. 64
home he had left; the years of dreaming and planning that had come to a sudden end; his bitter anger and hatred against the English. All the ~~various~~ strings were pulled together at last, and it was a cumulative anger that he turned on her.

He walked slowly, almost carefully toward her. In a fog of darkness everything seemed clear to him. He reached up and pulled her from the horse. She fell at his feet. ~~As he looked at her~~ His anger was pin^{pointed} into a sharp, knifelike hate that was directed at her. He was on the verge of darkness. She closed her eyes and waited.

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"Kasper!"

Some compelling power in the voice made him look up. Anna opened her eyes. Kasper's eyes focussed on the rifle in Koos' hands. It was raised to Koos's shoulder and it was levelled at him. There was something awful about the steadiness with which the point of the rifle ^{was} trained on him.

Anna got slowly to her feet and stepped back. Kasper dropped his eyes from the rifle-point and looked blankly around him.

Gal. 20 "We stop here, Koos," Anna said, ~~in a calm voice.~~

Koos lowered his rifle and dismounted. He went by Kasper and began to outspan the team. Anna went to the back of the wagon and got ~~all~~ the things ^{out} that were needed to prepare the evening meal. When Koos had finished outspanning he proceeded to halter all the animals except the sheep. Soon Anna had a fire going and two three-legged pots were over it.

Kasper stood where they had left him. He stood there for a long while, unaware of himself and of everything else. Slowly, imperceptibly, awareness returned. He went and joined Koos at

making the animals safe for the night. ~~They did not speak to each other.~~ Every now and then he turned his head to look at Anna. He could see her clearly by the glow of the fire near which she worked.

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By the time the two men had finished with the animals Anna had the food ready. She sat on a little box with her back propped up by the rear-end of the wagon. Stefan, ~~who had been by himself all day,~~ leaned against her. He had already eaten. While she dished up for the men he talked to her.

"When are we going home, ma?"

"One day soon, my little heart....Now come on, what is the letter after H? I told you last night? The letter after H now."

He screwed up his face and tried to remember the letter after H. But somehow it wouldn't come. His hand reached up to her neck and caressed its smoothness.

"Why are we here, ma?"

"Because we are going to a new home. Now...."

"Why are we going to a new home, ma?"

"Because there will be no Englishmen and we will be happier.

He turned his head to the men who were eating in silence.

"What is an Englishman, Oom Koos?"

"An Englishman is a devil," Koos said.

Stefan's
His eyes shifted to his father.

"What is a devil, pa?"

"A black and evil thing," Kasper said.

"Your alphabet," Anna said firmly. "Let's say it again. A"

"A."

"B."

"B."

10. 66
"C."

"C...What...."

"No...~~M~~D...."

"Oh...~~H~~D." His voice began to weaken.

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"H."

"Ma...."

"No...~~H~~."

"H."

"And after ~~H~~ comes ~~I~~."

"After ~~h~~ comes ~~i~~...~~Ma~~Ma...."

"Yes?"

"Can I play with Paul to-morrow?"

"Paul is black and all blacks are skepsels," Koos said.

"But I want to play with him."

Anna put her arm round him.

"He will not be where you are going, my little heart."

"Is he staying at home?"

"They have stolen our home. remember that, Stefan. They have stolen our home." Kasper's voice was cold.

Stefan nuzzled his head against his mother's bosom and went to sleep. Anna rocked gently.

Outside the circle of light cast by the fire, the darkness was complete. A little away from them they could hear the stamping and movement of the animals. Occasionally a sheep bleated or a horse snorted. Apart from that the darkness was covered by an awful silence.

They sat listening to the silence for a while. They felt the shroud of darkness about them.

"We're sure to strike something tomorrow," Koos said.

Neither of the other two said anything.

"There are many on trek and we're sure to meet some."

Anna rose slowly, careful not to wake Stefan. She eased him on to the wagon and climbed in after him. Blankets were spread ~~to make a bed~~ inside the tented part of the wagon. She lifted him to his place in the bed. He mumbled once, rolled over and settled for the night.

As she bent over him, she felt sickness rising up ~~suddenly~~ in her. She held it in by ~~sheer~~ force of will and tucked the blankets in over the sleeping child. The sickness came up in waves that would not be denied. She had to go out and retch.

She had nearly told Kasper about it yesterday. Now it was ^(too) late. There were too many other things to be attended to, and telling him now would only put further strain on him. And, strangely, she did not want to tell him now. It just did not seem important to tell him. Later, perhaps, when it could no longer be hidden. She fought down the waves of nausea and climbed slowly out of the wagon. Casually she walked away till she was out of the light of the fire, then she hurried forward till she could contain herself no more. She went down on her knees and opened her mouth. She vomited painfully, choking and gasping for breath, and trying, at the same time, to be quiet about it so that the men should not hear.

When it was all over she sat in the dark on her knees, breathing heavily and wiping her face and the inside of her mouth with a corner of her apron.

Wonder when it is, she thought. She cast her mind back. It was last month that she missed her time. It was December now. She counted on her fingers in the dark. From the end of November to the end of next August would be nine months. Perhaps it would be sometime at the beginning of September. By then they should

be settled beyond the reach of the English law. Perhaps the house would be built by then and she would be able to have her baby in their new home. She knew Kasper would want it to be another boy. She wanted a girl. She didn't mind a boy, but a girl would be company. And she would be able to do more for a girl. Make pretty coloured frocks, and a girl would be about the house with her. Kasper wanted sons. He was a farmer and he wanted sons to be farmers with him and spread the name of Jansen. She was a woman and it would be good to have a girl about the house.

She got up and stood for a moment while the pain settled, then she walked slowly back to the fire. She knew the men would think she had gone to do her business. There was no need to explain.

Kasper was cleaning a rifle by the light of the fire. Koos sat staring at the leaping flames, chewing a blade of grass. She took her seat and gave them coffee.

"What about the first watch?" Koos asked.

"I will take it," Kasper said.

"You will call me?" Koos said.

"Yes." Kasper said.

"And me?" Anna asked.

"Rest tonight," Kasper said.

Anna looked at him but his eyes were stubbornly turned away from her. She smiled inwardly and sat back, resting the small of her back against a point of the wagon.

Koos looked from Anna to Kasper, yawned, stretched himself and jumped to his feet. He reached past Anna and got a blanket.

"Bed for me," he said. "Goodnight Kasper... Anna..."

He picked up his rifle and walked to where the dark shadows of the animals loomed. Fully clothed, and without even removing

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his ^{boots} shoes, he stretched full-length on the grass, nursing his rifle with his right index finger near the trigger. For a while he lay staring at the Southern Cross and the myriads of stars that made up the Milky Way, then he whispered "Damn", closed his eyes, and slept lightly, uneasily, half awake.

In the circle of the fire Kasper sat staring at nothing. He wanted to look at Anna, touch some part of her and tell her he was sorry. But against that there was something deep inside him that was not sorry. She had no business to interfere with his decision. He was the leader of the Trek. He had said they should reach the hill. She had no business to interfere. No business at all. Neither had Koos.

From the heart of the leaping flames the face of black Johannes rose to mock him. The black face was master of his valley; black feet would climb his mountain; black eyes would see what he had seen. No. Black eyes would not see what he had seen. No. Black feet would not climb his mountain. There would be nothing in it for them.

The face that was in the leaping flames was no longer the face of black Johannes mocking him. It was the face of his father. He listened and the words came to him in soft whispers and he answered in the same whispering tones.

"I told you, Kasper."

"You did?"

"Yes, I did."

"It was a long time ago."

"Time never matters."

"Then what?"

"To remember, always to remember."

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"I've forgotten."

"I know."

"I mean I've forgotten what to remember."

"That's what I mean."

"Then how do I remember?"

"You will now, always. Just think and you will see that."

"I remember you telling me about the first war with the Kaffirs."

"Not only that."

"And about the camp of women."

"That's part of it."

"Yes, it was a long time ago and it wasn't far from the Old Fort."

"Yes?"

"We were still under the old Dutch Company."

"Yes?"

"The men had ridden off to hunt and the women were alone. It was thought safe because it was so near the Fort. When the men came back ^m Yes, when the men came back nearly all the old women were lying dead with spear-holes in their bodies and all the young women had been raped."

"That's part of it. Remember you asked me a lot of questions about it?"

"Yes, I remember."

"You didn't believe it, did you? It was because of all those stories the missionaries made up. They said there was no atom of truth in it. They said nobody had come forward. They said there was no record of it anywhere in the Old Colony's history. And you believed that too. You asked me many questions and didn't believe

because there was no proof."

"Yes, I remember."

"Do you still want proof?"

"No."

"Good. That is part of remembering."

"I remember other things too."

"That is good."

"I remember grandma and your younger brother. They were burnt ^{ed} alive during the last great kaffir war."

"There was proof of that, heh?"

"We still have the old kist with burn-marks all over it. It was the only thing that came out of the fire except the white bones of grandma and your younger brother."

"So you do remember."

"I remember my own sister. We were all three riding together. She fell forward in her saddle. We didn't see the arrow for a long time. But we caught him, didn't we?"

"Yes, my son, we caught him ^{all #} alright. But she was dead."

"Yes, she was dead."

"And now you and your valley, the valley we found together?"

"Yes, now I've lost our valley and Stefan ~~has~~ no home and Anna, my wife, has no home, and my brother Koos ~~had~~ no home."

"And you have no home, my son."

"And ~~I have~~ no home. "

"You know why ⁱⁿ...."

"I know why.... I shared my tobacco with him. I sat with him when he was sick. I drank coffee with him sometimes. I talked to him as with a friend....."

"You never used a whip on any of them."

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"Yes, I never used a whip on any of them. I followed his advice. I listened to him. When he said any of them were sick I believed him and let them be."

"What did it all mean?"

"He gave them orders. He was their master more than I."

"That is it."

"Yes, they listened to him. They did his bidding."

"And he had no fear of you because you talked to him and smoked with him and drank coffee with him."

"Yes."

"He looked you in the eye and it was you who turned your eyes away."

"They were many and there were only two of us."

"It began before that, my son."

"But I had to arm them."

"Before that even."

Del 2
"When?"

"When you forgot to remember."

"But I told you."

"Yes, and you drank coffee with him and smoked with him and laughed with him. Now you have no valley. You should have remembered."

"Then I was wrong."

"This is your punishment."

"Koos said it many times."

"He hasn't your head but he understood."

"What am I to do, father?"

"Time never matters. It is not too late to remember."

"For the North where we are going?"

"And all the future; and for your children and their

children."

"And for all time."

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"That is it, my son."

"For always we must remember they are many and we are few."

"That is most important."

"Never be kind. They don't understand it."

"Yes."

"Treachery is behind every smile of every man, woman, and child of them."

"They are not like us, Kasper. Look at their faces, look at their bodies, look at their eyes, look at their hair. They're not like us, Kasper."

"They are children of the devil and they can only understand fear. Nothing else but fear."

"That is the answer, my son. That is the answer."

The face flowed out of the flames and it was just a burning fire. Kasper stared blankly at the leaping flames. He shook his head once to clear it then turned to Anna.

"Did I say anything?"

"No, Kasper. You were very silent. I thought you were planning for tomorrow."

"Planning for tomorrow?" He frowned thoughtfully till the words sank in. "Yes. Yes, of course, I was planning for tomorrow." He leaned forward, rested his elbows on his thighs, and cupped his face in his big red hands.

"You are tired, Kasper."

~~"I'm alright."~~
all right

"Rest for a while. Lie down. I'll watch. I don't feel sleepy. Just for a little. It'll do you good."

"Just for a while."

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"Yes, just for a while. I'll call you."

She waited for him to look at her. His eyes avoided her, looked everywhere except on her person. He had not once looked directly at her since he had pulled her off the horse. They had not ~~once~~ touched each other. Almost, she could feel the physical nature of the wall between them.

She got up and prepared a bed for him near the fire, just far enough ~~from~~ ^{for} the glare not to interfere with his sleep. She stood near him. She pushed out one hand to touch his bowed head then pulled it back again. She went to her seat at the rear of the wagon.

"Kasper."

He raised his head.

"Thank you."

He went round the fire and stretched himself on the blanket. ~~on the ground.~~ He turned his head to her. Their eyes met, then his slanted away and looked at a point of darkness to her right.

"You will call me," he said.

"Yes," she said.

He rolled over, turned his back on her and the fire.

~~Lightly,~~ Noiselessly, Anna put two logs on the fire. It was a warm night but the fire was not for warmth but for light and protection against the creatures of the wild. She picked up her rifle, ~~from the ground beside her,~~ examined it, and rested it on her lap. She leaned back against the wagon point and scanned the darkness around. Her ears were attuned to catch the slightest alien sound.

Kasper had spoken out loud. She had heard it and listened and ^{pieced} ~~placed~~ it together. She thought about the strange conversation and its meaning. It would have been so much clearer if she, too,

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could have heard his father. But visions only came to individuals, not to couples or groups. She accepted the meaning of Kasper's vision without question, without doubt. Visions had happened so often to people, to other people, why not to Kasper? She tried to recall the words and the meaning of the words. She must tell them to Stefan when he ^{grew} grows up. That was important. As soon as he was able to understand she must tell him about this.

Koos understood about Kasper. It would be easy with Koos seeing. Still, she could not help her dislike of Koos. He had understood when Kasper had pulled her off the horse. They must watch out. It ^{might} may happen again. She must also tell Koos about the vision. Not everything. Just let him know.

And tomorrow? Would there ever be any real tomorrows for them now? The valley was far away and the future was hidden in the unknown darkness of this vast land. Would there ever again be a time for a real home and the little things that go into the making of a home? Would there ever again be the peace they had had in the valley? Yesterday and today seemed not to belong to the same world.

Yesterday. It flowed through her mind with the ease of a ~~facile~~ dream. All the yesterdays that had ever been in her life crowded hard upon each other and carried her along in their sweep.

There was Japie and her mother and her father and her two sisters. They were three sisters and one brother and he was the youngest of them all. Always, at table, they stood in a certain order and their father used to count them off. First Japie, because he was a man. Only at table did he have precedence over them. And how he enjoyed it! His little chest went out and he looked very grave and manly. They always wanted to laugh at him. But father was

stern about that. Japie was a man at table and they dared not. Outside and in play they could taunt him by shouting;

"Japie, Japie, you look like an apie..... Apie, apie, you look like Japie."

But at table he was ^athe man. And how he hated monkeys because of that shouting of theirs! Once he had killed a monkey because he really believed he looked like it. After that their mother had spoken to them about shouting it at him.

First there was Japie because he was a man. Then Johanna, then Maria, and then she herself, Anna, because she was the youngest except for Japie who was at the head of them all in any case because he was a man.

And father used to stand at the head and look down at mother at the other end and his eyes would laugh as he called: "All here," as if he could not see them. Then he would call their names in that order. Then they would all bow their heads and he would pray and thank the Lord for everything that had happened and for the food they were going to eat.

Maria was the first to leave. A young Predikant carried her off to far-off Aliwal. Funny to think of Maria, the noisiest and naughtiest as the wife of a preacher. How they had teased her about it! And about the solid dignity of the young preacher. Then Johanna, whom they had expected not to find a husband, had married a rich man with three farms and many slaves who was something important in Afrikaner politics in Cape Town. Johanna was more surprised than anybody else about it. She had always said she was resigned to not marrying and she was gay about it.

Slaves. Yes. They had many slaves. What's happened to them now? But never mind that now.

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Yesterday began to lose its facile ease.

After that there was only herself and mother and father and Japie. Then Kasper Jansen and his father had ridden by one day. That, too, belonged to yesterday. The brightness of the day when Kasper Jansen had ridden by. The weakness at her knees when he had looked directly at her and smiled. The old people had probed deep into each other's families but they had sat silent, exchanging secret looks. That had been the beginning.

Since then laughter had grown ~~more~~ rare and now there was none. Laughter. That was what her mother ^{had} spoken ^h of the last time, on that day she rode away with Kasper. How had it gone? Oh yes. It began: "Anna, you are laughing now, but you don't marry for laughter." Then her mother had spoken of her pioneering days, of the wars between Boer and Kaffir that she had seen. She never understood why her mother had spoken like that. In all the years that had gone by it had been remembered just as a mother's advice. Now she understood.

If only she could talk to her mother now, ask her to say those words ~~all~~ over again.

"But it is too late," she whispered.

The moon had risen, ~~to a point almost directly overhead.~~ The sharp darkness of the night was softened. The stars were not quite as brilliant as they had been. It was possible, now, to see the vague outline of their cattle.

She heard the softest sound and curled her fingers round her rifle. Then she relaxed as she saw Koos coming ~~lightly~~ toward her. She raised her hand and indicated silence. Koos tiptoed close to her.

She whispered:

"He had a vision after you'd gone."

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"Is he ~~all right~~?"

"Yes. He was very tired."

"I'll take over. You rest."

"No. He won't understand. You go back. I'll wake him."

"It's better for him to rest."

"He won't understand."

~~all right~~
"Alright."

"Let him watch for a while, then come."

"Did you hear?"

"Yes. But he doesn't know."

Koos tiptoed back to his blanket.

Anna called softly:

"Kasper, Kasper."

He rolled on his back then sat up.

"Have I slept long?"

"No."

~~all right~~
"Alright, you rest."

She climbed into the back of the wagon, careful not to wake Stefan, and eased herself down. She put her hands on her stomach but there was nothing to feel yet. It was much too early. She closed her eyes and thought of the unborn child that was beginning inside her. The empty sadness went from her. The strength of the earth flowed into her.

It shot through her mind like a point of light in a place of darkness and the thought shook her: Kasper was like Stefan. Like Stefan, Kasper had suddenly become a child to be protected. My child, Stefan. My child, Kasper? And my unborn child.

I must sleep, she told herself. Sleep would not come. The hours dragged themselves out. All the past, all the yesterdays

that had been for her flowed through them, without pattern, without ^hrythm or order. They just bubbled along, crazily, through her mind, dragging her first one way, then another. An uncontrolled anarchy of thought and emotion, ^{in a} flowing stream of conscious ~~unconsciousness~~ played through her mind and body.

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[The wagon creaked to a stop. Directly in front of it sloped a mountain, not steep for a man to climb, not even steep for a horse, but terribly steep for an oxwagon.

Kasper and Koos had ridden ahead to see if there was ~~any~~ way to by-pass it. Stefan was the Voorlooper and Anna brought up the rear.

Koos came riding back round the left side of the mountain ~~side~~. "Nothing there," he called. "It curves away to the horizon but it's high all along."

They waited for Kasper. While they waited Anna brewed coffee. Koos and Stefan sat on a ~~large~~ boulder. Stefan had a stick with which he scratched for lizards. Koos ran his fingers through the long, ragged, fair beard that hung down to his chest.

The days of their trekking had flowed on till they had lost all count of time. Anna had kept a tally till Christmas, after that she got confused and ~~finally she~~ gave it up altogether.

It was the unhappiness of that Christmas that had helped to confuse her....How terrible it had been. She could think about it now. She poked the fire and allowed her mind to stray back to that day.....~~mm~~

Morning was brighter than usual that day. It was the birth of Christ. The Day of the Lord. And the day itself seemed to say it. They were in a narrow strip of land between two low hills. She had insisted that this Day of the Lord be spent not as all other days had been. So they stayed when morning came. ~~K~~ Koos and Stefan built a fire. She planned their Christmas dinner. She thought of a lesson from the Bible. They would sing hymns. But first the

early morning lesson and then the Christmas dinner.

The lesson. They all stood bareheaded in the bright morning sun while she read it:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

David "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Afterwards, she went to the wagon for the things with which to make dinner. It had happened then. Her tears flowed. There was nothing for a pudding. There was only biltong and mealie meal. Water was short. And the world, suddenly, was desolate and lonely.

It was the Day of the Lord but it was not as other such days had been.

The absence of a proper Christmas dinner, of all the little things that had always made up their Christmases, hurt more than all the other things that had gone before. And for the first time she wept. She climbed the hill above the strip of land. There she was away from the men. There they would not see her tears.

Early in the afternoon of that Christmas day they inspanned and moved again. And after that? Well, it was after that that the days had lost their meaning, had become confused, till one day was like the next. Not Sunday or Monday or Tuesday, just another day.

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And each day brought the sun beating down pitilessly. And each night brought darkness and tension. Sometimes it rained. Sometimes the wind blew. But for all that, each day was the same.

Always, they kept on to the North. It was the Promised Land. Each day they pushed on up the gentle slope. Sometimes the slope fell away and the land was flat. Then the slope would be there again. For days that were without number or record they moved up the ~~series of~~ terraces that seemed as numberless as the days that were behind them.

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At night, they stopped and outspanned. With morning they ~~had~~ inspanned and moved on. They rarely spoke to each other. They ~~had~~ crossed rivers, climbed hills, fought the dust of desertland in silence. When they ~~had~~ spoken, it was to speak of necessities only. When they had no need to speak of necessities, they shared the brooding silence of the wild land in which they moved. It was so even with the child, Stefan. Only at nights, round the open fire, after the evening meal, when he took his lessons from his mother, was the spell of silence broken.

The men took part in these lessons too. It had happened imperceptibly. Each night they had listened a little more intently as Anna and Stefan went over the alphabet. Then they had begun to spell out letters with the boy. Now they were all a part of Anna's class.

She poured two mugs of coffee and carried them to where Koos and Stefan were. She was handing Koos his mug when the echo of a rifle shot carried to them from the direction Kasper had taken.

Koos ran to his horse, vaulted into the saddle, and rode off. Stefan flung his stick away, ran to the head of the team, and grabbed the reins, ~~ready to move~~. Anna mounted her horse, held her rifle in

the crook of her left arm and waited. She urged the horse on till she was beside her son.

"Kaffirs, ma?"

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"Don't know. It was your father's rifle."

"Kaffirs will kill us, won't they, ma?"

"Not if we kill ~~ed~~ them first."

"Is that why Oom Koes shot the two Kaffirs at the river?"

"Yes."

"Must we always kill them?"

"Most of the time."

Why?"

"They will kill us if we don't."

"But Oupa Johannes didn't kill us and we didn't kill him."

"You don't understand but you will later, and don't call him Oupa."

"But you told me to."

"I was wrong."

Something nagged at the back of her mind but she pushed it away. Her eyes were trained, eagerly, anxiously, round the mountain side.

"Why were you wrong?"

"Because he was bad."

"He carried me on his back and gave me fruit and cookies from his pocket."

The nagging at the back of her mind was strong.

"He was bad."

"Why was he bad?"

The nagging was painful now. A horrible sense of guilt rose in her. And against it was a sense of right, almost a sense

of defiance. And tucked away inside her was another little part that whispered: Defiance against what?

The child repeated:

"Why was he bad, ma?"

"Ask Oom Koos, ~~he~~^{he} knows."

Something in her voice made the child keep quiet. She looked down at him then looked away abruptly.

Koos and Kasper ~~appeared~~^{came} round the curve of the mountain side. Koos waved reassuringly. Between them they carried the carcass of a Springbok.

"It's alright," Anna said and dismounted.

Stefan went back to the boulder to continue digging for lizards. Kasper and Koos rode up. Anna brought them coffee.

"No other way but over the top," Kasper said.

Anna stared up the sloping side.

"Can we?"

"We must."

"It's easier over there," Koos pointed to the left.

They finished their coffee and walked over to the left to explore. Anna eased the yokes loose on the teams' necks and the oxen, freed, bent down and pulled up mouthfuls of green grass. Their teeth crushed the grass with monotonous regularity.

Anna folded her hands as a funnel round her mouth and called after the men:

"What's on the other side?"

They stopped, turned, Koos raised his rifle and waved. Good. They would go up and find out. They turned and carried on, their strong bodies braced against the slope of the mountainside.

"Here," Koos said.

They stopped and tilted their heads up. The slope of the mountain was gentler here. There was a flat part, almost like a very steep sand road.

"Something's gone up here," Kasper said.

Briefly, their eyes met. They went closer and bent forward, inspecting the earth. Kasper went up the slope; Koos went down. Near a piece of soft earth, Kasper knelt.

Guess
"Koos!"

He turned his head to find Koos. Koos was a long way down, nearly a hundred yards away, bent forward and poking at the earth. Koos jerked himself erect and waved. His voice, charged with emotion, drifted up to Kasper.

"Trekksers!"

They stood still for a moment, facing each other over the distance, then they both broke and ran toward their wagon. Anna saw them coming and felt her heart pounding. They were shouting but the words were not clear. She pushed the sunbonnet back from her head as though that would help her hearing. She tried to be composed and wait but the strain was too great. She began to run to them. Their excitement caught Stefan and he, too, ran.

"Trekksers, Anna!" Kasper called.

"What?"

"Trekksers!" Koos boomed.

Anna felt tears rising to her eyes. Somewhere in her there was a lump that threatened to stop her breathing. They were near each other now.

"Where?" Anna gasped.

Koos pulled up suddenly and came to a halt. All the others stopped too. The mad excitement died as suddenly as it had been born.

Anna searched the faces of the two men.

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"You said trekkers," she said.

"They had camped there," Koos pointed. "The signs are there."

"Their wagons went up the mountain," Kasper said.

Anna waited for more.

"The spoors are not fresh," Koos said.

Anna turned her back on the men and lowered her head. She looked up quickly and her eyes took in part of the vast distance they had covered in the days that were without number. I must be strong, she told herself. They came to me in excitement, I must be strong. She swung round and smiled at them.

"Then what are you standing there for, Koos?" Her voice was sharp, commanding.

Koos looked bewildered.

"Get your horse and go up there. They may not be too far. You may even see them. If not, we must follow and catch them. Go on! Go on!"

Koos grinned, touched his ~~wide brimmed felt~~ hat and hurried off. They watched him ride away then walked slowly back to the wagon. ~~All this time~~ Stefan ~~had~~ prattled on incessantly without anyone paying attention to him. Anna turned to him.

"What is it?"

"Are people coming, ma?"

"Perhaps."

"People like us?"

"Yes."

"~~Om~~ Koos gone to get them?"

"Yes."

"When will they come?"

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"We don't know. We may have to go to them."

"When?"

"Soon now, Stefan. Soon now."

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The child slipped his hand into his mother's.

"I would like to play with a boy like me, ma."

She pressed his hand and looked straight ahead.

"Soon now, Stefan."

Kasper went to the wagon. The brakes and chains had to be in order, the pins and axles had to be inspected and fixed, the iron rings round the wheels had to be ~~inspected~~ and tied here and there, the harness and the yokes had to be looked at. The assault on the mountain would put a ~~very~~ great strain on the wagon, and everything had to be done to ^{guard} ~~ensure~~ against a breakdown at a critical stage of the assault. ~~A breakdown might mean the loss of their wagon. It might go plunging down the mountainside and crash to fragments at the bottom. It might mean the loss of a life. Or the loss of a part of their team. And their lives, their future, depended on the wagon and the team. Everything had to be done to ensure safety.~~

> # <

Koos urged his horse on, spoke encouraging remarks into its ears. The horse picked its way delicately, slowly, up the mountainside. The heads of rider and horse were almost side by side. Once the horse slithered. Its feet pounded the earth in near-panic. Koos stroked its neck and whispered: "Easy, Boy, easy. Boy responded to the assurance in the familiar voice. He ceased fighting and spread his legs. The slithering, backward move, stopped. For a while he stood still. "On now," Koos whispered, "On now, but easily." Boy moved forward again, slowly, delicately.

assured and encouraged by the familiar voice of his master. Yard by yard they moved on till the top was two yards away. Boy sensed its nearness and tried to hurry. The slithering move started again. "Easy!" Koos said sharply. The horse obeyed, and, slowly, they reached the top.

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Koos urged the horse on a few yards then pulled up and dismounted.

"Alla Jesus!" he whispered.

He had emerged ~~suddenly~~ on a view of rolling veld flowing away to the far horizon, where the blue, misty, mountains reached up to the curving skies. It was ~~breath-~~taking.

This was the beginning of the great South African plateau, the high veld that was the flat part of the inverted saucer. For that is how the country is, like an inverted saucer sloping gently upward till the ridge is reached and then stretching flat. Magnify the saucer millions of times, plant broad-bladed grass that sways in the wind, put hills and valleys ~~high places and low places~~ in it, let streams run through it and plant willow trees on the banks of those streams and let the tender fingers of those trees touch the flowing water, let loose the creatures of the sun and the flowers of the sun in it, let the wind breathe over it, and you have the African high veld. It stretched before Koos' startled gaze.

From where he stood a faint track wound away, skirting a hill, to a drunken, twisting river guarded by leaning willows.

On the other side of the river, half-hidden by the trees and not easily discerned, three covered wagons formed a semi-

circle. Koos passed his hand over his eyes once and looked again. Yes, they were there! It was no dream, no mirage!

He vaulted into the saddle and urged his horse on. For the horse it was one of those rare ~~occasions~~ ^{times} when ~~his~~ ^{its} master was not thoughtful of ~~his~~ ^{its} feelings but prodded with ruthless heels till it hurt.

As they neared the river Koos saw figures moving from the wagons to the opposite bank of the river. They were running. He raised an arm and waved. One of the figures waved back. He urged the horse on to greater speed. His heart thumped against his ribs. There was music in his brain.

They were on the banks now. Only the narrow space of flowing water ~~separated~~ ^{separated} them. But the bank was too steep for horse and rider to wade in and ride across.

Koos got off his horse, ran to the edge of the ~~flowing~~ river and looked at the men on the other side. There were three of them. Three members of the great trek! He tried to speak, to greet them, but his throat was ~~gripped~~ ^{dry} by an awful disease that made it ~~impossible~~.

The older of the three men on the other side took a step forward.

"Good day," he called.

Koos relaxed.

"Good day," he called back. "My people are on the other side," he waved to where he had come from. "We hoped to find you. My name is Jansen."

The old man with the ~~flowing~~ white beard spoke:

"How did you know?"

"I saw where you'd had a fire and my brother saw wagon marks up the mountain."

The old man nodded and eased his rifle down.

"How many of you?"

"My brother, his wife and child, and I."

"Only one wagon?"

"Yes."

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"North or to Natal?"

"North for us."

"They say the land is beautiful there. They say a man can live and plant his seed and build his house without anybody standing over him or any flag flying over him."

"So we have heard."

"Good then, Jansen....You will need help to come across."

"It looks that way."

"It is....Go back and tell your people we are coming."

Koos mounted, raised his hand in salutation, then wheeled about and rode back.

Before he was within hearing distance of his family he started shouting the good news:

"They are here! They are here! They're coming!"

For a while there was great confusion. They all spoke together. Then silence settled on them. It had happened at last. They were not alone any longer. It was no longer just the Jansens against the empty sky and the open spaces, against the desolation and silences, against the valleys and the hills, against the creatures of the wild. Now there would be people to talk to. Days would take on meaning again. Nights would not mean darkness only. Now it would be different.

Kasper turned and walked away from them. He walked to where the remains of his cattle and sheep were herded. Many had perished

on the journey but a large number still remained. He walked among his creatures and touched them. He took off his ~~wide, felt~~ hat and stared away into space. His lips formed soundless words.

Anna choked back the well of tears that ^{rose to her eyes} ~~flooded her being~~ and reached out for ^{Stefan} ~~the child~~. As from a ~~great~~ distance, his voice broke through the tumult of her thoughts.

"Will there be someone to play with, ma?"

"Yes, my child."

He asked more questions, tugging at her ~~flowing print~~ dress and looking seriously up at ^{her} ~~the face, under the sunbennet~~. She did not hear the questions. She was dreaming of the child that was in her, and of the house they would build and of the little things that would turn the house into a home. She and her daughter, for it would be a girl, shared things about the house. As she dreamed, it seemed the girl was speaking to her.

"Ma. . . ."

So vivid was the illusion that she answered:

"Yes, Marie?"

"What's that, Anna?" Koos watched her intently.

She turned her face away.

"Nothing."

"Anna. . . ."

"I tell you it's nothing, Koos."

"Anna. . . ."

Something in his voice made her turn and look at him. They looked at each other for a while, then Anna shook her head and turned away again.

She said, "Koos," and there was reproach in her voice.

"I know," he said. "We've been alone a long time."

Abruptly, he walked away from her.

The men rode ~~slowly~~ down toward them. There were four of them. The three Koos had seen at the river bank, and another. The Jansen family moved till they all stood together in a bunch, waiting to meet the strangers. Anna moved a little away from Koos and put her two hands on Stefan's shoulders. Kasper stood slightly forward and held out his hand to the old man with the flowing beard.

"I am Kasper Jansen, son of old Stefan Jansen."

"I knew Stefan Jansen," the old man said. "We lost a good man when he died. I wondered when your brother mentioned his name at the river."

Kasper turned his head slightly.

"This is my wife, Anna, my young son, Stefan. You know my brother Koos."

The old man took off his hat.

"I am Martinus Van As." He turned slightly. "This is Jafta Bezuidenhout, Karel Elst, and my son, Paul Van As." Each man took off his hat as his name was mentioned.

They ^{all} ~~went round shaking~~ ^{shook} hands.

Anna hurried away as soon as she had shaken everyone of the strangers by the hand. She got into the back of the wagon, found mugs that had been packed away, and warmed up the permanently ready supply of coffee. She gave it to them. They squatted on their haunches in a circle and sipped the coffee while they talked.

This was the custom. Always, the stranger who came was welcomed with a mug of coffee. Other things came after that, but that was the beginning. The mug of coffee was a symbol of a way of life and living. Later, when they met the families of these men, the Jansens would go round and drink mugs of coffee with each

family in turn. It was a sign of welcome, a key gesture of social grace in a life that was completely bereft of social graces.

Anna stood a little way back from their circle and watched them and listened to their talk.

Normally, in a home, she would preside over her coffee pot, sitting in a chair with a little table of mugs beside her and a little fire on which to keep the coffee heated and have boiling water to keep the pot full. She would refill each mug as it was emptied. This would go on all the time the strangers sat talking. And they would drink innumerable mugs of coffee for it would be an insult to the house to refuse. Now, ~~out in the open~~, she could give them only one mug each and stand by.

And the men talked. ~~Uninhibitedly~~ they asked after each other's ancestry back into the distant past; and they wanted to know the details of what happened to each brother, to each brother's son, to each brother's son's son; ~~and the answers were uninhibited; and~~ then the questioner was questioned in the same manner. This too, was custom. Only after that did the business of the moment come up.

"And how was it with you?" Martinus Van As asked, bringing the business up to the present.

In an impersonal voice Kasper told the story of how they had to leave their valley. For a while after that they squatted in silence. The coffee had been drunk. The mugs were empty. The questions had been asked. The answers had been given. There would be more coffee, more questions, more answers, later. For the present, it was over. The while of silence bridged the past and the present.

Van As got up. The others followed him. Anna collected the mugs. The men examined the wagon, tightened the yokes and the reins. When everything was ready they moved. Occasionally Van As called out

an order, but apart from that there was no more speaking. The wagon creaked on and the cattle followed. They reached the place where the climb was to be made and halted.

"The animals first," Van As called.

The ~~six~~men rounded up the animals and urged them ~~slowly~~ up the steep slope. They left them at the top to graze. Then the four spare horses were driven up. Anna and Stefan went to the top and waited. The men left their horses at the top and went down on foot for the wagon and team.

The ~~elder~~ Van As took the voorlooper's reins. Paul Van As took the long whip and flung it out, ready for cracking. Elst, Bezuidenhout, Koos, and Kasper braced themselves against each of the four wheels.

Van As the elder called:

"Forward!"

Paul Van As cracked his whip. The four others strained against the wheels. The oxen strained against their yokes. The wagon creaked, moved a little, then came to a stop. Hurriedly, the four put on brakes and blocks not to lose the precious inches they had gained.

Again they braced themselves. Again Van As called "Forward!" Again the whip cracked. Again they moved forward a few inches and held them.

For nearly an hour they battled against the slope of land, sweating and straining, panting and worn out, their clothes clinging to their bodies with dampness. And, inch by inch, they conquered the slope! slipping, slithering but going up. The voice called, the whip cracked, the men and oxen strained and a few more inches of earth were conquered. With a heavy, plodding patience

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they moved up the slope of the hill.

At last they reached the top.

They rested the team for a while then moved on to the inviting haven where the other wagons were. They travelled up-river past the point where the wagons stood, past the willow trees, till they came to a place where river and bank were almost at the same level. There they crossed and travelled down stream.

By the time they reached the other wagons the sun was slanting far to the west and the signs of evening were in the air.

A huge communal fire blazed in the centre of the rough circle made by the three wagons. Over it, on skewers, a young lamb was slowly roasting. A young woman supervised the roasting and turned the carcase every now and then. A small group of women and children clustered at the rear end of one wagon, waiting to greet the new arrivals.

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The meal was over. The excitement of the welcome had tapered down to quiet group-friendliness. The big fire was down to a broad red base with an occasional leaping flame.

The two young men, Paul Van As and Moses, eldest child of Karel Elst, had gone down to the river for water. Elsie, Jafta Bezuidenhout's eldest child, and Lelia Elst were waiting for the water to do the washing up. The men sat in a semi-circular group, talking, chewing tobacco, drinking coffee. The women clustered at the rear of the Jansen wagon, talking to Anna. In a little hollow piece of land near the glow of the fire, five small boys fraternised with Stefan in the semi-secretive way of little boys.

The two young men came up from the river. The young women took the water from them and washed up under the bright stars.

Moses reached into his father's wagon and brought out a guitar and a concertina. He gave the guitar to Paul. They made themselves comfortable at the back of the wagon. Paul's thumb ran over the strings of the guitar. He tightened a string here, loosened one there. Moses held the concertina high, up, near his chin, bent his head with one ear cocked in a listening attitude. Paul nodded. They played.

They women hushed their voices and spoke on a lower key. The men, too, rumbled on a lower note and took in the music while they talked. The two girls adjusted the rythm of their work to that of the music. Even the conspiratorial young six seemed half-listening.

Occasionally a cow lowed, occasionally a sheep bleated, occasionally a horse neighed, but these were not noises. They were sharp variations on the theme of the music. It rose high above

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the human voices and the animal voices and reached up to the stars.
And the humans and animals were comforted by it.

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Anna walked round the wagon till she was out of sight of the other women. The conversation had turned from her and her family. For a few minutes she would not be needed. She stopped and listened to the music. How those two played! There was warmth in her heart. It was more than just a night on trek in the wild now.

She wanted to look into Kasper's eyes. The contentment in his heart would show in his eyes. Their eyes would meet and they would be intimate. Then she would go back to the women again and talk politely. Their eyes would meet.....

She walked over to the men and sought out Kasper's face in the gathering gloom. They did not see her coming and she stopped near them, still unnoticed. When a man spoke, she felt guilty, like an intruder, but stood and listened. When would Kasper's eyes reach up to hers?

In a hard, iron voice, Karel Elst said:

"It was wrong to go."

Those were the first words Kasper and Koos had heard him speak. They felt the restraint in the other men so neither spoke.

Karel Elst spoke again:

"We should have armed every man and woman and child and attacked them." He lowered his head and stared at the ground.

An uneasy silence hung over the other men. Martinus Van As looked briefly at Elst.

"Might as well tell you now," Van As said. Again he looked at Elst. "Karel's wife had a baby. A few days after it was born the slaves ran away in the night. Karel's farm was like yours."

Isolated. Two nights later there was a Kaffir raid. They beat off the first and the second and the third attacks. The fourth time the Kaffirs got close enough to set the house on fire. His wife and baby were killed. Karel and Moses and Lelia and the two boys got away with wounds and burns. There is still a raw spear-mark in Moses' side.

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"But that is not all. They travelled for two days because they were on foot. When they got to the Cellier farm, that's Karel's wife's family, they found only Ma Cellier. The Kaffirs had been and killed her husband and son. They had left her and the place alone.

"Bezuidenhout and I found them all at the Cellier farm when we trekked past. They decided to join us. His wife and baby, his father-in-law and brother-in-law were all killed within a few hours."

"We should have armed and taken the Cape from the English," Karel declared bitterly. The man's dark beard quivered.

"We would have failed, Karel," Van As said.

"But we will, one day," Bezuidenhout declared.

"We must bide our time and build our strength," Van As said slowly. "I've watched the English. I've known them for a long time. They are sly. That is why I'm for the North. Mark my word, as soon as the Natal trekkers are settled, their ships will sail in and hoist the English flag. They will not give the trekkers time to rest and feel their strength. They will swoop down while the trekkers are tired. Piet Retief is a good leader but between the Kaffirs and the English he will be lost. He's leading the people into trouble. The English are sly, mark my words."

"But won't they come North?" Koos asked.

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The old man stroked his ~~flowing white~~ beard and nodded.

"Yes, they will. They'll come ~~alright~~ ^{all right}. But the journey is long and they won't come now. We will get time to settle and rest and we'll be ready for them when they come. There won't be any mistakes next time."

"What of the North?" Koos asked. "Where will we settle there? And what of the Kaffirs?"

"Bezuidenhout and I missed Potgieter's party ~~at the Caledon River.~~"

"Potgieter's party?"

"Yes. Hendrik Potgieter is Commandant of the main body that is trekking ~~North~~." ^{North}

"And now?"

"We are trying to catch them. They are only a few days ahead of us."

"Will we get to them?"

"Yes. Two days ago a party of ~~their~~ scouts rode back to see if there were ~~other~~ stray trekkers behind. They know we are here and they told us how to travel. Tomorrow afternoon we should meet another scout party. The scouts said the main body will rest on the banks of the Orange River and wait till all the other smaller groups arrive."

"Are we far from the Orange?"

"Only two days' journey."

"And the Kaffirs?" Kasper thought of his home in the valley and of the mountain that was above his home. Did it all burn out or did they put out the fire in time? He wished he knew. The black face of Old Johannes filled his brain.

Martinus scratched his beard.

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"There's not much news of Kaffirs up in the North. An Englishman called Harris tells of a fat old man with feathers in his hair who goes around naked and likes to be given presents. They say he's drunk all the time. He's the king of the Kaffirs. No, I don't think we have much to worry about in the North. It is in Natal, among those Zulu Kaffirs where trouble will be. There is talk of a heathen savage called Chaka who kills for pleasure. Those who have seen say it is terrible. He makes slaves of all the Kaffirs who are not Zulus. But they say the North is free land. There we can build our homes."

"There we will build our homes," Bezuidenhout declared, "Kaffirs or no."

Koos looked at the faces around him then got up and stretched. Anna turned and hurried away before the men should see her. In her heart was a strange heaviness that ached dully. Kasper had not looked up at her. Their eyes had not met. And there was something else, too, that helped this aching heaviness.

Something she wanted from Kasper. She had hoped to look in his eyes and find it. Something she wanted from all these people. Something she could not describe, something without a name. She sighed. Perhaps the children had it. Perhaps she could find it with them. Oh, why did the music hurt so?... She went to the children. They saw her but her presence did not register. They carried on as if she were not there.

"I saw Oom Koos kill two Kaffirs." Stefan was proud as he looked at his companions.

The three Bezuidenhout boys were impressed. Not so the children of Elst. The two Elst boys watched him gravely. A little while ago they were just six little boys together. Now the two Elst

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boys were removed from the other four. A world of experience separated them.

Stefan smiled cockily and spat as he had seen his Oom Koos do

"They lay on their backs and one had blood in his mouth and it was wet on the sand. Two big, black, dead Kaffirs. We have their spears and shields in the wagon." Again he spat like his Oom Koos.

The younger Bezuidenhout boy, the one with the thin face and large eyes, shivered and bit his lips.

"Weren't you afraid?"

Stefan pushed out his chest.

"Not of a dead Kaffir. My mother says we must kill them or they will kill us. Oom Koos says never trust a Kaffir except a dead one."

The elder Elst boy nodded. This he understood. That part of it was not mere childish boasting. Never trust a Kaffir except a dead one.

The smaller Elst boy spoke with the coldness of a grown man:

"They burned us..... And my mother and our baby."

The elder boy said:

"Adries." There was sharpness in his voice.

Adries lowered his head.

"Ag. I wish I was there!" one of the Bezuidenhout boys declared.

"Shut up!" said the elder Elst boy.

The Bezuidenhout boy who had spoken reached for his team of modelled clay-oxen and put them in front of the little clay wagon. He scooped up a handful of clay and began to model a voorlooper.

She walked back to the women. It was the same among the children too. She would stay awhile with the women and then she

would go to the two young men who made the music. Perhaps....

The music of the guitar and the concertina hung over the stillness of the veld. The moon appeared, travelling fast through the cloudless blue of the skies. The stars shone merrily. The sounds of the animals were infinitely peaceful.

Old Sara Van As touched Anna's arm and looked at her sister.

"Nonnie and I knew your mother in our younger days."

"Oh." Anna looked at the two old women and didn't know what to say.

"Yes indeed," said Nonnie Joubert with a faraway look in her eyes. "I brought them together. Its a long time ago but I brought them together. If I had not introduced Pieter de Melke to Hannah Steenkamp you would never have been born.... or.... you would have been my daughter."

"That's why she never married," Sara said.

"I'm sorry," Anna said.

She looked at Nonnie Joubert's lined and toothless face and wondered what she had looked like as a young woman. Strange to think she might have been this woman's child. Stranger still to meet this woman out here, in the open, on trek.

"Oh, its a long time ago," Nonnie said, still staring away into space. "Everybody thought Pieter and I were going to marry. Nothing was said but everybody thought it. He didn't ask for permission to sit up with me, but he came often and bit by bit we began to sit up together and go out together. My father didn't like him and wanted to send him packing because he didn't ask."

"But mother had a soft place for him," Sara said.

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"Yes," Nonnie said, "mother liked him. She and I planned the wedding. We made all sorts of plans....And one day we heard that Hannah Steenkamp and Pieter de Melke were married.....~~m~~ They did not even ask me to come."

"I'm sorry," Anna repeated. She felt guilty on behalf of her parents.

Lena Bezuidenhout smiled into Anna's face. Anna drew comfort from the understanding of that smile. Lena was somebody she could talk to. They were of an age. It would be good to talk to her.

"We were lucky, " Lena said. "Our farm was near Cape Town so nothing happened to us."

Anna thanked Lena with her eyes and thought: she must be much older than she looks, her daughter is grown-up.

"I loved our valley," Anna said. "It was quiet but I loved it. I loved the comfort of the mountains around us. But I did miss a woman's company. The men were good, but you know how it is, a woman wants to talk to another woman sometimes. I wished I had a daughter; I often wished my son, Stefan, were a girl."

Again her eyes met Lena's and it seemed to her the other woman knew she was pregnant.

"I would like to show you Elsie's baby clothes," Lena said. But how can she know, Anna wondered.

Ma Cellier compressed her lips and looked at the other women. Her eyes went first to one, then the next till she had looked at everyone in turn. The manner of looking was familiar to Anna but she could not tell why. Ma Cellier's face fell away into grim, parched hollows and wrinkles.

"When I saw my old man lying there with blood in his side and my son near him, I lost all my fear." Again she compressed her

lips, looked at each in turn, and nodded slowly.

"I had never seen a heathen Kaffir alive in all my life. We had fought them. I had seen them dead from a distance, But I lost my fear.

"Their leader was as tall as a tree. There was fat on his body and the stink of him was strong. Ah, he was black and his eyes were red. I spat on his chest. I meant to spit in his face but he was too tall so I only spat on his chest. I was mad. I said 'Kill me, you black beast.' He laughed. Then he and the other Kaffirs went away and I was left with my man and my child dead at my feet. They didn't even burn the house or take anything." She shook her head for it was beyond her understanding.

Anna put her arm round the old woman's shoulders. The old woman pushed her away. Her toothless mouth worked.

"I really did want them to kill me," She stared from one face to the other as though trying to force them to believe her words.

At last she was alone. The other women had gone to their wagons to prepare for the night. Oh, why would this heaviness not leave her? They had all been very kind. Funny but kind. She recalled the conversation of the older woman and tried to smile. But, somehow, no smile would come.... Stefan would turn into another Koos. Could she do anything about it? What makes a person like another person? Why do some people ^{make} have more impression on children than others? Why didn't they just stop here? Why not build their homes here?

She stopped her thoughts. She examined the idea in her mind, testing it from every side....Yes, why not? There was water. There was grazing land. The lushness of the grass showed that the soil

was rich. Why not?....~~in~~ She knew they would not. That's why not. And Stefan will be like Koos but the child in me will be me. She put her hands on her stomach but there was nothing to feel yet. Good thing the sickness had passed.

The music reached at her. She walked over to where the two young men played. They greeted her. Paul tried to make way for her to take his seat but she stopped him. She went round and sat on the ground, leaning her body against the left back wheel of the wagon. She was in the darkness and could see without being seen. And round her, and into her, and through her, flowed the music that had started this heaviness in her. Yet it was gay music. She turned her head as Lena's daughter, Elsie, came toward the musician

Paul 30
Paul watched her coming. He watched the strong brave thighs and the firm straight lines of her body that showed through the simple print dress; he watched the firm ripe breasts that pushed the dress out and stood up like two young hillocks. There was an innocence, a purity in his scrutiny. Elsie came up to them and leaned against the wagon near Paul.

"Your music is good tonight," she said.

"It's for you," It was a simple statement of truth.

He turned his head and smiled and spoke to her without interrupting his playing.

"You look nice tonight, Elsie."

"Oh. Only tonight."

"You know what I mean."

"She's full of that new Jansen fellow. Koos Jansen. I've seen her look at him." Moses spoke with disgust.

"He looks a nice man," Elsie said.

"I don't like him," Paul said seriously.

"You are jealous, Paul," Elsie laughed.

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"No. I just don't like him."

"And why not, Mynheer Paul Van As?"

"You see," Moses declared still in disgust.

"He behaves too big," Paul said. "And there's something about him I just don't like."

"Well he's a grown man."

"So am I."

"Look at his beard and look at yours."

"There's only a few years between us."

"But he's among the men."

"Leave her alone, Paul." The disgust was very strong.

"So could I be."

"But you are not."

"Oh, Elsie. Stop fighting with me. We always fight and I don't want it."

"It's because you are stupid."

"Elsie."

"Well?"

"Please. This is serious."

"Well?"

"I don't like the way he looks at you, and it's not because I don't like him. I just don't like it. Please....."

Elsie tossed her head and walked away. Paul called:

"Elsie."

The music drowned his voice. She walked away from the wagons, to where the cattle grazed near the edge of the river.

The heaviness eased up inside Anna. She did not know the young

man, Paul Van As, but, suddenly, she liked him better than all these other people here. She got up and went back to their own wagon. There was greater harmony between her and the music.

Elsie sat on the bank of the river. Her knees were pulled up so that her chin rested on them. Her arms were folded round her legs and her hair tumbled down the side of her face. Nameless dreams, dreams beyond description, coursed through her mind. Something she wanted. Something that would make her feel whole. If only Paul could understand that.

Once she had seen a lady in a carriage driving past in Cape Town. The lady's head was high. All the heads of English ladies were high. All the clothes English ladies wore were beautiful. The man beside the lady in the carriage had his head bent and the lady was smiling with her head high.

She had stood and stared till the carriage was out of sight. Something had happened then. She had felt uncompleted, not whole like the lady.

When she got home she had told the family about it. About the lady and how it made her feel. Her father had got up without a word, reached for the rawhide thong, taken her into the bedroom and beaten the fear of the Lord into her. That had been the start of it all. After that each day had been more unbearable than the next. Each day desire had grown stronger. The beating had only inflamed her desire without explaining what and why it was. The young farmers and sons of farmers who had come to pay court had become unattractive. None of them bent like the man beside the lady, not one of them had that expression on his face.

With the trek she had begun to forget the lady in the

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carriage. There had been so much to do. There had been the excitement of the journey and there had been Paul. Only Paul was so dumb. Sometimes he was on the point of looking at her as the man in the carriage had looked at the lady, ^{then} just before it happened, he would lower his eyes or turn away. How it had infuriated her. And each day it infuriated her more. He always did it.

The excitement had gone out of the trek now. It was a hard, grim, dogged journey now, boring and heavy, full of monotony. There was nothing exciting in going short of water sometimes; nothing exciting in struggling up mountains and over rivers and through sand and never resting enough. But it had all helped her to forget the Cape Town lady and her carriage and the look of the man.

Now this Koos Jansen had brought it all back. The first time she had seen him looking at her she had recognised the look. The vision of the lady in her carriage had returned. She had shivered. She had not meant to. It had just happened. Also, she had felt afraid without knowing why. Yet, knitted into her fear had been excitement and pleasure. If only Paul looked at her like that. They would never fight, then.

"Good evening, Miss Elsie."

She looked up quickly, startled. Koos Jansen stood above her. Again the fear and joy shot through her.

"I saw you coming this way and came along too. I hope you don't mind."

Hurriedly she looked back at the wagons.

"Oh, nobody knows I followed you."

He sat beside her. She kept her head slightly turned away.

"I hope you don't mind?"

"No." Her voice was choked.

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"Good. All day I wanted to talk to you, to be alone with you, to hear you talk."

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She relaxed a little. She knew his head was bent as had been the head of the man in the carriage. She knew if she had heard the voice of the man in the carriage it would have had this same caressing note.

Koos smelled the body-heat of the girl. He remembered the days of loneliness that were behind him and the horrible yearning he sometimes had for Anna.

"When I saw you I knew you were lonely like me."

He put his arm round her shoulders and felt the warmth of her flesh under his fingers.

This is what the man in the carriage would do and say, this is what she always wanted.

He felt her relax and drew her closer into the fold of his arm.

"It's been terrible without anybody to talk to."

She wanted to answer ^{as} like the lady would but she did not know how. Still, she was like the lady now.

He caressed her arm and shoulders, gently. She liked that.

"I like your hair," He touched it with his left hand and rubbed it against his face. He tucked her shoulder deeper under his armpit. "D'you like it?"

"Yes."

He laughed softly and slipped his hand under her arm, near the outer base of ^{the} ~~one~~ breast. She pulled away a little but he held her and caressed the breast with the tips of his fingers, moving toward the nipple all the time. He touched the nipple. She shivered and tried to break free.

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"No."

The other hand came round and worked down her side.

"It's ~~alright~~ ^{all right}. You'll like this."

"No. Please."

"Why not?"

The hands kept working. She struggled against them.

"Please."

I'm not going to hurt you. It's nice.
"Relax. ~~I can see you've never had this. You'll scream~~
~~with joy.~~"

She struggled ~~more~~ desperately. His hand was down between her thighs, inside her dress. He twisted her neck, kissed her mouth and forced her back till she was flat on the grass. One of his heavy thighs pinned her down. He relaxed one hand to loosen the front of his trousers. She bit savagely at his arm. He gasped and pulled it away. She fought off the weight of his thigh, rolled over and jumped up. Tears streamed down her face. He grabbed, caught a bit of her dress. She jerked it loose and ran. She cried as she ran, jerking sobs shook her.

She heard him getting nearer. His hand reached out and touched her shoulders. She tried to swerve. The weight of his hand and the sudden move of her body unbalanced her. She fell. Quickly she crouched, ready for attack. A piece of stone came loose under her hand. She lifted it.

"I've got a stone. If you come near me...."

He walked deliberately toward her. *She heard his breathing.*

~~"I'm going to lay you, you little bitch, and you're going to like it."~~

"Don't come near." She held up the stone as a threat.

~~"I'm going to lay you," he said.~~

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He was poised above her. Desperately she flung the stone. It bounced off his chest, near his neck. ~~She had aimed for his face.~~ She crouched lower, waiting to beat off the attack when it came. Instead, unexpectedly, his open palm shot out and cracked against her face with all the weight of his body. It knocked her flat. She lay on the ground, dazed ~~and whimpering.~~ He towered above her. ~~He was working on the front of his trousers.~~ Painfully she tried to focus and pull herself together. She gathered all her strength and got to her knees. He smacked her down again.

When she became aware again, he was in her. She was pinned to the earth by the weight of his body. She tried to fight. He laughed.

"Now you can fight, my dear. Go on."

She fought fiercely. The more she fought, the more he laughed and the wilder became his movements. Against her will, whimpering, fighting, she felt her body begin to respond to the wildness ~~that~~ ⁱⁿ ~~coursed through~~ him. Nausea surged through her, but still her thighs moved up to meet the rhythmic motion of his, and when the moment arrived she was carried along with him.

He rolled over on the grass and lay beside her. She tried to move away, to get as far from him as possible, but there was no strength in her body. Only the tears ^{that} kept flowing ~~they needed no strength.~~ They flowed of their own accord. An ocean to drown out humiliation and deep, ~~indelible inner~~ hurt.

After a while he said:

"If you tell them, they will blame you. I will say you led me on. They will believe me."

She knew they would blame her. They would believe him.

"They will ask 'Why did you go to the river at night with a man you don't know?' I will say we arranged it. Your father will get out his strap. Paul, the little papbroek, will never look at

you again."

Yes, that would happen. She knew it would happen.

"But even if they did believe you, there is only one thing they can do after they have beaten you, they can make me marry you. That is all. Do you want to marry me?"

No, not that. Above all not that. They could beat her, do anything they liked. Only, they must not make her marry him. She would kill herself rather than that.

"So, you see, the best plan for you is to say nothing. Wipe your eyes and go back and say nothing. Because no matter what you say you will suffer."

He sat up. He reached out to her but she shrank away. He laughed.

It's alright
~~"I want nothing more from you. Get up."~~

He got up and helped her to her feet. She staggered a few steps then steadied and walked slowly, heavily, back to the circle of wagons.

He watched her for a while then smiled bitterly. He turned and walked down to the river.

~~"Kaffir maids are warmer and they fight less."~~

"Sister Jansen can read," Martinus said. "At the end of each day's trek we will take lessons from her. Mainly it is for the children, but those among the older folk who want to do so too will be welcome. Do not be shy but come and be taught."

He paused and held the animal-grease lamp high above his head. He looked at the people to *re* ~~en~~sure that everyone was there. Yes, they were all there, gathered in a body at the foot of the Van As wagon. Anna sat in the centre of the bunch with a Bible

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on her lap. The light of the lamp fell directly over her and lit up the pages.

"Our sister will lead us in a psalm, then we will pray."

11 pt itali
The old man bowed his head and waited for Anna.

Anna said:

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The Lord is my shepherd

extract (Elsie choked back the sob that rose in her throat. She felt Koos's eyes on her from just a few yards away. Paul caught Koos looking at her. His face thundered. Elsie intoned the words after Anna.

I shall not want

Karel Elst remembered the cries of his wife and child.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures

Bel 32 Elsie remembered how she had been forced down in the green grass. Something in her wanted to burst. She wanted to cry out. Paul's fingers found her hand. She clung to ~~the~~ ^{his} fingers and heard his voice echo the words Anna had read.

He leadeth me beside the still waters

extract (As Old Martinus echoed the words, they meant the river beside which they were resting now, and also the Orange River where they would meet the body of the trek, and from where they would cross over into the promised land.

He restoreth my soul

Ma Cellier remembered how she had spat on the big, black Kaffir. She had meant to spit in his face but it had only reached up to his chest. Her voice quivered.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Kasper remembered the mountain and the valley. He

remembered, also, the face of Old Johannes. He would go back there one day. He would settle with Old Johannes. Or his son would go. Whatever happened, a Jansen would go back and avenge the name of Jansen. And, somewhere in him, as he said the words, there was pride that it should be his woman who led the psalm recitation.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil

Those are true words, Koos thought. There were those two Kaffirs, then there was that skepsel, Paul. And in the more distant past, too, there were many instances when he had killed instead of being killed. That proves the rightness of the words.

For thou art with me

I wish my mother were here, Moses thought. She would know how to look after Lelia and the two boys. I'm not more than a boy myself and it's very hard. There are times when pa doesn't seem to know what he's doing. I wish she were with me.

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me

Is there comfort in the world, Anna wondered.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

We should have armed every man, woman and child and taken the Cape. It was a refrain in Elst's mind. We should have killed as many English and Kaffirs as possible.

Thou anointest my head with oil

Nonnie Joubert looked at Anna and nodded to herself. She may be the daughter of Pieter de Melke and Hannah Steenkamp but I am the Lord's anointed. I am the virgin whom the Lord anoints.

Start here

My cup runneth over

We have been lucky so far, Lena Bezuidenhout told herself. All these others have suffered more than we have. It is selfish, but please, God, let it stay like that.... ~~man~~ I don't like that man Koos and neither does Anna. I have seen the way she looks at him. Oh, I hope he doesn't want Elsie. If he wants her Jafta will let him have her. I don't want her to marry him. But Jafta likes him. Now Paul.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life

The voices droned over the quiet, night-kissed veld.

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

In the silence that followed the end of the psalm they all knelt and Old Martinus Van As raised his hands to the skies and prayed for the night and the morrow and for strength to meet the trials that were to come before they could enter the promised land. A long, deep ~~A-men~~ followed his prayers.

The group broke up and became families. The families separated and went to their wagons. Throughout the night the men would keep watch in relays. The rest would sleep in peace till the coming of the dawn. The next stage of the journey would ~~then~~ begin.

#

Anna rolled over from her side onto her back. Her eyes reached up to the bright stars in the black night sky. Kasper moved beside her. His breathing told her that he was as ~~still~~ ^{stare} as she was. And all the other things.... ~~man~~

~~It~~ ... ~~man~~ Not tonight.... ~~man~~

"One.... two.... three.... ~~man~~ four....." She counted the stars.

When she got to ninety-eight her mind began to wander from the stars. Koos is Stefan and Stefan will be Koos. And lead us not into temptation. The time when she and Maria went into the fields and pulled each other's breasts to make them bigger. But it wasn't wrong. It would be wrong now. And the time Japie piddled on the calf and then fell into the stream....

"A hundred and five.... a hundred and six."

9 Not tonight....

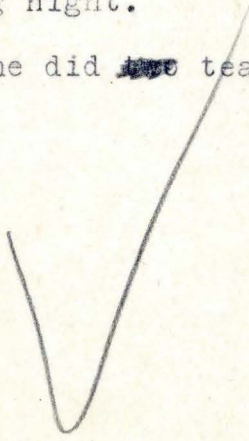
She turned her head away from him and looked at the outlines of the other wagons.

.... And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Where is the house of the Lord?....

Desperately she turned back to the stars. "A hundred and ten." At three hundred and ninety-three she fell asleep.

In another wagon Elsie lay awake. Her body ached, and down there it was bloody. Dry-eyed, dry-heart, wide awake, she kept watch with the long night.

Only when dawn came did ~~the~~ tears steal from her eyes and roll down her cheeks.



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33 [Gaily, in shimmering colours of the rainbow, the heat-haze danced a few yards ahead of the leading wagon. How and where it came from, was a freak no one understood. But it remained there, just ahead, with all the colours of the earth flowing into it. There was a merriness about the flowing colours. They skipped in and out of the haze like laughing children at play. Almost, their laughter rang out against the freshness of the morning heat.

On a boulder, just off the faint path along which the wagons rolled, a monstrous snake sunned its shiny body with lazy abandon. It ignored the line of wagons completely.

Further up the slope of land, beyond the boulder, a body of rabbits fell over themselves in their eagerness to scuttle for their holes.

Faraway, on the horizon of this flat stretch of earth, the land merged with blue mountains; and the mountains, in turn, merged with the bluer sky.

Etched into this setting, the wagons rolled along. The Van As wagon led; behind it came the Bezuidenhout wagon. The Elst wagon was third in line, and the Jansen wagon brought up the rear.

The elder Bezuidenhout boy was the main voorlooper. He led the Van As team. One of his brothers led their own team. By agreement, they worked in shifts. Later the third brother would take the leading team, the second brother would be free to do as he pleased, and the elder brother would switch back to the second team. So their rota worked each day. They counted time by the sun and their intelligence and knew when it was time to change shifts.

The two Elst boys had a similar arrangement with their wagon

Only Stefan had no one with whom he could make such an arrangement. When his Oom Koos offered to work in shifts with him, he accepted. But it wasn't the same as having some other boy to share the work with. He envied the others and resented the fact that he was the only boy in ~~the~~^{his} family.

He had turned to his mother, just before the trek had started, and asked:

"Ma, could I have a brother, please?"

Kasper had been there. Anna had looked at him and remembered the night before. It had been the first time in a long time that they had slept side by side, and there had been something wrong about it. She had known that Kasper wanted her. She had felt it in his movements and in the way he turned and touched her; she had known it by his breathing, ~~even~~. And something in her had gone cold and hard. She had not meant it to be like that. It had just been so. ~~And they had lain there, side by side, each growing more tense and more shut in by the minute. And nothing had happened. She had been afraid of something happening. What? She couldn't tell, but she had been afraid. And she had sensed something like it in Kasper, too. So she had counted stars.~~

When Stefan had said: "Could I have a brother?" they had looked at each other and then Kasper had turned abruptly and walked away.

So, with a sense of wrong in his heart, Stefan led the fourth team in the line of wagons.

And all, in turn, were led by the heat-haze that shimmered gaily in the morning sun.

The women rode in the rear, under the canvas tents of the

wagons. There, they worked on the clothing of their menfolk, repaired them and made others. There, they prepared the food that their men would eat. The space covered by the tent was the extent of their home, and under it they did the things that were normal in a home.

The men were all on horseback. Old Martinus Van As, as leader, rode ~~ahead~~ a few hundred yards in front of the group. Kasper, Jafta Bezuidenhout, and Karel Elst, flanked the wagons, Kasper and Elst on the left, Bezuidenhout on the right.

And a little way behind the last wagon, Koos and Paul Van As and Moses Elst drove the animals in a tight body.

~~There was a heaviness about this group-movement, a stolidity that was solid and sure. For all its slowness, it would get there, for it had the rhythm of things that arrive.~~

So the wagons moved through the early morning. They creaked and groaned, sometimes they swayed because of the unevenness of the land, sometimes they leaned precariously. But always they moved on.

~~And, solidly and steadily, the people inside the wagons went on with their work; and those outside too. They spoke rarely. That would come when they outspanned for the evening rest, or it would come for a brief spell while they had their midday meal. Now they were silent. Now they were alert. Their eyes searched the land round them as far as the horizon.~~

When the sun was nearly overhead
Once Kasper Hansen rode up to old Martinus and pointed far to the left.

"Something moving there."

"Where?"

"Over there. To the right."

Martinus shaded his eyes with his hand and looked.

"Yes. Can't make it out. Can you?"

"No."

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"Warn the others. Tell them to come in. Koos good?"

"Very."

"Send him and Paul."

Kasper rode back and warned the others. The women reached for rifles and powder. The wagons moved closer to each other. The men made sure that the belt of bullets slung across each shoulder was loose and ready for easy reaching and turning. Everyone, man, woman, and child, was on the alert.

Koos and Paul joined old Martinus. He pointed out the distant movement.

"See what it is?"

The two young men rode away.

"Take care," the old man called after them.

Martinus rode back, unrolled his whip and cracked it over the heads of his team. The pistol-like sound startled the oxen into a burst of speed. The voorlooper trotted along with the leading oxen close on his heels.

Martinus went to all the other wagons and did the same. Soon the group was moving at a brisk trot. The old man waved to Kasper to join Moses Elst in hurrying the cattle along.

The pace of the ox was doubled and the wagons rolled on steadily behind the many-coloured heat-haze that still danced gaily in front of them.

Koos and Paul rode side by side in silence. Koos kept turning his head to look at his companion. Paul looked everywhere

except at Koos. Far ahead of them the movement continued.

"Most likely Kaffirs, but could be trekkers." Koos spoke conversationally.

Paul rode in silence.

"What's the matter with you, man? Haven't you a tongue?"

Still Paul said nothing.

"Well, well! What a companion. It would be a shame to have to die with anybody like you, Mynheer Van As. Let's hope you can fight as fiercely as you can be silent."

Still Paul said nothing.

"Damn it, man. You're not a child ~~anymore~~. You don't like me, I don't like you, ~~all right~~, Mynheer papbroek Paul. But that's no reason for you to sulk like a woman. You're a man ~~man~~. Speak up. Tell me you hate my guts. It will make me laugh, I warn you, but say it. I promise not to knock you down ⁱ/_m now."

Paul dug his heels into the sides of his horse and shot away from Koos. He compressed his lips and stared straight ahead. Koos urged his horse on to cover the gap between them. Paul tried to keep it.

Far ahead of them, the moving mass seemed to reach a point and then disappear from sight.

They rode on for a while.

Paul pulled up and called:

"Kaffirs."

"I could have told you that."

Koos went past him.

"They will see you," Paul called.

"They have," Koos said. "Both of us."

Paul followed.

"I want to find out why they keep going away after seeing us.

They turned left and took a line parallel to the direction the Kaffirs were going.

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They stopped after a few minutes. The land sloped away suddenly, sheer.

"The other end of the climb we made yesterday," Koos said.

They dismounted and went to the edge.

Below them, to the right, a black mass moved away.

"Must be a hundred of them," Paul said.

"And look at the animals. I'd say there's a hundred head of sheep there. Must have made a big raid. That's why they're leaving us alone."

Paul turned his head and saw four ~~young~~ black warriors trying to steal on them.

"They're not."

Koos turned and saw. He laughed bitterly.

"They want amusement. Look at the others watching over there."

Those who had not gone down the steep slope, were all standing together, watching their four fellows and waiting to see what would happen.

When the four realised they had been seen, they straightened up and kept coming. The foremost one raised his arms, opened his palms and pushed them outward as if to push the pair of them away.

"They want us to run away," Koos laughed without amusement.

~~All~~ The black men laughed when the one in the lead had made that movement. They kept calling out as they drew near.

"Shall we do as they want?" Koos asked. "They want some laughter. They would get it if we turn and run. Shall we run or

pick off the four and give them something to laugh about? Or perhaps we'd better be careful as your father had ordered."

Paul raised his rifle.

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"Don't aim yet," Koos snapped, then ^{all} smiled. "You're alright, Mynheer papbroek, you may not talk but you have ^{the} a heart of a Boer. Now watch carefully. Are you a good snap shot?"

"Better than you."

"We'll see. We may not be here if you are not. The two on the right are yours. After the first one they'll rush. Kaffirs always rush.... They're getting in range now... Watch."

"Stop preaching. I know my work. The two on the right?"

"Yes, papbroek."

"I don't like you Jansen."

"At last. But I know how to fight?"

"Yes."

"I could have told you that. Now!"

They raised their rifles and fired. There was only one report. Two black men ^{dropped.} ~~sank to the earth.~~ The two white men reloaded with deceptive ease and speed. The two remaining black men came on, their shields raised, their spears poised, terrifying battle-cries came from their throats. What had started as fun ~~for them~~ had turned into blood and battle. Behind them the other warriors moved forward too. ~~This was war, two of their kind lay dead, this was no sport.~~

Paul picked off his second man at twenty yards, Koos got his in fifteen.

"Horses!" Koos was halfway in his saddle as he shouted. He spurred the horse on, then looked back. Paul was in his saddle but had turned. He raised his rifle and fired. One of the men in

the oncoming mass fell and lay still. Paul turned and dug his heels into his horse's sides. As they rode away a mass of bitter ~~Voices~~ ~~course~~ followed them.

"Good shooting, papbroek. Did you really aim for that one?"

"What do you think?"

"I think you did."

"~~A~~right. Let it go."

"Paul....."

"I don't like you, Jansen."

"Allejesus! Again."

"Nothing's happened to change that."

Behind them the chase of the black men fell away. They ~~soon all realised the impossibility of catching men on horseback, gave it up, and turned to rejoin their companions with the booty.~~

Koos and Paul rode in silence till they reached the wagons.

"Well?" Old Martinus asked.

"A band of Kaffirs," Koos said. "Raiders I should say. They had cattle with them. Over a hundred sheep and a large collection of oxen."

"Some poor Boer...." Martinus shook his head sadly.

"We got five of them."

"Good. Coming this way?"

"Going home with their loot. They were going to have games with us. Paul got three. I got two....Paul's good."

The old man looked at his son and nodded objectively. There was no pride in his look or voice.

"He is. I taught him."

"He's good too," Paul said impersonally.

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"Good. We need leaders. The Commandant will be glad."

The two young men turned their horses.

"Paul!" Van As called as they rode away. 159 46310

Paul came back. Koos carried on to take up his task. Father and son looked at each other.

"You don't like him."

"No."

"He doesn't like you."

"No."

"Is it 'Yes' and 'No' all the time?"

"What else?"

"~~all~~ Alright. But he's a good man?"

"A good fighter. No fear. Good with animals."

"And people?"

"I don't know."

"You've made up your mind. You know."

"I met him only yesterday."

"Paul. ~~Paul~~"

"~~all~~ Alright. I think he's bad for people."

"Why?"

"I feel it."

al. 35
"And you?"

"What will come out of all this fighting?"

"You killed three men."

"Yes, I killed three men. And others before that. And there will be others after."

"Then what?"

"~~all~~ Alright. It has to be done."

"But you don't like it?"

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"I don't like it."

"Do I like it?"

"That's not the point."

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"Then what is?"

"He does. He likes killing. And so do many of our people. A blood-lust is growing among us."

"Those Kaffirs had Boer sheep, Boer cattle, so you killed a few of them. He killed one fewer than you."

"I had to."

"You had to. You had to kill or be killed. And you hate killing. And you hate a blood-lust, as you call it, among your people. Then what is the answer, Paul? What would you have us do? What do you want me to do to escape the condemnation of your eyes? Should I have stayed under the English?"

"You know it's not you."

"Then what?"

"So many are becoming like him; good with animals and bad with people. Oh, you should see how good he is with animals.... You've seen a lot, father. You've seen men's eyes when killing is a pleasure for them, when hurting gives them joy. He's like that. And it's among so many of us since the trek began."

"War changes a man, Paul. To live you have to be hard in war. If you are not hard, you are killed, you are lost, you are the defeated. In order to win, to live, you have to be hard, without pity, without mercy. That is the only way. With the Kaffirs and us, it must be so."

"And afterwards, father, what then? When we have all become hard, and know only how to be kind to animals and not to people, when we've won the battle and are hard people, what then?"

"Always, you talk of afterwards, never of today...."

"If I'm alive afterwards, I'll have children. I will have a wife. I am young and I will live in the 'afterwards'. That's why I talk of it. It will be my ^{life} ~~wife~~, and my wife's life, and my children's life."

^{all} "Alright, Paul. We're always talking about this and ^{161 46310} never getting anywhere. I'm tired. I want it finished. You've said all these things. If I am with you, if I agree with you instead of arguing against you, what would you do? What is your answer to it all?"

"That, I don't know. If only I did...."

Father and son rode side by side in silence. Behind them the wagons rolled along at their normal pace. The voorloopers were not trotting along any more. The danger was past. Behind the wagons, the animals plodded along fanwise. The men on horseback ~~seemed born to their saddles, as though they belonged there and would appear unnatural out of them.~~

The elder Van As looked sideways at his son. There was a curious blending of pity, ^{anger} and exasperation in his feeling toward his son. ~~For him,~~ In him, there had never been this strange business that was going on in Paul. When he arrived at what had to be done his mind was at ease. He could not do a thing and hate it at the same time. He thought of the future, too, but differently. He had planned for Paul's future and they'd had a good farm and a large number of slaves. Everything had been ^{all} ~~right~~ till the English came, and then the freeing of the slaves. But he'd never thought of other people's minds or what the result of an act would be a long, long time later. If a thing was good and had to be done, he did it and that was all. Could he do anything that

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had to be done and yet was wrong? No. There couldn't be anything like that. Yet Paul believed it, and Paul was unhappy and Paul was no fool. He knew Paul was his son. He had seen Paul grow up, so he knew. And yet there was something so strange about the mind of this son of his. Something he could not get hold of, try as he would. And he wanted to, because he liked ^{his} ~~this son of his~~. He was a good man, a man to be proud of. A good Boer. It had been wonderful watching him grow up.

"Shall I join the others?"

"This other business, Paul, you know, about killing and the way you feel."

"Yes?"

"Do you feel very terrible?" There was a deep curiosity in the old man's voice.

Paul looked away at the heat-haze ahead of them. ~~The old man hoped he would open his heart. He really wanted to know what sort of feeling was in the boy.~~

"I don't know."

The old man was disappointed.

^{See} "Alright." The disappointment was in his voice.

Paul swung his horse round and rode back to join the others.

The sun climbed till it sat high overhead. The shadows changed and lengthened. The heat of the sun beat down steadily. The sun shifted its position westward. The heat eased up. The heat-haze disappeared into the emptiness from which it came. The long shadows lengthened and shortened suddenly. The day shifted to very late afternoon.

And through the changing day the wagons rolled on. The men stayed in their saddles. The women stayed under their tents. The

boys changed shifts, had bits of food from the women, then rested before going on shift again as voorloopers. Steadily, slowly, the trek plodded on to the ~~N~~orth. The brooding silence of the wide spaces in which they were, hung over the humans as well as the animals. Neither man, woman nor child spoke. Neither sheep nor lamb bleated, nor cow nor calf nor ox lowed. Only the wagons creaked as they moved along. Apart from that, all was silent.

The last rays of the sun were touching the outer edges of the earth and sky with golden yellow when old Martinus sighted a mountain ~~V~~ass far ahead, and, coming out of the ~~V~~ass, the scouts who had promised to be with them at noon.

The old man raised his rifle high above his head. Slowly the trek rumbled to a stop.

He cupped his hand over his mouth and called:

"Scouts ahead."

The wagons formed a circle. The silence was broken. Everybody spoke. The men got out of the saddles and stretched themselves. With stiff joints the women set about preparing something to eat. The boys found a stream with a clay bed and rushed there to scoop up clay and model clay homes and clay oxen and clay wagons and clay voorloopers. The animals stretched their necks and nibbled at the ~~green~~ grass at their feet.

By the time the scouts arrived coffee was ready and everybody was munching biltong, and a flat, round loaf that had been baked in hot ashes the night before.

There were twelve in the scout party. Eight were fitted with kit for the night. They were going back beyond the spot where the land sloped away to see if there were any more trekkers on the way. The other four had lighter kit. They were to spend the night with

the Van As party.

The eight who were going on gulped down ~~welcome~~ mugs of coffee, then rode away. ~~After they had drunk their coffee, the four who were to stay on were introduced to the Hansen family.~~
The rest ate
then the men walked a little distance away from the women and children, squatted on their haunches, and talked the business of the day and of the trek.

~~They sat in a semi-circle, men with differently coloured beards ranging from blue-black going through brown, ginger, red, carrot-yellow to snow white. The majority of them had formed the habit of running their hard fingers through their beards as they talked.~~

The leader of the scouts was a man called Adam Schalk. He spoke for them.

"The scouts that went south-east brought in a party of twenty wagons just before we left this morning."

"We expected you at noon," Van As said.

"Yes. We would have been here on time but we met a wagon that had broken down. Two young women and an old one. They had lost two wheels and were out of their minds with fear. We had to ride a long way back to find the wheels and repair the wagon. It took time."

"Only women? Alone?"

"No. They'd been with a party of six wagons."

"And?" Something in Koos's voice made all the others look at him.

"Yes, you're right.... We buried the rest on the other side of the Pass. Three men, five women, four children."

The men lowered their heads in silence. Karel Elst's voice

cut through the silence:

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"I didn't even bury my wife and baby."

Moses looked strangely at his father.

"Kaffirs?" It was Bezuidenhout.

"What else?"

"And the women?" Paul asked.

"We brought them back. Its better that they join you instead of going on by themselves."

"Where are they now?"

ail
"On the other side of the Pass. They're calm now. They're alright. You can get there just before dark and settle for the night..... See anything of Kaffirs?"

"This morning," Koos said. "They were going that way." He pointed where they had come from. "We got five of them."

"Good. Did they attack?"

"No, Paul and I went scouting."

"Pity you didn't get more..... The black devils."

"They had plenty of cattle and sheep."

"Pity they are too far away."

The men got up and stretched themselves.

"The Commandant has ordered the crossing of the Orange for six days from tomorrow. This morning a scout party crossed the river and went North to explore."

The men went to their horses. The women got into their wagon. The children left their clay stream and their oxen and wagons and houses. Each man rode by his wagon and told his family briefly of the women on the other side of the Pass and of the dead that were buried there.

"Forward!" Van As called.

166 46310 (132)
The wagons creaked and rolled forward and settled to the steady rythm of the even pace of the ox. Silence again descended on man and beast. ~~There was only the movement of the wagons, only the plodding of the oxen straining against their rawhide reins, only the hoof beats of the horse, only the forward movement.~~

se 8 When the last rays of the sun slipped away behind the far horizon, the Pass loomed large in front of them. They passed through it in the gloaming hour, when it was neither light nor dark, neither night nor day. As they emerged, they saw on their left, a little way up the slope of the land that went into the making of the mountain Pass, five wagons in a rough circle. But there were no oxen either in harness or near the wagons. Nor was there any sign of life. The wagons stood alone. And near the wagons were strewn things that had once been the dear possessions of people. Mugs, plates, bits of clothing, an old chest, a child's wooden spade that some father had patiently carved. Near the wagons was a big fresh grave.

A thousand yards farther away stood a solitary wagon with a team of oxen. With that wagon there was life. Three human figures waved at the group coming through the Pass. The people in the wagons and on the horses waved back. Lena Bezuidenhout got out of her wagon before it came to a stop and ran to the three women who stood waiting on the veld.

While the women of the Van As party embraced the three women who had waited and spoke words of comfort to them, the men moved to the communal grave near the five desolate wagons. There, they bared their heads and grouped around the grave in silence. It was just a fresh-dug earth, heaped up to a slight, sloping hump. At the higher end of it a crooked cross made of the branch

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of a young tree, was the only sign that what had been men and women and children once now rested underneath that sod. Who they were, where they came from, what their circumstances was, of that there was no sign. Or, perhaps, the signs were to be found in the five desolate wagons and the things that were scattered about them. Or, perhaps, the three women who had, by some strange miracle, escaped, would know and be able to tell. But for all others who would pass that way later, for all others who would see that grave there would be no sign of who lay in it, where they came from, or what their circumstance was.

The men stood in silence till the women and children came up. Then they all went on their knees. Martinus Van As prayed:

9 "Almighty God: The wilderness has swallowed up our brothers and sisters and their children here. They came in peace to look for a place to live in peace. They came with high hopes in their hearts. Their hands were turned against no man. All they asked was to be free and live in freedom with their neighbours.

9 "For that they have left their homes and crossed the wilderness as even we, Thy people, are doing now. All that they have built and seen grow, they left behind them and did not look back. Now they are dead. Take them to Your heart, Almighty God, for they were good people; good, honest, hard-working Boers. Take them to your heart and let them rest in peace.

9 "And, God, curse with all your anger the heathen savage Kaffirs. Strike them dead. Give us strength to strike them dead. Curse them unto the last generation with everlasting damnation. Curse their crop and their cattle for they are

devils, the children of devils.

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(134)

9 "Take to your bosom, these, our brothers and sisters, And give us strength, O Almighty; to strike the fear of God into the savage, heathen Kaffirs devils. Give us strength, for in you is our strength. Amen."

full mens.
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~~A fervent Amen rose from the combined throats of all the others.~~ They sang a hymn for the dead, ~~and~~ then they ^{went} ~~creeped~~ back to the wagons of the living.

> # <
They sat in groups round the communal fire, eating their evening meal. They talked in low voices for the dead ^{were} ~~was~~ near them, and the sense of the dead was heavy over them.

The children were tired. After their meal some went to sleep while others sat open-mouthed, occasionally nodding, listening to the talk of the men.

The women were with the three new members to their group. The new women were called Scheepers, a mother and her two daughter. There had been four of them when they had joined the party that was now buried on the hillside. There had been a father, ~~as well as the mother and two daughters.~~ The father had died of fever on the journey and had been buried by the wayside early one morning. Now they were the only three left.

Of the kaffir raid they could not talk. It was too fresh, too close. Suddenly, out of the darkness, death had descended on them. They could not tell how they got away. They could not tell if their team had been outspanned or not the night before. All they knew was that they alone were left of what had once been a large party.

Schalk and the three other scouts had gone back to the

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five desolate wagons to see what was left. They returned with rifles and powder, clothing, and other household things that would be of use to the living.

"It was unexpected," Schalk announced. "Not a shot was fired from any of the rifles."

"What of the wagons?" Van As asked.

"We'll use your cattle to take them along."

Later, Kasper Jansen got up and walked away from the fire. Anna watched him go. After a while she got up and followed him. He had not spoken to her all day. He had hardly spoken to anybody else all day. That hardness that had come when they had left their valley seemed to be permanently on him now. She had hoped it would be different when they were no longer alone in the wilderness. She had hoped that being with other people would bring them together again. She wanted to tell him about the child that was taking shape and form within her. But before she could do so something had to come from him. So long since they had last really spoken to each other.

It was difficult to hide her sickness now. It always came in the morning, and also quite often after she'd eaten. And it was difficult with so many people around. When they were alone she could walk away and be sick in peace. And, to her, it would be a crime if anybody else were to find out before Kasper. If only he would make it possible for her to tell him. It was her duty to tell him but something had to come from him.

She stumbled in the dark and steadied herself. Yes, it was as she had thought. He was going toward the grave and those five wagon

She called:

"Kasper!"

He stopped, turned, and waited. She climbed the sloping land slowly, conscious all the time of the lethargy that was in her bones and muscles because of the child, ~~that was taking shape in her being~~. She tried to pick out his face in the dark.

"Well?"

"I wanted to go with you."

He accepted it and turned. She fell into step beside him. They climbed in silence till they stood by the grave. Kasper took off his hat and stared at the earth. Anna wanted him to speak to her, to tell what was going on in him. She waited. She had made the first gesture, he must make the next.

He turned and went down to where the wagons were. She turned with him and remained at his side. With the force of her mind she willed him to speak to her.

They walked between the wagons. Kasper touched a wheel here, an empty yoke there, a piece of rawhide leather in another place. And all the time she knew what was happening inside him. The hardness was growing harder, the shroud of cold aloofness more intense. Each minute he was getting more like Koos without being relaxed like Koos. Her mind jumped to it in a moment of blinding brilliance. Koos had grown into what he was, it had come easily, in stages, that covered the span of his years. Koos had had time to become what he was easily without any change from anything else. That was the difference between them. Kasper had to do in a short spell what Koos had done in a lifetime. That was it. And to do it he had to lock himself away in a world of his own, a hard cold world of hatred. That was the word: hatred. She had seen it so often, lately, in Kasper. It wasn't directed at anybody. It was just there. When he had knocked her down it had been there, but then it had been directed at her. And down b

repetition

that stream where Koos had killed the two Kaffirs, it had blazed forth then till she couldn't look at his eyes. But why couldn't he take her into it too?

Now, as he touched parts of things that had once belonged to Boers like themselves, and as she walked beside him, she felt that hatred again. It radiated from deep inside him.

"Kasper."

"Yes?"

They turned and walked back to the wagons.

"I'm sorry about last night. If only you..."

"It's alright."

"Kasper...I want to tell you something..."

"Yes?"

"I'm going to have a baby."

"Good. When?"

"September, I think."

Now he would say something. Now he would say he's pleaded and wants it to be another boy who would grow up to be a good Boer. Now he would come close to her again.

But he remained silent as they walked along.

Anna stopped walking. He kept on.

"Kasper." Her voice was desperate.

He came back.

"What is between us?"

"What do you mean?"

"Everything, Kasper.....Everything. We are like strangers. We don't speak to each other any more. You turn your eyes away from me, and I tell you I'm having a child and you are not even happy."

"I'm glad. I told you it's good."

"And what of the other things? What of us?"

"Anna, we're on trek."

"So we must not speak or be happy?"

al 38 "How can you talk of happiness now? Don't you remember the valley?"

"Must you be hard even with me?"

"I'm not hard."

"Oh, Kasper. You don't even see that."

"There are things to be done, Anna. When they are done there will be time to rest. We lost our home because I made a great mistake. Now we must pay for it. How can I be happy?"

~~all~~ "Alright, Kasper."

"But I'm not hard, Anna."

Anna thought: not hard. Just a Boer doing what must be done. With my Bible and my Rifle. Doing what must be done. Not hard. Just doing what must be done. What was it her mother had said? Was it wrong to want laughter and happiness? Doing what must be done. Changing to do what must be done.

They walked back to the communal fire in silence. Kasper told himself that when all this was over he would try to explain to Anna. ~~But what was there to explain?~~ He knew there was something to explain, but what it was, he didn't know. Still, perhaps, by that time he would know and be able to tell her. ~~There was something to tell her. Of course, there was.~~ It would come to him in time. In the meantime, they had to go on, and this was the only way he could go. ~~There was no other way for him.~~ It was Koos's way, and his father's way, and it was the right way. There was no other way. Only to be strong in order to live and fight. Like old Van As had said in his prayers? Give us strength to strike them dead. That was the only wa

and Van As had known his father so he must be right.

She half-turned her head to him. Then, consciously, she stopped the movement uncompleted. It would be no good. There was nothing more to say, nothing more to ask. Why turn to him?

..... He would not give what you want, Anna. You told him you had a child and he said "Good." That is all it is. What more do you want? Walk beside him. He is your husband. You love him. Do you? Yes, of course. Well, walk beside him. He feels his losses and that grave up there. He feels for his people. This trek is the trek of our people. He is a good Boer. His heart is in this trek, Anna. You must see that. Perhaps things will come right again later. Perhaps you will be together again later. Try to understand, Anna. But he is like Koos now. All the world is turning like Koos. And Koos wanted his brother's wife. All the world is like that.....

She stumbled and put out her hand to him. The strength of his body steadied her. It was like leaning against a tree.

..... All the world is turning like Koos. And I, Anna, what am I to do? He thinks of the world of Boers and I think of my world with him and I'm alone. What are we to do whose only wish is to live in peace and with love? Are we wrong? This is not the man I married. Yet he is the heart of my life.....

Without sadness or joy Anna realised Kasper had changed, would never be the same again.

..... Now I must change too, I must adjust myself to him. But how? Oh how does one change to fit into one's world? How? How?

Near the fire, she left him and went to their wagon. There was much to be done and the sickness of her child was rising up in

"Elsie."

The girl jumped and spun round. Koos leaned against the wagon

and smiled.

"How are you?"

Fear hit Elsie in waves. The torture of the night before was still with her. Now it was magnified.

"I'm going for a walk past those wagons.. I want you to come."

"No."

"Think, Elsie."

"No. Leave me alone."

"Perhaps you'll be warmer this time. ~~Like some of those
Kaffir maids.~~"

"Go away, please."

"I am going, and you are coming."

"No."

"Yes, Elsie. Because if you don't come..... Just think. How would you feel if your father knew about last night. If you don't want me to tell you'd better come."

"You wouldn't."

"No?..... And what of Paul? I've seen you looking at him tonight. How do you think he'd look at you if he knew what we know? Perhaps it would be a better idea not to tell your father. He would only beat you and make me marry you. Perhaps it would be better to tell Paul and see how that look of worship would change to one of hate. Men like Paul are fools about things like ^{what} you and I did last night."

"You forced me."

"Think he'd believe it when you didn't say anything last night when you got back?.... I'm going now. If you don't come I'll tell Paul."

He walked away. Elsie stood shivering in the warm night air. Last night trickled back through her mind. But there was no room

in her mind for thought. Only fear. One fear chasing another, a multiple of fears.

She feared her father, feared his knowing and the disgrace attendant on that. Everyone would know and her shame would be complete. No one would believe her.

She feared, too, the horror that had been the night before down by the river. ~~Not fear of her people, fear of the censure of those around her, was greater than the fear of the hell she had endures. She would do anything to avoid that.~~

But greatest of all, ~~and it struck her suddenly,~~ was the fear of Paul knowing and changing. To have him look at her with hate instead of love, to have his eyes turn away instead of search for her, that was the greatest fear of all. Life would become empty, desolate, beyond bearing. No, not that, not that. Anything but that.

She was beyond thought, beyond feeling. A dead numbness pervaded her being. Darkness was all around. The only ray of light was her memory of the way Paul Van As looked at her. That must never change. She would do anything in the world to keep that look in his eyes.

Slowly, heavily, she turned and walked in the direction Koos had taken. Anything to keep that look in Paul's eyes. Anything. She skirted the fire and veered slightly to the left, not to have to walk on the sloping land of the mountainside. ~~Oh~~ how desolate a place the world was. She walked on, wearily, resignedly. Paul must not know. Paul must not know. Anything to keep that look in Paul's eyes. Now she was near the wagons. He was beyond them. Anything to keep Paul from knowing. Anything. How far the man and the woman in the carriage seemed. If she had any strength she would ha

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hated them for what they had done to her. Only Paul must never know. That look must stay in his eyes.

She didn't hear the voice calling her, didn't hear the angry footfalls rushing up to her. She heard nothing till Paul caught up with her and jerked her round.

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"Elsie!"

She stared stupidly at him.

"Heh?"

"Are you going to Koos Jansen? He's down there."

"Yes.". The numbness was still over her.

"I see."

She felt, more than saw, the hurt, disappointment and disgust in his face. The numbness went from her brain. Paul hated her. He would never look at her again with that special look in his eyes. They would turn away from her. Paul knew. She realised he was walking away from her. Walking away forever. Oh, Paul. Oh, Pa

"Oh, Paul!"

He heard her cry and came back.

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, Paul!" Tears streamed down her face and, impossible to quench, soaked the front of her dress.

"What is it?"

If only he would touch her. Oh, if only he would touch her. Sobs shook her body. They came up in waves. Each louder than the one before. Each more violent.

He waited till her sobbing died down.

"What is it?" There was heaviness in his voice.

"Last night, Paul..... Last night."

"Koos?"

"I fought him and he hit me. Twice. I lost my senses."

"Yes?"

"When I could think again he.....he.....he."

"He what?"

"Oh, Paul, please..."

"He what?"

"He was on me."

"And you're going back for more?"

"Please..."

"What else?"

"He said you would think like that."

"Oh."

"That's why I was going."

"So that I should think like that?"

"He said he'd tell you if I didn't go. He said you'd hate me. He's right. You do."

"What did he say last night to make you go?"

"I was sitting by the river."

"Hoping he would come?"

"No....Yes....I don't know. I was lonely. I didn't understand then. I thought it was beautiful, the way he looked at me. Like in a story. Oh, Paul; I was so dumb."

"Why didn't you tell last night?"

"He said they wouldn't believe me. He said he would say I was lying, that I went freely and led him on. He said they would make me marry him. He said you would hate me and never look at me. I was afraid, Paul, I was afraid. I didn't want you to stop looking at me."

"Tonight he said he'd tell me if you didn't go?"

"Yes."

"Wait here."

"Paul."

"Wait here."

He swung round and walked down in the direction of the Pass. He passed the wagons and ^{the} grave. He knew Jansen was stronger than he was. He thought of it calmly. He wouldn't have a chance against Jansen. He was too big, too strong. Jansen would break his neck. Jansen knew that, was sure of that. There was only one way. If Jansen's certainty made him careless there would be a chance. Otherwise he, Paul, would have to take an awful beating. Jansen wasn't the kind to be careless, but there might be that one chance.

He was near the Pass now. He looked left, then right. He called:

"Jansen! Jansen!"

"Here!"

Koos leaned against a huge boulder on the right. Paul went slowly to him.

"Elsie said you had something to tell me."

"Oh. Didn't she tell you?"

Paul went closer.

"No. She said you wanted to tell me."

Koos laughed.

"It's nothing really. Just a joke between us. I told her you didn't like me, you wouldn't come anywhere hear me. She said you'd do anything she asked you. Seems she was right, papbroek. We took a bet and I've lost."

Paul chose his words carefully.

"My God, but you're foul, Jansen. And a coward as well. No wonder your sister-in-law looks at you as she does."

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"Shut up!"

"Now I understand why you get on so well with animals. They know you as one of themselves. How many other women have you raped? Have you raped your sister-in-law, too?"

"Shut up if you don't want to get hurt!"

"Those are the two things you know, aren't they? Raping and hurting. Smacking down women and killing men. Do you know anything filthier than yourself, Jansen? Because I don't."

Suddenly Koos laughed.

"Work it off if you must, papbroek, but you're a fool. You know the old saying 'A dog never runs after an unwilling bitch.' My advice is to forget her. There are many other fish in the sea. There are those Scheepers girls. The young one's quite good-looking. Must say I didn't think Elsie would have the guts to tell you."

Paul stepped forward and bunched his right hand. Koos straightened.

"I shouldn't do anything unless you want to get hurt, Van As."

Paul struck. Koos caught the blow in mid-air on his left arm and struck out with his right. The blow landed flush on Paul's mouth and sent him flat on his back. Paul lay still.

"I warned you, papbroek."

Koos paused for a while, then stepped forward and bent over Paul. In a lightning move Paul's right foot shot up and landed squarely between Koos' thighs, hitting ~~his testicles~~ with torturing force. Koos sighed and sank on his knees, clutching his ~~privates~~ ^{groin} with both hands. Paul jumped up and butted him in the face with his right knee. Feebly Koos tried to fight him off. Paul caught his right arm and twisted it behind his back, upward, in the direction of his head. Koos cried out a mingled string of hurt and curses.

40 Paul kept up the pressure till there was a dull crack denoting the ~~dislocation of the right arm up at the shoulder.~~ He let go and stepped back. Koos fell forward, rolled over, and lay on his side.

"I'll kill you for this," Koos whispered feebly.

The anger that had driven him on, suddenly left Paul. He felt wearied, depressed, tired. He didn't want to stay near this man any longer. He hated this man, and it was the only man in the world whom he really hated. He went back to where he had left Elsie. His mouth felt thick and tasted strongly of blood. He spat twice.

"Paul."

She was sitting on a flat stone near where he had left her. He went over and sat beside her.

"He didn't hurt you?"

He felt terribly depressed.

"No." He didn't mean to say it but it came out in a wave of jealousy: "How could you, Elsie? And with him."

She took his hand and raised it to the side of her face. His fingers ran over the thick welts.

"But I warned you." The jealousy was stronger; That man had slept with her and he had not.

"I was a fool, Paul. Such a fool. I didn't understand. Oh how I hate myself!"

"He got what I didn't get from you....I hate him for that."

"I'm sorry, Paul."

"You didn't like it, afterward. When it happened I mean."

"No."

"Not for a second?"

"I was sick with hate, Paul."

"But he ~~got into you~~"

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A flash of tenderness and understanding, strange and new, shot through Elsie. There was only one way of comforting him, only one way of making it easier, more bearable for him. She willed herself not to shrink from it.

"He didn't ~~get into me~~, Paul."

"But you said...."

"Yes. Yes..... But listen and I'll try to explain. Unless a person gets into your heart and unless you give yourself willingly, they don't really touch you, Paul. They hurt you, they do all sorts of things, but they don't really touch you. Please believe that. I know it's true. I was a fool because I didn't know this before, Paul. I didn't know how much you were in my heart. I wanted things that were new and you were always around. I know something now, Paul. I know you want me. I know you won't feel better till you've wiped out last night by having me. Come, my dear."

She got up and took his hand. Together they climbed up the mountainside till they found a flat grassy place. Elsie lay on her back and looked up at the stars. With her mind she relaxed her body. The instinct was to harden, to resist, to tighten up. She fought it down till she was completely relaxed. She opened the front of her dress and raised his hands to ^{her} ~~the~~ warm young ~~hillocks that~~ ~~were her~~ breasts. He leaned against her and rolled over. She felt tremors shooting through his body. There was calm acceptance in her mind. This was the way it should be always. A woman waiting for her man. A strange devotional placidity about her. Waiting to be taken. This was the way. How nearly she had lost the way.

It hurt as he went into her. She was still raw down there. But she welcomed him, pain and all, and her brave thighs rose to him. Those brave thighs kept up a steady rythm in response to his own. Not because she wanted it, or didn't want, but just because it had to be. It was part of the rythm of life, the beginning of many things.

Slowly, the pain and the hurt went from her, and infinite pleasure took its place. And, together, they flowed away on the mounting waves of pleasure that soared higher and higher each second, till they were on the pinnacle of creation, till a cloud-burst of feeling merged them with the nothingness that is the beginning of all life. They poised there for a second of infinity. Then, in receding waves, they flowed back to the reality of the grass and the mountain and the wagons, and the reality of the night.

They lay side by side and looked up at the Milky Way and the Southern Cross.

Paul turned his head to Elsie.

"You didn't....."

"How could I with anybody else."

"I'm sorry."

She lay and calculated the time span before her next period was due. It must come. It had to come. Then, after that, it wouldn't matter. Only, this time it had to come. Perhaps Paul would marry her. She hoped he would. Perhaps he wouldn't. She would do whatever he wanted. After last night she could only accept whatever he decided.

"Better go back."

She decided his voice sounded more cheerful. Strange how aware of him she had suddenly become.

He got up and pulled her up. They walked down.

Elsie's mother was the first to meet them.

"I was getting worried, and so was your mother, Paul. Koos Jansen came staggering back a little while ago; his face is all swollen and his right arm is useless."

"What did he say?" Paul asked.

"He fell over a rock and rolled down the mountainside. He looks a proper mess."

Suddenly Lena Bezuidenhout noticed that Paul and Elsie were holding hands. Paul saw her look. He felt awkward.

"I went for a walk with Elsie. I wanted to ask her something before speaking to you and Oom Jafta."

"Oh."

"I hope you don't mind."

"I do mind." Lena's voice was happy. "She didn't ask us if she could walk with you. And neither did you, young man.... Go along now, you'll catch Jafta alone in the wagon. Hurry or he'll join the others by the fire."

As Paul hurried away, mother and daughter embraced each other.

Paul leaned against the front of the wagon. In it, Jafta Bezuidenhout ^{was} ~~check~~ ^{ing} his supplies.

"Oom Jafta..."

"Yes, Paul?" Bezuidenhout looked up.

The words tumbled out hurriedly.

"I want to ask your permission to sit up with Elsie, and, perhaps, when we get to the main body by the Orange we could be married. I haven't much but I'm strong and can work and half my father's cattle are mine when I marry."

Bezuidenhout jumped out of the wagon and stood beside Paul.

"What does Elsie say?"

"I think she's willing."

"Asked her?"

"No."

"Ah-ah... well, we'll see..... Elsie! Lena!"

They hurried along.

"Elsie."

"Yes, father?"

"This young man wants you....I don't like this....Sure you didn't ask her, Paul?"

Lena took pity on the young man.

"Leave him alone, Jafta. Remember your own young days."

Husband and wife smiled at each other.

"Well, Elsie, what do you say?"

Elsie lowered her head, then raised it quickly and looked at Paul. She hesitated then stepped forward quickly till she stood beside him and took his hand.

"I want him too, father."

"I don't like this."

"Jafta." There was reproof in Lena's voice.

"I didn't have such an easy time with your father. The old devil played with me for days."

They laughed.

Bezuidenhout put his right hand on Paul's shoulder and his left on his daughter's. He smiled at the pair of them. Behind him, his wife beamed.

"You have our blessing, children. May we come to a place of rest, and may your days be good and happy. She will make you a good wife, Paul. And a good mother. Am I right, Lena?"

"Yes, Jafta. She's a good girl, and Paul's a good man. They'll be happy."

"Now there's your family, Paul. Do they know?"

"No."

"Martinus! Sara! Everybody!"

They walked to the communal fire. Martinus and his wife Sara came up, and all the others crowded behind them.

"These two," Bezuidenhout addressed himself to Martinus and Sara Van As. "These two have been making eyes behind our backs. Have you any objections ~~against~~^{to} having my daughter as your daughter, Martinus? Paul has asked ~~me~~ to sit up with her and I've said yes. I can find nothing against the young man. What about you?"

Martinus stroked his beard gravely. Everybody was silent.

"If I have any objections," Martinus said heavily, "they would be against my son. But since I brought him up and taught him everything myself, even his good eyes for a pretty lass, I can think of no reason why I should insult myself. You have my blessing, children. May your life together be as happy as mine and my old woman's has been. Bless you both."

He laid his hands on both their shoulders and the ritual was completed. Now they could ~~sit up~~^{sit up} together and hold hands, now they could go openly for walks together, now they could approach and talk to each other without a third person having to be present. They were promised to each other.

People crowded round to shake their hands and wish them well. Old women gave Elsie advice. Old men slapped Paul's back.

"My friends!" Van As called, and held up his hand for silence. "These children have left it rather late, but for all that, this is

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a night for rejoicing. I am sure the Good Lord will understand although only this morning some of us were buried over there. Let us have music and let us dance and be happy for these two children. I've got some peach wine in the front of my wagon."

"I have a barrel of wine too," Bezuidenhout called. "Help me get ~~that~~ ^{it}."

The wine was brought. The fire was built up. The music struck up. Old and young danced by the firelight, and drank wine and were happy.

Paul and Elsie sat together, holding hands, looking on. Even now and then somebody came up to exchange a few words with them. But for the main part, people were just enjoying themselves and their music and voices and laughter rose up to the night sky.

Koos, his arm in a sling, the side of his face swollen, came up to them.

"Didn't know you'd fight dirty, papbroek."

"You should have been killed, Jansen."

"Can't understand you, papbroek. You're funny."

"Please go away."

"Forget what I said about killing you."

"Go away."

Koos turned and walked away.

"I hate him," Elsie said.

"Funny but I don't," Paul said gravely.

Through the din and the excitement of the celebration, Anna recalled the now far-off days of her own betrothal. She danced first with Martinus Van As, then with Jafta Bezuidenhout, and all the while the past flowed through her mind. How different it had been then. How more settled, more stable, life had seemed.

How glorious it had all been! Only, it had been winter, not summer, and the party had been held in their family barn, not in the open, under the stars, on trek into the unknown wilderness. Farmers and their families had ridden in from all the surrounding countryside. A week of preparation had preceded the party. It was no sudden thing like this. But perhaps life would be better for Paul and his Elsie. She liked him, and she liked her. They were both nice young people.

Again she was young Anna de Melke, daughter of old Pieter, and it was the night of her betrothal and the young man, Kasper Jansen, was sitting beside her while everywhere people danced and talked and drank. Her eyes filled suddenly. Kasper was on the other side of the fire. He and Karel Elst sat a little away from the others. They each had a mug of wine, but apart from that they took no part in the celebrations.

Anna brushed the tears from her eyes and hurried over to the young couple.

She took Elsie's hands.

"I want you to be so happy..." Again her eyes filled..."So happy....." her voice faltered.

Elsie put her arms round the older woman and held her close.

The party went on far into the night. It ended when all the wine had been drunk and everybody was too tired to stay awake a minute longer. Then they went to sleep.

With morning they set out again. All that day they travelled as they had travelled on other days. When night came they rested.

When morning came again, they continued their journey.

It was late afternoon on the second day that they topped the

42 rising slope of land and looked down into a valley. And below them, running through the valley, flowed the Orange River. And on the near banks of the river, bright in the late afternoon sun, they looked down on a town of tented wagons.

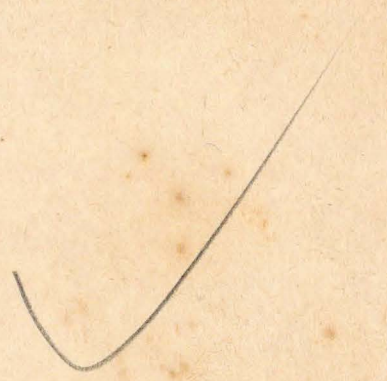
A spontaneous cry went up from the Van As party. Then their wagons rolled down into the valley to become part of the hundreds of wagons down there that made up the party of Commandant Hendrik Potgieter, leader of the great trek to the North.

The days of loneliness and fear were not over. But now they had changed. Now they would be different. The cry was still: To the North. But now there was law and organisation behind it.

The canvas tops of the wagons glistened ^{in radiant} ~~in the~~ in the afternoon sun.

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[Anna walked along the bank of the river. Low, leaning willows trailed their green tips in the yellowish water. The river was high, swollen with the summer rains; but ^{it was} on the way down, for the rains had passed.

Underfoot, there was a firmness to the soft earth. The sprouting grass-blades were stiff, full and taut with nourishment. Indeed, the touch of summer plenty was everywhere. The little yellow and gold wild flowers were more erect and scentedly proud than she had ever seen them. And everywhere, intoxicatingly strong, was the scent of honey that rose from each little flower.

She picked a handful of flowers and raised them to her face. But the overall richness of the honey-kissed air robbed them of their special fragrance. She walked on till she came to a stone on which a big, yellow-bellied frog croaked his last farewell to the late afternoon. Briefly, he turned impudent eyes on her, then carried on, his sides bulging dangerously with his emotional discord.

Sundown, earth-smell, a croaking frog, willow trees, and a river. It was good. She sat by the bank of the river, near the croaker, and listened and felt and smelled. She was a little girl in a world of make-believe.

This was the first chance she'd had to be alone since they joined the main party. The city of tented wagons was up there, behind her. All she had to do was turn her head to see it. But she didn't want to. Here she was alone, away from the order and routine of that city. Away from the Anna Hansen who had, in the last four days, become a part of that city, one of the main teachers at the school that was held in the open.

----- Strange how their journey had grown and changed. First, a long, long time ago, they had left their valley. Then there had been only the four of them, Kasper, Koos, Stefan, and herself. Till that Christmas day she had held on to things. They were still her family, she could still control some part of that family life. Kasper had fought, resented, been bitter, but it had all been part of the family, part of her life. Then that Christmas day. On that day, something she believed had lost its core, the heart had gone out of it. But they had still lived and fought and struggled as a family.

Then? Then, they had joined the Van As party. She had been happy then. They were with people. Kasper would relax and want her and speak to her again. But even if he didn't speak, his silence would be as it had been in their valley. She had been happy because she had felt sure the sense of family would come back as they were with others, and, therefore, safer. She had been sure he would war her. She had been sure he would fight against it. But he had done so in their valley and she had loved him for it.

But she had been wrong. Why? How does one know why you are wrong when you only feel it with your heart? How can you transfer the feeling of your heart to your brain and make them meet? Never mind. She'd been wrong. When they'd met the others she'd lost the last sense of family control. Even with Stefan.

"I don't really hate the others," she said aloud.

The big frog croaked, and the sun turned orange as it neared the far horizon to the west.

Now they were in the heart of the trek. They had started off as a family, then they had become a small group, now they were a small part of a city of tented wagons. Each time they had met more

People they had seemed to come between her and Kasper. First it had been the little group and that man, Karel Elst. Now it is the bigger group, the whole city of tented wagons. Kasper, with ~~Old~~ Van As, was now a member of the elders who held counsel with the Commandant. Sometimes he rode out with others to scout the land around. At other times he went on hunting parties and they came back with wild meat for the whole trek. They brought back more meat than they needed for the land was rich in roaming herds. How many of their names did she know? Let's see, there's the springbok and the eland, the wildebeest and hartebeest, the zebra and the blesbok, the roan and the sable, and... the sesseby... and... the koodoo and... and... and many others which she couldn't think of now... Anyway, the land was rich and the hunting parties on which Kasper went brought back all the meat. Their own wagon was full of strips of dried meat for the next stage of the journey. But whenever he came back to sleep it was like a stranger.

Such a long time since he'd wanted her. Oh, such a long time. Other people on the trek must sleep with each other. They do. Only Kasper.

Aloud, she said: "I'm not sorry for myself. I only want my family." She looked around as though expecting some answer.

She noticed the silence. The croaking frog had gone. How long ago? A slight breeze was in the air. Some of the flowers were closing. The night noises of the crickets were already starting.

She felt afraid suddenly, with a deep, strange, new panic.

"I'm not losing my head," she whispered. "I'm not mad. I only want my family."

She leaned forward and saw the dark reflection of a willow branch in the water. Haven't seen my face since we left the

valley, she thought. She bent further forward and looked into the water. But it was awkward in that position. It strained the bulge of her stomach. She moved her feet back so that she was lying straight, on her side, with the bulge just touching the earth. Her hands dug into the sharp grass and felt the blades prick as she hung on.

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Again she bent her head over the dark water. It was easier this time. Down there, below her, in the water, the outlines of a face came and went, swaying crazily one way then the next, getting squashed and short then abnormally long; eddying, billowing, shifting $\frac{1}{4}$ the face of a woman. Suddenly, the water settled and was calm and she saw clearly. Two large eyes stared at her from a sharp, narrow face. It was the face of a stranger. Her face, the face of Anna Jansen, was round and full. She moved one hand to her cheek and looked at the water. The face did the same. But it was the face of a stranger. How could it do the same. She looked closely to see the hair. But it was only a dark mass down there. She bent lower. Still it wasn't clear. Something caught her eyes. Hurriedly she pushed back the sleeves of her right arm and held it over the water. Yes. Yes. The arm of Anna Jansen had been round and firm and soft and strong. A lot of flesh to it. This woman's arm was like a stick. Just like a stick.

"But it is my arm! It is my face!"

She moved back from the water and sat up. Wonderingly, amazedly, she looked at her arm. With her left hand she touched it, feeling for flesh. There was a little just below the elbow, on the side near her body, but that was all. Everywhere else it was only skin and bone. Rough dry skin and hard bone. And my legs? She pulled up her dress. There was a hard knot at each cal

Women's thighs are always soft. Always. Quickly, she pushed the dress higher and touched the dry, thin thighs. She pushed her right hand into the top of her dress.

"I have no breasts," she whispered. Her hand had only felt a little lump.

She put her hands up to her face and felt the hollows and the bulging bones. She felt her neck.

...I am dry. Like a piece of meat that's been cut up and dried for the trek. Everything is for the trek. Biltong Anna. I was soft once, soft and round as a woman. Thighs of a woman. Breasts of a woman. Arms of a woman. Now? Biltong Anna. Will Koos still want to sleep with his brother's wife. Do men sleep with Biltong? Does Kasper sleep with anybody else? No. It would be better if he did. He wouldn't kill me inside, then. Wonder about my hair. I can feel its not soft any more. What does it look like?.....

She rolled over and leaned toward the water again.

"Hello Biltong Anna." She tried to smile. If only she could see her hair and the hollows of her face more clearly. Then, she would know the strange woman called Biltong Anna.

She tensed suddenly. There was somebody there. She felt it. Somebody was looking at her. And her dress was up almost to her waist. She turned and pushed at her dress. A man stood there with the last rays of the sun behind him. The light hid his face. But he wasn't a Kaffir. He had clothes on. Perhaps it should have been a Kaffir, she thought.

"Who's there?"

"Me, Paul Van As, Tant Anna."

She felt glad. She liked Paul Van As. She liked the softness

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in his voice. She said:

"I came for a walk." A corner of her mind wondered what he thought of her lying there with her dress pulled up to her waist. And, thinking of it, she saw him as a man.

"I too," he said.

"Come and sit with me." The words were out before she had thought of them. What would he think?

He came slowly, uncertainly, as though testing each step before he took it. She remembered the music he had played. She remembered the night he and Elsie became engaged. She remembered many things without seeing them. They were just shadows at the back of her mind. Then he was beside her, standing there, looking down. She felt shy, suddenly, and lowered her head. It was the kindness in his eyes that had done it.

"Sit down."

He sat beside her and turned his eyes to the water. He looked so young, and she felt so old. Yet he was over twenty and she would not be thirty till October.

"It is quiet here," she said, breaking the long moment of awkward silence.

"It is," he said.

He thought: She's suffering. He wondered why he thought that. Her face didn't show anything. Perhaps it was the air around her. He'd always felt it about her, since he'd met her. What could he say to her?

"It is nice..." She didn't finish the sentence. Instead, her voice changed, became not conversational but earnest. "Tell me please, what does my hair look like?"

He turned his head and looked at her. It was the first time

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he was really close to her, the first time he could look at her and talk to her. What he had seen of her had led him to expect something different.

"I don't know, Tant Anna."

"Please..... Tell me, is it white?"

"Yes. But not all over."

"But a lot."

So that's why she'd been lying like that over the water. Sadness touched him for this woman.

"Yes, a lot. The brown and the white are equal almost."

"Thank you."

The gratitude in her voice made him feel embarrassed, guilty as though he had done something wrong.

"And my face..... I know its thin. I saw that in the water. But the water does not show clearly."

Oh God, he thought. He felt trapped.

"Yes, its thin," he said. "You look sick....."

"Its ugly, isn't it?"

"No....."

"Isn't it?" Her voice was calm.

She lifted her head and looked into his eyes. In the gathering gloom her eyes were big and dark. He's so kind, she thought.

She wants the truth, he thought.

"Yes, Tant Anna."

He calls me Tant, she thought. Anyone would think I was as old as his mother.

"I'm ugly. Its true, isn't it?"

"Yes, Tant Anna."

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He wanted to get away from her. It would be more bearable if she cried or protested. She was so quiet.

She saw his misery and smiled. How easy it was to smile with a person who was warm and soft. His misery warmed her, made her feel alive again. Such a long time since she had really smiled.

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He thought: She isn't ugly when she smiles. It could be the gathering darkness, but she is beautiful when she smiles. He wanted to tell her but feared she might ask more questions. A corner of his brain whispered: This woman is the first fruit. What of our later fruit?

She said: "You know, once, my face wasn't all thin. Once I was beautiful. Not very, but beautiful enough for... ~~W~~ oh, for many things. In my family, we were three girls and I was the most beautiful. It's true, although you may not believe it."

"I do."

She thought: Yes, he does. She wanted to put out her hand and touch him. It would be so nice to feel a warm human being. She wished he would laugh. What could she say to make him laugh? She racked her brain, but all fun and funniness had gone from it. I'm dead, she thought.

"You marry tomorrow," she said.

"Yes."

"And then?"

"Then we move."

"I mean about you and Elsie."

"I don't know."

"It's hard to know."

"Yes. It's hard."

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Without believing it, she said:

"It will be better when we've won and are where we're going. She looked closely at him as she said it. She remembered the music he had made.

"Perhaps it will," he said. Deep inside him, almost beyond the reach of thought, something whispered: we are losing ourselves to win. "But it will be hard," he said aloud. We're near it now, he thought.

Irrelevantly, it shot into her mind: I wonder if he would like to sleep with me? She was surprised that the thought didn't shock her. Did she want to sleep with him? No....Not sleep with him. Just lean against somebody who was warm and human. And Kasper? Did she still love him? She thought about it and decided. Yes. But why?

"Love is a habit," she said.

He tried to see her face, to look into her eyes, but it had grown too dark. He could only see the outlines of her face.

"Yes," he said.

"Will it go on?" she asked.

He understood. She meant the unhappiness that had come to her.

"They will get hard," he said. But there was something more. There was a way of explaining it, a way of making it bigger than the two of them. A little while ago it had tugged away at the back of his brain.

She thought: I'm sure he thinks I'm mad. He stays with me because he's kind but he thinks I'm mad. No. He had said they will get hard. He had understood.

He said: "My father says to win through we must harden our hearts. He says there is no other way."

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"My husband says so too."

Oh, how I wish I could lean against him, she thought.

He said: "But afterwards, would it be possible for hard hearts to turn soft again? "

They sat in silence for a long time. They had said everything without saying anything. But it had been around them. Each, in their individual way, had felt and used words to hint, shadowlike at the dark thing that was in their minds.

Over them, silence, touched with creature-noises of the Veld, reigned complete. The sun had gone down and twilight was giving way to night. There was a slight dampness on the sharp grass and the willows looked black instead of green. For the first time, they heard the low lapping of the water as the Oran flowed at snail-pace on its course. There was a timeless hush in the air. And their silence made them timeless. They could have sat by this river a hundred years ago. They could sit by this river a hundred years hence. For the silence and the water and the earth-smell and the trees and the grass-blades would still be there. And the water, a hundred years ago, a hundred years hence, ^{would} still lap ^{ed} as it flow^{ed}.

"It is dark," Anna said.

"Yes, we must go," Paul said.

He jumped up and held out his hands to pull her up. She pulled away and got up unaided. Side by side, yet careful not to touch each other, they walked back to the city of tented wagons.

There was much to be done, for in the morning, after Nagmaal, they were crossing the river. The bridge was ready.

The road was clear.

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Now it was morning.

She knelt on the solid earth. On her left Kasper knelt, on her right Stefan, and, beyond him, Koos. And all around them other people knelt. The whole city of tented wagons knelt there.

The words of the Predikant droned on her ears without reaching her consciousness, without conjuring up the reality that religion had always been for her. They were just noises. She tried to focus her attention on the words. But there was a listlessness to her mind that would grasp nothing.

It seemed the force of the people around her stifled her, robbed her of all power of feeling or thought. She was a twig on a stream, carried by the waters, tossed and turned by them.

Now it was time to eat the bread and drink the wine. The body and the blood of the Lord. Why didn't she think of falling into the river yesterday when she was there? Amen. The body and the blood of the Lord. The Holy Communion. Wash me, cleanse me in the blood that flowed on Calvary.

How long would it take before they are finished. There are so many of them. My knees are getting tired.

The child in her began to kick. She opened her mouth to ease it. It didn't hurt, but it was a strange jab that made her uncomfortable. It seemed to kick in all directions at once, up and down and sideways.

Now the weddings. How her knees hurt. Now she could get off them and stand on her feet. Perhaps it would ease the little one kicking. There, over on the left, were Paul and Elsie among the

many other wedding couples. This wouldn't take long. Now this she wanted to listen to. Was it the same as with her wedding? Did they use the same words? The Predikant must be tired. She could hardly hear his voice.

45 She turned her head to Kasper. Would he remember? He seemed lost in himself. He had great responsibilities now. He was an elder. He would be a member of the new government, perhaps, when they got there. Was the Predikant saying 'To love and to cherish?' Pity she ~~couldn't~~ ~~can't~~ hear.

It was all over now. Paul and Elsie were husband and wife. Really, she should go and wish them well. Everybody else who had been with the Van As party would be doing so. Yes, she'd better. She pushed her way through the throng of moving people till she was near them. Round them was a tight circle of people. She'd have to wait before she could get to them.

Paul raised his head briefly and his eyes met hers. She moved her lips. He nodded and that warm smile touched his lips. She need not wait. She would go back to their wagon. He knew of her good wishes.

Men on horseback boomed at the people. The trek would soon be under way. They had to get to their wagons. There was not much time.

Anna fought her way through the mass of people and noises till she got ⁶ their wagon. Stefan was with Koos so he was ~~all~~ ~~right~~. She climbed into the wagon and sat down with a sigh. How tired she was. She watched the confusion change to order in remarkably quick time. Kasper and Koos arrived with Stefan and their horses. Stefan went to the head of their team. He would be Voorlooper. The two men on horseback flanked the wagon.

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From the outskirts other wagons drew near till they were all clustered in a tight bunch.

The tall, bearded, Hendrik Potgieter, Commandant of the great trek to the north, urged his horse into the heart of the cluster of wagons. He straightened his back and flung his right arm out, pointing. His deep voice thundered over the wagons and the silent people.

"Over there is the land. We have travelled far for it. We still have far to go, but we will get there because our trust is in an all-seeing and merciful God. Behind us we left the fruitful land of our birth. We left it that we might be free, that we might speak our own language and worship God in our own way.

"Ahead lay many trials and dangers, but also the land. We will take that land and build our homes and farms there. We will build a new State and a new people there... Dedicated to freedom... And no man... no man will take it away from us again. Too much of our blood is soaked in this land. It is ours! F-o-r-w-a-r-d!"

He wheeled his horse and rode across the bridge. The wagons rumbled on after him. The course was north, ever north.

Anna remembered her father and whispered:

"With my bible and my rifle....." but she didn't complete it.

The early rays of the morning sun touched the eastern skies.

There would be rivers to cross, and mountains to cross; there would be flat lands and high ~~roads~~ ^{lands}, dry places and wet. The days would roll into weeks and the weeks would roll into months. But the trek would move on, slowly, steadily, certainly. People would die and people would be born, but nothing would stop the onward move.

Over the honey-scented land fell the first shadows of winter.

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2. BAYETTE!

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PART ONE

(B)

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Far up in the mountains, out of the reach of human sight, along the Road of Children; up there where morning is evening and evening is morning, where midnight is noontide; far up in the mountains of Childhood a child took its mother, leading her by the hand.

Quest-child, the mountains said and sighed.

The stars reached down and touched the child.

Quest-child, they said and twinkled.

Wild beasts took the child's hands and wept when the woman trembled.

Quest-child, they moaned.

Blades of grass tickled the child's feet and said, Quest-child.

The child said: Mother, what is life?

The spirit of our ancestors who were before us live in us.

And, mother, what is man?

The woman was sore afraid and held her peace.

The brooding old man whispered but the child heard not for the fear of his mother barred his ears. The old man said:

Man is a quest, and fulfillment his aim.

But the child heard not for the fear of his mother closed his ears.

Man is a quest.....



-1-

The taller of the two men slackened his pace. He flung the ochre-coloured blanket back from his arm and pointed.

His companion looked and grunted.

"A sight, hah?"

"A sight indeed!"

They changed their direction.

~~"There is comeliness there," said the tall one,~~

~~"Enough for any man. Yes indeed."~~

To the left of them, a little ahead, a woman worked in the fields. Strapped to her back was a child. The child hung head-down but appeared nonchalant as ~~she~~ ^{the woman} bent forward to push her maize into the soft earth. She looked up and saw the strangers. She straightened her back, planted her hands on her hips, her feet a little apart on the soft earth, and stared at them.

"Spirit of my ancestors!" exclaimed the tall man. "I would like that one in my kraal!"

"Show me the man who would not! This one is truly comely. I have seen the beauty of Umnandi, the king's wife, but this one is truly comely. A man might well forget the reason for his journey and linger here." ~~Only the king's business could keep one going~~

"For such a one even that might be forgotten." As soon as he had said it, the tall one looked at his companion anxiously. Perhaps he had said too much in his enthusiasm. ~~It is said that too much beer, and a beautiful woman is the downfall of many a good man. But his companion did not seem to have noticed.~~

They were near the woman now. They fed their eyes on her

~~beauty.~~

Start here

She was ~~brown~~ a dark mahogany brown. Her skin was smooth, without a blemish. She was plump but supple. And she was tall and stately like most Matabele women. Her eyes were deep and dark and round. Her ears and mouth were small, and her face was round and innocent like that of a very young girl. Her arms flowed into her shoulders, and her shoulders flowed into the round smoothness of her neck. In spite of the child on her back, her bosom stood out straight and firm, ~~not shaking~~.

"Those thighs!" the tall man whispered.

"Oh, those hips!"

The woman smiled and showed perfect teeth.

"Greetings, daughter of the king!" The tall man bowed as he spoke.

"Greetings to you, indunas of the king."

"Now I understand why our soldiers fight so well! It is the beauty of our women that spur^d them on. In you is the beauty of all the Matabele women."

The woman smiled.

~~"My lord flatters in well chosen words."~~

~~"Indeed I don't flatter. You are....."~~

"I am a mother of two children, a humble hand-maiden of the king. My son is ten, nearly a man, he herds his father's cattle beyond the hill."

The tall man drew himself up to make a reply. His companion spoke before he could do so.

"Oh, daughter of the king, it is true, my friend is struck by your beauty, as ~~I~~ am I, as would be any man of the Matabele,

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for you are truly a beauty among a nation of beautiful women, ~~brightest star among many. We have paused to salute your beauty~~. But we are on the king's business, and no man dare longer on the king's business. ~~"The eye of Mzilikazi, the eater of the lie, the lord of the earth and the sky, sees everything. We pause but to relieve our thirst."~~

~~"You speak well, my lord."~~

The woman dropped her hoe and went toward a group of ~~three~~ huts round which was built a wall of stones. They watched her go, then the tall man turned to his companion. There was anger in his eyes.

"Easy, my friend," the other said. "Do you know who that?"
"What does it matter?"

~~"With your life, my brother. You have heard of Dabula?"~~

"Dabula? There are many Dabulas."

"You are wrong, my brother. At Inzwinyani there is only one Dabula."

"You know Gubuza?"

"Who does not know the Commander of all the king's armies?"

"I have heard...."

~~"Dabula"~~ is the personal aide to Gubuza."

"But...."

"This beauty is Ntombi, his wife. Once, I saw her at Cou with Nanda, Gubuza's wife, and Umnandi, the queen."

The tall man opened his eyes wide, smacked his chest with his fist and groaned.

"Let us be away from here!"

"Patience, my friend. No harm has been done. ~~If we go now it will be strange and she will tell Dabula and we will be finished.~~ Let us stay and drink what she gives us and go on our way. Thus, it would be that two men passed on the king's business and had a drink and went on."

"They say the medicine-man, Mkomosi, is a friend of Gubuza."

"Yes. I have seen them together often."

47 The tall man shivered suddenly. He let out an involuntary sigh.

"I am finished. He will throw his bones and smell me out. I am finished."

"Courage, my friend. Are we not all the king's children? Does he not say whether we live or die? Courage then."

The woman came back from the huts. Behind her, a young woman carried a calabash. The men went to meet them. The second woman gave the calabash to Ntombi. She took it and gave it to the short man. He drank ~~long~~ then passed it to his friend.

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"This beer for a king!"

"I am glad you find it good."

~~The tall man gave her the calabash. She gave it to the girl.~~

"The king's business calls us," the short one said.

"The king's protection go with you," the woman replied.

They bowed and walked away. She watched them for a while. A gentle half-smile played around her mouth and dimpled her cheeks. She turned and went back to her sowing. While she sowed she sang softly to the child on her back.

~~The two men walked in silence for a long time. Their strides were long. Their footsteps ate up space. They moved with the tireless, rhythmic ease of perfectly trained Matabele warriors. Mile after mile they kept up the steady pace. Whether they were climbing a hill or going down into a valley or crossing a mountain or a river, they kept up the same steady pace. Their breathing was even. Their heartbeat was steady. They were warriors of the king, trained to move for days without feeling the strain.~~

Toward late afternoon ^{the two men} ~~they~~ had covered nearly a score of miles and the Barolong city of Kunana lay ahead of them.

The tall man looked at his companion. His mistake about the woman, Ntombi, was heavy on his mind. A man paid with his life for less. He realized ² that he was at the mercy of his companion. That was why he had held his peace all the long day. But now he wanted to try ~~once more~~ to straighten things out. If his companion decided to denounce him his life wouldn't be worth anything.

"The other was a beauty too, the one who carried the calabash. The king's Captain, Dabula, is fortunate in his women."

The short ~~man~~ man laughed.

"It is clear ~~that~~ you do not know the talk of Inzwinyani, Bange-la."

"I have been with the armies in the north."

~~"It is so. I will tell you."~~ Dabula has only one wife."

"Only one!"

"Only one."

"This is strange. Even a poor man has two wives."

"It is strange indeed. Had it been anyone else, had it been you or me, or even any ^{other} officer in the king's armies. the murmurings of the

women and of the medicine~~men~~ and even of some of the soldiers would have been so great that the king would have....~~He~~" He moved his index finger across his throat. "But it is Dabula so no one murmurs. Dabula is the friend of Gubuza, and Gubuza is the Commander of all the king's armies."

"I have heard that Gubuza....."

"Yes, he has only Nanda. But ~~along~~ time ago when our people were still in the East, when Mzilikazi was a commander in Chaka's armies, Gubuza was a Captain of the armies. When Mzilikazi fled before the ~~wrath~~ of Chaka, Gubuza left all his wives and brought only Nanda with him. So, for Gubuza, it is different. They say Dabula has only one wife because the spell of Gubuza is on him."

"And his woman, does she not feel the insult?"

"They say the spell of Gubuza is on her, too," ~~and that she honours Dabula because he has only one wife.~~

"And him the first Captain of all the king's armies!"

"It is strange indeed, Bangela. But the old days are passing and strange new ~~things~~ are coming to pass." The short man picked his words carefully and looked at his companion. "The instrument of this change is Gubuza. ~~He~~ breaks all our tribal laws. It seems that he has bewitched the king. Even some of the generals, great men like Qanda and Tabata and Dambuza, say it. They say that with his friend, the medicine~~man~~ Mkomози, he has bewitched the king. They say Mkomози throws the bones for him."

The tall man, Bhoya, felt eased. Bangela would not have told him this much if he had meant to denounce him. ~~The heavy load of the fear of death lifted from his heart and mind.~~

"A tragedy, this, Bhoya," he said, emphasising his companion's name to show their new equality as conspirators. "Why don't the other medicine~~men~~ throw their bones and smell out the evil ones?" ~~A tragedy this: A Captain of the armies with only one wife, the chief commander of the armies who breaks out tribal lawes, it is a tragedy for which we shall all pay unless the evildoers are smelled out."~~

~~"Yes," Bhoya said. "But what are we to do? Gubuza is the only man in all the land who can speak against the king and live." In all the land there is no other, only Gubuza."~~

~~"The king is bewitched."~~

"We must bide our time. The moment will come..... But do not speak ~~in~~ of this to anyone. Do not speak of it to your favourite wife even. If you do your heart will be fed to the vultures. I, Bhoya, swear this by the spirit of all my ancestors."

"I shall not speak."

They were on the outer fringes of the Barolong city now.

People stepped out of their way. But there was veiled hostility in the eyes of the men. The women turned their backs and hurried their children into their huts.

The two men passed through, erect, looking straight in front of them. They carried themselves with the dignity of Matabele warriors. They were on the king's business. The king's dignity had to be upheld. They moved on till they were in the centre of Kunana. They knew that Barolong men and women and children followed at a safe distance, but they moved as though only they trod the earth.

At the centre of the city was a cluster of huts, larger and more decoratively built than the others. This was the seat of Tauana, chief

of the Barolong.

Here they stopped and waited. A young man came out of the biggest hut, saw them, and went in again.

Tauana came out. He was short and fat and looked amiable. He was dead drunk. Two men brought a chair forward and he slumped into it. He raised drunken eyes to the two men.

"Greetings Tauana!" Bhoya said.

The chief of the Barolong remained silent. Bhoya's eyes flashed. ~~He grew angry. This Rolong chief had already insulted them by not offering them seats, and now he was again insulting the king's dignity by his silence.~~

"I bring the greetings of Mzilikazi!" Bhoya said sharply.

"Mzilikazi the great, lord of the leopard and the lion, master of the elephant, king of the mountains and the valleys, eater of the jackal, destroyer of his enemies, protector of his friends!"

Tauana hiccupped. He turned to one of his young men.

"Rauwe, I see the naked men are covered today. They must realize at last that our women don't like to see their ^{urhidness} ~~big penises~~, hah? Or is it cold, hah?"

Rauwe laughed. The people waited in silence.

Bhoya said:

"You are drunk old man! It pleases you to insult Mzilikazi but tomorrow you will weep. It is the king's wish that you and your people deliver to him, as tribute, a hundred head of milking cows and a hundred head of fat sheep. You are, further, to supply men to drive these to the king's city!"

Tauana tossed his head in drunken anger.

"Taxes! Taxes! all the time! I am sick of your taxes. Before

you people with your nakedness came from the "ast we lived without paying any taxes to anyone and we were happy, heh, Rauwe?"

"Yes," Rauwe said.

"But you were attacked and robbed of your cattle and your people were killed. Now you are protected by the shadow of Mzilikazi!

48 "That is no matter," Tauana said. "We were free, we were happy. We didn't give our cattle to anyone. We kept them for ourselves. I am sick of you and your king and your taxes! I want you to be lost. Understand? I want you to be lost."

Bhoya turned his eyes to the young men who had drawn near,

"Think you! Your chief is drunk with too much beer. To disobey Mzilikazi is to invite a death that is swift and sudden. There will not be child left or a wall that is not crushed after the Matabele warriors have passed through here! Tell your chief to obey the orders of Mzilikazi or those of you who are fortunate enough to escape will mourn this day for all eternity."

Tauana turned to his young men.

"The ravine is close by, Rauwe. Lose these collectors of taxes! I hate taxes!"

The young men moved forward. Bhoya and Bangela were unarmed. ~~They had come without their shields and spears for they were on a peaceful mission in the King's name, so they faced them unarmed and did not try to fight back when the young men laid hands on them.~~

Bhoya said:

"I have warned you. You share in the madness of your chief. I am sorry for you, you descendants of hammersmiths! Kill us and you sow the seed of your own destruction. A Matabele's blood never mingles

with the earth without calling forth death and destruction. I have warned you!"

Rauwe struck Bhoya across the face with the handle of a knife. Others tied their hands and dragged them to the ravine on the western edge of the city. There, Rauwe stabbed Bhoya in the chest while a companion stabbed Bangela.

They dragged the two wounded men to the edge of the ravine.

Bhoya shouted:

"Bayete!"

Then they pushed him over.

Bangela echoed the cry in a dying breath.

The young men, led by Rauwe, returned, singing songs of battle. Tauana got up to receive them. ~~He was happy.~~

"Death to all tax collectors!" he shouted drunkenly. "Beer for my soldiers! We will show these naked easterners!"

He led the young men into his hut,

"Beer! Beer!" He kept up the call till beer was brought.

"Drink, my soldiers, drink!"

They drank deeply and sang. Such a long time they had been under the heel of the Matabele. Such a wonderful feeling to turn on the ~~my~~ oppressor.

But outside, there were those who were sober, those who could think calmly of the power of the Matabele. Among them, the word went around:

Tauana had ~~h~~ordered the death of Mzilikazi's messengers. The young men had obeyed.

And each time it was told, the menace inherent in the deed grew. Two of Mzilikazi's messengers were dead.

It hung over Kunana and the hut of Tauana was a drunken island in a sea of fear. It spread till it reached the elders at the cattle ~~posts~~ on the outskirts of the city.

When night fell Kunana was a throbbing hive of fear. People acted, talked, and ate their food as though they were walking a tight-rope. And in every mind, except those in the hut of Tauana, were the questions: What would happen? When? What could they do to avoid it?

The elders held a meeting.

"What are we to do?" one asked.

The most respected among them, an owner of much cattle and land, a wise man called Notto, said:

"There is only one thing to do. We must go to Mzilikazi. We must take him ~~his~~ double the tribute he demanded. We must get Tauana to lead us. We must make him throw himself on Mzilikazi's mercy. There is no other way."

"But will Tauana?" an elder asked.

"We must make him," another said.

"Let us do so now," a very old man said.

They went to Tauana's hut. Drunkenly, Tauana and the young men called to them:

"A great day, hah!"

"We'll show those naked easterners!"

"Come drink to our victory!"

"Silence!" Notto cried. The fury of his voice surprised them into silence. "Fools! Do you know what you've done?"

"Yes!" Rauwe cried defiantly.

Notto ignored him and spoke to Tauana:

"The only way we can save our city and people is for us to double the tribute and take it to Mzilikazi. You will lead us. You will go on your knees and plead forgiveness. You will say you were drunk and did not know what you were ~~doing~~ doing. You ~~...~~."

Tauana got to his feet unsteadily.

"Another naked ^Aeater^Aner," he mumbled. "Lose him, my brave Rauwe! My brave ~~soldeirs~~!"

"He's drunk," an elder said bitterly. "They're all drunk."

"Can't do anything with him," another said.

"Lose them all!" Tauana cried.

"Better leave them alone," Notto said. "The beer has made them mad. They may even turn on us. Let us go."

They left the chief's drunken party. The very old man said:

"Mzilikazi will not be appeased if Tauana is not with us."

Another said: "Yes."

"We must wait till Tauana sobers," Notto said. "We must wait and hope. There is nothing more we can do."

And still the fear hung over the city of Kunana.

How would the wrath of the Matabele express itself?

What would Mzilikazi do?

What would happen to them, to their city?

A man of the Barolong, a citizen of Kunana, stole away from his city and turned his feet in the direction of Inzwinyani, capital of Mzilikazi's empire.

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[It was after midnight when the member of the Barolong tribe neared Inzwinyani. He was ~~tired~~. He had trotted most of the way. Slowly he climbed the last hill. At its summit, a heavy weight suddenly settled on his neck, ~~and threatened to choke the life out of him.~~ A sharp point pressed against the side of his neck.

"I carry tidings to the great Mzilikazi," he whispered, ~~in fear.~~
The arm round his neck relaxed a little.

"Who are you?"

49 "From 'auana's city. I saw two of the king's messengers killed."

"Killed?"

"Yes, killed."

"Blood will flow..... Come, I will take you to the king."

The warrior let out a low whistle. Another suddenly appeared near the earth.

"This one brings news from Kunana."

"Yes?"

"Two of the king's messengers were killed."

"In Kunana?"

"Yes."

"By the Barolong?"

"Yes."

"There will be blood."

"I take him to the king."

The other nodded in the darkness.

"Come." The warrior led the way at a fast trot and the man of the Barolong kept close behind him. Every now and then the warrior

and his companion were stopped by the network of guards that protected the approaches to the king's city. Each time this happened the warrior grunted a password and they were let through. Beside him, the member of the Barolong tribe panted. He was not used to such a hard pace, and, besides, he had been on a long journey. But he knew that even if this warrior, ~~slightly ahead of him~~, had had to do the same journey, he would have been as fresh as he was now, and his breath would have been as even and unforced. It was this knowledge that had a lot to do with his journey.

~~In his heart, he was convinced of the invincibility of the Matabele. They never tired. They were never hungry. Even death held no fear for them. He had witnessed Bhoysa and Angela die. Before that, he had seen many a Matabele warrior die with that selfsame cry on his lips. To him, the most dreaded word in the world was the one Bhoysa and his companion had uttered when death was in their hearts:~~

~~"Bayete!"~~

~~It was that word and all that it meant to him, that had let him to this.~~

They were running through the sleeping city now. There was silence everywhere. In every hut people slept, secure in the knowledge that the king's shadow protected them. They passed dark and silent huts. Then, suddenly, they came to an empty space. The warrior slackened his pace. The man of the Barolong tribe was grateful. ~~He was panting heavily.~~ His lungs felt as though they were on fire. Truly, these Matabele were devils without feeling! They tired not, neither did they hunger. All they lived for was their king ~~and their king's shadow.~~

A figure loomed ahead. The warrior came to a stop.

"I am a scout from the western gates of the city," he said.

"Why are you here?" the figure asked.

"There is word of treachery. Two of the king's indunas have today been slain in the Barolong city of Kunana. This one brought the news."

"An Ndabele?"

"No. A ^{Ba} Barolong."

The looming figure laughed. The man from Kunana did not like the sound.

"This is for the king himself."

"So I thought."

"Come forward. The captain of the king's guard will lead you."

They followed the silent figure.

The smallest shadow here hides a man, thought the man from Kunana. From nowhere a figure rose in front of them.

"Captain," the looming figure said.

"Yes?"

"There is news of treachery, ~~here~~. The guard from the western gate of the city is here with a man from the Barolong city of Kunana. He brings news of the killing of two of the king's indunas."

"Is there a guard on the western gates now?"

The warrior who had brought the stranger spoke.

"Yes, my captain."

"Good..... What is this, ~~Barolong~~ ^{Barolong} dog?"

The man from Kunana spoke in a frightened voice:

"It is as the soldier said, captain. Two of the king's tax collectors came to Kunana and were received by Tauana. In the name of the king they demanded tribute but Tauana ordered his young men to kill them."

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"And they were killed?"

"They were killed, captain."

"How?"

"They were stabbed and thrown into the ravine outside the city."

"And you were there?"

"Yes, captain."

"You looked on?"

~~The man was frightened.~~

"I am only one man, captain, and they were many."

"Answer my question, dog! You looked on?"

"Yes, captain."

"How did the two men die?"

"I told you, ~~then~~."

"No! Were they afraid? What did they say?"

"They were not afraid, captain. They said the royal salute."

"Say it!"

"Only a warrior of the Matabele dare say it, captain."

"Good..... You, guard of the western gates, go back to your post.

You have done well."

"Yes, my captain." The guard turned and trotted away.

"You too," Bhlamini."

The looming figure disappeared into the shadows.

"Come!"

The Captain led the way across the empty space. The man from Kanana followed close on his heels. They walked till the dark shapes of huts were in front of them.

"Come!"

At the dark door of a hut men made way for the captain. He went in. The man followed him. Inside a body of soldiers lounged and talked. They were part of the night guard. They stood by in case of ~~some~~ emergency.

They passed into another hut, connected with the first by a low doorway. In this, women of the king's household supervised the food and beer that the king and his friends had. They passed through.

Now they were in the largest hut the man from Kunana had ever seen. Here every corner was lit with the brightness of a clear sunny day. The earthen floor had been covered with a mixture of cow dung and clay and this had been polished till a man could see his face in it. Over this smooth, shiny floor, were stretched the skins of large animals. But all these things the man from Kunana saw in passing as the eye catches a number of things when it really looks at only one.

In the far corner of the hut were a group of men. They were all in positions of relaxation on a long, low couch built into the wall. But his eyes saw only one man. No one had told him it was the king, but he knew. All the men were dressed ~~like~~ ^{the} same, blankets over their shoulder, and bands round their heads, showing their high static in life. But there was only one who could be the king, and the man from Kunana picked him out. He could not tell how he did it, all he knew was, that was the king.

gal. 50 The captain said:

"Bayete!"

The king said:

"What now?"

"There is news of treachery, oh, king."

"Who is this?"

"A man from the Barolong city of Kunana."

"He brings the news?"

"Yes, my lord."

"What is it?"

"Two of your indunas have been killed, oh, lord of the earth and skies."

The king stood up, ~~suddenly~~. Yes! He was the king! Of that there could be no doubt. ~~All the force of the man dominated the room and held it so that no one else mattered.~~ He was tall and powerful and commanding, but it wasn't that. It was more than just shape and size and dignity. It was an inner force, a power from within, that would have dominated had he been a one-legged cripple with only his left eye and no arms.

"Bhoya and Bangela!"

~~The king's anger mounted. The man from Kunana could not look at the anger that showed in those eyes. He lowered his head.~~

~~As suddenly as it had come, the king's anger seemed to evaporate.~~ He sank back onto the long couch and stared at the man from Kunana.

"Speak!" His voice rumbled.

The man from Kunana opened and shut his mouth twice before any sound came out.

"It is as the captain has said, oh, lord of the elephant."

The captain said:

"The king said 'speak'!"

In faltering words the man from Kunana told of the death of Bhoya and Bangela. Often he fell over his words; often the words came

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out so fast and made so little sense that he had to stop and say them ~~all~~ over again, slowly. Beads of sweat showed on his face. His heart hammered loud against his ribs. The motionless silence of the people who listened to him made the telling of the tale more terrible than a fight with a wounded rhino. Stumbling, faltering, his story came to an end. He waited for the dreadful silence to lift. Time seemed to slip into an eternity before the king spoke.

"And you, man, why is it that you are the instrument of the betrayal of your people?"

"Oh, great Mzilikazi!"

"Have you the voice of a new-born lamb? Speak, man!"

"It is water that runs in his veins," one of the king's companions ~~declared~~ declared. The others laughed. The man from Kunana trembled violently.

"Silence!" The king's voice cut through the laughter. There was instant silence. "Speak!"

The man from Kunana raised his voice. He shouted through a dry, squeaking, parched, throat.

"Oh, great Mzilikazi! Lord of the elephant and the lion! Master of all creation! Devourer of your enemies! I saw the evil that my people did against your indunas and my heart was against their treachery so I came to you....."

"You saw it?"

"Even so, my lord."

"How near were you?"

"Very near."

"You could hear their words?"

"Indeed, my lord."

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"You could see the bearing of my indunas?"

"They showed only scorn for their murderers, oh, king."

"And you, what did you show?"

The man from Kunana was silent.

The captain said:

"He was alone and they were many." ~~His voice was cold.~~

"Did you speak and warn them of my wrath?"

"No, my lord."

"Did you raise your arms in defence of my indunas?"

"No, my lord."

"Did you say 'kill me too'?"

"No, my lord."

"Yet you come to me."

"Yes, my lord."

"Is it that you fear my wrath?"

"Yes, my lord."

"And crave the protection of my shadow against the wrath that would descend on your people?"

"Yes, my lord."

"What, then, do you wish?"

"If it pleases your royal bounty, I beg that the king makes me the humblest of all the humble soldiers in his army. I would serve the king faithfully and spend all my days telling of the big heart that beats in the royal breast. I crave further, that I join those who go to visit the king's wrath on the evil city of Kunana. If it pleases your royal bounty, Oh Great One."

"So..... You plead well, man..... Tell me. You have a wife?"

"Yes, my lord."

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"In Kunana?"

"Yes, my lord."

"You have children?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Perhaps even a father and mother?"

"Indeed, oh, king."

"And brothers and sisters?"

"Brothers. No sisters."

"My shadow will not cover them."

"I am the king's servant."

Mzilikazi smiled. The smile did not reach his eyes.

"You would betray your chief and your people, even your wife and your family?"

"I am the king's servant."

Slowly Mzilikazi rose to his full height. Burning anger blazed from his eyes.

"Hush, you lying dog! You are no servant of the king."

He walked slowly to the man from Kunana. A spasm of terror shot through the man. He sank to his knees and cringed away. Mzilikazi stood over him with blazing eyes.

"You are a coward!" He spat out the words. "Today you betray your chief and your people; today you betray your children and the mother of your children; today you betray the woman who nursed you in her stomach; tomorrow, if you live, you would betray me at the first chance! Look at yourself, man, you are a coward!" He raised his foot over the man from Kunana then shook his head and turned away. "He saw men die and learned nothing from it. He is a yelping dog. Take him away and guard him carefully. It is good that men should

The man from Kunana grovelled on the floor. The captain called.

Two warriors came in and dragged him away.

(No page)
"I will call you, captain."

"Bayete:"

The captain turned and marched out.

The five men who were with the king ~~looked at each other and~~
waited for him to speak.

Mzilikazi paced the length ~~and breadth~~ of his council chamber. Slowly, softly, he murmured Bhoyas words, the words the man from Kunana had repeated: "To disobey Mzilikazi is to invite a death that is swift and sudden. There will not be a child left or a wall that is not crushed after the Matabele warriors have passed through here."

"I do not like this," the king said.

"There is nothing else to do," Dambuza said.

Sitonga nodded and stretched himself. "Bhoya spoke those words before he died. It was a promise from a man who spoke in the king's name."

"It must be done," Dingiswayo declared.

"I wonder what our brother ~~51~~ Gubuza, would counsel," Qanda said.

"I wish he were here," the king said.

"He hunts," Dambuza said. "This affair cannot wait till his return."

Tabata scratched the side of his face and looked at them all in turn. When he had something important to say Tabata always did that.

They recognised ² the sigh and waited. Tabata went on scratching. The king stopped in front of him.

"Well?"

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"I don't know what our Commander-in-chief would say; there is no knowing what Gubuza would say next. But this I know. The words of Bhoya are this night travelling abroad. Tomorrow they will be known in every kraal and village of every little tribe. All eyes and all men's thoughts will be turned here, to Inzwinyani, to see what the king does and when he does it and how he does it. And while they wait to see, Bhoya's words will sing through their brains and they will make up their minds and they will decide. Perhaps they will decide the shadow of Mzilikazi is not so powerful after all. Perhaps they will decide they can do something because the shadow gives them time to get away. Perhaps....."

"Is that all?"

"That is all, my lord."

"And you others, my lords, have you words to add to Tabata's?"

There were no more words to add.

"Then leave me. I wish to think."

The five saluted and left the council chamber.

Mzilikazi flung himself on the couch and stared into space. If only Gubuza were here. If only he could talk to Gubuza about this matter..... Such a long time since they had left the green southern upland stretches because of the wrath of Chaka. Such a long journey it had been. So much blood they had shed on the way. But it was ever so.

They had to shed blood, the blood of others, or their own blood would be shed. And then, when they had settled here and built their

city, they had to conquer all the tribes around that they might live

in peace. But always others had tried their hands against the strangers from the East. So there had to be more bloodletting. Always bloodletting. To survive, to be free and respected, blood had to flow. Gubuza had built for him an army second only to the armies of the great Chaka. Now Chaka was dead. Now the army was second to none. Still there had to be blood. The words of Bhoya called for blood. Now his soldiers called for blood. Could there be an end to this bloodletting? How? When? If only Gubuza were here now. Zululand was so far away. Sometimes he and Gubuza talked about it. They had both been born there. They had both played out the days of their youth there. That was home to them. The green upland stretches with the softness on the earth and in the air. Oh, the mountains and the rivers! Oh, the valleys and the hills! Oh, the gentle caress in the air there! Oh, Zululand!

This land, this northland was good, but it was harsh and austere. Even the blades of grass were firm. Not soft like the grass of Zululand. Oh, to be there again.... But Dingaan, the murderer of Chaka, would have inherited the wrath of Chaka against him and the only way back to Zululand would be through a river of blood. He had no doubt that his armies would, even after their long march, crush the armies of Dingaan. In Dingaan's armies there was no general to match the military genius of Gubuza. The only one, who could match and master him, Chaka, was dead. Both he and Gubuza had learned the art of war at the feet of Chaka. But in Zululand today, the art of Chaka was forgotten. Men and tribes feared the kingdom of Dingaan because they remembered the days of Chaka. Soon, the greatness that was Chaka's would be a memory only, and the record of his deeds would be legends old women tell young children round their fires.

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?
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Oh, yes, he could crush Dingaan's armies. But he was tired of bloodletting, tired of living by the spear. And, besides, those were his people and a man has no stomach for the crushing of his own people.

The memories flowed on and the king grew depressed. He called out. When a servant appeared, he said:

"Beer!"

One of his wives brought him a huge calabash. He emptied it in one draught and shouted for more.

Still the memories persisted, and Bhoya's words were interlaced with the memories of the past.

He called out again. When a servant appeared, he said:

"Call me the queen Mnandi."

A little while later the queen came in. She was tall and slender and stately and very beautiful. On her face was a permanent expression of kindly wisdom.

"My lord called."

Mzilikazi got up and swayed a little.

"My heart is heavy tonight, my child. Come sit with me."

"I wish Gubuza were here," she said.

"But he is hunting and I am alone. On all sides there is treachery and I am alone. Perhaps even he plots."

"Not Gubuza, my lord."

"I am tired of blood, sweet Mnandi. Tell me what to do?"

"What troubles you, Mzilikazi?"

She took the beer away from him, called a servant, gave it to her and told her not to bring any more.

Mzilikazi talked about Zululand and about Bhoya and about bloodletting. It was all confused, one thing flowing into another without

and listened to his words.

152 The outpouring eased him. He stopped talking and closed his eyes. She caressed his big arm that was round her waist. He opened his eyes and smiled, a sad, faraway smile.

"My spear, child."

She removed his arm ~~gently~~ and went out. From the pile of royal spears she chose the oldest and ugliest and took it to him.

He fondled its long, broad, two-edged blade. This had been his spear when he had been a captain in Chaka's armies. It was one of the first of the new spears Chaka had invented. What a difference between it and the old tiny blade with the long handle! This, plus training, had made the Zulu invincibility of old. Now, he was the last guardian of that invincibility.

"Chaka gave me this," he said.

"Yes, my lord."

"Captain! Captain!" His voice suddenly rang through the huts. The captain hurried in.

"The Generals..... And my son, Langa."

The captain went. Mnandi made to follow him.

"Stay, child."

The generals came in.

"My lords, Tabata is right. The words of Bhoya must be proved

"The king's wisdom is great," Tabata said.

"Langa, my son, will lead young warriors who have not yet tasted blood. They will travel this night and Kunana will be no more when the sun is high tomorrow. Is my decision wise? Is it as it should be?"

Together, in one voice, the generals roared:

"Danzak!"

Langa entered the council chamber on the last note of the royal salute. He was as tall as his father, younger, his muscles much stronger. Age and ease had not softened them yet. A perfect physical specimen of the ^{Matabele} warrior. His eyes were cold, glacial; his mouth was firm, hard, unyielding.

"My lord....." His voice was deep, coldly impersonal. His eyes rested on Mnandi then shifted to the king's face. No expression showed in them.

Mzilikazi thought: If he could, this one would slit my throat with that self-same look in his eyes. How is it that I fathered one such as this? Aloud he said:

"Greetings my son! There is work to be done. The honour of the Matabele is in your hands."

"I have heard."

"So....." The king looked at his generals.

In an impersonal tone Langa repeated Bhoya's threat to the Barotsi long.

Mzilikazi wondered which of the generals had told him. This could be the beginning of a conspiracy.

"That is your task. Before the sun is high tomorrow it must be done."

"It will be done."

The king nodded. He felt tired. He looked at Mnandi.

"The Ndaba is finished."

Langa and the generals left.

"I am tired. Lead me to your hut and we will sleep, my child."

"My lord honours me, but this night my lord should sleep with No-Menti."

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"And am I not lord in my own house?" ~~"Is it not I who say which of my wives I sleep with?"~~

"I think only of the anger of my sisters."

He smiled and put his arm round her shoulders.

"Fear not, my child, my shadow is big.... I have no stomach for No-Menti or any of these others this night. No-Menti talks too much, the others try too hard to please. I want only rest. I will have that with you."

"It is as you command."

She took his hand and led him out and round to her hut. A maid went out as Mnandi entered with the king. She opened the bed for him and helped him take the blanket off his shoulders.

"How is the child?"

"He sleeps. Come."

She led the way into the little hut that was connected to hers. ~~by a doorway over which a blanket hung.~~ She raised her lamp of animal ~~fat~~ high. A young woman who slept on the floor jumped up. She was almost as big and broad as the king. A knife flashed in her hand.

"It is only the king who is with me," Mnandi said gently.

The woman bowed and stepped to the wall. Mnandi ^{moved} ~~raised~~ the lamp so that its light fell over the boy who slept on a couch.

"He is peaceful," Mzilikazi whispered.

"He sleeps like a growing man," Mnandi said.

"No one has ~~seen~~ ^{heard} him."

"No, my lord."

"He is well guarded?"

"Nana is the guardian of his life. No harm will befall Lobengul while Nana is here. I trust her with my life."

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"Nana."

"My lord?"

"You know your instructions?"

"No presents from anybody, particularly Prince Langa and the Generals, must be accepted. Lobengula must eat nothing they send. Only the presents of the king and queen Mmandi and Gubuza are welcome. But before they are given to the boy I must find out if the presents are indeed from the king or queen or Gubuza. I will find out by asking them directly, no matter what they are doing."

"That is good..... Sleep well, Lobengula....."

"They went into the queen's hut. The king stretched himself on the soft couch. Mmandi opened her arms and he nestled into them.

"I am so tired," he murmured.

"Then sleep."

"How can a man sleep with blood and treachery around him?"

"To be strong for it a man must sleep..... Sleep."

From outside was carried faintly to them the muffled notes of the war-drums and the stamping feet of the dancing warriors. Mmandi reached out and put out the ^{lamp} light. In the darkness they listened to the war-noises.

"You don't ask about this?"

"If you want to, you will tell me."

"You have heard some of it."

"Enough."

"Before the sun is up Kunana will be destroyed."

"I know."

"I am tired."

"Then sleep."

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"Speak to me."

153 "I planted maize on the new land you gave me. I dug the earth and found three worms....." She talked on, telling him every detail of the planting of the maize. She felt him relax and fall asleep. She stopped talking and listened to the war-drum. The sound of the drums rose to a pitch then stopped. She heard the sound of many feet moving away. Soon there was silence only. Soon the Barolong city of Kunana would be no more.

In the other hut Lobengula slept peacefully.

She eased herself into a comfortable position and closed her eyes.

[In the glow of the firelight he could only see the mop of white hair of the Father, Gubuza. Everyone called him Father. Why? Sometimes even the king did. Father. Only the hair showed, white as snow. The rest of his face was shadow. Like the dark spaces between one star and another. Only the white hair and the deep rumbling voice were real now. All the other was just shadow.

Old Mkomozii, on the other side of the fire but nearer him than Gubuza, he saw more clearly. When a flame from the fire leapt^{ed} up it lifted out the old man and he saw again the many folds of skin that made up the face of Mkomozii. And he saw again the shrivelled^{ed} up body that was like that of a ~~very~~ small child. Only the eyes he could not see clearly. Which was good, for when those eyes looked at him he could not look and he could not think. The face and body of the old man leapt^{ed} up with a flame and swayed with it and was clear. And when the flame sank down the old man also slipped into the shadows. And then only his voice could be heard. A dry voice, dry ^{as} ~~like~~ when corn-stalks are rubbed against each other.

He leaned forward and threw a piece of wood on the fire. The night was cold, but not as cold as nights had been some time back. The harshness was going out of the winter. Perhaps before too long the summer warmth would come again. He pulled the blanket closer over his naked shoulder. He reached forward and took a drink from the earthen bowl in front of him.

How these two talked ~~about matters~~! All evening he had sat here listening to them while over there, by that other fire, the other young men of the party were having pleasure and ~~were~~ talking

of things that would interest him. But he had to sit here and listen. No one had told him he had to sit here and listen. Gubuza had not said "Dabula, stay with us and listen to our wisdom," Yet here he was. No one had mentioned it, but everyone expected him to be here. And he, Dabula, expected it more than others. So he sat here listening to the old men and hearing the laughter and gaiety of the young men over there.

Why?

He looked at the mop of white hair on the other side of the fire. He was glad Mkomosi could not see him. His mind said: You are here because you are a creature of Gubuza. You do the bidding of Gubuza without him telling you. Rebellion stirred inside him. Why should he do the bidding of Gubuza any more than any other warriors?

And something else inside him said: You are disloyal in your thoughts. Gubuza is a father to you. He is your father. He took you in and brought you up as a child. All you have is due to Gubuza. He wondered if it would have been the same if Gubuza had really been his father, if Gubuza had been the man who had slept with his mother and brought him forth. How does one know these things? It's like having only one wife. You do not know how it feels to have many wives. This, too, was the doing of Gubuza. He had only one wife because it was the wish of Gubuza. Maybe it was right, as Gubuza said. But how could he know, having only one wife? And why were the others against him?

He yearned, suddenly, to sleep with another woman. ~~In the year-~~
~~nine~~ He felt ~~a disloyalty~~ ^{ashamed} and reached for his bowl of beer to hide his face. As he drank his thoughts were at rest for a moment and he heard the voice of Gubuza. It had been a chorus to his thoughts,

but now, in his silence, it reached him sharply.

"And this other thing of which there are so many rumours, tell me of that?"

Dabula thought: How deep his voice is. But I've known it all my life.

"The white men?" Mkomози asked.

Dabula let his thoughts be and listened.

"Yes," Gubuza said.

"There are such men," Mkomози said.

"Many?"

"I don't know. But you must know of them."

"I know of the wars other tribes have fought with them, but that is all."

"I have seen them," Mkomози said.

"Are they really white?" Dabula asked.

"Yes. They are white, my son."

"Where did you see them?" Gubuza asked.

"Many years ago I went to the coast. To a place they call the Cape. I saw them there."

"Tell us of them," Gubuza urged.

A flame shot up ~~from the fire~~, tall and bright, and Dabula the old man leaning forward. But for his face, it could have been ~~any~~ young child leaning forward.

"When you first see them they are strange. Not like people all. Their hair is straight and they have a lot of it. Their skins turn red in the sun and it is as if the blood would fall out of the skins. They wear garments in the shape of the body of a person...."

Dabula tried to see one of these people but his mind could not build up the picture.

"..... Their huts have corners to them and they are big, bigger than any of the royal huts I have seen. I saw some where one hut is on top of the other."

"Strange," Dabula murmured.

"And their wisdom?" Gubuza asked.

"Of that I cannot speak. I was not there long. And they spoke a language that I could not understand."

"But you know all languages," Gubuza said.

"Not theirs. It is like no language you have ever heard."

"Has it no relation to the languages of the north, of our past of which you so often speak?"

"None at all."

"Have you been in their huts?" Dabula asked.

"No."

"Where are they from?" Gubuza asked.

"It is said they are from across the waters."

"Are there lands across the waters?" There was a doubt in

54 Dabula's voice.

"For strange people to come here, there must be. They must come from some land for people can live only on land. The people across the great desert of the north are fair but not like these. So there must be other lands."

Other lands! Other people! And white people with a language that even the wisdom of Mkomози cannot understand! Strange indeed. Dabula tried to think of it, to grasp the meaning of these things.

Gubuza said:

"Tell me, Mkomosi, what do you think ~~will~~^{will} these people bring?"

"I don't know. It is said they are good in battle. There are stories of a wonderful weapon they have."

"Better than the spear of Chaka?"

"I cannot tell. I know the spear of Chaka but I do not know this weapon. Only stories...."

"What will they bring?" Gubuza said. His voice was musing. "How I would like to know! How I would like to see one of those men and speak to him, to find out about their wisdom, to know the land from which they come..... Do you think they will come here?"

"Perhaps they will," Mkomosi said. "Perhaps they will."

After that they were silent. The fire crackled and the leaping flames danced merrily. There was no wind in the air. The stars shone clearly. The moon, young and less than half-formed, stood out the black sky, very near the earth. The leaping flames died down. Dabula threw two pieces of wood on the fire.

From over there ~~were~~^{where} the young men were the noise of singing rose. Some of the voices sounded decidedly drunk. What matter! They were a hunting party so it was all right. They had hunted well that And hunting is a time for eating and sleeping and drinking. A change from the sharp discipline of army life.

The yearning to sleep with another woman suddenly came back to Dabula. He had not meant it to. It had just happened. He tried push it from his mind. He thought of Ntombi. Now there was a woman you! A beauty! His wife! He would think of her and forget all this nonsense about another woman.

11/11/1
Ntombi's thighs.... He closed his eyes. Almost, he could feel them rising ~~under~~ under him, straining against him. And the flatness of her belly when he leaned against it. And the softness of her skin. Not another woman. No, not another woman! He didn't want another woman! When they got back he would sleep with Ntombi. Not another woman. Not another woman!

No.

He got up.

"I am going for a walk." He had not meant to say it. He had meant just to get up and walk away but it had tumbled out. Always it was like this. Always, he made explanations when really he did not want to. He walked away from the fire hurriedly.

No! Not another woman.

Ntombi's breasts are sharp and pointed. You feel them when you lean against them. They press up against you and make your flesh tingle.... Are there really other lands across the waters?.... Would another woman be as warm as Ntombi? Would it feel the same.... And they have hair that is straight, the old man said. And if I had my own father, would I feel the same about him.... Remember the time Ntombi laughed and cried at the same time? She nearly tore a hole in ~~her~~ ^{my} back then. What a night that was! Cannot forget that night ever.... How do they live across the waters? How do they make huts with corners. Strange, that. Huts with cornets. Funny. Makes you want to laugh....

No!

But why not?

Because the father said so.... Would your own father say so?

But you never had a father of your own. Who was he? What happened him? If you were to meet him now, would you know him? If young Dabula had never seen you, would he know you? Heh.....?

He reached the fire where the young men were. They were all

*drunk
tight.*

"Ho there, Dabula!" one called.

"Ho yourself!" he said.

He touched one young man on the shoulder.

"Come Ndawe."

The young man looked at him. "Where?"

Another said:

"Drink with us."

He ignored that and said to Ndawe:

"We will walk."

"The fire is warm and the beer is good," Ndawe protested.

"Come," Dabula said.

The others began a new song. Ndawe got up reluctantly and followed Dabula.

When they were out of the circle of the hunting camp Ndawe caught up with Dabula.

"Where are we going?" Ndawe asked.

"The village...."

"But it is far, Dabula.... Why do we go there?"

Why do we go there? I'm not going to sleep with another woman. Ntombi's my woman and I have only one wife. Why do we go there? Instead of answering he just lengthened his strides.

"Dabula...."

"I want to see women!" There! It was out. He had said it. For a long while Ndawe was silent, then he asked:

"To sleep?"

"You can sleep. I only want to see."

"You are longing for Ntombi?"

"Yes."

Ndawe believed him. Why? Because he was Gubuza's creature? Had anyone else told Ndawe that, he would have laughed. Then why did he believe him, Dabula? Strange how people choose whom to believe and whom not.

They climbed the hill at a slant, not working directly for its top, but going at an angle to where it sloped away around a curve. On the other side of the curve was the village. On the side of the hill they felt a slight but sharply cold night wind. They pulled their blankets tight about them.

Dabula wanted to ask Ndawe about women. He had three wives and was planning to get two more. He had the cattle for that. How did it feel? And your attitude toward the women, how was that? The same as his to Ntombi? No, of course not. It couldn't be.

Not another woman!

Ndawe half-turned his head.

"Having one wife..... It is against our customs..... You understand I'm only asking a question..... Do not be angry..... I have thought much of this since I have been made your aide.....

55 it a good thing? How do you feel, Dabula?"

Dabula thought: I want to ask him of other women and he asks me of one. Aloud, he said:

"Gubuza says it is the right way. It is good for a man to love only one woman. The feeling is good."

"But if a man has not a wife such as Ntombi."

"You see the beauty of Ntombi because she is not your woman."

"It is not that.... I want many things from many women."

"Try it with one and you will see."

"With my mind I want to, but my body yearns for the different pleasures of my many wives..... Why does Gubuza say it is good for a man to have only one wife? Perhaps if a man understood that.... I don't know."

Dabula thought about it. Gubuza had explained to him why. Now he tried to remember it. But, strangely, the reason was lost somewhere in the darkness of the many words Gubuza had spoken to him and he could not.

"Do it and you will understand," he said, knowing that he lied.

They went round the side of the hill and down into the hollow land. The village was a lot of shadows on the dark earth. Suddenly Dabula wanted to turn back. Perhaps the people slept. Perhaps Ndawe didn't believe him and would tell.

It is better to go back now. Turn and walk back to the fire and sit down and listen to the two old men. Turn back and drink much beer. Drink enough to make you too sleepy for strange things to go on inside you. Turn now.

He lengthened his strides.

"I know the chief here," Ndawe said.

"Good."

(insert here P. 208a)

208a
220A.

(Typist's omission. To run on from the bottom of page ~~220~~ and into page 220).

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"I think I would like a woman. These are Fedis but some of their women are beautiful....." There was a suggestion in Ndawe's voice.

Dabula thought: Tell him now you want a woman too.

No! Only to see.

"Do not tell them who I am."

"Good."

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"We are just two soldiers from across the hill.... And do not speak of this to anyone."

"It is natural for a man....."

"Do not speak of it, understand!"

"Yes, Dabula."

"Good. If you wish to sleep with any, that is matter for you."

They were near the village now, and all the village was not asleep. In places there were lights. They walked in silence till they had passed some of the other huts. Dabula laughed, a sudden gust of laughter. Ndawe tried to see his face in the dark. There had been a note to that laughter.

"What is it?"

"You remember the time Langa went to a village with some of his friends?"

"I remember....."

"He called himself Dabula, Captain of the king's armies....."

"Yes! Ndawe laughed." "They had a night with the women! And the story travelled far because everyone thought it was you, the man who loved only one woman!"

"Well....."

Again Ndawe caught that note in Dabula's voice. It dawned on him then.

"N-o-o!"

"Yes."

Ndawe slapped his side and laughed. They were near the chief's huts now.

"You are Langa, Price of the Matabele....."

"Yes. But do not tell it too loud."

"Good! You want quiet pleasure.... And the story would go around that Langa was with the maidens and did not touch them!" Ndawe chuckled as they reached the chief's huts.

"Go in, I will wait," Dabula said.

Ndawe went into the hut.

A tightness about the throat and heart took hold of Dabula. He knew it. It was the tightness of fear. His limbs felt weak. The beating of his heart was loud against his ribs. He felt ashamed. All his life it had been like this when he went into battle. Always he had been overcome by fear. With it had come shame that he, a warrior of the Matabele, a Captain of all the king's armies, should know fear. He had never seen it in the ordinary soldiers. Not even in the weakest of them. Only in him. And ~~always~~ his shame had been great. He had always turned his face away from others for fear they might see it. And always, it had only been after he had struck his first blow that the fear had left him.

And when men spoke of the courage of Dabula, he felt guilty. He knew it was a lie. ~~Only he knew. Perhaps, one day, they would find out. That he reared above all else. Always, he had to hide his face and turn from all men at the moment before battle. One day he would not be able to do it and they would know. One day they would look into his face and see his fear there. He dreaded that day. In his bones he felt that day would come.~~

It was like that now. The fear was there, and with it, the shame. Yet he was not going into battle. Why should he, of all men, be a coward? Was it because he did not know his father? Why was

Ndawe so long? Come back, Ndawe, come back. Let us go back where we came from. Would Ndawe know his fear?

He tried to quiet the beat of his heart. He rubbed his hands against his blanket to be rid of the sweat. He tried to control the trembling of his body. From the shadows of the huts figures came to him. Automatically, he turned his face away.

The voice of Ndawe said:

"My lord! The chief pays you homage."

Another voice said:

"You are welcome, great Prince. All that I have is yours. Your companion says you seek quiet pleasure. Not a word will go forth. Come in, mylord."

"Thank you," Dabula said. ~~He his ears, his own voice sounded like that of a stranger, whom he had never heard.~~

He followed the chief. At the door the chief stepped aside to let him in.

Ndawe said to the chief:

"My lord is tired.... No speeches. we know your welcome is with all your heart and all you have is ours. Send us beer and some maidens, ~~and~~ then leave us."

Dabula sat on the couch and kept his eyes averted from Ndawe. The chief went out and returned ~~a few minutes later~~ followed by three young women carrying earthen pots of beer. Dabula raised his head. And as it was in battle, after he had struck the first blow, his fear fell from him.

"Drink with us, chief," he said. His eyes ran over the girls. Without meaning, ~~meanly~~, the chief's words of thanks echoed through his mind.

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The young one over there, the third one, looked soft and warm.
He smiled at her.

"Give me beer maiden." He seemed in a cloud of feeling. Another person, lost from the self of everyday.

While he took the beer from the shy girl, he saw that Ndawe had pulled one of the girls into the circle of his arm and that the chief was whispering to ^{the} another. It all seemed ~~very~~ unreal, like something happening in a dream. ~~And all the while waves of heat coursed through his body, each wave stranger than the one before.~~ He tilted his head and poured the beer down his throat. It was strong and he felt a glowing warmth begin in the ~~pilt~~ ^{pit of his stomach} of his stomach. The girl ~~who had brought him the beer~~ moved away. He reached out and pulled her back and made her sit ~~on the couch~~ beside him. He put an arm round her. She felt soft and it was as though it was the first woman he had touched. Her eyes, frightened, went to the chief. The chief smiled.

"It is well, my girl," the chief said. "We are honoured. The arm round your body is that of a prince. Look at the face of Prince Langa and be honoured, my women!... My Prince! The one you hold is untouched as are these other two. They are my newest wives and I have not yet known them. You are my guests, if you wish them, I am honoured. They are for you."

"This one is warm," Ndawe said pressing the girl against his chest.

"I will rest and talk peacefully to this maid," Dabula said.

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"Have your pleasure. I will call you."

Ndawe looked at Dabula. Dabula nodded.

"Is there a hut?" Ndawe asked.

"My own hut is for the prince," the chief said.

"Not for me, for my friend," Dabula said.

"But you....."

"I will rest here and talk to the maiden."

The chief looked at Ndawe in amazement.

"The mood of my prince," Ndawe said. "Have you a hut for me?"

"Yes, my friend."

"Go," Dabula said. "I will call you when I am ready to go. Let no one disturb our talk."

Ndawe poured beer down his throat and got up, leaning against the girl.

"Lead the way, chief."

Dabula tilted the beer container and drank deeply. The effects were going to his head. He watched the chief and Ndawe and the two young women leave. He watched the blanket fall into place, shutting off the hut from the outside. Now they were alone. He and another woman. Alone. He tried to think about it but his brain seemed clouded, unable to focus. ~~With his arm~~ he felt the girl beside him. He was afraid of looking at her. He kept his eyes on the blanket that covered the door. What was Ndawe doing now?

"Speak to me, child."

"Yes, lord."

"Don't call me lord."

"No."

"What is your name?"

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"Umindi."

"Umindi," he said softly.

Now she was a person. She had a name. A woman. His hand felt her flesh. It was the flesh of a woman, warm, exciting. His fingers ran over her arm and slipped under it, into her armpit. How often this had been on his mind! To know another woman beside Ntombi, to feel another woman beside Ntombi! His fingers ~~were more sensitive than they had ever been~~, felt the raise in the flesh where her breast began. Fear, the old fear, took hold of him and he began to tremble again.

"Speak to me, Umindi."

"What of?"

He felt her face turn to him. ~~His hand reached the sharp point of her breast~~. He swung his head round and looked into her face. He had never looked at anybody while he feared and trembled. Now he was doing it. A remote part of his brain asked: Did I fear with Ntombi? But it was too far away for an answer. ~~His hand caressed her breast.~~

"I want you...."

For a while he looked into her upturned face, round as a dark moon. Then, suddenly, she lowered her head till her forehead leaned against his chest. The world flowed into Dabyla. Tenderly, with trembling fingers, he undid the blanket about her shoulders. Now he would know! Now he would know! He pushed her down and touched the side of her face.

"Umindi! Umindi!" His voice was a cry in the dark.

She cried out once.....

Slowly, the world flowed out of Dabula. Thought came back. ~~Feeling connected with the brain came back.~~ He rolled over and lay beside her. He looked at her. Her eyes were closed, her face tranquil. Something stirred in him. He turned his face from her. The stirring grew till he knew it for what it was.

... Oh, what have I done? Oh, Ntombi! What have I done?...
He felt guilty with a sense of sickness. But he felt good too.

... I've done it! Now I know! What do I know? But I've done it. Yes. Another woman. It was as though I'd never done it with anybody before, not even with Ntombi. It was new. A first time....

The good feeling left him, only the other remained. How could he look at them now? Especially the old man. Mkomosi saw everything. And Gubuza too. How could he face them?

... I looked at her while I feared....
He turned his head back to the girl. He put his hand to touch her. Quick, unexpected revulsion swept over him.

... For a man to have only one wife and be true to her is good. It makes his love strong, and when that is so he is strong....

He never said that. He never said anything. That was Gubuza. Always Gubuza. Always.

... One day I will say something....

But the words of Gubuza lingered and with the words was the face of Ntombi. The wave of revulsion touched him again, stronger. He got up and moved to the other side of the hut. The girl opened her eyes and looked at him. The placidity went from her eyes.

"What is it?"

"Get up!" His voice was harsh. "Cover yourself!"

Startled and afraid, she sat up and drew the blanket about her.

"Have I displeased you, my lord?" Her voice was timid ~~and~~
~~tentative.~~

The softness of her voice worked on him. He walked over and towered above her. A hint of fear crept into her eyes. She saw suddenly how big and broad he was, how cold and hard his face was. He raised his right hand. She closed her eyes and drew away as though from an expected blow.

He swung on his heels and went back to the far end of the hut.

gal 57 "Call Ndawe!" The anger had gone from his voice.

She went to the door of the hut and lifted the blanket.

He said:

"Wait."

She stopped without turning.

"Don't tell anyone I slept with you. Understand?"

She turned then. Her eyes touched his face and fell away.

"But the chief...!"

"Don't tell him!" His voice was hard again.

"But when he sleeps with me and finds....!"

"I don't care! You did not sleep with me! Understand?"

"He will turn me out, Lord. All the people....!"

"I don't care! You did not sleep with me! Understand?"

"Yes, lord," she murmured and went out.

He walked about the hut, restless and angry. The plea in the

girl's voice kept coming back to him in echoes. He will turn me out, lord. All the people.... All the people what?

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But it wasn't wrong. Who said it was wrong? Only Gubuza. Ntombi? No. Only Gubuza. What if he told Ntombi? Tell Ntombi? No. But tell these people. Let them tell it. Let Ndawe tell it. Let the whole world tell it to her. All men did it. He was like all other men. All he did was what all men did. Even Gubuza had had many wives at one time.

He stopped moving. He stood dead still. His eyes glittered. He whispered softly:

"I will tell these people, the chief and Ndawe, I will tell them. That's it! I will tell them. Then I will take her with me, back to Inzwinyani, back to our farm. I will take her to Ntombi and say: ~~I~~ I have brought another wife. I can do it. I have the cattle to pay this chief back his lobola. I have slept with her. I will take her."

He went to the couch and sat down. They came in. ~~When they were all in he got up and stood looking at them. Ndawe and the chief had that air of reserve of people who had been to bed and who knew that the others know it.~~

Dabula looked at Umindi. She held tight to the blanket over ^{the} hut door. I will tell them now, he decided. He felt calm. Everything was clear. He thought: All I have to say is I have slept with her and I am taking her with me as my wife. How many cattle do you wish me to send you, chief? That was all. ~~He drew in his breath to say it. The world was hushed, as if waiting for his words.~~ He thought: What will Ntombi and Gubuza say? He dropped his eyes and let out his breath. That thought had done it. ~~He had not meant to think it but it had just come.~~

"Let us go," he said and strode out of the hut. His eyes touched and slid over Umindi's face as he went by her at the door.

The chief turned to Ndawe:

"The prince is angry. Why?" His eyes shifted to Umindi. "Have you displeased him? Did he say 'sleep with me' and you refused?"

Quietly,
~~In a tide voice~~ Umindi said: -

"No, my lord."

"Did he sleep with you?" Ndawe asked. She lowered her eyes. Her shoulders sagged.

"No, my lord."

"Then do not worry," Ndawe said. "He was thinking of his wife."

"Wife?" the chief said.

"His favourite wife. She's a great beauty and he loves her much."

He patted the buttocks of the girl who had so recently been in his bed-companion. "Perhaps I will come back, eh, chief?"

"You are welcome always my friend. I will keep that one for you. Guard us against the anger of our prince."

~~"You have nothing to fear. It is only one of his moods. I thank you for both of us. I will come back, little one. I like your warmth.... Stay well, my friends."~~

"Go well," the chief said.

He caught up with Dabula where the slope of the hill grew steep. He fell into step and they walked in silence for a while. Every now and then he turned to look at Dabula whose face was only a shadow in the dark. At last, in a voice of warm remembrance, he said:

"Lord! But that one was warm!" ~~These Pedi women shimmy and dance when you sleep with them. Once she shivered and kicked so much, I thought she was going to throw me over her head! That's one for you, brother!~~ I think the chief is a liar. No virgin has so much fire and passion. Virgins have to ^{be} warmed first before they can be like that one. I think....."

"Shut up!" Dabula's voice cracked like a whip.

Because ^{they were} ~~it was so~~ unexpected ^{the words looked} ~~it struck~~ Ndawe, as a physical blow that hurt. His reaction was automatic. He grabbed Dabula's arm.

"Hey! You....."

Out of the darkness, ^{Dabula's} fist hit him high on the nose, between his eyes. The force of the blow sent him staggering, ~~back~~ blinded him for a while. When he could see again, Dabula was ahead, moving away. He clenched his fists and hurried after him. Then as he neared Dabula, he grew calm. Dabula was ~~a~~ Captain of the king's armies. Dabula had ~~great~~ power over him. He swallowed his wrath. When he walked beside Dabula again, he said in the formal voice of a soldier:

"Captain."

"Yes."

"I should like to go back to my regiment. I wish your permission."

"You may go."

"Thank you."

They walked in silence after that.

Dabula thought: Since the death of Young Gubuza, he has been my only real friend. Now it is over. ~~The weight of his heart grew heavier.~~

~~But his face was cold and stern a mask of hardness. His big body was stiff and straight. All the other tribes in the land believed the Matabele had no feeling. Their faces never showed anything but cold aloofness. The tribes did not know the faces of warrior-nations were always like that.~~

When they reached the hunting camp, ^{the place was deserted.} ~~all the fires, except one small one, were down to cinders. That was strange for the night was cold. They hurried to the one little fire. As they passed the remains of the fire of the bearers who would carry the results of the hunt, Dabula said:~~

~~"They have gone!"~~

~~Neither the bearers nor the carcasses were there. The same was true at the fire where the young men had drunk and sung.~~

~~"They have all gone," Ndawe said.~~

~~"Ho there!" Dabula called, (to the lone figure)~~

~~A figure rose from the little fire and hurried~~ ^{to} ~~them. It was a soldier of Gubuza's~~ ^{personal} ~~guard who had not been on the hunt with them.~~

"What is this?" Dabula asked.

"I brought news from Inzwinyani for my lord Gubuza," the soldier said. "They returned and left me to tell you. The general orders you to follow quickly, Captain."

"Are they long gone?"

"They said you had just gone when I arrived."

"We must hurry then..... Come!"

They ^e ~~sat~~ off at the fast, long-legged pace of the Matabele on the march. The moon was low in the east. It had grown to a big

bright yellowness. The morning star glittered in a clear sky that had only hints of other stars. A soft, fine mist hung over the valleys.

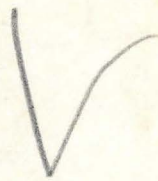
"What is the news?" Dabula asked.

"Prince Langa and his men destroyed Kunana this night."

"What did the Father say?"

"He said it is bad, Captain."

Steadily, evenly, easily, their barefeet trod the earth, eating up space.



4.) (C

There are two ways to Inzwinyani. There is the way up from the south. And there is the way down from the north, through Mzil kazi's Pass. The way from the north is a way of magic. It begins in the air. ~~For~~ There is a tenderness ⁱⁿ about the air that words cannot ^{describe} tell of. Perhaps it has to do with the height of the land. For always, whether coming or going to Inzwinyani, the traveller stops at a certain point. In his head there is a feeling of the strangest lightness. His senses are sharp. The world is clear and bright. And, ~~then, slowly, without knowing it, the tenderness about the air that words cannot tell of, slips over him and embraces him.~~

And when he looks to the north, it is like looking through a mist of green and rusty gold, no matter what the season. And there is no horizon, ~~absolutely no horizon at all.~~ There are the hills and ~~the~~ valleys and more hills and valleys that go on stretching into space. There is no curve to the land or sky, no blue mountains to cut off sight. There is only space that fades away because the eyes can see no farther. And ~~he knows, for so it seems to him~~ ^{the traveller's} that if ~~his~~ eyes were strong enough, he could see right into the heart of Africa, ~~And it is a part of this magic that makes him believe that he would then see~~ ^{into} all the villages in all the valleys of Africa, and that he would see the people go about the little daily tasks of their lives.

And when he turns and looks to the south ~~(all men look both ways)~~, he sees a track that goes steeply down into the valley. He realizes that where he stands is the beginning of it. Except for a twist here and there where it steps out of the way of a huge

boulder or where it ^{goes} ~~walks~~ round a slight rise in the land, it is straight. And at the end of the track, deep in the heart of the valley, ~~he sees~~ two mountains rise up ^{sheer} ~~steep~~ on either side of the track and all but meet. They are like a frame. And within the frame, in perspective, nestles Inzwinyani. ^{It is a city of circles.} ~~From where he stands, it seems to the traveller that he is looking at a series of circles set within a nature made frame.~~ There is a large circle. ^{of huts} Then a circle of space; ^{of huts} Then another, smaller circle, then a smaller circle of space; ^{of huts} then yet another and smaller circle, and another and smaller circle of space. So the circles work till there is only the heart of the circle ^m which is another circle.

~~If the traveller is a stranger he does not realise that each circle is made up of huts till he is near the mouth of the Pass. And as he walks down he is not conscious that the tenderness about the air is leaving him for the new magic of the city of circles is on him. And the wild rose bushes of by the way have a rich scent that intoxicates. And lower down, near the Pass, four strangely twisted Marula trees lean against each other to make an archway. ^{through the Pass,} If the traveller is fanciful, he turns off the track to go through the archway.~~

^{on the other side of the} ~~And as he goes through the Pass, the sudden brightness of the green grass is startling. And he sees the broad, clear river ^{flow through} the Willow trees lean ^{of the} over it, their long, thin fingers touching the flowing water. In the summer there are millions of little yellow flowers among the green grass blades that are lush all the year round.~~

From the north, the way to Inzwinyani is a way of magic.

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Dabula and his companions stopped where the track began and looked down into the valley. The main party was just moving through the Pass. They had travelled well through the night. They would get to the city soon after Gubuza and the others. ~~They stopped where the track began and looked to the north where the land rolled into the heart of Africa. Then they turned their eyes and again looked down to where the Pass was a frame for the city of circles. And as they stood, they heard a steady throb that seemed to come through the Pass. The throb was picked up by other throbs that came from elsewhere.~~

"The feast for Kunana," Dabula said.

"Also a call to the Ndaba, Captain," the soldier from Gubuza's personal guard said.

"Special?" Dabula asked.

"There are many whispers, Captain."

Ndawe remained silent. He had not spoken throughout their long night journey.

"Come then," Dabula said.

As they went through the Pass the morning sun reached out ~~from~~ behind the eastern hills. But it seemed a cold sun. More a sun of light than warmth. On the other side of the Pass the throb of the tom-toms drowned every other sound. It invaded men's consciousness with an insidious persistence that commanded surrender.

Without thinking about it, Dabula felt his heart beat change so that it kept time with the throbbing tom-toms. ~~There was nothing else to do except surrender.~~ He raised his eyes to the high land that bounded the city on all the sides. Yes, this was going to be

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a big day ^{all right} ~~alright~~. He smiled, remembering other big feast days. In the past, at big feasts, he had always felt apart ~~from it~~, not one of the crowd. Yet, at the same time, he had always felt less alone. The tom-toms and the people and their drinking and dancing always warmed him though he was on the outside of it all. And always, it was the beginning of the feast that excited him most. Thinking about the feast made him forget the heavy weight that was on his heart. The nagging memory of Umindi, of Ntonbi, of Gubuza left him as he looked at the people streaming across those hills.

Look at them! They came from everywhere. From all the villages of the empire. And they were not all people of the Matabele. No! Among them were chiefs and elders of the Bakgaka and the Bakwena, of the Ngwaketse and the Bechuana and the Barolong and all the other tribes over whom they held sway. ~~Look at them coming down those spears and footpaths!~~ They all bring presents that the king's wrath may pass them by. Cowards! Look at them! He felt good, uplifted, as he always felt on feast days. It was good to be alive, good to be a warrior of the Matabele. For these were the days that measured the greatness of the Matabele. It was good to see the foreigners tremble as they looked at the king's warriors.

The power of the tom-toms ~~were~~ ^{was} over him. He wanted to laugh out loud and shout the battle ~~very~~ ^{cry}:

"Bayete!"

~~With hurrying feet~~ ^{He} led his companions across the river over the bridge of young trees. They were near the city now and were a part of all the ~~feet~~ that were turned to Inzwinyani. ~~And over them, and through them, vibrated messages~~ the message of the tom-toms. Insistently,

~~incessantly, the drumbeats sent out the cry of victory, the call to the victory-feast. From hilltop to hilltop the message was carried. And all tracks and spears and footpaths led to Inzwinyani, the king's city, the heart of the Matabele empire.~~

~~He saw long files of Matabele women coming across the hills. They carried pots of beer on their heads. Their children were strapped across their backs. In front of each file were young symbolists who beat out time to the rhythm of the tramping feet.~~

Now they were inside the city, inside the noise and frenzy. Dabula picked out the women of the city by the calmness with which they moved through it all. ~~Only women who had experienced this all their lives could be so calm. The others jumped and danced and drank. Nothing could deflect the women of the city from their care of the food they were preparing over the huge fires that dotted the fringes of the assembly place near the heart of all the circles.~~

The city was full of soldiers. Their spears flashed everywhere. And as he went by them, they made way, and here and there he heard a whispered:

"That is Dabula, Captain of the armies."

Or:

"Look! There he is. Yes, that's Dabula."

Or:

"Dabula.....Gubuza's young man."

He went as though he did not hear, without turning his head. Yet he felt good. It warmed him that people should know him and point him out. It had happened for a long time but it was always as though it was the first time.

Above

Through the noise around them, Ndawe said:

"May I go to my regiment, Captain?"

For a moment the sadness of last night flooded over him. This was his friend asking to go away and not be his friend any more. This was the only man with whom he could talk freely ^{and open} ~~with~~ his heart. He stopped and turned to Ndawe. He had only to say 'I'm sorry, my friend. Forgive me.' But when his eyes looked into the cold eyes that looked at him, respectfully, but from a stern soldier's face, he said:

gal. 59 "Yes," curtly and turned his back on Ndawe. ~~He was the Captain of the king's armies, he was a warrior of the Matabele. But the sadness persisted and he saw the face of Unindi as she clung to the blanket over the doorway and pleaded.~~

The soldier who had waited for them at the hunting camp said:

"May I go too, Captain?"

He said: "Yes."

Now he was alone among the mass of people. Really, he should go and report to the Father. The Father had said this affair of Kunana was bad so there might be things to do. But it was good out here among the people. He thought: This is my city. He said it aloud to himself. In the din nobody noticed. He was no longer aware of the beat of the tom-toms. It had become as natural as the beat of his heart. ~~All he was aware of was the tense excitement everywhere.~~ A girl flashed by him laughing and turned bright eyes on him as she went. The sadness dropped from him like a discarded blanket. He laughed out loud as he pushed past people.

A woman of the city stopped him.

"It is our great Captain Dabula. Drink with us Captain!"

Another called:

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"It is the blood of the Barolong of Kunana, Captain!"

He drank and moved on, laughing. This was his city and these were his people. The greatest city and the greatest people alive.

~~Look at them!~~

He was near the centre of the city now and could see through the throne erected on the assembly place near the royal huts: a raised platform with a huge wooden chair covered with leopard and lion skins. Near him, a group of girls chattered at the top of their voices, their ~~beautifully~~ coloured blankets swishing as they danced with excitement.

Sabula
He stopped and tried to listen. After much nodding and shaking of heads they seemed to agree. The loudest among them called for silence. Others near him also turned and listened. The girl jumped into the centre of the circle and sang:

center (

"Come, let us sing!"

A The other girls answered:

"Mzilikazi has a son."

A She sang:

center (

"Come let us sing!"

A They sang:

"Langa is his name."

"Come, let us sing!"

"Langa has a spear."

"Come, let us dance."

center (

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"Sharp is the point of his spear."

"Call the girls of Sodaiza!"

"Call them to the dance.

"Call the maids to the Puza!"

"Call them to the dance."

"Mzilikazi has a son!"

"A fighting son."

"His right arm is strong!"

"Ask the Barolong."

"Hail! Hail! to his son!"

"Langa! Langa the Prince!"

The song was hailed with joy. They repeated it. This time, those around them joined in the chorus. They repeated it again and again. Soon it supplanted all the other songs. Soon everybody round the assembly place was singing the Chant ^{to} ~~or~~ Langa. It spread to the outskirts of the city. It became the song of the day.

^{Dabula}
~~He~~ turned his eyes to the throne as men with headbands of station moved toward it. Like a moving wind, silence descended on the crowds.

Soldiers of the royal guard grouped themselves round the throne. Their spears shone in the morning sun. Their huge shields half-covered their bodies.

~~The wind of silence blew more closely against the murmuring crowds and the murmur died to the faintest of buzzing hums.~~

Soldiers of the city guard fell in and cleared a wide passage to the very outskirts of the city.

A sigh rose from the crowds. All eyes turned to the gateway of the royal huts.

He whispered the names of the people as they came out. The first to step out was Sitonga. That meant he would give the royal speech of welcome. Next came Qanda, then Dambuza, then Dingiswayo, and finally, Tabata. With ^{Dambuza}him, the crowds murmured their names as they appeared. Each name was a household word. For these were great warriors, the leaders of the king's armies, the guardians of the people, ~~the men jealous of the honour and safety of the Matabele nation.~~

With the others he waited. Perhaps Gubuza, the Father, would now appear. He came before the king but after everybody else because he was next to the king. The wait stretched into a long moment that grew tense.

Mzilikazi stepped out of the gateway. A scarlet cloak that swept the ground covered his shoulders.

"Bayete!"

It pervaded earth and sky, touched the peaks of the mountains.

"Bayete!"

It covered the vast half continent with the shadow of the king.

Slowly the echoes came rolling back.

~~The king's eyes swept over the people in the silence that followed the thrice-called salute. Everywhere, spears, points skyward, glistened in the morning sun. Quickly the king walked to his throne. He sat down. Voices bubbled again.~~

The loudest of the maidens, the one who had started the Chant to Langa, ran into the clearing in front of the throne. She bowed low then raised her head high and started the Chant again. A host of voices joint^{ed} in. The king turned to his generals and nodded.

A soldier hurried from the outskirts of the city. He spoke to one of the generals. The general spoke to the king. The king raised his right hand. The singing died suddenly, ~~as though cut off by a sharp knife.~~ Even the tom-toms were silent.

In the silence, approaching drumbeats could be heard. They grew louder and drew nearer. All eyes turned to the wide passage made by the soldiers of the city guards. ~~The drum-beats were near now.~~ The king waved to the royal drummers. They struck up, keeping time with the approaching drum-beats.

Up the human passage, led by his mbongis ~~(victory-singers)~~ came Langa, leading his army. Looking neither left nor right, no sign of expression on their faces, they marched through the human passage. ~~Their ears seemed deaf to the shouts of welcome. Their eyes seemed blind to the thousands who were there to greet them.~~

When they reached the clearing before the throne, ~~silence fell again over the huge gathering,~~ the leader of the mbongis stepped to the throne and chanted the story of the destruction of Kunana. Then, in great detail, he listed the booty that had been taken: so many thousand heads of horned animals, so many bulls, so many cows, so many sheep, so many lambs, so many tanned hides. He went carefully through the list.

When he had finished and stepped back, ten thousand voices roared:

"Bayete!"

At the head of his soldiers, ~~as though he had not heard a word of all this,~~ Langa stood impassive, his cold eyes directed at a point above the king's head.

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The king waved his hand as though fanning his face. Once. Twice Dabula sighed in expectation. A rumble stirred through the vast assembly. The huge mass of people sat down on the hard earth. ~~4s~~
~~though drilled in army routine. It was one long single movement. One~~
~~moment they had been standing. The king waved: and the next moment~~
~~they were seated. Langa and his soldiers~~ squatted on their haunches
leaning against their spears.

Now for the speeches! Dabula thought. And everywhere expectant faces were turned to the royal platform, and on all faces could be read the Matabele love of oratory.

Sitonga stepped forward and raised his hands.

"My Lord! Royal Prince! Chiefs! People of the Matabele!

"Who is Sitonga that the king, the great Mzilikazi, lord of the earth and the sky, master of men, should choose him to salute these, our returning heroes? Yet I am proud of these youths, and I speak with humble pride.

"Tauana, a rebellious Rolong chief flaunted the king's dignity. Where is Tauana now? Where is ^{his} the city now? Where, indeed! I will tell you. Listen. Langa, Prince of the Matabele, son of our king, has blotted his name and the name of his city off the face of the earth. Tauana will die nameless and unhonoured.

"You know, my brothers, that among ~~us~~ there are croakers. There are those whose ears are deaf and whose eyes are blind to Matabele virtues. They see only our decadence: they say the milk of the mothers to-day is not conducive to the growth of the bravery in our children's livers. They say the milk of the mothers of to-day can only breed faint-heartedness. Where are these croakers now? Let them

come forward and eat their words, for Langa has crushed their lies. Langa and his warriors do not know the meaning of fear, for they are Matabele warriors..."

Sitonga was interrupted by a thunderous: "Bayete!" His voice was charged with emotion when he went on:

"We heard with pain the sad news of the murder of the indunas, Bhoya and Bangela. They were not private men passing through a city, my brothers. No.... They were men who went peacefully on the king's business. The shadow of the king's protection was over them. And they were murdered.

"And this man who murdered them, who was he? What was he?

"He was, my brothers, a brigand who enjoyed the king's magnanimity. In the peace brought by the king's shadow, he shared with us the sunshine and the blessing of rain. With us, he shared the cool wind on hot days. At night he slept in the same protected peace as we did. As with us, the king's shadow guarded him. His men were permitted to hunt even as our men are. His women garnered the produce of the land, as did our women.

"Was the king unjust to them? If he is unjust to them, then he is unjust to us. For his blessings, we pay tribute to our king. Why should not they? He brought peace to the land, freedom and plenty to its people.

"The city of Tauana is no more. His corn bins are empty, and this evening we will divide his cattle.

"We have here among us Chiefs from other tribes, loyal leaders of their people. Each of these chiefs will drive home a share of the booty. Thus, their people will know the goodness of Mzilikazi to

those who are loyal. Mzilikazi is their shield. But, and listen with care, my lords, for those with treachery in their hearts, the fate of Tauana is a promise."

He turned to the impassive Langa.

"Oh, Langa, Prince of the Matabele, descendant of the great Matshobani, we are proud of you! Proud of your arms! No race with such valiant princes need fear for its royal house....Langa, my Prince, as long as you are alive we will sleep and rest secure in the knowledge that you are guarding us from every danger!"

He stepped back and a great roar of approval went up.

Dambuza stepped forward and began another oration.

While he spoke, a murmur started and spread among the crowd. It began somewhere behind the throne. It drowned the voice of Dambuza. Dabula craned his neck to see. There was a stir over there. People pushed and moved against each other. Then he caught the whisper:

"The Father is among us..... The Father is among us." Heads everywhere turned.

The king raised his hand. Dambuza stopped speaking.

"What is it?"

Gubuza broke through the crowd.

"Gubuza!" The king smiled.

"My lord."

"This is a strange manner of arrival."

"Strange things happen, my lord.... The dust of the road is still on my back, my cloak is as rags beside those of my lords the generals. But I wish to speak."

"After Dambuza."

"Now, my lord."

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There was murmuring among the people in the front. Mzilikazi stared at Gubuza. Gubuza returned the stare.

"Then speak," the king said.

Dambuza stepped back. Gubuza took his place and turned to the people. He was as tall as the king, but less fat. His body was still that of a young man in his fighting prime. The tight, woolly curls on his head were snow white. Against his smooth unlined face it was strange and contradictory. Age and youth blended too evenly, ~~too~~ ^{incredibly} ~~impossibly~~. Only his eyes, the eyes of an old man, saved the blending from being ~~an impossible freak~~ ^{incredible}. About his bearing ~~there~~ was a hint of tiredness that was not physical.

He spoke slowly, an almost detached anger in his voice:

"I have listened to the words of Sitonga, my brothers, and I do not like them." He raised his hands as the crowds murmured. He waited till they were silent again. "I am the king's man. You all know that. Murmur if you will, but know I am the king's man. As the king's man, I will speak what is in my heart. I will not use the powerful art of oratory to sway you, my children. My speech will be brief. After ^{me} others can sway you. I will not tell you of all the things I have shared with Mzilikazi. I will not tell you of the battles we fought together or the joys we have shared. This is not a time for that.

"I said I do not like the words of Sitonga. I say it again. I, Gubuza, have sat at the feet of many wise men. I have listened to their words, and I have learned wisdom from them.

"I was born in Zululand. Lately, I have been there again, not as Gubuza, Commander of the king's armies, but as an ordinary man with no name. I have been to Swaziland, to Tongaland and to Basutoland.

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I know the northern forests, I know the western deserts, I know the eastern and the southern seas. I have made these journeys, not on whim, but in search of wisdom. It is with this wisdom that I say I do not like the words of Sitonga.

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"Children of the Matabele!" A more personally angry note crept into his voice. "Wise men of different tribes and nationalities are agreed that cheap successes are nearly always followed by the shadow of tragedy. Wise men are agreed that nations should in their strength tread carefully. My friend, Moshesh, king of the Basutos, can tell much of this wisdom. He is, this day, building a nation dedicated to the wisdom of treading carefully in strength."

Again there was an uproar. It started somewhere near Tabata. Gubuza calmly waited till it passed.

"I hear scorn at the name of Moshesh. Listen, children! When the name of Gubuza, and many another, is long forgotten, men will tell of the wisdom of Moshesh. Scorn not that name for in doing so you show your own stupidity. For myself, I wish that I had stayed longer with that wise man."

"I hurried back when word reached me of this affair at Kunana for my heart was sore within me. I asked myself, and I ask you now. Are we sure that Bhoya and his companion were guiltless? Was there no provocation? If they were guiltless, was there no other answer? Word reached me that Tauana was drunk, that he had not taken counsel from his elders. What had those elders decided? Who among you has not done wrong in a drunken moment? I have."

"Do we know if the people of Kunana had decided to punish their own chief and make amends for the death of our two indunas? My lord and my people, hmm"

Tabata jumped forward and waved his arms. He trembled with anger.

"Enough! Enough of this treachery!"

From somewhere a voice called "Coward!" Other voices took it up.

Everywhere people moved. They jumped to their feet and strained forward. Dabula got up and pushed against people.

"Make way!" he shouted.

They looked at him and when they saw the band round his head they made way. He worked his way to the back of the throne where a group of warriors of Gubuza's personal guard stood, ~~gripping their spears~~. Their captain hurried forward as he saw Dabula.

"We've been looking all over for you. The General wanted you, Captain."

Mkomozi hurried to them, his body looking more like that of a little boy.

"They are shouting against Gubuza," he said.

"Get your guard!" Dabula said.

The captain of the guard turned to one of his men:

"Call the guard!" he ordered.

The warrior hurried away.

"The king's personal guard also!" Dabula called after him. He turned to the captain. "I want one of your men. A fast one."

The captain called and a man ^{came} ~~stepped~~ forward.

"Listen well," Dabula said to the man. "My own regiment is on guard at the southern approaches ~~to~~ the city. Hurry there, find the commander. Tell him I, Dabula, order that he keeps his men in readiness for battle. Tell him to bring them closer to the city. Tell

him to send a runner to take my orders. Is it clear?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Good. Now take this," he took off his head-band and gave it to the man. "It will get you through the people. Show it to the commander of my regiment. Go!"

The man moved off.

"Wait!" Dabula called.

The man came back.

"Give me your shield and spear..... Now go!"

The voices against Gubuza were raised to a mighty roar. Soldier hurried out from the royal enclosure. The captain of the king's guard came up and saluted Dabula.

"Close to the throne," Dabula said. "Watch the generals. Defend the king and Gubuza. Watch Langa and his men. My warriors will be near soon. I will give you a sign if there is need."

The two captains turned to their men and ordered them forward, ~~telling them what to do. Dabula, his shield and spear in his hands,~~ moved to the throne, ~~pushing the crowd.~~ Mkomози followed him. His bright, watery eyes were sad as he watched Dabula's broad back. He thought: So sure for the battle. All the correct orders without even thinking.... So unsure for life. He sighed.

They stopped on the edge of the clearing, near the throne. All about them was a terrible din. He tugged at Dabula's blanket. Dabula bent down.

"What now?"

"Wait."

They looked at Gubuza. He had stood silent throughout. Sudden-

ly he raised his right arm. The tiredness fell away from him. His body stiffened. His eyes flashed. In a voice that drowned all other noises he cried:

"I hear the word coward! I have my shield! I have my spear! Let any man here step forward and touch spears with me!"

In the hush that followed, everybody waited, but no man came. Gubuza's lips curled. He turned to the throne.

"No doubt we are all drunk with the size of the booty and the good beer of our women," he paused and weighed his next words: "But my lord, I am afraid we have only made a fresh enemy and one day we will pay for it."

He turned and walked away from the throne. He made to go out of the circle and through the crowds, but the king waved him to stay. He saw Dabula and Mkomazi and went to them.

"My lord and people!" Tabata roared. "I am a pure blooded Ndabele!"

The crowd shouted its approval.

"And I am proud of it!"

The shouting rang out till Tabata raised his arms for silence. ~~His voice shook with passion.~~

"I breathe the pure air in the belief that should a man or a beast shed a drop of my blood, the king's soldiers will settle him before he has time to repent; but if I may be killed with impunity by any one, whatever his grievance, life would mean nothing. For my part, I say Tauana got less than he deserved. He escaped with his life.

"My people! I vow that never again will I salute Gubuza. His

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70/62 words mean he would tolerate the spilling of Matabele blood. Such words, such a man, I cannot salute.... Rather, I would be a Bushman and eat scorpions than see Matabele hunted and killed like rock rabbits."

He turned to Gubuza. He pointed his finger at him.

"Gubuza! We all know you as a warrior and nothing can rob you of the glory of your arms. We know you are fearless in battle. I would not use the word coward when I think or speak of you. In battle you are not a coward.... But there is no need for you to be jealous of the success of the Prince. All he knows of battle he learned from you. And it is right that in due time the young should replace the old. The glory of the future is in the young. Eat your jealousy and be ashamed, for you have spoken words of treachery this day. Shame be on you!"

In the tumult that followed, the king sat staring into space. Voices were loud against Gubuza. Soldiers moved nearer the throne. Dabula's eyes were sharply watchful.

Mzilikazi murmured softly to himself: "A man loses his throne thus."

The medicine-men, in a group to the left, began rattling their bones. The spirit of a witch-hunt was in the air.

Mzilikazi rose and raised his arms. In the silence his voice carried to the thousands.

"My people! Listen to your father; listen, my children. I have a few words of wisdom for you. Listen to them." He paused impressively. When he spoke again his voice was cajoling.

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"If Gubuza *had* not spoken I would have been very sorry. I am glad he spoke. I am glad he hurried here with the dust of travel on his face. Look at that face! Look at the dust on it!

"You see, my little ones, a man has two legs that he might walk properly. He cannot get far on one leg only. In the same way, a man has two hands: one to hold his spear; one to hold his shield. No matter how strong or agile a man may be, if he has a spear in his right hand, and no shield in his left, he is at the mercy of his enemy. Likewise, a man has two eyes in order to see well. He has two ears in order to hear both sides of a dispute. He who listens to one side only, often finds himself wrong.

"In every part of life there are two sides to every matter, my children. There are riches and poverty; beauty and ugliness; health and sickness; wisdom and folly, right and wrong; day and night; summer and winter; fire and water. One cannot be without the other. Without you, I cannot be king, Without me, you cannot be a nation. Without Gubuza our armies would not be so powerful.

"Gubuza, and some others among you, will remember that faraway day when we returned from buffalo hunt. Our pack oxen were laden with beef and eland hides and everybody was satisfied. It was then that I charged Gubuza with taking our army, which was loose and weak and changing it into the tightest and strongest army in all the land. I told him that it was in order that law should come to the land, and that ^{that} law should govern from the desert to the sea.

"He promised he would train such an army. And after the word came the deed. He promised, with the new army, to spread my shadow

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from Sekukuku's mountains to the Tembu and Pondo seas. He said that even the great Chaka would acknowledge the greatness of our army. It sounded like a child's dream then. But was it? You know the answer my children. For after the word came the deed.

"Chaka is dead. There is no army in the world like the army of Mzilikezi...."

"Who made that army?"

"You know the answer, my children. You are the creatures of Gubuza! He took you, as a small child takes clay, and shaped you into an army and a powerful nation. Without him, where would you have been?.... Look at him! Look at the dust on his face.... His name is Gubuza. You call him Father. He is your father. Is it not right that a father should chastise his children with the anger of his tongue?"

"Then an end to all this murmuring.... I heard the word treachery from one of my generals. My children, he spoke in the anger that flowed from his great oratory. It is easier for a ^{Matabele} ~~Ndabele~~ mother to betray her young son than for Gubuza to have treachery in his heart. Those were hot words spoken in a blind moment by a wise man. Another very small thing, my children, he who does not salute Gubuza, does not salute me.... But away with all this! It is all a misunderstanding. There is beer to be drunk. We must be merry this day."

He turned to Gubuza and smiled. There was a deathly silence over the vast assembly. Mzilikazi thought: If I lose my throne, now is the moment. This is the second for treachery, the hour for the vultures to swoop. Will they swoop? Will a spear enter my back?

To Gubuza he said, still smiling:

"How now, my friend! I take heed of your words and your warning is in my ears but I feel the balance is still in our favour....I think we should reward the boy, Langa, for his daring. What do you say?"

Gubuza returned the smile and nodded.

"We could promote him, my lord, to the command of the Sibongo regiments and make him chief of the Amasizi. And, I think, if he likes, he may settle them on the territory from which he has cleared the Barolong."

Mzilikazi turned to his son.

"Great honour there from the king's general. How do you speak boy?"

"Elbow before the commander of the king's armies, my lord. His kindness is great. Without his training we would have been nothing."

Mzilikazi thought: The moment has passed.

From the ~~malleable~~ ^{malleable} crowd went up a great roar.

"Bayete!"

Dabula sighed and relaxed. There was a rustle of nervous relief among the warriors of the guards. The king smiled and left his throne. This signalled the end of ~~the~~ speechmaking. Dancing and singing broke out. People went to the beer pots and drank. The hungry were fed by the women of the city. Military displays were performed. Young maidens went through the motions of their national dances.

The feast had begun.



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["Have they gone?" Mzilikazi asked.

Dabula went to the door and looked out.

"Yes, my lord."

"I don't trust Tabata. Look carefully."

Dabula went out. ^{moments} He came back a few ~~minutes~~ later.

"The generals are all with Langa, my lord."

"I don't like this!" Mzilikazi said, getting up. "They are plotting."

"Sit down and forget them," Gubuza said quietly.

Mzilikazi dropped heavily onto the couch beside Gubuza. Mkomози reclined a little distance ~~away~~ from them, his bald head buried on his tiny chest. ~~His face screwed into a mass of wrinkles so that his eyes hardly showed. Dabula stood respectfully near the door of the hut.~~

"Call for beer and sit down, boy," Gubuza said.

"Yes, beer," Mzilikazi said. "I was afraid to drink while those vultures were here." ~~I am afraid of my own shadow when Tabata and Ntongelwane are near me..... And Langa..... The others I can read. I bred a snake for a son..... Beer, Dabula. I can drink now."~~

Dabula called for beer. After a while two maidens brought in beer. ~~They handed it around. Mkomози refused the beer.~~

"A little goat's milk for me," he said.

The girls went out and one returned with a bowl of goat's milk.

"Drink, my friends," Mzilikazi said.

~~They drank.~~ Mzilikazi put down his bowl and sighed.

"It is wonderful to drink when one drinks with friends. There is a

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wonderful taste to the beer."

Gubuza smiled and nodded. ~~The smile lit up his face.~~

Dabula's mind strayed to those tense moments at the Ndaba. What would have happened if anybody had attacked Gubuza? The king would have defended him. Yes. That's true. ~~So would he have done.~~ It could have happened. It was there in the air. Ntongolwane was rattling his bones, and kept looking at Tabata for a signal. What would have happened, had the signal been given?..... First Gubuza and then the king. Or at the same time? While some rushed at Gubuza others would have rushed at the king. They had worked up the people ^{all right} ~~alright~~. They'd had their moment and let it pass. Langa could have been king ~~at~~ ~~Enzwinani~~ now. Tabata could have been the king's general, ~~commander~~ of all the armies, next to the king. Only, they'd let their moment go. If they had not done so, Gubuza would have been dead.....

He turned it over in his mind. He pictured it. Gubuza lying on the ground with blood flowing from his face and body. Gubuza dead. What would it mean to him to see Gubuza lying dead? ~~with blood flowing from his face and body?~~ Those eyes would be closed or staring without seeing anything. He would be on his back. His head would lie sideways. Perhaps his mouth would be open..... The question sang through his mind: what would it mean to him?.....

In a ~~sudden~~ rush of fear, he raised his bowl to his lips and closed his eyes tight to shut out the picture. After a moment he opened his eyes and looked ~~briefly~~ at Mkomosi. Perhaps the old man had watched him. Perhaps the old man knew.... No, he was not looking.....

Mkomosi thought: all the treachery and fear is of their own making

making. They fathered it, now they rail against it.... He felt too ~~tired~~ to think anymore. This business at the Ndaba had worn him out. Inside he had died for Gubuza. Perhaps, later, he would climb the western hills to be alone and think and look down on the city. He always felt good there. Now he was too tired. He sipped his goat's milk.

Mzilikazi smiled ~~thoughtfully~~, a pensive look in his eyes. ~~Impulsively~~, He flung an arm round Gubuza's shoulders.

"I thought my moment had come," he said. He laughed without amusement. "And all I could think of was: 'What a way for Gubuza and me to die, we who dared Chaka and lived.... Now to die at the hands of cowards and a pup'. I would have hated that."

Gubuza ~~noded~~ ~~thoughtfully~~.

"I did not fear, my friend."

"You are a fool, Gubuza."

Gubuza laughed. There was gaiety in his voice. It forced laughter-lines to show on Mzilikazi's face.

"You try me, Gubuza!" Mzilikazi's voice was equally gay.

Mkomozi thought: Now they are boys again.

"You try me, Mzilikazi," Gubuza said. "Why did you do this fool thing?"

"I pulled your head out of ^{the} bags of the medicine~~men~~ and this is your thanks!"

"Why did you do it?"

"Damn Bhoya and Bangela! They nearly lost me my throne."

Dabula forgot his thoughts and listened to the Father and the king. He had never heard the Father talk in this way. There was

laughter and seriousness, so evenly blended that one could get lost. ~~The voices were so light, so full of fun that one almost forgot the words.~~ He sensed ~~something of~~ the feeling ~~that was~~ behind these light words. If only the Father would speak to him like that! Almost, this was a new Gubuza. Almost, he was just an ordinary man. And he sensed also that for the moment they were unaware of himself and Mkomози. For the moment they were the only two in the hut. If only the Father would speak to him like that.....~~W~~

"Why did you do it, man!" Gubuza asked.

"You speak to the king. Take care Gubuza!"

Gubuza laughed.

"Answer me, Mzilikazi."

"I will denounce you myself!"

"An end to this nonsense. Speak, man! Why?"

"Those five devils were at me."

"As I thought.....What of your promise?"

"I tell you, they were like vultures on me."

"You promised to think for yourself. You are the king."

~~"It is easy for you to speak, my friend."~~ It is not ~~so~~ easy to think with treachery around you."

"You spoke against them now."

Mzilikazi lowered his head. He said simply:

"Your life was in danger."

Gubuza's eyes twinkled. A tender look passed over his face.

"There was no audience last night," he said.

"You do not understand.....I am caught up in this kingship and I do not like it. I wish we were roaming the eastern lands

again. Just you and I. I am tired."

"Courage, Mzilikazi."

"You see visions. I do not. I tell you in."

"I know.... You are tired of this kingship."

"You mock me!"

"I don't."

"Well, I am tired."

"Yes, my friend."

"I am very tired."

"I know."

"You still say we must guide them?"

"Yes."

"To peaceful ways?"

"Yes."

"Still? After to-day?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"If we do not find the answer, others will. That is the teaching of Mkenozi. It is good."

"You and I, we built a nation and made an army. Now we fear it."

"We don't."

"We do."

"No."

"Well, I do..... In my old age I am a coward."

"No. You are tired."

"Yes, I'm tired."

"And drunk."

"Is it wrong now to be drunk?"

"No. You must sleep now."

"I want Mhandi."

"I will call her .Sleep."

Gubuza pushed Mzilikazi down on the couch. The king rolled over and turned his back to the wall. He closed his eyes. Gubuza led the other two out. When they were at the door, Mzilikazi called in a sleep drunken, voice:

"Gubuza, my brother."

"Yes?"

"I am not a coward, am I?"

"No."

"I'm only drunk, heh?"

"Yes."

"Mhandi...."

"She is coming."

"Goodnight, my brother."

"Goodnight."

Mzilikazi immediately began to snore.

Outside, Gubuza turned to Dabula and Mkomosi and said:

"I'm going home to Manda, come if you wish."

"I want to climb the western hills," Mkomosi said.

"I want to see my regiment and some of the other officers for later," Dabula said.

"Will they try again to-night?" Gubuza asked.

"There are whispers," Dabula said.

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"I am sorry I cannot let you go to Ntombi straightaway."

"I know, Father."

They separated. The last rays of the sun were fast fading from the western hills.

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Nanda met him at the door. Though younger, she looked many years older than Gubuza.

"It is good to see you, Gubuza."

"It is good to see you, dear Nanda."

He put his arm round her shoulders and they went into the huts together. He looked at her face and knew she wanted to talk about the Ndaba.

"We had a wonderful hunt," he said.

"Yes?"

"I have two perfect leopard skins for your floors. We've had the other ~~rest~~ too long. And I killed them myself. That is, with Dabula's help. The second leopard was not dead, but I thought it was. If Dabula had not been there I would have been finished."

She brought him water and a clean blanket. While he washed he kept on talking about the hunt, every now and then looking up at her face. At last he finished with his story of the hunt and sat beside her.

"And you, Nanda, what did you do while I was away?"

A half-smile touched her lips. She looked into his eyes and shook her head.

"Why do you ask what you know?"

He sighed.

"All right. We will talk about this thing then. You want to, don't you?"

"About the Ndaba? ... Yes. I am afraid, Gubuza."

"There is nothing to fear, only the folly of our people."

"It is that I fear."

"You fear that in their folly they will kill me?"

"Yes."

"That is not my fear. There will always be someone who will get up and say 'We might need the old man for so and so. Do not kill him!'"

"One day even that ^{may} stop them."

"Perhaps.... But my fear is of a different kind. I do not fear for my life, Nanda, though life is sweet. I am an old man who has seen much and lived much. I must soon die, so I do not fear that. I am afraid for these people, I am afraid for the littleness of their wisdom. I am afraid without knowing what I fear or how to overcome it. Some of it, I think, is due to all this talk of strange men with hair on their red faces, ~~from the south~~. Mkomози knows of the past of this land. If men came from the east or from that west or south or north, he would know them by looking at their faces and listening to their words and he would tell you where they came from and, perhaps, even something of their tribal ways. But these strange men of whom we hear seem to come from nowhere. Mkomози says ^{they} are men from across the sea. It disturbs me greatly to hear of them. ~~But~~ That is one matter.

"The other matter that is at the root of my fear are these people of ours. Sometimes, when I talk to Mkomози, I feel that a curtain would be lifted from my brain and I would see things. And I know they

would be wonderful things. But the curtain is never lifted. I never see."

"Tell me more, Gubuza. Sometimes I, ~~too~~, feel the substance of your visions." She smiled gently.

He put his arm round her and they sat close together.

"I am a windbag in my old age!" He laughed.

"Speak my man! There is beauty and wisdom in your wind."

"Then listen. You remember with the boy. I encouraged him in his love for Ntombi for she is a good child. But it was like the lifting of the curtain from my brain when I encouraged him to have only her as his wife. You know the murmuring there was against it but it was a good thing. On the hunt he told me of its goodness.

"When the curtain lifted from my brain for the briefest of moments, I saw a wonderful thing. Look."

He opened his ^{hand} and held his fingers apart. He said:

"Take one."

She took a finger.

"Now twist it."

She bent it a little.

"If you twist hard you will break it. Right?"

"Yes."

"Good. Let it be."

He bunched his hand into a fist and held it clenched.

"Now break it."

She tried to reach a finger but failed. She tried to twist the fist but failed.

"It came as a wonderful thing. To have a wife and to love her."

with the strength of a tight fist that cannot be broken, is better than to have many wives and love each with the weakness of a little finger that is easily broken. For a strong love makes a man stronger, a weak love makes a man weaker. And yet, when I tried to tell them, they were against me. Some said 'How do you know? It is against the tribal custom.' And I cannot answer for I do not know how I know, all I know is I know."

She smiled and caressed his hand. Laughter-lines showed round her eyes.

"You always turn my fears aside with your stories. You always make nothing of my fears and tell of your visions." She shook her head in mock-anger. "And I always aid you in your deception. You are an old windbag."

They laughed ~~together~~.

"It is good to speak with you again, Nanda."

"I longed for this day."

He was thoughtful for a moment.

"To grow old like this, with you by my side, to lose all my teeth and to have my back bent, would be pleasant."

She turned her head away from him.

"Gubuza."

"Yes?"

"Let us grow old like this, just you and I. Leave the army and be just an old man who attends to his cattle. Let us move to a piece of land outside the city, like Dabula and Ntombi. All your life you have been in the army. You have built it. Leave it now."

He stared into space and shook his head.

"It is the wish of my heart but I cannot. If I leave, the intriguers would sing for joy. And soon, very soon, the army and the nation would be torn into fractions. Each man would see his own ambition as the need of the nation, and treachery would stalk the land. I dare not leave. Mzilikazi needs me."

"There are those who say the lust ^{for} power is in you too. They say you would not leave because the taste of power is sweet."

"How does a man know his motives, Nanda? Perhaps it is true. Perhaps my head is turned by power. How does a man know? All I know ^{if I seek power, it is for what I can do} ~~is that I should be powerful.~~ ^{with it, not merely} But how does a man know the secret motives of his heart?"

"Forgive me, Gubuza."

"There is nothing to forgive!"

"No one spoke of your lust for power. I was lying."

He laughed softly.

"And did you think your words deceived me? Oh Nanda! Nanda! I have lived with you these many years and ~~you~~ ^{you} still take me for a fool."

Nanda tossed her head and turned away from him.

"Men are fools!" she said crossly.

"Nanda...."

She responded to the serious note in his voice. ~~She forgot her~~
~~excesses.~~

"What is it, Gubuza?"

He reached for her hand. She moved closer to him.

"When I stood there and they roared against me, I ~~suddenly~~ thought of our son. I wanted him to be beside me..... It was strange I wasn't afraid. But I felt weak. And ~~quite suddenly~~, I wanted our

son to be there with me. I ~~felt I would like~~^{wanted} to lean against him. ~~if he were there.~~ He shook his head. "I nearly cried. You know... I felt the tears rising to my eyes and there was a hardness in my throat and I wanted to cry: 'My son! Help me!'"

"Oh Gubuza!"

~~Her hands~~^{She} reached up and touched his face, and there was tenderness in her fingers. ~~Her lips~~^{She} kissed his chest where the blanket did not cover it.

He saw the tears in her eyes. He said:

"It did not last long. ~~And then it was gone.~~ And when I looked again, Dabula was there, armed to defend me."

"Had our son lived he would have been like that," Nanda said.

"That is our son," Gubuza said.

"Oh you are a fool!" Nanda cried. "I am not a child! Why do you speak to me as if I'm a suckling that must be comforted with lies?"

Gubuza took her face between his hands and turned it till she looked into ~~her~~^{his} eyes. ~~their eyes spoke.~~ A tender smile lit up his face and glowed from his eyes. His lips trembled. The anger slowly passed from her.

"You are a fool," she said. Now there was gentleness in her voice. She turned her eyes from his.

The tender smile clung on his lips, the tender look in his eyes. The trembling too.

"Sleep," she said, and went out of the hut.

He sat staring at the doorway for a long time, the strange smile on his lips, the strange look in his eyes. Time passed. He shook his head a little, as though to clear it. He stretched his body

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full-length on the couch and closed his eyes.

What was the meaning of the news of the strange, red-faced men from the sea? What were they doing in the south? Where had they come from? What did they want? What would their coming mean to his people?

~~Remember to ask Mkomazi, Mkomazi was wise and knew much. Mkomazi could read the stars and the moon and tell when it would rain and when it would not. Not like the other medicine-men who used tricks to further their own power. Mkomazi was a real medicine-man. He took herbs from the earth and comforted the sick with them. A real medicine-man his name was proof of it. The Comforter. Ask Mkomazi. May be he knew.~~

And these people, of his, what would happen to them? Why was this heaviness in his heart? Why would not the curtain lift from his brain and let him see?

He felt the possibilities of new, undreamed of, horizons. How to reach ^{them}, how to get to them, what they meant, where they would lead to, that he did not know.

He fell into a restless sleep and dreamt ^{ed of} about men with red faces.

~~~~~>#<

Dabula stretched himself on the blanket near the fire. This was good. He was among his soldiers. This was his regiment. His word was law here. And these men around the fire were his officers. They obeyed him. He looked at the sky. Everywhere stars shone faintly.

Soon they would be bright. And up there, slightly to the right, were the four stars that make a cross. Gubuza had once told him a



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story about how their ancestors had followed that cross from the north in the past of long ago. He wondered whether any of their ancestors were still left up in the north. Whenever he stood where the path began on the way down to the city from the north, he always looked north into the heart of the land and wondered about their ancestors. Of ten he had wanted to ask Mkomozzi. But, somehow, he had never been able to talk to Mkomozzi. Never mind. He was among his men. He felt slightly drunk and closed his eyes. Mkomozzi was up there on the western hills now. He wondered what went on in that old mind. Without opening his eyes he asked:

gal. 66 "Our spies are out?"

From the other side of the fire, the commander of the regiment answered:

"Yes, my lord."

"Any news yet?"

"No."

One of the officers said:

"One of my spies has a friend in Langa's hut. I will hear from him soon."

"Good."

He opened his eyes and watched a shooting star flash across the sky from the north. He felt relaxed in every part of his body. He thought of Ntombi. Before long now they would be together. Thinking of Ntombi made him remember Umindi. When he went to Ntombi, would her body know he had slept with Umindi? Would she know by looking at him? And why was it wrong to sleep with another woman? All the other men in the nation did it. Still, he did not want



Ntombi and Gubuza to know about it. He asked:

"Has Ndawe reported?"

One of the officers said:

"Yes, lord."

"What did he say?"

"Only that you sent him back to the regiment."

"How is he?"

"He's a good soldier. Better than the average."

"Good enough to be an officer?"

The commander said:

"Yes. I was going to mention his promotion to you but you took him with you as your aide."

"You think he deserves special training?"

"He will make a good leader."

"All right then."

He felt better without quite knowing why. Only that girl. What would happen to her? As he thought of her, he was gripped by a sense of guilt. He wanted to stop thinking of her. He tried to turn his mind to Ntombi. Would she be on her way now? And would the children be with her? But his mind kept straying to the girl. The harder he tried not to think of her, the more persistently the picture of her grew. Soon he was back with them again. But they could not see him. He could see and hear, but to them he was invisible.

The chief called her and said 'Umind! And she went to him. And he said 'We will go to my couch, my child.' And there was great fear in her. It showed in her eyes and in the heaviness of her



walk. But she said 'Yes, my lord' and went with him to his hut. She lay on the couch and tried not to show the terror that possessed her. And then the chief came and lay with her. And when he finished he looked at her ~~for he had felt nothing to pierce. He saw no~~ ~~blow~~. He struck her. She rolled off the couch and fell on the floor. He took her by the hair and lifted her up. And again he struck her and she fell to the floor. And in raging fury, the chief asked 'With whom did you sleep before I knew you?' But she said nothing so he kicked her. And then he thought of the Price of the Matabele and asked 'Did you sleep with the Price that night?' And she whispered 'No, lord.' while the blood showed where her mouth had been cracked by his first blow. And the chief, his anger without bounds, kicked her again and shouted 'Get out! You whore! You receptacle for every man's water! Get out!' And she got up and staggered out. And he struck her again as she went. And outside, the women of the village waited for her. And they beat her as they drove her from the village. And she wandered alone, wounded.....

"Captain Dabula! My lord! Captain!"

The commander was bending over him, peering anxiously at his face.

"What is it?"

"I spoke to you but you did not answer. Are you well? Did they poison you?"

"What is it? I am well."

"The spy who has a friend at Langa's hut was here. Did you hear his report?"

Dabula shivered. A part of his mind was still with Umindi.

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"No. I was thinking. What is it?"

"Shall I send for the man to report?"

"No. You tell me."

"He did not hear very much."

"Who were there?"

"Langa, Ntongolwane and all the generals."

"Go on."

"They talked of this afternoon. It appears they are divided. Some, led by Ntongolwane, thought the moment had come and they had missed it by not seizing it.....They...."

"I know of that. Did he hear their plans?"

"Not all, but what he heard makes a picture. To-night there will be a witch-hunt led by Ntongolwane. They say Gubuza will do something. The man did not hear what. But whatever it is, it will give them the opportunity."

"I see....."

"What shall we do, Captain?"

"Let us think....."

From the other side of the fire a young officer spoke:

"I have thought of something, Captain."

The commander called:

"Are we alone?"

From the darkness, on the side near the city, a voice called:

"Yes, lord!"

"Speak," Dabula said.

The young officer said:

"This is my thought. Our regiment and the guards at the royal huts are outnumbered by Langa's regiment and Tabata's army which



camps at the western end of the city reaches. "abata planned this."

"True," the commander said. "In battle their number will crush us. To do battle with them would be useless."

"What is your plan?" Dabula asked.

"It is this," the young officer said. "If we protect the king and Gubuza, we may withstand the first assault, but it is only a matter of time before their numbers will tell. Before the loyal armies from the field can get here we will be crushed and the king and Gubuza would be dead."

"Well?"

"Then listen. Instead of only defending the king and Gubuza, why not do this: Why not throw a ring of our men around each of the generals? With Langa it would be difficult but it could be done!"

"Then what?" Dabula asked. But he was beginning to see.

"Then, at the slightest sign of <sup>danger</sup> ~~anything~~, kill the generals."

"Perfect!" the commander cried. "Without them, the revolt will die. Perfect!"

"Don't forget Ntongolwane," Dabula said.

"Then you agree, Captain?"

"It is a good plan. You arrange it, commander."

Dabula peered across the fire. He wanted to see and remember the face of the young officer. The young man was only a blur. Never mind, he would find out after this thing was over.

"How did you think of it?" he asked the blur.

From across the fire the voice said softly:

"Ntongolwane smelled out my father. Tabata got his land. I was a small child then."



Something stirred inside Dabula, like a warning. He tried to get hold of it, to reduce it to the size of thought. But before he could, it was gone.

A warrior came out of the darkness and loomed large in the firelight.

"What is it?" the commander asked.

"General Tabata is on his way here. He passed the first guard but they sent word."

The commander said "Oh" on a rising note.

"Alone?" Dabula asked.

"Yes, lord."

"Let him come."

The warrior disappeared into the darkness. Dabula peered at the blurred young officer across the fire. He wanted very much to see the young man's face. They waited in silence, and the silence seemed long. Then, suddenly, Tabata stepped into the circle of light. They all got up. He was an army general.

"My lord," Dabula said.

"Greetings, Captain.... And you too, young officers.... I came for a friendly drink of beer round an army fire. It is a change from the excitement in the city."

He ~~stood~~<sup>went</sup> close to Dabula. He was the shortest general of the Matabele: also the broadest. His shoulders were wider than that of any other man. His neck was short. His head looked much too small for his massive shoulders. Dabula looked down at him. He thought: This is the most cunning man in all the land.



"We are honoured," Dabula said.

"Then let us sit down," Tabata said. "Oh the spirit of our army! The fire in the open and the officers round it. It is the life I love!"

~~They all sat down.~~

"Beer for the general!" the commander called.

Soon, the beer was brought. Tabata looked at the bowl and smiled.

"For a drink to be good," he said, "it must be shared."

"I have my bowl," Dabula said, reaching for it.

"Share mine." Tabata offered him the bowl.

Dabula took it.

"I will taste it to make sure it is good. Beer sometimes turns sour." He raised the bowl to his lips and drank. He gave it to Tabata.

"It is good, my lord."

Tabata drank. After a while he put the bowl down in front of him.

"We are fortunate," he said.

"Yes, lord," Dabula said.

He turned his head to Dabula.

"Only my army and Prince Langa's regiment are here.... And, of course yours. Should anything happen only we can defend the city."

"Yes," Dabula said.

"Now you, Dabula, are a great warrior.... Your regiment is famed. But there is greater glory waiting for it.... Should anything happen, you would defend the city with us, heh?"



"Against whom, my lord?"

"The enemies of our people.... You should be a general...."

"But there are no enemies this night, lord."

"You understand, my son.... You could be general Dabula."

"I do not understand, lord."

Tabata sighed loudly and got up. The others got up too.

"Of course, there are no enemies this night. It is just that I am full of fancies. Your beer must be very strong.... Rest well my brave warriors. Of course there are no enemies...."

Tabata walked out of the circle of fire and was soon wrapped in the blanket of darkness.

"Whew!" the commander cried.

"That is the man," the young officer said from the other side of the fire..

"Arrange everything for to-night," Dabula said to the commander

"I am tired. I will sleep. Call me when it is time."

He stretched himself ~~full length~~ on the blanket and tucked another tightly about him. He closed his eyes. Immediately, the picture of Uindi, beaten and bleeding, forced itself on his mind. He opened his eyes. He raised himself and leaned on one elbow. He reached for his beer bowl and tilted it to his mouth. He drank till he felt short of breath, till his stomach felt tight as a drum. He put the empty bowl down. ~~Slowly~~ His head began to swim. After a while he felt as though he ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> floating round and round in space. He relaxed on to his side, closed his eyes, and went to sleep.





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Mkomozi leaned against a rock and looked down. Below him, the city was bathed in the light of many fires. In places it was so bright, he could see people moving about. Soon the moon would be up and it would help the light of the fires.

As always up there, his fancies roamed and he addressed his thoughts to people who were not really there. Yet, for him, they were there. Almost, he felt them.

To-night, his thoughts were addressed to those strange white creatures from across the sea. Would they know of Inzwinyani? Would they know of its meaning? Of the treachery and the feasting and the fears and dreams? If one <sup>of them</sup> were with him <sup>now,</sup> would he know? You are here, brother, here beside me, Do you know what it means?

The moon came up rapidly.

Night over Inzwinyani.

Oh, brother! Have you not seen Inzwinyani on a feast night? Really? Oh, my brother! Where are you from, man?.... What is your name? What your tribe?.... Then why is it that you know not of feastnight over Inzwinyani?

Listen!

Night is over Inzwinyani. The moon is big. Like a bright yellow ball that is white at the same time. If you are a dreamer you reach up and touch it, brother. And the stars, they are like a brood of over-bright children round mother moon. There is no sky, no sky at all. There is only the moon and stars and space. Nothing else up there.

And the moon is on the earth too, brother. A young moon that lights up the grass on the earth. As I say, if you are a dreamer you can touch it, brother. Moon and stars and grass on the earth. See the



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brightness on the river, brother. It is the moon and the stars again. They are in the sky and they are in the water. Even the water dances. It knows of feast<sup>1</sup> night in Inzwinyani.

Now look at the hills, brother. They span Inzwinyani like a mantle. And listen, listen, brother. The spirits of our ancestors are abroad this night. Hear them moan, hear them whisper. They would be with us, brother. They would join in the boasting and drinking and singing. Oh, how they would be with us, <sup>my</sup> brother!

The spirits of our ancestors are on those hills. They look down on us. And they speak. Listen, brother, listen.

They tell of the past. Not the past of yesterday, but the past long gone, the past beyond the memory of the oldest among the old, the past beyond the memory even of these ancient hills.

Listen, brother! This is a night for memory. The spirits know.

Have you heard of Benin? Have you heard of Ahmed Baba? Have you heard of our ancient empires and civilisations<sup>2</sup>, brother? The spirits talk of them this night.

Before we came down south our empires were great and great was their glory. In the city of Benin we made forms of beauty, in the city of Ahmed Baba we made wisdom. And then, when those empires were smashed by desert arabs and we moved down to this southland, we built Monomotapa and we built Zimbabwe. Did you know that, brother?

But how could you? Somewhere in the ages, we lost our wisdom. Only the spirits remember and they whisper over Inzwinyani.

Take the footpath then, come down with me to Inzwinyani along its twisting way, and as we go, brood over the past of which the spirits whisper.

It is the feast<sup>1</sup> night in Inzwinyani.....



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[ They were near the city now.

Ahead of her, the warrior Nanda had sent, led the boy by the hand. The baby was strapped to her back. Balanced delicately on her head, she carried an earthen pitcher of beer. This was for Dabula. She had brewed it especially for him. He would love that. Men were like children in that way: always wanting something that nobody else had. This was ordinary beer like all other beer. But because she had brewed it and only he would drink it, it became special beer. All foolishness, of course. But such loving foolishness!

They were in the city now. The crowd grew thick, ~~so thick that it was hard for a person to move.~~ The warrior made her take the boy's hand. Now he was free. He went ahead of ~~her~~, clearing a way through the people. ~~And because of his military head-dress of ostrich feathers and his shield and spear, the people made a passage for them and they moved through.~~ She heard the admiring comments of men. For the sake of Dabula she was glad. She wanted to be beautiful for him. Would she have time to oil her face and arms before she saw him? Perhaps he would be at Nanda's with the Father and she would not. She hoped he was not there. Only for a little while; only till she had made herself beautiful. Not for long, of course. This blanket of her's was stained with the dust of the road. Never mind. She had some fine blankets and beads at Nanda's. She would be beautiful for him to night.

They passed through the gate of the wall round the royal huts. The boy broke from her and ran to Nanda's hut. Her excitement mounted.



Just enough time to make herself beautiful and then she would see him. She wanted to see the look of desire in his eyes again. She wanted to feel the softness of his eyes as he looked at her.

Nanda met her at the door. The warrior saluted and went off. From inside, where the women cooked, she heard the boy's voice pleading for food and the laughter of the cooks. A small corner of her mind said: He's always hungry.

"Come in child," Nanda said, smiling happily.

"Where is he, mother?"

"Who?"

"You know."

Nanda laughed.

"I don't know, child. He is off somewhere. Gubuza sleeps."

"Good!"

Nanda was surprised.

"I thought you hurried here to see him."

Ntombi pushed past her.

"Are my blankets and beads in the same place?"

"I see..... Yes, child."

Ntombi hurried into a little hut that was the clothes place of the Gubuza family. She found a ~~little~~ bundle and carried it to a hut with more light. There were ~~beads~~ and three blankets and a pair of buffalo-hide sandals. The blankets were the usual ochre-coloured, but each had intricate ~~and beautiful~~ patterns woven into it: one in red, one in blue, and one in white. She undid the blanket she wore and let it fall to the floor. All she had ~~now~~ <sup>now</sup> on was a soft skirt of animal



skin that reached from her waist to above her knees. The skirt was slit on either side to make walking and bending easy. The rest of her body was ~~bare~~. In turn, she tried on each blanket. Nanda came to the doorway of the hut.

"I like the white one."

"Then I'll wear it!" Ntombi spun round, took a dancing step to the door, and burst out laughing gaily.

"You are happy, my child."

"I will soon see my man, mother!"

"That is a good reason."

"I want oil, mother! I want to be beautiful for him!"

"I will get it for you."

While she waited, she tied the blanket at the shoulder and put on the sandals. Nanda returned with the oil and helped her oil her face, arms, and legs. Nanda also had a piece of soft red stone. After a few rubs, a rich, dark red bloom showed on Ntombi's cheeks. Nanda stepped back and inspected her. She nodded.

"You are beautiful.... Only your hair...."

Ntombi pulled a face but submitted while Nanda arranged the tight little curls with a three-pronged wooden comb. Nanda stepped back again and looked at her critically. She nodded.

"Yes. Now all is right."

Ntombi smiled. There was a touch of shyness about her.

"I'm going to find him!" she cried and hurried out.

"Take care!" Nanda called.

"Yes," she called back.

"Youh



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"You have not heard," Nanda whispered, smiling. She stood at the door and watched till Ntombi passed through the gate of the wall round the royal huts.

nd gal 69 Ntombi pushed through the milling crowd. She moved in the direction of the huge fire that was in the heart of the celebration. Most likely Dabula would be there. ~~Most likely.~~ She felt keyed-up. She fought her way through the laughter and the singing and dancing till she was on the edge of the great circle of fire. She watched the faces eagerly. Don't ignore any. It might be his face. Her eyes picked out one face then another. It was a long time since they had seen each other; a long time since he had looked at her with soft eyes; a long time since his strong arms had held her body; a long time since she had lain by his side and listened to his sleeping. It was a long time that was over now. Soon now their eyes would meet.

On the far side of the fire one of Langa's young men looked up and saw Ntombi. He nudged a friend.

"Look!"

The friend looked and nudged another.

"Look!"

The whisper went round till it reached Langa's ears.

"Look!"

He looked.

"Who is she?" he asked.

"Just a maiden," Ntongolwane murmured.

Langa smiled and shook his head.

"Not just a maiden, my friend."

"Indeed not!" It was the first young man.



"I would like to know her," Langa said, "I would like to have her in my hut this night."

"My lord," Ntongolwane murmured, "Perhaps she is taken."

Dabula's wife, he thought. This is good.

"I want her," Langa said firmly.

Ntongolwane laughed.

"So be it."

He called a medicine-man, whispered into his ear and pointed to Ntombi. The man nodded and went round the fire to her. He touched her arm.

"Daughter."

She turned her head.

"You have found favour in the eyes of the prince."

"I am taken."

She turned her head away and scanned the sea of faces.

"Daughter...!"

"Please, I am looking for my man. There are many maidens for the prince."

The man went back to Ntongolwane.

"She is not interested, my lord. She's looking for her man."

Langa turned his head and stared at her. His eyes glittered. He spoke without turning his eyes from her.

"A beauty indeed. She's fit for the bed-chamber of a prince. And she is looking for her man. What foolishness! Ntongolwane!"

"My lord?"

"I want that maiden."

"But lord...!"



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"Or I want her dead."

The medicine~~man~~ raised his eyes to the girl, then nodded.

"It will be so, my lord."

Langa kept staring at Ntombi.

Ntongolwane rose. Other medicine~~men~~ got up too. People near them noticed and shrank away. Slowly, followed by ~~many~~ <sup>the</sup> others, Ntongolwane went round the fire. A ~~sudden~~ hush fell over the people near the fire. Those in front pressed back, those at the back pressed forward. The laughter and ease and freedom in the air gave way to silence, fear, tension. Only Ntombi was unaware of it. Her eyes sought Dabula. The men made a tight circle round her. She did not notice that she stood alone now, cut off from the other people by the circle of medicine~~men~~. Suddenly the tom-toms ~~talked~~ <sup>sounded</sup>. Then they were silent. Then they ~~talked~~ <sup>sounded</sup> again.

She became aware. She looked at the faces round her. She knew ~~the~~ then what this meant. She began to tremble. Fear hit her in paralyzing waves. Dabula!

Ntongolwane pushed his face close to hers. He whispered:

"Child, the couch of the prince is soft! He would share it with you!"

She tried to open her mouth, to speak, but no words came. Only terror, only terror. The dark terror of all time and all the power of the medicine~~men~~ of all the ages. A timeless terror.

"You will share it with him."

Only terror. She shook her head.

"Then I <sup>e</sup>fortell your death! Think again!"



She shook her head again. Her brain was numbing.

Ntongolwane ~~stopped~~ <sup>moved</sup> back and began to mutter. Around him and Ntombi the others muttered too. ~~But for the muttering, there was a heavy silence everywhere.~~

Ntongolwane carried a bag of rock-rabbit skin round his neck. From this he drew his medicine horn. Still muttering, he went on his knees in front of Ntombi. He dug a hole near ~~the~~ <sup>her</sup> feet, took some medicine from the horn, and pushed it into the hole. He repeated this to the left of her, then behind her, then to the right of her, till she was circled by holes filled with medicine. Now she was sealed in the timeless method for sealing witches. This was the way. She knew it.

He waved an arm. The other men moved back and stood chanting in a group, leaving him alone with Ntombi.

His eyes gleamed as he pushed his face close to hers.

"You cannot move!" he whispered fiercely. "You cannot move!"

He danced round her, swishing the air with his buffalo tail. He dipped the tail in oil from his horn, splashed the oil in her face, and shrieked out loud. Then he pushed his face close to her again, his nose touching hers.

"You cannot speak!" he said fiercely. "You cannot speak!"

Ntombi was rooted to the earth. She could not move. She knew she could not move. The weight of the mountains was in each leg. And she knew she could not speak. Her tongue was dead. She wanted to cry out for Dabula but her tongue was dead. In her heart there was death. She felt it creeping through her, touching her feet, her back, her stomach, her throat. She was a witch. He would not be



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able to harm her otherwise. ~~She had known it.~~ His face pushed toward her again.

"Can you feel death? He is close in now. You can feel him. Rising. Rising. Death!"

Ntongolwane waved both arms. The tom-toms began to beat. They beat softly, steadily, insistently. Drumbeats of death.

Again he pushed his face close to her.

"You cannot breathe," he whispered fiercely. "You cannot breathe." His eyes dug deep into her. ~~And she was lost.~~

And now breathing was hard for her. Her lungs were tight. The air went in ~~slowly~~, too slowly. She opened her mouth and tried to get in huge rushes of air, but it was hard. ~~The air would not come.~~ Sweat showed on her face. The more she tried to breathe, the harder it became.

"Soon!" Ntongolwane whispered. "Soon you will die!"

~~The shadow of death hung low over Ntombi and showed itself on every little part of her body.~~

~~And~~ Over the vast throng ~~of people~~ the whisper went and was carried further. It travelled from mouth to mouth, from ear to ear:

A witch had been caught. A witch had been smelled out. The all-powerful magic of Ntongolwane had done the deed. And such a beautiful witch! One such as you had never seen in all your days before. It was whispered that the witch had tried to cast a death spell over Prince Langa and only the bones of Ntongolwane had saved his life. Death, then, to the beautiful witch!

The whisper said the witch was dying. Her breath was coming in little whistles only. And over her watched the magic and the

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presence of Ntongolwane. Death to the witch!

A little old man broke through the throng of people who watched the dying witch with bright eyes. He too, carried the little bag of the medicine~~man~~. Ntongolwane swung round, and faced him.

"We have a witch, Mkomozzi, where were you when we caught her?"

Mkomozzi recognised Ntombi. He raised his voice.

"This is no witch! This <sup>is</sup> Ntombi, wife of Dabula!"

"She is a witch!" Ntongolwane cried. "Look at her. Why is she dying if she is not a witch? You know the bones cannot harm those who are innocent. Look at her!"

The whisper spread that a medicine battle was on between Ntongolwane and Mkomozzi. The whisper said the witch was the wife of Dabula, Captain of the king's armies. And now everybody understood the reason for his breaking the tribal laws by having only one wife. She had bewitched him all the better to work her evil on him and the people. Now everything was clear.

Mkomozzi was old, the whisper said, he was losing his powers. See, he did not recognise her as a witch. That was the proof! And she was dying!

"Your bones lie!" Mkomozzi shouted.

Ntongolwane looked closely at Ntombi then turned to Mkomozzi:

"Prove it!"

"I will!"

People pressed closer yet held back. They were eager to see, yet afraid lest the spell on the witch should touch them.

Mkomozzi went close to Ntombi. Ntongolwane danced round them, swishing his buffalo~~tail~~.

Mkomozzi called the girl in a quiet, compelling voice.



"Ntombi! Ntombi! Look at me, Ntombi! Listen to me!"

But she neither saw nor heard him. Her eyes were glazed. Her mouth was open, fighting for breath.

"Call her!" Ntongolwane jeered.

"Ntombi! Listen, child, listen!" His voice sank to an intent whisper. "There is no spell on you. The spell is in your mind only. It is because you believe it that it is so. Do not believe it. It is not real. It is in your mind only. Listen. It is in your mind only. In your mind only."

~~She did not hear. Death was in her heart.~~

"Save her!" Ntongolwane jeered.

Mkomozi stepped to the edge of the circle of people. They moved away hurriedly. He called a soldier.

"Get Dabula! Bring him here or you die before this night is out."

The soldier hurried away. Mkomozi turned and went back.

"Ntombi! Listen! I will break the spell now."

He moved round her. And now, he too, dug holes in the ground and buried medicine. He too, dipped his buffalo tail in oil and swished it over her head. And while he did these things he spoke to her. In his voice was the power of magic.

"Remember you home, my child. Remember your man. Remember you have two children. Who will mother them if you die? Who will look after them and feed them? Remember them, and remember your husband. His name is Dabula. You love Dabula. You love the children of Dabula. Dabula and the children of Dabula. Dabula. Dabula. Dabula. He is your husband. Dabula. Dabula. Dabula."

The crowd gasped. The glaze had gone from the woman's eyes. Now they were wild and desperate and frightened. The woman opened her mouth wide and looked at Mkomozi, but no words came.

"Dabula," the old man said. "Call his name."



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The open mouth tried but the spell was still on it. The old man held out his arms.

"Come child!"

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The woman swayed but remained rooted to the spot.

"You can do it! The spell is only in your mind. It is not real. You can do it. Come child!"

Again the woman swayed but again she remained rooted to the spot.

Dabula broke through the crowd. A fresh murmur went up. Mkomozzi took his arm, steadying him.

"Ntombi!"

"Careful, my son. Be calm..... Call her..... Stand back and call her. Call her by all the loving names that are common between you. Put all ~~the power of~~ your love into your voice..... Call her now."

Dabula ~~stood back and~~ looked at his wife. All that had been between them, the days of laughter and love, the nights of peace and passion, all these came fresh in his mind. ~~They gave him strength and he called in a strong voice of love.~~

"Ntombi! Girl! It is I. It is I, Dabula!"

She heard his voice and shivered.

"Call her, my son."

"Star of the morning! It is I your man who calls."

The woman turned to him and her eyes were pleading.

"Tell her to speak, my son."

"Oh, mother of my children! Speak to me. Let me hear the sweetness of your voice."

"Dabula....." It was the faintest of whispers.

The crowd heard it and gasped. The whisper passed from lip to lip, from ear to ear: Great was the magic of Mkomozzi. It had vanquished that of Ntongolwane. The woman had spoken and still lived. It was as Mkomozzi had said. She was no real witch. ~~Had she not spoken and still~~



~~lived?~~

"Dabula, open your arms and call her to you....No. Do not move forward. Stand there and call her."

Dabula opened his arms. He said:

"Ntombi....."

She broke loose, ran, and fell into his arms. He folded his arms about her and held her tight. Her open mouth pressed against his bare chest. She whimpered hysterically.

"The spell is broken," Mkomози said. "It was an evil spell and the spell of good broke it. This child is no witch. Look, she has spoken and moved and she still lives! I have proved she is no witch."

"Listen people! As there are good soldiers and bad soldiers, so there are good doctors and bad doctors; as there are good men and evil men, so it is among doctors too. You have often heard me say a good doctor comforts and heals, a bad doctor bewitches and kills. It is so among all the races and nations. For the bad doctor gets drunk with power. He does not think of the comfort of the people but only how to have power over them. Remember these words.... Come, Dabula, take your wife. I will give her a medicine to take this evil out of her brain."

He walked out of the circle. Dabula lifted the shivering Ntombi in his arms and followed Mkomози.

As they went, Langa's cold eyes studied Dabula. He turned to one of his young men.

"I want to cross sticks with that Dabula. This is a night for display. I will display with him. Let it be known."



Ntongolwane had been cheated of one victim. ~~The power of his magic had suffered.~~ In the eyes of the people he had sustained a powerful defeat. It was important that his power should again be asserted. He pounced on another victim. She was young and beautiful. Not out of her teens.

With his men, he worked his spell on the girl till she fell ~~down~~ in a dead faint. Then, to kill the spirit of evil that might still lurk in her dead body, Ntongolwane plunged a knife into her heart.

His power had been proved. The real witch had been caught. ~~Had she not died under the power of his spell? Had they not all seen her fall down and lie dead before he had plunged his knife into her?~~

While the body of the girl was taken away, the king and his generals appeared.

"What now?" Mzilikazi asked.

"A witch, my lord," someone said.

Mkomozi touched Gubuza's arm and drew him to one side. He told him of Ntombi.

"And now?"

"She is well."

"And Dabula?"

"He is with her. She will soon fall asleep and he will come to ~~you~~ as you told him. He asked me to tell you. What is it, my friend?"

"Nothing yet. We want it to remain so. Just a little soldiering, Mkomozi."

"I have no stomach for these things, Gubuza, but to-night I think it wise to remain with you. There will be a witch-hunt and sometimes another doctor is better than many soldiers. Only, they must have



their blood, Gubuza. Let it be while it does not touch those who can serve our people."

Dabula joined them. On each side of him were two young warriors.

"Ntombi?" Gubuza asked.

"She sleeps."

Mkomozi said:

"When she wakes it will be like a bad dream. Do not be afraid, my son."

A young man from the crowd touched Dabula's arm. ~~Dabula turned.~~

"I have a word for your ears, my Captain."

"Speak!"

"It is whispered that Langa wants to cross sticks with you. Those who saw his face when you carried Ntombi away think it will not be wise to treat it as another show of arms. There are some who say it might be a deadly battle. They say Langa's desire for another man's wife was the cause of the pain to the beautiful Ntombi..... Also, my Captain, it is said the generals will be behind Ntongolwane's cry for blood to night. That is all."

Dabula said:

"The king has good ears. Let them listen more."

The young man disappeared into the crowd.

"As I feared," Mkomozi said.

"Your men are among us?" Gubuza asked.

"Yes, my lord," Dabula said.

"Then watch."

Gubuza and Mkomozi moved close to the king. Dabula went to where a group of men sat.

Everywhere was feasting and drinking and laughing. And in many



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places and hearts was fear also.

Ntongolwane and his men, with many high leaps and loud cries, danced into the centre of the clearing in front of Mzilikazi and his generals. Their faces were painted yellow. They had horns on their heads. Their buffalo-tails swung between their legs. Ntongolwane led them in a dance of ritual. The drum-beats pervaded the air.

Suddenly, dancers and tom-toms stopped. ~~Sound and motion had been cut off.~~ There was a moment of motionless silence. Then Ntongolwane crawled on his belly till he was near the king's feet. He spoke in a trance-like voice:

"The lion is eaten by the ant. The jackal is destroyed by the worm. Day is consumed by a shadow. Such are the ways of witches! Such are the ways of treachery!"

"There is evil abroad this night. It is among the innocents, even among the babes who suckle at the bosoms of their mothers. The breath of evil is in the air. Only with blood can that evil be washed away. Only with the blood of the witches and of those who dream treachery.

"Oh Mzilikazi! Oh lord of the Stars, Ruler of the Skies. Your doctors are sick. They are sick with the stench of treachery and witchcraft. They are sick with fear for your safety and the safety of your children. Show them a sign that they might clear the land of the curse that is spun upon ~~them~~<sup>it</sup>. Show them a sign!"

Ntongolwane twisted his neck and turned his face so that one side rubbed in the earth. All eyes turned on Mzilikazi.

The eyes of Mzilikazi ~~met~~ met those of Mkomosi, then he nodded ~~his head~~ so that all men saw.

In a flash Ntongolwane was on his feet, and his fellows with him.



The tom-toms beat and there was ~~frenzy~~ <sup>frenzy</sup> in the air. The madness of their dancing swayed everybody. They whirled round and leaped high. And while they ~~leaped~~ they cried. And while they cried they moved their bodies in midair. And always the tom-toms were there. The frenzy, the fever, the madness, shot through the people. The wild rhythm of the witch-hunt dance caught and held them.

On! On to a frantic fever of whirling, leaping, swaying, crying. On! On to the wildness of primeval passions.

Suddenly the drums stopped. There was a hush ~~on the air~~. Five of the medicine-men lost themselves in the crowd. ~~"The silence hung"~~ They returned to the centre of the circle. Each dragged a victim. Three women, one old and two young, and two men.

Ntongolwane rattled his bones and threw them on the ground.

"Death!" he roared.

Again all the eyes turned to the king. And again Mzilikazi nodded. Tabata looked closely at Gubuza's face. ~~There was nothing to see on it.~~

The drums struck up again. The medicine-men danced again. But this time they singled out victims and danced around them, carried by the frenzy of the drums, to the climax and the sudden silence that followed it. Then the victims were dragged into the centre to be herded with the other witches and plotters of treachery.

Soon twenty witches and plotters had been smelled out. Soon thirty. Soon forty.

The drums struck up their death tattoo again. Ntongolwane danced near Gubuza. All necks were turned. All eyes stared. Tabata's eyes glittered. This was the moment. Tabata held his breath, waiting for Ntongolwane to look at him. He would nod ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> Ntongolwane would



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pounce. The people were eager for blood. It could not fail. ~~Suddenly,~~  
He felt men pressing against him, one on each side, he felt sharp  
points that could be knives. He turned his head to the right and  
recognised<sup>z</sup> the young man. The commander of Dabula's regiment. He  
looked at the face on his left. It was the ~~face~~<sup>face</sup> of a stranger. The ~~hat~~  
hate in the stranger's eyes shook him. He looked to the right. Dambuza  
was there. Perhaps he could make a sign. ~~Dambuza was looking at him.~~  
But, as with him, two young men pressed close against Dambuza. He  
looked quickly at the others. It was the same with them. They were  
powerless. He turned his head and met Ntongolwane's eyes. He shook  
his head slightly. The points at his side eased up.

Gubuza looked coldly at Ntongolwane. The drums stopped. People  
held their breaths. Ntongolwane hesitated, veered away from Gubuza,  
stopped in front of Dabula and danced round him twice. Many men  
with spears and shields pushed forward among the crowd. Tabata opened  
his mouth and kept it open. Again the silence hung over the crowd.  
Ntongolwane pounced suddenly. He grabbed a young man behind Dabula  
and dragged him into the centre.

The moment had passed.

Mzilikazi raised his hand. The witch-hunt was over. The call  
for blood had been satisfied.

The drums struck up. They battled on. Then they stopped.

Ntongolwane grabbed the first victim. The cry choked in the girls  
throat as the knife touched her heart. One or two among those who  
looked on recognised<sup>z</sup> her as the one who had started the Chant for  
Langa.

After the first victim, the medicine-men fell upon the witches



and plotters of treachery. And before~~x~~ a man could count up to ~~a hundred~~, ~~and~~ not a single one remained alive. When the forty-one bodies were removed it was seen that the earth was red.

With ~~the~~<sup>a</sup> last dance, a last flourish of the drums, the medicine-men retired.

"What now?" Mzilikazi cried.

Tabata stepped in front of the king.

"My lord! It is the wish of many to see a sight of beauty. It is the wish of many to see a feat to surpass all other feats. It is that the sticks of Langa, Prince of the Matabele, and the sticks of Dabula, Captain of all the king's armies, should meet! These two young men are known for their prowess and their strenght and the bigness of their hearts. Let their sticks meet. It would be a fit treat to end this great night!"

The king nodded.

The two young men entered the circle. Each was given ~~x~~<sup>two</sup> stout, long sticks made of young willow trees.

Gubuzu went over to Langa.

"Remember my teaching, Langa. Parry well. Watch your moment. Do not waste your strength. Remember the rules of honour. This is no battle but a display. Breathe evenly and watch your enemy."

Then he went over to Dabula.

"Watch him, boy. Watch his right hand. You know what to do. I have trained you with greater care than I trained anyone else. Do not forget my training. He will not observe the rules of honour. Do not turn your back to him. But be careful. If he harms or kills you, they will say it is an accident. If you do ~~so~~, they will call for your blood. Should he hurt you, strike at all places I told you of. And strike hard, boy!"



They met in the centre of the circle. ~~Both men had a stick in each hand. One for attack, one for defence.~~ On the balls of their feet they circled each other, watching, weighing, waiting for an opening. In a lightning move Langa struck for Dabula's head. The crowd roared. Dabula caught the blow with his left stick. It slid off his shoulder. Suddenly, unexpectedly, Langa struck with the left, the stick for defence. Dabula caught it partially but it stung his right shoulder just below the neck. He stepped back and the right passed near his face.

Dabula thought: Father was right. "This one is out for my death." He parried a right to his legs, another to his waist. He moved back. Blows rained on him from every side, but fast as they came, he picked them off, moving back all the time. Langa kept coming in, kept raining blows on him.

Dabula thought: I must stop him or he will crack my skull.

The earth became slippery underfoot. He was on the blood-soaked patch where the witches and plotters of treachery had been put to death. He caught another blow from Langa on his left stick. The force of it, on the slippery ground, knocked him down. He sat on the blood-soaked earth and saw Langa's stick swishing down to his head. He moved his head but not fast or far enough. It caught him high on the left temple. As he fought back dizziness he felt blood on his face. Another blow came. He moved his face far enough this time and the stick went by. He jumped up and moved back.

Everybody was keyed up and tense. This had turned into a battle. The king was on his feet. So were the generals. Only Gubuza remained seated.

Langa followed Dabula.

"Stand and fight," he taunted.



Dabula kept moving back.

"Where is your courage, my Captain," Langa jeered.

Dabula stopped. A shower of blows rained on his sticks. He moved back again. Langa expected him to keep moving and hurried forward. Dabula stopped suddenly. He struck at Langa's left arm, just below the shoulder. The blow landed with full force. The stick fell from Langa's hand. ~~His arm was paralysed.~~ Quickly Dabula jumped round and struck Langa from the back, at the same place on the right arm. Both arms were paralysed.

Dabula stepped back, threw his sticks on the ground, turned, bowed to the king and left the circle. There was an uneasy silence.

"Well done!" Gubuza murmured.

"I should have killed him!" Dabula said.

Mkomozi applied ointment to the wound on his temple.

Tabata hurried to Langa and spoke to him. Langa ~~stepped~~ <sup>went</sup> in front of the king.

"My lord!"

"Speak Langa."

"I only wish to bow my head before the Captain of your armies. In the excitement of the chase I struck at him while he was down. There was no way of holding back the force of my stick. It was an accident."

Langa waited, his cold eyes fixed on a point above the king's head. Mzilikazi ~~nodded~~ <sup>nodded</sup>.

"It seemed so to me too. I am sure Dabula found it so too. I am sure there is no other thought in his brain..... No more of it. We have seen a good fight. No skulls were broken and the skill of our young men is considerable."



He got up and addressed the people:

"Dance and be gay, my children. Drink and be happy. Sing and let your voices ring out. This is feast-night in Imzwinyani!"

They greeted his words thunderously:

"Bayete! Bayete! Bayete!"

The official part of the night of feasting was over. ~~Now, the people would make their own entertainment and the tension would not be in the air. There would be an inch more freedom in the look they turned on their neighbours.~~

At the door of the royal huts Mzilikazi turned to his generals:

"I am tired, my lords. For me the night is ended."

One by one the generals took leave of him. When only Gubuza and Mkomosi were left he said:

"Come drink with me. I had no stomach for these ~~for these~~ others."

They went into the council chamber and beer was put before them. Mzilikazi shivered and drew the red cloak close about him.

"To walk with treachery all day. That is painful. It puts a weight on a man's heart, my friends."

"Forty-one is the number of the lambs that were slaughtered." Gubuza's voice was bitter and heavy. "Forty-one. And all innocent. Why is it so with our people?"

"We are cursed by a bloodlust," Mzilikazi said.

"I am afraid of the darkness of our people," Gubuza said. "Sometimes I say I am mad to have this softness in my heart. But as age creeps on me, the softness for them is stronger. Assuredly I am mad for they do not deserve it. Their hearts danced over the death of the



forty-one innocents."

Mkomozi wiped the beer from his mouth and shook his head.

"It is as you say, Gubuza. But don't curse the softness of your heart. It is not madness. It is the greatest wisdom a man can have."

"Oh, but their bloodlust!" Mzilikazi exclaimed.

"And the darkness of their minds," Gubuza said heavily.

Mkomozi laughed.

"I see your hearts are heavy, my brothers."

"Forty-one innocents," said Gubuza.

"And treachery," said Mzilikazi.

"You mourn forty-one innocents, Gubuza: and you mourn treachery, Mzilikazi. Then listen and I will make it plain to you!

"You mourn for forty-one, yet a city and its people were destroyed. Kunene is dust, and those of her children who are not dead are scattered like dry leaves in a strong wind. You don't mourn for them but you mourn for forty-one. Why do you only mourn for forty-one, my friends? I will tell you. It is because the darkness that you cry of in these others, is in you too. Another matter. Who made the army? Who created the lust for blood? You did, ~~you~~ Gubuza. You and Mzilikazi. When you built this nation and forged this empire, you created a lust for blood. You trained strong men ~~and~~ sent them out to battle.

"And you, Mzilikazi! You mourn of treachery and plotting. How is a king made? First, he must be strong. Second, he must be cunning. With his strength he must make others admire him. With his cunning he must divide all the most powerful. Some he draws to him, for it is in his interest. Others he pushes from him, for that too, is in his interest. And so he becomes the most powerful, the king. The treacher



and plotting you mourn of, is of your own creation! You made your generals.

"But I don't speak to revile you, my brothers. I speak to make matters plain. And <sup>do</sup> not ~~to~~ revile yourselves because of my words. These matters are in the scheme of things.

"It is not only our people who ~~are~~ in darkness, who are bewitched by false medicine ~~men~~ and false prophets, it is not only our people who are made drunk by words and blood, it is not only our people who are stirred to a frenzy of madness by the ton-tons.

"It is so everywhere, among all the nations. The darkness is everywhere. The lust for blood is everywhere. The false medicine ~~men~~, the false prophets, are everywhere. And they wax powerful and call for blood and are followed by the people. It does not matter if they use ~~the~~ ton-tons or other methods to fill the people with a frenzy of madness. The darkness is everywhere. So mourn not, Gubuza, Mzilikazi, mourn not for the Matabele. If you must mourn, mourn for our world that is in darkness, where the false doctors hold power over the simple ~~ness~~ of people." He stopped abruptly.

Gubuza said:

"You have chastised us, my brother. Your eyes see further than these poor eyes of ours. The wisdom of our ancestors is in you. Tell me, why is it so?"

Mkomozi smiled and there was a terrible sadness in ~~one~~ <sup>his</sup> smile.

"To know that..... Oh, to know that!" He shook his head as though telling himself something. He lowered his face. When he looked up again, the sadness on his face was replaced by a dreamy longing. "Perhaps in the distant ages that are to be, there will be, among our descendants, those who can answer your question, my good Gubuza.



And when they can do that, perhaps the darkness will be lifted from the minds of people and there will be only good medicine-men and no bloodlust and no witch-hunts and no destruction of cities and scattering of people.... Perhaps, in the ages to come....." He lapsed into a brooding, thoughtful silence.

Gubuza and Mzilikazi looked at each other. Their eyes said: He is seeing visions. Mkomози got up and moved to the door.

"I will climb the hills," he said.

Dabula looked ~~down~~ at Ntonbi. The sweat on her face shone in the lamp-light. Her breathing was even. Only her head kept rolling from side to side. Every now and then a tremor shot through her body. Her mouth was slightly open. White teeth just showed. He touched her forehead. It was hot to the touch. He pulled his hand away and wiped it against his blanket. He remembered Mkomози had said:

"Do not wake her. Let her wake of her own accord."

He pulled up a little stool. He sat close to her couch, watching her face. ~~He would wait till she woke.~~ The side of his head throbbed a little. That blow of Langa's had been powerful. Had all of it caught him it would have split his head open. ~~He had seen a man's head split wide open so that the gray mass inside showed. But the bleeding had stopped. The clabrous Mkomози had put on it had burned horribly, but it had stopped the bleeding.~~

Mkomози had told him what to tell her when she woke up. He must remember it. It was some strange matter about the mind. He remembered



*all right*  
the words, ~~all right~~. It was the meaning that was strange. But Mkomози knew. Mkomози was wise. ~~His wisdom was even greater than that of the Father, and Father's wisdom was truly great. So, that Mkomози must be the greatest in all the world. He must remember the words and tell her. Mkomози had said it was important.~~

How his heart had stood still within him when he had seen her standing there with the spell on her! A great weakness had assailed his <sup>legs and head.</sup> Only the arm of Mkomози had saved him. Only that. How terrible that moment had been!

He looked down on her in a new rush of tenderness. She was beautiful. More beautiful than any woman he had ever seen in all his life. How he loved the high forehead where the tight curls began. And the little ears. So little!

She opened her eyes. For a while, she lay staring up at the roof of the hut, then she turned her head and looked at him.

"Dabula."

"Ntombi! Ntombi!"

"Oh, Dabula!"

She raised herself on one elbow. He leaned forward and folded her in his arms. Her soft fingers touched his ribs and the strong muscles on his back.

He remembered the words old Mkomози had told him to say.

"It is over now. It is over now."

"Oh, Dabula!"

"There is no witchcraft except in the mind," Ntongolwane tried to make you believe that you were dying. It was because you accepted the wish of his mind that you could not move or speak. All the time you



could move. But your mind told you, you could not and you accepted it. Really it was not true. It was a lie, but your mind accepted the lie and you believed it. ~~Your mind lied to you and you believed.~~ That was all.....~~Now it is over.....Now it is over.~~ As he said then, the words hit him, he wanted to think about them.

"Oh, Dabula!"

Not now, another time. Now he had to comfort her. He would think about them later. He held her very close.

"I love you, Ntombi."

She pushed away from his chest and looked at his face. He saw the shadow of the evil thing that had nearly happened. The memory of it would not go easily.

"The children?" she asked.

"They sleep....." he smiled for her benefit. "The boy is alone in a hut because he says he is a man now. The little one is with Mother Nanda. They are safe. Don't worry."

"Oh, Dabula!"

"It is finished!"

"I'm afraid."

"It is really finished, Ntombi. There is nothing to fear."

"I cannot help it."

"Don't think of it."

"I felt death."

"Don't think of it. Put it from your mind."

She shivered and clung to him.

"Let us go home, Dabula. Let us go home!"

"Yes my dear, I will go first."



"Yes, my dear, we'll go first thing in the morning."

"No! ~~now~~ <sup>Now!</sup>"

"But you are weak. You must rest. Mkomози said so."

"Please,...." ~~It was a desperate plea.~~

Dabula looked into her eyes and could not refuse the ~~terrible~~ appeal he saw ~~there~~ <sup>there</sup>.

"We'll go," he said. "Wait here while I go to prepare."

"Come back soon."

"Yes."

He went into another hut and found Gubuza and Nanda.

"Ntombi wants to go home. Nothing I say will stop her. I want to ask Mkomози."

"He's in the hills," Gubuza said.

"What shall I do?"

"Take her home," Nanda said.

"But she is weak, mother."

"Take her home, Dabula. There is no better medicine. I know."

Ntombi appeared at the doorway. She was ready for travel.

"Where are the children?" she asked.

"I will get them," Nanda said and went out.

Ntombi kept her eyes on Dabula's face while they waited. Gubuza went out and detailed to <sup>3</sup>members of his guard to escort them. Nanda came <sup>back</sup> with the children.

"I will get a maid to carry the baby for you," Nanda said.

"No!" There was a fear in Ntombi's voice.

~~He's right~~  
"All right, my child," Nanda said.

She helped Ntombi strap the child to her back. The boy clung



sleepily to Dabula's hand. Gubuza came back.

"Let us go," Ntombi said to Dabula. Her eyes ~~passed~~ passed over Nanda and Gubuza. "Stay well, mother.....father."

"Stay well," Dabula said.

"Go well, children."

"Go well, children."

They went out. Dabula held the boy by one hand and Ntombi by the other. The <sup>two</sup> warriors flanked them, one slightly in front, one slightly behind. They were on the way home.....

> # <

Up in the western hills old Mkomazi communicated with the spirits of the past and the new spirits of the new men from across the sea. <sup>Below</sup> in the valley, the fires were gradually dying, the crowds gradually thinning.

Ho there, brother!

Ho yourself, man!

Tell me, who are these who come out of that valley? The moon is low but the day has not yet turned its face on the world. Yet there are so many people walking. I know it is not an army for armies move not thus. Then who are they? Where are they from? Where do they go? Tell me, brother, for I would like to know. It is strange to see so many people at such a time. Why is it? Tell me.

You must be a stranger to these parts.

I am, brother.

You must come from very far, perhaps from across the sea.

I do, my brother.

Then listen..... It was feast night in Inzwinyani.

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PART TWO, ) (B)

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The boy called:

"I have found one! I have found one!"

He lay flat on his stomach beside a cluster of large rocks.

"A big one! A black one! A fat one!"

He poked his stick between the stones.

"Coooooh! It's moving! Come father!"

Lower down the slope of the mountain, Dabula left the rocks he had been poking and hurried up.

The boy jumped away and laughed shrilly.

"It is angry!"

Dabula began to run.

"Take care, boy!"

The boy poked again and jumped away.

"It is out!"

~~He jumped back again, and jumped away.~~

~~"It is out!"~~

He jumped back again, quickly. As he moved he brought his stick down heavily.

Dabula reached his side.

"Careful, boy."

Father and son looked down at the big, black, fat snake.

The boy pleaded:

"Is it mine?"

"It is big."

"I'm not afraid. Is it mine? Please?"



~~Alright~~ <sup>all right</sup>. Take care. Remember what I told you."

The snake reared its head. It was ugly and shiny. It ~~the~~ stared at the boy out of old dead eyes.

"It will strike!" Dabula warned and moved forward.

The boy cried:

"No!"

At the same time the snake struck. Its forked tongue shot out. But the boy had moved. His stick came down smartly on the snake's head.

Without moving his eyes from the snake, the boy said:

"Do not help me. Please."

<sup>all right</sup> "Alright. But watch out."

The snake slid forward. The boy stood his ground and hit it smartly on the head again. The snake reared up and swayed its head from side to side. As it ~~slashed~~ <sup>lashed</sup> out, the boy moved back and hit it on the head again. Angrily, the snake ~~lashed~~ <sup>lashed</sup> out again. The boy hit it again.

"Beautiful!" Dabula whispered.

The snake turned its head to him. Blood showed on its flat head. Suddenly, as lightning, it swung and struck at the boy. But the boy had been waiting for it. He moved back then stepped forward and hit hard. The blow was powerful. The snake writhed in agony.

"Beautiful!" Dabula murmured again.

The snake, hurt beyond bearing and baffled by this human it ~~could not reach~~, slithered away to the rocks. The boy ran in a circle and stopped between it and the rocks. The snake reared up. Its fangs kept shooting out. Carefully, deliberately, the boy stepped in and hit



it with all his strength. The force of his blow sent the snake rolling Quick as lightning the boy was on it. Blows rained down till its head was only a mess.

*Just*  
"Fine! Fine!" Dabula said. "Not once did you make a mistake. It was good. You struck just when you should, moved just when you should. It was good to watch you, boy. Not as with the other one when you struck in haste and got frightened. This was a pleasure to watch. There is skill in your hands, and your eyes are like the eyes of an eagle. It was fine."

Dabula's enthusiasm overwhelmed the boy. He said:

"It was nothing." In his voice was the slightest note of boastfulness.

The boy straightened the snake. Dabula measured it for length

"An old giant, this," he said. "And cunning. Did you see....."

"Father....." the boy whispered. He motioned <sup>with</sup> his eyes.

Dabula looked.

Ntombi stood a little distance from them. Dabula wondered: How long has she stood there? How much has she heard and seen? He raised his voice:

"I told you not to hunt snakes, boy! One day you will come to harm. Why do you not listen....."

"Oh, Dabula," Ntombi said.

The boy laughed with his eyes but tried to keep a straight face.

"Let me <sup>be</sup> while I speak with my son," Dabula said in anger.

"I have been here a long time," Ntombi said.

She walked toward them. Dabula pushed the boy in front of him and turned his eyes away from those of Ntombi. She came on, Dabula moved back.



"Stand still, man!"

He stopped but kept his eyes away from her. She looked at the size of the snake. The enormity of it took her breath away. She sat on a boulder and looked at her son. So small, only ten, and he had killed this horrible thing. She raised her eyes to his father.

"Dabula....."

"There was no harm in it."

"Dabula....."

"I was here to see no harm came to him."

"Dabula....."

"It is only that I was training him, Ntombi."

"Dabula....."

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to fight it?. Then it would bite him and he would die."

"Dabula....."

Start here "It was for the boy's good."

"Dabula....."

"A man must know these things."

"Dabula....."

"And he is a man, although a small one."

"Dabula....."

"Yes...?"

"Look at me."

His eyes swung round and met hers, tentatively. What he saw hurt him.

"Ntombi! I am sorry. I promise....."

"Do not promise for the breaking of it will be heavy on you."

"But....."



"No.....!" She shook her head. "Oh, you are such a child, my man. A woman cannot help being a woman, a man cannot help being a man. It is because you are a man that you do these things with our son. It is because I am a woman that I feel as I do. Let it be then. Let me be a woman. See my pain and bear it without making promises that you cannot keep.....It is only that the boy is young."

"Ntombi.....!"

"Hush. Let the matter be."

She got up and went back to the food she had left on the far boulder where she had first stood. She picked it up then called:

"Come!"

They followed her down the mountainside. Below, the cattle grazed on a slope that rose from the valley. She flung back her head and called:

"~~Will~~ <sup>will</sup> watch our cattle while you hunt snakes?"

They looked at each other in sheepish silence.

At the foot of the mountain, on a soft spot of grass, they sat and had their food. The way her man and her child looked at her, the guilt in them, forced laughter to Ntombi's lips. After her laughter the guilt left them and they ate their food in a spirit of gaiety.

It had been so with them, and, indeed, with all the land, since the night at Inzwinyani. They had, on the early morning after the feast night, tramped the road home. There they had taken up the threads of home, as did all other people in the land.

In the mornings Dabula and his son had driven out the cattle to graze on the hillsides. It was so with all the men in the land who were not training with their regiments.

Ntombi and the maiden who helped her, tilled the brown earth



and planted the ~~Spring~~ seeds.

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And the days had rolled by with an ease and comfort that was ~~placidly~~ pleasant. In the evenings they sat by the fire outside their huts and ate their food in the open under the stars.

Ntombi crushed her maize in the manner her mothers had done for generations. She put the maize in a wooden container made of the hollowed-out trunk of a young tree. With a clean, smooth, flat-edged piece of stout wood, she pounded it rhythmically till it was crushed, fine. Then she lifted it out and let it run through her fingers onto a straw blanket. The wind blew the chaff away and only the fine crushed ~~as~~ maize was left. This she did with mealies too. Sometimes she and her maiden polished the floor of her huts with clay and cow manure and made beautiful patterns on its shiny surface. And while she worked she sang for her heart was full of joy. Her man was about, she could watch him, could feel his presence about their home.

There had been the thatching of the roofs.

There had been the building of a new cattle-pen.

There had been the shearing of the sheep.

And always, when Dabula and the boy had been out on the hillside with the cattle, she had taken food to them when the sun was high. And they had eaten together.

Days had passed easily..... In time she had even forgotten to remember that evil night.....

Now, as they ate, she looked at her man and there was laughter in her heart.

He looked at her and remembered the amazing thing he had learned during these days at home. She was his wife. Look at her. She was



happy. She had been happy all these days. And why? Just because he was home. Just because she could lie beside him each night and because she could come out and eat with him on the hillside each day. At times, in these last days, he had hated her for it. He had watched her go about singing. He had heard the laughter between her and Nontando. He had marvelled that she did not know his unhappiness. Amazing, that. To live with a person and be a stranger to that person, to have thoughts and to think them without that person sensing them; to be unhappy and for the mother of your children not to know it because there is a smile on your face. Amazing.

He remembered the first night home and smiled.

"What is it?" she asked.

He looked into her eyes.

"Only a fancy," he said.

Of course, she didn't know. He could see that. Look at the smile on her face. ~~Of course she didn't know.~~ Funny! For all these years he had believed she would know all his moods and feelings. Funny. Look back now. You actually thought she did. And in the past it seemed that she did. How come? Yes, how come?.... Lets see.... Maybe it's because you wanted it so. And because you believed Gubuza. Yes. That's it. You believed Gubuza.

Now that first night back. Umindi had been in his mind all the time she was now. He had been afraid ~~to~~ looking at Ntombi. Afraid she would know what was in his mind. When they went to sleep he had pulled away from her. As far as he could. But she had only curled up and gone to sleep. He had lain awake all night. The vision of Umindi would not let him sleep. Yet she had not known it. She had gone to sleep. He had ~~not~~



woken her after a long time. He had said: "I want to tell you something." She had groaned and moved closer to him. That was all. Only her body had moved closer to him. He had slept with her then. It had been like sleeping with Umindi. Sometimes it had been Umindi and sometimes it had been her. Sleep had been easier after that. In the morning he had slept with her again. And again it had been like sleeping with both her and Umindi at the same time. But she had not known. Well, she had not known of the emptiness in his heart. How could she know he had slept with another woman. Oh, how he had wanted her to know! How he had wanted her to ask him that he might tell her! But she'd been so happy, and he'd been so alone. These days had taught him a great thing.... But what? Why had he not known it before? ~~Why did he know~~ *He felt alone these days, removed from people by his thoughts. That was it! Man is always alone. He had to carry the weight of his life in his own hands. So small, so alone. It frightened him. That sleeping with another woman should have taught him that. And frightened him, too. Whatever the thing was, it had taken the joy out of his life.*

Before he had known it he'd been happy. Now it was different. Now he was no longer happy. Now, when he slept with Ntombi, it was to forget, to go to sleep. Not for the joy of it. Now, strangely, he did not want to drink too much beer. He had never before felt that drinking too much beer was wrong. It had begun with that feastnight when he had to drink to go to sleep.... And that young man who hated Tabata.... What was he doing now? What did he look like? Would he put a knife in Tabata's back one day? Would he, Dabula, put a knife in Gubuza's back one day? He could even think of that and look her in the face. He had looked Umindi in the face when he had been afraid, and she had not seen it. Now, he could look Ntombi in the face.... And all these years he had turned his eyes away from men. He smiled without humour.

"You have many fancies," she said, and took his hand.

The boy finished his food and ran off to a cluster of boulders.



"No snakes!" she called after him.

He thought: Yes, no snakes. He could play with her and she did now know it. Like up there with the boy and the snake. No snakes. Irrelevantly, his mind veered off to these white people about whom Gubuza and Mkomози talked. They would have women too, of course. Think of all the talk there would be if he were to take one of their women as his wife. What would Ntombi say to having a white skinned sister..... Wait ~~a~~while..... What would she look like? What would Ntombi look like ~~if~~ she had ~~a~~white skin and straight hair? And would she have it on her face too? He tried to see it. The only picture of whiteness that rose to his mind reminded him of the medicine-men. At times they put white clay on their ~~faces~~. He could see Ntombi with white clay on her face and buffalo-tail hair on her head. It was funny. A broad grin cracked his face. He put some of the buffalo-tail hair on her <sup>face</sup>. It was a slight picture. But it sent him into gusts of laughter.

She smiled and waited till the laughter had passed.

"Tell me," she said.

"You with a white face....." He said, and laughed again.

"I don't understand?" she frowned.

He choked down his laughter.

"Mkomози and Gubuza talk of the people with white skins and straight hair that cover their faces as well as their head. I tried to see you like that."

"Why?"

"Why?..... What do you mean, why?"

"Why do you want to see me like that?"



"I don't know...../ I'm interested in these people. I want to know what they look like. Don't you?"

Instead of answering, she pulled him down into her lap.

"Go to sleep," she said. "You've been restless since you came home."

It shocked him. Was he wrong? Did she know about his thoughts? He looked up into her face. No. She didn't know. But how did she know he was restless? He closed his eyes. He decided: Tonight I will tell her about Umindi. I will tell her I slept with another woman. Where is Umindi now?

Her hand came down and was cool on his forehead. The way her fingers played across his forehead made him feel like a little child. He relaxed <sup>as</sup> ~~like~~ a child relaxes to its mother's lullaby. The earth felt tender and soft. And the hollow, where his head rested, between her two thighs, was warmly comfortable. Faintly, her body smell reached him through the blanket. Gently her fingers weaved a spell of dreams over his forehead. Slipping into sleep, he thought: How warm and kind she is. I love her. I will tell her because I love her. I will tell her of the things that are in my heart. Ntombi...../

#

When she woke him the sun was nearly down. The warm day had turned cool and his fingers and toes were cold. He sat up and saw the boy was fast asleep against her chest.

"It is late," she said. "We must go."

Her hand lingered on the back of his neck. Tenderness for her shot through him. He forgot his hard thoughts.

"Yes," he said gently.



She smiled and her face was lit up.

"Oh, Ntombi," he murmured.

He lifted the boy from her breast and laid him on the grass. He bent forward and gave her his hands and pulled her up. They leaned against each other. He put his hand under her chin and tilted her head till she looked into his eyes. So many things he wanted to say as he looked into her eyes. So many promises he wanted to make. So many faults he wanted to explain. Instead, he only stared into her eyes. His hand, under her chin, trembled slightly. She reached up and pressed it against her cheek and stilled its trembling.

A corner of his mind whispered: A man is so many things at the same time.

"Come, we must go," she said without making any move.

He knew she expected something. He slipped his hand under her blanket. As he pulled her close he marvelled at the softness of her flesh. Now she was close to him. So close, he could feel her heart beat. He crushed her body against his and held her tight. Something flowed out of him. Something that eased him so that he forgot his unhappiness. Her body relaxed completely. He pressed harder. He knew he was hurting her. Still he pressed. Without knowing it clearly, he wanted her to cry out. And the harder he pressed, the better her felt. He looked into her face. It was flushed and relaxed. Her eyes were closed. He pressed harder against his will. ~~There was a dull crack somewhere but nothing showed on her face.~~ He relaxed his pressure suddenly. He held her up. She opened her eyes and took a deep breath.

"We must go," she whispered and moved out of his arms.



~~He went on his knees and woke the boy. She gathered the remains of their food. By the time she was ready the boy was wide awake. Together they rounded up the animals and drove them home.~~

By the time they arrived the sun had long ~~since~~ gone and the evening star was bright in the sky. Nontando had prepared the evening meal. While they ate, Dabula thought of something that would please the ~~his~~ family. He looked at Ntombi. Yes, she would like that.

"If you like," he said slowly and casually, "we will go on a visit tomorrow. All of us. Would you like that?"

The boy gave a whoop of joy and upset his food.

"Where?" Nontando asked excitedly.

"Yes," Ntombi said, her dancing eyes on him.

"We will go to the southern outpost for some days," he said.

Ntombi and Nontando and the boy talked together in their excitement. The southern outpost was Nontando's village. Her father was the chief there.

"The journey is long," Dabula said, "We must start early so we'd better go to sleep now."

The boy flung himself at Dabula and would not leave him till Ntombi threatened that they wouldn't go. Then he went quietly to bed.

"I won't sleep at all," Nontanda said as ~~she~~<sup>he</sup> went to bed with the baby.

For a while Dabula and Ntombi sat by the fire in silence. Vaguely, Dabula knew why he had made this gesture. It was as much to himself as the family. ~~Here, in fact,~~ <sup>aliveness</sup> Before he had become aware of this ~~thing that he could not name~~, he had been happy. He wanted to recapture that happiness: to go back to where they were before this thing had happened. Then, life had been good ~~the~~ all time. He had not



been tortured by thoughts. Then, faces had not flashed across his brain before he went to sleep. And these visits had been high points. He hoped it would be so again. Perhaps this new-found coldness would leave him and there would not be times when he would look at Ntombi as if she were a stranger, as he had done lately. And the thoughts about Gubuza. They brought him only unhappiness. Perhaps they would go too. Not in thought but in feeling, he asked himself: How does one go back to innocence? How?

"Come," Ntombi said, getting up. "Tomorrow's journey is long."

"I will come in a short time," he said.

"You will sit here and forget."

She took ~~him by the~~ <sup>his</sup> hand and pulled him up and led him to their hut.

Now I must tell her, he thought.

She climbed over him and nestled up to him. He opened his arms. She nestled her head against his chest. He reached out and put out the ~~light~~ <sup>lamp</sup>.

Now I must tell her.

How should he do it? How does one begin these things? What are the first words?

She moved her hand ~~down~~ under the blanket. It brushed against his thigh. ~~That accidental brush made him aware of all her body.~~  
He rolled over and pulled her to him. He raised himself.....

Afterwards, <sup>at</sup> along time afterwards, he said:

"Are you asleep?" He hoped she was.

"No." Her voice was dreamy, it always was afterwards.

"I want to tell you something."

"What?"



He wondered what she would say.

"On the hunt....~~Nothing~~."

"Yes?"

"On the hunt....~~Nothing~~" He must tell her now. "I slept with a girl." It was out now. Nothing could take it back again. It was out. What would she say? He waited for her to say something. She remained silent. ~~That was unexpected.~~ Say something! ....~~And~~ And where is Umindi now?

"It was at a village. She was a virgin. I made her swear never to tell. She was one of the wives of the chief. We told him I did not sleep with her. Before I left her she pleaded. She said they would drive her out and every hand would be against her. But I made her swear. Now I cannot forget her. Her name was Umindi. She was so young.

He waited. Ntombi said nothing. ~~She was silent and still in the darkness. Everything, the hut and the couch and even the outside world which he could not see, all had a silent stillness.~~

"I'm sorry," he said.

Why wouldn't she speak? ~~He listened for her breathing. He could not hear it. Nor could he feel the slightest movement anywhere about her. Where had all the night noises gone to??~~

~~He lay and~~ The darkness pressed close around him. He was alone. Utterly alone. Was Ntombi dead? Alone with a dead woman beside him and a host of visions crowding in on him.

To love only one woman. ~~Gulu~~ Gubuza said.

They will turn against me....~~Umindi~~ Umindi cried.

Tabata took our land....~~the~~ the man of the shadows said.

She started the Chant to Langa....~~A~~ A witch.

Why don't you stand and fight....~~Langa~~ Langa jeered,



Call her, my son....//Mkomoxi said.

Whitefaced strangers with a weapon....// Gubuza said.

You should be a general....//Tabata said.

The witchcraft is in your own mind.....Mkomoxi said.

How does it feel with one wife.....Ndawe asked.

Is she dead? Alone. He fought against the shadows that only increased his aloneness.

"Ntombi." His voice was pleading now.

She remained silent. His body was taut with tension.

"Dabula."

The shadow at the door was real. He turned his head slowly.

"Dabula."

"Yes? What is it, Nontando?"

"There is a messenger from Gubuza."

"I am coming."

The shadow moved from the door. He felt for his blanket. He got up and flung it round his shoulders.

The captain of Gubuza's personal guard waited for him.

"What is it?" Dabula asked.

"My lord Gubuza sends for you, Captain."

"Why?"

"Queen Mnandi has gone."

"Gone?"

"Disappeared. The king is broken with grief."

"Wait here."

Dabula took a light from the fire and went into their hut. He lit the ~~oil~~ lamp. By its light he saw Ntombi lying as he had left her. ~~on her back~~. Her eyes were fixed ~~at~~ <sup>on</sup> the roof-thatching of the hut.



"Ntombi....."

She didn't turn her head. ~~She lay as though she had not heard him.~~

"I must go to Inzwinyani. Mnandi has disappeared. Gubuza wants me. I do not know when I will come back. Maybe soon, maybe not."

She turned her head and looked at him.

"I'm sorry....." he said, thinking of Umindi.

"Go well, Dabula," she said softly.

"If I can't come back soon, I will let you know. Watch over the children and yourself." He looked at her, waiting for some gesture that would make it possible for him to be less formal. At last he gave it up.

"I must go," He said. "Stay well."

When he reached the door, she said:

"Dabula."

He turned hopefully.

"Since it happened..... You have thought every day of this Umindi. His hope died. "Yes."

"Go well, Dabula."

He thought of something more to say.

"Greet the boy for me."

"I will."

"Tell him I'm sorry about the visit."

"Yes."

There was nothing more to say. Would she be here when he came back? Langa wanted her. Would she still be here?

"Stay well, Ntombi."

"Stay well,"

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"Go well, Dabula."

He hesitated, then turned and went out.

"Come," he said to the man, ~~who waited for him.~~

They stepped into the moonlit and star-kissed world and made  
for Inzwinyani.

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[ When they reached Inzwinyani the morning sun had risen and there was a faint mist in the valley. A cool wind crept over the southwestern hills and took the warmth out of the valley. Young boys drove their herds before them in search of green pastures. A long file of women walked down to the river from the city. On their heads they

balanced<sup>d</sup>, delicately, huge earthen <sup>jars</sup> ~~jars~~. This necessitated a sliding movement that would not shake and unbalance the jars. Some carried washing. This they would beat against the smooth wet stones till all the dirt had gone out of the garments. Here and there along the way sun-flowers were opening their broad, yellow faces. ~~If one stopped and looked at them for a few minutes, one would actually see them straightening their fibrous bodies, opening their faces, and turning them to the rising sun.~~ Everywhere the world was shaking itself out of slumber and coming to life, reaching up toward the sun.

At Gubuza's home Dabula found Manda and two maidens pounding corn.

"Greetings, mother," he said.

"I am glad you have come," she said. "It is terrible about Mnandi. I hope she is still alive. You must find her, Dabula."

"Where is the Father?"

"With Mzilikazi. The poor man is sick with the loss of her."

"I will go there."

He went to Mzilikazi's huts. ~~The guards stepped aside and let him through to the Council Chamber.~~ They were all there, the generals and Langa and old Mkomosi. His eyes slid over Langa's face and came to rest on Mzilikazi. The king sat hunched in a corner, ~~as though he had turned into an old man.~~ The change in him startled Dabula. His



body seemed too heavy ~~for him and it was a weight~~ for him to hold ~~it~~ up. ~~and~~ <sup>then</sup> the light had gone from his eyes and made ~~him~~ sightless. He did not look up when people came or went. Not a man, Dabula thought and marvelled <sup>at</sup> the daring of his thought. Not ~~any~~ man, only the shadow of a man. Near him sat Mkomosi, his darting eyes brighter than ever, flickering from one face to the other. Gubuza sat where the king normally sat and Tabata was in the place of Gubuza.

"My lords," Dabula said. He thought: It is as if Gubuza is the king and Tabata is Gubuza. But while his mind would allow Gubuza as king, it would not allow Tabata as Gubuza.

"I'm glad you've come," Gubuza said.

But he is not glad, Dabula thought, looking at him. He's hard and cold, watchful, like a lion before it tears up a lamb. And these others too. They are all vultures waiting for their prey.

"There may be work for you," Gubuza said.

~~His eyes met Gubuza's and he waited for the smile of greeting that was always there for him, no matter how terrible the situation. But there was no smile. Suddenly, the tension in the room reached him with all its force. His body stiffened. His mind became alert, sharply, defensively watchful. This may be a trap for him.~~

~~"Sit down," Gubuza went on. "And listen and take note of everything."~~

These men were all strangers to him. Yet he had known them all his life. Gubuza was the Father, yet he was a stranger to be feared. He hesitated then went and sat near Mzilikazi on the side that put the king between him and Mkomosi. Mzilikazi was the safest man in the room.

Mkomosi could not now watch his face as he could those of all the others in the chamber. He turned his eyes, moving his head only a



little, to steal a look at Langa and Tabata. But before he could do so Gubuza spoke.

"Bring the girl!"

His eyes swung to the doorway. ~~After a while~~ The captain of the guard led in a young woman. Her feet dragged unwillingly. Her head <sup>and</sup> shoulders drooped. Her fingers were intertwined and pressed against her stomach as though to keep it in place. Over her ~~whole being~~ was an air of concentrated fear. Dabula thought of Uindi and felt ~~a great~~ pity for the girl. He tried to see her face. Her head was sunk too low on her chest.

Gubuza said:

"You are the queen's maid?"

The girl whispered:

"Yes, my lord."

"When was the last time you saw the queen?"

"The night before last, my lord."

"Where?"

"In her hut, lord."

"You did not see her after that?"

"No, lord."

Dabula looked at Mzilikazi. The king seemed not to have heard. He was still the empty shadow of a man.

Gubuza said:

"Why did you tell no one?"

"I was afraid, lord."

"What of?"

"I was afraid, lord."

"I said what of. Of what person?"



The girl was silent, her head lower than ever, ~~fear over her~~.  
Dabula's eyes darted to Tabata's face. It was impassive.

Gubuza stared at the girl for a time then said:

"Child."

"My lord."

"Come near me."

She moved a little.

"Nearer."

She took a few more steps.

"Still nearer, child"

She dragged herself close to him.

"Good. Now look at me."

Slowly she raised her head.

"Into my eyes."

Her eyes touched his.

"No. Do not make your eyes hard and sightless. Look at me."

Terror showed in them. They slid down to his feet.

"No. Do not drop them."

She raised them again and tears showed.

"Child."

"My lord."

"You know me."

"Yes."

"Say my name."

"Gubuza, lord."

"You know my position?"

"Yes, lord."

"Say it."



He said he would kill my mother and my father and my brother and my sisters. He said ants would eat my body while I was yet alive. Oh please



lord, don't make me tell!" She sank to her knees.

Gubuza looked at Mkomози.

"Mkomози!"

"Yes?"

"Is there a greater medicine<sup>man</sup> than you in the land?"

"Not one in all the land."

"You are sure?"

"Am I not the great Comforter?"

"If this child tell<sup>3</sup>, will you break the spell that is cast on her and all the members of her family?"

"That I will. I will do it with this little horn of mine. The magic of all the wisest in Zululand is in it."

Gubuza turned back to the girl.

"You have heard, child?"

"Yes, lord."

"Then speak."

Her streaming eyes begged him.

"Soldier!"

"Lord?"

"See if the captain is ready with the fat."

"It was Ntongolwane, Lord!"

All strength left her body. ~~One moment she knelt sobbing in front of Gubuza, the next she lay stretched on the floor, too weak even to sob.~~  
*she slumped down and*

Dabula sighed and felt the tension leaving his body and mind. He was no longer a part of Gubuza's questions and the girl's answers. He was a person. ~~Gubuza had said watch everything. His eyes swung to Tabata's then to Langa's face. There was nothing to see. They had~~  
~~nothing to see. So it was Ntongolwane. He~~



felt ~~happy~~ <sup>glad</sup>. Beside him he felt the king stir. He turned his head. It was the first sign of life from the king since he had entered the chamber.

Slowly, as though coming from a long, long way away, Mzilikazi's eyes began to focus. His body trembled and came to life. His back straightened. His shoulders moved convulsively and squared. His hands began to tremble. Dabula edged away from him.

"Ntongolwane," Mzilikazi said.

~~"Ntongolwane," His voice was louder.~~

~~"Ntongolwane!" He screamed.~~

~~He got up and stood trembling. Every part of his body shook.~~

"Get him!" He cried. "Get him!"

Gubuza got up and took Mzilikazi's arm. Mzilikazi shook him off.

"Get him!"

Gubuza grabbed his arm again. Mzilikazi tried to push him away. ~~with his free hand, Gubuza grabbed that as well. For a time they~~ ~~strained against each other. The girl on the floor dragged herself a little distance from them, then slumped down again.~~

Gubuza said:

"Mzilikazi! Listen to me! This is Gubuza. Listen!"

Mzilikazi stopped fighting. Gubuza put his arm round the king, and led him back to the couch.

"Sit down, man," Gubuza said and pushed him down. "You are blind with anger. Let me find out what there ~~is~~ is to know. Let me speak and ask the questions."

Mzilikazi lowered his head. Gubuza went back to his place. The girl on the floor raised her body a little and whispered:



"Lord, you promised."

For a moment Gubuza stared blankly at her then he nodded.

"No harm will come to you or your people, child. Go."

The girl tried to get up. Dabula helped her and led her to the door. He called a warrior and said:

"Take her to her people."

As he turned ~~back~~ back to his place, ~~he saw~~ Ntongolwane entered followed by the captain of the guard. ~~He sat down and waited.~~ Ntongolwane came boldly in. Gubuza said:

"Ntongolwane....!"

~~But before anyone knew what was happening,~~ Mzilikazi jumped up and rushed at the medicine-man. He struck him down with a powerful blow that sent blood spurting from the side of his thin face. Then he kicked him twice in the face before Gubuza got hold of him and dragged him back to his place.

"Killing <sup>him</sup> will not help," Gubuza said. "Sit down!"

Gubuza turned to Ntongolwane.

"Is she dead?"

"My lord....?" Ntongolwane said, ~~on a rising note.~~ He got up and wiped ~~some of the~~ blood off his face.

"Is she dead?"

"I don't know what....!"

Mzilikazi got up.

"Hold him, Dabula!" Gubuza ordered.

Dabula felt confused.

Ntongolwane took a step back.

"No, lord," he said. "She fled."



"What have you done?" Mzilikazi cried.

"<sup>U</sup>Hush, my friend," Gubuza said. "She is alive. We will find her

"She is alive," Mzilikazi said. He wiped the back of his hand across his eyes. Dabula felt relieved.

"I obeyed the orders of the queen," Ntongolwane said. His voice was pleading.

"What queen?" Gubuza asked.

"No-Menti, lord."

Mzilikazi dropped his head on his chest.

"Where is ~~Mandi~~?" Gubuza asked.

"She fled south, lord."

"That is all," Gubuza said. "Captain!"

Ntongolwane went on his knees.

*Gulst*  
"Mercy, lord.... I only obeyed the queen. I would not let them harm her.... Mercy, lord."

"Captain!" Gubuza called.

"Mercy!" Ntongolwane cried.

The captain of the guard came in.

Softly, Mkonozzi murmured:

"What a strange word from those lips."

Ntongolwane's eyes appealed to Tabata. Tabata ignored him. He took a step toward Tabata.

"The reward for treachery is death," Tabata said coldly.

"Take him," Gubuza said.

"And the other false medicine-men," Mzilikazi said without raising either his head or his voice.

The captain dragged Ntongolwane away.

"Now the woman," Gubuza said, turning to Mzilikazi.



"I will deal with her," Mzilikazi said. "She is my wife. I will deal with her." He saw Gubuza's anxious look and shook his head.

"I am calm. I will deal with her."

"Get the woman, No-Menti," Mzilikazi called.

Gubuza got up and took Mzilikazi's place.

No-Menti came in and stood ~~calmly~~ in front of Mzilikazi. Dabula looked curiously from the king's face to that of No-Menti. What would he say and what would she say? If he, Dabula were the king and the woman in front of him were Ntombi, how would he feel?

"What have you done?" Mzilikazi asked softly.

"You are angry," No-Menti said.

"What have you done?" Mzilikazi repeated.

She laughed suddenly, a hard laugh that had no joy to it. She threw back her head. Her eyes swept over the ~~other~~ ~~others~~ then came back to Mzilikazi's face. She nodded.

"So it is death." Her voice was impersonal.

A lump rose in Dabula's throat. Warm waves of emotion passed over him. His eyes stung. He looked closely at No-Menti. He had seen her for more years than he could remember. But she had always been the king's wife. One of many. The oldest. Never a person. How big she was! How proud and strong! He felt tenderly toward her.

"Why did you do this thing?" His voice was so soft, it was almost pleading.

Her smile had a touch of mockery about it. Only her eyes were sombre and without pride and arrogance.

"For myself," she said, planting her hands on her hips. "I did it for myself.... Listen and I'll tell you why. You are going to



kill ~~me~~. Let me give you the reason why you are going to kill me....  
I have watched and seen that witch beguile you with her soft voice ~~and~~  
and soft looks. With her you became soft, like a baby bull licking  
everything he touched.... Look at you now....! Soon you will be  
like that old fool there," ~~her~~ <sup>her</sup> ~~pointed~~ finger stabbed at Gubuza, " ~~and~~  
have only one wife. That is why I did it.

"I did it because it was with me that you built the greatness  
of your power. Because it was when you lay between my hips that  
you schemed and planned. With her there is only softness in your heart  
and foolish dreams in your mind. With her the crows would soon shit  
on your head and these intriguers around you would steal your power."  
Her eyes swept over the ~~mine~~ <sup>others</sup>. "Intriguers who would steal your power,"  
She repeated bitterly.

"You ask why I did it. I will tell you. I did it to stiffen  
your back that the spear of Mzilikazi might be powerful again. I did  
it for you. And look at yourself! You whine like a sick dog!"

"I will not plead for my life. That is for your generals and  
your doctors. Like that witch, I could have run away when you called  
Ntongolwane. All I had to tell her was that you had ordered her death  
and she ran. Yet she claims to love you! What love is this that makes  
a whining dog out of a man?"

She turned to Langa.

"You are my son, Langa. The man whose seed made you was a  
different Mzilikazi. He was the heir of Chaka. This one is soft. Now  
you are the heir of Chaka. They will try to make the witch's son,  
Lobengula, king. You have your spear. You know what to do."

Mother and son stared coldly at each other. Mzilikazi shook  
his head and said heavily:



"All these years..... And I did not know you."

She spat on the floor.

"Take the woman," he said.

The captain touched her. She pulled away from his touch. She turned and walked away, followed by the captain. At the door she turned back and spat on the floor again. Then she went out.

Dabula choked back the ~~strange waters~~ <sup>tears that</sup> that threatened to flood his eyes. He could not remember ever having wept. Why should tears assail him now? Because a woman was going to die? Yes. But she was a stranger for all that. He had seen many women die without weeping. He would not see her die yet he wanted to weep. Why?... The face of Umindi jumped into his mind. Umindi with blood on her face. He ~~looked at~~ <sup>looked at</sup> Mzilikazi's face. What he saw ~~there~~ banished the picture of Umindi from his mind. ~~For this was a miracle. He was watching it.~~ <sup>What a miracle!</sup>

Two teardrops formed in the king's eyes. They grew in size. For an infinite moment they hovered on his lower lids, then they rolled down his cheeks and ~~they~~ met below his chin. Two others came. After them, yet two others. And soon ~~very soon~~ it was not possible to tell the number of the teardrops for they came so fast.

Who has ever seen a king in tears? Who has ever seen a king stare into space while teardrops rolled down his cheeks? Who has ever seen Mzilikazi, king of the Matabele, emperor of all Central South Africa, lord of the earth and sky, who had ever seen him in tears?

Yet there he was. The tears flowed freely. Oh sight of all x sights! The great Mzilikazi in tears. Long must this day be remembered.

Through his tears the king said:



"She was my wife, and there were many years between us. Why did she have to do this thing?"

Mkomozi said:

Within her the need for power was strong. With it was no softness of love. It is ever so, my brother. Why?.... That I do not know, for to know that one must know many things."

Mzilikazi said:

"The years were between us..... Oh Mmandi! Mmandi!"

The tears streamed down his face.

Mzilikazi buried his <sup>tear stained</sup> ~~strained~~ face in his hands. His big body shook.

"Leave me....."

They got up and moved out. No one said the royal salute. Dabula remembered he had not said the royal salute when he came in. It was the first time in his life. Langa passed him at the door. He saw the scorn on Langa's face as he took one last look at the bowed head of the king. A desire to crush that scornful face possessed him. It left him as quickly as it had come.

He followed Gubuza and Mkomozi to Gubuza's place.

"You have heard," Gubuza said to him when they got there and Nanda had set food before them.

"Yes, lord."

"That is all we know. She may have died on the way. She may be alive still."

"I think she is alive," Mkomozi said.

"You must go south and find her, son. You have seen how it is with Mzilikazi. He did not know how much he loved her till she had gone."



He will pine till she comes back. You must go south and find her. Don't come back without her or until you have seen where she lies dead."

"Yes, lord."

He finished his food and got up. Nanda brought him a bundle. A young woman brought a selection of sticks. He chose one and tested it.

"Stay well, mother.... my lords...."

"Go well, son,"

"Take care," Mkomози said.

He looked at the old man and saw him smile. It startled him. It was the first time Mkomози had ever smiled at him. How brightly his old eyes shone! How warm they made him feel! They were like a cloak of tenderness over him. A tender cloak of eyes caressing and comforting all his body and settling his mind at peace.

He knew that he could now speak to Mkomози. Now he could look <sup>at</sup> him ~~in the eyes~~ and say things, and ask things. He looked <sup>L</sup> fully into the old eyes. The smile deepened. The face creased so much that <sup>ne</sup> eyes were almost hidden. Suddenly, he wanted to feel the old man's hands <sup>L</sup> on him. He wanted to stay and talk to the old man. To climb those western hills with him and try to see what he saw.

Mkomози, the comforter.

An answering smile cracked Dabula's face. He felt good.

"Take care," Mkomози repeated, adding, "my son."

"Stay well, " Dabula said and turned on his heels.



He dug his stick into the earth, leaned against it, and looked down into the valley. Yes, that was ~~Thaba Ncho~~ <sup>Thaba Ncho</sup> down there. The capital city of the Barolong in the south. On the slopes to the right, a group of boys herded cattle.

He weighed the question thoughtfully. Should he go and speak to them or will that raise an alarm? If he went and spoke to them they might go to the city and report that a strange man who <sup>looked</sup> like one of the Matabele had asked them many questions. Then he would be hunted, ~~by all and his life may not be spared.~~ Yet what was he to do? He had to find out. That was the purpose of his mission.

The number of the days he had journeyed were as a dream to him. There was great weariness in his body. The city was inviting. There, he could rest and sleep and eat well. There, the new ~~and strange~~ gauntness of his body could be <sup>filled out</sup> and weariness lifted from his muscles. But to go there might mean never to return.

But those boys..... How would they know he is of the Matabele? He was dressed like the Barolong. The Zulu blanket he usually wore had been replaced by <sup>a</sup> blanket of the Bechuana, and round his body was the clothing of the Bechuana. On his feet were <sup>a</sup> Bechuana sandals. ~~He would speak to them. and he had even grown used to them. There was no band round his head to mark him out as the Captain of the king's armies. How would those boys know? May be they had never seen a Matabele. He would go and speak to them. If there was suspicion in their eyes he would ask no questions. If not, he would ask carefully.~~

He straightened his back, pulled the stick out of the ground, and walked down, keeping to the right. As he neared them, the boys saw



him, and looked with open curiosity.

He called out:

"Greetings, young men!"

They called back to him. He went nearer.

"I am a stranger to these parts."

The biggest among the boys answered.

"From the north?"

"Yes."

"There are many from the north in our city. They fled the wrath of the terrible Matabele."

"Yes, I know of it."

"They destroyed Kunana and its chief is in our city now."

"Of that, too, I know."

A small boy asked:

"Have you seen a live Matabele soldier?"

"Yes." Dabula smiled.

"Are they as terrible as the stories?"

"Just as terrible."

"Do they eat people?"

"That I have never seen."

"We are told so."

"I have seen much but not that."

The big boy asked:

"Do you flee from them too?"

Dabula made his voice sad.

"Yes..... I was a chief up in the north. One day they came."

He moved his shoulders. "My wife fled and I have not seen her since. It is ~~her~~ <sup>she</sup> I am looking for. All these many days I have gone every-



where seeking ~~for~~ her. I know she has not been captured by the Matabele but I do not know where she is. I am weary and hungry with journeying and hiding from my enemies."

"We have food, chief," the big boy said. "Eat of it."

Dabula sat on a flat stone and they gave him of their food and he ate. ~~While he ate he spoke to them, and they to him.~~

The big boy said:

"Perhaps your wife is in our city, chief. There are many strange women there. Perhaps if you go among them you will see her."

Dabula shook his head.

"I don't think so. If she were there you would know of it. Her beauty is so great that all men talk of it. Wherever she passes people speak of her and never forget. She is like a star when there is only one in the sky, like the moon when the night is very black. If she were in your city, you would say to me 'We have heard our parents talk of a woman of great beauty who walks like the wind.' Have you heard of such a one?"

The big boy said: "No."

Another said: "Don't you remember?"

The big boy shook his head.

"It is not that one. She was of the Matabele."

Dabula said:

"What do you talk of?"

The big boy said:

"Many days ago there was news in the city of a woman such as you describe. Our parents spoke of her. They said she was of the Matabele. A queen. Many were for killing her as revenge for Kunana."



Gal 83. But word reached the king of the Basutos and he sent soldiers and they took her away. But she cannot be your wife for she was of the Matabele."

Dabula shook his head and ~~tried to~~ look <sup>ed</sup> sad. One little boy opened his eyes wide at the amount of food the stranger was eating, the amount of milk the stranger was drinking.

Dabula thought: over those mountains on the left is Basutoland. Aloud, he said:

"No, it cannot be my wife.... I, too have heard of this beauty of the Matabele. They say it is one of their king's wives. It cannot be my wife. Perhaps I seek in vain."

The big boy said:

"Go down into the city, chief. Maybe ~~there~~ there is someone who has news of her."

"I will do that," Dabula said. "Thank you for the food. I was sick with hunger."

He got up and took his stick. The boys watched him walk down into the valley. To the left, his mind told him. To the left. Mmandi is there, to the left. Over those mountains. To the left.

But the boys were watching him. If he went left they would be suspicious for their city lay to the right in the heart of the valley.

~~What to do?~~

The big boy called:

"At the bottom you will find the camp of the Boers. Be careful, they do not like people near their cattle."

Dabula stopped and turned.

"Boers? Who are they?"



"White people. The men all have hair on their faces. They are going north, to the land of the Matabele. They will destroy them for what they have done to our people. They are powerful. You will see them.

White people with hair on their faces. ~~Men with hair on their faces. Her.~~ *So they had come.* Gubuzi and Mkomosi talked of them. Now they were here. The boy said they were going to destroy the Matabele. ~~He said they were powerful. Men with hair on their faces. Powerful? Who is more powerful than the Matabele?~~ *Were they more powerful than the Matabele?* What had the Father said about them?

~~He tried to remember, but he had not listened with any particular attention when the Father had spoken of these people. He wished he could see them. Of course, they would be broken by the power of the Matabele. Of course. Still, He wished he could hurry back and be there to receive them when they arrived.~~ *and warn Gubuzi.*

But Mndi was across the mountains to the left. ~~To the left.~~ That was his way, for Basutoland lay across those mountains. ~~To the left.~~

He turned and carried on, edging to the left as he walked. He knew the boys were ~~still~~ watching him. He was a good distance from them now. He would have to run for it.

The big boy shouted:

"Chief! You are going the wrong way! There's the city! You can see it."

He began to run. He heard noises. He turned his head. The boys were running after him, calling to each other and shouting at him. He set a fast pace and kept it. He had eaten well, he had rested, he had a good start. They could not catch him. He was a warrior of the Matabele, Captain of the king's armies. How could mere boys catch him? Soon the power of their lungs would give out and they



would drop the chase. There was no need to go down into the city. He knew where the queen was. ~~He had eaten~~. There was only need to cross the mountains. Nothing else. He ran steadily.

The land sloped, then rose, climbing a hill toward the mountain. He turned his head and looked back. The boys were far behind. They had lost distance. He smiled. They will go on losing distance. Soon they will give up. ~~The race was too unequal. They were mere boys. Untrained in trials of endurance. He ran steadily.~~

~~He crosses the hill. Again the land sloped. He ran down the slope. The slope ended and the land rose. At the top of the second hill he stopped and looked back. Perhaps one or two of the bigger boys might just have had the strength to reach the summit of the first hill.~~

~~But there was no one there. They had given up. He had expected it. There was nothing else they could. No man of any other tribe or nation, let alone a boy, could keep up with a warrior of the Matabele in endurance. He was breathing steadily, a little faster perhaps, but steadily and easily. He could run for hours yet without feeling the strain. He was trained to it.~~

From the hill where he stood, a path skirted the mountain on his right. He took this walking briskly. For perhaps an hour he walked steadily, then he came to a sudden turn in the mountain. It veered sharply right. As he made the turning, he saw two men. They were strangers than any men he had seen in all his life. So strange that the power of movement left him and he could only stand and stare. They wore ~~evening~~ garments ~~that were~~ made in the shape of a man's body.

And the sandals on their feet were truly unusual. Not a part of a foot showed. Not even a single toe. On their head were ~~strange~~ head-



dresses with wide edges that reached beyond their faces and shaded the  
~~And, strangest of all,~~ they rode animals with long ears that looked  
like bulls but were not. To the faces of these animals were tied  
leather thongs with which they guided them. On the backs of the ani-  
mals were seats on which they sat. A leather thong hung from each side  
of the animal. Into these they pushed their feet and balanced them-  
selves. And, in front of him, with one hand on it, each man carried a  
~~strange~~ piece of wood into which was worked a round piece of iron.  
And, miracle of all miracles, the face of each man was almost com-  
pletely covered with hair so that only the nose and eyes and forehead  
showed. And these were white! No, not white, but a redness mixed with  
white!

These, the, were the Boers. The people of whom the boys had spo-  
ken. Strange people. They had hands, they had eyes, noses, ears, hair,  
all the things other people had. But they were different. The shapes,  
the measurements, the colours, even the texture of their hair, all this  
was different from the way ordinary people were. They were men, but men  
of a surpassing strangeness. Men unlike all other men.

The two men drew near. Still Dabula could not move.

Paul Van As turned to Moses Elst.

"Alla ~~Jesus~~ man! Have you ever seen anyone like him. Look at  
that face. Look at those shoulders! Look at that chest! Look at those  
arms! What a man! He can't be one of these Barolong. They have some  
big and strong ones, but nothing like this!"

"He is a big one," Moses said. "Perhaps he is one of these  
Matasomethings we hear of."

"Matabele is the word..... No. He wouldn't be here."

"God, man, people are beginning to talk of the way you mix



with these kaffirs. You learn their language and sit and talk with them as if they are white men. Many of our people don't like it, Paul.

"We've got to know them if we are going to live with them."

"You do too much knowing. The kaffirs will get ideas."

"You speak like Koos Jansen."

"Jansen is right there. I don't like him but he's right."

They pulled up ~~their horses~~ beside the black man.

"Greetings," Paul said in the language of the Barolong.

"Greetings," Dabula said.

"You are not of these parts....."

"No. I fled the wrath of the Matabele. My home is in the north."

"What does he say?" Moses asked.

"He's from the north."

"Then I was right. He's....."

"No. He's also run from them."

"God! As big as he is?"

"What does your friend say in your strange tongue," Dabula asked.

"He says you are big to flee from anyone."

"Tell him the Matabele are stronger and bigger than I am. Even

the smallest among them is bigger than I am."

"What's he say?" Moses asked.

Paul told him.

"He lies," Moses said.

"What does he say?" Dabula asked.

"He is filled with surprise," Paul smiled.

"~~And~~ you who are so strange to look at," Dabula said. "Where are you from? What manner of men are you?"

"We are from the south."



"And before that?"

"Before that our ancestors came from across the seas in ships."

"Ships?"

"Huts that travel on water."

"This is strange."

"<sup>I</sup>It is true."

"What's he saying now?" Moses wanted to know.

"<sup>He</sup>He wants to know where we are from."

"And you're telling him!"

"He told us where he was from."

"Jesus, Paul! You are a kaffirboetie. Let's go man."

"We must live with these people."

"Your friend is angry," Dabula said. "Why."

"It is because he cannot speak with us."

Dabula smiled. Paul returned the smile. Their eyes met.

"Where do you journey now?" Dabula asked.

"Soon we will go north, to the land of the Matabele. We will teach them a lesson and then we will live in peace."

"Why do you leave your southlands to go to the land of the Matabele? They will not like it and they are terrible in their wrath. I know. I have seen it. Death can be sudden."

"In the south we cannot be free. We seek a land of our own where we can be."

"But why go to the land of the Matabele?"

"You speak as if you wish to protect them."

"I speak in warning for I know the wrath of the Matabele."

"Then fear not, our wrath can be greater."

"Come on, Paul! Elsie will start worrying. You know how she is."



Fine thing to tell her we're late for food because you stopped and talked to a kaffir on the way."

Paul said to Dabula:

"We must go."

"I too."

"Where do you journey?"

"To the land of the Basuto."

"Go well, my friend."

"Go well, white man."

The two men rode away. ~~When~~ they were round the side of the mountain, Dabula turned and began to run. Perhaps they would meet the boys and the boys would tell them. He had to be very far in case they returned on their animals. Those animals looked as <sup>though</sup> they could move fast and far. He left the track that skirted the mountain. He went down into a deep valley. Here it would be impossible for those animals to come. He climbed out of the valley. Straight ahead, to the left, was ~~away~~ between two mountains. That was his way. Suddenly he remembered the names of those animals. The Father had spoken of them once. ~~The~~ The Father had ridden them when he had visited the king of the Basutos. They were called ponies. It must be easy on a man's strength to ride on them. But perhaps a man lost his strength by not testing it each day. Warriors who did not test their strength each day grew fat and weak, and were easily beaten in trials of strength. Still, it would be nice to ride on those things when a man was tired.

At a steady trot he climbed the high land between the two mountains.

So the words of the boys were true. These strange men were going north. Their plan was to make war on the Matabele. Something about



them made the thought disturbing. Of course, they would be defeated. But still, the sense of disturbance was there and would not leave him. Perhaps it was because of their strangeness, because of the hair on their faces, because they were so unlike other men. Yes, perhaps it was that. The one who had spoken to him, now he was a fine man. Small for a warrior, but a fine man. It was in his head and in his eyes and in the sound of his voice. A fine man. One to talk with.

Oh, to go back and warn those at home of the coming of these Boers. If they are all like that one it would be best to do that. It would be best to have the army prepared for them. Trained and ready. The temptation to turn for home was strong. He reached the summit of the land between the two mountains and looked back. There was no sign of life as far as his eyes could see. He was safe.

But even so, this land is hostile. Walk with care, man, walk with care. Home is far away, and about, all about, are enemies. Even enemies with reddish-white skins and hair on their faces. Walk with care, man.

He turned and hurried down into Basutoland. Far across hills and valleys, through a mist of distance, he saw the high mountain stronghold of the king of the Basutos, Thaba Bosigo. *The Mountain of Night.*

> # <

It was early the next morning when Dabula reached the mountain stronghold where Moshesh, king of the Basuto, ruled. People saw *Dabula* ~~him~~ and pointed him out as a stranger. They talked among themselves. But they left him alone. No one asked him his business. No one tried to stop him. This was strange. But the Father had said he would find the ways of these people strange. Still, a city where strangers moved



at will could be easily overwhelmed.

It was only when he reached the foot of the mountain itself that soldiers stopped him and asked him his business. And such strange soldiers they were! No military formation! Not the bearing of warriors. Just ordinary men. He pulled himself up and said:

"I am Dabula, Captain of all the king's armies. I am the personal messenger of Mzilikazi, king of the Matabele, master of all the northland, lord of earth and sky. In the name of Mzilikazi, in the name of the great Bubuza, I wish to speak to your king."

The leader of the soldiers who were not as soldiers, said:

"Then come, Dabula, and I will lead you to Moshesh."

*START*  
Dabula followed the man up to the very heart of the Mountain of Night. When they reached the top, the vast stretch of flat land surprised him. So much land on top of a mountain. But even more surprising was the size of the huts. Their shapes he had observed and marvelled at down in the valley. These huts were not round but rectangular. And these up there were bigger huts than he had ever seen. His guide led him into the largest hut that had many chambers and was finely furnished. The man left him and went through a door that led to another part. After a while he returned.

"Come."

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He led Dabula through many doorways into a room where a man sat at a table. Here he left him.

Dabula stopped dead. The man was talking to a white man, one like those he had met on the way. But this one had no hair on his face. He thought: the one who sits must be Moshesh.

Moshesh looked up and said:

"Sit, young man. I will speak with you soon."



A strange one to be king, this. Very small ~~for a king~~. And no sign of the warrior about him. And he was dressed in clothes that were shaped like a human body. The kind of clothes white men wore. But so small for a king. Yet the Father had spoken highly of him. Very highly. His head was big, especially his forehead. His voice had the tiredness that was in the Father's and in that of old Mkomози. And his eyes, when he looked up, were the eyes of Mkomози. It was as if sadness never left them. Yet his mouth seemed always to smile. Even now as he talked with this white man who had no hair on his face. And while Moshesh talked, this white man made marks on a flat white sheet with a feather he kept dipping into black liquid. Wonder what the white band round the white man's neck means? Must be a sign of his position; But people usually carried such things round their heads not their necks. Strange. Very strange.

The white man got up and left the room. As he passed Dabula, he nodded and smiled. There was a softness in his eyes.

Moshesh got up. How short he was! Yet for all his shortness, something about him made you know he was a king.

"Well, young man?"

Dabula squared his shoulders, raised his head, towered over the king.

"Moshesh! King of the Basuto! I greet you in the name of Mzilikazi, king of the Matabele, lord of them....."

"Yes, yes.... lord of the northland and all the other things. I know all about them.... Tell me, how is my friend Gubuza?"

Dabula had the ~~strange~~ feeling of being laughed at. Yet the king did not laugh. ~~But the feeling persisted.~~



"My lord Gubuza, commander of all the king's armies, is well. In his name I greet you too."

"Young man,"

"~~Lord~~"

"Have you a father?"

"No, lord... My lord Gubuza is as my father."

"Ah! Then you must be the young man called Dabula of whom he spoke to me sometimes. I am glad to greet you, boy..... Now wait. Do not speak yet..... Tell me, when you speak to Gubuza, do you use all these titles before you say what must be said?"

"No, my lord."

"You have a wife?"

"Yes, lord."

"Well, tell me, when you ask something of your wife do you say: 'I Dabula, Captain of the ~~king's~~ armies of Mzilikazi, lord of all the northlands and all those other things you call him lord of, I Dabula want beer.' Do you speak like that to her?"

"No, lord, but with her I am not on the king's business."

"And always, on the king's business, you must use all that language?"

"Yes, lord."

"And you never grow tired?"

"It is the custom, lord."

"And you never grow tired?"

"No, lord."

From the look in his eyes, Dabula saw the king did not believe him. But the king only nodded his head.

"It is so then..... Now listen, young man. The customs of one people are not the same as the customs of another people. To be a



good messenger for your king, it is not enough that you ~~should~~ know only your own customs. For when you reach a place where the customs of people are different, your customs may appear foolish and people may laugh at them. ~~Yam~~

"Who laughs at our customs, lord?"

"Kill your anger, young man. I laugh at them, my soldiers laugh at them. It is like playing a game of children.... I, Dabula..."

The king pushed out his chest and imitated the manner of Dabula. "It is foolishness."

"I will do battle with anyone for the honour of my king!"

Moshesh laughed.

"No doubt, young man.... And you will win. You are trained to war. But there are many ways of warfare, boy. Sometimes the way of strength is a stupid way. But no more of this.... Sit down, I am tired of standing."

"In our land, lord...."

"Sit down, boy!"

Moshesh stared at Dabula's eyes. The captain of the armies of the Matabele sat down. For all his smallness, this one was powerful, a man to be reckoned with, truly a king. Under the steady stare of Moshesh, he lowered his eyes and waited.

A woman came into the room with bowls. She gave one to the king and one to Dabula. When she had gone, Moshesh made a sound and Dabula raised his eyes. Yes, the king was laughing now, openly.

"In your land it is not a custom to drink before business, is it?"

"No, lord."



"Well, drink."

When the bowls were empty, Moshesh said:

"You have come on a long journey. You were hungry and thirsty. Tell me, which is better, to have drunk or not to have drunk?"

"To have drunk."

"Yet it is not your custom."

Dabula was silent. Again the soft, merry laughter of the king of the Basuto filled the room.

"Listen, boy: wisdom says a stranger should know the customs of the people among whom he is. Thus, with a knowledge of their customs, he can wrap them round his little finger and make them do his bidding. Always, this way is more powerful than your way, the way of the spear. Now, for the black people, it is the only way.... You come to speak of queen Mnandi."

"Yes, lord."

"Then speak."

"It is whispered that she is here."

"She is."

"I come to take her back to my lord, the king."

"If she wishes, young man.... If not, all the power of Mzilikazi, all the spears of his soldiers, will not remove her from the protection of Thaba Bosigo."

Dabula thought for a while then said:

"May I speak to her, lord? The king wishes her no harm. Those who have conspired against her are dead. You have but the deep sadness of the king to know he could never harm Mnandi."

"And what of the story that he was arranging for her death

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because some medicine~~men~~<sup>men</sup> had seen a strage man in her chamber."

"All lies, <sup>my</sup>lord. It was a conspiracy between No-Menti who was jealous of her and Ntongolwane who sought power. Their plan was to make her fear and flee. In that they succeeded, but now they are dead."

"And Mzilikazi, perhaps in the back of his mind there lingers a small belief in these lies?"

"No, lord. Of that lord Gubuza himself told me to tell the queen. They have eaten their lies and denounced each other."

"If Gubuza says so....."

"He does, lord."

"Good. You can see her. Now you will be given a chamber and can wash and rest. Tonight or tomorrow you can speak to the queen."

Dabula thought of the two white men. They were going north to make war on the Matabele. Something about them made him anxious to get back and warn the Father.

"My lord."

"Yes?"

"On the journey here I met two white men with hair on their faces."

"Boers."

"Yes, lord. One spoke to me in the tongue of the Barolong. He said they were journeying north to our land. He said they would make war on us. If it pleases my lord, I would see the queen now. I am eager to return to my people that I may warn Gubuza of the coming of these strange men."

Moshesh got up, walked to the door, and called somebody. He returned and stood in front of Dabula. On his face was the sadness of deep thought.



"You are wise, my son. You will speak to the queen. If she wishes to return with you, you can go as soon as you like. But first listen to my words, and listen carefully, child, for it is a grave thing of which I speak.

"When you get back to your land, go at once to Gubuza and give him this message. Tell him his friend, Moshesh, commands that he does not fight with these Boers. They have terrible weapons and battle with them is not wise. Tell him I say he must talk with them peacefully, and while he talks with them, I will make a treaty with the English. Are the words clear in your brain?"

"Yes, lord."

"Then repeat them to me."

"But you told them to me."

"Do as I say, boy!"

"I am to tell Gubuza not to make war with the Boers."

"Right."

"I am to say war with them is not wise."

"Right."

"I am to say he must talk with them peacefully while you make a...."

"Now you see why I want you to repeat them.... A treaty. It is a word that means that others will fight your wars for you. The English are other white people who are more powerful than the Boers. It is wise to use them. The Boers will not fight if the English say they will protect you. That is the meaning of a treaty."

"We need no protection from other people. With our sp...."

"Quiet, child! You don't know what you speak of. Tell my friend Gubuza what I have said. And most important, your Moshesh repeats his



warning not to fight these Bgers."

"And if they attack?"

"Perhaps they will not, but even if they do, don't fight them."

"What language is this, lord?"

"The angry warrior again! ~~///~~ Fool! It is the language of wisdom. I have lived here and I have observed these people. You in the north have not. I know what I speak of. Enough, young man! Repeat my message to Gubuza. That is all. If you do not <sup>and</sup> live, you will remember this day for a long time and you will beat your breast in vain mourning till the day you die. I know what I speak of."

Moshesh went back to his chair and sat staring into space. His eyes were hooded and the shadow of deep sadness seemed cast over his being. He sat like a man carved out of rock; not a part of him moved. To Dabula it seemed he did not even breathe. After a long time, he stirred, put his hand on the table, opened it, and looked down at it. As if speaking to himself, he murmured:

"When a man has lived by the spear, it is difficult, sometimes impossible, for him to learn to live by his head. Maybe it is so here."

"My lord?"

"It is nothing, child."

From the door came the sound of voices, then Mnandi entered the room. The men got up.

"Dabula," she said. "Oh, Dabula!"

It made him think of Ntombi.

"Mother! I greet you."

"What is news of my lord and of Inzwinyani?"

"All Inzwinyani weeps for the sadness of the king is great at the

loss of sweet Mnandi."



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"Ntongolwane said Mzilikazi was preparing my death."

"All lies, mother. The schemers themselves have died."

Mnandi lowered her head. After a while she said:

"It is a heavy burden to carry the death of others."

"But they plotted your destruction!"

"Even so, Dabula. It is a heavy burden.... And my lord?"

"His heart is heavy. His anguish is terrible to see. I come to take you to him, mother, for only thus will the pain of his heart be relieved."

Moshesh said:

"Only if you wish, my sister. If you wish to stay here, this is your home and no man will take you from it."

"And if I wish to go?"

"Then you are free, my sister."

"Thank you, Moshesh of the Basuto, you are very kind, very good, very wise. I wish that all men had your wisdom.... I fled from Inzwinyani and from my lord because I feared his wrath. I feared that he would kill me in his wrath.... Now, why, if his wrath is not against me, if No-Menti and Ntongolwane lied, then I must return to my lord, for he is my lord. Where is a woman's place if not with her man? I will come with you, Dabula, for I, too, am sad with ~~the~~ longing for my man and for my city and my people."

"You have been kind, Moshesh, but I would go home."

"So it shall be, Mnandi.... This young man wants to start his journey now for he wants to warn his people of the coming of the Boers. I think it is a wise thing to do."

"I am ready now."



"Good. I will give orders that ponies be made ready and provisions packed for you. Some of my men will guide you till you are out of danger from the Barolong or the Boers. Sit, sister, while I tell them to make ready."

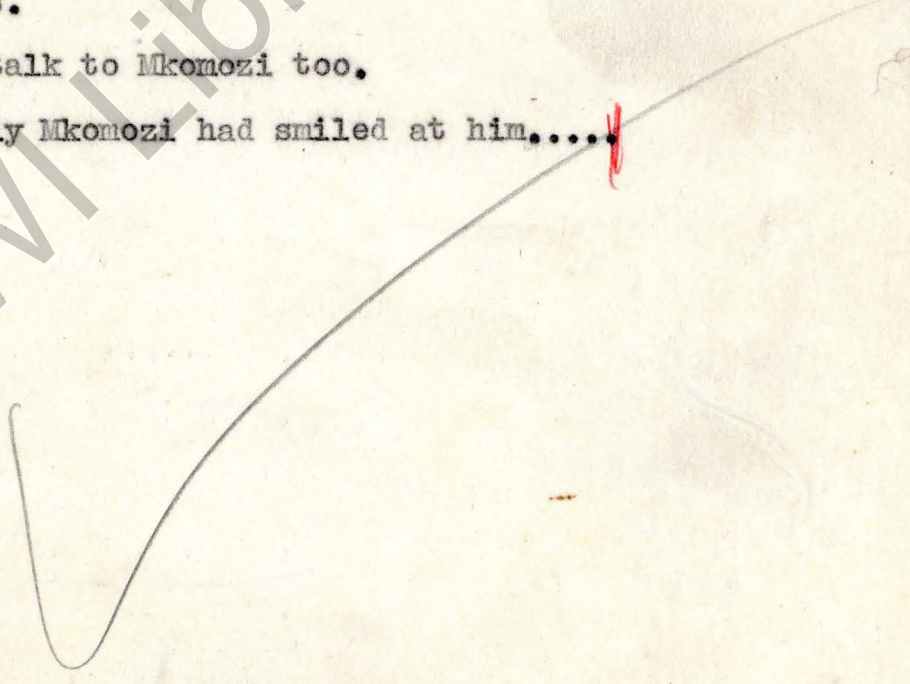
Mnandi seated herself and turned to Dabula.

"Tell me, Dabula, how is Ntombi and the little ones?" *mm*

While he answered her questions, Dabula wondered whether Ntombi would still be there when he got back. So many things he wanted to talk to her about. So many things he wanted to tell her. He'd had time to think on this long journey to the south and he wanted to share his thoughts with her. He wanted to explain about Umindí and also to tell her about his treacherous thoughts on Gubuza. He'd had a long time to think on these things.

And he would talk to Mkomozí too.

How beautifully Mkomozí had smiled at him..... *!*





[ "Sit down."

With a straight face the young man made himself comfortable in the chair. It was ever so with Moshesh. He used people that he might think. He used them as other men used bits of wood to clean their teeth. For this the people respected him. They smiled knowingly, comfortably, in the knowledge that it was for their well<sup>=</sup>being that his big head worked. Therefore, his little ways were precious and endearing and they told the children of them when sitting round the fire of an evening.

"They have gone?"

"Yes, they have gone."

"I know what you think."

"Me?"

"No. All of you. I have seen the way you looked at the young man, Dabula, and the laughter that was in your eyes. I have seen it."

"He was strange."

"Why strange?"

The young man smiled.

"He pushed out his chest and spoke <sup>with</sup> that bigness of his king. One would think that his king was master of all the earth."

"Oh my children! Oh my children!"

"Were we wrong, father?"

"Not wrong. No. Not wrong. Only, you do not understand. You are like him in that. His king was master of all the earth; his kings were masters of all the earth. Only, the earth was small then."

Moshesh smiled. The young man looked at him. Now he was deep



in his thoughts. It was there, on his face.

"I do not understand your words."

Moshesh did not hear the young man's words. He heard only the whispering voice of time.....

Bright morning was gay on the mountains when first the warning came. In the beginning there were no words. Just a feeling. As if snow had touched the tip of the morning sun. Only a warning without words.

Then people started coming in from all corners of the gay land. They drove their cattle before them, and they brought their children and their possessions with them. And then the words began to flow. They flowed till, at last, meaning crept into them.

He went among the people and he asked:

"What is this?"

And they said:

"The Zulus!"

"What of the Zulus?"

And they said:

"Oh protect us, Moshesh!"

More than that no one could tell him. He called:

"Lithele! Lithele!"

"Yes? I am here."

"Take your pony and ride through the mountains and see what there is to see."

He went among the people and he spoke to them. He comforted them with words and tried to find the meaning of their flight. They only said:



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"The Zulus!"

"Protect us, Moshesh."

"I will protect you."

It is easy to say that with words. Easy to promise. Yet the keeping of the promise is the hard thing. If these Zulus came, how could he protect these people? The word is one thing, the deed another.

These Zulus ruled everywhere. The name of their king, Chaka, was terrible. If less than half of what he had heard of them was true, then, assuredly, they were the most terrible people who had ever lived. How to fight people such as these?

He climbed to the highest point of the mountain city and looked down into the valley that danced in and out between the many mountains.

A long way away, he could see Lithela returning. There was haste about Lithela. He waited.

Lithela hurried up to him. On Lithela's shoulder, to the front and just above his heart, was a terrible bruise. Blood showed. He pointed to the wound.

"What is that?"

"As I came up the terraces of <sup>the</sup> mountain, a small rock came rolling down and struck me. It is nothing. Perhaps some child at the top pushed the rock with his feet. It is nothing."

"And the Zulus?"

"A terrible army of them is coming, Moshesh."

"Many?"

"Many, many hundreds. Their spears shine in the sun and their shields cover nearly all their bodies. They are terrible to behold. The



land is empty of all people. Even the animals have disappeared. The only sound in all the land is the heavy tramp of their feet. They are bigger than all the big men I have ever seen. This is the end of our day, Moshesh."

"Are we already finished then?"

"Yes. To do battle with them is foolish."

"It is said they destroy what is before them whether it fights or not."

"I have heard."

"Yet you say it is foolish to do battle."

"It is."

"Look."

Moshesh pointed. Down the sun-kissed valley, between two mountains, came the columns of the Zulu impis. Their bright spears glittered in the sunlight. They moved in tight formation, like a huge body with only one heart-beat.

Lithele said:

"There is death over us. I can feel its shadow."

The impis drew near. The eyes of Moshesh were shrouded till it seemed he was asleep on his feet. The impis were near the Mountain of Night. Soon they would start climbing its terraced steps.

Who had ever withstood the power of the Zulus? Who could? Who could stand up <sup>to</sup> the terrible armies of Chaka? All the nations and tribes in all the land had gone down when the armies of Chaka passed. ~~Who could withstand such power? Who could withstand those terrible spears and that terrible battle-cry?~~

Weep for the <sup>S</sup>Banuto. Weep for these small-boned people. Weep for the Mountain of Night. Weep for the blood of the mothers and children.



of Basutoland. Night is over the land of mountains, over its children who love peace and their ponies and the tilling of their land. Weep, for the night of the Zulu spear is here. Weep.

"Lithele."

"Yes."

"Rocks!"

"My shoulder is nothing! The Zulus are here!"

"Rocks! Lithele! Rocks! Not little ones! Big ones!"

"Moshesh."

"Come."

They hurried down to the people among whom there was wailing and weeping.

Moshesh shouted:

"Get rocks! Big round rocks! Hurry, my children, hurry!"

The people hurried away and returned with rocks. Big, round, smooth rocks that had been washed by many rains, kissed by many suns, and blown by many winds. Men, women, and children, they rolled the rocks to the head of the terraced steps of the Mountain of Night. They brought rocks and went away and brought more. Soon there was a little mountain of rocks.

Down below, the army of Chaka had reached the foot of the mountain. The first formation was on its way up. They moved with the assurance of the unconquerable.

Above, Moshesh stood and looked down on them. Beside him was Lithele. Behind them clustered the people.

The first formation was half-way up. Lithele trembled. He said:

"Now!"

"No."



Now the first formation was two-thirds up. A second had started at the bottom.

Moshesh's voice held no feeling as he said:

"Now!"

A young man moved a rock. All the rocks moved. They gathered speed as they moved down the terraced steps. They spread. They were an avalanche. The warriors of Chaka were directly in the path of the rocks. The rocks crushed them and sent them hurtling down the terraced steps. And they, in turn, aided the rocks in crushing their fellows at the bottom.

A few of the Zulus were lying halfway up the terrace. Moshesh said:

"Get them!"

Young men hurried down.

"More rocks!"

People went away and returned with more rocks and piled them up. Two of the Zulu warriors were alive.

"Take good care of them!"

The people marvelled but obeyed Moshesh. They put ointments on the wounds of the two men.

Three times, the Zulus tried to get up to the top. Three times ~~were~~ rocks rained on them and they were crushed. On the third time, Moshesh called the men together and said:

"After the rocks, go down. Make as much noise as you can on the way. Shout and scream and make your voices fiercer than you know how to be. But watch out! If they do not run away, if there is any sign that they would battle with you, turn and hurry back and we will have more rocks. If they run, chase them a little way and then return.



..... And you others. Get some fat cattle..... Women, get some beer..... These I want <sup>you</sup> to take as presents to them."

It was thus, then, on the third time. The warriors of Chaka were baffled. They had never fought any ~~enemy~~ such as this. ~~An enemy who threw rocks at them and then retired to hide and throw more rocks.~~ This was not war. How could a man fight war with unseen enemies who never came into the open? This was like fighting with a woman, a hopeless affair.

They were confused and discouraged and frustrated when the terrible yells of the Basuto broke on their ears. Without stopping to see what was coming, without thinking, they turned and ran.

A great shout went up from Thaba Bosigo. The Zulus were running! The most terrible army in all Africa was running! The men of Chaka were running! Oh beautiful day!

After the shouting <sup>men</sup> went the men and women with presents, and the ~~beautiful~~ maidens in their brightly coloured clothes.

When the Zulus stopped between the two mountains to find out what had made them run, they were met by singing men and women, bringing them presents. Among themselves, they said:

"What manner of people are these?"

"Why do they behave thus?"

"First they fight like women then they send gifts."

"A strange people indeed."

So the captains and the ordinary soldiers spoke among themselves and marvelled, ~~for a strange thing had happened.~~ And when their generals, Mzilikazi and Gubuza, came from their observation post to find out what happened, the soldiers crowded round them and all spoke at once, telling in loud voices of this strange war that was not a war.



Mzilikazi and Gubuza looked at each other. In an amazed voice, Mzilikazi said to Gubuza:

"It is not possible! Our army has been defeated without fighting a battle. And behold! Our soldiers dance with the daughters of their victors and drink beer with those who have vanquished them. It is not possible, Gubuza!"

They looked around them. And it was so. Everywhere soldiers of the armies of Chaka drank and danced and laughed with men and women and young maidens of the Basuto.

Gubuza said, smiling in bewilderment:

"Yet look, Mzilikazi! It has happened."

"Chaka will never believe it!"

"I do not. Yet it is here for us to see."

"Who is their king? What manner of a man is he?"

"A strange man indeed."

Lithele came up to them.

"Brave warriors of Chaka! I am commanded by Moshesh, father of my people, to lead you to him that he might do you honour."

The two youngest generals in Chaka's armies looked at each other. Gubuza nodded. Mzilikazi said:

"Lead us."

At the top of the terraces, Moshesh waited for them. Behind him, his people were respectful and friendly. What big men these Zulus were! Moshesh had to tilt his face in order that his eyes might meet theirs.

"I greet you, brave generals. I honour you in the name of my people. My home, my land, shall be yours, for there is only friendship in our hearts. Those of your warriors who were wounded are being



cared for by my people. For those who are dead, we will pay tribute in many cattle, for we know the life of a soldier of Chaka is sacred. In our hearts is only the wish for peace. It is with this peace I greet you."

Mzilkazi said:

"Greetings, Moshesh."

Gubuza said:

"You are a strange man, Moshesh of the Basuto, but I fear there is much cunning in your strangeness. Tell us <sup>of</sup> this strange battle which you have won and yet was never fought."

Moshesh raised his eyes to those of the young general with the prematurely white hair. Their eyes met. ~~Friendship was born between them~~. A strange half-smile played on Moshesh's lips.

"When I look at you, Gubuza, I must lift my head as if to look at the skies. When I am beside you I am as a pigmy. It is so with my people too. How can pigmies fight giants?"

"And your answer?"

"Cunning."

Again the two men looked at each other. And now they both smiled.

"Come, let us drink and be gay."

#

Moshesh raised his eyes to the young man's face. The thought ended, the young man thought.

"What did you say?"

"I do not understand your words."

"Yet they were simple. What were they?"

"You said his kings were masters of all the earth."



"So they were. But I said something more."

"You said the earth was small then. It is that I do not understand."

"Yet it is simple."

"But the white father among us says the earth is round."

"So it is."

"The how can it be small at one time and big at another?"

"It can be that too."

"Your words are strange, father."

Moshes~~h~~ smiled. His eyes danced, yet a sadness lurked behind their dancing.

"I will ask you a question, my son. The white father tells the time by the little machine he carries, is it not so?"

"Yes."

"With it you tell the hours of the day."

"That is so."

"Now tell me, when you do not look at that little machine, can you tell where each hour ends and where a new one begins?"

"No."

"Now tell me another thing. Were there hours before the little machine came to count them for you?"

"Yes, there must have been."

"Yet you knew not of them."

"That is so."

"It is so too with the size of the world."

"I do not understand."

"Think and you will. When the white father brought you the little machine <sup>and</sup> you saw it for the first time, the days changed. There were



hours and minutes and seconds. Yet they were the same days. They have not changed and yet they have changed. For you, there is a new meaning in the old days. This new meaning burns the old days so that they are new days now. Yet they are the same old days. Is it not so?"

The young man understood only vaguely, but he nodded his head.

"Yes, father."

"So, too, for the land. The coming of the white man was like the coming of the little machine. I, too, learned to measure the meaning of the days by the little machine. Only, it is not the same little machine as yours."

The young man did not understand at all, but he said:

"Yes, father."

The strange white intruders were everywhere. They ran over the land like a swarm of locusts. Only, unlike the locusts, their season never came to an end.

High in his mountain, he listened and heard and was much exercised by the coming of these people. ~~Their~~ power was such that soon they would be all over the land. Their coming cast a shadow over the land.

How to deal with this shadow? What manner of cunning could cope with it? Soon, they would take all the land. Yet to go to war with them would only end in defeat. Of that he was certain.

It was while he was thus exercised that the white father came in the name of a strange being called God. This white man talked much of the power and wisdom of his God. Diligently, carefully, he inquired of this man where this God of his was and what he did.



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And while he inquired about this man who lived in the sky and made people kneel all the time, he discovered that there was conflict between these white people. Those called Boers were against those called English. This he understood better than the God who was in the sky and made people kneel to him all day. Yet he understood also that to win the complete goodwill of this white father, he had to become a follower of this Christianity. So he became a Christian and the white father said they were brothers-in-Christ.

He learned much from the white father, and used him much. It was through the white father that he discovered the answer to his problem. Often they talked of the land and of the people. One day, the white father said:

"Perhaps you should make a treaty with our queen."

"A treaty?"

The white father explained. As he talked, the answer came to Moshesh. This was the way. It was the way he had dealt with all his more powerful neighbours. Only, none of his neighbours would go to war for him. And if he understood this treaty rightly, and if he used it rightly, then the English would go to war for him.

He made the white father write to his sister across the waters. Soon a treaty was signed and he was under the protection of the English.

The strength of this treaty was tested when his men had aided Boer cattle pens. The Boers came out in great force to attack Thaba Bosigo. He did not fight them. The English defended him and his people. A treaty was a strong thing if a man used it wisely. With it his people might live and flourish while stronger people died and were destroyed. His sister across the waters...



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"My son."

"Father?"

"When a man walks in a place where the field is on fire and there is only a narrow piece of safe land beside a river, he must walk carefully, must he not?"

"Yes, father."

"It is so for us. If we do not walk carefully, we will fall into the river or be burned by the fire. The land is like a great fire and a flowing river. If we do not walk with care, one or the other will destroy us. The days have changed for us, my son. In the past there were no minutes and seconds to them. Now the little machine has brought minutes and seconds. Now it is not the same day, not the same world. It is a strange day, and it is a bigger world. Yet it is the same. Not the same, yet the same. We must walk with care, my son."

Moshesh straightened his back and stared straight in front of him. He spread his hands on the table and pressed hard against its smooth surface. His eyes were hooded. Round his lips was a smile that came and went. Over his whole being was a concentrated quiet, a tense relaxation that passed from him to the young man, to the room, out of the door. It poised high over the Mountain of Night and spread through all the mountainous regions of the land of the Basuto, of the land of Moshesh.



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3. NEW DAY.

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PART ONE

(B)

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Man is a quest.....

Mountains and slopes, hills and valleys; rivers and fountains,  
oceans and wells, listen.

Man is a quest.....

Children at dawn-light, old folk at moonlight, listen.

Man is a quest.....

Lovers of women, sweethearts of young men, listen.

Man is a quest.....

Sigh wind and tell them, Sigh wind and tell them.

Man is a quest.....

Oh my brothers, oh my sisters; oh my children, born and unborn  
Listen.

Man is a quest.....

Out of the hills a man came; out of the rivers and oceans he  
came, from the flat lands and high lands, from green places and  
brown places, from daylight and darkness. From the many nations he  
came and the touch of many lands was on him. His eyes were the eyes  
of all the people.

He came down from the hills and he said:

That ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly.

Oh my brothers..... Oh my sisters.



1.1) (C)

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Hendrik Potgieter led the elders of the trek from his tent. They went ~~they went~~ to the seats that had been specially put up for them in the open. Kasper Jansen and Martinus Van As were among the elders. Behind them, in a tight bunch, clustered the ~~trekkers~~. Facing them, and surrounded by their own followers, were the chiefs of the Barolong.

Paul Van As stood to the fore and acted as interpreter.

Potgieter said:

"I have called you here to thank you for making us welcome. We are now ready to move. Before we go, there is one thing I want to put before you, chiefs. It is this. If the Matabele are as fierce as you say, we may have to fight them. If that happens, we would like your help. If you help us, and you have reason not to love the Matabele, this is what we'll do. We will give you all the cattle we take from them and keep only the land for ourselves."

Moroka, chief of the Barolong at Thaba ~~Ncho~~ <sup>Ncho</sup> turned to the others.

"What do you say, my brothers?"

~~They looked at each other in the long silence. Then~~ [Tauana said:

"This is no bargain. What will a man do with cattle if he has no land on which to feed them?"

"What do you want?"

"I have only one condition," Tauana said. "Kunana was my city. I want back the city of Kunana and the land that was ours, the land of my fathers. The land that is between the Molopo and its tributaries is ours, all the land to the east you can have. If you agree, I will go with you."

The other chiefs voiced their agreement,



"One more thing," Moroka said. "I want you Boers to understand and agree that Thaba Ncho and all the land that is mine now should remain so. If you agree to that, we will all join you."

One of the Boer elders said:

"These kaffirs make <sup>to</sup> many conditions!"

Kasper laughed.

"Let them."

Potgieter turned his head and smiled at Kasper. He nodded slowly.

"What do you say?" Moroka asked.

"We agree," Potgieter said.

"And you promise these things?"

"Yes, we promise."

"Then it shall be so. We will be with you if there is need for war."

"That is all," Potgieter said.

The chiefs led their people from Moroka's Hoek <sup>back</sup> to Thaba Ncho. Potgieter got up and turned to his people.

"We have come thus far. We are near the end of our journey now. Soon the long months of travel will be over. Soon we will outspan and build houses and have land. Our journey is near its end, my people. Just a little while longer, ~~only a little while longer now.~~ The land looks beautiful around here, but it is more beautiful further north. <sup>make</sup> ready, for we leave in the morning, and the strength of the Lord <sup>goes</sup> with us."

The people dispersed and prepared for the journey. They had rested many weeks at Moroka's Hoek. They were refreshed and strong. Their journey was near its end. Soon it would be over.



Anna brushed a strand of hair from her eyes. Bending down was difficult. The child ~~inside her~~ was big. Its bigness showed in the ~~big~~ tight roundness of her body.

Slowly, she went down till she crouched over the fire. The child ~~in her~~ kicked hard and she opened her lips and sighed. Funny that it shouldn't hurt. She kicked and kicked and yet it never hurt. Only the strangeness of something moving in you. Balancing was a much more awkward thing. So easy to fall.

She stirred the food and dished it onto the plates. She held out the first plate.

"Kasper."

He took the plate and grunted.

"Stefan."

The boy took his plate.

"What do you say?" Kasper's voice was stern.

"Thank you, mother."

"Why must one always tell you?"

"I was going to say it, father."

"Don't lie, lad!"

"But....!"

"Quiet, Stefan. I saw his mouth move, Kasper. You didn't give him a chance to speak."

"I am speaking to my son, Anna."

"He's my son too, Kasper." Her voice was very quiet.

Kasper lowered his head. In silence he ate his food. Stefan looked from his father to his mother then buried his head in the plate.

"Don't fill your mouth so, Stefan!"

The boy choked on the food. Anna raised her eyes briefly to Kas-



per's face, ~~but held her peace~~. She put a little food on her plate then raised herself ponderously. She moved over to her seat and lowered herself into it with a sigh.

"I wonder where Koos is," she said.

Fear sprang into Stefan's eyes.

"What is it, boy?" Kasper snapped.

The boy turned appealing eyes to his mother.

"What is it, Stefan?" Her voice was gentle.

Stefan's voice was faint and frightened:

"I forgot. Oom Koos told me to say he was eating with the Van Wycks."

"One sometimes forgets," Anna said hurriedly.

Kasper stared at the boy. Sneakingly, guiltily, the boy raised his eyes to his father's face, then ~~dropped~~ <sup>lowered</sup> them hurriedly.

"It doesn't matter," Anna said, looking at Kasper. "No harm was done."

She put a spoonful of food into her mouth, chewed it, and swallowed. The food stuck in her throat. She blinked her eyes and forced it down. It went down in a lump, hurting as it went. The child kicked and she pulled a face.

All the months, she told herself. All the months.

~~Her cheeks were sunken, the rosiness had gone from them. Her round, firm, solid body had caved in and there were many hollows where there had once been flesh. There was a new dullness in her eyes: the so eyes that had flashed so brightly in the valley. Her mouth, the strong, understanding and generous mouth of the valley was two thin, straight lines.~~



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She forced another spoonful down.

Those days of the valley, and, looking back, they were happy days, now seemed to belong to another world and another person. *Not to Biltong Anna.*  
~~Curiously, she wondered if the Anna who had been in that valley was the same person whom she knew. And this Kasper, this man, down there he had been different.~~

She pushed another spoonful into her mouth and tried to remember the man/ she had known, the man who had been her husband, the man whose child she now carried. What was he like, that man? What came first?

First..... First he was quiet and soft. Yes. That was the thing about him. Quiet and soft. That man felt things but couldn't speak of them. The other woman, *not Biltong Anna,* ~~the woman she had been,~~ had known this. She had known about him feeling things and not being able to speak. That had been the reason for his mountain. Up there, ~~he~~ he had been with things. Things that could not speak but that were real. Yes. That was the first thing about that man. He was quiet and soft and felt things.

And second?

Second..... Second he loved her and he loved Stefan and he was strong inside. How does one know when a person is strong inside? Why, by the way ~~they~~ walked, the way ~~they~~ talked, the way ~~they~~ laughed, the look in ~~their~~ eyes. What other way was there? By looking and listening and knowing a person. ~~That is the only way.~~

She pushed a third spoonful down her mouth.

And now?

She looked at Stefan. The food choked her. She put the plate from her.



"More , Stefan?"

"No thank you, ma."

"You should eat more, boy. You're very thin, thinner than the other boys. Have more!"

Stefan looked at his father, then gave the plate to his mother. She put more food on it and gave it back to him.

"More Kasper?"

"No."

She got up and went to the wagon. She leaned against it and closed her eyes as the child kicked. Then, when the kicking was eased somewhat, she fetched ~~won~~ the things for the washing up.

Kasper got up and walked away, down the lane of tented wagons. When he had gone, Stefan looked at her with large eyes. She left her washing up ~~things~~ and came and sat beside him.

"Why is father always angry, ma?"

She ran her hand through his hair and smiled into his eyes.

"He does not mean to be."

"But he is."

"You must not be afraid of it. It doesn't mean anything."

"Doesn't he like us, ma?"

How to answer this, what to say, what would be true?

"It's not us, Stefan. I don't know how to tell you. I don't know how to make you understand. It's not us he doesn't like. Only.... Can you still remember our valley?"

"Yes. Oom Koos tells me about it often. Those terrible kaffirs took it from us. One day we will get them for it! You wait and see!"

"Yes, do you remember it?"

"Yes. We'll get it back one day!"



"But do you remember what it looks like, Stefan?"

"No."

"Well, it was a beautiful place. Before we left it, your father liked everybody though he never said it and never showed it. No<sup>w</sup> he likes nobody. It's not just us, Stefan."

"It's the kaffirs."

Is it the kaffirs? Is it really the kaffirs? If it isn't the kaffirs, then what is it? Koos says it's the kaffirs. Everybody says it's the kaffirs. If it isn't the kaffirs, then what can it be? There is nothing else it can be. Therefore, it has to be so.

"Yes," her voice was tired. "It's the kaffirs."

"I hate them! When I grow up I want to kill many of them!"

"Hush, Stefan."

"I do! They make father so that he's always angry with me. I want to kill many of them, like Oom Koos."

"You're too young to talk of killing..... Give me your plate. I know you don't want that."

"I want it now! Please, can I have more?"

She smiled and filled his plate. He ate with great enjoyment.

~~Koos smiled gaily at the three young men.~~

~~"I don't believe you," one said and laughed.~~

~~"It's true," he shrugged.~~

~~"Tell us about it then," another said.~~

~~He made himself more comfortable and grinned.~~

~~"Well, as I said, this kaffir chief said to me....."~~

~~"What's his name and where was this?" one asked.~~

~~"That is a secret. You must find these things out for yourself."~~

~~Besides, we're on the way in the morning."~~



through with you. Then I went to her....."

"Then what?"

Koos laughed gaily.

"That's all, boys."

"No....."

"You can't stop now!"

"Be a sport!"

"You are warm now. Working yourselves up by imagining it."

"Was she a virgin?"

"Sure."

"Did she cry?"

"Hah! .....Did she cry..... You should have heard her."

"Tell us, man."

"I've finished, boys."

"You devil!"

Koos shrugged and moved away. There was a gay swing to his step.

"Jansen!" the fat one called after him.

"No more stories today," he called back.

"What about the Scheepers girls? Which one have you got now?"

He carried on through the lane of wagons. Only his laughter came back to them.

Karel Elst said:

"Moses!" His voice was charged with fury.

Moses looked up from the piece of wood he was carving. His eyes were calm and steady.

Ma Cellier said:

"Answer your father, Moses."



Moses said:

"He knows, I'm listening. Let him speak."

Lelia said:

"Moses." There was an appeal in her voice.

"Quiet, Lelia," Moses said. ~~calmly~~.

The ~~two~~ boys stared with open mouths.

"You two go and play for a while," Moses said. "Come back soon so that Lelia can put you to bed."

"Stay here!" Elst ordered the boys. "I want to speak to all of ~~you~~ you."

"Go on," Moses said. ~~calmly~~.

The boys dashed away. Karel Elst raised his fist and took a step toward Moses.

"You damned...." He trembled with rage.

Moses got up and stared coldly into his father's eyes. Blood rushed to Karel Elst's face. He raised his fist higher but did not strike.

"He is your father," Ma Cellier said.

Moses looked at his grandmother and smiled bitterly.

"Is he?..... They call him drunk Elst.... / Is that my father? Is that Lelia's father and the boy's father?..... / Drunk Elst."

The old woman spoke appealingly.

"He's suffered much, Moses. Everybody forgives him because they know what happened to him."

Karel Elst went back to his seat and sat with his head in his hands. Moses returned to his carving.

"You and the other people forget one thing, grandma. His wife and his child ~~was~~ <sup>we</sup> our mother and our little brother. What happened to him, happened to us too. He didn't suffer alone. We suffered with him."



"But you are young, Moses."

"What of it, grandma?"

"You don't feel things so much."

"You really believe that, don't you grandma?"

"But it is so, Moses." She was uncomfortable under the steady stare of this grandson of hers who had changed so much in so short a time.

"I wish you knew just how I feel.... Just how Lelia feels.... But no, we have no feelings. We are too young for such things. Only drunk Elst has any feeling. And you, and all the others forget she was our mother too. You forget that we also heard her screaming. How do you think we feel when people talk of our father with pity in their voices?.... Drunk Elst.... There is Moses. You know, drunk Elst's eldest son. He's the man in the family. If he weren't there they wouldn't have any food or anything else. And the girl, that's Lelia. She and the boy look after the children and feed everybody in the family. Yes, they're drunk Elst's children.... I wish you knew how I feel, grandma."

He flung away the piece of wood he'd been carving and got up.

Lelia said:

"We're out of meal, Moses."

"I'll get some."

He walked away.

Ma Cellier turned to Elst.

"You know, the boy's right, Karel. I've heard people say it just as he tells it. Only, he's hard. But then, the young are hard. But he's right, Karel. Everything he says is right. She was their mother too, you know. Please, Karel, try to stop drinking. She would want you to look after them."



Karel Elst raised dull, lifeless, eyes to the old woman's face. Behind the dullness and lifelessness lurked a deep and permanent pain.

"We shouldn't have given in," he said hollowly. "We shouldn't ~~in~~ have ~~given~~ in. We should have armed ourselves and attacked them. We should have killed as many of them as we could. We should have killed them, our wives should have killed them, our children should have killed them. We shouldn't have given in. We should have armed ourselves and taken the Cape from them. That was our mistake. We didn't do it. We didn't fight."

He put his head back in his hands and sobbed like a little child.

Lelia looked at him for a while, shook her head, then went to him and put her arm round his shoulders.

"Its ~~all~~ <sup>all</sup> right, father. Its ~~all~~ <sup>all</sup> right." She spoke softly to him, comforting him with words of tenderness.

All the while, he wept with the bitterness of a child deeply hurt.

~~The two families were together. Only the three Bezuidenhout boys were not there. They had all eaten together. Now the things were cleared away and they sat round the fire. Martinus Van As cleared his throat. Jafta Bezuidenhout looked at Paul. Paul thought, now. Elsie slipped her hand into his. Sara Van As looked at her husband and then at her son. She decided that she might be able to start better than the man.~~

~~"Your father wants to talk to you about something very serious, Paul. Please listen to him and be reasonable. It is only for your good. You do not want to begin your family under a shadow....." In the silence that followed her words, she regretted having spoken.~~

~~This was really a man's affair.~~

~~Paul looked from his mother to his father. He waited.~~



They walked on the outskirts of the city of tented wagons.

"You know what this means," <sup>Paul</sup> he said.

"It doesn't matter," <sup>Elsie</sup> she said.

"Have you heard people talking?"

"No," she lied.

"Your people might have nothing more to do with you."

"You are my husband."

"I'm sorry about that."

"Any case, I think you are wrong. Mother will speak to me."

"She might not."

"Even that doesn't matter. You are the one that matters."

"I can't help it, Elsie. It's the way I feel."

"Why is it so important, Paul?"

"It wasn't important to me at all, Elsie. It was only after the  
...only until."

"Until what?"

"Only until the Jansen business..... Oh don't be upset, Elsie.  
I'm just trying to explain."

"I'm not upset. Tell me."

"It was only after Koos Jansen had done that to you. You see, if  
treating kaffirs the way he did, could make him do that to you, then  
there was something terrible about it. It was that that began it all."

~~"You mean with kaffir girls?"~~

~~"No, not that. I'll tell you what I mean."~~

They walked in silence for a while, then he said:

"The first time I killed anybody, I couldn't sleep for weeks.  
Sometimes now I still remember it. It was one of a group of kaffir  
thieves who tried to steal some of the cattle on our farm. My father



and I went out after them and I shot one of them. It made me sick for a very long time. But after that it was easy to kill. That's what I mean. If you kick a ~~black~~ <sup>black</sup> man, it's not hard to kick a white man afterwards. If you rape a ~~black~~ <sup>black</sup> girl, it's easy to rape a white girl afterwards. You see, after the first time it becomes easy. Just as it was with the second man I killed. After I had killed a number I never thought of it. Once, not so long ago, I came back from a scouting expedition and ate a good meal after I had killed three kaffirs. It's that that's wrong, Elsie. We become hard inside...."

"But will it change if you talk, Paul?"

"I don't know. Only, I feel better about it if I say how I feel. You see, Elsie, I'm afraid of what's happening to our people. I see and hear it every day. I'm afraid that my children might grow up like that and be hard. You have only to look at Kees Jansen to know it's not a good way to grow up. It kills all the good that is in a person."

"Perhaps we will all change after we've reached where we are going, Paul."

"Only if we remember what we were before we went. If we don't we won't know what we were before we changed into hard people, and our children would grow up like that. Look at my father, it was he who taught me to think for myself and trust my feeling. But now he's changed like so many others have."

"My father too."

"Then you understand what I mean."

"I think so, Paul.... Only I'm worried. If you have ~~no~~ <sup>no</sup> friends and are alone, you won't be happy."

"I would feel guilty if I gave in."

"Couldn't you just say so without meaning it. That wouldn't hurt anybody."



"It would. I would be lying to myself, and I would be lying to everybody else. I don't want to be against everybody, Elsie. I'm not. You know I'm not."

"I know that, Paul. It's just that you like your father so much, and he likes you so much. And I don't think it's good for a man to be without friends."

"I must be true to myself, Elsie. Oh, I don't mind for myself, it's you I'm worried about. I don't want you to be unhappy."

"Stop worrying about me. The only thing that can make me unhappy is if anything goes wrong between us. Nothing else matters. Come now, let's go back. I feel a bit tired."

They turned and retraced their steps to the city of tented wagons, among which was their wagon, their home. In the intimate manner that was between them, Elsie put her hand into Paul's and laced her fingers through his. She swung her hand a little, easily, with the movements of a child.

"Elsie....!"

"Heh...?"

"You are sure about the baby?"

She laughed.

"My last period began three days before we were married."

"Then it's certain."

"Of course it's certain. Stop worrying."

In a brooding voice he said:

"I don't want my children to be hard; I don't want them to hate people just because they look different."

"They need not, Paul."

"Only if we watch over them and see that they don't."



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"We can do that."

"Do you want to?"

"I want to do what you want, Paul."

"Not only because I want to, but because it's right."

"Yes, Paul."

At their wagons Moses Elst waited. He said:

"Paul, what's this I hear about the Commandant."

Elsie left them.

"Perhaps you've heard ~~all~~ all this talk, Tant Anna."

"No, Elsie."

"People say Paul is a kaffir-boetie. I don't know what to do. He tries to pretend that it doesn't matter but I know he's very unhappy. Now there's trouble between him and his father. I don't think his father will speak to him again. Tell me, Tant Anna, you know so much, is he right?"

"What about, Elsie?"

"The kaffirs. Treating and speaking to them like he treats us."

Anna tried to think about it. Elsie's face was so anxious, she looked so young in the firelight. So young. Are kaffirs human? Is it right to treat them like white people? So young. What shall I tell her?

"He's alone now," Elsie said. "The only friend he has is Moses Elst. It isn't good for a man to be alone. Please tell me."

So young. She'd been young once. What does one do with kaffirs? Kill them, of course. Kasper and Koos and all the others say only dead kaffirs are good kaffirs. Are they right or is Paul right? So young. Must think about this and answer the child. Wonder where Kas-



per is. Doesn't really matter. Oh, but it does! Yes, it does.

She closed her eyes and tried to think. Only the valley and Kasper shone clear in her mind. She opened her eyes and looked at Elsie. She took the girl's hands.

"Does he speak to you?"

"Yes."

"Does he speak about these things?"

"Yes. We went walking and he spoke to me about them. That's why I came to you. You see, you know more than me and him."

A faraway look crept into Anna's eyes. She remembered the time Paul had seen her down by the river. He had understood.

"Did he hold your hand?"

"Yes," Elsie looked closely at Anna.

"Was his voice soft?"

"Yes.....But....."

"That is important, Elsie. That is the most important. Everything he does and says must be right if you are close to him and he holds your hand and speaks to you in a soft voice. That is important, Elsie, more important than you know.... Does his voice make you feel warm, as though the sun is on you?"

Elsie looked at Anna in silence. Anna's expression and voice changed.

"Don't laugh, Elsie: I'm not mad. I know what I'm saying. If his voice is soft and he holds your hand and looks into your eyes, then he can't be very wrong, Elsie. I know that."

Elsie looked at Anna's face then turned her eyes away. She was afraid ~~of~~ <sup>to</sup> looking again. She wanted to get up and hurry away, to



find Paul and tell him about this. But she was afraid of going, afraid what Tant Anna might think, and just afraid.

She sat quietly, awkwardly, staring down at the fire. Anna picked up the material in her lap and continued her sewing. Her thin, haggard face looked calm in the firelight.

On the fire, a three-legged pot began to sing gaily. Its music blended with the sweet gaiety of a few little creatures of the veld who sang nearby.

"Have a mug of coffee with me," Anna said.

"Please," Elsie said in a small voice.

Lena Bezuidenhout stepped out of the shadowy gloom and stood beside the fire.

"I'm glad you're here, Elsie."

"I didn't know if you'd speak to me, Mother."

"You wait till you're a mother," Anna said.

"Mothers always speak to their children," Lena said.

"No matter what happens," Anna said.

"I'm glad," Elsie said.

Anna got up and made the coffee. Lena sat beside her daughter and took her hand.

"Told Anna?"

"Yes."

"Everybody tells Anna."

"She think's I'm mad," Anna said softly.

"No, Tant Anna!" Elsie protested.

"But you do, child."

"No, really!"

Lena laughed without humour. They drank their coffee in silence.



Around them were the many lights of the many wagons; around them were the many voices of the many families; the many noises and the many silences. This was a city and they were part of the city, citizens. From ~~Paraway~~ came the voices of young people, singing. From another direction came the laughter and music of a dance. This was a city, a moving city with heart and ~~nerves~~ <sup>nerves</sup> and arteries.

Elsie said:

"I must go."

"I'll come with you," Lena said. "I want Paul to know I'm still his mother-in-law.... I'll be back soon, Anna."

Mother and daughter walked away. Anna sat quietly sewing.

When they were out of the glow of the firelight, Elsie turned to Lena.

"Oh mother!" An involuntary shiver shot through her.

"What did she say?"

"She asked me about intimate things: whether Paul looked at me and spoke in a soft voice and took my hand."

"What else?"

"Her eyes turned black and she said only that was important."

"Was that all?"

"Yes.... Oh mother!"

"You are growing up, Elsie.... She's very unhappy. Poor Anna."

"Why, mother, why?"

Lena smiled in the darkness; a strange, twisted smile that her daughter could not see.

"If anyone knows the answer to that, I think Paul does, my child. Ask him. Perhaps he doesn't. But if he doesn't, don't bother to ask



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anybody else.

"Then you think Paul is right?"

"I don't know, Elsie. Only, remember what Anna told you."

"You too, mother!"

Again Lena's twisted smile was hidden by the darkness.

> # <

Kasper climbed out of the valley till he stood a little to the right of where Dabula had been early that morning. A young moon was in the sky, clear and bright with a cluster of stars around it. From Moroka's Hoek and the city of wagons, many twinkling lights shone. The spring nights were getting warm. Summer was not far away. Soon the days would be hot again and the sun would beat down pitilessly. From the hard, mountain earth rose many scents, but the strongest of these was the sweet smell of honey. The noises of the little wild things of the world were everywhere. There was peace in the ~~spring~~ night air.

He found a flat stone and sat on it. He rested his rifle on his knees. Having his rifle with him was a habit. Like wearing clothes or eating ~~food~~.

Soon all this would end. So now, the long journey would be over and they would take land and build houses and start a new life. ~~Very soon now~~. The Commandant had said so. Wise man, the Commandant. He thought of everything. This morning he had talked about making a trip to the east coast where another trekking party had gone, and seeing if there would be a port for their use. Wise man, the Commandant. He was looking ahead. He had said they would want to export what they got from the land. Europe would buy. The English had the port of Cape Town, Natal was too far away, and he was afraid the English would take that too, so he was taking a small party to see if he could not make an agreement with the Portuguese who had a port on the east



coast. He thinks of everything, does the Commandant. Everything.

~~Like turning a corner,~~ His thoughts swung away from the Commandant.

He said aloud, thinking of Anna:

"Everything will be <sup>all</sup> ~~all~~ right."

When they had their home, when they were settled, everything would be <sup>all</sup> ~~all~~ right again. She would stop pulling away from him. She would stop being strange and strained. It was leaving their valley that had done this to her. Also the coming baby. He could think calmly about the valley. But women were different. Such a long time since they had talked to each other. Of course, she didn't think of him and what he felt.

They would show these kaffirs. Good thing about the boy and Koos. Anna was putting the boy against him. Never mind. Koos and the boy were good friends. Koos would see to it that the boy remembered the valley and all that had happened to them. Koos would see to that. Very popular fellow, young Koos. He should go far. Not like that Van As boy. Not at all. A man. Of course, Koos was his brother, his father's son. Blood would tell.

Yes, blood would tell. These days and months had brought him close to his father and the spirit of his people. These days had given him strength. These days, listening and talking to the Commandant and the others, he had felt strength grow in him. They would build a nation founded on strength, just and good. The key to all their future was to know the kaffirs and deal with them firmly. Meet cunning with cunning, trickery with trickery. Watch them all the time.... Pity about Anna. Great pity. But she would come to her senses as soon as they ~~were~~ <sup>well</sup> settled. Perhaps before. ~~But~~ he had to ~~be~~ firm. A man rules his house and his family. A man is the



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source of all strength. She would learn that.

He got up and made his way back, down to the many twinkling lights in the valley. He felt calm. There was no conflict anywhere in him. Only a determination to get to grips with the kaffirs and show them, only the solid, rocklike will to avenge his valley and what had happened there. Every kaffir was the cunning old Johannes to whom he had given tobacco.

> # <

And in the valley people prepared for the morrow. There was much to be done. Things to put away, harnesses to mend, wheels to grease, shorts roots to ~~be~~ pull up.

They worked and talked and laughed far into the night. Then, when all the work was done, the lights went out one by one and silence descended on the city of tented wagons.

In the morning they would be on the way again. Only this time, the end of the journey was near.

The young moon was bright over the silent land. ~~Because of its brightness the land was not dark.~~



[The two boys crouched low behind the boulder and stared in terror-stricken amazement. Lower down, where the Vaal River twisted like a snake going by a stone, things were happening.

"Look!" the smaller boy whispered. "Look!"

"Yes," the big one said.

The small boy began to whimper.

~~"They cannot be evil spirits," the big boy said. "One cannot hide from spirits."~~

"They are spirits," the little boy said. Tears streamed down his face. His body shook with fear.

"They are crossing the river!" the big boy said.

"Let us go home," the little boy pleaded.

"Careful or they will see us," the big boy said.

They crawled out of their hiding place and moved ~~on~~ upriver bending double. From down there, strange noises drifted up to them. The noises of the cattle they understood, but all the other noises were strange and frightening. They moved on till some huge boulders hid the things down there from their sight.

"Run!" the big boy said.

They ran as if the devil ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> behind them. They ran without looking back till they reached the hill behind which their village lay. ~~All the time the little boy cried, his being possessed by terror. At the crest of the hill they looked back. Yes, the things were still there. They turned and ran down the other side.~~

<sup>when</sup> ~~By the time~~ they got to the village the little boy could not speak. His teeth chattered, gasping sobs shook his body, ~~but no word came from him.~~



The big boy tried to explain but failed. He kept pointing across the hill. How could one tell of a thing when there were no words to describe it? ~~It was like nothing else he knew. It was new and he didn't have the new words for it.~~ He pointed across the hill and talked of things crossing the river.

A body of men took up their spears and shields and went across the hill. The villagers came out ~~in a body~~ and watched them climb to the crest of the hill. There were fifty men. At their head was their chief.

When they disappeared on the other side of the crest, the people returned to the little affairs of their day. Expeditions often went out when strange tribes appeared. They would come back. They were warriors of Mzilikazi, lord of the lion and elephant. Their village was the southern outpost of the great empire of the Matabele. ~~And the people knew that fifty Matabele warriors were a match for a whole army of any other tribe. Perhaps it was all for nothing. Perhaps the boys were frightened by something that did not really exist. The women went back to their spring sowing; their fathers would come back. The old folk went back to their dreaming; their sons would come back.~~

It was ever so, they went and did the king's business and then they came back and took up the routine of their lives when there were no battles to fight. It would be so again. ~~It was ever so.~~

An hour later a woman idly lifted her eyes from what she was doing and looked at the crest of the hill. The idleness left her eyes. Her forehead creased in a frown. She looked again, hard.

Four men were coming down the crest of the hill. Four warriors. She knew those spears and shields. No other tribe, or nation had, or



dared use, shields and spears such as those. But only four men? Fifty had gone over that crest. Why <sup>did</sup> only four ~~one~~ return? She called to other people and pointed. They, in turn, called others and pointed. Soon, the whole village was gathered to await the four.

"Look! One of them is wounded," an old man said.

Two men supported a third between them.

A woman said anxiously:

"That one on the left looks like my man."

Another said:

"We shall soon see the others." But there was fear in her voice.

~~But because they were all really so surprised and perplexed to speak, silence soon enveloped them and they waited. What could this mean? Nothing like it had ever happened in the history of this outpost or in the history of the whole nation. Fifty men went out and only four returned. What could it mean?~~

Now the men were close enough for the people to see. The wounded one was their chief! On his left shoulder, near his neck, was much blood. But how could this be? He was their chief, and only the bravest and best fighters among the Matabele are made chiefs. What tribe is there whose warriors can inflict such a wound on a Matabele chief? The people waited in stunned silence.

Their chief tried to stand on his own when he got to his people but he swayed and the two had to hold him again. How the blood flowed from him! What a terrible look in his eyes! What a terrible look in all their eyes! What had they seen?

"Inzwinyani....." the chief whispered.

When they heard his voice they knew death was among them. ~~Its rattle was in his words.~~



"All flee there!" His voice was fainter now. Death was near. He turned his eyes to the man on his left. The man bent his head low that he might hear.

"Tell Gubuza," he whispered.

Suddenly the chief shivered. A terrible light was above him. A point that came from afar. Sharp and dazzling. It raced toward him. He wanted to get away from it, to avoid it. It struck terror into him. He opened his mouth to cry out. The point of piercing brightness exploded in his brain. His head fell forward, his body went limp.

"He is dead," the man on his left said.

"What happened?" an old man asked.

"Fifty went," a young woman said. "Where is my man?"

The man on the left of the dead chief said:

"Make haste for Inzwinyani. Across the hill is a terrible evil. I go to warn Gubuza. Make haste for Inzwinyani or a terrible death of thunder and lightning will strike you."

He left them and began to run in the direction of Inzwinyani. He would run till he got there. He was trained to that. He was a warrior of Mzilikazi, King of the Natabela, emperor of all central South Africa.

Those who remained hastily buried their chief. Then they went to their huts and bundled up their possessions. The boys drove the cattle before them. The women carried their children on their backs, and some of their household possessions on their heads. Each man was loaded with the things that had made up the place he had called home.



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end [ The generals looked at each other and shook their heads. In their eyes was disbelief.

gal 97 "My nostrils are touched by the stench of treachery?" Tabata said.

"I smell it too," Dambuza echoed.

Mzilikazi looked at Gubuza. Gubuza looked at Mkomози, then turned his eyes to the man.

"This one speaks what he has seen," Mkomози said. "It is in his eyes. Look at them."

"But what he reports is not possible," Sitonga said harshly.

"Yet he has seen them. Look at his eyes!"

"Eyes! Eyes! Eyes can lie," Danda said.

"Not those eyes," Mkomози said quietly.

"Stop this wrangling!" Mzilikazi cried in sudden anger.

All this time, Gubuza had kept his eyes on that of the man in front of them. His mind tried to grapple with what those eyes told him, tried to wrest from them the secret that had put horror and resignation and some unnamed and formless fear in them. Matabele warriors did not fear death. What was behind those eyes? What terrible things had they seen?

"You are a soldier," he said in a ~~soft~~ gentle voice.

"Yes, my lord." It was even in the man's voice.

"Be calm, then, as befits a warrior of the king."

"Yes, lord." [He would never be calm again.]

What could it be?

"Tell me slowly and in a calm manner that I <sup>may</sup> understand. Answer my questions with care."



"Yes, lord."

"Good.... Now tell me, how did it begin? How did you know of these things?"

"Two-of-the-boys-from-our-village."

"Calmly, my son; slowly. Now start again."

The kindly voice eased the man a little.

"Two...of...the...boys...came...from...the river..."

"Now rest.... What did they say?"

"They could not speak."

"That is fine. I understand all your words now. What did they do?"

"The...younger...one cried..."

"Slowly, my son, slowly."

"He hid his face against his mother and cried as no child does."

"And then?"

"The bigger one tried to speak, but he could not. He pointed across the hill that leads down the river."

"So you went?"

"Yes, lord."

"The whole outpost of fifty men. Why?"

"It was the faces of the boys, lord. The chief saw their faces and said all the men should go."

"A wise man your chief," Mkomozzi said. "He could tell truth by looking at faces. He could also tell the importance of a truth."

A warrior brought beer and gave it to the man. He drank with trembling fingers. He was much calmer now. The voice of Gubuzza had soothed him. The understanding of Mkomozzi had comforted him.

"So all fifty of you went," Gubuzza said patiently. ~~after the warrior had taken the empty calabash from the man.~~



"Yes, lord."

"Now tell us what you saw. Calmly, my son."

"When we reached the crest of the hill we saw....a....strange... sight."

"Calmly, son."

"In the valley there were things on wheels that looked like huts."

"Many?"

"The valley was full of them. They reached back to the other side of the river. They were strange things, these huts on wheels."

"Huts on wheels....." Gubuza was thoughtful.

Mkomozi said:

"Many years ago a wise old man in the south tied wood together and made his cows draw it. Then another put things on the wood and the animals drew that as well."

"Moshesh spoke of these things," Gubuza said..... "Then what?"

"We went down <sup>into</sup> the valley and creatures riding animals came to us." Suddenly the young man closed his eyes tight.

"I have ridden them too," Gubuza said softly. "In the land of Moshesh there are many of them."

The young man opened his eyes and stared at Gubuza.

"It is true, my son."

"Then...they...were...men...father....!"

"Yes, my son. They were men."

"They had the shapes of men...but."

"Calmly, my son. You speak of men, though strange men. But?"

"Their faces! Their faces were covered with hair. Like <sup>those</sup> of baboons. But they were white in colour. And hair everywhere!"

A strange look crept into Gubuza's eyes. He was remote, lost in a



world of thought beyond the reach of all these others. Perhaps only Mkomози could go there with him. For the others, where he was would be unreality, madness. He looked at Mkomози, and for the first time in his years, there was a touch of fear in him, but it was soon pushed away by the wistfulness that ~~convinced his being~~ *took hold of him.*

"White men with hair on their faces." His voice was just above a whisper. "So they have come....."

"Yes, my friend," Mkomози said.

"What is this?" Tabata cried in anger.

Gubuza shook his head, as if to clear his brain.

"Patience," he said. He turned to the young man. "They were coming to you on their ponies. Go on."

"At a distance they stopped. Then the leader among them called:

"Who are you?"

"You could understand them?"

"They spoke in our language."

"In our language? All of them?"

"Only one spoke, lord. I know not of the others."

"Go on."

"Our chief cried: We are warriors of Mzilikazi! We guard his southern outposts! No stranger might enter his land without his blessing! lest the wrath of Mzilikazi be aroused. If you ~~have~~ *do not* his blessing, turn and go where you come from lest a swift and terrible death reaches out for you! Those were his words, my lord."

"Yes. Go on."

"The leader spoke to the others but we could not hear. Then there was laughter among them. It angered our warriors. Men who laughed at the name of the great Mzilikazi do not live long after their laughter....."



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"What happened then, my son?"

"Their leader cried 'We come in search of land and we mean to stay, whether your King wills it or not. We will not turn back. If your king dare try to turn us back, he will find that ours is a greater and more terrible wrath than his. We mean to have the land and we will take it!' Those were his words, my lord."

"Then what?"

"Our anger was great against these strange beings. Our chief shouted the royal salute and we swept down on them, meaning to fall on them and slay everyone of them.....But...."

The young man shut his eyes and clenched his fists. Tremors shook his body. Gubuza got up and went to ~~the young man~~ <sup>him</sup>. He put his arm <sup>round the man's</sup> ~~on his~~ shoulders and led him to a couch. He pushed him down but the young man resisted. A warrior does not sit in the council chamber of his king ~~and his generals~~. Gubuza pressed harder.

"Sit, my son."

Gubuza sat beside him and kept his arm on the young man's shoulders.

"Now tell us the rest, and be calm for you are a warrior of the king." He felt the boy tremble under his hand.

"As we rushed ~~to~~ them, lord, they raised sticks to their shoulders.....Oh, my general!"

"Calmly, my son. You have seen a strange thing and it has shaken you. But I, too, must know of it if I am to protect you and all our people from it. What happened when they raised these sticks?"

The young man clenched his hands and spoke through tight lips:

"Before we could get near enough to strike them or to throw ~~our~~ spears, the sound of thunder came from their sticks and lightning



struck us!"

A sigh went up in the council chamber.

"Yes, my son?"

"Great gashes appeared on the bodies of our warriors and they fell down dead. Oh, my lord! Oh Gubuza!"

Gubuza held the young man tight. How his body shook!

"Yes, my son?"

"Twice we rushed on them..... Then all our warriors lay dead on the ground. All save three and our chief, and he had a great gash in his shoulder of which he died in our village."

"How many did you kill?" Tabata asked.

"Not one, my lord. We could not reach them."

Gubuza stared into space.

"How did the four of you escape, my son?"

"They let us be, my lord. They laughed and let us be. Their leader said: 'Go back to your king and tell him of our wrath.' Then they rode their animals back to where the many huts on wheels crossed the river. They laughed when they left us. And they waved their terrible sticks in the air."

"And you say there are many of them?"

"Many, lord. If they are to come here, all the valley of Inzwinyani would be filled from one end to the other with all their huts on wheels."

A silence that could be felt hung over the council chamber. Its ~~thunder~~ echoes beat heavy on the men. Meaning and reason had gone out of their world. If what this young man said was true, then everything that had been could not have been. How could men make thunder and lightning and push it into sticks and then release it



and kill other men with? How could it be? How could the world be the world if that were so? The silence was charged with the frightfulness of the unknown.

Mkomozi was the first to shatter the silence. He took something from his medicine bag and looked at it. Gubuza got up and called. A soldier came in.

Gubuza said:

"Take this young man and give him food and let him rest."

"No food," Mkomozi said. He opened his hand and held out the thing he had taken from his bag. "Put this in beer and give it to him. It will make him sleep. When he wakes up you may give him food."

Gubuza patted the young man's shoulder.

"You have done well, my son. Fear not."

The strange, nameless look was still in the young man's eyes as he went out. Though young, he moved like a man suddenly grown old.

Dingiswayo, the silent one among the generals, asked, looking at Mzilikazi:

"What is the meaning of this thing, my lord?"

"I do not know," Mzilikazi said slowly. "Ask Gubuza.... Tell us, Gubuza, what is the meaning of this thing?"

"I do not believe that craven's word!" Tabata said.

"Tell us, Gubuza," Mzilikazi said.

"These men bring things that have great goodness in them," Mkomozi said.

"Yet they would take our land," Gubuza said heavily.

"It is ever so, my friend. Did you not fear it might be so when you first heard the news of these people?"

"I feared it might be so."



"I feared without knowing what I feared, Mkomozzi. I did not fear the taking of our land."

"The matter is out of our hands," Mkomozzi said. "This is the change that had to come."

Gubuza's head snapped back. His eyes cleared.

"Land is the life of people. For that, all men fight. These people come with arrogance in their heart. They kill our men and send mocking messages to us. If that is the meaning of their coming, then we must fight them. The land is ours. Let us call forth our soldiers and fight for it. They have a terrible weapon, but it is a weapon made by men. Let us go out and meet it. Land is the life of our people of our nation. Mzilikazi, those are my words!"

Very, very softly, under his breath so that no one heard him, Mkomozzi whispered: "Oh, Gubuza..."

"But what of this strange weapon?" Sitonga asked.

Gubuza towered above them. His voice was firm and steady.

"Time comes to an end, my brothers. That we know. For old men and old women, for young men and young women, there is an end to time. No man lives forever, no beast lives forever, no blade of grass lives forever." Suddenly there was much light in his brain and he saw things clearly. "It is so with nations and empires too. Time has an end for them too. No thing exists for which time has no end, be it big or be it small, be it powerful or be it weak. Time has an end for us too, my brothers. That is the meaning of this thing that has been brought to us by the young man. It means that a force is among us that has come to challenge our power. Perhaps it is a greater force than ours and the kingdom of the Matabele will go down before it as other kingdoms have gone down before us. Perhaps it is not."



"There are two things to choose from. You have heard of the terrible weapon these strange men have. Think of that when you choose between these two things.

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"First, we can do this: we can take up the things that are ours, and, driving our cattle before us, we can leave this land and move north till we cross the great Limpopo. That is the first.

"Second, we can go out and meet these people. We can give them battle. We can face their terrible weapon and try to overcome it. And if we succeed, why, then the land would remain in our hands and perhaps we would learn the secret of this weapon and make it for ourselves. But the land would be ours. Our cattle would graze on its hillsides and in its valleys. Our people would roam its rolling plain in freedom and without fear. That is the second thing to choose from, my lords. Choose!

"For myself I have often thought and wondered about the coming of these people. Ever since my friend, Moshesh, spoke of them many years ago. Sometimes I thought their coming might bring new wisdom that would put an end to our fighting. I thought they might come in peace. If they had come thus, I, Gubuza, would have gone to them and said; 'Wise men from the seas! I come to sit at your feet that I might learn your wisdom.' I would have gone to them and said that! But they come in the name of war! They come speaking the old language of blood and wrath, the old language of war. Oh, where are my hopes! They come with new ways and new weapons but no new wisdom! Then, let them come! Even if I die, I would meet them and test their weapon with my blood. Even thus would I avenge the vain hopes that were born in me when I heard of their coming.

"I do not know how you feel, my brothers. I am for war! Let us



crush these strangers or die, for after their coming the land ~~would~~<sup>will</sup> be desolate and ~~there~~<sup>will</sup> be much weeping in the hearts of the mothers of our children. They bring no new wisdom! They bring new means of death!"

When he stopped ~~talking~~ his dark face was flushed. His dark eyes flashed. The spell of his passionate anger gripped all but one. Only old Mkomози seemed calm.

"You have heard Gubuza, the leader of our armies," Mzilikazi said. "He speaks with my voice."

Tabata cried:

"Bayete!"

The others joined him. ~~The thrice-called~~ salute echoed through the council chamber and the royal huts.

"Bayete!"

Gubuza strode out. Those in the chamber heard his voice calling to soldiers:

"Let the war-drums be sounded! Call in the tribes! Call in all the warriors of the nation! Let the war-drums be heard!"

Dambuza said to Tabata:

"Gubuza is angry. He is great when he is angered thus."

Under his breath, Mkomози whispered:

"Fool! You do not understand."

A hopeless, futile, bitter, anger rose in him ~~suddenly~~. He wanted to hate somebody. He looked at Dambuza, then at Tabata. How he wished he could hate them! But there was only pity in his breast. Only pity. He tried to hate Gubuza, but how could he? Gubuza was his brother. More so than if he had been a child of his mother. He cast about in his mind for something to hate. Now, those strangers with their ter-



rible weaponx. But even they could not arouse hatred in him. How could one hate people? They were so foolish, so stupid, so unwise. It would be like hating a child for its naughtiness. Oh, if only he could hate somebody! Perhaps then, this pain in him would go. If only he could hate somebody. It is easy to hate war. War does not speak or breathe or eat or sleep. War has no heart that beat, no brain that ~~think~~ thinks. War is a creation of man. Not a man. If only he could find a man to hate. The things men do, the evil they sometimes did, that he could hate. Yet it was a man he wanted to hate, for only thus could he ease the pain within him. But there was no one. No man on whom he could vent his pain.

He walked out of the council chamber.

From hilltop to hilltop the message was carried.

Come to Inzwinyani.

The war-drums carried it through the air.

Come to Inzwinyani.

A tom-tom beat and a tom-tom answered.

Come to Inzwinyani.

Everywhere men took their spears and shields and set out for the king's city.

There was an enemy in the land. He had to be expelled.

Gubuza went home. Soldiers were streaming into the city from everywhere. Soon there would be an army, then two, then three, and



before ~~so~~ long all the armies would be at hand. By ~~the~~ morning they would be ready for the enemy. He and the generals would go into the field tonight with the first army. ~~There was much to be done.~~

He rounded some huts and saw <sup>N</sup>anda waiting for him at their door. She had brought out his shield and spear. They leaned against a wall. ~~He felt~~ **A** deep sadness ~~coming over~~ <sup>came over</sup> him. How quietly she waited.

She looked soberly into his eyes then looked at the shield and spear. He nodded.

"The white men have come," he said.

"Must we fight them?" she asked.

"Yes."

"You are so sad....!" Her voice trailed off.

"I had great hopes."

"Then it must be."

"It must be. They come to take our land. They speak the old language of war and arrogance."

"Yes.... Have you time?"

"Only a little. I only came to see you before going."

"I knew you would come."

He thought: She knows I may not come back this time.

"This is a strange enemy," he said. "They have a new weapon."

"Come inside," she said.

He shook his head.

"Let us sit ~~down~~ outside."

They went to the back of the huts and sat ~~down~~ on low stools. The noise of the city was all around them. But it seemed as though they were alone in a very quiet world. For a long time they sat in silence. At last <sup>N</sup>anda asked:



"All the armies?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then this weapon is terrible."

"It is a stick that pierces a man's skin from a great distance."

They lapsed into silence again. A blanket of intimate silence that covered many things. Nanda stirred and turned her eyes to him. ~~He looked into her placid eyes.~~ Her face was calm but he felt the heaviness of the calm.

"Will you come back?"

"I don't know."

Always before, he had known. Now it was different.

A maiden brought them two bowls of sour milk. After the maiden had gone some time, Mkomози came and sat with them. No one said a word. Gubuza shared his milk with Mkomози.

The sun <sup>that</sup> had seemed motionless overhead, was suddenly low over the western hills. The long shadows were everywhere. The short ones had gone.

When only the last rays of the sun still showed, Mkomози got up. He put his hand on Gubuza's shoulder.

"I will watch you from the hills," he said. He turned to Nanda, "Stay well, sister."

When he had gone, Gubuza turned to Nanda.

"I must go." ~~For the first time he touched her.~~ He reached out and covered her hand with his own. He stared intently into her face then lowered his head. She gripped his hand.

"Nanda....."

"Yes, Gubuza....?"



"I may not return."

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"I know."

"Then listen." He raised his head and looked into her eyes. He leaned forward till his face was close to hers. When he spoke again his voice was soft, almost a whisper. "If I do not return to you, sweet Nanda, do not weep for me for I do not need it. Weep for the young and weep for our nation. Weep for Inzwinyani and the children of Matshobani for they will need your weeping."

"You see, you and I have been fortunate. We've had a chance to grow old together. The years have been kind to us. We have been touched by summer rains and winter winds. More fortunate than most. On cold nights we have sat beside warm fires; on warm nights we have lain beneath the stars. You and I have climbed mountains and crossed rivers together. We have sat side by side and talked quietly. Some times we have sat in silence. You and I have made long journeys and seen much of the world. Together, we have known laughter, you and I. And sadness. We shared the death of our son. We have shared much, you and I.... Think of it. We are old. The years are behind us. And, sweet Nanda, we have shared them. All those years. Remember? We were young when we first met. A boy and a girl. Such a long time we have shared. I thought of it as we sat here. Such a long time. More than most."

"But our people are young. Like Ntombi and Dabula who have not shared much. And this evil thing that has come among us can destroy them. Think of the years that are between us and think what they would miss if they cannot have that. And then, weep for them if I do not return. There is no need to weep for me or for you. Our lives have been richer than most. We are old. Soon we must die in any



case for time has an end for everyone and it is not possible for you to come where I go. But if I do not return, Nanda, remeber<sup>m</sup> the past and that we have been more fortunate than most and weep for the young, not for me."

He left her sitting there.

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Bright morning.

Topping the hill that led down into the valley of Inzwinyani, their eyes were struck by the activity about the king's city. Dark columns moved everywhere. Spears glistened in the morning sun.

The joy of homecoming left Mnandi's heart. Her hands tightened about the reins of her pony.

"Armies, Dabula!"

"Yes, mother. All the king's armies."

"What does it mean?"

"There is only one meaning, the strange white men are here." ~~The king's armies go out to meet them.~~

"What of the words of Moshesh?"

"Let us hasten, mother, that I might deliver them to Gubuza."

They spurred their ponies on and hastened down into the valley.

Many eyes stared, first to see the strange animals these two rode, then to look at the two themselves. Assuredly, that was Dabula, Captain of the king's armies. And that was Mnandi with him! The queen who had disappeared was among them again! The flower of the heart of Mzilikazi had returned! A good omen, this! ~~The sweet Mnandi was among them. The mother of the people! The joy of the king!~~

~~They whispered it among themselves. They made way that the queen might pass. They saluted her with loving words. Was she not the mother of them all even as Mzilikazi was their father? The word spread till it dominated all else at Inzwinyani. Even the coming of the strangers~~



~~who had to be expelled. For a space of time, there was only the talk of the return of the queen. She had been as one dead, now she had returned to them. A good omen, this.~~

At the gateway of the royal huts, Mzilikazi waited. There was an empty space around him and he stood alone. He did not move as they neared him. ~~He just waited, as a calm man waits. But in his eyes was the~~ <sup>his eyes</sup> ~~lie to his calmness. They~~ <sup>h</sup> ~~shone with a brightness that was dazzling.~~ And there was a wetness about them, ~~too.~~

Dabula dismounted and helped the queen off. She walked slowly to Mzilikazi. In a soft voice she said:

"Greetings, my lord. I have been far but I have returned."

He looked down at her. He said:

"Welcome home, my daughter."

"How is the boy?" she asked.

"Lobengula and I have mourned these many days," he said.

"Then let us not keep him waiting, my lord. I, too, have mourned for you and for him and for our city."

Together, side by side, they went into the royal huts.

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"My lord has gone to war," the maiden said.

Dabula pushed past her.

"Where is mother Nanda?"

"In her chamber. Mkomosi is with her. There is great heaviness in her heart and she wishes to speak to no one."

"She will speak to me."

"Yes, lord."

He hurried through the huts till he came to Nanda's. He lowered his head and went in.



She raised her eyes to Dabula's. "Welcome home, my son. Have you brought Mnandi with you?"

"Yes, mother. She is with the king..... Where is the Father? I bring him a message from Moshesh."

"What is the message?" Mkomozzi asked.

"That we do not fight the white people."

"It's too late," Nanda said. "He is on the field of battle."

"It is too late even if he were here," Mkomozzi said. "A man's dreams are on the battlefield."

"I must go to him," Dabula said.

"It is too late," Old Mkomozzi said.

"I must see him," Dabula said.

"Ntombi and the children are here," Nanda said. "See them before you go."

"Here?"

"Yes," Nanda said. "They are somewhere in the house."

"I will return," Dabula said and hurried out.

Ntombi was here. She was waiting for him. He felt afraid, anxious, tense. How would she receive him? Would she still be quiet? Would she be happy to see him? How would he speak to her? What would he tell her?

He went to where the women cooked. The boy was there. ~~in a corner~~. In front of him ~~he had~~ <sup>was</sup> a huge plate of food and he was happy. He greeted his father without stopping his eating.

"Where is your mother?" Dabula asked.

"At the back with the little one," the boy said.

Dabula went round the huts to the back. Ntombi and the child were on a blanket in the sun. The child's fat little legs and arms



kicked and waved feverishly. Ntombi's head was bowed. When he was near she looked up, ~~and saw him~~. He felt awkward, uneasy.

"Greetings, Ntombi."

"Greetings, Dabula.....!"

He felt the restraint in her voice. She looked <sup>up</sup> at him then looked ~~away~~. ~~He stared awkwardly above her~~

"Did you find Mhandi?" she asked.

"Yes."

There seemed nothing more to say. All the things he had meant to tell her needed a beginning and he could not find it. If only she would give him a chance to open his heart.....

"I must go to the battlefield," he said.

"Now?"

"Yes." He shifted the weight of his body to his left leg. Her eyes darted quickly over his face.

"You are thin," she said.

"It was a hard journey," he said.

Her fingers scratched on the blanket. The child began to cry. She picked it up and rocked it. It stopped crying and gurgled. She continued the rocking. He remembered she had always told him not to spoil the children by picking them up when they cried.

"Dabula...."

"Yes?.....?"

"I have something to tell you.....!"

It shot into his mind: She has slept with another man. His stomach bunched up. He felt weak. Perhaps it was Langa.

"Sit down.....!"

He sat on a corner of the blanket. She kept her head bent over



the child. She said, as though speaking to the child:

"When you left, I went to the village of Umindi...."

He held his stomach in tight and waited.

"....I saw Umindi.... ~~She's beautiful~~. I talked to her. She told me of that night. She remembered it well...."

"Yes?" His voice was tight.

"She is now the first wife of the chief.... After you had gone she told him...."

"The first wife...." He relaxed.

"Yes.... She is very happy and the chief loves her much." She raised her head and looked at him. Her eyes were laughing.

"Ntombi...."

The laughter touched her mouth. The tightness left him completely. He reached forward.

"The child," she warned.

She put the child on the blanket. He pulled her to him and held her tight. They stayed like that for a long time.

"And all this time...." he said.

"Now you can forget it," she said.

So many things he wanted to tell her. So much he wanted to explain. He looked at her and all the things rushed through his brain. So much.

"Ntombi...."

"There is no need to explain." She put up her hand and touched his face.

He pushed the many things from his mind. There would be time for it later. Time to make her understand the new things that had



come into his mind. Time to tell her that he was not sure any more. There would be so much time later. He rubbed his cheek against hers.

"You have changed," she said.

How did she know? Mkomози knew it too. But what was this change in him? If only he could understand that....

"I must go," he said.

"I will wait for you to come back."

"I will come back."

Mkomози waited for him at the gate.

"I will walk a little way with you."

They moved through the mill of soldiers. The soldiers were everywhere.

"He will not listen," Mkomози said.

"But I must tell him," Dabula said.

"You have seen them?"

"Yes."

"He had great dreams," the old man said.

"Even if we win it will never be the same," Dabula said.

"He cannot see that," Mkomози said. "His dreams were too great."

Dabula stopped and turned to Mkomози.

"Father.... What will come after us?"

Mkomози smiled tenderly. He patted Dabula's arm affectionately.

"Now life is real for you, my son. It will never again be just a spear and a battle-cry ~~for you~~."

"The world is so big," Dabula said thoughtfully. "So big."

"You are afraid?"

"Yes." There was no need to hide it. It was part of this new thing in him. All men were afraid sometimes, even though they did



not show it.

"And uncertain?"

"It is that that hurts..... I wonder what will come after us."

"Now you understand him a little?"

Dabula knew he meant Gubuza.

"Yes. I do not have this secret bitterness any more."

"I know. Yet he was wrong. He made instruments of people. And always, that is wrong. He wanted to do a good thing but he was wrong."

They were near the army control point now.

"I must go," Dabula said.

"We will talk again," Mkomozzi said. "Come back for we have much to talk of and there is much for you to do. Salute Gubuza for me. Go well, my son." Mkomozzi touched him again then turned away.

Dabula hurried on till he was with those who controlled the soldiers. Inzwinyani was thinning rapidly. Armies moved across the hills at a trot.

"I am Dabula!"

"We know, great Captain."

"Where is the battlefield?"

"Near our southern outpost. In the valley by the river."

Dabula mounted his pony and rode across the hill. Everywhere soldiers were hurrying to the field of battle.

The September sun was going down. Suddenly, a cloud passed over the sky. Big and black. It was followed by a hail storm.



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Gubuza's ~~hottle~~ headquarters ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> on a hill between two valleys. The southern was the valley through which the Vaal flowed and in which the Boer Voortrekkers camped. In the northern valley were the armies of the Matabele. Gubuza and his generals were on the hill overlooking the two valleys.

There was silence on the hill. Men moved softly. The drums were silent. There was no singing. ~~In the valley of the Matabele it was so too.~~ The warriors moved silently and spoke softly as they ate their evening meal. There was no need for it, yet they were soft and silent. ~~A noise would have to be terrible, beyond the bearing of human ears, to be able to carry from the Matabele valley into the Boer valley.~~ ~~Yet they were silent. They sat round their fires and talked in hushed voices of the things they had done.~~

Night had settled over the valleys, over the land. The thunder-storm, in the manner of such storms, had passed as quickly as it had come.

Down in the Boer valley, fires burned and people ate their food as they had done on other nights. Because they were in the hostile land of the Matabele, many guards were mounted. The flint-locks of their rifles were ready. But for all that, it was a night like all the other nights had been.

Only, this was the land for which they had travelled so far and so long. This was the promised land. These green plains and rolling hills cried for human habitation. The land cried for the plough. The hills cried for the cattle to graze on them. Houses <sup>would</sup> look beautiful in these valleys. Sheep and cattle would be happy on these green



pastures. This was the land, <sup>all night</sup> alright. ~~This was the promised land. The long road was behind them. Many had perished on it. They had suffered greatly that they might reach this land. Now they were here. Soon, they would scatter and claim their farms. Soon, farmsteads would spring up. This was the land.~~

For the present, they would wait and see if the Matabele kaffirs had heeded the warning of what had happened <sup>that</sup> ~~yesterday~~ morning. If they did so, well and good. If they did not, well, then they would <sup>be broken.</sup> ~~break~~ them. ~~But this was the land and they would take it. They had come far for it. Now it was theirs.~~

Their wagons were drawn into a huge circle inside which they would spend the night. They would be vigilant this night, lest there <sup>be</sup> ~~is~~ treachery on the part of the kaffirs, lest the kaffirs sneak up in the dark to avenge what had happened yesterday morning. But for all that, they danced and sang and laughed and were happy. This was the land. The Lord had led them into the promised Land even as he had led the people of old.

Anna's labours <sup>(1)</sup> ~~began~~ that night. Painful ~~downward~~ movements that grew in violence. For hours she held in the pains that tore through her body, then she gave <sup>up</sup> ~~in~~ and screamed. Elsie and Lena were with her when the pains began. When she started screaming, Elsie ran for an old Boer midwife. They ~~held~~ <sup>held</sup> her down while the old woman massaged her stomach with hard hands. ~~that hurt.~~ They worked on her for hours and boiled water. But nothing happened. They kept on filling the water-pots. She kept on screaming.

"A hard one," the old midwife said, wiping sweat away.



Dabula stood beside Gubuza on the hillside. Together they looked ~~down~~ into the valley of the Boers.

"He said it did not matter what they did, father."

"I have heard you, my son."

"Then why do you not order the soldiers to return?"

"This is a time for battle."

"But Moshesh will make this treaty thing and we will keep our land."

"No, my son. He is near his other white friends. We are far. For us there is only battle. These are vultures who would eat up all that is ours, and they would do it in arrogance and with laughter on their lips.

"Then we fight, father."

"We fight."

"Put me at the head of an army and I will crush these white men for you! I am not afraid of the terror of their weapon."

Gubuza put his arm round the young man's shoulders.

"I know that, my son."

Before the first ~~grey~~ streaks of dawn were in the air, but when the shadow of it was over the land, the armies of the Matabele moved up the hillside. They were divided into two <sup>groups</sup>. One ~~group~~ of two thousand men, and one ~~group~~ of five thousand men.

The smaller group went across the hill. They moved in the formation of the half of a circle.

"Aaa! Its coming!" the midwife said.

There was a pallor on



her face. Her eyes were dark things in deep hollows. There was blood on her mouth, where her lips had been torn by her teeth.

The old woman put one hand into Anna and pressed her stomach with the other in a downward motion. Anna <sup>c</sup>screamed.

"Feel it moving," the old woman said.

Kasper came near Anna. He put out his hand to touch her head. She pulled away. Hate-filled eyes stared up at him.

"Don't touch me!" There was horror in the cry.

"Delirium," the old woman said.

"Killer!" Anna cried. It ended on a scream of pain.

"She doesn't know what she's saying," the old woman said.

"Hate! Devil! Hate!" Anna cried.

"Don't mind it, son," the old woman said.

"N-o-o-o!" Anna screamed. Her body tossed in agony.

"Go away, Kasper," Lena said.

Puzzled, hurt, he moved away. She had wanted him near when Stefan was born.

"Now!... Water!" the old woman said.

"Killer...." The cry died in Anna's throat.

The old woman worked on the bloody mess that was the child.

Lena said:

"Anna.... Anna.... Look at Anna!"

"Linen!" the old woman cried.

Lena said:

"She's dead!"

"Water!" the old woman said.

Kasper moved closer and looked at Anna. Her mouth and eyes were open, but she saw nothing and said nothing.



The smack of the old woman's hand resounded loudly. Suddenly, the child cried.

Above the ~~cry of~~ <sup>the</sup> child was another cry:

"The kaffirs are coming!" ~~the cry~~ <sup>it</sup> was everywhere.

"It will live," the old woman said. She looked at Kasper. "You have a son."

He looked at the small thing being wrapped into yards of cloth. He looked at Anna. He looked at Lena. Something in her eyes made him turn away.

From outside, the cry was echoed:

"The kaffirs are coming! Thousands of them!"

Kasper took his rifle and hurried away. ~~The iron that was born in his when he had left his valley, was now tempered steel. It had been burned by many fires.~~

Lena brushed the tears from her eyes and said to Elsie:

"Give me their <sup>B</sup>bible."

She opened the <sup>B</sup>bible where the names of each member of the Jansen family had been written over many generations. In a heavy, childish hand, she wrote:

"Born to Anna and Kasper Jansen: a son."

She asked Elsie:

"What is the date?"

Elsie didn't know and shook her head.

"September eighteen or nineteen," the old woman said.

<sup>after</sup>  
Behind the words ~~"son"~~ <sup>son</sup> Lena wrote:

"September 18, 1836."

"We don't know what he wants to call the child," Lena said.

"That can wait," the old woman said. "First find him a breast-



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mother."

Elsie hurried away from the place. Tears streamed down her face. She wanted to find Paul, to be with him, to feel the comfort of his arm round her shoulders.

Everywhere people moved; everywhere people worked. Fires burned. ~~men~~ Men worked over these, casting bullets from the molten lead. Kegs of powder and wads were near them. Women helped, and new bullets were born by the minute.

The outer circle of wagons were lashed to each other by chains. In the space between one wagon and the next, ~~men~~ men piled huge thorn bushes.

Women stood guard over food and water. Others knelt near their men, loading rifles and guarding bullets. Others watched children.

Using the wagons for cover, men lay on the ground <sup>perched</sup> in the wagons waiting.

From a distance came the thud of many feet and the sound of the war-drums.

Elsie found Paul with a group of fifty, about to mount their horses. She clung to him and told him of Anna. Then she asked:

"Where are you going, Paul?"

His face was very sad.

"We're riding out to meet them. Don't worry. I'll come back."

They rode out to meet the ~~coming~~ <sup>oncoming</sup> dark mass that moved in the shape of a half of a circle.

The first dawn-streaks touched the spears of the Matabele warriors.



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Gubuza stood on his hill and watched the battle. About him stood the generals and Langa and Dabula.

They saw the small body of men ride out from the circle of wagons. They saw the men riding for the very heart of the marching army.

"Our warriors will eat them up!" Tabata cried.

"Let us see," Gubuza said.

They saw the horsemen nearing the army and raising their arms.

"The sticks!" Dambuza cried.

They waited to see what would happen. Would lightning come from the ~~skies~~ and strike their army? Nothing happened. The army moved on. The men on horseback turned.

"They are running!" Tabata cried. "Their magic is a lie!"

"Perhaps men have died," Gubuza said.

"But we saw nothing. Our men keep moving on."

The men on horseback turned, raised their sticks again. And then they turned again and rode away. They did this a number of times.

"They are killing our men," Gubuza said. "They should charge."

"It is too far to charge yet," Tabata said. "You yourself trained them to save their strength till the last minute for the charge."

"But not for these men."

"But where is the power of their magic?"

"You may yet see it, Tabata."

Langa said:

"Those dark things on the ground: could they be the bodies of our warriors?"



"I fear so," Gubuza said.

"Look!" Dabula cried.

The men on horseback had ridden into the circle of wagons. The warriors had started the dreaded Matabele charge.

"Now we shall see!" Tabata said. "Now we shall see!"

No nation or tribe had ever withstood that charge. How could they? Was it not the charge of the most powerful army in the land? What magic could stop this onward rush of the king's warriors? What magic?

"We shall see," Gubuza said.

But, wonder of all the land! Look! The charge is wavering! Wavering! Yet no man is coming out to show them battle! There is no thunder in the air! Yet the charge is breaking! Oh spirits of our ancestors! What is this? Why is this?

"What is this?" Tabata cried. "Why do they not go forward?"

"See them dying," Gubuza said. "They go forward and they die without striking a blow. It is like the wind of death blowing through their ranks."

The army rallied and moved forward again. But they could not get near this enemy who threw death at them from pieces of wood.

Koos's eyes gleamed as he picked off black body after black body. What a sight to see them stopping and suddenly looking so surprised in mid-motion! What a sight to see their bodies folding up and sinking to the ground. He trained his rifle and fired. There's another! The Scheepers girl pushed the other rifle into his hands. Another! Kaffirs! Kaffirs everywhere! Let them come on! He'll show them something. Something to tell their mothers about, only they won't be able to do so. The



girl gave him another rifle. Another! How good the smell of powder is. How many had he got so far? Never mind, it was ~~too~~ many to remember. Another! Good loader, this little girl. Steady fingers. Another! Let them scream and beat their drums. Another! Will do something with this girl when all this is over. Another! How beautifully they fell. Another!

Kasper killed them coldly. In his mind was a picture of his valley. And each black face was that of old Johannes. Kill them so that they cannot steal your valley, Kasper. Kill them for that. Kill them because it must be done. No other reason except that it must be done. Anna lay dead. Kill them. They killed her. Kill them. Don't trust kaffirs. Kill them. They don't understand kindness. Kill them. If you don't they will steal everything you've got. So kill them. The woman behind him kept pushing a loaded rifle into his hands. Kill them.

Paul aimed and fired. Blood. Blood everywhere. Blood on his hands and blood in his heart. Elsie gave him a loaded rifle. Blood on the earth. People were dying and he was killing them. Yet it had to be done. He had to kill. But why? Why? Why? Elsie gave him another rifle. He aimed and fired. Why? Why? Why?

Martinus picked off a big, black one who was getting near. Must speak to the boy. Tant Sara gave him another rifle. That one there. He picked him off. Something might happen and where there's death there must be friendship. Must speak to the boy. He picked off another. Must keep them off or we're lost. Another. What horrible black faces they have. Another. Can't understand Paul's concern for them.

We should have done this in the Cape, Karel Elst thought. He laughed each time a black body crumbled up and lay still. Should have done this with the English as well as the kaffirs. Another. Hah hah hah. Should have done it with all of them. Hah hah hah. Should have killed



them like this, everyone. Hah hah hah. That was the mistake. Hah hah hah.

Moses Elst picked them off anxiously. Strange feelings, a new sense of power and importance crept into his being.

#

"The ranks are breaking!" Sitonga cried. "Yet they have not met the enemy! What manner of war is this?"

Gubuza's head snapped back.

"Listen, my lords! These are my orders! We ourselves will lead the reserve army into battle! I will go at the head. You, Qanda, Sitonga, Dambuza, will lead the left wing of the army; you, Tabata, Langa, Dingiswayo, will lead the right wing.

"These are the plans of battle. We will march till the horsemen ride out with their little sticks, then we will rush. It does not matter how far we are from their encampment! We rush and do not give these horsemen a chance to turn on us again! If we can reach their encampment before their weapons destroy us, we will crush them! You are the king's generals! The leaders of the armies! They will follow you anywhere. And I, Gubuza, will be at their head. Those are my orders, my lords! Is any man against them?"

No man was.

"Then to our tasks!" Gubuza cried. His voice softened. "We may not meet again, my brothers. I salute you. We have often had our differences, but I salute you. We go to meet a terrible enemy this day. If we do not crush him, the good days of our lives and those of the lives of our children will be ended. Only we stand between the power of destruction of our people, of our land, of our homes. Let us



fight that the spirit of Chaka may be proud of us as it roams the plains of our native Zululand. I salute you, my brothers. I salute you, Tabata. Go well."

"Go well, Gubuza."

"Go well, Dambuza."

"Go well, Gubuza."

"Go well, Qanda."

"Go well, Gubuza."

"Go well, Sitonga."

"Go well, Gubuza."

"Go well, Dingiswayo."

"Go well, Gubuza."

"And you, young Langa, go well."

"Go well, my lord Gubuza."

They touched each other and went off to their posts.

Dabula said:

"And I, father, do I go with you?"

Gubuza smiled tenderly at him.

"No, my son. For you, I have another mission, a greater mission than war."

"But I would die with you, my lord!"

"How wise you are for one so young in years. Yes, I go to die. But there is work to do, and you must do it for me."

"No, father! You go back. Let me die!"

"I order you, Dabula, Captain of the king's armies. Hear my words."

Dabula straightened himself.

"Yes, lord."



Gubuza spoke slowly, testing each word before he spoke it:

"Stay on this hill and watch how the battle goes. If it goes with us wait for me, but do not wait too long for I may not return even though we win. If the battle goes against us, this is what I wish you to do. Listen carefully, for what I tell you now is of great moment.

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go  
165  
"If the battle is against us, mount your pony and hurry to Inzwinyani. Tell Mzilikazi to go north, to lead the people there, till they cross the great Limpopo. Tell him to set up a new kingdom there. Tell him I say he must try to rule with the wisdom we found together. Tell him it is for that reason that I take the generals and Langa into battle with me. Thus he would be without any plotting and treachery around him. That is all for Mzilikazi. For you there is much.

"You will be the new general of the king's armies. Train your men well in the arts of battle, but shun war. But the most important duty I demand of you concerns young Lobengula. He will be king soon for his father is old and will soon die. You must be the guardian of the young boy. Teach him the wisdom you have learnt from me. Teach him also the wisdom of Moshesh. Teach him not to fight white men but to intrigue with them and make treaties with them. Teach him to be cunning in the ways of peace. And, my son, teach him to watch over our people and to protect them as a father, for that is the duty of good kingship.

"One last word. Watch well over Nanda. She will miss me sorely for there is much between us. My blessings on the children and the good Ntombi. You have been a good son to me, Dabula, go well...."

"But, my lord... Dabula cried.



Gubuza swung round hurriedly and walked down the hill, into the valley. Soldiers crossed the hill and followed him down.

"But my father....." Dabula cried. In his heart was a grief too strong for tears.

Soon, he stood alone on the hilltop. The valley behind him was empty. There were signs that men had been there, but apart from that, it was empty.

The human mass that made half of a circle moved down. Soon they were in the valley. From the circle of wagons, the horsemen rode out. The armies moved forward. The morning sun showed behind the eastern hills. And from the earth and the flowers on it rose the sweet scent of honey. The promise of a good summer was in the air.

When the horsemen drew near, the armies began to run. The horsemen fired once and turned, but they did not have time to turn again for the armies rushed on them. They rode fast back into the circle of wagons.

From his hilltop, Dabula saw the armies closing in on the wagons. Would they get there? Oh, would they get there?

"Forward, my children!" Gubuza cried and raised his spear high above his head.

All round him <sup>men</sup> fell away but others hurried forward to take their places. Was not the great Gubuza himself leading them? Were not all the generals in front of them?

"Forward, my children!"

Warriors climbed over the bodies of their dead to answer Gubuza's call.



The steady fire of the Boers cut them down as mowers cut down early summer corn. But they went on. Was not the great Gubuza himself leading them? ~~Is it not a great honour to die following Gubuza, leader of the king's armies?~~

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From his hilltop, Dabula cried:

"They have reached the wagons!"

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"Kill the wizards!" Gubuza cried. "They bring new means of death. No new wisdom! Kill the wizards!"

Thorns cut into his flesh but did not heed them. A white, hairy face rose in front of him. He struck it down with his spear. Another. He ran his spear through it. Then a screaming woman. He pushed her aside with his shield.

"Kill the wizards!"

A young hairy face rose in front of him, its death-stick raised. He leaped forward and stabbed. At the same time, a horrible, searing fire tore into his stomach. Strength left him and he fell on top of the white man. His spear was deep in the man's side. They lay looking at each other, both in the agony of death.

Nearby a man groaned. It was Koos. A spear had just torn through his ribs and touched his heart. Before he could move, the warrior who had stabbed him, was shot through the eye.

From his hilltop, Dabula saw the ranks breaking. They had reached the wagons, but now they were falling back. His heart beat <sup>like</sup> as a tom-tom against his breast. How could this be? What could this mean? Yes.



The ranks were breaking. Oh, spirit of my fathers! The ranks are breaking!

And as he looked, he saw, coming from the river, the army of the Barolong who had promised to help the Boers.

Now the armies were broken. Horsemen were coming from the circle of wagons and the warriors of Mzilikazi fled before them.

"Gubuza is dead," he said heavily. "Gubuza is dead."

He mounted his pony and rode back to Inzwinyani.

In the valley, the soldiers threw away their useless spears and shields and ran.

Oh mountains! Valleys! Hills! Streams! Oh rivers! Trees! Grass! Earth! Listen, sun! Oh listen, listen! Be silent wind and listen! Can you hear it! Oh listen earth!

An epoch has ended; an epoch has started. This is the point between yesterday and tomorrow. The old ends here; the new starts here. There would be other battles, there would be skirmishes. But here is the end. This is the end of a lifetime. The beginning of a lifetime. Yesterday, Mzilikazi's power was great. He was lord of the earth and sky, master of the elephant and the lion, king of the Matabele and emperor of all Central South Africa. His was the last great African kingdom. The Zululand of Dingaan is but a shadow. Here is the last heart-beat of African power. This is the day. This is the hour. An epoch has ended; an epoch has started.

The soldiers threw away their spears and shields and ran.

Dying, Gubuza whispered:

And since I tilled the earth."



Paul's eyelids flickered. Elsie nursed his head. He said:

"I too, have not tilled the earth for many months."

"You understand," Gubuza said. "Do you all?"

"No. Only I."

"Then you are the one who spoke to my men."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I was for peace."

"But you killed."

"There is hate in my people."

"Now there is hate in my people too."

"I am sorry."

"You are so young.... So young to die. And by my hand."

"What is your name?"

"Gubuza."

"You are wise," Paul said.

But Gubuza did not hear. He had ceased breathing after telling the young man his name.

"What did he say?" Elsie asked.

Gal 106 Paul began to choke.

"Teach...our...child."

Suddenly his body relaxed.

Elsie cried: "Paul!" on a mounting note of fear.



44) (C) 4/25  
[ The sun was sinking behind the western hills and peace hung over the land.

In the valley by the river, the Boers knelt on the earth with heads bowed down. In the heart of the kneeling throng a Predikant stood. In a deep voice he said:

"..... And open your hearts and thank the Almighty God this day. He has led us out of the wilderness into this valley of promise. He has gone before his people and shown them the way. Open your hearts and thank him. He has delivered the heathen kaffir into our hands, and with the powerful arm of the Lord we have struck him down. Thank him, praise him, and fear him.

"When you go to choose your farms, when you go out into the fields to sow your corn, praise the Lord. His kindness is great. Praise him and thank him that his blessing might ever be on you. This is your land. With your faith in God and the strength of your right arm you have bought it. You have paid for it with your blood. Take it and praise God....."

In a deep voice he prayed for those who had died in battle and called out their names. They named the place of battle Vegkop.

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Under the setting sun a human mass moved through Mzilikazi's Pass. Their feet pointed northward. Behind them they left a deserted city. In front of them they drove their cattle. And with them, they carried the dear possessions of home.

These people had once lived in Inzwinyani, the heart of Mzilikazi's empire. Now they went forth to seek a home.



At the last point from where the deserted city could be seen, at the point where the magic track began, Mzilikazi stopped and looked back. That had been his city. There he had lived out many years of his life. There he had often drunk and talked far into the night with his good friend Gubuza. There they had dreamed and planned and schemed; first when they were young, then when they were old. Almost, he could hear the strong softness of his old friend's voice. Almost, he could see the strange whiteness of his hair.

Mnandi came and stood beside him.

In a broken voice, he said:

"That was my city."

Tenderly she said:

"Yes, lord."

Mkomozi came to them.

Again Mzilikazi said:

"That was my city."

In a voice of softness, Mkomozi said:

"Yes, it was."

"And now?" Mzilikazi asked with a strangeness in his voice.

Mkomozi looked down at the deserted huts. With the voice of a dreamer he said:

"That was your city, now it is nothing. For a city is made of its people. Now there are no people so there is no city. That was our city. Now it is nothing. But, perhaps, one day, in the future that is to be, for there are always people so there will be a future. One day, in that future, a story will be told of our city. Perhaps an old man will sit in front of a fire. And round him will be little children. Their hands will be out to the fire. And perhaps one child will say:



" 'Tell us a story, grandfather.'

" And the old man will say:

" 'Once upon a time..... ~~There~~ In the long ago..... There was a city. It was called Inzwirvani. Mzilikazi was its king, Gubusa was its heart, and an old, old man <sup>called</sup> Mkomosi was its conscience.....' "

Mzilikazi turned his eyes from his city and looked at Mkomosi.

"Is that all?"

"That is all. Only people go on. It was that Gubusa did not understand. Their power comes and their power goes, but they go on. It was that he could not see, so he died. People go on."

Mzilikazi sighed. "They turned and moved with the stream of people. The direction was north.

Far ahead, Dabula walked. With one hand he led his son, with the other he led Lobengula. Ntombi, her child on her back, walked beside him. In front of them, Nanda rode the pony.

Under his breath, to himself, Mkomosi murmured:

"Once upon a time....."

Over the land was the shadow of a new day.