

THIS PASSING NIGHT

Peterz Abrahams

The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn

-From Keats' Ode to a Nightingale

floor and put your feet on it. If we meet anybody remember where you are, you are not in Europe now, and whatever you think of yourself you are just a kaffir here, remember that. Now get in!"

Mkosi got in the back of the car, put the money at his feet, ^{of the consequence} looked back and closed his eyes; his body tingled with the sweetly-dreadful relief. The impulse was to ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ keep his eyes closed and sink into oblivion. But he fought it off and forced himself to speak with a heavy tongue.

"In your heart and mind you're still one of them, aren't you?" Like the whipped and brutalised dog who yet kicks the boot that kicked it, he ~~xxxx~~ shook himself wearily.

"What do you expect." ~~xxxxxxxx~~ sounded friendly and kindly. "You yourself said I sound like one of them. That's because I am I look like them, I sound like them, I think like them, I feel like them. Nobody or nothing can change that."

"Not even their casting you out?"

~~xxxxxxxx~~ started up the engine. He got into the driving seat, ~~xxxxxxxx~~ then switched ~~xxxxxxxx~~ it off again. He half swung about to peer into the back at Mkosi.

"They're going to pay for it. They're going to pay dearly for their foulness. I'm only one of a number you know, and if all those people decide on revenge as I'm now doing, they are going to be in real trouble, deciding who is and isn't white! It's something you see and know and feel! But they'll learn and then they'll come begging!"

He turned back and started the engine once more. The car leapt forward with a violent jerk then settled down to a steady busy pace that tossed Mkosi from side to side. At last they got off the rough track and on to the smooth road. Mkosi found himself drifting off; the will to stay awake, on the alert, on guard, a strong but absolute fatigue was overpowering. Somewhere in the hazy region between the conscious and the unconscious Mkosi kept

asking Westhuizen "How are they going to pay; what you going to do to make them pay?". Instead of answering Westhuizen moved further and further away until his face was a dark speck above the horizon off the sea. Nkosi tried to attract his attention by shouting; "What you going to do to make them pay?....."

Suddenly he was wide awake. His heart pounded; his body trembled. The car was at a standstill. Voices were about him. A bright light shone in his face.

A gruff voice said: "So you are alive. Passbook!"

Nkosi was speechless with shock and fear.

"C'mon man, and get out of there!"

Then he heard Westhuizen's voice: "This is a raw one: picked him up on the Protectorate border earlier today. Will arrange for him to get his Passbook tomorrow. Is that all right?"

Nkosi stumbled out of the car, missed his footing and went down on hands and knees. A pair of rough hands jerked him violently upright and slammed him against the side of the car.

"Careful man." There was mock concern in the gruff voice. Back in the shadows Nkosi saw another man and a little beyond him the patrol car. A wave of panic shot through Nkosi. The urge was to run, to put as much distance between himself and these men.

"Suppose tomorrow will do," Gruff voice said.

"Not strictly legal,"/friend from the shadows said, a curious note to his voice. "You know the requirements of the law Mr.....Mr....." He waited pointedly.

"Coetzee, Hans Coetzee," Westhuizen said. "To reach my place you turn off the main road about five miles along."

Gruff Voice said: "Yes, I know of you Mr. Coetzee. Hear you are very active in party work. I'm sure it will be allright for you to

register him ~~xxxxxxx~~ in the morning."

Westhuizen turned to the man in the shadows. "Sorry about this but when I set out I had no intention of bringing a kefffir back with me otherwise I would have arranged things in advance."

The man in the shadows said: "I see," then he added, the curi note still in his voice: "You're a new arrival here Mr. Coetzee, a very welcome one to be sure. Even I have heard of what an upright party man you are. So please don't misunderstand me. But we have some trouble in this district lately and orders are to keep a tight check on kaffir movements."

Nkosi thought: You're in trouble Westhuizen; that one is suspicious.

The man from the shadows moved forward quickly. Nkosi sensed rather than saw it. Suddenly the bright glare of the torchlight was full on his face.

Relax; look frightened; blink; you're just a scared kaffir.

The bright light lingered on his face for what seemed a life time, then it moved slowly down his body, lingered on his chest and shot back up to his face. He had half expected it so it revealed nothing. With startling suddenness the bright light was on Westhuizen's face. And then it was off and the voice behind the torch murmured:

"Sorry Mr. Coetzee; didn't mean to do that. Finger slipped."

"Till tomorrow then," Gruff Voice said. "Or, rather, later t morning. It's nea ly three now."

"Inside, kaffir," Westhuizen said. "Hurry up!"

The two patrolmen called out ~~xxxxx~~ greetings as the drove away. But Westhuizen made no response.

As they got into the patrol car Gruff Voice said: "You shouldn't have done that: Coetzee was furious, and don't forget his party pull. He can make trouble."

"Furious or frightened?" His companion asked softly.

Gruff Voice grew alert.

"What do you mean?"

"I thought our Mister Coetzee was frightened. I thought I saw panic in his eyes in the brief glare of light."

"You're mad, man. Coetzee....."

"I know. Coetzee is a well known upstanding party man. But what do we know about him? Go on, you tell me: what do we know about him?"

"You're letting your imagination run away with you."

"Perhaps. But let us consider a few facts. Over the past six months seven people whom the law have restricted to house detention have vanished; they and their families have clean disappeared as though they never existed. That is fact number one. Two months ago our security forces were on the trail of the terrorist Mahlangi. They tracked him down to this part of the country, and then he suddenly disappeared as though swallowed up by thin air."

"He slipped into the Protectorate," Gruff Voice said.

"Did he? Then how come that even the British have no record of him leaving the Protectorate. For him to leave by air there had to be some record, and our agents there would have discovered it. But there was no record. So how was it possible for him to show up in a communist country a week after he disappeared?"

"You tell me," Gruff Voice said.

"The coast is an hour's drive from here," his companion said softly. "The coast, ~~xxxxxx~~, isolated, unguarded."

amusement.

"Crazy mad about whom? Mahlangi?"

"No; you may be right about Mahlangi: about Coetzee."

"But I didn't say anything about Coetzee except that the light showed panic in his eyes, and I asked what we know about him."

"Because of Mahlangi and those disappearances?"

"Yes. And because we don't know anything about the man."

"And because we found him on the road with a kaffir a little before three in the morning?"

"I don't know about the kaffir. He looked alright to me. I just have a feeling we ought to find a little more about Mr. Coetzee. How long has Coetzee lived here?"

Gruff Voice struck a match and held it cupped in his right hand. With his left he took the cigarette from his mouth and said "Six ————— " He stopped and stared at nothing till the match burned his fingers. Then he started cursing softly, and flung the dead match away. After a while he stopped cursing and shook his head.

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"I don't believe. He's one of us."

"I'm not saying he isn't. He came here six months ago and these things happened since. Who is he and where did he come from?"

"I think we'd better find out about Mr. Coetzee," Gruff Voice said thoughtfully, lighting his cigarette afresh.

"That's all I'm saying."

"Do we write a report when we get back?"

"No, not yet. We haven't anything to report yet. Let's find out a little more first. You and I'll have to keep an eye on him; but he mustn't know..I know a chap in security. I'll call him when we go back on shift this evening."

"Good," Gruff Voice said. He yawned hugely and growled: "God how I hate this night duty."

In his mind's eye he saw the warm plump roundness of his wife. He knew that got home she would murmur in her sleep in bed. When he ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ in an hour's time, her flesh would be warm to the touch, almost hot. And the moment he touched it, he knew, it would burn desire into him. After nearly two years of marriage he was still drunk with passion for his wife.

Beside him his companion smiled ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ with affectionate derision. "Stop working yourself up. You'll soon be with her. Get on."

To cover his sudden self-consciousness he said:

"What made you think of that Coetzee in that way?"

"I've always wanted to get into security."

"I see," Gruff Voice said, without quite knowing what he saw.

Westhuizen's cursing had gone on and on until Nkosi had snapped:

"Stop it!"

And surprisingly, Westhuizen had obeyed him like a lamb. Then, for the next three miles, Westhuizen had gone at breakneck speed.

"Following us?"

Nkosi peered through the rear window. "No."

A mile further on Westhuizen ordered him to look again. There was no sign of the patrol car. They passed through a built up area and in the predawn half light Nkosi recognised it as a settlement on the edge of canefields. Far to the right and falling away at a gentle sloping angle Nkosi saw a cluster of lights. He remembered the little town from childhood days: one of the few predominantly Boer towns it had been in this part of Natal.

Instead of making for the town Westhuizen swung left, away from it, climbing up the slope of the land. Then, two miles further, he

suddenly swung off the road, turned off his lights and went along an uneven, bumping track until the car was lost ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ in a sea of tall green cane.

Westhuizen pulled up. From nowhere a figure was suddenly beside the car.

A voice said: "Mr. Nkosi...."

"Yes?"

"Good."

Westhuizen said: "This is going to cost you double. Twenty, not ten. For this one and all the others."

Nkosi said: "I don't know how but he knew what I carried. We were stopped by a patrol and I think they are suspicious of him."

"Damn lying kaffir!" Westhuizen hissed. "The patrol wasn't suspicious and I only guessed about the money. He gave himself away: its him."

There was silence, then the voice said: "Think there'll a follow-up?"

What you mean follow-up?" Westhuizen asked.

"I think so," Nkosi said and decided that the new man sounded like an Indian.

"What the devil are you talking about?" Westhuizen said.

"Come," the new man whispered.

Nkosi stepped out of the car then pulled out the bag with the money. Beside him a pencil torch suddenly created a small circle of light. In the light Nkosi looked down at two ~~xxxx~~ coal black hands peeling money from a thick wad: they were big, pudgy, competent hands.

"You said twenty," the Indian said. "There it is. Thank you. Come...."

A hand found Nkosi's wrist and he followed the burly, quick

moving, shadowy figure with a sense of relief that left him weak. Now, at last, he was, he knew, on his own side of the line. He had made the successful crossing.

Westhuizen called out softly but urgently:

"Wait a minute!"

The Indian leading Nkosi only hastened his pace until they were half trotting. After five minutes of trotting they suddenly emerged at the side of a building. Beside it was a car. ^{The} A man sat at the wheel asked:

"Everything all right?"

Nkosi's guide said:

"Yes our guest is here."

"And his package?"

"And his package."

Soft long fingers curled round Nkosi's hand in a grip that hurt.

"Welcome," A soft voice murmured caressingly. "You don't know how needed what you bring is.....Come, sit down for a while. I'm sure you are dead beat but we have to wait till Westhuizen leaves./// Oh dear. I'm so sorry my dear fellow. I'm Doctor Nunkhoo. Officially I'm opposed to common action between our people because I belong to the rightwing of Congress; indeed, I may be said to lead that rightwing. Unofficially, I'm your host." ^{He} /chuckled softly without any trace of humour. "We have paid dearly for our former transparently honest methods of struggle. When they were ready they pounced and destroyed the movement because we had all declared ourselves from public platforms all over the country. We have now learnt that this is bitter war, no platform game. Your guide here is Sammy Naidoo, trade unionist: officially we are enemies. It helps to confuse the

Sammy Naidoo said: "They were stopped by a patrol."

"Only one? I expected them to be stopped at least twice."

"But this is the point, Doc. Mr. Nkosi says Westhuizen knew about the money and that the patrol was suspicious enough to want to follow-up."

"I know they'll follow-up," Nkosi said. "He was in a panic and one of them shone a torch in his face and saw it. He has to go and register me in the morning."

Nkosi felt the sudden tension in both men.

"Didn't he give you a passbook?"

"No."

"But I gave it to him, Doc."

"All right Sammy, I'm sure you did. Tell me, my friend, how do you know he knew about the money?"

Nkosi told them about the meeting with Westhuizen and repeated his words about how needed what Nkosi brought was to the opposition. Then he told them of Westhuizen's direct reference to the money and his statement about not taking it because Nkosi's friends were particularly good at painful murders."

"Yes, I see," Munkhoo said. "Of course you didn't deny it....."

"When he gave the password I assumed he was one of us."

"Naturally. We knew this was the most risky part. Anybody else but a white man - or an apparent white man - would have been searched."

"This route must now be closed," Naidoo said.

The soft voice of the doctor went on as though Naidoo had not spoken: "Tell me my friend, do you think Westhuizen would tell if they pressed him."

"If they really pressed him, yes."

"There he goes," Naidoo said.

Far behind, and a little below them, the twin headlights of Westhuizen's car swung onto the main road and sped away rapidly. /
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"We can go now. I'm sorry but there's one ~~more~~ ^{more} little piece of discomfort for you, my friend. We dare not have you travelling with us in case we're stopped. Naidoo and I are a couple of Coolies and Coolies breed like flies so the Coolie doctor has been out to deliver another curly arse into the world. When we're on a trip like this we always ensure that there's a newly born little Coolie to make his or her contribution to the struggle. BUT if they found you with us they might become very curious and start searching. So you have to curl up in the boot. We've made it as comfortable as possible. Come."

The doctor put his hand on Nkosi's arm to help him out of the car. What he felt made him shift his hand from arm to pulse.

"We'll have to move, Sammy, our friend's near breaking point."

"I'm all right," Nkosi said.

"That's all right, my friend. Come."

Between them, Nunkhoo and Naidoo helped Nkosi to curl himself as as possible up/comfortably/in the big boot of the enormous American-made car.

There were blankets and pillows to absorb as much of the bouncing as possible. Then they shoved the money bag in with him and closed down the lid. A wave of nausea and claustrophobic panic swept over Nkosi. He let out a desperate yell and banged against the roof of the boot. And suddenly the boot was open once more and the soft caressing voice of Nunkhoo kept repeating:

"Easy, friends, easy; easy. You've been under great strain but easy. Just a little longer now and then your great mission will be over."

The soft caressing voice droned on insistently until Nkosi relaxed.

"Sorry," he murmured. "I'm all right now."

But the doctor kept on repeating his words till they became a jumbled, meaningless, monotonous, drone. Then the doctor placed his hand on Nkosi's forehead and kept it there for a minute or two.

"I'm closing the boot now, my friend. If it worries you just bang lightly. We'll hear you straightaway and stop and open up. We have something rigged up so that we can hear. But don't bang too loudly in case you attract unwanted attention. All right?"

"All right."

The ~~xxxx~~ top of the boot came down, but slowly and quietly. this time: there was no sudden jarring bang. He was aware of a ~~a~~ the momentary sense of stifling oppression, but ~~that~~ knowledge that he could end it at will was reassuring. But could he really? Thought was too much effort. And then the thing began to move, gently at first, easily so that the bumping was not too bad. Then, suddenly, there was a floating smoothness.

In a remote sort of way he became aware of the terrible pounding of his heart. It forced a dull, persistent ache at the back of his head. This reached to his shoulders and from there the ache spread right through his body. It affected his breathing and he knew that if he had to speak his voice would sound faint, hollow, disembodied. And the soft caressing voice of the doctor was everywhere inside his head, fighting off the pain, lulling him into a sense of relaxed security. But a part of his mind fought against the impulse to relaxed security. And then his teeth began to chatter and he was back in the ~~dhaghy~~ and alone on the black ~~egg~~ ~~rolling around in the circle~~

and he began to whimper, teeth chattering, body shaking, like a dazed and terrified little child locked in the dark.....

It was thus that they found him when they opened the boot inside the safety of a closed garage. They carried him into the house and up a flight of stairs and into a small comfortably furnished attic room. Quickly, deftly, the doctor administered an injection. Then he and Naidoo undressed Nkosi and put him to bed. The doctor stood by, feeling his pulse as the shaking gradually died down and the low moan stopped.

Naidoo looked from Nkosi to the doctor.

"That what they mean by someone cracking up, doc?"

"Very mildly, Sammy. Really this is more like someone simply passing out: a combination of too much tension, too great an anxiety and the strain that goes with it, and too much holding on to yourself, too much self control for too great a period."

"So he might have cracked before we got him if there'd been any delay."

"No, Sammy. If he had to he could have gone on for maybe another two, four, six or even twelve hours."

"I don't see it, doc."

"He let go because he knew he was safe: his subconscious mind knew it was safe to let go of all that tension and he needed the release deperately."

"If you say so, doc." But Sammy was not satisfied. "He's very small for this job, doc. Did you notice his little feet, and look at those small hands. Not strong at all."

Munkhoo laughed and there was real amusement in his laughter. He was tall, pale-skinned, graceful. A thick mop of wavy jet black hair ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ crowned a handsome, humorous face.

There were streaks of grey in the hair, but these only enhanced his high-caste Hindu good look. The doctor looked what he was: a handsome ^{wealthy} upper class Hindu of ~~great~~ family who had had the best education Europe could offer and money could.

In contrast, black Sammy Naidoo, big, burly, clumsy-looking was obviously a descendent of those poor low-class Indian peasants who were brought to the country as indentured coolie labour about the middle of the 19th century.

"You're wrong, Sammy. Little Nkosi's probably stronger than the pair of us put together."

"You're joking, doc."

"I'm not talking about physical strength, Sammy."

"What's the difference: strength is strength, isn't it?"

"No, it isn't, Sammy." The doctor paused, stared into space, then shook his head slightly. "We'll have to leave this for another time. There's work to be done. He'll sleep the clock round and in any case Dee will be here to take ^{care} of him. I'll see that the money gets up to ~~stating~~ Jo'burg. You arrange about Westhuizen."

"Looks like we'll have to get rid of him," Sammy said quietly.

Nunkhoo sighed and nodded. Then, suddenly, his face became a twisted mask of bitter disgust. "Another necessary getting rid of, heh, Sammy. That poor bloody brute has been messed up by them and messed up by us; and now he's to be got rid of."

Sammy became all stolid and heavy.

"He knows me; he knows Nkosi; he knows about the money; and I told you that he's suspicious of you. And you heard what Nkosi said. For all we know they might be at him now."

"All right! All right!"

"You know there's no other way," Sammy said insistently.

"I said all right, didn't I?"

"I don't like to see you messing yourself up, doc. You know as well as I do what these people think of us and what they will do to us. Have you forgotten what happened when they encouraged the Zulus to slaughter our people; d'you remember how they stood by while it happened? Remember? Remember, doc?"

"Stop it, Naidoo! In any case this man is no longer one of them, they've cast him out."

"But he's not on our side, doc. He will sell us; you heard Nkosi say that. We must establish confidence between ourselves and the Africans. Doesn't matter whether its our fault or not, if this thing breaks down here it will play into the hands of the Africanists. They will say this is what happens when you co-operate with the coolies. And what will happen to our people then, and who will protect them? We must get the money to take Jo'burg and there must be no trail leading to the underground through us!"

Nunkhoo submitted, as he had done so often in the past, resignly in the face of the hard logical of what Naidoo called 'the situation'.

"We'll try to make it look like Pogo," Naidoo said.

Nunkhoo shook of his depression, looked once more at Nkosi who had now slipped into a deep drugged sleep and put his hand to the light switch.

"Come on, Sammy, we've work to do."

"That's my doc," Naidoo murmured.

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Richard Nkosi woke suddenly, startlingly awake and alert, keyed-up and tense. Then he remembered that the doctor had put him to bed. He relaxed and the tension left his body. The doctor whose name is Munkhoo, and Naidoo the trade unionist: he had seen their faces just before the drug had taken effect. And it was Naidoo's that came back to him most vividly: a big face, utterly expressionless, almost but not quite round, and black, really black, a sort of matt black such as you do not find among the so-called blacks themselves. And the eyes, small, sharp, darting, ~~eyes~~ and with the dispassionate calculation he had once seen in the eyes of an adder and which he had never forgotten.

Then Nkosi realised that he was in darkness. Dawn was breaking when they put him to sleep, now it was dark. He felt lost and trapped. He must have slept right through the day that was breaking when they brought him here. But where was the door? He ran his hands along the bed and discovered that it was ^a single bed. The sheets were of softest linen and the extra cover over him was a feather-light blanket, caressingly soft to the touch.

He lay still, all his senses alert, until he had the direction from which, ~~the~~ almost imperceptibly, the gentlest current of coolish air flowed into the room. He now knew where the window was. But what about the door? He put out his hand to the left of the bed but touched nothing; to the right he felt the bare surface of a ^{small} bedside table, but with nothing on it, not even the expected table lamp. Perhaps it wasn't safe.

He raised himself, threw back the bedclothes, and swung his feet carefully out of the bed. But in spite of his care his feet

brushed lightly against and there was a light but surprisingly loud crash. Nkosi fumbled desperately at his feet for a few seconds; then he straightened up and smiled in the dark. Someone had set a booby trap for him; now they would know that he was awake. He thought of Moidoo's calculating little eyes and sat on the edge of the bed, waiting, listening.

Suddenly, out of the silence, he felt rather than heard the door open. And now he could place it: straight ahead and to the right.

"Sorry if the noise startled you. It can be awful waking up in a strange place, especially when there's no light. I wanted to hear when you did." The voice had ~~him~~ something of the same caressing softness that Munkhoo's had, but this one was a woman's voice. "If you'll wait a little I'll shut the window then you can have light. We don't draw attention to the existence of this room."

Again he felt rather than heard movement as the unseen woman skirted the bed and went diagonally across the room to shut and seal off the window. There was sound and movement as she did this: then there was silence till she spoke from the door.

"I'm going to turn on the light now: I'll be outside when you are ready." Then the room was flooded with light. There was quick movement, the door in the corner pulled shut and Nkosi was alone in the small, low-ceilinged attic room with the bare ceiling beams and rafters: there was the bed, the little table by its side and a wooden chair on which Nkosi's ~~trousers~~ ^{trousers} were. ^{His shoes were on the floor.} They had stripped him down to his underpants. ^{There was no sign of his vest and shirt.} There was no mirror, no washbasin. And on the floor of this bare and poorly furnished little room was a luxurious window carpet, thick piled, of light pastel blue. The now sealed/was part of the low, sloping ceiling.

He pulled on his trousers and moved to the door.

"I'm ready."

The door opened silently and the woman stood in front of him, and the light from the room behind him shone fully on her. She was a little taller than he was; more robust-looking than most Indian women he had seen. A little darker than the doctor, but still very pale. Her hair, a dark brown, was pulled back severely and tied in a bun at the nape of her neck. Two deep grooves running from just below the bridge of the nose to the sides of the mouth cancelled the attractiveness of the regularity of features and the striking directness of the grey-brown eyes. She wore slacks and a loose, sacklike blouse. She offered him her hand.

Come. By the time you've bathed food will be ready.
 "I'm Dee Bunkhoo. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~
 ready."

She turned from him, and as she did so Mkosi realised that the woman was a cripple. Her left shoulder and left hip dipped down low as she went down on her left foot; then she rose up high on to the right foot. Her left leg was several inches shorter than her right and the foot itself was encased in a blocklike leather creation. Mkosi felt embarrassed, guilty, confused at the fact of the woman's ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ being crippled. He followed her down the narrow flight of stairs, disturbed, in spite of himself, every time she dipped down low to put down the clubbed foot.

A small door led out of the attic and ~~xxxx~~ into the ^{hallway of the} upstairs proper of the house. The woman swung a piece of paneling into place and the ~~xxxxxxxx~~ stairs were hidden and the entrance was transformed into cupboard space.

She smiled at Mkosi.

Just/cupb oard. Exactly the same as the two on the side of it.

The thing to remember is that it is the last of the three. If you rush into any of the others in an emergency....."

"I'll remember." Nkosi nodded.

"You'll find everything in the bathroom. When you're ready come down the stairs."

"Openly?"

"Yes." She smiled an odd, twisted, slightly derisively smile. "You're safe here. We coolies have been forced to build our defences in depth. We're almost like ~~xxxx~~ ants now."

"I'm sorry," Nkosi murmured.

She raised her head high; she inhaled deeply. She stared at him and her face was hard and bitter.

"I wasn't fishing for pity."

"I wasn't offering any. I was born ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ this part of the country and still have what you describe as and I know my people had/a share in creating/your antlike existence. I'm sorry that we had a hand in it. That's all."

He turned away from the woman and stalked towards the door from which came the sound of a bath filling. He felt both angry and depressed at once: angry at himself and his people and the woman and her people and the terrible notion of antlike people; and his depression was sickeningly boundless. He banged the door shut, stripped and got into the warm bath. Slowly he relaxed. The anger left him and only the depression remained. He washed quickly, suddenly aware that he was very hungry. Perhaps he would see the doctor now and they could arrange for him to get out of this place and out of this bloody depressing country. The sooner that could be arranged the better. He reached for the towel on the chair and saw, under it, his vest and shirt freshly laundered. He silently complimented

the women. In spite of her ugly disposition she was thoughtful and competent. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ He shaved then dressed quickly, cleaned the bath after him and went out and down the stairs.

This part of the house was that of the successful doctor in any part of the world. Before he reached the bottom of the stairs the woman appeared at the first door to the right of the stairs.

"This way." She waited for him at the door. The combination of food smells from the room made his mouth water and his stomach rumble. Some of the depression lifted from him. The woman's eyes were friendly now. And when she smiled at him the two ugly grooves at the sides of her face were magically banished, making her look young and attractive.

"It is my turn to apologise," she said. "I didn't mean to be bitchy. But we do live like ants, you know. All the warning systems of the ants too. We would know an hour before any hostile force reaches here. And like in the ant world there will always be those who are ready to be sacrificed for the good of the mass."

Mkosi suddenly felt relaxed and at ease with this woman.

"Thank you for the vest and shirt. Nice to feel fresh again."

They went into the room and a wave of disappointment swept over him. There was no one else, and the table was laid for two.

"The doctor?" he said.

"Still in Johannesburg," ^{she} said. "He was supposed to be back by now but he phoned earlier to say he was delayed and he may not be back until sometime tomorrow. Everything is all right though. Your package has been delivered safely."

"Then everything's fine and I can get out again."

"They want you to wait till my brother comes."

"The job's done so why wait? Anyway, who's 'they'?"

She seemed about to say something, apparently changed her mind, took three dipping strides to the table and sat down.

"Let us eat," she said. "Naidoo will be here later and he'll explain everything. Come. Sit down."

Nkosi sat down to the kind of Indian meal he had not eaten for well over ten years: a feast of delicately balanced meats and vegetables, superbly flavoured with spices of which curry powder is only one: and the roti was airlight with a flakey butteriness that titillated the roof of the mouth.

Her eyes and face softened to his obvious appreciation of the food.

"Is it only hunger or do you really like this?"

"Both. But I've never had any curry as good as this. Not even in Durban as a boy young man. And I like a lot of it."

"And, of course, after two days without anything would taste good."

"Since you must sell yourself short - yes. Have I really been out for two days?"

"A day and a night and a day."

He remembered the nightmare journey with the white man who had been made coloured by decree and who could not help feeling white in spite of everything.

"How much do you know about this business?"

"Which?" The softness went out of her and she became hard, alert.

"My coming here." He thought: She knows everything about it.

"Only that you brought money for the underground."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing else."

"Not even about my journey or where I came from?"

"No."

He wondered why she found it necessary to lie so ~~fix~~ obviously. She picked up his thought as though he had expressed it aloud. The bitter, derisive smile played on her lips.

"You've been away a long time, haven't you, Mr. Akosi?"

He ignored the calculated offensiveness of her tone. "Yes."

She lifted her head and inhaled deeply as she had done outside the ^{hidden} attic door. Her lungs filled out, raising her breasts. Her neck seemed long suddenly. She spread her right hand in encouragement for him to take more food, but disdainfully now, with a hint of contempt for both him and the food he enjoyed so much. He helped himself.

"I understand it is something like ten years or more since you ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ left your native land. Am I right?"

"That about it."

"The trouble with being away from a place or a situation or a problem for so long is that one loses touch."

"I think you're right."

"Without being aware of it one adopts the values and attitudes of the society in which one finds oneself."

"Yes....."

"Well, don't you think that you, Mr. Akosi, are out of touch with your ^{own} country; that you are judging it by the flabby, moralistic standards of the middle-class Europeans among whom you've spent so much of your life."

"You may be right," he said easily. "But what's the point? As far as I know I haven't passed judgement, unless I did ^{so} without knowing."

"You're being facetious, in order to evade the point, I suspect."

this by any chance part of the business of being an entlike coolie? Is that the point? If it is I find it rather boring."

The woman flinched as though he had slapped her face. She stared tensely at him for a few seconds.

"You've no right...." she said bitterly after a while.

"No more than you have," Nkosi said. "I'm not here by choice."

After a long while of silence, ^{she} said, in her normal voice:

"You do sound like the Europeans, you know."

He thought: Perhaps we'll get on better now.

"Sound or behave?"

"But then I was a bit like that too when I came from Europe," she said, ignoring his question.

"Like what?"

"Like you are. Uncommitted, detached, objective - any of those words would ^{do} you know what I mean."

"So, being European is being uncommitted, detached, objective?"

"You are deliberately distorting my meaning now. What I really mean is that you react and respond with the kind of self-assurance that is not common to us - all of us - who are non-Europeans in this country."

"When did you leave Europe?" he asked.

"In the late fifties," she said thoughtfully. "I went to India, looking for a home, but it was even more foreign than Europe."

"And so you came home," he said.

"Yes. Except that they all said - the Africans as well as the whites - that this is not my home." She turned her face away and when she turned it back to him he saw a bleak, haunted look in her eyes.

"I arrived home during that week of rioting when your people hunted my people down like rats and -"

while scores of my people were slaughtered...."

"Please," Khosi said.

"Please let me finish. I saw some of it. I was in a taxi on Durban's Esplanade, coming from the ship. And I saw two strapping young Zulu fellows chasing a skinny little Indian. The Indian taxi drivers wouldn't stop. He said they would kill us as well. Anyway, one of the two caught up with the little Indian and hit him with his big knobkerrie. I was looking out of the back of the taxi and I saw the little Indian die. I swear I know the moment he died. I felt it a split second after the big stick had split the back of his head. His momentum carried him on a few yards and then he folded up like a limp sack, his bones turned to jelly....I saw two others... and when I got home I heard that our younger brother had been killed the night before. And I had just returned after finding both Europe and India alien places where I would never feel at home. This is home but any day, any night, your people, egged on by the whites, can come sweeping down on us, slaughtering and burning. D'you understand?"

"D'you understand what it meant to know that you were coming into this house to be sheltered and hidden. Practically every Indian in the District knows that you are here. That is part of our ant existence, and ~~unavoidably~~ they all have reason to remember the riots. This District was nearly burned down and the casualty rate was high.

"I've had you alone here in this house, at my mercy, for two days and a night." She slipped her hand into her blouse and brought out a little pistol. "You had done your job and there were complications which could best be coped with if you were just to disappear."

Khosi held out his hand and she put the little pistol into it.

"The temptation must have been great," he said.

"Then why didn't you yield?"

"I don't know. Perhaps because it would be pointless."

"Or perhaps because murdering me would put you on a par with those savage kaffirs and deprive you of the comforting sense of being ~~xxxxxxx~~ part of a martyr minority."

He held out the pistol to her. She took it and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ got up and moved towards the door.

"Having found that it worked once you are trying rudeness again. But you are wrong. For us life has had to be more of an act of will than for you. You can afford the casual cruelty of the majority. We are the smallest minority among the minorities; and we are the most hated on all sides because we are at once the most despised, the most envied, the most hated. And so we cannot afford the luxury of careless cruelty."

"And so we are back at the ant instincts again. Don't you ever get away from them?"

"Do you ever get away from your blackness?"

He followed her out of the room and heard, as he ~~ixit~~ went out of one door, another open and the silent shuffle of barefeet as someone went to clear the table. The woman led the way into a large sitting room where french windows ~~xxxxxx~~ opened onto a tiny, high-walled garden. They went out into the walled-off garden and the stars stood out, glowing like bright jewels in the black night, as near as he had not seen them since he had been on cattle watch in the long ago nights of another lifetime. ~~xxxxxxx~~ There was a table and chairs in a corner of the ~~yard~~ garden, ~~xxxx~~ tucked back in the shadows, away from the light that streamed from the room and onto the grass through the french windows.

Underfoot, the grass felt luxuriously thick and carpetlike, an almost boyish and ringiness to it. They walked across the carpet of grass and settled in the shadows by the table.

"The door right behind you leads to the back," she said.

Always prepared, he thought and tried to suppress the answer the thought brought. Until his eyes adjusted to the change of light she was a blurred shadow beside him.

"Well," she said. "Do you ever?"

He watched her light a cigarette, his mind floundering about for a few seconds; then he made the connection. By the brief light of the flashing match her face looked soft and gentle, bereft of all the harshness that he knew was there.

"Often," he said.

After a long silence she said "Forgive me but I don't believe you."

"I would have been surprised if you did. There are many places in the world today where blackness doesn't mean what it does here. I think you people here are rather isolated from this trend. If you'd left Europe five years later than you did you would have seen this trend getting into full stride. On this question your world is moving backwards and so you are judge the rest of the world by this backward movement."

She let out a harsh, ugly, guttural sound; half-laugh, half-jeer.

He waited and when she said nothing he went on "It's true you know. Not very far from here, in fact in parts of what used to be known as White Africa, things have changed so much that being black has ceased to be a burden. Indeed, in places like Greenland, Tanganyika, Kenya, Northern Rhodesia if there is a burden attached to colour it is to being white...."

"Or Indian," she said softly.

"Or Indian," he agreed, then he went on "On the West Coast the values are totally different. Colour is meaningless and pointless in West Africa and Egypt. The problems are different in quality. I've spent time in these places and I know. There, even being Indian is no handicap."

"But I'm South African. Supposing everything you say is true. How does it help me and my situation? Another thing: a little while ago you spoke about 'you people' and 'your world'. Are you repudiating it, and us? Are you no longer part of us and our world?"

"Would you concede me the right to an ambivalence at least similar to yours?"

"There is no ambivalence in my attitude to the country and the problem. I'm South African. My fate and my future will be worked out here. For me and mine there is no other place, no other future."

"That's the point of ambivalence: that 'me and mine'."

"But that's the reality of the situation, my dear man."

Nkosi felt relaxed and reassured. What had seemed impossible had happened. They had broken through the barriers of words and attitudes and racial and other positions and made contact. Now, suddenly, a thin ~~xxxxxx~~ thread of understanding flowed between them, ^{tenuous,} compassionate, tender, giving the words they ~~xxxxxxx~~ exchanged a new dimension of ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ illumination. He recognised the mood and atmosphere. It belonged high on his scale of values.

The woman was startled and disturbed by this sudden flow of warmth and sympathy between them. She was unused to it and so she found it embarrassing and even a little frightening, like suddenly being naked before a stranger.

"I'm not disputing the reality of the situation," he said. "All I'm saying is that it shows up your ambivalence."

~~xxxxxxxx~~ She noticed, as though for the first time, the undercurrent of gentleness in his voice. She fought against the impulse to relax and be peaceful, against the odd impulse to tenderness that suddenly possessed. Then she gave up, leaned back and relaxed all her body.

"But what's the connection between my ambivalence and your apparent repudiation of South Africa and South Africans?"

All the harshness had gone out of her now and he heard it in her voice.

"Your 'me and mine' assumes a 'you and yours'."

"But within the family."

"But who determines the family?"

The flow of thought was strong and clear between them now.

"It is determined for you," she said. "It is like birth and death. You have no choice over these. You cannot choose your mother or your father or your country or your race or your colour or your sex."

"I think your emphases are wrong. It isn't the fact of birth or death that is significant. It is the fact of living."

"Even that is determined for you," she murmured. "But do I have to say it?"

"If you are going to cite the ~~xxxxx~~ masses I shall persist in arguing that your emphases are wrong. Choice is limited for all of us. That is part of the human condition. But it is always more limited for what you call the masses. They always have somebody or some small group acting out their will for them. It is you and your brother and Naidoo and the underground that tell them how much they hate the racialist regime. You give them orders. You lead them, you

you have overthrown this system, you, the minority, will write a constitution for them in which racialism will be repudiated and then you will tell them and make them believe that you are carrying out their will. The truth is that you first create that will for them. Do you see the point?"

"That it is always a minority that determines what happens? Yes. I'm not sure you're right though."

"Try to think it out and you'll see."

"All right. But there's still my point about the family."

"Very good: let's examine it. You, Miss Joe Munkhoo, a high caste young Indian woman are sitting here alone with me. You know and I know and the people behind this door," he waved backward, "know that you are out of character as far as your 'me and mine' are concerned. Their concept of the family, as you are using it, is different from yours and mine. You know that if one of their daughters were out like this with somebody from an African village nearby they would kill her."

"But you are making my point now!"

"I'm not, you know. Class, caste and wealth, forms of power, make it possible for you to break the rules of the so-called family. And somewhere, with one of those people back there, my being here with you has shaken profoundly someone's concepts about the place of Indian women and Indian women sitting out with black men and possibly the nature of black men. So who makes the family?"

In the half light Joe Munkhoo shook her head gently. Heed saw, but he did not see the tenderness of her smile.

"All you say is beautifully true. But truth is set in time and space. You are here with me because you are not here. There is no record of your being in the country. And still you are a woman."

"You know," she reached out and touched his arm. "Sitting here with you, I feel more tranquil and more at peace with myself than I can ever remember being. And I think I know it is because you are here and because of your ideas. It's the kind of idealism that lifts one's heart. But you know as well as I do that all we have to do is go outside this garden for all your fine ideals to become meaningless. Remember we are living in a state of barbarism. Remember you took great personal risks to smuggle money into the country for the underground. Have you forgotten the hundreds of political prisoners and the broken homes where mother and father are in jail and there is nobody to look after the children and find food and clothing for them and pay the rent for them? And the people who are sentenced to house arrest so that the state will not have the responsibility of providing even food and shelter for them? And what happens to ^{the} children when both breadwinners are sentenced to this kind of arrest....."

"Hold on! Hold on! We are getting back to political sloganeering. I know it is necessary. That is why I'm here. But the point of it is that it should be possible for us to live and grow and feel like people."

"Yes," she said heavily. "Yes. It should be possible. But it isn't. Here, for now, it feels as though it is possible. But I know it is an illusion brought on by you, and I rather suspect that you planned it and I'm grateful. But if we give in to it they will destroy us. We are at war, my friend. It is wonderful to have, even for a moment, the illusion of being at peace. But to hold on to it too long is dangerous." Already, because of this evening, I shall be more vulnerable than is good for me and mine."

"You mean with black people, don't you?"

"Yes.....You know, we too, do not quite believe that black people can be as civilized as we are. It is not so much prejudice as.....but perhaps it is. I don't know. But it's going to be easier for me personally and, I'm afraid of that.... when I was in India I was horrified at the straight prejudice I found against African students there.....Please, can we be quiet for a while....."

He thought: You are nice when you allow yourself to be human.

Aloof, he said: "The point, my dear, is to be uncertain, to be afraid, even to entertain the possibility of disaster and still carry on. We must cultivate self-doubt and introspection in order to remain human."

"To remain human. That's most important to you?"

"Or to regain and extend one's humanity. For me that is the only justification."

"You make me feel awfully old and cynical and hard-faced and knowing." The irony that she felt did not come through, though he sensed it behind her words; a sort of twisted gentle bitterness. "You speak like a child in a world of make-belief, untouched and unaware of the dangers and evils all about him. This situation is real, you know. Just outside these walls the evil is all about you all the time."

"Is that is all that is real then what is the point of fighting?"

"We are beginning to make circles," she said, a little wearily.

They were silent after that: and it was the silence of peace, tranquillity and understanding, seemingly beyond time and space.

It was thus, in this trance of silence, that Sammy Moidoo came upon them. He had come out of the night and his eyes were adjusted

to the night light. The person who had let him in had pointed to the garden through the now darkened sitting room. He had stood by the french windows. At first he thought they had fallen asleep in their seats; then he was not so sure. Floating people rarely generate a sense of atmosphere and the sense of atmosphere was strong enough for Sanyo Aisoo to feel it.

That the hell, he thought and tilted to the back of the house. Two skinny women and a strapping young man with heavily oiled and scented hair were in the kitchen. Sanyo Aisoo ignored the women and spoke to the man.

"What happen in there?"

"Nuttin'."

"Who you seen, nuttin'?"

"They come down; they eat then they go out there; that's all."

"I told you to watch and listen."

"I did."

"Well, what'd they talk about?"

"Some funny jazz I don't understand. Even the politics was funny. Not our kinda stuff." And they seen funny with each other too."

"Love stuff?" Aisoo asked casually.

The man seemed puzzled.

"They don't touch or hug or kiss or anything, and they don't talk about love but it feels like it: not in the beginning, later."

"What happened in the beginning?"

"Like I say, they come down and she feed him and she's like we people is with them. Then they quarrel." The man saw Aisoo's expression change and shook his head quickly. "Not like we quarrel. Like when I seen the white people quarrel when I work in that hotel

You know, hard and two-faced like."

"What they quarrel about?"

"She tell him about the killings. You know....."

"Yes. And so he quarrel....."

"So he tries to tell her he's sorry but she don't let him. And she tell him how we feel about them. And then she show him her gun and it sound like she telling him how she want to kill him and don't do it. And he take the gun and give it back to her...."

"And then?"

"And then they go out in the garden and they still fight in that funny way. First they talk about Africa and colour bar and Indians and then the funny jazz begin. All about me and mine and you and yours and dying and burning and why you fight. Tell you something, Sammy, they really chuck the English lingo about you see! I'm proud of how thick Miss Dee stand up but that little kaffir man there is hot stuff!" The disapproval on Sammy's face pulled him up. He assumed a slightly cringing air. "Sorry, Sammy, sorry. It slip out." The old face cracked in a tentative smile. "Anyway, I bet when they by themselves they call us char and coolie..."

Sammy coldly ignored the appeal in his voice and face.

"Listen Dicky, next time I hear you use that word you go back to the canfields. Understand?"

"Okay, Sammy. Okay!"

"All right. Then, what happened?"

"Nothing more. They go on and on with the funny jazz and the only thing I understand is they soundine soft and sweet and spoony. Then they stop talking and stay like that."

"Long?"

"It seem long to me. Maybe ten, maybe twenty minutes."

Sanny Haidoo stood thinking for a while, his round black face calm and impassive, his big hands shoved deep into the trouser pockets of his navy blue serge suit. He looked rocklike, big, assured. The elder of the two women studied him closely and saw the telltale ashiness of his purplish lips. His eyes, she saw, were slightly bloodshot. And she remembered other times when Mr. Haidoo had shown up late at night looking like this and the doctor had insisted on his eating before anything else.

"You eat yet, Mr. Haidoo?"

Haidoo seemed to follow the line of her thought. He smiled.

"You taking doctor's place, Cissie?"

"Doctor say you important to us, Mr. Haidoo, so we must look after you good."

"Everybody's important, Cissie."

Cissie looked as though she wanted to argue the point, changed her mind, licked her lips.

"Sit down, Mr. Haidoo. I warm up something for you, quick."

"Aftabwards," Haidoo ~~snapped~~ snapped. Then his face softened into a warm, appreciative smile. "I'll come back soon; you keep it warm for me, heh."

"I keep it nice and warm for you, Mr. Haidoo," Cissie glowed.

That's how he's made Dee feel, Haidoo thought as he left the three in the kitchen: but Dee's no simple trust-coolie woman who looks on him as Cissie looks on me. So what happened? Or has Dicky Halcker developed an imagination? But he knew that Dicky was solid and reliable.

This time he made his approach as loud ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~, coughing, slapping a table, bumping into the french windows. And so they were both on their feet when he reached them. The strong sense of

atmosphere was gone. But Dee seemed a little on edge, like a person caught out at some forbidden activity.

"Sorry I'm so late," Ndico said to Dee. Then he turned to Mhosi and offered him beer. "How you feeling now?"

"Fine," Mhosi murmured.

Yes, Ndico thought, you look and sound it.

"Any word from Doc?"

"He phoned earlier this evening," Dee said.

"Everything all right?"

"Yes; but we couldn't talk very much: the clock."

"They tap our telephones," Ndico explained to Mhosi. "It's sort of routine. They don't seem to realize yet that there's a slight click when they cut in....." They to Dee: "When's he due back?"

"Sometime tomorrow night."

"What about my arrangements?" Mhosi asked. "When can I get away?"

"Told him anything?" Ndico asked.

"No," Dee said.

She turned her head to Mhosi and Ndico sensed the current of understanding flowing between them.

"We'd better go in," Ndico said.

Without a word Dee led the way in; Mhosi followed and Ndico brought up the rear. As he scans her awkward, crippled movements Ndico felt reassured. Africans, all Africans, even polished and sophisticated Africans like this fellow, have an instinctive and deep-seated and historical revulsion against any physical deformity. In the old days they killed all their cripples; today they just withdraw because they do not have the power to destroy.....

Dee led the way up the stairs, ~~and~~ turned right, ~~sixthirty~~ away from the bedrooms and the hidden attic room to the left, and entered the study. She flicked on the lights and the men followed her into a large room. Except for the space of one window, the walls were lined ~~xxxxxx~~ with books from floor to ceiling. Some were in glass-covered cases but most were on simple wooden shelves. A huge mahogany desk near the window dominated the room which was a study in brown. There was a huge settee and three heavy armchairs, all upholstered and covered in brown leather. It was a warm, friendly room with the ~~a~~ slightly dusty smell that books give off in hot countries. The pipe-rack with its large number of pipes, the faint smell of pipe tobacco, so markedly different from the smell of cigarette tobacco, all these ~~s~~ gave the room a pronouncedly masculine feel.

Naidoo shut and locked the door behind him.

"This is the doc's favourite room," he said. "Soundproof, you know, so a man can read and think in peace."

"Away from women," Dee said drily.

Nkosi caught the momentary twinkle in Naidoo's eyes. He felt impatient, though, anxious to hear what Naidoo had to tell. Naidoo moved round the desk and sat in the doctor's place. Dee Nunkhoo made herself comfortable on the settee and Nkosi noticed that she automatically so adjusted herself as to obscure sight of her crippled leg. He settled in the chair nearest the desk and waited.

Naidoo spread his big hands on the desk top and stared at them.

"I'm sorry but your end of the arrangement has broken down."

"Westhuizen?" Nkosi asked.

Naidoo nodded.

"How? Did he talk?"

"No. He didn't talk but they found the passbook he should have given to you. They also found ^{out} / pretty quickly who he was."

"The patrol people knew him as Coetzee."

"They - and the whole country - now know that Coetzee is Westhuizen. It's on the radio and all the papers have it; and the story of how he was declared Coloured a year ago."

"Poor brute," Nkosi said. "But he'll talk, you know."

Naidoo raised his head and looked directly at Nkosi.

"He won't. He's dead."

Nkosi looked at Dee and knew that she had known all along. She stared back at him, stony eyed, and it was as though he heard her voice say: I told you out there is evil.

"Who did it? The police or....."

You're quick, Naidoo thought, too damn quick.

"He could lead them to Sammy and you," Dee said, a harsh flatness to her voice.

"And so he had to go....."

"What else?" she asked.

Dicky Naicker's funny jazz, Naidoo told himself.

"What right have we....."

"The right of necessity, of history, of survival," Naidoo cut in quietly. "It is either that or we all submit all the way."

Nkosi shook his head violently but spoke equally quietly.

"I'm not talking about an uprising or sabotage or a revolution. This is the straightforward and simple murdering of one man, a poor ~~black~~ brute who helped us too."

"Approve or disapprove, we did what had to be done." Naidoo closed his eyes and pursed his lips. He fought down the angry words

that choked him. He could not quite hide the bitterness he felt, and Nkosi felt it all the more forcefully for being controlled. "I am responsible for what was done. I assume the responsibility."

A wave of anger surged up inside Nkosi.

"And that, I suppose, is that."

"What else could be done?" Dee repeated urgently, anxiously.

What he thinks is important to her, Naidoo thought, and the thought startled him. He looked from Nkosi to Dee, then back to Nkosi.

"You will forgive me but I'm not prepared to debate the morality or the ethics of this matter now. Perhaps in another place and under different circumstances, but not here and now. So you think what you like; for us, at present, it does not matter. We can't allow it to matter."

To herself, irrationally, Dee cried: No, no; without knowing why.

"What does affect you," Naidoo went on, "is the fact that the passbook intended for you was found. For reasons of their own they have not made this public. All they've let out is that Westhuizen was murdered by Pogo. But they've made hundreds of prints of the picture on the passbook and these have gone to police all over the country."

"They think I murdered him....."

"The internal police report is that he was last seen in the very early hours of yesterday morning/~~when~~ with 'a Native' and he told the police patrol that he had picked up 'the Native' on the Protectorate Border. And the order is to get this 'Native' at all costs and to get him alive. But the published reports of the death of Westhuizen has none of this....."

Naidoo paused in case Nkosi wanted to speak; he had allowed some of his weariness and hunger to take hold and show.

~~After a while~~ Naidoo went on: "They're not really interested in who killed Westhuizen. They're interested in what he was doing and they think the 'Native' who was with him ^{in the hours of} early/yesterday morning can help them find out."

"How do you know all this?"

To Naidoo he sounded remarkably calm. Dee felt the knotted tendon in him. An odd flicker of feeling passed over Naidoo's face.

"My brother, my elder brother, is a Detective Sergeant in the Political Division.....He doesn't know of my activities....."

"I see," Nkosi said.

Naidoo's control suddenly went.

"You do, ~~you~~ do you! What the hell do you see, mister?"

"Sammy, please," Dee said.

"It's alright," Nkosi said to Dee.

"It's alright," Naidoo mimicked with rising anger. "The man says it's alright, so it's alright; the man says he sees so he sees. He's wise, he's civilised, he doesn't like murder and he sees. Well, let me tell you something, mister. You may be black and you may be born here but you don't see a damn! In fact, I'm sick of your little-Lord-Jesus attitude....."

"Sammy!" This time Dee was angry. "Mr. Nkosi's our guest!"

"Yours, not mine or ours!" Sammy snapped. Then he pulled himself together and shook his head. "I'm sorry, Dee. I didn't mean that. It's just that he seems to refuse to understand...."

"And you are tired and hungry. We can talk afterwards."

"Cissie's warning something for me....I'm sorry," he turned to Nkosi. "I've been under pressure. Arranging to kill somebody isn't as easy/^{and coldblooded} as you seem to think. Please don't say anything yet. There's no sense in getting into another argument. Just listen for minute.

We Indians have a ~~s~~particular problem." He turned to Dee. "Did you tell him about the underground; the details of our position?"

"No."

Naidoo lowered his head and closed his eyes for a few seconds, deep in thought. Then he snapped upright and looked at Nkosi.

"I think you know that the foundation of the underground movement is African. For sometime the Congress leaders were in complete control. I'm of course talking about the people who led Congress before it was banned. You will remember they were the moderates: people who saw things as you do, in terms of values, people who urged restraint and who deplored the matching of a white racialism with a black racialism. Luthuli was and still is the great spokesman for this view though he is not connect with the leadership underground. But this moderate/inevitably suffered reverses when the enemy became more brutal. Resistance was driven deeper underground. Pogo challenged the old Congress leadership and asserted the methods of the counter-terror. And, inevitably, ~~these differences~~ differences began to appear. The Liberals and the other whites who had made common cause fought against the methods of the counter-terror. Pogo and the Africanists reacted by repudiating and denouncing all co-operation between black and white. They went further. They insisted that nobody could help them win their salvation and they therefore did not need anybody's help. This shocked everybody, the African moderates included. The liberal and progressive types in ~~the~~ all/minority groups - the Coloureds, the Whites, the Indians - had assumed that all they had to do was declare themselves on the side of the Africans and they would be welcomed with open arms and invited to lead the poor blacks. So, when the blacks said we don't need you and we don't want you, it

was a nasty disturbing shock. But even more shocking was the apparent warmth with which the African masses welcomed the stand of the new leadership.

"Well now, characteristically, the communists, of all colours, were the first to adjust to the new situation. The only whites, colored and Indians who accepted it were the communists. The next group to do so were the Indians: we declared our unequivocal acceptance of majority leadership and majority rule. But in spite of this there were and are people inside the underground who still want to have nothing to do with the Indians and the communists. The underground leadership is deeply split on this issue. And so people like the doctor and I have to beg for an opportunity to prove the commitment of the Indians; we have to beg for a chance to make our contribution. Because the secretary of the Central Council supports us we are allowed to make whatever contribution we can. But our enemies inside the Council are waiting for us to make one mistake. Just one. And then they'll turn on us." Naidoo paused and took a deep breath. "Whether we like it or not, we must work our passage into the movement and into the future. If we fail we'll have no future here. This, whatever we feel or think of it, is the hard reality of the Indian situation. I believe Bee told you how the enemy exploits this latent anti-Indian feeling among the Africans. You know about the riots and murders. If the underground turns against us it'll be worse. And so we come to you. The money is safe now but you are still in our care. We cannot afford for you to get caught or for anything to happen to you while you're in our care. The police are looking for you. They are on the alert everywhere along the Protectorate border; and with the charge of murder or suspicion of murder over you the Protectorate authorities

will be bound to hand you over, should you slip through their border guard."

"So I am wanted for murder," Nkosi said at last, looking at Dee. But Naidoo answered him.

"Not for murder. For questioning. But if they think the only way they can get hold of you is by saying murder then they will."

"And if they do get hold of me?"

"Then two things happen: first, our enemies/denounce us; and we must then decide who and how many of us, if any, must step forward to at least save your neck and salvage whatever little African goodwill we think we have left. Either way we suffer. So you see how important you are to our sheer survival, Mr. Nkosi. If we have to, the doctor and I and, if needs must, Dee too, we'll all lay down our lives to save you, not because we love or even care very much about you and your opinion....."

"That much I know," Nkosi said. "The point is well taken."

"Sammy doesn't mean that," Dee put in.

"But Mr. Nkosi and I know that I do, my dear."

"He has a right to be bitter," Nkosi said.

"You're wrong again. We can't afford that luxury."

"You'd better go and eat," Dee said.

Sammy stood up, swaying slightly, his weariness now apparent to both of them.

"Yes.....I'm sorry I've upset you, Dee."

"You haven't; at least, it isn't you."

"Then it's worse than I feared." He walked round the big desk and rested his big hand briefly on Nkosi's big shoulder as he went out to the door. He opened the door then looked back at Nkosi.

"I'm sorry about this but you see that we must give up our

original plan for your departure."

"Yes, I see."

Naidoo looked at Dee. "You'll have to stay here at least until the doc shows up. That shouldn't be too much of a hardship; then we'll know the next move. Don't worry if I don't see you for some time; Dee will take care of you.....Bye Dee." Before Dee could respond Naidoo pulled the door shut behind him.

Nkosi laid his head back against the brown leather. He closed his eyes and tried to think out the implications of his position. When they had approached him to undertake this mission he, and they, had thought and talked of all sorts of possibilities. They had even thought of the possibility of his having to break loose from the support and protection of the underground and going it alone. The one thing they had not thought about was this possibility. The powerful and wealthy liberal forces that would have helped in any emergency ^{were} ~~was~~ he knew, shy away at any hint of murder. And then there ~~was~~ the Indians. In a remote sort of way he had known about this always. But not with this horrible starkness that made him feel guilty and weighed down with depression.....And how was he to get out of this damned place and out of this damned murder trap. Why the devil did they allow the passbook to fall into police hands. And Westhuizen.....

The woman's hand on his shoulder interrupted his jumbled thoughts. But he kept his eyes closed. She knew about it all the time. Then he felt her hand in his own and opened his eyes.

"I'm sorry," she said.

And he knew, suddenly, that she was offering herself as comfort. And she was unused to it or else to being so close to a black man. She leaned towards him but he got up and pushed her away, gently. She lowered her head.

"Is it because of my - is it because I'm a cripple?"

The silence between them was long and painful, charged with the embarrassment brought on by the absence of restraint.

He thought to himself: It's not fair. Aloud, he said:

"You're using a weakness as a weapon. That's unfair."

"Is it?" She insisted, head down, voice very small. "Be honest. I'll understand. I know it is part of the history of your people that you cannot stand - deformity."

Nkosi fought off the feeling of being almost physically crowded.

"Leave me alone, woman!"

"It is that then," she said.

"Oh God! It is not!" He felt savage suddenly. "As Naidoo said, you may have to lay down your life: you don't have to spread your legs as part of buying your way in. Or perhaps you do, but not to me. I'm not that important. Do it with the opposition in the underground! Only leave me alone and get me out of here as soon as possible."

She raised her head. And now she was as she had been when he first met her. The corners of her mouth ^{were} turned down and this, added to the deep grooves at the sides of her face, accentuated the harshness that was ~~there~~ part of her personality before their spell in the garden had brought out the softness in her. Now all that softness was gone. The grey-brown eyes stared coldly, levelly at him.

"Forgive me," she said, the slightly derisively smile twisting her lips. "I did rather impose on you. I won't do it again. It is rather late...."

He said: "Listen, Dee."

She turned away as though he had not spoken, opened the door and waited for him, head up, chest out, poised ~~and~~ deliberate. They

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She turned away as though he had not spoken, opened the door and waited for him, head up, chest out, poised and deliberate. They

stared at each other for while, then he shrugged slightly and walked towards her. She waited till he went past her then turned out the study lights and walked with him down the passage.

"No need for you to go up to the attic," she said. "We've prepared the spare bedroom directly opposite the attic. If anything happens you can quickly slip up. You couldn't do that while you were drugged and out....I think you'll find everything there. Naidoo took your measurements while you were out and there's a suit. Remember to take that if anything happens. But you'll be warned in good time. Even if I say so myself, we coolies are quite efficient...."

"Yes," Nkosi said, "like the ants."

"As you say, like the ants," she said. She stopped. "This is my bedroom. And this is no invitation."

"I'm aware of that."

"Goodnight then. Be assured we'll do our best to get you away as quickly as possible."

"Dee,"

"Yes?"

He looked into hard eyes and changed his mind.

"Never mind. I'm sorry. Goodnight."

Downstairs Dicky Raicker and the two women watched in silence till Naidoo finished eating. The younger of the women nodded every now and then, but seemed determined not to miss anything.

"This book is mine and must be kept here," she said, taking out of the kitchen, ignoring her protests about not being there really.

~~There~~ There was a brief, subdued, startled squeal from outside the kitchen door. It made Dicky Naicker chuckle.

"That Cissie really rough on the child you see, Sammy."

"How," Naidoo asked.

"Nuttin' serious," Dicky said hurriedly as he saw the concern on Sammy's face. "Just a lick on the arse and a roughing with her tongue. Nuttin' serious. Nuttin' to worry over. Cissie not cruel."

Cissie came back.

"How she doing?" Naidoo asked.

"All right, Mr. Naidoo. But these young ones soft, you see. Always combing their hair and painting their faces. When I was her age I had two children and I was working in the fields from before sun-up to after sundown; and no nonsense about painting face and being tired. Different world today!"

"If she lazy," Naidoo said, "then we'd better send her back. We can always find someone else to help you."

"Oh no, Mr. Naidoo, no!" Cissie protested. "I don't say she lazy. I like her. She's a good girl, good worker!"

"But I thought you said----"

"No. I only say the world different for girls today; softer. That's all. True's God, Mr. Naidoo, the girl is good."

"Then there's no problem," Naidoo said.

"She's a good girl," Cissie repeated.

Naicker began to chuckle and Cissie suddenly realised that she had been teased into praising her assistant. Briefly, she vacillated between face-saving anger and amusement. She saw the twinkle in Naidoo's eyes. Laughter bubbled up inside her and showed on her face. And then, suddenly, Naidoo was serious.

"We don't want to make life as hard for the young ones as it

was for us, Cissie. We went to make it easier. That is why we are all part of the Movement. The doctor and Miss Dee and I and all the other leaders, we all agree on this. But think of it yourself. When you were young as that girl wouldn't it have been fun to brush your hair and put oil on it and put and flower in it and put on a pretty sari and have a boyfriend and walk with him by the river? Just think of it. Wouldn't it have been fun for you, Cissie? Instead you had to breed children while you were still a child yourself, and you had to work from sun-up to sundown. It was a hard life. You don't want the same life for your child or even for this child who helps you, do you?"

"No, Mr. Naidoo."

"Fine! When she little bit slow, remember she's young. And give her time to make friends and to dream and to make herself pretty for boys, heh. Life going to be hard enough later: we know it."

"Yes," Cissie said thoughtfully, "we know it."

"Allright then. Now for the serious business. You Cissie must tell the child never to talk about the man upstairs. She must not mention it to anybody, not even to you. And you must not mention it to anybody, not even to me. You must all forget that this man is here. Nobody must talk about it. Understand?"

"But the people in the street.... Only today....."

"The word will go to them too. From now on no-one must talk or think about this man. The Movement wants everybody to forget this man is alive. There was no man, so he never came here and so nobody ever saw him. You pass the word along the street, Dicky. Tell them the leaders of the Movement say it is a matter of life and death. Warn them the police may come among us. All right?"

"Yes, Sammy," Dicky Naicker said gravely.

Cissie
 "Yes, Mr. Naidoo,"/said said.

"All right then Cissie, it's been a long day. You go and rest."

"You stay here tonight, Mr. Naidoo?"

He thought: Even she's worried about the man effect on Dee.

"No, Cissie, I can't stay tonight. There's too much to do."

Cissie raised her eyes as though she would look through the barrier of walls and ceiling to see what went on upstairs, then she turned to the door.

"Goodnight, Mr. Naidoo."

"Goodnight, Cissie."

"Night Mr. Dicky."

"Night Cissie. Don't worry. I'm sleeping here."

Dicky waited till Cissie had shut the door then he said:

"I can take a blanket and stretch out at the top of the stairs."

Naidoo smiled wanly and shook his head.

"You can but you won't. You will see me out, then you will check that all doors and windows are properly shut and locked, then you will take the backdoor key and go out and lock the back door behind you. You will let the man on watch know in which of the outside rooms you are sleeping, and then you will go to sleep."

"But....."

"But what? You've seen and heard the man. Do you think he'll try and murder Miss Dee in the middle of the night?"

"No, Sammy.....But...."

"You think ~~hee~~ he'll rape her?"

Dicky Naicker looked appealingly at Sammy Naidoo. He knew that Sammy knew what was in his mind; but it was not the kind of thing you said out aloud. He thought: Please, Sammy, you know what I mean. He's black and she's one of ours; she's the doc's kid sister and

we must take care of her.

Naidoo thought: At least we have reached a point where we are too shamefaced to talk openly about our thoughts. He said:

"Only thing that can happen is what Miss Dee wants."

Dicky Naicker turned his head away, afraid suddenly, Sammy Naidoo knew, to pursue this line of thought any further. Naidoo was surprised that Dicky Naicker had not jumped at the apparently reassuring fact that Miss Dee had the initiative: a year ago he would have. Now, a year later, Miss Dee was less infallible; the fact that the power of choice was hers did not mean that what Dicky feared could not happen.

Dicky Naicker tried to muster a smile but his lower lip trembled uncertainly.

An enormous feeling of warmth for Dicky Naicker welled up in Sammy Naidoo. Young people like Dicky, growing up in this land in these days, had to mature much too quickly and therefore much too artificially. They had to skip so much of youth and become adult before their time; none of the lazy easy maturing for them; everything was forced so hard as to destroy vast areas of their humanity. Soon, Naidoo thought bitterly, soon this land and all its people, black, brown, white and what will you, soon they will all be strangers to the meaning of compassion: the trend is there, sharp and clear, unmistakeable. Unless.....

He said: "Tell me, Dicky. You ever have a black girl?"

A shy, self-conscious smile lit up Dicky's face.

"One time."

"And it different?"

"You mean from our girls? No; but you don't talk of it. You know

"How you mean?"

"From other/ girls; from our girls. Black girl any different?"

"I dunno," Naicker said doubtfully.

"Af course, every girl is different from every other; I don't mean that. I mean did you find the black girl different from every other girl?"

"I don't remember so clear now; you know how it is; but I don't think she different."

"And you feel any different after you have her?"

"No..... Why you ask these things, Sammy?"

"No special reason. Just that for me all women are the same. Each one is different because every person is different, but not because of colour or race: certainly not with those I knew."

It was ~~Sammy~~ Dicky's turn to ask questions now. By asking him, Sammy had given him the right to ask in return. He was self-consciously bold about it.

"You ever had a black girl, Sammy?"

"More than one." Sammy smiled sleepily. "And white ones too, and Coloured ones. Those days were not like it is today. In those days people like us could go to the universities of Johannesburg and Cape Town and even to the university college at Durban. People mixed more and you could be friends.

"Friends with whites?" Dicky was incredulous.

"Yes, Dicky, friends with whites."

"Here! In this country?" Dicky thought about it for while .

"You mean there was no colour bar?" at all?"

"There always was, but in those days the whites were ashamed and felt guilty about it; and so they had to explain it and excuse it. ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ And because the government itself felt guilty it pretended not to see those whites who broke the rules and fraternised

with non-whites. Why, in those days a man like Janx~~Hafner~~ Hofmeyr could denounce the colour bar and still win a seat and remain a minister of government. The trouble, Dicky, is that we allowed the colour bar to take root and become a habit. And once people slip into habits the questions of right and wrong become blurred; and the hardest thing to break is a well established habit."

Naicker

"You tired, Semmy," Dicky ~~Hafner~~ murmured, sensitive suddenly to the strong wave of depression that had assailed Naidoo as he spoke.

"Yes," Naidoo said. "Come, see me out. And remember what I told you."

He heaved himself out of the chair, will his body into an almost militaristic erectness and moved decisively to the front of the house. Before opening the front door he looked briefly up at the stairs and the upper part of the house. It was in darkness and it was silent. Dicky Naicker suppressed the impulse to appeal once more for permission to sleep inside the house, preferably near Dee's room. Naidoo opened the door, stepped out and shut it behind him, all in one smooth quick flowing movement that gave Naicker no chance to say goodnight.

Outside, Naidoo waited until he heard Naicker turn the key and shoot the two bolts home. Then he hurried down the deserted street of the Indian area that was on the fringe of the white town. He willed himself not to think of Dee and the black men called Nkosi. Instead, he thought about the nature of prejudice and the terrible problem of trying to stay free of it oneself. Once, at a corner, the heartrending howl of dog brought him to a stop. Then he lowered his head and moved off again, too tired to think but on the alert for patrolling police.

-3-

Dr. Nunkhoo arrived back from Johannesburg in the very early hours of the morning, at that time of day, that hour before dawn, when there is ~~affresh~~ fresh chilliness to the air even at sea-level on the equator. He had driven hard all night and now only the steady stream of cold air kept him awake; that and the will to be awake.

He slowed down to regulation speed on the outskirts of the white town. There was no other traffic on the clean, wide, well-lit streets. But Nunkhoo drove with the care and attention of someone travelling through dense and tricky traffic until the broad clean streets and the spacious houses in their large and well-kept gardens were behind him. Then, in that no-man's-land between the legally defined 'European residential area' and his own 'Indian residential area', which in this case was the squalid strip of land where the small handful of coloureds of the area live, he picked up speed again. Once, most of this land, including parts of the town, had been owned by Indians. By a series of legal moves at central government level, at provincial government level and at local government level the Indians had been deprived of their land. His own family had lost close on a thousand acres of land, part of it here but the bulk of it near the coast at a spot that had been turned into a popular resort. Nunkhoo smiled bitterly at the thought of his lost land and at the fact that this was probably the first legally constituted government in history that ^{some four-fifths} had deprived ~~xxxxxx~~ of its citizenry of the so-called sacred right to freehold title to property, purely and simply on the basis of colour.

"But that is the least of our worries," he murmured to the wind.

On the outskirts of the Indian quarter the world turned drab and

ugly. Only the main street was surfaced; the others were dustbowls in the dry season and muddy pools in the wet. The houses were equally drab and ugly and unpainted. This was true of the homes ^{even} of those who were relatively prosperous. But this was of course only true of the outside. It was wise, in these days, to show a poor and drab and miserable front lest the lords of the land envied what they saw. If they ^{envied} ~~desired~~, the area could easily be declared 'European', and then there would be another exodus of Indians. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ And so the whites were only allowed to see the ugly false front that made them feel good and masters of the situation. And those who did know that behind the false front were the refinements of a cultured people - those whites concerned with security and with political intelligence - kept the disturbing secret from the rest of their people. This was part of the elaborate pattern of deception, the complex pattern of the deceiving house of mirrors, on which the entire society had increasingly come to be based. People were no longer just people; where the wind came ~~from~~ ^{from} and on whom it blew first, determined whether it was a good or bad wind; water was clean or dirty, not because of filtration or the lack of it, but because kaffirs or coolies had either used it five or ten miles further up or not: if it had gone underground immediately after use by the kaffir or coolies and emerged soft and purified it would still be dirty, if it were known that it had been used by kaffir or coolies. So here too, in order to enjoy the gifts of nature, the deception was necessary.

And because this line of thinking always took him, step by step, to a point where he felt a kind of compassionate pity for the gross, almost historical stupidity shown by man through the ages, he always

he always stopped this line of thinking abruptly; but he knew that one day, in a moment of weakness, he would follow it through. And that, he knew, would be his undoing. The moment you begin to understand that, given the same circumstances, the Indians or the blacks would have behaved exactly as the white minority does.....

But of course the Marxien proposition is that if you change the circumstances you change the behaviour pattern of people. And in any events the circumstances are not and cannot be the same: the blacks are the majority and the black majority will not need to oppress a white minority in order to survive. "And we coolies have ceased to be colonisers many, many, thousands of years ago." Who knows, perhaps the day will come, a thousand years ~~from~~ or more from now, when the whites will be as psychologically incapable of being colonised as we now are. But what if the blacks had by then become the world's new great colonisers?.....Beware Dawood Nunkhoo! These dangerous thoughts could lead to impotence,"

He cleared his mind of all thought and felt the cool wind on his face and saw the first dawn rays climbing the sky to the east. And he realised suddenly that now, at last, he was driving from one side of the narrow road to the other; co-ordination and control were completely gone, and so was the strain. He was home and safe - as safe as he could be anywhere in this land.

Dicky Naicker and the watchman opened the garage gate and it was all he could do to get the car in safely without scraping Dee's. She met him at the top of the stairs, sleepy and warm. He held her tight for a moment and thought of another woman, the only other one he had ever held like this, but with very different feelings. Because of the racialism of the land and because of what he conceived as his

duty he had not married that woman. Now she was someone else's wife in faraway Scotland, and in all the years since he had found no other to take her place in his heart and mind.

"How's our guest?" Then he noticed the puffy redness of her eyes.

"Shaken by what's happened," she said. "But all right. Keeps his head."

"And you?" He tried not to show the tenderness he felt.

She raised her redrimmed eyes to his.

"I'm in a bit of mess," she said impersonally.

"Talk about it?"

"No.....It's about him.....Get into bed and I'll bring up a cup of tea."

He watched her go bobbing down the stairs; then he went into his bedroom; conscious, briefly, of the usually submerged sense of guilt because she, the woman, was the cripple. Men supported such states best. When Dee Nunkhoo returned to her brother's room with the tea, he he was out to the world. She tucked him in, drew the curtains to keep the room in darkness, and went out with the tea tray. Then she saw Nkosi at the door of his bedroom.

"My brother has returned," she said.

"Yes; I heard."

"But he's awfully tired - too tired to drink this tea."

"I wasn't expecting to see him now.....May I have his tea?"

She hesitated, conscious suddenly of the semi-transparent flimsiness of her night clothes, and, at the same time, confused and angered that the presence of this man should have this effect on her.

"What is it you want?" She almost felt his sense of shock at the harshness of her voice. She felt him withdraw, become remote and impersonal.

She braced herself against the impact of his reply, aware of her vulnerability with this man, determined not to let him see it. But he seemed content to just stand and stare, remote and very much a black presence. After what seemed an age he said:

"It is of no moment," with the stiff formality she had noticed so often before with Africans who were being coldly polite.

She suddenly felt desperate, frightened, anxious. She thought: if the wall goes up now it will be the end. He turned and began to move back into the room from which he had come. She closed her eyes.

"Please....." She choked on the word, repeated "Please....." and fought down the humiliating tears that filled her eyes.

She turned away from him, switched off the landing light and went into her room. She put the tray on her little bedside table, bobbed silently to the open window and looked out ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ to the east where where the dawnrays were now lighting up the sky with colours. Soon, in an hour perhaps, the lightrays would grow stronger, touch all the earth and play herald to the sun itself. She was calm suddenly, tearless, relaxed. Then, after what seemed an age of waiting, she sensed rather than heard him come into the room. She raised her chin a little, clenched her fists tight and allowed the hot tears to run down her face, making rivers of the deep grooves on each side of her nose.

"Please shut the door and turn off the light." Her voice was calmly conversational now.

She heard him shut the door. Then, as he switched off the light, she turned to him. There was enough natural light for them to see each other, for her to see that he saw her flowing tears; but the light was subdued and kindly, and there was a hint of self mockery in her recognition of this fact.

She indicated, awkwardly, the easy chair by the window.

"Please be seated.....~~Forgive~~ the uncertainty....I don't know how a woman's supposed to behave in these circumstances.....Its the first time I've entertained a man to tea in my bedroom at this hour. What happens with one's brother seems singularly unhelpful....."

She thought: this is ridiculous! Me! Me playing jelly-belly at my age! Trouble is my belly is jelly. Jelly-belly.....One of those expressions that had stuck ~~from~~ since that long ago day of childhood when her two brothers, the elder sleeping in the next room, and the ^{anti-Indian} young clubbed to death by black/race rioters, when those two had dared her to strip and jump into a dam with them; and because she wouldn't Dawood had thrown back his godlike, chiseled head and roared 'Jelly-Belly!' and then collapsed in helpless laughter. Jelly-belly ^{Private} had been a part of their/currency of communication ever since. Jelly-belly.....

"The answer is to treat all men as one's brother."

He's just as jelly-belly, she thought and felt comforted.

2 "Surely that's not possible....."

"As a conscious confidence-giving device, certainly."

She waited till he went past her and settled himself at the window, then, as unobtrusively as possible, she moved to her bedside ~~tabla~~ and busied herself ~~packing the box~~ cleaning up her face. Then she poured the tea and carried it to the window. He brought the stool ^{drinking their tea and} from her dressing table. They sat on either side of the window/^{the} watching the forming and re-forming of new patterns of/light of the breaking day. She felt herself grow tranquil and warm, as in the garden last night. This time she surrendered eagerly, but with a hint of sadness, to the trancelike atmosphere that seemed a part of his presence.

After a long while he said, as though speaking to himself only:

"I left a woman in Europe...."

"European and beautiful, &...." she murmured.

"Yes: both," he said.

The ache of her heart was physical.

"And good and intelligent, I'm sure."

"No," he said. "Neither good nor intelligent. Mean, selfish, shallow and utterly without morals...."

"And yet you love her," she said.

"She's a shameless liar and utterly without scruples. Because she resented our friendship she seduced my best friend and then came and told me that he had ravished her by force. It destroyed our friendship, of course. I knew that had our roles been reversed I too would have been seduced by her but I couldn't forgive my friend for not being stronger than I would have been....No. That's not the reason

"No; that isn't the reason," she said.

He turned his head from the changing lights of the breaking day and stared curiously and intently at her.

"But it's not the desire to possess her," he said. "I don't want her; I've sent her away often enough. She's gone often enough. But then, after weeks or months she's come back hungry and beaten and I've taken her back and fed her and clothed and comforted her.....And despised her and called her a harlot and a stupid one who doesn't even take money....."

"And loved her," Dee murmured remotely.

"No. There is no respect, no admiration, no real friendship - and all these are implicit in love."

"Then it's pure animal."

"That was strong in the beginning. But you know the saying about

how too many fingers dipping in the same bowl can spoil the flavour of it. When she discovered that I was growing cold it became a challenging pastime for her to use her skills to arouse me: when ~~all~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ I finally became impervious to all her tricks it became a thing of bitter desperation. If she were capable of love I would say that she grew to love me when she discovered she had destroyed my capacity to love her in any way. But it is not love, it is possession she's after."

"And the point of telling me all this?"

"Seen from the outside: I've stuck to this woman for the best part of ten years and the only possible reason for a man sticking to a woman must be love. Again, seen from the outside: she's gone away to other men but she 's always come back. And now there is a sort of desperation with which she tries to make me lust after her. From the outside this can be interpreted as the painful and stormy interplay of a great love between two people. That is indeed how outsiders do interpret it: it is part of the whole fictionalised, commercialised love myth...."

"And yet there is this remembrance, this thinking of her, this breaking of a friendship because she seduced your friend....."

"That was a long time ago."

"But if it happened now, today, even though you say you are cold to her, I think it ~~will~~ would still destroy that friendship....."
is based

"Only because the friendship itself/on certain cardinal assumptions which are violated."

"I see that," Dee said quickly. "But there is still the fact of the remembrance. If it is neither love nor lust, then what is it? What is the hold this woman has over you: it is patently obvious and yet you speak of her with contempt both for yourself and for her. What ^{that she has,}

is her hold?"

"Her weakness."

"Are you saying you're a sucker for loose women?" She felt gay suddenly. "It would be awful on a woman with any fastidiousness."

"No," he said seriously. He seemed to grope for words. "I think it is that she turned to me and offered me the burden of her weakness. And I think my weakness is that I could not refuse the reality of her weakness. I suppose its my vanity; and a sort of subconscious desire to be the big strong man....."

"And of course she was a hell of a sexy bit," Dee said coarsely.

"Yes, that too."

"So you wanted her because she tittivated you; then you discovered that she was a tart but having laid her you felt responsible for her. In other words you're all mixed up and loaded with a sense of guilt, of responsibility and every other complex under the sun. Really, you know, that's an awfully high price to pay for a sleep....."

"Do you have to make it sound so cheap....."

Determinedly, she shut her heart and mind to the gentle, sad reproach behind his words. Suddenly, sharply, in a flash of brilliant insight she realised that this one's trouble was that he wanted to put all women on pedestals and look up to them.

"But you make prisoners of them, my dear," she protested/urgently.

He was completely out of touch with her now.

"What are you talking about?" He said.

Then, her newfound gift of seeing still working, she said:

"I see it now. You set them on pedestals and look up to them and God help them if they don't live up to it! That's the trouble with your poor, immoral, silly little sexy bitch. She keeps on falling off the pedestal. What she doesn't realise and what you've hidden from yourself is that if she didn't fall off you'd lose all interest.

in her. She has this hold on you because she's a no-good little tart. You are the missionary wrestling with evil. If she were strong and moral and upright you would have had your sleep and passed on to other pastures, feeling guilty and conscience stricken as befits a good missionary type, but free and oddly fulfilled because she would still have been up there on her pedestal: you would have climbed up, had your bit of fun, climbed down and still been able to look up to her. Instead, this one has come right down ~~into~~ ground level with you and you've spent the last ten years trying to put her back up there where you think she belongs.....Frankly, my dear, I'm sorry for the poor little bitch. It must have been every kind of hell for her, trying to hold her own and knowing, probably in the most primitively instinctive way, that to hold you she had to be weak....."

She stopped talking abruptly, aware, suddenly, that she had said more than she had intended. This was something she would have to watch with this man. In his presence the impulse was to open up, to be mentally and emotionally naked with him: and she knew it had dangers. She looked anxiously at him. The dawnlight coming through the window played tricks with his face, made it look covered in a ^{whiteish} ~~pinkish~~ powder that set the eyes far back in their sockets. She was disturbed by ^{her} ~~the~~ sense of anxiety lest she had offended him.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't mean to go so far...." Then she ~~had~~ sensed rather than saw the smiling curve of his lips. She felt reassured but went on "The trouble is that you make me say more than I mean to."

He said, lightly: "I'm sorry - if that is bad."

She thought: we've crossed the first big hurdle. She said:

"It could be - especially with your impulse to set all women

on pedestals."

"But that won't worry you," he said with gentle mockery. Then, as though uncertain of her reaction, he asked: "Will it?"

"You are laughing at me!" she protested, but unable to quite contain the purring hint of victory in her voice.

He heard it and it brought a deep low chuckle to his throat. She jumped up self-consciously, but before she could move away he reached out and caught her left wrist and pulled her towards him. She resisted for a brief while then she gave in and went into the circle of his arm, leaning forward till her breasts rested heavily against his chest. His arm tightened about her waist as though he wanted to merge their two bodies; she closed her eyes and gave up all effort at thought; the sheer physical excitement of the moment set her body trembling with desire for this man.

Then his arm relaxed. The sense of a merging of bodies, of a sexual oneness, faded. Slowly, reluctantly, she gave in to the new mood of thought he generated and demanded.

He said: "You know I'm going back as soon as possible."

"Yes; I know."

"And that she's still there; waiting for me....."

"Yes," she repeated. "I know."

"And still....."

"Only if you want it."

"But what if.....what if you get too attached to me?"

"You're being the big strong man again, my dear. All right, what if I do?"

"You're not as tough as you try to sound."

"I don't want to be tough: it is just that know that you may; no, not may; knowing that you will go away changes nothing."

"I want to be sure you know what's in store...."

She leaned far back, bracing her hips against his and intertwining her fingers round the back of his waist. She savoured, sweetly and snugly, the exciting new sense of possessive intimacy she felt about this man. And now she knew also that for this man she could make herself physically exciting.

"Be assured, my dear. I know what's in store. I know it is futile to say it but I would like you to be assured that when the moment of parting comes I will regret nothing."

"It is easily said now."

"I know. If you want me to assure^{you} that I will not be hurt, I cannot. You mustn't project cheating expectations. What I can and do assure is that there will be no messiness at the end of the line -- whatever it is."

He kissed then; gently, warmly, tenderly, almost thankfully. But then she felt a wave of desire shoot through him. Then, repending, a wave of desire swept through her; it was so overpowering that she knew, more by instinct than reason, that she would make a hash of it if she gave in now. And the first time had to be right. So she fought down her rising passion.

"I want you so desperately but I'm so shaken that I'll make a mess of it now."

he
"All right, my dear," murmured.

They held each other tight. He caressed her back, her shoulders her neck, in gentle circular movements that relaxed her in body and mind. And she closed her eyes and drifted into a state of trance-like passion. Then, suddenly, she jerked out of it, shaken and trembling.

The caressing hand was exploring her left hip, the beginning of the crippled leg.

She lifted her head and pulled away from him. He held on to her and kept on with his exploration, bending a little as his hand went down her thigh to the back of her knee.

"What are you doing?"

"Feeling you, trying to see and feel the extent of your crippledness."

"Why?"

"You seem to expect me to have an attitude to it, so I want to find out if I have."

"Everybody has an attitude to a cripple."

He let go of her and she moved away from him.

"I hoped I'd seen the end of the hard self-pitying side of you."

The harshness behind the words stung her even more than the words themselves. Tears welled-up and overflowed her eyes. She fought hard to gain control of her emotions.

He walked briskly to the door and flicked on the light. Automatically she turned her body so that he saw it in profile, the crippled leg hidden away from him. He studied her coldly, deliberately. Then he said: "Turn. I want to take a close look at your crippled leg."

The sobbing she had controlled this far became uncontrollable. But she turned. And as she did so she turned her eyes away from his face.

"Come nearer!" he ordered. Then, as she stood no more than a yard away from him, he said: "Turn a little more and raise your night-dress....Higher, yes, up to your waist. Your left hip and thigh seems a little smaller than your right. I want to see how much; and I want

to take a really close look at your clubfoot. I've never had a chance to examine one till now. I wonder whether they're all alike but I don't suppose you even bothered to find out. That's the difference between artists and non-artists. Artists will use even their own weaknesses and deformities to serve the creative process. What do you know about clubfootedness?"

He went down on one knee and felt the mishapen lump.

"Only that it is supposed to be congenital," she said between painful sobs, that had escaped her control.

"If you'd been an artist instead of a would-be politician you would have been able to tell me lot more. Anyway, I should say there is a length difference of between two to three inches between left and right leg."...."

"Two and a quarter inches," she said.
indeed

"The left thigh and hip, and the whole of the left leg seems to be perfectly scaled down for a person two and a quarter inches shorter. I'm not sure that I do not prefer the smaller hip and thigh. The woman to whom they belong would be just about the right size for a little man like me. Anyway, I'm in a position to have an attitude now and I'll give it to you if you are interested. Of course you may prefer to repeat your clever claptrap about everybody having this, that or the other, attitude toward cripples."

He looked up at the ravaged, tearstained face. Then, gently, he freed the flimsy cloth from her clenched fists and allowed it to slide down her legs. He got up and stood facing her, and now, at last, she saw the gentle, reassuring look in his eyes.

"Interested in my attitude?"

Twice she opened her mouth and twice she could make no sound other than the painful gasping sobs. Then she nodded.

"I think it is a pity about this clubfoot. I'm sorry about it and I'm sorry that you're saddled with it. But I do think you make it much more important than it is. Maybe its because you're a woman and women are vain. I think the real damage, the real harm you've suffered has been self-inflicted because of this feeling that you're unnatural. So you've tended rather to impose your clubfoot on me. I hope you'll stop doing that now." I'm sorry I had to bring things to a head in this way. Self-pity is the meanest and ugliest of human emotions and not worthy of you." He smiled a brief, tender smile. "It is certainly not worthy of my woman."

She let out a strangled cry, ~~grasped~~ half-fell forward and grabbed his him and then buried her face in ^{his} shoulder, muting her sobbing by pressing her open mouth against against the curve of his neck.

When her passionate storm had passed, she said:

"Please, the light. Not even a very beautiful woman can stand it in this state." She hesitated then went on: "The impulse is to not let it matter. I couldn't be more naked before you than I've been. But...."

"You are ~~right~~ right," he said. "A woman must always be a woman."

He left her and went and turned off the light. When he turned back to her she had turned her back on him. She stood facing the window and the light of the breaking day.

"Please leave me now. Get some more sleep if you can."

"You'll be all right now?"

"Yes," she said. "Yes, my dear. I'll be all right now."

He left her and she remained by the window for along time, watching the breaking day.

-4-

He dreamt that he was asleep and that Dee was calling him, urgently, insistently, shaking him. He dreamt that he opened his eyes and stared up into her face and that the bright light of day was in the room. And then it was not a dream but ~~xxxxxxxx~~ reality.

"Please! You must hurry into the attic."

He was alert suddenly. He swung out of bed and gathered his clothes in one quick sweeping movement. A tall thin Indian woman entered ~~xxxxxxxx~~ and got about making the bed, apparently oblivious of his presence. ~~He went to the door and~~ Dee/looked out.

"Allright," she said.

He passed her, crossed the passage and entered the false cupboard.

"I'll come as soon as I can," she whispered.

Then the cupboard door shut and he groped his way up the dark and narrow stairs. At the top of the stairs he felt for the door. He closed his eyes and tried to bring back to mind the ~~xxxxf~~ picture he had of the attic room from his brief view of it the night before. The light-switch, he knew, should be on the wall to the left, just inside the door and about three inches higher than his head. And the small fanlight should be somewhere over there to the right. It must still be covered otherwise some daylight would enter. His hand felt for and found the light switch; then, with his fingers on the switch, he decided against making a light. Instead, using the angle of the wall as a guide, and keeping his eyes closed, his right hand outstretched, he moved forward delicately to where the bed should be. He touched it, felt it, and put his clothes on it. Then, feeling his

way round the bed, he kept up his exploration until he located the little window set in the sloping ceiling. His fingers explored the blackout curtaining carefully before finally opening it. It was important not to impair the effectiveness of the curtaining. At last he moved the curtain aside. A bright stream of light filtered into the room.

He examined the window. It had one single square pane of glass, one inch thick and with fine mesh wire embedded in it. This was set in a sliding steel frame. A single steel bolt kept the window shut. Nkosi tried the bolt. It slid back noiselessly. He tried the window: it, too, opened easily, noiselessly, rolling back on well-oiled bearings. In an emergency this was the way out of this hiding place. He got the wooden chair on which his clothes had rested the previous night. By standing on it he could poke his head out. The upward slope of the roof was towards the front of the house; the downward slope towards the rear, to the bathhouses and, beyond them, to the maze of dark alleys and tin shenties of this Indian residential area. At one point where the back portion of the roof would have been exposed to anyone who looked up from the street, a zinc fence had been put up. Everything had been thought of and provided for, ^{had been} nothing left to chance.

The thought depressed him. But in spite of that he took careful note of the easiest and quickest way down. Then he shut and bolted the window.

"You left the door open, he told himself. Sort of carelessness you shouldn't allow....He walked quickly across the thick carpet and shut and locked it.....You wouldn't have done this but for the

feeling of security she has given you: watch your step, mister, watch your step.

He changed quickly ^{from} ~~his~~ his pyjamas into the suit Sammy Naidoo had brought for him. Then he waited: alert, attentive, yet oddly relaxed, suppressing all thought in case it puts him off guard for a second.

Time passed: long, unending seeming, meaningless except as yet another means of torturing man. But he refused to allow even the reality of that thought: and so there was nothing except time passing, and a man waiting to be released from waiting.

At last he heard the faintest of sounds. Someone was coming up the stairs. He moved quickly and quietly. First, he unbolted the window, then he put the chair directly under the open window, then he slipped on his shoes. He went to the door and looked back, measuring the distance and the leap he would have to make to get out in one smooth movement. Then he waited, listening for the faint sound beyond the door.

There were two gentle taps and Dee's voice came softly to him.

"It's all right. They've gone."

He ~~xxxx~~ unlocked the door. She came in quickly and he saw that she was angry and that she had difficulty containing her anger. She looked from him to the open window and concern replaced her anger.

"Where would you have gone?" she asked.

"I hadn't thought that far," he said. "What was it?"

She went and sat on the bed. He closed the window and shot the bolts home then he went and sat beside her.

"Gentlemen from security," she said bitterly. "Checking on the doctor, you know. Wanted to know when he had got back, why he went to

Johannesburg, the names of the people he saw, where he slept..... And of course the doctor answered the nice white basies. The law says we must always answer all the questions, no matter how personal, asked by its representatives. If we don't they might think we are up to mischief and on the basis of their thoughts they might lock us up."

Nkosi said: "Stop it!"

She shook her head and touched his hand.

"I'm sorry. I suppose this is really the ugliest part of it; it turns us ugly too."

"Only if we allow it," he said. "Anyway, what happened?"

"On the face of it it was just one of their routine visits to check on Dawood, but we are not sure. They seemed almost anxious to be reassuring. They didn't mention Westhuizen; they didn't mention their search for the man who was with him; and they didn't mention the fact that a large army of people, many of them confined to house arrest, who were desperately without two days ago are now suddenly in possession of food and a little money."

"Surely they wouldn't discuss all this with your brother, in case they betray something he doesn't know."

"I'm afraid that's how they do it. There are always two of them. One asks the questions while the other goes into a corner and watches your reactions. It is most effective. The trick is to let you know how much they know in the hope that your reaction will betray guilty knowledge. As I say, it's been most effective. But this time they did the opposite, and they never do anything without very good reason."

"Aren't you making them sound just a little larger than life?"

"I've had rather more dealings with them/^{then} you have had. Anyway, Dawood is as worried about this visit as I am and he doesn't go in for pointless worrying. Come, let's go down, Dawood will soon be going on his rounds and he wants to see you before he goes."

She led the way down the hidden stairs and out of the false cupboard. Voices drifted up to them from the doctor's surgery on the ground floor. Dee led the way into her bedroom where a table had been laid for three near the window.

Nkosi looked out of the window and remembered, as part of a ~~junk~~ jumbled pattern of thought and disturbance, what had happened in this room between him and Dee earlier. As though aware of this, she moved to his side. They embraced briefly: a gesture of tenderness and intimacy, almost bereft of all passion.

"In these times and in this place there should not be room for this sort of feeling," she said quietly.

He laughed softly and she liked the sound of it.

"One day," he said, "one day we'll produce a race of men who will only feel and respond in accordance with the dictates of time and place.....Thank God I won't be around when that day comes." He paused then went on with a new undercurrent of seriousness. "I really believe that if the day ever comes when man is wholly rational in his responses then we will see the day when the world becomes a really ugly and scientific and brutal thing. Man's saving grace is and has always been his impulse, which is utterly irrational, towards phantasy and fairy-tales. God and love and beauty and truth are not scientifically provable.....Do I sound awfully reactionary?"

"Yes, but I like it. Trouble is it makes things so much more difficult.....Ah, here's Dawood."

by daylight
At first sight/Nkosi found Dawood Nunkhoo smaller and less striking than he had been when they had first met by the canefield that night that now seemed a lifetime away. Then the doctor had seemed a towering, handsome, slightly ironical godlike figure who could never be ruffled. Now, by daylight, the tall man looked very mortal and very disturbed. And even his voice, when he spoke, lacked the tranquillising power it had had that first night. Only the handgrip was still as firm as Nkosi remembered it.

"It is good to see you," the doctor said. "And looking so well too. The people in Johannesburg asked me to tell you what a great job you've done."

"It seems I've brought trouble too."

"Couldn't be helped. Westhuizen was the one weak link. We all knew that was the most likely point of trouble in the chain."

"The weak link has now been eliminated...."

Nunkhoo caught the undercurrent of bitterness. He looked closely at Nkosi's face and thought: Lucky you to be free enough to express your revulsion.

"Surely they explained....."

"Very clearly," Nkosi murmured. "And that, of course, justifies"

"You've had this out with Sammy, haven't you?"

"Yes.....Sorry. I'm being difficult and I don't mean to be. I'm sure its not easy for you...."

"Please don't forget Sammy, friend. It isn't easy for him either. In fact its worse. He's the activist - and an activist with a conscience walks a hard road.....It has ceased to be a question of anything justifying anything else."

Cissie brought in the tea tray and Dee set about dispensing

tea. Nunkhoo stood staring out of the little window, stuffing his pipe.

Dee Nunkhoo moved across the room with a cup of tea for her brother; and because he was her brother he noticed a subtle difference in her movements. She walked as though with nothing to hide, as though being crippled was as normal as not being crippled. He looked quickly at Nkosi and thought: That one gives nothing away.

Dee said:

"Brother, this man believes in phantasies and fairy-tales, in God and love and beauty and truth....."

Nunkhoo looked down at his sister and nodded.

"I rather suspected as much from the moment I met him. The trouble is believing in these things rather complicates matters in our situation."

"Just what I told him," she said, turning away to pour Nkosi's tea.

Nunkhoo thought: And you, little sister, want to believe with him. Aloud, he said: "And what did he say, little sister?"

"Something about the world being a really ugly and brutal and evil place the day we stop believing in these things."

"And she," Nkosi cut in, "she said that it is already all that and more right now, here in this place."

And now, suddenly, Dee sensed, between her brother and this man, that same undercurrent of understanding that had grown up between herself and this man.

"And what did you tell her?" Nunkhoo asked softly.

Nkosi took the tea from her and an odd smile flickered across

his face.

"I didn't say anything," Nkosi said equally softly. "Before I knew about Westhuizen it might have been easy to answer her. After I heard about Westhuizen I was not so sure I knew the answer."

Nunkhoo turned from the window.

"But that is where you were wrong, my friend. Because there are no stars in the sky is no reason for one to assume that darkness is eternal."

"But what kind of day will follow the darkness? Surely it is not simply the fact of daylight that is important."

"Yes. But first there must be the clear knowledge that there will be daylight."

"It depends on what we mean by daylight in this case. If it means merely to be alive...."

"But that is precisely what it does not mean," Nunkhoo cut in. "If it meant just that then there would be no need to fight. It is precisely because it means much more than ^{just} being alive that we are fighting....."

"You would say this in spite of Westhuizen?"

"In spite of a thousand Westhuizens - provided we hold on those beliefs you expressed to Dee...."

Startled, Dee said: "Phantasies and fairy-tales and God and all that?"

"All that."

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" she asked.

"Because it does make things that much more difficult."

"Then why tell me now?"

"I didn't. You dug it out of him." Nunkhoo turned to Nkosi.

"The means-and-ends argument is pretty wonderful as long as it remains an argument: it assumes that ~~thing~~ issues are either right or wrong, that the choice is always a straightforward one between good and evil. But the moment you enter the field of action this simplification of values falls away: an action is at once both right and wrong, both good and evil. The real problem here, the real gamble, the real hope is that our judgement has been sufficiently sound, our faith in the phantasies sufficiently strong for our actions to tip the scales in favour of good. That is the limit of our guarantee: a mere hope that out of our action will come good rather than evil. Because this has not been enough for many people they have chosen inaction. One does not risk being wrong ^{or doing evil} if one does nothing."

"I quarrel with none of this," Nkosi. "You know that and you know the nature of my quarrel - at least I think you do."

"That often in the process of fighting evil you adopt -"
- "Or are forced to adopt." -

"Or are forced to adopt methods that are as evil as the evil you fight. My answer is that if the ultimate objective is a good one, that is as much as we can ask of any cause. Beyond that, each man makes his own private choice. And here, in South Africa today, the choice has been made painfully simple."

"You've made your choice," Nkosi said. "And it is because I, too, have made mine that I am here. But that does not resolve everything."

"There is no such resolution," Nunkhoo said a little impatiently.

"Which brings us back to fantasies and all that," Dee said.

"And the task in hand," Nunkhoo said. "In the light of what has happened all our plans have to be changed. You cannot go

THIS PASSING NIGHT

Peter^g Abrahams

For my friends

Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela,

and all the others, the captured and

the still free, who are at war against the evils^{of}
this passing night.

The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in feery lands forlorn

-From Keats' Ode to a Nightingale

Personae Dramatis

<u>Richard Nkosi</u>	an identity used by many men in the service of the underground
<u>Richard Dube</u>	an artist, the latest Richard Nkosi
<u>Westhuizen</u>	a man who was white till the law declared him coloured, and who then became <u>Hans Coetzee</u>
<u>Sammy Naideo</u>	a leader of the Indian resistance in Natal
<u>Dawood Nunkhoo</u>	an Indian doctor
<u>Dee Nunkhoo</u>	his crippled sister
<u>Dicky Naicker</u>	members of the Nunkhoo household
<u>Cissie</u>	
<u>Karl Van As</u>	deputy head, Natal Bureau of Internal Security
<u>Anna de Wet</u>	his secretary
<u>Dr. Ludwig Snel</u>	head of the Natal Bureau of Internal Security
<u>Man From Records</u>	a state bureaucrat
<u>Japie DuPlessis</u>	Chief Inspector, Natal C.I.D.
<u>Hans Jansen</u>	Inspector, Natal C.I.D.
<u>Milner Scott</u>	headmistress of largest coloured girls school in Natal.
<u>Old Man Moola</u>	a wealthy Indian merchant
<u>Gung Man Moola</u>	otherwise Joe, his son
<u>Isaacs</u>	a travelling drygoods buyer and a repairer of broken lines of communication
<u>Captain Stikkelund</u>	a seafaring man who had lost the capacity to believe

and the people of the Republic of South Africa

~~BOOK~~
One

.....When the Wind Blows

floor and put your feet on it. If we meet anybody remember where you are; you are not in Europe now, and whatever you think of yourself you are just a kaffir here. Remember that. Now get in!"

Nkosi got in the back of the car, put the money at his feet, leaned back and closed his eyes; his body tingled with the sweetly-painful relief of the bone-weary. The impulse was to ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ keep his eyes closed and sink into oblivion. But he fought it off and forced himself to speak with a heavy tongue.

"In your heart and mind you're still one of them, aren't you?" Like the whipped and brutalised dog who yet licks the boot that kicked it, he added to himself wearily.

"What do you expect," Westhuizen sounded friendly suddenly. "You yourself said I sound like one of them. That's because I am: I look like them, I sound like them, I think like them; I feel like them. Nobody and nothing can change that."

"Not even their casting you out?"

He got into the driving seat, started up the engine..... then switched it off again. He half swung about to peer into the back at Nkosi.

"They're going to pay for it. They're going to pay dearly for their foolishness. I'm only one of a number you know, and if all those people decide on revenge as I'm now doing, they are going to be in real trouble. Deciding who is and isn't white! It's something you see and know and feel! But they'll learn and then they'll come begging!"

He turned back and started the engine once more. The car leapt forward with a violent jerk then settled down to a steady lumpy pace that tossed Nkosi from side to side. At last they got off the rough track and on to the smooth road. Nkosi found himself drifting off: the will to stay awake, on the alert, on guard as strong but absolute fatigue was overpowering. Somewhere in the hazy region between the conscious and the unconscious Nkosi kept

asking Westhuizen "How are they going to pay; what you going to do to make them pay?". Instead of answering Westhuizen moved further and further away until his face was a dark speck above the horizon off the sea. Nkosi tried to attract his attention by shouting; "What you going to do to make them pay?....."

Suddenly he was wide awake. His heart pounded; his body trembled. The car was at a standstill. Voices were about him. A bright light shone in his face.

A gruff voice said: "So you are alive. Passbook!"

Nkosi was speechless with shock and fear.

"C'mon man, and get out of there!"

Then he heard Westhuizen's voice: "This is a raw one: picked him up on the Protectorate border earlier today. Will arrange for him to get his Passbook tomorrow. Is that all right?"

Nkosi stumbled out of the car, missed his footing and went down on hands and knees. A pair of rough hands jerked him violently upright and slammed him against the side of the car.

"Careful man." There was mock concern in the gruff voice. Back in the shadows Nkosi saw another man and a little beyond him the patrol car. A wave of panic shot through Nkosi. The urge was to run, to put as much distance between himself and these men.

"Suppose tomorrow will do," Gruff voice said.

"Not strictly legal," ^{His} friend from the shadows said, a curious note to his voice. "You know the requirements of the law Mr.... R...." He waited pointedly.

"Coetzee, Hans Coetzee," Westhuizen said. "To reach my place you turn off the main road about five miles along."

Gruff Voice said: "Yes, I know of you Mr. Coetzee. Hear you are very active in party work. I'm sure it will be alright for you to

register him ~~xxxxxxx~~ in the morning."

Westhuizen turned to the man in the shadows. "Sorry about this but when I set out I had no intention of bringing a kaffir back with me otherwise I would have arranged things in advance."

The man in the shadows said: "I see," then he added, the curl note still in his voice: "You're a new arrival here Mr. Coetzee, a very welcome one to be sure. Even I have heard of what an upright party man you are. So please don't misunderstand me. But we have some trouble in this district lately and orders are to keep a tight check on kaffir movements."

Nkosi thought: You're in trouble Westhuizen; that one is suspicious.

The man from the shadows moved forward quickly. Nkosi sensed rather than saw it. Suddenly the bright glare of the torchlight was full on his face.

Relax; look frightened; blink; you're just a scared kaffir.

The bright light lingered on his face for what seemed a lifetime, then it moved slowly down his body, lingered on his chest and shot back up to his face. He had half expected it so it revealed nothing. With startling suddenness the bright light was on Westhuizen's face. And then it was off and the voice behind the torch murmured:

"Sorry Mr. Coetzee; didn't mean to do that. Finger slipped."

"Till tomorrow then," Gruff Voice said. "Or, rather, later this morning. It's nearly three now."

"Inside, kaffir," Westhuizen said. "Hurry up!"

The two patrolmen called out ~~xxxxx~~ greetings as they drove away. But Westhuizen made no response.

As they got into the patrol car Gruff Voice said: "You shouldn't have done that: Coetzee was furious, and don't forget his party pull. He can make trouble."

"Furious or frightened?" His companion asked softly.

Gruff Voice grew alert.

"What do you mean?"

"I thought our Mister Coetzee was frightened. I thought I saw panic in his eyes in the brief glare of light."

"You're mad, man. Coetzee....."

"I know. Coetzee is a well known upstanding party man. But what do we know about him? Go on, you tell me: what do we know about him?"

"You're letting your imagination run away with you."

"Perhaps. But let us consider a few facts. Over the past ^{Twelve} ~~six~~ months seven people whom the law have restricted to house detention have vanished; they and their families have clean disappeared as though they never existed. That is fact number one. Two months ago our security forces were on the trail of the terrorist Mahlangi. They tracked him down to this part of the country, and then he suddenly disappeared as though swallowed up by thin air."

"He slipped into the Protectorate," Gruff Voice said.

"Did he? Then how come that even the British have no record of him leaving the Protectorate. For him to leave by air there had to be some record, and our agents there would have discovered it. But there was no record. So how was it possible for him to show up in a communist country a week after he disappeared?"

"You tell me," Gruff Voice said.

"The coast is an hour's drive from here," his companion said softly. "The coast, ~~Exxxxx~~, isolated, unguarded."

"You're crazy mad!" Gruff Voice said, his address turned to

amusement.

"Crazy mad about whom? Mahlangi?"

"No; you may be right about Mahlangi: about Coetzee."

"But I didn't say anything about Coetzee except that the light showed panic in his eyes, and I asked what we know about him."

"Because of Mahlangi and those disappearances?"

"Yes. And because we don't know anything about the man."

"And because we found him on the road with a kaffir a little before three in the morning?"

"I don't know about the kaffir. He looked allright to me. I just have a feeling we ought to find a little more about Mr. Coetzee. How long has Coetzee lived here?"

Gruff Voice struck a match and held it cupped in his right hand. With his left he took the cigarette from his mounth and said "Six ————— " He stopped and stared at nothing till the match burned his fingers. Then he started cursing softly, and flung the dead match away. After a while he stopped cursing and shook his head.

"I don't believe ^{you} He's one of us."

"I'm not saying he isn't. He came here six months ago and these things happened since. Who is he and where did he come from?"

"I think we'd better find out about Mr. Coetzee," Gruff Voice said thoughtfully, lighting his cigarette afresh.

"That's all I'm saying."

"Do we write a report when we get back?"

"No, not yet. We haven't anything to report yet. Let's find out a little more first. You and I'll have to keep an eye on him; but he mustn't know. I know a chap in security. I'll call him when we go back on shift this evening."

"Good," Gruff Voice said. He yawned hugely and growled: "God how I hate this night duty."

In his mind's eye he saw the warm plump roundness of his wife. He knew that got home she would murmur in her sleep & in bed. When he ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ in an hour's time, her flesh would be warm to the touch, almost hot. And the moment he touched it, he knew, it would burn desire into him. After nearly two years of marriage he was still drunk with passion for his wife.

Beside him his companion smiled ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ with affectionate derision. "Stop working yourself up. You'll soon be with her. Get on."

To cover his sudden self-consciousness he said:

"What made you think of that Coetzee in that way?"

"I've always wanted to get into security."

"I see," Gruff Voice said, without quite knowing what he saw.

Westhuizen's cursing had gone on and on until Nkosi had snapped:

"Stop it!"

And surprisingly, Westhuizen had obeyed him like a lamb. Then, for the next three miles, Westhuizen had gone at breakneck speed.

"Following us?"

Nkosi peered through the rear window. "No."

A mile further on Westhuizen ordered him to look again. There was no sign of the patrol car. They passed through a built up area and in the predawn half light Nkosi recognised it as a settlement on the edge of canefields. Far to the right and falling away at a gentle sloping angle Nkosi saw a cluster of lights. He remembered the little town from childhood days: one of the few predominantly Boer towns it had been in this part of Natal.

Instead of making for the town Westhuizen swung left, away from it, climbing up the slope of the land. Then, two miles further, he

suddenly swung off the road, turned off his lights and went along an uneven, bumping track until the car was lost ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ in a sea of tall green cane.

Westhuizen pulled up. From nowhere a figure was suddenly beside the car.

A voice said: "Mr. Nkosi...."

"Yes?"

"Good."

Westhuizen said: "This is going to cost you double. Twenty, not ten. For this one and all the others."

Nkosi said: "I don't know how but he knew what I carried. We were stopped by a patrol and I think they are suspicious of him."

"Damn lying kaffir!" Westhuizen hissed. "The patrol wasn't suspicious and I only guessed about the money. He gave himself away: its him."

There was silence, then the voice said: "Think there'll a follow-up?"

What you mean follow-up?" Westhuizen asked.

"I think so," Nkosi said and decided that the new man sounded like an Indian.

"What the devil are you talking about?" Westhuizen said.

"Come," the new man whispered.

Nkosi stepped out of the car then pulled out the bag with the money. Beside him a pencil torch suddenly created a small circle of light. In the light Nkosi looked down at two ~~very~~ coal black hands peeling money from a thick wad: they were big, pudgy, competent hands.

"You said twenty," the Indian said. "There it is. Thank you. Come...."

A hand found Nkosi's wrist and he followed the burly, quick

moving, shadowy figure with a sense of relief that left him weak. Now, at last, he was, he knew, on his own side of the line. He had made the successful crossing.

Westhuizen called out softly but urgently:

"Wait a minute!"

The Indian leading Nkosi only hastened his pace until they were half trotting. After five minutes of trotting they suddenly emerged at the side of a building. Beside it was a car. ^{The} man sat at the while asked:

"Everything all right?"

Nkosi's guide said:

"Yes our guest is here."

"And his package?"

"And his package."

Soft long fingers curled round Nkosi's hand in a grip that hurt.

"Welcome," A soft voice murmured caressingly. "You don't know how needed what you bring is.....Come, sit down for a while. I'm sure you are dead beat but we have to wait till Westhuizen leaves./// Oh dear. I'm so sorry my dear fellow. I'm Doctor Nunkhoo. Officially I'm opposed to common action between our people because I belong to the rightwing of Congress; indeed, I may be said to lead that rightwing. Unofficially, I'm your host." ^{He} chuckled softly without any trace of humour. "We have paid dearly for our former transparently honest methods of struggle. When they were ready they pounced and destroyed the movement because we had all declared ourselves from public platforms all over the country. We have now learnt that this is bitter war, no platform game. Your guide here is Sammy Naidoo, trade unionist: officially we are enemies. It helps to confuse the

Sammy Naidoo said: "They were stopped by a patrol."

"Only one? I expected them to be stopped at least twice."

"But this is the point, Doc. Mr. Nkosi says Westhuizen knew about the money and that the patrol was suspicious enough to want to follow-up."

"I know they'll follow-up," Nkosi said. "He was in a panic and one of them shone a torch in his face and saw it. He has to go and register me in the morning."

Nkosi felt the sudden tension in both men.

"Didn't he give you a passbook?"

"No."

"But I gave it to him, Doc."

"All right Sammy, I'm sure you did. Tell me, my friend, how do you know he knew about the money?"

Nkosi told them about the meeting with Westhuizen and repeated his words about how needed what Nkosi brought was to the opposition. Then he told them of Westhuizen's direct reference to the money and his statement about not taking it because Nkosi's friends were particularly good at painful murders."

"Yes, I see," Nunkhoo said. "Of course you didn't deny it....."

"When he gave the password I assumed he was one of us."

"Naturally. We knew this was the most risky part. Anybody else but a white man - or an apparent white man - would have been searched."

"This route must now be closed," Naidoo said.

The soft voice of the doctor went on as though Naidoo had not spoken: "Tell me my friend, do you think Westhuizen would tell if they pressed him."

"If they really pressed him, yes."

"There he goes," Naidoo said.

Far behind, and a little below them, the twin headlights of Westhuizen's car swung onto the main road and sped away rapidly.

"We can go now. I'm sorry but there's ^{more} ~~one~~ little piece of discomfort for you, my friend. We dare not have you travelling with us in case we are stopped. Naidoo and I are a couple of Coolies and Coolies breed like flies so the Coolie doctor has been out to deliver another curry arse into the world. When we're on a trip like this we always ensure that there's a newly born little Coolie to make his or her contribution to the struggle. BUT if they found you with us they might become very curious and start searching. So you have to curl up in the boot. We've made it as comfortable as possible. Come."

The doctor put his hand on Nkosi's arm to help him out of the car. What he felt made him shift his hand from arm to pulse.

"We'll have to move, Sammy, our friend's near breaking point."

"I'm all right," Nkosi said.

"That's all right, my friend. Come."

Between them, Nunkhoo and Naidoo helped Nkosi to curl himself ^{as} ~~up/comfortably/in~~ ^{as possible} in the big boot of the enormous American-made car. There were blankets and pillows to absorb as much of the bouncing as possible. Then they shoved the money bag in with him and closed down the lid. A wave of nausea and claustrophobic panic swept over Nkosi. He let out a desperate yell and banged against the roof of the boot. And suddenly the boot was open once more and the soft caressing voice of Nunkhoo kept repeating:

"Easy, friends, easy; easy. You've been under great strain but easy. Just a little longer now and then your great mission will be over."

The soft caressing voice droned on insistently until Nkosi relaxed.

"Sorry," He murmured. "I'm all right now."

But the doctor kept on repeating his words till they became a jumbled, meaningless, monotonous, drone. Then the doctor placed his hand on Nkosi's forehead and kept it there for a minute or two.

"I'm closing the boot now, my friend. If it worries you just bang lightly. We'll hear you straightaway and stop and open up. We have something rigged up so that we can hear. But don't bang too loudly in case you attract unwanted attention. All right?"

"All right."

The ~~roof~~ top of the boot came down, but slowly and quietly this time: there was no sudden jarring bang. He was aware of a ~~a~~ the momentary sense of stifling oppression, but ~~that~~ knowledge that he could end it at will was reassuring. But could he really? Thought was too much effort. And then the thing began to move, gently at first, easily so that the bumping was not too bad. Then, suddenly, there was a floating smoothness.

In a remote sort of way he became aware of the terrible pounding of his heart. It forced a dull, persistent ache at the back of his head. This reached to his shoulders and from there the ache spread right through his body. It affected his breathing and he knew that if he had to speak his voice would sound faint, hollow, disembodied. And the soft caressing voice of the doctor was everywhere inside his head, fighting off the pain, lulling him into a sense of relaxed security. But a part of his mind fought against the impulse to relaxed security. And then his teeth began to chatter and he was back in the dinky and alone on the black

see moving around in the street

and he began to whimper, teeth chattering, body shaking, like a dazed and terrified little child locked in the dark.....

It was thus that they found him when they opened the boot inside the safety of a closed garage. They carried him into the house and up a flight of stairs and into a small comfortably furnished attic room. Quickly, deftly, the doctor administered an injection. Then he and Naidoo undressed Nkosi and put him to bed. The doctor stood by, feeling his pulse as the shaking gradually died down and the low moan stopped.

Naidoo looked from Nkosi to the doctor.

"That what they mean by someone cracking up, doc?"

"Very mildly, Sammy. Really this is more like someone simply passing out: a combination of too much tension, too great an anxiety and the strain that goes with it, and too much holding on to yourself, too much self control for too great a period."

"So he might have cracked before we got him if there'd been any delay."

"No, Sammy. If he had to he could have gone on for maybe another two, four, six or even twelve hours."

"I don't see it, doc."

"He let go because he knew he was safe: his subconscious mind knew it was safe to let go of all that tension and he needed the release deperately."

"If you say so, doc." But Sammy was not satisfied. "He's very small for this job, doc. Did you notice his little feet, and look at those small hands. Not strong at all."

Nunkhoo laughed and there was real amusement in his laughter. He was tall, pale-skinned, graceful. A thick mop of wavy jet black hair ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ crowned a handsome, humorous face.

There were streaks of grey in the hair, but these only enhanced his high-caste Hindu good look. The doctor looked what he was: a handsome ^{wealthy} upper class Hindu of ~~good~~ family who had had the best education Europe could offer and money could. ^{buy}

In contrast, black Sammy Naidoo, big, burly, clumsy-looking was obviously a descendent of those poor low-class Indian peasants who were brought to the country as indentured coolie labour about the middle of the 19th century.

"You're wrong, Sammy. Little Nkosi's probably stronger than the pair of us put together."

"You're joking, doc."

"I'm not talking about physical strength, Sammy."

"What's the difference: strength is strength, isn't it?"

"No, it isn't, Sammy." The doctor paused, stared into space, then shook his head slightly. "We'll have to leave this for another time. There's work to be done. He'll sleep the clock round and in any case Dee will be here to ^{care} take/of him. I'll see that the money gets up to Jankburg Jo'burg. You arrange about Westhuizen."

"Looks like we'll have to get rid of him," Sammy said quietly.

Nunkhoo sighed and nodded. Then, suddenly, his face became a twisted mask of bitter disgust. "Another necessary getting rid of, heh, Sammy. That poor bloody brute has been messed up by them and messed up by us; and now he's to be got rid of."

Sammy became all stolid and heavy.

"He knows me; he knows Nkosi; he knows about the money; and I told you that he's suspicious of you. And you heard what Nkosi said. For all we know they might be at him now."

"All right! All right!"

"You know there's no other way," Sammy said insistently.

"I said all right, didn't I?"

"I don't like to see you messing yourself up, doc. You know as well as I do what these people think of us and what they will do to us. Have you forgotten what happened when they encouraged the Zulus to slaughter our people; d'you remember how they stood by while it happened? Remember? Remember, doc?"

"Stop it, Naidoo! In any case this man is no longer one of them; they've cast him out."

"But he's not on our side, doc. He will sell us; you heard Nkosi say that. We must establish confidence between ourselves and the Africans. Doesn't matter whether its our fault or not, if this thing breaks down here it will play into the hands of the Africanists. They will say this is what happens when you co-operate with the coolies. And what will happen to our people then, and who will protect them? We must get the money to ~~take~~ Jo'burg and there must be no trail leading to the underground through us!"

Nunkhoo submitted, as he had done so often in the past, resignedly in the face of the hard logical of what Naidoo called 'the situation'.

"We'll try to make it look like Pogo," Naidoo said.

Nunkhoo shook of his depression, looked once more at Nkosi who had now slipped into a deep drugged sleep and put his hand to the light switch.

"Come on, Sammy, we've work to do."

"That's mydoc," Naidoo murmured.

-2-

Richard Nkosi woke suddenly, startlingly awake and alert, keyed-up and tense. Then he remembered that the doctor had put him to bed. He relaxed and the tension left his body. The doctor whose name is Nunkhoo, and Naidoo the trade unionist: he had seen their faces just before the drug had taken effect. And it was Naidoo's that came back to him most vividly: a big face, utterly expressionless, almost but not quite round, and black, really black, a sort of matt black such as you do not find among the so-called blacks themselves. And the eyes, small, sharp, darting, ~~xxx~~ and with the dispassionate calculation he had once seen in the eyes of an adder and which he had never forgotten.

Then Nkosi realised that he was in darkness. Dawn was breaking when they put him to sleep, now it was dark. He felt lost and trapped. He must have slept right through the day that was breaking when they brought him here. But where was the door? He ran his hands along the bed and discovered that it was ^a single bed. The sheets were of softest linen and the extra cover over him was a feather-light blanket, caressingly soft to the touch.

He lay still, all his senses alert, until he had the direction from which, ~~the~~ almost imperceptibly, the gentlest current of coolish air flowed into the room. He now knew where the window was. But what about the door? He put out his hand to the left of the bed but touched nothing; to the right he felt the bare surface of a ^{small} bedside table, but with nothing on it, not even the expected table lamp. Perhaps it wasn't safe.

He raised himself, threw back the bedclothes, and swung his

brushed lightly against and there was a light but surprisingly loud crash. Nkosi fumbled desperately at his feet for a few seconds; then he straightened up and smiled in the dark. Someone had set a booby trap for him; now they would know that he was awake. He thought of Naidoo's calculating little eyes and sat on the edge of the bed, waiting, listening.

Suddenly, out of the silence, he felt rather than heard the door open. And now he could place it: straight ahead and to the right.

"Sorry if the noise startled you. It can be awful waking up in a strange place, especially when there's no light. I wanted to hear when you did." The voice had ~~xxx~~ something of the same caressing softness that Munkhoo's had, but this one was a woman's voice. "If you'll wait a little I'll shut the window then you can have light. We don't draw attention to the existence of this room."

Again he felt rather than heard movement as the unseen woman skirted the bed and went diagonally across the room to shut and seal off the window. There was sound and movement as she did this: then there was silence till she spoke from the door.

"I'm going to turn on the light now; I'll be outside when you are ready." Then the room was flooded with light. There was quick movement, the door in the corner pulled shut and Nkosi was alone in the small, low-ceilinged attic room with the bare ceiling beams and rafters: there was the bed, the little table by its side and a wooden chair on which Nkosi's ~~trousers~~ ^{trousers} were. His shoes were on the floor. They had stripped him down to his underpants. There was no sign of his vest and shirt. There was no mirror, no washbasin. And on the floor of this bare and poorly furnished little room was a luxurious carpet, thick piled, of light pastel blue. The now sealed ^{window} was part of the low, sloping ceiling.

He pulled on his trousers and moved to the door.

"I'm ready."

The door opened silently and the woman stood in front of him, and the light from the room behind him shone fully on her. She was a little taller than he was; more robust-looking than most Indian women he had seen. A little darker than the doctor, but still very pale. Her hair, a dark brown, was pulled back severely and tied in a bun at the nape of her neck. Two deep grooves running from just below the bridge of the nose to the sides of the mouth cancelled the attractiveness of the regularity of features and the striking directness of the grey-brown eyes. She wore slacks and a loose, sacklike blouse. She offered him her hand.

"I'm Dee Nunkhoo. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~
Come, By the time you've bathed food will be ready."

She turned from him, and as she did so Nkosi realised that the woman was a cripple. Her left shoulder and left hip dipped down low as she went down on her left foot; then she rose up high on to the right foot. Her left leg was several inches shorter than her right and the foot itself was encased in a blocklike leather creation. Nkosi felt embarrassed, guilty, confused at the fact of the woman's ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ being crippled. He followed her down the narrow flight of stairs, disturbed, in spite of himself, every time she dipped down low to put down the clubbed foot.

A small door led out of the attic and ~~xxxx~~ hallway of the into the/upstairs proper of the house. The woman swung a piece of panelling into place and the ~~xxxxxxxx~~ stairs were hidden and the entrance was transformed into cupboard space.

She smiled at Nkosi.

"Just/cupboard. Exactly the same as the two on the side of it."

The thing to remember is that it is the last of the three. If you rush into any of the others in an emergency....."

"I'll remember." Nkosi nodded.

"You'll find everything in the bathroom. When you're ready come down the stairs."

"Openly?"

"Yes." She smiled an odd, twisted, slightly derisively smile. "You're safe here. We coolies have been forced to build our defences in depth. We're almost like ~~xxxx~~ ants now."

"I'm sorry," Nkosi murmured.

She raised her head high; she inhaled deeply. She stared at him and her face was hard and bitter.

"I wasn't fishing for pity."

"I wasn't offering any. I was born ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ this part of the country and still have what you describe as and I know my people had/a share in creating/your antlike existence. I'm sorry that we had a hand in it. That's all."

He turned away from the woman and stalked towards the door from which came the sound of a bath filling. He felt both angry and depressed at once: angry at himself and his people and the woman and her people and the terrible notion of antlike people; and his depression was sickeningly boundless. He banged the door shut, stripped and got into the warm bath. Slowly he relaxed. The anger left him and only the depression remained. He washed quickly, suddenly aware that he was very hungry. Perhaps he would see the doctor now and they could arrange for him to get out of this place and out of this bloody depressing country. The sooner that could be arranged the better. He reached for the towel on the chair and saw, under it, his vest and shirt freshly laundered. He silently complimented

the woman. In spite of her ugly disposition she was thoughtful and competent. ~~Franklyxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ He shaved then dressed quickly, cleaned the bath after him and went out and down the stairs.

This part of the house was that of the successful doctor in any part of the world. Before he reached the bottom of the stairs the woman appeared at the first door to the right of the stairs.

"This way." She waited for him at the door. The combination of food smells from the room made his mouth water and his stomach rumble. Some of the depression lifted from him. The woman's eyes were friendly now. And when she smiled at him the two ugly grooves at the sides of her face were magically banished, making her look young and attractive.

"It is my turn to apologise," she said. "I didn't mean to be bitchy. But we do live like ants, you know. All the warning systems of the ants too. We would know an hour before any hostile force reaches here. And like in the ant world there will always be those who are ready to be sacrificed for the good of the mass."

Nkosi suddenly felt relaxed and at ease with this woman.

"Thank you for the vest and shirt. Nice to feel fresh again."

They went into the room and a wave of disappointment swept over him. There was no one else, and the table was laid for two.

"The doctor?" he said.

"Still in Johannesburg,"/said ^{she} . "He was supposed to be back by now but he phoned earlier to say he was delayed and he may not be back until sometime tomorrow. Everything is all right though. Your packaged has been delivered safely."

"Then everything's fine and I can get out again."

"They want you to wait till my brother comes."

"The job's done so why wait? Anyway, who's tk 'thev'?"

She seemed about to say something, apparently changed her mind, took three dipping strides to the table and sat down.

"Let us eat," she said. "Naidoo will be here later and he'll explain everything. Come. Sit down."

Mkosi sat down to the kind of Indian meal he had not eaten for well over ten years: a feast of delicately balanced meats and vegetables, superbly flavoured with spices of which curry powder is only one: and the roti was airlight with a flakey butteriness that titillated the roof of the mouth.

Her eyes and face softened to his obvious appreciation of the food.

"Is it only hunger or do you really like this?"

"Both. But I've never had any curry as good as this. Not even in Durban as a boy young man. And I ~~had~~ had a lot of it."

"And, of course, after two days without anything would taste good."

"Since you must sell yourself short - yes. Have I really been out for two days?"

"A day and a night and a day."

He remembered the nightmare journey with the white men who had been made coloured by decree and who could not help feeling white in spite of everything.

"How much do you know about this business?"

"Which?" The softness went out of her and she became hard, alert.

"My coming here." He thought: She knows everything about it.

"Only that you brought money for the underground."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing else."

"Not even about my journey or where I came from?"

"No."

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He wondered why she found it necessary to lie to him obviously. She picked up his thought as though he had expressed it aloud. The bitter, derisive smile played on her lips.

"You've been away a long time, haven't you, Mr Nkosi?"

He ignored the calculated offensiveness of her tone. "Yes."

She lifted her head and inhaled deeply as she had done outside the/attic door. Her lungs filled out, raising her breasts. Her neck seemed long suddenly. She spread her right hand in encouragement for him to take more food, but disdainfully now, with a hint of contempt for both him and the food he enjoyed so much. He helped himself.

"I understand it is something like ten years or more since you ~~xxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ left your native land. Am I right."

"That about it."

"The trouble with being away from a place or a situation or a problem for so long is that one loses touch."

"I think you're right."

"Without being aware of it one adopts the values and attitudes of the society in which one finds oneself."

"Yes....."

"Well don't you think that you, Mr. Nkosi, are out of touch with your ^{own} country; that you are judging it by the flabby, moralistic standards of the middle-class Europeans among whom you've spent so much of your life."

"You may be right," he said easily. "But what's the point? As far as I know I haven't passed judgement, unless I did ^{so} without knowing."

"You're being facetious, in order to evade the point, I suspect."

When he said: "To

He wondered why she found it necessary to lie, and so obviously; and why there was this strong undercurrent of resentment flowing from the woman. Perhaps it was the fact of being cripple; but no-one could sustain resentment that long. It would be like holding your breath till you died, except that the body would not permit it. At a certain point will ceases to function and the instinctive impulse to survival, to breathing in and breathing out, takes over. So this consciously felt resentment could not be something sustained over the years because she was a cripple.

The woman seemed to pick up his line of thought; a bitter, derisive, slightly contemptuous smile flitted across her face.

"You've been away a long time?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, on guard, bracing himself. "A long time."

"Something like ten years, I understand?"

"That's about it," he said and wondered: What now.

"One loses touch," she said, a hint of rudeness about it, "being away so long."

"You're probably right," he said curiously. "Why?"

"I think you've lost touch," she said.

Oh dear, he thought, she's going to make a scene: but why?

"As you say," he said. "Then years is a long time."

She said: "And without being aware of it one adopts the values, attitudes, thought-patterns of the society in which one finds oneself."

Allright, he thought: I'll meet you halfway.

"What are you trying to say?"

"That its premature for you to judge us because you're out of touch with your own country and might judge it by the flabby moralistic standards of the middle-class Europeans among whom you've spent so much of your life."

He felt anger suddenly, the anger of a man being ~~unreasonably~~
 for
 provoked/~~to~~ no reasonable cause, to no comprehensible point. And he contained his anger because he was at this woman's table, eating her food, and therefore in a false position of obligation to her. The taste went from the delightful food. He pushed the plate away and leaned back, a faint but depressing sickness in the pit of his stomach.

For the first time, immediately, startlingly, the woman saw him as an individual person, a man. Up till this point he had been, like all other Africans - like all ~~other~~ white people, like all coloureds - a representative: a person representing and symbolising this or that or the other racial group.

It is because I hurt him, she thought: because I could see the pain in his eyes and almost feel him feel it. Would I have behaved like this if he were white, or even coloured? Is it the race and colour thing again? But the whites and coloureds haven't done to us what they have done to us, not directly at least. How responsible must he be for his people? How responsible am I for what my people do?

She looked at him with clear, seeing eyes. A broad forehead, large eyes, highish cheekbones and a face tapering sharply to a pointed chin....But oh, the controlled hurt in these eyes and the soft mouth now set in stern lines.....I hope he still understands, she thought, without telling herself, or quite knowing, what it was she hoped he understood. So much had gone bad and wrong and sick between her people and his people.

She lowered her head and said: "I'm sorry, Mr. Nkosi. I had no choice in your being here; no business....."

"Nor I," he said. "And the sooner I can leave the better I'd

~~this by any chance part of the business of being an antlike cooler.
Is that the point? If it is I find it rather boring."~~

~~The woman flinched as though he had slapped her face. She stared
tensely at him for a few seconds.~~

~~"You've no right...." she said bitterly after a while.~~

~~"No more than you have," Khosi said. "I'm not here by choice."~~

~~After a long while of silence, ^{she} said, in her normal voice:~~

~~"You do sound like the Europeans, you know."~~

~~He thought: Perhaps we'll get on better now.~~

~~"Sound or behave?"~~

~~"But then I was a bit like that too when I came from Europe,"
she said, ignoring his question.~~

~~"Like what?"~~

~~"Like you are. Uncommitted, detached, objective - any of those
words would ^{do} you know what I mean."~~

~~"So, being European is being uncommitted, detached, objective?"~~

~~"You are deliberately distorting my meaning now. What I really
mean is that you react and respond with the kind of self-assurance
that is not common to us - all of us - who are non-Europeans in this
country."~~

~~"When did you leave Europe?" He asked.~~

~~"In the late fifties," she said thoughtfully. "I went to India,
looking for a home, but it was even more foreign than Europe."~~

~~"And so you came home," he said.~~

~~"Yes. Except that they all said - the Africans as well as the
whites - that this is not my home." She turned her face away and when
she turned it back to him he saw a bleak, haunted look in her eyes.
"I arrived home during that week of rioting when your people hunted
my people down like rats and the forces of law and order stood by~~

while scores of my people were slaughtered...."

"Please," Nkosi said.

"Please let me finish. I saw some of it. I was in a taxi on Durban's Esplanade, coming from the ship. And I saw two strapping young Zulu fellows chasing a skinny little Indian. The Indian taxi drivers wouldn't stop. He said they would kill us as well. Anyway, one of the two caught up with the little Indian and hit him with his big knobkerrie. I was looking out of the back of the taxi and I saw the little Indian die. I swear I know the moment he died. I felt it a split second after the huge stick had split the back of his head. His momentum carried him on a few yards and then he folded up like a limp sack, his bones turned to jelly....I saw two others... And when I got home I heard that our younger brother had been killed the night before. And I had just returned after finding both Europe and India alien places where I would never feel at home. This is home but any day, any night, your people, egged on by the whites, can come sweeping down on us, slaughtering and burning. D'you understand?

"D'you understand what it meant to know that you were coming into this house to be ^{sheltered} ~~sheltered~~ and hidden. Practically every Indian in the district knows that you are here. That is part of our ant ^{they all have} ~~existence~~ existence. And ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ reason to remember the riots. This district was nearly burned down and the casualty rate was high.

"I've had you alone ~~where~~ in this house, at my mercy, for two days and a night." She slipped her hand into her blouse and brought out a little pistol. "You had done your job and there were complication which could best be coped with if you were just to disappear."

Nkosi held out his hand and she put the little pistol into it.

"The temptation must have been great," he said.

"Thank you very much," she said.

"Then why didn't you yield?"

"I don't know. Perhaps because it would be pointless."

"Or perhaps because murdering me would put you on a par with those savage kaffirs and deprive you of the comforting sense of being ~~xxxxxxxx~~ part of a martyr minority."

He held out the pistol to her. She took it and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ got up and moved towards the door.

"Having found that it worked once you are trying rudeness again. But you are wrong. For us life has had to be more of an act of will than for you. You can afford the casual cruelty of the majority. We are the smallest minority among the minorities; and we are the most hated on all sides because we are at once the most despised, the most envied, the most ^{despised} ~~hated~~. And so we cannot afford the luxury of careless cruelty."

"And so we are back at the ant instincts again. Don't you ever get away from them?"

"Do you ever get away from your blackness?"

He followed her out of the room and heard, as he ~~left~~ went out of one door, another open and the silent shuffle of barefeet as someone went to clear the table. The woman led the way into a large sitting room where french windows ~~xxxxxx~~ opened onto a tiny, high-walled garden. They went out into the walled-off garden and the stars stood out, glowing like bright jewels in the black night, as near as he had not seen them since he had been on cattle watch in the long ago nights of another lifetime. ~~xxxxxxx~~ There was a table and chairs in a corner of the ~~yard~~ garden, ~~xxxx~~ tucked back in the shadows, away from the light that streamed from the room and onto the grass through the french windows.

"Or Indian," he agreed, then he went on "On the West Coast the values are totally different. Colour is meaningless and pointless in West Africa and Egypt. The problems are different in quality. I've spent time in these places and I know. There, even being Indian is no handicap."

"But I'm South African. Supposing everything you say is true. How does it help me and my situation? Another thing: a little while ago you spoke about 'you people' and 'your world'. Are you repudiating it, and us? Are you no longer part of us and our world?"

"Would you concede me the right to an ambivalence at least similar to yours?"

"There is no ambivalence in my attitude to the country and the problem. I'm South African. My fate and my future will be worked out here. For me and mine there is no other place, no other future."

"That's the point of ambivalence: that 'me and mine'."

"But that's the reality of the situation, my dear man."

Mkosi felt relaxed and reassured. That had seemed impossible had happened. They had broken through the barriers of words and attitudes and racial and other positions and made contact. Now, suddenly, a thin ~~xxxxxx~~ thread of understanding flowed between them, ^{tenuous,} compassionate, tender, giving the words they ~~xxxxxxx~~ exchanged a new dimension of ~~xxxxxxx~~ illumination. He recognised the mood and atmosphere. It belonged high on his scale of values.

The woman was startled and disturbed by this sudden flow of warmth and sympathy between them. She was unused to it and so she found it embarrassing and even a little frightening, like suddenly being naked before a stranger.

"I'm not disputing the reality of the situation," he said. "All I'm saying is that it shows up your ambivalence."

~~xxxxxxxx~~ She noticed, as though for the first time, the undercurrent of gentleness in his voice. She fought against the impulse to relax and be peaceful, against the odd impulse to tenderness that suddenly possessed. Then she gave up, leaned back and relaxed all her body.

"But what's the connection between my ambivalence and your apparent repudiation of South Africa and South Africans?"

All the harshness had gone out of her now and he heard it in her voice.

"Your 'me and mine' assumes a 'you and yours'."

"But within the family."

"But who determines the family?"

The flow of thought was strong and clear between them now.

"It is determined for you," she said. "It is like birth and death. You have no choice over these. You cannot choose your mother or your father or your country or your race or your colour or your sex."

"I think your emphases are wrong. It isn't the fact of birth or death that is significant. It is the fact of living."

"Even that is determined for you," she murmured. "But do I have to say it?"

"If you are going to cite the ~~xxxxx~~ masses I shall persist in arguing that your emphases are wrong. Choice is limited for all of us. That is part of the human condition. But it is always more limited for what you call the masses. They always have somebody or some small group acting out their will for them. It is you and your brother and Naidoo and the underground that tell them how much they hate the racialist regime. You give them orders, you lead them, you think for them, you tell them what to think. And afterwards, when

you have overthrown this system, you, the minority, will write a constitution for them in which racialism will be repudiated and then you will tell them and make them believe that you are carrying out their will. The truth is that you first create that will for them. D'you see the point?"

"That it is always a minority that determines what happens? Yes. I'm not sure you're right though."

"Try to think it out and you'll see."

"All right. But there's still my point about the family."

"Very good; let's examine it. You, Miss Dee Munkhoo, a high caste young Indian woman are sitting here alone with me. You know and I know and the people behind this door," he waved backward, "know that you are out of character as far as your 'me and mine' are concerned. Their concept of the family, as you are using it, is different from yours and mine. You know that if one of their daughters were out like this with somebody from an African village nearby they would kill her."

"But you are making my point now!"

"I'm not, you know. Class, caste and wealth, forms of power, make it possible for you to break the rules of the so-called family. And somewhere, with one of those people back there, my being here with you has shaken profoundly someone's concepts about the place of Indian women and Indian women sitting out with black men and possibly the nature of black men. So who makes the family?"

In the half light Dee Munkhoo shook her head gently. Nkosi saw, but he did not see the tenderness of her smile.

"All you say is beautifully true. But truth is set in time and space. You are here with me because you are not here. There is no
in the country, and still you are a prisoner.

You know," she reached out and touched his arm. "Sitting here with you, I feel more tranquil and more at peace with myself than I can ever remember being. And I think I know it is because you are here and because of your ideas. It's the kind of idealism that lifts one's heart. But you know as well as I do that all we have to do is go outside this garden FOR ALL YOUR FINE IDEALS to become meaningless. Remember we are living in a state of barbarism. Remember You took great personal risks to smuggle money into the country for the underground. Have you forgotten the hundreds of political prisoners and the broken homes where mother and father are in jail and there is nobody to look after the children and find food and clothing for them and pay the rent for them? And the people who are sentenced to house arrest so that the state will not have the responsibility of providing even food and shelter for them? And what happens to ^{the} children when both breadwinners are sentenced to this kind of arrest....."

"Hold on! Hold on! We are getting back to political sloganeering. I know it is necessary. That is why I'm here. But the point of it is that it should be possible for us to live and grow and feel like people."

"Yes," she said heavily. "Yes. It should be possible. But it isn't. Here, for now, it feels as though it is possible. But I know it is an illusion brought on by you, and I rather suspect that you planned it and I'm grateful. But if we give in to it they will destroy us. We are at war, my friend. It is wonderful to have, even for a moment, the illusion of being at peace. But to hold on to it too long is dangerous." Already, because of this evening, I shall be more vulnerable than is good for me and mine."

"You mean with black people, don't you?"

"Yes.....You know, we too, do not quite believe that black people can be as civilised as we are. It is not so much prejudice as.....but perhaps it is. I don't know. But it's going to be easier for me personally and, I'm afraid of that.... When I was in India I was horrified at the straight prejudice I found against African students there.....Please, can we be quiet for a while....."

He thought: You are nice when you allow yourself to be human.

Aloud, he said: "The point, my dear, is to be uncertain, to be afraid, even to entertain the possibility of disaster and still carry on. We must cultivate self-doubt and introspection in order to remain human."

"To remain human. That's most important to you?"

"Or to regain and extend one's humanity. For me that is the only justification."

"You make me feel awfully old and cynical and hard-faced and knowing." The irony that she felt did not come through, though he sensed it behind her words; a sort of twisted gentle bitterness. "You speak like a child in a world of make-belief, untouched and unaware of the dangers and evils all about him. This situation is real, you know. Just outside these walls the evil is all about you, all the time."

"If that is all that is real then what is the point of fighting?"

"We are beginning to make circles," she said, a little wearily.

They were silent after that: and it was the silence of peace, tranquillity and understanding, seemingly beyond time and space.

It was thus, in this trance of silence, that Sammy Naidoo came

to the night light. The person who had let him in had pointed to the garden through the now darkened sitting room. He had stood by the french windows. At first he thought they had fallen asleep in their seats; then he was not so sure. Sleeping people rarely generate a sense of atmosphere and the sense of atmosphere was strong enough for Sammy Naidoo to feel it.

What the hell, he thought and tiptoed to the back of the house. Two skinny women and a strapping young man with heavily oiled and scented hair were in the kitchen. Sammy Naidoo ignore the women and spoke to the man.

"What happen in there?"

"Nuttin'."

"Wha' you mean, nuttin'?"

"They come down; they eat then they go out there; that's all."

"I told you to watch and listen."

"I did."

"Well, what'd they talk about?"

"Some funny jazz I don't understand. Even the politics was funny. Not our kinda stuff.* And they seem funny with each other too."

"Love stuff?" Naidoo asked casually.

The man seemed puzzled.

"They don't touch or hug or kiss or anything, and they don't talk about love but it feels like it: not in the beginning, later."

"What happened in the beginning?"

"Like I say, they come down and she feed him and she's like we people is with them. Then they quarrel." The man saw Naidoo's expression change and shook his head quickly. "Not like we quarrel. Like when I seen the white people quarrel when I work in that hotel in Durban: soft voice and no cursing and shouting but you feel it.

You know, hard and two-faced like."

"What they quarrel about?"

"She tell him about the killings. You know....."

"Yes. And so he quarrel....."

"No he tries to tell her he's sorry but she don't let him. And she tell him how we feel about them. And then she show him her gun and it sound like she telling him how she want to kill him and don't do it. And he take the gun and give it back to her....."

"And then?"

"And then they go out in the garden and they still fight in that funny way. First they talk about Africa and colour bar and Indians and then the funny jazz begin. All about me and mine and you and yours and dying and burning and why you fight. Tell you something, Sammy, they really chuck the English lingo about you see! I'm proud of how that Miss Dee stand up but that little kaffir man there is hot stuff!" The disapproval on Sammy's face pulled him up. He assumed a slightly cringing air. "Sorry, Sammy, sorry. It slip out." Then his face cracked in a tentative smile. "Anyway, I bet when they by themselves they call us cher and coolie...."

Sammy coldly ignored the appeal in his voice and face.

"Listen Dick, next time I hear you use that word you go back to the canefields. Understand?"

"Okay, Sammy. Okay!"

"All right. Then, what happened?"

"Nothing more. They go on and on with the funny jazz and the only thing I understand is they soundin' soft and sweet and spoony. Then they stop talking and stay like that."

"Long?"

"I seem long to me. Maybe ten, maybe twenty minutes."

Sunny Naidoo stood thinking for a while, his round black face calm and impassive, his big hands shoved deep into the trouser pockets of his navy blue serge suit. He looked rocklike, big, assured. The elder of the two women studied him closely and saw the telltale ashiness of his purplish lips. His eyes, she saw, were slightly bloodshot. And she remembered other times when Mr. Naidoo had shown up late at night looking like this and the doctor had insisted on his eating before anything else.

"You eat yet, Mr. Naidoo?"

Naidoo seemed to follow the line of her thought. He smiled.

"You taking doctor's place, Cissie?"

"Doctor say you important to us, Mr. Naidoo, so we must look after you good."

"Everybody's important, Cissie."

Cissie looked as though she wanted to argue the point, changed her mind, licked her lips.

"Sit down, Mr. Naidoo. I warm up something for you, quick."

"Afterwards," Naidoo ~~xxxx~~ snapped. Then his face softened into a warm, appreciative smile. "I'll come back soon; you keep it warm for me, neh."

"I keep it nice and warm for you, Mr. Naidoo." Cissie glowed.

That's how he's made Dee feel, Naidoo thought as he left the three in the kitchen; but Dee's no simple trust ^{coo}lie woman who looks on him as Cissie looks on me. So what happened? Or has Dicky Maicker developed an imagination? But he knew that Dicky was solid and reliable.

This time he made his approach ~~xx loud xxxxxxxxxx~~, coughing, slapping a table, bumping into the french windows. And so they were both on their feet when he reached them. The strong sense of

atmosphere was gone. But Dee seemed a little on edge, like a person caught out at some forbidden activity.

"Sorry I'm so late," Naidoo said to Dee. Then he turned to Nkosi and offered him hand. "How you feeling now?"

"Fine," Nkosi murmured.

Yes, Naidoo thought, you look and sound it.

"Any word from Doc?"

"He phoned earlier this evening," Dee said.

"Everything all right?"

"Yes; but we couldn't talk very much: the click."

"They tap our telephones," Naidoo explained to Nkosi. "It's sort of routine. They don't seem to realise yet that there's a slight click when they cut in....." Then to Dee: "When's he due back?"

"Sometime tomorrow night."

"What about my arrangements?" Nkosi asked. "When can I get away?"

"Told him anything?" Naidoo asked.

"No," Dee said.

She turned her head to Nkosi and Naidoo sensed the current of understanding flowing between them.

"We'd better go in," Naidoo said.

Without a word Dee led the way in: Nkosi followed and Naidoo brought up the rear. And seeing her awkward crippled movements Naidoo felt reassured. Africans, all Africans, even polished and sophisticated Africans like this fellow, have an instinctive and deep-seated and historical revulsion against any physical deformity. In the old days they killed all their cripples; today they just ~~with~~ withdraw because they do not have the power to destroy.....

Dee led the way up the stairs, ~~and~~ turned right, ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ away from the bedrooms and the hidden attic room to the left, and entered the study. She flicked on the lights and the men followed her into a large room. Except for the space of one window, the walls were lined ~~xxxxxxx~~ with books from floor to ceiling. Some were in glass-covered cases but most were on simple wooden shelves. A huge mahogany desk near the window dominated the room which was a study in brown. There was a huge settee and three heavy armchairs, all upholstered and covered in brown leather. It was a warm, friendly room with the ~~a~~ slightly dusty smell that books give off in hot countries. The pipe-rack with its large number of pipes, the faint smell of pipe tobacco, so markedly different from the smell of cigarette tobacco, all these~~s~~ gave the room a pronouncedly masculine feel.

Naidoo shut and locked the door behind him.

"This is the doc's favourite room," he said. "Soundproof, you know, so a man can read and think in peace."

"Away from women," Dee said drily.

Nkosi caught the momentary twinkle in Naidoo's eyes. He felt impatient, though, anxious to hear what Naidoo had to tell. Naidoo moved round the desk and sat in the doctor's place. Dee Nunkhoo made herself comfortable on the settee and Nkosi noticed that she automatically so adjusted herself as to obscure sight of her crippled leg. He settled in the chair nearest the desk and waited.

Naidoo spread his big hands on the desk top and stared at them.

"I'm sorry but your end of the arrangement has broken down."

"Westhuizen?" Nkosi asked.

Naidoo nodded.

"How? Did he talk?"

"No. He didn't talk but they found the passbook he should have given to you. They also found/^{out}pretty quickly who he was."

"The patrol people knew him as Coetzee."

"They - and the whole country - now know that Coetzee is Westhuizen. It's on the radio and all the papers have it; and the story of how he was declared Coloured a year ago."

"Poor brute," Nkosi said. "But he'll talk, you know."

Naidoo raised his head and looked directly at Nkosi.

"He won't. He's dead."

Nkosi looked at Dee and knew that she had known all along. She stared back at him, stony eyed, and it was as though he heard her voice say: I told you out there is evil.

"Who did it? The police or....."

You're quick, Naidoo thought, too damn quick.

"He could lead them to Sammy and you," Dee said, a harsh flatness to her voice.

"And so he had to go...."

"What else?" she asked.

Dicky Naicker's funny jazz, Naidoo told himself.

"What right have we...."

"The right of necessity, of history, of survival," Naidoo cut in quietly. "It is either that or we all submit all the way."

Nkosi shook his head violently but spoke equally quietly.

"I'm not talking about an uprising or sabotage or a revolution. This is the straightforward and simple murdering of one man, a poor ~~kindly~~ brute who helped us too."

"Approve or disapprove, we did what had to be done." Naidoo closed his eyes and pursed his lips. He fought down the angry words

that choked him. He could not quite hide the bitterness he felt, and Nkosi felt it all the more forcefully for being controlled. "I am responsible for what was done. I assume the responsibility."

A wave of anger surged up inside Nkosi.

"And that, I suppose, is that."

"What else could be done?" Dee repeated urgently, anxiously.

What he thinks is important to her, Naidoo thought, and the thought startled him. He looked from Nkosi to Dee, then back to Nkosi.

"You will forgive me but I'm not prepared to debate the morality or the ethics of this matter now. Perhaps in another place and under different circumstances, but not here and now. So you think what you like; for us, at present, it does not matter. We can't allow it to matter."

To herself, irrationally, Dee cried: No, no; without knowing why.

"What does affect you," Naidoo went on, "is the fact that the passbook intended for you was found. For reasons of their own they have not made this public. All they've let out is that Westhuizen was murdered by Pogo. But they've made hundreds of prints of the picture on the passbook and these have gone to police all over the country."

"They think I murdered him....."

"The internal police report is that he was last seen in the very early hours of yesterday morning/~~when~~ with 'a Native' and he told the police patrol that he had picked up 'the Native' on the Protectorate Border. And the order is to get this 'Native' at all costs and to get him alive. But the published reports of the death of Westhuizen has none of this....."

Naidoo paused in case Nkosi wanted to speak; he had allowed some of his weariness and hunger to take hold and show.

~~After a while~~ Naidoo went on: "They're not really interested in who killed Westhuizen. They're interested in what he was doing and they think the 'Native' who was with him/early/yesterday morning in the hours of can help them find out."

"How do you know all this?"

To Naidoo he sounded remarkably calm. Dee felt the knotted tension in him. An odd flicker of feeling passed over Naidoo's face.

"My brother, my elder brother, is a Detective Sergeant in the Political Division.....He doesn't know of my activities....."

"I see?" Nkosi said.

Naidoo's control suddenly went.

"You do, ~~you~~ do you! What the hell do you see, mister?"

"Sammy, please," Dee said.

"It's alright," Nkosi said to Dee.

"It's alright," Naidoo mimicked with rising anger. "The man says it's alright, so it's alright; the man says he sees so he sees. He's wise, he's civilised, he doesn't like murder and he sees. Well, let me tell you something, mister. You may be black and you may be born here but you don't see a damn! In fact, I'm sick of your little-lord-Jesus attitude....."

"Sammy!" This time Dee was angry. "Mr. Nkosi's our guest!"

"Yours, not mine or ours!" Sammy snapped. Then he pulled himself together and shook his head. "I'm sorry, Dee. I didn't mean that. It's just that he seems to refuse to understand...."

"And you are tired and hungry. We can talk afterwards."

"Cissie's warming something for me....I'm sorry," he turned to Nkosi. "I've been under pressure. Arranging to kill somebody isn't as easy/as you seem to think. Please don't say anything yet. There's no sense in getting into another argument. Just listen for minute."

We Indians have a ~~s~~particular problem." He turned to Dee. "Did you tell him about the underground; the details of our position?"

"No."

Naidoo lowered his head and closed his eyes for a few seconds, deep in thought. Then he snapped upright and looked at Nkosi.

"I think you know that the foundation of the underground movement is African. For sometime the Congress leaders were in complete control. I'm of course talking about the people who led Congress before it was banned. You will remember they were the moderates: people who saw things as you do, in terms of values, people who urged restraint and who deplored the matching of a white racialism with a black racialism. Luthuli was and still is the great spokesman for this view though he is not connect with the leadership underground. But this moderate/inevitably suffered reverses when the enemy became more brutal. Resistance was driven deeper underground. Pogo challenged the old Congress leadership and asserted the methods of the counter-terror. And, inevitably, ~~these differences~~ differences began to appear. The Liberals and the other whites who had made common cause fought against the methods of the counter-terror. Pogo and the Africanists reacted by repudiating and denouncing all co-operation between black and white. They went further. They insisted that nobody could help them win their salvation and they therefore did not need anybody's help. This shocked everybody, the African moderates included. The liberal and progressive types in ~~the~~ all/minority groups - the Coloureds, the Whites, the Indians - had assumed that all they had to do was declare themselves on the side of the Africans and they would be welcomed with open arms and invited to lead the poor blacks. So, when the blacks said we don't need you and we don't want you, it

was a nasty disturbing shock. But even more shocking was the apparent warmth with which the African masses welcomed the stand of the new leadership.

"Well now, characteristically, the communists, of all colours, were the first to adjust to the new situation. The only whites, colored and Indians who accepted it were the communists. The next group to do so were the Indians: we declared our unequivocal acceptance of majority leadership and majority rule. But in spite of this there were and are people inside the underground who still want to have nothing to do with the Indians and the communists. The underground leadership is deeply split on this issue. And so people like the doctor and I have to beg for an opportunity to prove the commitment of the Indians; we have to beg for a chance to make our contribution. Because the secretary of the Central Council supports us we are allowed to make whatever contribution we can. But our enemies inside the Council are waiting for us to make one mistake. Just one. And then they'll turn on us." Naidoo paused and took a deep breath. "Whether we like it or not, we must work our passage into the movement and into the future. If we fail we'll have no future here. This, whatever we feel or think of it, is the hard reality of the Indian situation. I believe Dee told you how the enemy exploits this latent anti-Indian feeling among the Africans. You know about the riots and murders. If the underground turns against us it'll be worse. And so we come to you. The money is safe now but you are still in our care. We cannot afford for you to get caught or for anything to happen to you while you're in our care. The police are looking for you. They are on the alert everywhere along the Protectorate border; and with the charge of murder or suspicion of murder over you the Protectorate authorities

will be bound to hand you over, should you slip through their border guard."

"So I am wanted for murder," Nkosi said at last, looking at Dee. But Naidoo answered him.

"Not for murder. For questioning. But if they think the only way they can get hold of you is by saying murder then they will."

"And if they do get hold of me?"

"Then two things happen: first, our ^{in the underground} enemies/denounce us; and we must then decide who and how many of us, if any, must step forward to at least save your neck and salvage whatever little African goodwill we think we have left. Either way we suffer. So you see how important you are to our sheer survival, Mr. Nkosi. If we have to, the doctor and I and, if needs must, Dee too, we'll all lay down our lives to save you, not because we love or even care very much about you and your opinion....."

"That much I know," Nkosi said. "The point is well taken."

"Sammy doesn't mean that," Dee cut in.

"But Mr. Nkosi and I know that I do, my dear."

"He has a right to be bitter," Nkosi said.

"You're wrong again. We can't afford that luxury."

"You'd better go and eat," Dee said.

Sammy stood up, swaying slightly, his weariness now apparent to both of them.

"Yes.....I'm sorry I've upset you, Dee."

"You haven't; at least, it isn't you."

"Then it's worse than I feared." He walked round the big desk and rested his big hand briefly on Nkosi's ~~big~~ shoulder as he went ~~out~~ to the door. He opened the door then looked back at Nkosi.

"I'm sorry about this but you see that we must give up our

original plan for your departure."

"Yes, I see."

Naidoo looked at Dee. "You'll have to stay here at least until the doc shows up. That shouldn't be too much of a hardship; then we'll know the next move. Don't worry if I don't see you for some time: Dee will take care of you.....Bye Dee." Before Dee could respond Naidoo pulled the door shut behind him.

Nkosi lead his head back against the brown leather. He closed his eyes and tried to think out the implications of his position. When they had approached him to undertake this mission he, and they, had thought and talked of all sorts of possibilities. They had even thought of the possibility of his having to break loose from the support and protection of the underground and going it alone. The one thing they had not thought about was this possibility. The powerful and wealthy liberal forces that would have helped in any emergency ^{were} ~~were~~ he knew, shy away at any hint of murder. And then there ~~were~~ the Indians. In a remote sort of way he had known about this always. But not with this horrible starkness that made him feel guilty and weighed down with depression.....And how was he to get out of this damned place and out of this damned murder trap. Why the devil did they allow the passbook to fall into police hands. And Westhuizen.....

The woman's hand on his shoulder interrupted his jumbled thoughts. But he kept his eyes closed. She knew about it all the time. Then he felt her hand in his own and opened his eyes.

"I'm sorry," she said.

And he knew, suddenly, that she was offering herself as comfort. And she was unused to it or else to being so close to a black man. She leaned towards him but he got up and pushed her away, gently. She lowered her head.

stared at each other for while, then he shrugged slightly and walked towards her. She waited till he went past her then turned out the study lights and walked with him down the passage.

"No need for you to go up to the attic," she said. "We've prepared the spare bedroom directly opposite the attic. If anything happens you can quickly slip up. You couldn't do that while you were drugged and out....I think you'll find everything there. Naidoo took your measurements while you were out and there's a suit. Remember to take that if anything happens. But you'll be warned in good time. Even if I say so myself, we coolies are quite efficient...."

"Yes," Nkosi said, "like the ants."

"As you say, like the ants," she said. She stopped. "This is my bedroom. And this is no invitation."

"I'm aware of that."

"Goodnight then. Be assured we'll do our best to get you away as quickly as possible."

"Dee,"

"Yes?"

He looked into hard eyes and changed his mind.

"Never mind. I'm sorry. Goodnight."

Downstairs Dicky Naicker and the two women watched in silence till Naidoo finished eating. The younger of the women nodded every now and then, but seemed determined not to miss anything.

"Time for the little one to ^{go to} sleep," Naidoo said. Cissie took the hint and hustled the younger woman out of the kitchen, ignoring her protests about not being tired really.

~~There~~ There was a brief, subdued, startled squeal from outside the kitchen door. It made Dicky Naicker chuckle.

"That Cissie really rough on the child you see, Sammy."

"How," Naidoo asked.

"Nuttin' serious," Dicky said hurriedly as he saw the concern on Sammy's face. "Just a lick on the arse and a roughing with her tongue. Nuttin' serious. Nuttin' to worry over. Cissie not cruel."

Cissie came back.

"How she doing?" Naidoo asked.

"All right, Mr. Naidoo. But these young ones soft, you see. Always combing their hair and painting their faces. When I was her age I had two children and I was working in the fields from before sun-up to after sundown; and no nonsense about painting face and being tired. Different world today!"

"If she lazy," Naidoo said, "then we'd better send her back. We can always find someone else to help you."

"Oh no, Mr. Naidoo, not!" Cissie protested. "I don't say she lazy. I like her. She's a good girl, good worker!"

"But I thought you said——"

"No. I only say the world different for girls today; softer. That's all. True's God, Mr. Naidoo, the girl is good."

"Then there's no problem," Naidoo said.

"She's a good girl," Cissie repeated.

Naicker began to chuckle and Cissie suddenly realised that she had been teased into praising her assistant. Briefly, she vacillated between face-saving anger and amusement. She saw the twinkle in Naidoo's eyes. Laughter bubbled up inside her and showed on her face. And then, suddenly, Naidoo was serious.

"We don't want to make life as hard for the young ones as it

was for us, Cissie. We want to make it easier. That is why we are all part of the Movement. The doctor and Miss Dee and I and all the other leaders, we all agree on this. But think of it yourself. When you were young as that girl wouldn't it have been fun to brush your hair and put oil on it and put and flower in it and put on a pretty sari and have a boyfriend and walk with him by the river? Just think of it. Wouldn't it have been fun for you, Cissie? Instead you had to breed children while you were still a child yourself, and you had to work from sun-up to sundown. It was a hard life. You don't want the same life for your child or even for this child who helps you, do you?"

"No, Mr. Naidoo."

2 "Fine! When she little bit slow, remember she's young. And give her time to make friends and to dream and to make herself pretty for boys, heh. Life going to be hard enough later: we know it."

"Yes," Cissie said thoughtfully, "we know it."

"Allright then. Now for the serious business. You Cissie must tell the child never to talk about the man upstairs. She must not mention it to anybody, not even to you. And you must not mention it to anybody, not even to me. You must all forget that this man is here. Nobody must talk about it. Understand?"

"But the people in the street.... Only today....."

"The word will go to them too. From now on no-one must talk or think about this man. The Movement wants everybody to forget this man is alive. There was no man, so he never came here and so nobody ever saw him. You pass the word along the street, Dicky. Tell them the leaders of the Movement say it is a matter of life and death. Warn them the police may come among us. All right?"

"Yes, Sammy," Dicky Naicker said gravely.

Cissie
 "Yes, Mr. Naidoo,"/said said.

"All right then Cissie, it's been a long day. You go and rest."

"You stay here tonight, Mr. Naidoo?"

He thought: Even she's worried about the man's effect on Dee.

"No, Cissie, I can't stay tonight. There's too much to do."

Cissie raised her eyes as though she would look through the barrier of walls and ceiling to see what went on upstairs, then she turned to the door.

"Goodnight, Mr. Naidoo."

"Goodnight, Cissie."

"Night Mr. Dicky."

"Night Cissie. Don't worry. I'm sleeping here."

Dicky waited till Cissie had shut the door then he said:

"I can take a blanket and stretch out at the top of the stairs."

Naidoo smiled wanly and shook his head.

"You can but you won't. You will see me out, then you will check that all doors and windows are properly shut and locked, then you will take the backdoor key and go out and lock the back door behind you. You will let the man on watch know in which of the outside rooms you are sleeping, and then you will go to sleep."

"But....."

"But what? You've seen and heard the man. Do you think he'll try and murder Miss Dee in the middle of the night?"

"No, Sammy.....But....."

"You think ~~hee~~ he'll rape her?"

Dicky Naicker looked appealingly at Sammy Naidoo. He knew that Sammy knew what was in his mind; but it was not the kind of thing you said out aloud. He thought: Please, Sammy, you know what I mean. He's black and she's one of ours; she's the doc's kid sister and

we must take care of her.

Naidoo thought: At least we have reached a point where we are too shamefaced to talk openly about our thoughts. He said:

"Only thing that can happen is what Miss Dee wants."

Dicky Naicker turned his head away, afraid suddenly, Sammy Naidoo knew, to pursue this line of thought any further. Naidoo was surprised that Dicky Naicker had not jumped at the apparently reassuring fact that Miss Dee had the initiative: a year ago he would have. Now, a year later, Miss Dee was less infallible; the fact that the power of choice was hers did not mean that what Dicky feared could not happen.

Dicky Naicker tried to muster a smile but his lower lip trembled uncertainly.

An enormous feeling of warmth for Dicky Naicker welled up in Sammy Naidoo. Young people like Dicky, growing up in this land in these days, had to mature much too quickly and therefore much too artificially. They had to skip so much of youth and become adult before their time; none of the lazy easy maturing for them; everything was forced so hard as to destroy vast areas of their humanity. Soon, Naidoo thought bitterly, soon this land and all its people, black, brown, white and what will you, soon they will all be strangers to the meaning of compassion: the trend is there, sharp and clear, unmistakeable. Unless.....

He said: "Tell me, Dicky. You ever have a black girl?"

A shy, self-conscious smile lit up Dicky's face.

"One time."

"And it different?"

~~"You mean from sex girls? No, but you don't talk of it. You know"~~

"How you mean?"

"From other~~g~~ girls; from our girls. Black girl any different?"

"I dunno," Naicker said doubtfully.

"Af course, every girl is different from every other; I don't mean that. I mean did you find the black girl different from every other girl?"

"I don't remember so clear now; you know how it is; but I don't think she different."

"And you feel any different after you have her?"

"No..... Why you ask these things, Sammy?"

"No special reason. Just that for me all women are the same. Each one is different because every person is different, but not because of colour or race: certainly not with those I knew."

It was ~~Sammy~~ Dicky's turn to ask questions now. By asking him, Sammy had given him the right to ask in return. He was self-consciously bold about it.

"You ever had a black girl, Sammy?"

"More than one." Sammy smiled sleepily. "And white ones too, and Coloured ones. Those days were not like it is today. In those days people like us could go to the universities of Johannesburg and Cape Town and even to the university college at Durban. People mixed more and you could be friends."

"Friends with whites?" Dicky was incredulous.

"Yes, Dicky, friends with whites."

"Here! In this country?" Dicky thought about it for while.

"You mean there was no colour bar?" at all?"

"There always was, but in those days the whites were ashamed and felt guilty about it; and so they had to explain it and excuse it. ~~with whites~~ And because the government itself felt guilty it pretended not to see those whites who broke the rules and fraternised

with non-whites. Why, in those days a man like Janx~~Hofmeyr~~ Hofmeyr could denounce the colour bar and still win a seat and remain a minister of government. The trouble, Dicky, is that we allowed the colour bar to take root and become a habit. And once people slip into habits the questions of right and wrong become blurred; and the hardest thing to break is a well established habit."

Naicker

"You tired, Sammy," Dicky ~~Rixian~~ murmured, sensitive suddenly to the strong wave of depression that had assailed Naidoo as he spoke.

"Yes," Naidoo said. "Come, see me out. And remember what I told you."

He heaved himself out of the chair, will his body into an almost militaristic erectness and moved decisively to the front of the house. Before opening the front door he looked briefly up at the stairs and the upper part of the house. It was in darkness and it was silent. Dicky Naicker suppressed the impulse to appeal once more for permission to sleep inside the house, preferably near Dee's room. Naidoo opened the door, stepped out and shut it behind him, all in one smooth quick flowing movement that gave Nacker no chnace to say goodnight.

Outside, Naidoo waited until the heard Naick er turn the key and shoot the two bolts home. Then he hurried down the deserted street of the Indian area that was on the fringe of the white town. He willed himself not to think of Dee and the black man called Nkosi. Instead, he thought about the nature of prejudice and the terrible problem of trying to stay free of it oneself. Once, at a corner, the heartrending howl of dog brought him to a stop. Then he lowered his head and moved off again, too tired to think but on the alert for pratroling police.

-3-

Dr. Nunkhoo arrived back from Johannesburg in the very early hours of the morning, at that time of day, that hour before dawn, when there is ~~affnshxx~~ fresh chilliness to the air even at sea-level on the equator. He had driven hard all night and now only the steady stream of cold air kept him awake; that and the will to be awake.

He slowed down to regulation speed on the outskirts of the white town. There was no other traffic on the clean, wide, well-lit streets. But Nunkhoo drove with the care and attention of someone travelling through dense and tricky traffic until the broad clean streets and the spacious houses in their large and well-kept gardens were behind him. Then, in that no-man's-land between the legally defined 'European residential area' and his own 'Indian residential area', which in this case was the squalid strip of land where the small handful of coloureds of the area live, he picked up speed again. Once, most of this land, including parts of the town, had been owned by Indians. By a series of legal moves at central government level, at Provincial government level and at local government level the Indians had been deprived of their land. His own family had lost close on a thousand acres of land, part of it here but the bulk of it near the coast at a spot that had been turned into a popular resort. Nunkhoo smiled bitterly at the thought of his lost land and at the fact that this was probably the first legally constituted government in history that ^{some four-fifths} had deprived ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ of its citizenry of the so-called sacred right to freehold title to property, purely and simply on the basis of colour.

"But that is the least of our worries," he murmured to the wind.

On the outskirts of the Indian quarter the world turned drab and

ugly. Only the main street was surfaced; the others were dustbowls in the dry season and muddy pools in the wet. The houses were equally drab and ugly and unpainted. This was true of the homes ^{even} of those who were relatively prosperous. But this was of course only true of the outside. It was wise, in these days, to show a poor and drab and miserable front lest the lords of the land envied what they saw. If they ~~imagined~~ ^{envied}, the area could easily be declared 'European', and then there would be another exodus of Indians. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~
~~xx~~ And so the whites were only allowed to see the ugly false front that made them feel good and masters of the situation. And those who did know that behind the false front were the refinements of a cultured people - those whites concerned with security and with political intelligence - kept the disturbing secret from the rest of their people. This was part of the elaborate pattern of deception, the complex pattern of the deceiving house of mirrors, on which the entire society had increasingly come to be based. People were no longer just people; where the wind came from and on whom it blew first, determined whether it was a good or bad wind; water was clean or dirty, not because of filtration or the lack of it, but because kaffirs or coolies had either used it five or ten miles further up or not: if it had gone underground immediately after use by the kaffirs or coolies and emerged soft and purified it would still be dirty, if it were known that it had been used by kaffir or coolies. So here too, in order to enjoy the gifts of nature, the deception was necessary.

And because, this line of thinking always took him, step by step, to a point where he felt a kind of compassionate pity for the crass almost historical stupidity shown by men through the ages, he always

he always stopped this line of thinking abruptly; but he knew that one day, in a moment of weakness, he would follow it through. And that, he knew, would be his undoing. The moment you begin to understand that, given the same circumstances, the Indians or the blacks would have behaved exactly as the white minority does.....

But of course the Marxian proposition is that if you change the circumstances you change the behaviour pattern of people. And in any events the circumstances are not and cannot be the same: the blacks are the majority and the black majority will not need to oppress a white minority in order to survive. "And we coolies have ceased to be colonisers many, many, thousands of years ago." Who knows, perhaps the day will come, a thousand years ~~xxxxxx~~ or more from now, when the whites will be as psychologically incapable of being coloniser as we now are. But what if the blacks had by then become the world's new great colonisers?.....Beware Dawood Nunkhoo! These dangerous thoughts could lead to impotence,"

He cleared his mind of all thought and felt the cool wind on his face and saw the first dawn rays climbing the sky to the east. And he realised suddenly that now, at last, he was driving from one side of the narrow road to the other; co-ordination and control were completely gone, and so was the strain. He was home and safe - as safe as he could be anywhere in this land.

Dicky Neicker and the watchman opened the garage gate and it was all he could do to get the car in safely without scraping Dee's. She met him at the top of the stairs, sleepy and warm. He held her tight for a moment and thought of another woman, the only other one he had ever held like this, but with very different feelings. Because of the racialism of the land and because of what he conceived as his

duty he had not married that woman. Now she was someone else's wife in faraway Scotland, and in all the years since he had found no other to take her place in his heart and mind.

"How's our guest?" Then he noticed the puffy redness of her eyes.

"Shaken by what's happened," she said. "But all right. Keeps his head."

"And you?" He tried not to show the tenderness he felt.

She raised her redrimmed eyes to his.

"I'm in a bit of mess," she said impersonally.

"Talk about it?"

"No.....It's about him.....Get into bed and I'll bring up a cup of tea."

He watched her go bobbing down the stairs; then he went into his bedroom; conscious, briefly, of the usually submerged sense of guilt because she, the woman, was the cripple. Men supported such states best. When Dee Nunkhoo returned to her brother's room with the tea, he he was out to the world. She tucked him in, drew the curtains to keep the room in darkness, and went out with the tea tray. Then she saw Ekosi at the door of his bedroom.

"My brother has returned," she said.

"Yes; I heard."

"But he's awfully tired - too tired to drink this tea."

"I wasn't expecting to see him now.....May I have his tea?"

She hesitated, conscious suddenly of the semi-transparent flimsiness of her night clothes, and, at the same time, confused and angered that the presence of this man should have this effect on her.

"What is it you want?" She almost felt his sense of shock at the harshness of her voice. She felt him withdraw, become remote and impersonal.

"It is of no moment," he said, with the stiff formality she had noticed so often before with Africans who were being coldly polite.

She thought: if we don't make contact now, as we did out in the garden earlier, we will never again make contact; something will end before it had ~~any~~ chance to begin.

She stood still, watching and feeling his cold withdrawn black presence, knowing that what she felt was crystallising itself in her mind by being dressed in language, waiting for it, knowing what it would be, and therefore being afraid. At last, the knowledge was a clear thought, whole, complete, invading all her consciousness. She thought: God help me, I want this man - and he is black.

Other thoughts were there, too; tugging her this way and that. But this one dominated all the others. She told herself that she did not want it to be so, that you couldn't just say to yourself, or think to yourself: I want this man, or, I want this woman. But still the thought and the reality were there, irrational, inexplicable, terrifyingly real, except that it did not terrify, seemed the most normal and the most natural thing in the world to want this man now turning away from her.

Just before he shut the door, she said: "We can't have tea here; come into my room."

Sammy knew I wanted him before I did, she thought, and marvelled at the perceptiveness of Sammy Naidoo.

Akesi hesitated at the door of his bedroom.

She told herself to remember that he was frightened and worried and upset by what Sammy Naidoo had told him. Remember his need right now is for comfort and companionship. Remember he doesn't want you. Anybody would do, so don't make a mess of it because you want him.

Nkosi turned to her, so she went into her bedroom, leaving the door open for him. She ^{put down the tray and} hurried to her dressing table and dabbed quickly at her face. She bobbed silently to the open window and looked out to the east where the dawnrays were now lighting up the sky in a glow of colours. Soon, in an hour perhaps, the lightrays would grow stronger, touch all the earth, and play herald to the sun itself.

She thought: I wish I were whole and clean and not brutalised, like him. Then she thought: How do you know that? What do you know about him. And then, to herself, just audibly, she murmured: I know. She knew when he came in, though he moved with catlike silence. "Please shut the door," she said.

"I'll take my tea into my room," he said, still stiffly formal. Remember he's hurt and upset and proud.

"If you wish. But I'd like you to stay."

She's trying to make amends, he thought, then: No, she's trying to comfort me. But she did lie to me, did withhold the knowledge of what Naidee told me later.

She said: "I was not free to tell you anything. Discipline in our movement is very strict about that sort of thing. Besides," God help me, "I didn't know it mattered that much to you. I should have, after our talk....."

He thought: Why are you trying so hard, woman? He said: "Its allright."

And then he felt the stirrings of something physical between himself and the woman. The impulse to withdraw was strong. Nothing good could come from this sort of thing in this place at this time.

Dismayed, she thought: He knows I want him.

She indicated, awkwardly, the easy chair by the window.

"Please be seated.....~~Forgive~~ the uncertainty....I don't know how a woman's supposed to behave in these circumstances.....Its the first time I've entertained a man to tea in my bedroom at this hour. What happens with one's brother seems singularly unhelpful....."

She thought: this is ridiculous! Me! Me playing jelly-belly at my age! Trouble is my belly is jelly. Jelly-belly.....One of those expressions that had stuck ~~from~~ since that long ago day of childhood when her two brothers, the elder sleeping in the next room, and the young clubbed to death by black/^{anti-Indian}race rioters, when those two had dared her to strip and jump into a dam with them; and because she wouldn't Dawood had thrown back his godlike, chiseled head and roared 'Jelly-Belly!' and then collapsed in helpless laughter. Jelly-belly had been a ^{Private} part of their/currency of communication ever since. Jelly-belly.....

"The answer is to treat all men as one's brother."

He's just as jelly-belly, she thought and felt comforted.

2 "Surely that's not possible....."

"As a conscious confidence-giving device, certainly."

She waited till he went past her and settled himself at the window, then, as unobtrusively as possible, she moved to her bedside ~~babā~~ and busied herself ~~pouringxxxxxx~~ cleaning up her face. Then she poured the tea and carried it to the window. He brought the stool from her dressing table. They sat on either side of the window/^{drinking their tea and} watching the forming and re-forming of new patterns of/^{the}light of the breaking day. She felt herself grow tranquil and warm, as in the garden last night. This time she surrendered eagerly, but with a hint of sadness, to the trancelike atmosphere that seemed a part of his presence.

He turned his head to look closely at her face. She turned her face away, unwilling to look at him or to let him look closely at her face.

Another time, he thought, removing his foot from the blocklike lump of flesh.

He put his hand on her breast and explored its unusual firm roundedness. At her age women's breasts had usually begun to sag. He caressed her, running his hand up and down her spine, massaging the tense neck muscles till he felt her relax, till she returned from the far and lonely region to which she had withdrawn her mind and body. Then she began to warm and respond, to press her body against his and to feel him with her hands.

She thought: We've crossed the first hurdle; next time it will be all passion, and more than a little wild perhaps. And then she thought: God how I would love to have his children! Unexpectedly, inexplicably, her eyes filled with tears; the tears ran down her cheeks, found their way into one ear and wet the pillow. She tried to stem the tide but the tears kept flowing, for no reason at all. She felt ashamed, self-conscious, apologetic and fearful that his remembrance of this night might be of a teary and therefore stupid woman.

He said, very gently: "Remembering your first love?"

"No," she said shortly.

"Your second then?"

She turned her face fully to him. There was just enough light for him to see that the tears had stopped flowing. "There was only one," she said in the familiar hard voice. "It was rather sordid."

So that's it, he thought.

After a long while he said, as though speaking to himself only:

"I left a woman in Europe...."

"European and beautiful,%..." she murmured.

"Yes: both," he said.

The ache of her heart was physical.

"And good and intelligent,I'm sure."

"No," he said. "Neither good nor intelligent. Mean, selfish, shallow and utterly without morals...."

"And yet you love her," she said.

"She's a shameless liar and utterly without scruples. Because she resented our friendship she seduced my best friend and then came and told me that he had ravished her by force. It destroyed our friendship,of course. I knew that had our roles been reversed I too would have been seduced by her but I couldn't forgive my friend for not being stronger than I would have been....No. That's not the reason."

"No; that isn't the reason," she said.

He turned his head from the changing lights of the breaking day and stared curiously and intently at her.

"But it's not the desire to possess her," he said. "I don't want her; I've sent her away often enough. She's gone often enough. But then, after weeks or months she's come back hungry and beaten and I've taken her back and fed her and clothed and comforted her.....And despised her and called her a harlot and a stupid one who doesn't even take money....."

"And loved her," Dee murmured remotely.

"No. There is no respect, no admiration, no real friendship - and all these are implicit in love."

"Then it's pure animal."

"That was strong in the beginning. But you know the saying about

how too many fingers dipping in the same bowl can spoil the flavour of it. When she discovered that I was growing cold it became a challenging pastime for her to use her skills to arouse me: when ~~all~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ I finally became impervious to all her tricks it became a thing of bitter desperation. If she were capable of love I would say that she grew to love me when she discovered she had destroyed my capacity to love her in any way. But it is not love, it is possession she's after."

"And the point of telling me all this?"

"Seen from the outside: I've stuck to this woman for the best part of ten years and the only possible reason for a man sticking to a woman must be love. Again, seen from the outside: she's gone away to other men but she 's always come back. And now there is a sort of desperation with which she tries to make me lust after her. From the outside this can be interpreted as the painful and stormy interplay of a great love between two people. That is indeed how outsiders do interpret it: it is part of the whole fictionalised, commercialised love myth...."

"And yet there is this remembrance, this thinking of her, this breaking of a friendship because she seduced your friend....."

"That was a long time ago."

"But if it happened now, today, even though you say you are cold to her, I think it ~~will~~ would still destroy that friendship....."

"Only because the friendship itself ^{was} ~~is~~ based on certain cardinal assumptions which ^{have} ~~are~~ violated."

"I see that," Dee said quickly. "But there is still the fact of the remembrance. If it is neither love nor lust, then what is it? What is the hold this woman has over you: it is patently obvious and yet you speak of her with contempt both for yourself and for her. What

A frightening thought struck her suddenly. He felt her withdraw momentarily. He put his hand on the back of her neck and pulled her to him.

"Not again," he said.

"Have you any children? You and this habit of yours?"

He said "No" and she relaxed.

"Doesn't she want any?"

"We never talked about it," he said.

"Or thought about it....?"

"Or thought about it."

She thought: You'll never go back to that woman, I'll see to it.

He moved his foot until he made physical contact with the lump of flesh once more. As he touched her clubfoot her newfound confidence evaporated. He felt her shrink and shiver up.

"Not again!" he snapped. "I think you'd better tell me." He kept on exploiting the clubfoot with his own toes.

"No."

"I want you to," he insisted.

"Please....."

"Yes! Or you'll always run. Don't you see that?"

"Allright."

She pulled away from him. He allowed her to withdraw so that there was no physical contact between them. The silence between them stretched out and became charged with unease.

"Its sordid!" she protested. "Please!"

He said nothing, just lay waiting.

is her hold?"

"Her weakness."

"Are you saying you're a sucker for loose women?" She felt gay suddenly. "It would be awful on a woman with any fastidiousness."

"No," he said seriously. He seemed to grope for words. "I think it is that she turned to me and offered me the burden of her weakness. And I think my weakness is that I could not refuse the reality of her weakness. I suppose its my vanity; and a sort of subconscious desire to be the big strong man...."

"And of course she was a hell of a sexy bit," Dee said coarsely.

"Yes, that too."

"So you wanted her because she tittivated you; then you discovered that she was a tart but having laid her you felt responsible for her. In other words you're all mixed up and loaded with a sense of guilt, of responsibility and every other complex under the sun. Really, you know, that's an awfully high price to pay for a sleep...."

"Do you have to make it sound so cheap...."

Determinedly, she shut her heart and mind to the gentle, sad reproach behind his words. Suddenly, sharply, in a flash of brilliant insight she realised that this one's trouble was that he wanted to put all women on pedestals and look up to them.

"But you make prisoners of them, my dear," she protested urgently.

He was completely out of touch with her now.

"What are you talking about?" He said.

Then, her newfound gift of seeing still working, she said:

"I see it now. You set them on pedestals and look up to them and God help them if they don't live up to it! That's the trouble with your poor, immoral, silly little sexy bitch. She keeps on falling off the pedestal. What she doesn't realise and what you've hidden from yourself is that if she didn't fall off you'd lose all interest.

in her. She has this hold on you because she's a no-good little tart. You are the missionary wrestling with evil. If she were strong and moral and upright you would have had your sleep and passed on to other pastures, feeling guilty and conscience stricken as befits a good missionary type, but free and oddly fulfilled because she would still have been up there on her pedestal: you would have climbed up, had your bit of fun, climbed down and still been able to look up to her. Instead, this one has come right down ~~into~~ ground level with you and you've spent the last ten years trying to put her back up there where you think she belongs.....Frankly, my dear, I'm sorry for the poor little bitch. It must have been every kind of hell for her, trying to hold her own and knowing, probably in the most primitively instinctive way, that to hold you she had to be weak....."

She stopped talking abruptly, aware, suddenly, that she had said more than she had intended. This was something she would have to watch with this man. In his presence the impulse was to open up, to be mentally and emotionally naked with him: and she knew it had dangers. She looked anxiously at him. The dawnlight coming through the window played tricks with his face, made it look covered in a ^{whiteish} ~~waxlike~~ powder that set the eyes far back in their sockets. She was disturbed by ^{her} ~~the~~ sense of anxiety lest she had offended him.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't mean to go so far...." Then she ~~saw~~ sensed rather than saw the smiling curve of his lips. She felt reassured but went on "The trouble is that you make me say more than I mean to."

He said, lightly: "I'm sorry - if that is bad."

She thought: we've crossed the first big hurdle. She said:

"It could be - especially with your impulse to set all women

on pedestals."

"But that won't worry you," he said with gentle mockery. Then, as though uncertain of her reaction, he asked: "Will it?"

"You are laughing at me!" she protested, but unable to quite contain the purring hint of victory in her voice.

He heard it and it brought a deep low chuckle to his throat. She jumped up self-consciously, but before she could move away he reached out and caught her left wrist and pulled her towards him. She resisted for a brief while then she gave in and went into the circle of his arm, leaning forward till her breasts rested heavily against his chest. His arm tightened about her waist as though he wanted to merge their two bodies; she closed her eyes and gave up all effort at thought; the sheer physical excitement of the moment set her body trembling with desire for this man.

Then his arm relaxed. The sense of a merging of bodies, of a sexual oneness, faded. Slowly, reluctantly, she gave in to the new mood of thought he generated and demanded.

He said: "You know I'm going back as soon as possible."

"Yes; I know."

"And that she's still there; waiting for me....."

"Yes," she repeated. "I know."

"And still....."

"Only if you want it."

"But what if.....what if you get too attached to me?"

"You're being the big strong man again, my dear. All right, what if I do?"

"You're not as tough as you try to sound."

"I don't want to be tough: it is just that know that you may; no, not may; knowing that you will go away changes nothing."

"I want to be sure you know what's in store...."

She leaned far back, bracing her hips against his and intertwining her fingers round the back of his waist. She savoured, sweetly and snugly, the exciting new sense of possessive intimacy she felt about this man. And now she knew also that for this man she could make herself physically exciting.

"Be assured, my dear. I know what's in store. I know it is futile to say it but I would like you to be assured that when the moment of parting comes I will regret nothing."

"It is easily said now."

"I know. If you want me to assure^{you}/that I will not be hurt, I cannot. You mustn't project cheating expectations. What I can and do assure is that there will be no messiness at the end of the line - whatever it is."

He kissed then; gently, warmly, tenderly, almost thankfully. But then she felt a wave of desire shoot through him. Then, repending, a wave of desire swept through her; it was so overpowering that she knew, more by instinct than reason, that she would make a hash of it if she gave in now. And the first time had to be right. So she fought down her rising passion.

"I want you so desperately but I'm so shaken that I'll make a mess of it now."

"All right, my dear,"^{he}/murmured.

They held each other tight. He caressed her back, her shoulders her neck, in gentle circular movements that relaxed her in body and mind. And she closed her eyes and drifted into a state of trancelike passion. Then, suddenly, she jerked out of it, shaken and trembling.

The caressing hand was exploring her left hip, the beginning of the crippled leg.

She lifted her head and pulled away from him. He held on to her and kept on with his exploration, bending a little as his hand went down her thigh to the back of her knee.

"What are you doing?"

"Feeling you, trying to see and feel the extent of your crippledness."

"Why?"

"You seem to expect me to have an attitude to it, so I want to find out if I have."

"Everybody has an attitude to a cripple."

He let go of her and she moved away from him.

"I hoped I'd seen the end of the hard self-pitying side of you."

The harshness behind the words stung her even more than the words themselves. Tears welled-up and overflowed her eyes. She fought hard to gain control of her emotions.

He walked briskly to the door and flicked on the light. Automatically she turned her body so that he saw it in profile, the crippled leg hidden away from him. He studied her coldly, deliberately. Then he said: "Turn. I want to take a close look at your crippled leg."

The sobbing she had controlled this far became uncontrollable. But she turned. And as she did so she turned her eyes away from his face.

"Come neerer!" he ordered. Then, as she stood no more than a yard away from him, he said: "Turn a little more and raise your night-dress....Higher, yes, up to your waist. Your left hip and thigh seems a little smaller than your right. I want to see how much; and I want

to take a really close look at your clubfoot. I've never had a chance to examine one till now. I wonder whether they're all alike but I don't suppose you even bothered to find out. That's the difference between artists and non-artists. Artists will use even their own weaknesses and deformities to serve the creative process. What do you know about clubfootedness?"

He went down on one knee and felt the mishapen lump.

"Only that it is supposed to be congenital," she said between painful sobs, that had escaped her control.

"If you'd been an artist instead of a would-be politician you would have been able to tell me a lot more. Anyway, I should say there is a length difference of between two to three inches between left and right leg."...."

"Two and a quarter inches," she said.
indeed

"The left thigh and hip, and the whole of the left leg seems to be perfectly scaled down for a person two and a quarter inches shorter. I'm not sure that I do not prefer the smaller hip and thigh. The woman to whom they belong would be just about the right size for a little man like me. Anyway, I'm in a position to have an attitude now and I'll give it to you if you are interested. Of course you may prefer to repeat your clever claptrap about everybody having this, that or the other, attitude toward cripples."

He looked up at the ravaged, tearstained face. Then, gently, he freed the flimsy cloth from her clenched fists and allowed it to slide down her legs. He got up and stood facing her, and now, at last, she saw the gentle, reassuring look in his eyes.

"Interested in my attitude?"

Twice she opened her mouth and twice she could make no sound other than the painful gasping sobs. Then she nodded.

"I think it is a pity about this clubfoot. I'm sorry about it and I'm sorry that you're saddled with it. But I do think you make it much more important than it is. Maybe its because you're a woman and women are vain. I think the real damage, the real harm you've suffered has been self-inflicted because of this feeling that you're unnatural. So you've tended rather to impose your clubfoot on me. I hope you'll stop doing that now." I'm sorry I had to bring things to a head in this way. Self-pity is the meanest and ugliest of human emotions and not worthy of you." He smiled a brief, tender smile. "It is certainly not worthy of my women."

She let out a strangled cry, ~~grasped~~ half-fell forward and grabbed ^{his} him and then buried her face in ^{his} shoulder, muting her sobbing by pressing her open mouth against against the curve of his neck.

When her passionate storm had passed, she said:

~~"Please, the light. Not even a very beautiful woman can stand it in this state." She hesitated then went on: "The impulse is to not let it happen. I couldn't be more naked before you than I've been. But..."~~

~~"You are right right," he said. "A woman must always be a woman."~~
 He ^{tuned from} ~~left~~ her and went and turned off the light. When he turned back to her she had turned her back on him. She stood facing the window and the light of the breaking day.

~~"Please leave me now. Get some more sleep if you can."~~

~~"You'll be all right now?"~~

~~"Yes," she said. "Yes, my dear. I'll be all right now."~~

~~He left her and she remained by the window for along time, watchin
 the breaking day.~~

"please sit down," she said without turning. "I want to tell you the story of my love life."

"You don't have to," he said.

"I want to."

"Allright."

He sat down and waited. She was silent for so long he decided she had changed her mind, but he waited.

At long last she said, speaking in a flat dead voice: "I met him in my second year at London University. He was doing political science and he was the secretary of the Sparticus Club. He was a brilliant speaker, he had published a volume of revolutionary verse and he paraded and professed his Marxism with a sort of joyous pride and arrogance. I first saw and heard him when the Sparticus Club debated the Socialist Club on colonialism. I had never heard or seen a performance like that and I fell for him on the spot. He was tall and handsome and godlike - and of course, his side won, thanks to him. I was flattered by his attention after the debate and I joined his gang on a pub-crawl. When closing time came the others went their way and he casually suggested that I go to his flat with him. By the way, whenever it had come to his ~~tax~~ turn to buy a round of drinks, I had paid. The first time, he had put his hands into his pockets and looked at me and shrugged and I had paid. After that it was taken for granted that I would pay for his round as well as my own. Anyway, I went to his flat with him. He expected me to sleep with him, so I did. I became his mistress; I paid his bills; cleaned his flat; cooked his food; I even stayed out of the way when he wanted to sleep with another woman for a change. You see, I was so grateful that ^{this} the godlike and eloquent and

brilliant revolutionary should have time for me; it meant that in spite ^{of} my deformity I could be attractive to a man like that. It was a source of great pride to me. Also, a woman has a fixation on the first man she sleeps with if that man rouses her fully, and he roused me fully....."

She was silent for a long time and Nkosi said:

"You're upsetting yourself: there's no need to go on."

After a while she went on as though he had not spoken.

"One day I returned to the flat to find him waiting anxiously with a packed suitcase. He told me a small group of writers ~~was~~ were making a special trip across Russia and through China. They were leaving next morning and he wanted to join them. He needed two hundred and fifty pounds. He expected me to give it to him. Dawood was making me a generous allowance but in four months with him I had used up the five hundred odd pounds of my savings and I had overdrawn on my allowance for the whole of that year. I knew the bank would not advance me a penny more without Dawood's authority and I just couldn't cable my brother and tell him I needed the money to give to my lover. For one thing he didn't know I was living with a man and supporting him; for another I still had some shreds of pride left. Anyway, I told him I couldn't raise the money. At first he thought I was just being difficult and that a little of his charm and love-making would break me down. I could not convince him that I could not raise the money. He was sure that if I wanted to I could. He even suggested a phone call to my brother in South Africa explaining the reason why I needed the money.

"When I refused that my charming godlike hero turned on me with unbelievable viciousness and told me how he had to suppress

a sense of physical revulsion each time he bedded me; but that, he said, was part of the system and he had more than paid for every penny I had provided. He never said so explicitly but he made it pretty clear that his sense of physical revulsion stemmed from the fact^{that}/not only was I Indian, I was a crippled Indian to boot.....At the height of his rage he did a sort of cruel parody of the way I walk..... Then he told me to get out."

Nkosi said quietly:

"And you never told anyone about it?"

"Everyone at the university knew," she said in that flat dead voice.

"I don't mean that," he said.

"People I care for? People like Dawood and Sammy? How could I? Only their love and respect and my cowardice prevented me, in those early days, from doing something desperate."

"It's still very real?" he said gently.

"Like a recurrent nightmare," she said flatly.

"You should have talked about it."

"To whom?"

"To your brother."

"I couldn't before now. I can now - if....."

He said: "I don't think there is any need to now. Is there?"

She thought about it for a long while then shook her head almost imperceptibly.

He said: "It is all out in the open now and you can look at it and examine it?"

She turned from the window and looked searchingly at his face.

"we'd better get a little more rest," she said.

He left her then and she turned back to the window.

He dreamt that he was asleep and that Dee was calling him, urgently, insistently, shaking him. He dreamt that he opened his eyes and stared up into her face and that the bright light of day was in the room. And then it was not a dream but ~~unusually~~ reality.

"Please! You must hurry into the attic."

He was alert suddenly. He swung out of bed and gathered his clothes in one quick sweeping movement. A tall thin Indian woman entered ~~xxxxxxx~~ and ~~got~~ about making the bed, apparently oblivious of his presence. ~~Dee~~ went to the door and looked out.

"Allright," she said.

He passed her, crossed the passage and entered the false cupboard.

"I'll come as soon as I can," she whispered.

Then the cupboard door shut and he groped his way up the dark and narrow stairs. At the top of the stairs he felt for the door. He closed his eyes and tried to bring back to mind the ~~xxxx~~ picture he had of the attic room from his brief view of it the night before. The light-switch, he knew, should be on the wall to the left, just inside the door and about three inches higher than his head. And the small fanlight should be somewhere over there to the right. It must still be covered otherwise some daylight would ~~enter~~ enter. His hand felt for and found the light switch; then, with his fingers on the switch, he decided against making a light. Instead, using the angle of the wall as a guide, and keeping his eyes closed, his right hand outstretched, he moved forward delicately to where the bed should be. He touched it, felt it, and put his clothes on it. Then, feeling his

way round the bed, he kept up his exploration until he located the little window set in the sloping ceiling. His fingers explored the blackout curtaining carefully before finally opening it. It was important not to impair the effectiveness of the curtaining. At last he moved the curtain aside. A bright stream of light filtered into the room.

He examined the window. It had one single square pane of glass, one inch thick and with fine mesh wire embedded in it. This was set in a sliding steel frame. A single steel bolt kept the window shut. Nkosi tried the bolt. It slid back noiselessly. He tried the window: it, too, opened easily, noiselessly, rolling back on well-oiled bearings. In an emergency this was the way out of this hiding place. He got the wooden chair on which his clothes had rested the previous night. By standing on it he could poke his head out. The upward slope of the roof was towards the front of the house; the downward slope towards the rear, to the outhouses and, beyond them, to the maze of dark alleys and tin shanties of this Indian residential area. At one point where the back portion of the roof would have been exposed to anyone who looked up from the street, a zinc fence had been put up. Everything had been thought of and provided for, ^{had been} nothing/left to chance.

The thought depressed him. But in spite of that he took careful note of the easiest and quickest way down. Then he shut and bolted the window.

You left the door open, he told himself. Sort of carelessness you shouldn't allow....He walked quickly across the thick carpet and shut and locked it.....You wouldn't have done this but for the

feeling of security she has given you: watch your step, mister, watch your step.

He changed quickly ^{from} ~~out~~ of his pyjamas into the suit Sammy Maidoo had brought for him. Then he waited: alert, attentive, yet oddly relaxed, suppressing all thought in case it puts him off guard for a second.

Time passed: long, unending seeming, meaningless except as yet another means of torturing man. But he refused to allow even the reality of that thought: and so there was nothing except time passing, and a man waiting to be released from waiting.

At last he heard the faintest of sounds. Someone was coming up the stairs. He moved quickly and quietly. First, he unbolted the window, then he put the chair directly under the open window, then he slipped on his shoes. He went to the door and looked back, measuring the distance and the leap he would have to make to get out in one smooth movement. Then he waited, listening for the faint sound beyond the door.

There were two gentle taps and Dee's voice came softly to him.

"It's all right. They've gone."

He ~~skin~~ unlocked the door. She came in quickly and he saw that she was angry and that she had difficulty containing her anger. She looked from him to the open window and concern replaced her anger.

"Where would you have gone?" she asked.

"I hadn't thought that far," he said. "What was it?"

She went and sat on the bed. He closed the window and shot the bolts home then he went and sat beside her.

"Gentlemen from security," she said bitterly. "Checking on the doctor, you know. Wanted to know when he had got back, why he went to

Johannesburg, the names of the people he saw, where he slept..... And of course the doctor answered the nice white basies. The law says we must always answer all the questions, no matter how personal, asked by its representatives. If we don't they might think we are up to mischief and on the basis of their thoughts they might lock us up."

Nkosi said: "Stop it!"

She shook her head and touched his hand.

"I'm sorry. I suppose this is really the ugliest part of it; it turns us ugly too."

"Only if we allow it," he said. "Anyway, what happened?"

"On the face of it it was just one of their routine visits to check on Dawood, but we are not sure. They seemed almost anxious to be reassuring. They didn't mention Westhuizen; they didn't mention their search for the man who was with him; and they didn't mention the fact that a large army of people, many of them confined to house arrest, who were desperately without two days ago are now suddenly in possession of food and a little money."

"Surely they wouldn't discuss all this with your brother, in case they betray something he doesn't know."

"I'm afraid that's how they do it. There are always two of them. One asks the questions while the other goes into a corner and watches your reactions. It is most effective. The trick is to let you know how much they know in the hope that your reaction will betray guilty knowledge. As I say, it's been most effective. But this time they did the opposite, and they never do anything without very good reason."

"Aren't you making them sound just a little larger than life?"

"I've had rather more dealings with them/^{than} you have had. Anyway, Dawood is as worried about this visit as I am and he doesn't go in for pointless worrying. Come, let's go down, Dawood will soon be going on his rounds and he wants to see you before he goes."

She led the way down the hidden stairs and out of the false cupboard. Voices drifted up to them from the doctor's surgery on the ground floor. Dee led the way into her bedroom where a table had been laid for three near the window.

Khosi looked out of the window and remembered, as part of a ~~junk~~ jumbled pattern of thought and disturbance, what had happened in this room between him and Dee earlier. As though aware of this, she moved to his side. They embraced briefly: a gesture of tenderness and intimacy, almost bereft of all passion.

"In these times and in this place there should not be room for this sort of feeling," she said quietly.

He laughed softly and she liked the sound of it.

"One day," he said, "one day we'll produce a race of men who will only feel and respond in accordance with the dictates of time and place.....Thank God I won't be around when that day comes." He paused then went on with a new undercurrent of seriousness. "I really believe that if the day ever comes when man is wholly rational in his responses then we will see the day when the world becomes a really ugly and scientific and brutal thing. Man's saving grace is and has always been his impulse, which is utterly irrational, towards phantasy and fairy-tales. God and love and beauty and truth are not scientifically provable.....Do I sound awfully reactionary?"

"Yes, but I like it. Trouble is it makes things so much more difficult.....Ah, here's Dawood."

by daylight
At first sight/Nkosi found Dawood Nunkhoo smaller and less striking than he had been when they had first met by the canefield that night that now seemed a lifetime away. Then the doctor had seemed a towering, handsome, slightly ironical godlike figure who could never be ruffled. Now, by daylight, the tall man looked very mortal and very disturbed. And even his voice, when he spoke, lacked the tranquillising power it had had that first night. Only the handgrip was still as firm as Nkosi remembered it.

"It is good to see you," the doctor said: "And looking so well too. The people in Johannesburg asked me to tell you what a great job you've done."

"It seems I've brought trouble too."

"Couldn't be helped. Westhuizen was the one weak link. We all knew that was the most likely point of trouble in the chain."

"The weak link has now been eliminated...."

Nunkhoo caught the undercurrent of bitterness. He looked closely at Nkosi's face and thought: Lucky you to be free enough to express your revulsion.

"Surely they explained....."

"Very clearly," Nkosi murmured. "And that, of course, justifies"

"You've had this out with Sammy, haven't you?"

"Yes.....Sorry. I'm being difficult and I don't mean to be. I'm sure its not easy for you...."

"Please don't forget Sammy, friend. It isn't easy for him either. In fact its worse. He's the activist - and an activist with a conscience walks a hard road.....It has ceased to be a question of anything justifying anything else."

Cissie brought in the tea tray and Dee set about dispensing

tea. Nunkhoo stood staring out of the little window, stuffing his pipe.

Dee Nunkhoo moved across the room with a cup of tea for her brother; and because he was her brother he noticed a subtle difference in her movements. She walked as though with nothing to hide, as though being crippled was as normal as not being crippled. He looked quickly at Nkosi and thought: That one gives nothing away.

Dee said:

"Brother, this man believes in phantasies and fairy-tales, in God and love and beauty and truth....."

Nunkhoo looked down at his sister and nodded.

"I rather suspected as much from the moment I met him. The trouble is believing in these things rather complicates matters in our situation."

"Just what I told him," she said, turning away to pour Nkosi's tea.

Nunkhoo thought: And you, little sister, want to believe with him. Aloud, he said: "And what did he say, little sister?"

"Something about the world being a really ugly and brutal and evil place the day we stop believing in these things."

"And she," Nkosi cut in, "she said that it is already all that and more right now, here in this place."

And now, suddenly, Dee sensed, between her brother and this man, that same undercurrent of understanding that had grown up between herself and this man.

"And what did you tell her?" Nunkhoo asked softly.

Nkosi took the tea from her and an odd smile flickered across

his face.

"I didn't say anything," Nkosi said equally softly. "Before I knew about Westhuizen it might have been easy to answer her. After I heard about Westhuizen I was not so sure I knew the answer."

Nunkhoo turned from the window.

"But that is where you were wrong, my friend. Because there are no stars in the sky is no reason for one to assume that darkness is eternal."

"But what kind of day will follow the darkness? Surely it is not simply the fact of daylight that is important."

"Yes. But first there must be the clear knowledge that there will be daylight."

"It depends on what we mean by daylight in this case. If it means merely to be alive...."

"But that is precisely what it does not mean," Nunkhoo cut in. "If it meant just that then there would be no need to fight. It is precisely because it means much more than ^{just} being alive that we are fighting....."

"You would say this in spite of Westhuizen?"

"In spite of a thousand Westhuizens - provided we hold on those beliefs you expressed to Dee...."

Startled, Dee said: "Phantasies and fairy-tales and God and all that?"

"All that."

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" she asked.

"Because it does make things that much more difficult."

"Then why tell me now?"

"I didn't. You dug it out of him." Nunkhoo turned to Nkosi.

"The means-and-ends argument is pretty wonderful as long as it remains an argument: it assumes that ~~thing~~ issues are either right or wrong, that the choice is always a straightforward one between good and evil. But the moment you enter the field of action this simplification of values falls away: an action is at once both right and wrong, both good and evil. The real problem here, the real gamble, the real hope is that our judgement has been sufficiently sound, our faith in the phantassies sufficiently strong for our actions to tip the scales in favour of good. That is the limit of our guarantee: a mere hope that out of our action will come good rather than evil. Because this has not been enough for many people they have chosen inaction. One does not risk being wrong ^{or doing evil} if one does nothing."

"I quarrel with none of this," Nkosi. "You know that and you know the nature of my quarrel - at least I think you do."

"That often in the process of fighting evil you adopt --"

- "Or are forced to adopt." -

"Or are forced to adopt methods that are as evil as the evil you fight. My answer is that if the ultimate objective is a good one, that is as much as we can ask of any cause. Beyond that, each man makes his own private choice. And here, in South Africa today, the choice has been made painfully simple."

"You've made you choice," Nkosi said. "And it is because I, too, have made mine that I am here. But that does not resolve everything."

"There is no such resolution," Nunkhoo said a little impatiently.

"Which brings us back to fantasies and all that," Dee said.

"And the task in hand," Nunkhoo said. "In the light of what has happened all our plans have to be changed. You cannot go

the way we had originally planned."

"Naideo told me all that," Nkosi said.

"The big question," Nunkhoo said, "is: what now? Before the visit of the gentlemen from security I thought we had a little time - perhaps as much as a week - in which to lay our plans. I'm not so sure now. I think they are going to seal us off and begin a systematic search. Now, do you want to be outside or inside this sealed-off area? I think there's an even chance of our keeping you here in safety through their search. But there is an equally even chance that some accident, some slip, some verbal mistake, some error of judgement, somebody breaking down under pressure, might betray you and your presence here...."

"I want to be outside," Nkosi said sharply.

Both Dee and her brother seemed startled by the quickness of Nkosi's response.

"But why?" Dee said with a hint of bewilderment.

Nunkhoo looked speculatively from his sister to Nkosi.

"The chances of your being caught or not being caught are fifty-fifty while you are here with us. Out there you have perhaps a twenty-percent chance of getting away and an eighty-percent chance of getting caught. So, if you want my advice, my friend, I would suggest that you stay with us."

"Do I have any real choice?" Nkosi asked.

"Within reason, yes."

"I mean about staying inside or going outside your area..."

"That; yes; but again within reason. We cannot allow you to walk out of here and get caught: it would jeopardise us and the movement."

"I accept that...Could you get me out of here safely?"

"It depends. Where do you want to get to?"

Nkosi hesitated perceptibly then said:

"To an African village. I should say it's between sixty and a hundred miles from here, in the cattle country on the way to Swaziland."

"You sound as though you know it well," Nunkhoo said.

"I should. I spent half my childhood there; the other half I spent here, near the coast where I landed. My favourite uncle is chief of the village up there."

"I know," Nunkhoo said.

"You know?"

"Yes; I know; we know. Tell me, have you been in touch with your favourite uncle while you were away?"

"No. But what is this, anyway?"

Dee said: "For heaven's sake tell him, Dawood!"

"Your ~~man~~ favourite uncle," Nunkhook said flatly, dispassionate. "is an enemy of our move - not the Indian movement, the whole African nationalist movement. He is a government appointee as village head, but he is more than that: he is an active agent working for the government. If you go to him then within an hour of your arrival you will be in the hands of the police. Incidentally, he is very high on the underground's list of those who will have to be dealt with when the time is right."

was

Nkosi ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ surprised at his ready acceptance of what Nunkhoo told him of this man who had been closer to him in his ~~young~~ boyhood and young manhood than any other person; this man

had, because of his gifts of imagination and sensitivity and perception, become more than his father had ever been to him; and the death of his father and the return of this uncle from the great big city had been the opening of a new world for him. By his own ability to see and to dream and to feel, this man had taught him to see and to dream and to feel. And now they said this man was a traitor and he accepted what they said without hesitation. Why? And accepting what they said, he knew that if that uncle appeared in front of him and in their presence this minute he would still wrap his arms about that uncle and embrace him with love and with respect. But he was glad he would not have to do it because there would be a new and terrible dimension of pain to it. And for him, till this moment, his favourite uncles had been the only adult with the purity and the innocence to share totally in the carefree happiness of a boy growing up in communion with the earth and the sea and the sky and the limitless promises they offered the young imagination and the young heart..."

Dee Nunkhoo put down her cup and came and stood close to him, careful not to touch him. Dawood Nunkhoo turned his back on them and stared out of the window.

"So the village is out," Nkosi said, then, casually, "He was very special to me, my favourite uncle."

Without turning, Nunkhoo said: "So we were told; but it didn't mean anything. We didn't know you and so there was no living person, no humanity, against which to measure his humanity."

"And now you - and the movement - know!" He could not quite control the sudden bitterness in him.

Nunkhoo said: "I cannot speak for the movement, and I don't

presume to claim to know you; but I do know Dee, and I think she knows you," he hesitated then added, more lightly, "in that funny and dangerous way in which a woman can get to know a man."

The woman touched him then, tentatively, enquiringly, as if asking if it is allright to show emotion in the presence of a third person. It was slight, just her fingers brushing against the back of his hand. And because he did not respond immediately ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ she pulled away quickly, sharply, making a small show of it. He registered all this distantly, as something happening to someone else. And then, equally distantly, he dismissed it as part of the world of petty possessive tyrannies inherent in all human relationships.

He thought: And thus and thus and thus it is that a cherished image carried for half a life time is wiped out in a few minutes with a few sentences. And all you say is he was very special to me because you know, painfully, the sadness of mourning dead images; and images and dreams are the ephemeral factors which have invested man with the precarious nobility that sets him apart from the other animals, the factors which have made him invest his brief, passing, moment here on earth with a sense and feel of immortality that is ridiculous in face of the facts, but glorious for all that. And the surest and the most total and the most complete death is not the physical but the ephemeral, not the death of the body but the death of the dream and the image that gave special distinction to the living body. And so and so and so it is.....And now he wondered fleetingly whether he would still be prepared, as he was a few moments earlier, to wrap his arms about that uncle and embrace him. He shivered suddenly

and remembered the old people's thing about a ghost passing over your grave when you shiver like that.

Dawood Nunkhoo turned from the window and noted the time by Dee's bedside clock.

"We must decide. I must be on my rounds."

Nkosi said, "I'll take my chances but I'm not prepared to risk being caught here."

"But your best chance of not getting caught is here."

"I know: but there is a risk."

"There always is; but it is less here."

"I know that too; but I'm still not prepared to take it here."

Nunkhoo looked searchingly at his sister's face; then he said, the faintest hint of bitterness in his voice:

"You and Sammy did your pleading well, my dear. Too well perhaps..."

"Almost like beggars," she said softly, lowering her head.

And both men felt her shrink and grow small in spirit.

Nunkhoo said: "There are things we do out of conviction. Survival is not the only driving force, either collectively or individually."

Nkosi said: "Do you need to tell me that?"

Nunkhoo thought for a while, then shook his head. "Perhaps not you; but certainly myself - and all of us. The pressures are great at times."

Nkosi thought: Yes, I had forgotten how great the pressures are: and I had not thought about the minorities. Few of us have. Aloud, he said: "It is because we do things out of conviction that I choose not to involve you and your people in any avoidable

risk. The choice is mine and however restricted and limited the area of choice, as long as I have choice I am a man. And in relation to you and your people I choose to be a shareholder in the guilt of my people, and to try and atone."

"Allright. But where will you go?"

"Where does not matter. What does matter is that you arrange to formally transfer me out of Indian care and into African care as soon as possible and in such a way that no blame attaches to the Indians if anything goes wrong. So I must not be here when this place is searched."

"Our contacts with the Africans in Natal are difficult. The Natal group is under the influence of the Pan-Africanist non-cooperators. We dare not ask them for help; we dare not let them know you here."

"Bad as that?"

"Yes.....But one of our white friends can get a safe phone call through to Johannesburg and if the instructions come through from the underground itself they will be bound to follow those instructions."

There was a knock on Dee door then Dicky Niacker poked his head round the door.

"Its like you fear, Doc. Word come they throwing the net around us."

"Allright, Dicky. Get word to Sammy, and tell him I'm on my rounds and he's to meet me at the arranged place."

"Okay, Doc." Dicky withdrew.

"How long to get those instructions from the underground?"

"At least/^{twelve}~~twenty-four~~ hours. It may be possibel before but

I doubt. Quite a series of calls have to be made to different people in different places before the decision can be transmitted back here in a form that nobody will defy."

"And they are already setting the search in motion here?"

"Yes. It looks as though you'll have to stay."

Nkosi shook his head.

"No friend, I'm not prepared to take that chance and you can't make me."

Nunkhoo shrugged helplessly.

"You talk to him, Dee.....They're looking for you everywhere, man! Don't you undersand. Tell him, Dee!"

"Its no good, Dawood. But listen, I can take him to the farm." She explained to Nkosi. "We have a small, isolated farm in the hills. Its completely cut off from everything. The nearest human habitation is an African village in a valley five miles away. Nobody will think of looking there."

The sense of helplessness fell away from Nunkhoo. He said: "I think ^{Dee's} ~~you~~ got something ~~there~~. You can lie low there till word comes through. Nobody will dream of looking there. The only problem is to get you there."

"I'll take him," Dee said quickly.

"No you won't," Nunkhoo said. "If you disappear from sight for an hour they'll know something is up. And all they need is something as tangible as that to really get going." He thought for a while. "I think Dicky had better go with him. As far as they are concerned Dicky just another low class Coolie but we'll have a fake Dicky here in his place just in case. I think that's it. Make him look as Indian as you can, Dee. Blacken him up....

Sorry, friend, you must now be transformed into a low class Coolie. But we'll take good care of you.....And thanks. I must go and set things in motion." He took Nkosi's hand in a firm warm grip. Then he patted his sister's shoulder and walked briskly out of the room.

After a while, Dee said: "I'm sorry I can't come with you. But he's right. I hate to let you go alone but they'll get you through. They are very good."

He said: "Will you please stop talking, woman."

She said: "Will there ever be a time when people are not afraid and on guard and on the run?"

"I am sure there will."

"And when you're not an African and I am not an Indian?"

"No. I don't think there'll ever be a time like that. I think there will always be - or, at least, for as far into the future as matters to us - Indians and Europeans and Africans. Each will tend to want to stick in his own groups. And there's nothing wrong with that. What I hope is that each group will accept and respect the equal humanity of the other."

"And what of people like you and me? What of our kind of feeling?"

"You and I represent minorities within our groups and you measure the good/society// by it attitude to the minorities who do not conform who intimate and/intermarry and have/relations outside the group."

"And you think the day will really come when Africans will accept Indians as South Africans without any reservation?"

"How can I answer you? I can only speak for myself."

"Yes," she said quietly.

"For the sake of the future, for the sake of the Africans, I hope and pray that they do."

Then they were disturbed by Dicky Mäcker's knock.

"If not.....?" She left it hanging as a bleak and terrible possibility: and she looked at him anxiously, mutely pleading for reassurance.

"If not ," he said slowly.....

Then they were disturbed by Dicky Naicker's knock. Naicker pushed his head round the door.

"Sorry, Miss Dee. Doc tell me I must take him," his eyes touched ~~Nkosi's~~ Nkosi's face then slid quickly back to Dee "to the ~~farm~~ farm. Well the bulls spreading around and the only way we can get out is to join those holy fools going to muck about in the river."

"Dicky!" Dee snapped. "You're not to call religious people fools!"

Dicky made a brief show of contrition. "Sorry, Miss Dee; but they not even Christians; they don't even go church. Only way out is to join them and they beginning to join up...."

"How long do we have to get ready?" Dee asked.

Five, ten minutes," Dicky said.

"Allright; you find the right clothes for Mr. Nkosi and tell Cissie to come up here with the make-up stuff."

Dicky Naicker withdrew and almost immediately, Cissie, the cook-housekeeper , entered with a small tray with little piles of different coloured paints on it. Dee made Nkosi sit ^{at} her dressing table and without a sound the two women went to work on his face. Nkosi watched his reflection in the mirror and saw his face darken from its normal deep coppery brown with a hint of a yellow base into an almost matt black. When they had darkened all his face and neck and ears, Dee washed her hands

then she looked at Cissie. Cissie nodded. Dee/~~xxxx~~^{rubbed} one of her wet hands against Nkosi's cheek. No paint came off.

"It might rain or you might find yourself having to go into the river," she explained to Nkosi.

"Then how do I get it off?" he asked.

"Your skin throws it off gradually, in the same way that the body throws off some impurities through the pores. Takes ^{five} ~~about/xxxx~~ ^{cleansing} days: but we have a special/paste if there is any need for a quicker removal. Now Cissie will change your features: she's the expert and while she deals with your face I'll darken your hands and arms."

While she worked on his face, changing the shape of his nose by a line of ~~paint~~^{stain} here and there; while she seemed to reduce the size of his forehead and to lengthen his ~~face~~ and to change the shape of his eyes and to reduce the fullness of his lips, he studied the face of the woman called Cissie. It was hard to think that both she and Dee were Indians. This ~~xxx~~ one was very dark, very thin and bony and with the impassive face of the proud Rolong women. She had the same dead snake's eyes, the same broad bony shoulders, the same thin long sexless neck, flat chest and angular sharpness all over. Generally though even the skinniest of the Rolong women had some sign of breasts, even if these hang down, sacklike, to the waist. This one was absolutely flat up and down. And the kerchief about her head, tied African style, completely hid her hair so that only the very darkness of her skin set her off as being not a woman of the Barolong. No member of the Barolong, male or female was ever as dark as this woman, or Dicky Naicker or Sammy Naidoo or as they were

now making him. The hands that worked on his face were long-fingered dextrous and, whenever they touched his skin, as impersonal as her eyes. Dee's touch as she stained his hands and arms was living contact between one human and another; life throbbed through her fingers and reached him. This sense of life/^{was}absent from the touch of the woman Cissie. He wondered: Is it I who do not live for her, or is it that she does not think ~~she exists~~ exists as more than a thing for me? Had Dee not been there he would have tried to find out. With Dee present it would be painful and impossible. But ^{this one,} for/~~her~~, and those like her, some sort of pattern of integration should, theoretically, be more possible than for people like Dee. Or should it? And he found himself in the grip of a pattern of counter- thought. Prejudice exists more strongly at the lower levels of sophistication; the simpler the life pattern the more conformist and therefore the more exclusive the habits of the group and the individual within the group. And yet the great manipulators of prejudice - as indeed the great fighters against ^{nearly} prejudice - have/~~always~~ come from the more sophisticated, the more privileged, the more powerful within any group or any society.

"A penny for your thoughts," Dee murmured.

"The origins of prejudice," he said.

"From watching Cissie?"

"Odd, isn't it?" But she provokes thought."

"The trouble," Dee said thoughtfully, "is to find the time and the circumstance to make contact. We don't know each other and so we don't know ourselves or what we think."

Cissie stood off a little, surveyed her work and then looked questioningly at Dee.

Dee thought of the origins of prejudice and shrugged with a hint of weariness.

"Fine Cissie; nobody will recognise him."

"But you not satisfied Miss Dee..." Cissie had misread the shrug.

"I was thinking of something else," Dee explained.

"The prejudice thing?" Cissie was delicately tentative.

"Yes, Cissie, the prejudice thing."

"We all born with it," Cissie said flatly. "It never change."

And without waiting for reply or reaction Cissie gathered up her material and left the room.

A wave of utter depression swept over Dee Nunkhoo. Nkosi felt the weight of it. But he fought it off, unwilling to become involved in her depression. Instead, he felt ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ tension building up in his nerves and heart and mind for what lay ahead. And because they ~~xxxxxxxx~~ were both aware of this new absence of emotional accord, there was an odd constraint and awkwardness between them. Each saw the other in a new light suddenly; and each seemed impersonal, detached, alone, aloof to the other. And so there was nothing to say. Dee turned from him and ^{went} ~~xxxxxx~~ to the little window. He looked at his new reflection in the mirror and mentally covered his hair with an Indian headcloth. Made up thus, his image was that of a stranger that even his mother might have been fooled by had she been around. But not Dee, some remote part of his brain whispered, Not Dee. And now he longed for that sense of intimacy between them; but her back was turned to him and it was she who was the stranger who could not feel his need.

The brief spell of silence seemed an eternity till Dicky Naicker came with the clothes that would complete Nkosi's disguise. Naicker left the clothes, ~~xxx~~ said they did not have much time,

then left to make his own preparations. Nkosi took the clothes to his room, changed as best he could, then returned to Dee's room. She turned from the window and helped him put the finishing touches to the turban-like headdress.

Dicky Naicker came back and said: "Time to go - sir."

Then Dee seemed to come alive. She took both Nkosi's hands and held them as though she would not let go. She looked intently into the transformed face, biting her lower lip. Dicky Naicker stood fascinated, wanting to look away but unwilling to miss any part of the silent by-play. Silently, to himself, he said: Jeez, just like in the fillums. And then he remembered big Sammy Naidoo. There had never been anything to show it but he knew that what Sammy wanted most out of life for himself was for Miss Dee to look at him as she was now looking at this little fellow....

"We must go," Dicky Naicker said.

Dee released Nkosi's hands abruptly.

"Please take care of him, Dicky....."

"I will, Miss Dee....."

"Take good care of him....."

"I will....."

"He means much to me....."

"Miss Dee....."

"Everything, Dicky; everything."

"Yes, Miss Dee."

Abruptly, she turned her back on them, and they went silently out of the room and down the stairs.

Dicky Naicker led the way to the back of the house. They passed people waiting in the passage downstairs for the doctor to

return: there was a coloured woman with a child who looked part Indian, the rest were all Indians, and they all looked small and poor and shrivelled up. In the kitchen the woman, Cissie, and a pretty young girl with a strapping figure and long oily hair, looked up briefly from their work then carried on as though no one was there. The smell of curry powder and butter gee and herbs and spices mingled to give the kitchen air a quality that was at once special, subtle and exotic.

But outside in the yard the world assumed the dull drabness, the air of rundown squalor, that is ~~common~~ the common habitat of the poor or the dispossessed or the discriminated against in all the world's tropical and sub-tropical countries. In cold countries the environments of the poor are also dull and drab, but there the light of the sun is not so bright, not so sharp, not so clear, not so harsh; and so there is a softening grayness to even the face of poverty. In the tropics and sub-tropics every fine little detail of dirt and filth and ugliness is sharpened and refined and clarified by the warm brilliance of the sun. And even the earth, which one rarely sees bared in cold countries, is given a new dimension of ugliness by its nakedness. And so one of the most squalid sights in all the world is ^{the} a bare, naked, Backyard of a tropical home where the sun has burned all the life out of the exposed earth, turning it a dead dirty brown, and where armies of flies make sport and do battle over every edible little bit of dirt on the naked earth. All the backyards and passages through which Dicky Naicker led Nkosi added up to one enormous and squalid backyard of the nation: one of many, scattered up and down the slum backwaters of the country and strikingly alike,

whether the inhabitants were Indians, Coloureds or Blacks: not even the differing food smells and personal habits of the different groups could conceal the basic similarities of these slums.

And the people they met and passed had the same dull drabness, the same air of rundown squalor, as the place. Like it, they seemed parched and hard and dried out. And the strapping well-fed-looking ones like Dicky Naicker, stood out in sharp relief against the majority.

At last the the houses, and the people, began to thin out and the land began to slop. And far down the sloping land, moving towards a river, they could see a religious procession wending its way. Faintly, the sound of flute and drum drifted up to them. On the other side of the river, and sloping upwards and away from it, the land rose towards the white township. And because the wind was blowing in that direction the sounds made by the religious procession would be carried more sharply and loudly to the white people of the town, and there would be new protests about the outlandish habits, and about the smells and about the noise made by the Indians. The local paper might even renew its editorial campaign to have the 'coolie village' removed farther from the 'European town'.

Dicky Naicker said: "Better we hurry now, sir." Calling the little black men 'sir' came easily now. "We pass a few bulls already and more on the road. We must catch that group there," he pointed to a cluster of people walking just ahead. Then he pointed to a smaller group about a mile further on. This other group stood by a car beside the dirty road. "Those searching bulls and they'll stop us if we alone. They looking for you so we get lost in the group." Then Naicker gave him a quick smile meant to reassure.

They moved ahead more briskly. The cluster of people ahead

slowed down, then came to a halt, then moved again.

"Goddammit to hell!" Dicky Naicker said forcefully.

"What's the matter?"

"Them bloody buggers, sir! Trying to make time for us! Giving us away to the bulls. Wait till I tell Sammy. Mr. Naidoo. He give them hell.....If the bulls don't get us through their foolishness! Dammit to hell!"

"Then we'd better hurry in case they do it again."

Nkosi started lengthening his stride even more but Dicky Naicker laid a hand on his arm.

"Easy sir! See one of those bulls with spyglasses watching. Take our time."

Nkosi forced himself to keep to the even pace set by Dicky Naicker. Although the people ahead were going much slower, it did to look as though they could catch up with them without obviously hurrying. Nkosi felt the mounting agitation of the young man beside him. Then someone in the group ahead looked back and went through a pantomime of recognition and waving and calling out to the others and pointing back at them.

"Wave Sir," Dicky Naicker said.

They both waved and the group came to a halt and waited for them. Two men and a woman, all dressed in white, flung their arms about Nkosi and drowned him in a rush of meaningless words. Then, clearly through the babel, he heard: "Smile and make like you're talking." And then he found himself swept into the very centre of the little group.

He was not aware of the exact moment when they passed the group of watching plainclothes Indian detectives by the car. But he was aware/~~when~~ the exact when danger was past because the warm bodies that had pressed against him and held him suddenly withdrew

Briefly the common danger, the common enemy and the common objective of outwitting him, had brought them together in a special and intimate relationship. The end of the danger meant, also, the end of the intimacy. The woman to his left, who had pressed so closely against him, now gave off the feel of wanting to withdraw into non-existence. And the men too, though more subtly, moved away from him till he walked in an isolated little circle, hemmed in by the others and cut off from them. He knew that this withdrawal was instinctive, that the other, the coming towards him and the protecting of him, was the consciously chosen action of reason; he knew that the rational need for action and the action based on need and reason were the real manifestations of hope for the future. But still their instinctive withdrawal sent a wave of utter depression through him and he wished he were far, far away from this land.

Then Dicky Naicker was beside him and the overpowering sense of encircled isolation snapped. They were catching up with the stragglers in the procession and he was aware now of the noise made by a hundred voices speaking at once and the mixed conflicting-sounding Indian music, shrill, discordant and utterly lacking in any pattern of melody to his ears. Dicky Naicker said something but there was too much din for him to make out what it was. Nkosi gestured with his hands to show he could not hear. The young fellow seemed to understand. He grinned and again Nkosi had the fleeting impression of a very young and very attractive person. The woman to his left still moved on the far fringe of the little group, but the men had ceased to withdraw and he was no longer isolated, either physically or mentally. He had a notion that young Dicky

Naicker had had something to do with the changed atmosphere.

They caught up with the procession and worked their way into the thick of it. And ^{now} they were a part of the moving mass of dark-skinned and white robed humanity, moving as such masses have moved for centuries down to rivers to affirm and reaffirm man's timeless and changeless need to worship some ennobling force.

This, Nkosi thought, is uniquely Indian. Only they do this is in this way. The new set of African/~~xxxxxxxx~~^{religious sects}, part-racialistic, part revolutionary and often founded by 'bishops' who had failed to make the grade in the recognised churches and denominations, have borrowed some of the outward symbols: the white robes and the procession down to the river. But then many of them had destroyed the beauty of even this symbolism by the hint of sadism in ~~by~~ the manner of their total-immersionist form of baptism. To put your knee into the small of someones back and then to yank that person backwards into the water so that his or her feet shoot up into the air while he or she half drowns is strange homage to any ennobling force!

But here, in the heart of the procession, he sensed a strange gentleness. Violence, here, was impossible - either the violence of the total immersionists or the more commonplace violence of the lurking savage in most of us. And ~~xxxxxxxx~~ even the noise of voices and music did not seem to penetrate to the heart of the procession. The sounds that reached them came subdued and muted, as though gentleness had been enforced even on sound.

Beside him, Dicky Naicker said: "Everything fine for now. But we stay here all afternoon and then we go the other way. One thing, sir. Don't worry even if you don't see me for a time: always

people from the Movement around watching and guarding you. Nuttin' going happen to you. Okay?"

"Okay, Dicky."

The young Indian beamed that Nkosi should call his name.

"That's it, sir! Don't you worry. We'll have grub by the river: nuttin' to drink though. Not safe: not all these people in the movement and bulls may have one or two spies."

"Drink doesn't worry me," Nkosi said.

"We and the boys like a little wine when we come to the river. Not when we on a job like now, you understand."

"I understand," Nkosi said. "Tell me, what's this procession about?"

"Some holy business," Dicky said off-handedly.

"Yes; but what?"

"Their leader, the skinny little old man in front them carrying he going give a hell of a long speech, sir." Suddenly Dicky pointed down river from where another procession, almost the size of this one approached. "That's it sir. Soon as the two processions meet we go slip over to that one. Then we going stick with them all day and go with them when they break up and leave."

The hint of a smile flitted over Nkosi's face. Dicky Naicker's reaction was quick as a flash.

"See that big man over there on the left, the one near the girls - don't let them see you looking, sir. See him?"

"Yes."

"That's Corporal Singh, sir, Political Division, Natal C.I.D. Easy, sir! Don't show nervousness; didn't ^{want} to tell you in case you get nervous' now I told you because you getting ~~careless~~ ^{cocky}."

"I see," Nkosi said thoughtfully. "Sorry to be so difficult."

"Aw, you not difficult, sir. Once I had to guide a white professor from Joh'burg to the border. Hell of a brain he had, sir. You could see just by looking at him. But Jeez! Was he ~~him~~ difficult! Scared of nuttin' and don't know how to be quiet! He give me a rough time that one. And then the damn fool write a bad book to say we Indian never going get on with the black people

"Did you read the book?"

"No. But Sammy - Mr. Naidoo - tell me....No, sir, you not difficult. And Corporal Singh, Political Division, Natal C.I.D. is also a member of our Movement. But there are other bulls around who are not and he watching them for us. So take it easy but remember. Okay, sir?"

"Okay Dicky. I really understand now."

"Fine."

Dicky drifted away. Corporal Singh, Political Division, Natal C.I.D., looked fleetingly at Nkosi then fell back out of Nkosi's line of sight. One of the young women with whom he had been walking seemed, by a most natural process, to find herself walking beside Nkosi. She turned to him, clasped her two hands in front of her and bowed to him in the traditional Indian salutation. Then she took a garland of white flowers from her neck and reached out and up and slipped it over his head.

"Tell Dicky the danger will be at the drift," she said.

Then she casually drifted away from him. And suddenly the peace and tranquility that he had senses and that still hung over the heart of the procession seemed a very doubtful factor.

And yet....And yet.... He looked at the tranquil, almost transfigure face of a woman a few yards away.....And yet.

They reached the farm in the very early hours of the following morning. After the day by the river and the long and tiring march with the second group of people away from the river when the sun went down, they were tired and silent. But they could have been much more tired and they would have ~~been~~ arrived very much later ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxx~~ had they not made the last half of the journey by a delapidate ~~hacking~~ old Land Rover that looked only fit for the scrap-heap but that travelled remarkably smoothly and quietly.

The Land Rover was waiting for them at the last Indian village they left. And until they were completely away from any possible interception it was driven by a young man from that village. The young man wastall and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ willowy in his thinness, with a sickly ashen sheen over his skin. He coughed nearly all the time: a disconcertingly ~~hacking~~ cough that sent him into uncontrollable convulsions. For partner this young man had a big, burly young fellow, almost as big and tall as Sammy Naidoo; but whereas Sammy Naidoo was all hard and tight-muscled, this fellow, though younger, was blubbery fat. The fat one sat beside the thin driver as though ready and waiting to take over when the thin one finally expired from coughing. Indeed, each time the thin one was caught up in a terrible paroxysm Nkosi expected him not to come out of it: and each time he came out of it, choking, spluttering, battling for breath. Throughout the journey they exchanged no words.

When they reached the beginnings of the climb into the rolling hills the thin one pulled up and he and his fat partner jumped off the Land Rover. Each made a quarter-gesture of farewell, then they walked back down the moonlight track from whence they had come. The speedometer

showed they had travelled twenty-eight miles since leaving their village.

Dicky Naicker climbed over to the front and Nkosi joined him there. They sat there looking back until the two men receded into part of the moonlit haze of the night. Then Dicky Naicker switched on the motor and they began the steady climb up into the hills.

Nkosi thought: I'm going farther away from the borders of the Basutoland Protectorate; and the further I go from it the more complicated everything becomes. It began as a simple operation: land, deliver the money, slip across the border into Basutoland, then fly out back to London - and feel good because you have taken risks and made a real contribution to your country's struggle. Now you've done it and you are stuck and you may not get out and you are even doubting the value and meaning of your contribution.

Dicky Naicker spoke above the low hum of the motor: "This time of morning always sad. Makes you want to cry like a baby."

Nkosi ^{peered} ~~stared~~ at the young Indian beside him, startled, without quite knowing why, except that this was not the sort of thing he expected to hear from this young fellow: from Dee and from her brother and, perhaps, from Sammy Naidoo, but not from this young fellow.

After that they travelled in silence for nearly two hours. The land rose and fell and rose and fell again, but always climbing gently but steadily, until, at a little over two thousand feet, they reached the farm in the early hours of the morning. They were now just short of forty-eight miles from the village where they had found the Land Rover.

The small farmhouse nestled on the slope of a hill in a wide

valley ringed by higher hills. To the south, from the crest of this hill, one could see an opening between the higher hills. This commanded a wide and sweeping view to the south, the south-east and the south-west. On clear days one could, from that crest, see all the way to the Zululand coast where Nkosi had landed. To the north, the direction in which the house faced, there were only the mountains, sweeping away, each range higher than the one before. Thus the house was effectively hidden from the south, the south-east and the south-west. It could only be seen from the north but the mountains were to the north. There was of course the air, but a plane would have to fly perilously low over those mountains, and it would have to be on a definitely and careful search if it is to spot the house.

Dicky Naicker ran the Land Rover beside the house. And now the crest of the hill leaned over the house protectively. They got off and Dicky Naicker pointed out a path behind the house leading to the crest of the hills.

"Way up to the look out. We can see everything from there. No one can see us."

Inside, the little house was remarkably clean and ready for habitation. While Dicky Naicker lit oil lamps, Nkosi read a list of 'don'ts' hanging on the back of the door. The reader was ^{told never} ~~instructed~~ to make any kind of fire that let off smoke, night or day; never to drive in or out of the place by daylight; and in the event of any real emergency never to forget to take a rifle/~~xxxxxxx~~ ^{and a rucksack} of iron rations ~~xxxxxxx~~ before withdrawing into the high mountains.

After a while he sensed Dicky Naicker beside him.

"Where are the guns?"

Dicky Naicker led him to a corner cupboard, opened it, and raised high the lamp he held. Half a dozen shining rifle were stacked side by side in a rack. And on a hook above each hung an ammunition belt and a small rucksack.

"Aren'tt you afraid someone might stumble on this place? By accident, I mean?"

"Somebody always guarding it, sir."

"But those people are far away. That is if you mean the people where we got the Rover?"

"No. We have others."

"Nearer?"

Naicker hesitated a moment then seemed to make up his mind.

"Very near, sir; so don't worry." Naicker shut the cupboard, put a huge padlock into position on it and held up the light for Nkosi to look again. "Helluva thing to bust this, sir."

The cupboard was part of the concrete structure of the house and the door was a massive affair that would not open easily without the key to the enormous padlock.

"But if anybody does stumble on the place, that notice....."

"It was put up for you, sir."

"I see," Nkosi murmured, remembering Dee's bitter remarks about the antlike existence this land had forced on the Indians.

And now, suddenly, in the shape of this carefully prepared and guarded and fortified retreat, he felt and understood and shared, briefly and vicariously, Dee's and Naidoo's lurking bitterness. Whatever they do, however much they sacrifice, however much they give, the African victory, when it comes, may be as bitter for the Indians as has been the period of white rule. All the things they are denied now, may still be denied then then; or even the little they now have

may be taken from them. For the African the promise of the end of white racialism is clear in its meaning. The Indian had no such assurance that he would, at the very least, be free of racial indignity. And so....

He said: "Tell me, Dicky, what happens to the Indians when we defeat the Nationalists?"

"I don't know....What you mean?"

He sensed Dicky Naicker's sudden reserve. Watch yourself.

"I mean does your movement - the Indian movement - think everything will be fine for you when we overthrow the whites?"

"Come, sir," Naicker said and led the way to the kitchen. There was nothing young about him now.

In the kitchen he waved Nkosi to a chair by the table and made tea on a kerosene put a plate of sandwiches in front of him. He/pressure stove and poured it.

"I'm tired. Where do I sleep?"

"Just tell me. I'll find my way."

Naicker took a pile of sandwiches and his tea and leaned against a cooking contraption on which three stoves of the Primus type stood. Nkosi was too tired to eat but he welcomed the hot tea.

He thought it had been a mistake to try and draw the young fellow out so soon but at the time the impulse had been overpowering.

"I'm tired. Where do I sleep?"

Naicker put down his unfinished food and got up.

"Just tell me. I'll find my way."

"The door beside the cupboard, sir. The inner room. Take the light in the front room." Naicker hesitated then added. "We know everything won't be fine. We know it might be worse...."

"Everybody in your movement knows this?"

"We're organised and disciplined, sir. We have to be. And there only a few of us. I don't mean Indians in the country. I mean only ^a few Indians who are in the movement and who understand. The majority of Indians are not in the Movement because they know everything won't be fine and it might be worse and so they say what is the sense to fight for something that may make it worse for us."

"And how do you answer that?"

"Sammy - Mr. Naidoo - and Miss Dee and the Doc can answer it better than I can."

"But you can answer it?"

"Hell, yes!"

"Allright, tell me."

"You don't know?"

"I think I know but I'm not sure. You see, Dicky, I think I've known about it without fully understanding just what it means to be an Indian."

"It is the same as anything else: only thing is the colour bar hits us from two sides and that rough sometimes. But if we show the Africans we are on their side things may be better later."

"But they may not...."

"Sure.....That's a chance....But if we don't take it then there is nothing."

"And we cannot live without hope," Nkosi murmured very softly.

"Also," Dicky Naicker said with a hint of self-consciousness, "All prejudice is bad....Sammy says so.....And a man must fight for the good things against the bad things if he is to be a man and his life mean something."

"Cissie says we're all born with prejudice and it will never change."

The corners of ~~Dicky's~~ Dicky Naicker's mouth turned downward, he hunched his shoulders, bent his back a little, cocked his head slightly to the right and raised both hands, palms up, in one of the most characteristic of all Indian gestures - a gesture part supplicatory, part defensive and wholly humble.

"I don't know: maybe Cissie right, maybe Sammy right; maybe prejudice will never change. I don't know. Maybe its just bad to be a char in this land."

"Char.....?" Nkosi queried.

"Char.....Coolie.....Indian. All the same."

"But we must go on," Nkosi said.

"Yes, sir. That what the doc and Sammy say.....You think it will finish one day?"

"One day," Nkosi said.

"I mean for us too.....You know what I mean, sir."

"I think so; for you too."

"You know, sir, its the first time I'm talking like this to....."

"To a black man?..."

"Yes.....It really free over there, in England?"

Yes, let us change the subject, Nkosi thought. "Yes. Its free. But there's prejudice."

"Just like Cissie say?"

So we're not running away from it after all, he thought: bully for your movement. He thought: this conversation at this place at this time is ridiculous.

He said: "Cissie's wrong, Dicky. There is nothing in the world

that never changes. Everything changes. Life is change."

"That's what Sammy tell us all the time."

"But change could be bad as well as good."

"I know what you mean, sir." The young Indian was very sober, very adult, very responsible. "Like I told you, we talk about it in the Movement: we understand."

Yes, Nkosi thought, you have to; even if you cannot express it clearly. He got up from the table, left the room and found his way to the bedroom. The early morning air was chilly and he was glad to c/crawl between the blankets on the camp cot. Briefly, like a flicker on the screen of his mind, he thought of Dee occupying the other cot in the room. Then, instantly, he was deeply asleep.

In the kitchen Dicky Naicker rinsed the cups and the teapot; he filled the pressure stoves with kerosene and wiped them clean; then he found a clean tablecloth and laid the table for one. All this done, he went into the front room, checked door and windows and ~~th~~ only then did he go to bed in the smaller bedroom. Unlike Nkosi, he did not fall asleep instantly. He lay on his back for a long time looking out of the little window of his bedroom. But all he saw was a piece of the hillside, and he could only guess at the colour of the sky by the way in which the shadows disappeared from the ~~side~~ visible piece of hillside. A series of images, rather than thoughts, raced and chased each other through his mind, crowding each other this way and that, like over-excited children at play. Miss Dee gripping the little black man's hands and begging; and the way Sammy Naidoo looked at her and her looking that same way at the little black man; and the little black man with a brain just like the clock he opened once and saw how beautifully and smoothly and easily it

worked..tick-tock-tick-tock-tick-tock-tick-tock-tick-to ck
 Smooth and easy. The picture of the clock and the picture of the
 little man's face merged....tick-tock-tick-tock....And Miss Dee and
 him doing that thing because she want to....tick-tock-tick-tock....
 And the face of Sammy wanting Miss Dee like she want him....tick-tock.
 ..Life is change....

Briefly, images juggled themselves into a single ~~the~~ clear
 thought: if this one led the underground, if this one ruled after
 the whites, then things would be better; change, then, would be
 good.... Comforted by this thought, Dicky Naicker resolutely put
 the images out of his mind, turned on his side, closed his eyes,
 and waited patiently for sleep to come.

Late in the afternoon, two days later, Dicky Naicker warned
 Nkosi to expect a visitor late that night. He would not say much more
 and Nkosi did not press him. If this meant that he was being
 formally handed over into African care then young Naicker would not
 know anything about it; if not, then it did not matter very much.
 Waiting was no hardship for him. He had found paper and pencil and
 had spent his time sketching: there was enough sketching to do here
 to keep him a month and more. And he would have enough material for
 a score or more canvasses, if he got out of this place and back
 to his studio.

Dicky Naicker drove down for the visitor about nine. Nkosi
 went to bed. The journey up from that village had been two hours
 and so the visitor was unlikely to get here before midnight. He
 had worked hard these past two days and he had eaten well, so he
 fell into a deep sleep.

And so it was as though he were dreaming when he opened his eyes to find Dee Nunkhoo sitting on the edge of his cot. He had turned out the lamp and now the lamp was lit once more. He reached out tentatively, fearing that he would touch nothing: but he touched her.

"I'm real," she said.

And a wondering, pleased, warm, sleepy smile broke on his face and filled her heart. Then his face clouded over with concern.

"What's happened?"

She thought for a while, then said: "It can wait till morning."

"Bad news?"

"I tell you it can wait till morning," she said.

There was a long pause, then he said:

"I've missed you."

"I've missed you," she said.

He ~~xxxx~~ sat up abruptly and pulled her into the folds of his arms. They clung to each other and she knew that this was the moment, that everything would go right. She disengaged herself and went to the door, not trying to hide her limp at all. She opened the door and called out to Dicky Naicker. When he called back/^{she}said:

"We're going to sleep now! Goodnight!"

There was a slight pause then Dicky Naicker called back goodnight. There was a faint smile on Dee's lips as she turned from bolting the door. She turned off the lamp and he listened to the rustle of her clothes as she undressed, and as he listened an overwhelming tenderness for this woman spread through him. It was so overpowering that she felt it wrapping itself about her as/^{she}crawled into the cot beside him. And sex, with this man, was a thing/^{with}of delicate spiritual overtones.

And they merged blindingly into each other.

After that they slept, still intimate, arms and legs wound about each other. Then they woke, together, at the same instant, as though one brain commanded both bodies. And again they made love; lingeringly this time, with a taut tenderness, so delicate, so finely drawn, that it made the woman ^{moan} ~~weep~~ softly and rhythmically.

At last as though forced out of him against his will, the man groaned; "I love you!" Then, more calmly, with a hint of wonder and a world of tenderness, he repeated it. "I love you." And then he was aware of the tears running down her cheeks. And then her moaning grew louder and the dance of love built up to its climax.

Afterwards they were both wide awake. They lay pressed against each other because that was the only way they could share the little cot. The lack of room to stretch or turn was no hardship, now. For the present this was how they wanted it.

"Say it again," she whispered.

"I've said it to others," he said.

"I'm sure you have," she said.

"Allright. I love you."

She let out a deep contented sigh.

"That all?"

"What else? I know you mean it right now."

"And that's enough?"

"More than enough, my dear. At this moment we are as close as people can ever hope to be. Our hearts have beaten together, our bodies have merged. Right now I know what love is. I know how it feels to be not completely alone. Right now I know you as I have never known anybody else. So what else? When you ask is it enough...."

He put his hand over her mouth and stopped the flow of words.

"I love you. And though I've said it to others it has never meant what it means to me now."

She reached up and moved his hand from her mouth.

"Say it again."

"I love you."

"Once more!"

"What's the matter with you? Losing your mind or something?"

"I order it!"

"Allright. I love you."

And then, for the first time, he heard her laugh. And with her, laughter came as a rich bubbling of pleasure in sound. He sensed a mood of intoxication sweeping over her.

"Find me sexy?"

"Very," he said drily.

"I know. I didn't realise I was so sexy. I can make you lose your head any time I want to; and I'm going to do it too! I want to have at least six babies and I want you to sire them..."

"Like a bull," he mocked.

"Like a bull: my bull!" she said.

Then her mood changed: "Do you want to father my children? Really And won't they be cripples? I wouldn't like that."

"They won't and I would be proud to father your children."

"And what would they be: Indians or Africans?"

"Do not spoil your dream," he said gently. "I will follow it with you and we will walk together in it, for dreaming is the deeper reality of living."

"Somewhere the dream and the reality must meet," she said.

"They will be your children and mine," he said.

"Indian? African?" Resentful and ashamed of their mother or resentful and ashamed of their father? Rejected by his people or rejected by her people?"

He felt for her face in the dark and laid his palm across her forehead.

"Where is a the wisdom of a little while ago that said 'right now this is enough'? Are you having a child tomorrow? Next week? Next month? Are you with child now?"

"I would like to have your child, your children."

"And you would like guarantees that they would be accepted and happy and healthy and secure and without resentment...."

"It is natural."

"Natural to hope it would be so: not to demand guarantees. These guarantees that you would have for your dream children cannot even be made for the children of Indian and Indian, African and African, white and white."

Her mood changed again. She ran her hand over his face and the upper part of his body, at once both caressing/^{him} and familiarising her brain with the shape and feel of him.

"You are really black, aren't you? Can't think of you as black."

"Because black is frightening...."

"And dangerous and unknown....And you are so intimately familiar."

"Exotic too?...." He was teasing her now.

"No. No. Not exotic. You're too civilised to be exotic: too bloody intellectual, my dear. ~~xxxxxxx~~ God, I'm thirsty! Let's get up and go for a walk. Or d'you want to go to sleep?"

"Let's get up," he said.

She swung off the cot and groped about the bedside table till she found the matches. Then she lit the lamp and turned up the wick. Her face, by lamplight, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ had a new and unknown softness to ^{cot} the man on the ~~xxx~~. The harsh ~~xxx~~ lines around the mouth were gone. The eyes seemed larger, rounder than he remembered them. But it was the hair that excited him most. Always, before, it had been tied up. Now it hung loose, a halo of thick strands/~~xx~~ ^{down} both sides of her face and all but long enough to cover her firm breasts: another two inches in length and the hair would effectively have covered the breasts completely.

She grew shyly self-conscious under the intensity of his stare so she leaned down over him and kissed him. Then she turned her back on him, ~~xxx~~ dressed quickly and went out of the room.

When he joined her in the kitchen she had put up her hair. He unpinned it and she shook it loose for him.

"I like it so," he said.

"The real reason I came was to show you that." She indicated the paper on the table.

The bold banner headlines leapt at him:

" SENSATIONAL SWOOP ON UNDERGROUND HQ

"In a sensational swoop on a luxury mansion in Johannesburg this evening the police arrested a number of Europeans and non-Europeans. Unconfirmed reports give the numbers as six whites and eighteen non-whites, two of the non-whites being Indians.

"The police allege that the luxury mansion had been used as the headquarters of the underground movement and that those arrested made up the National High Command of the underground....."

Nkosi stopped reading. The water on the stove began to boil. Dee made the tea.

Nkosi said: "What does this mean?"

"Its bad enough but not as bad as they think. It is not ~~the~~ what they call the National High Command of the underground that has been broken. That was not a meeting of the Central Council of the underground. But from our point of view it was almost as important, if not more important. The arrested Africans are our friends inside the Central Council, the people who want the struggle to retain its multi-racial character. This was a meeting with representatives of the other groups to work out a line of approach for the next Council meeting."

"So these arrests add up to victory for the enemies of co-operation inside the underground Council."

"That's about it."

She poured the tea and came and sat opposite him.

"How great a victory? Was your friend the secretary of the Council arrested?"

"Luckily he couldn't make it to that meeting." Suddenly she shivered convulsively. "And but for dealing with your problem Dawood would have been there too....The point is: communication has now broken down. We don't know whether the ^{phone} call which went out from Durban ~~xxxx~~ got through or not and until new communication lines are set up we can do nothing. They've had to make rigid rules about this."

"So what do we do?"

She put her hand over his. "I must go back ^{tomorrow} ~~tonight~~. You, my dear, must wait: just wait. But we have a little time now, and tomorrow, for each other and for dreaming. And I'll return as soon as possible..... Come, let us climb the hill and wait there for the day to break."

When daylight came, they came down from the top of the hill and ate enormously. Dicky Naicker's presence was with them, but always just out of reach, out of sight. Once or twice Nkosi paused in mid-sentence, or in the middle of a small action, and turned, expecting to see Dicky, but always there was nothing to see. Dee seemed utterly unconcerned about Dicky Naicker and his unseen presence and this irritated Nkosi mildly while they ate.

Reading his mood, Dee reached across the table and touched his hand lightly.

"He won't thank us for not letting him work this out for himself.

He said: "All the same....." then he allowed the thought to die uncompleted; then he added: "He's very young and the young are vulnerable."

And resilient, as he said to herself; but she did not bother to tell it to him because she knew he knew it and the knowledge and consciousness of it was on his face at this moment.

"He will eat?" he asked.

"And do all the natural and normal things.....Don't worry about him....I will make opportunity for him to speak his mind when he drives me down tonight....Trust him - and me."

Later in the day they founded a shaded place in the shadow of the overhanging rock and while the woman sat reading the man made a vast number of sketches of her: some were of all her body, some of parts of her body, some of only a small member of the body like a hand or a foot or an ear or just the line of her lip; he did the eyes several times; but most often he did the face, moving from

position to position till he had sketched it from every conceivable angle. When he was satisfied at last, the sun was far to the west.

An aloof and impersonal Dicky Naicker showed his presence for the first time since Dee had called out to him the night before: he brought them tea and biscuits, placed the tray at Dee's feet and walked away without speaking or look at either of them.

After tea, and when the sun was nearly down, they walked down into the ~~valley~~ wide valley and sat by the dried up little river that twisted in and out between the mountains on its way down into the sea. They looked at the high mountains that rose on the other side of the wide valley.

She said: "I've seen all this so often but I'm only really seeing it now; I think it was those sketches of yours. I suddenly saw just how beautiful this place, and this country, really are."

He said: "The thing about cold countries is that they teach you to see. I never was as sharply aware of the beauty of green grass and green leaves until I'd spent my first cold winter in Europe. For nearly six months the earth was covered with snow and the trees were barren of leaves. Then, one day, there were buds on the trees and all the world seemed to come alive. There was a tree outside the window of my digs in those far-off days. And nothing has ever been as richly and vitally alive as the first green leaves on that tree after my first English winter."

"It's because you're an artist," she said. "Not because of cold countries."

"No. It is the business of learning to see; and it is easier to learn to see and hear where you have violent seasonal changes. If you have green all the time seeing it becomes habit till you cease

to see. If, on the other hand, you don't see it for months on end the impact is startling when you do. And when you think about this startling impact of the presence or absence of green leaves you are in fact learning consciously to see."

"So love becomes habit till you cease to love....I don't believe it."

"It can. But you have a one-track mind. We were talking about learning to see."

"Or to love," she insisted. She lowered her head and played absently with the dry, ^{crumbly} ~~crumbly~~ earth on the dried up river's bank. Then she went on in a small soft voice, choosing her words carefully: "Since last night I have experienced everything you felt when you saw the first green leaves after your first English winter. And no habit will ever ~~make~~ make it cease to be so all my days. And I refuse to believe I love you because of the violence and brutality of our society."

"Hold it!" he said, quickly, tenderly, and pulled her into the circle of his arm. She resisted for a while then she relaxed and leaned against him; but still she kept her head lowered. He waited, patiently; and after a long while she raised her head and tried to smile at him while tears ran down her cheeks.

"There is a profound difference between seeing and loving," he said. A tremulous, little-girl-smile flitted across her face as she wiped at the tears with her fingers.

"I know, my dear. I don't know why I panicked and lost my head."

After that they sat in silence, close to each other, till the golden glow of the sun faded from the tips of the mountain and the valley grew dark and chilly. Then, hand in hand, they climbed up

the hill to the house.

The lighted front room and the smell of cooking from the kitchen attested to the presence of Dicky Naicker about the place. They went into the bedroom; and this time there was a hint of desperation in Dee that invested their lovemaking with a certain painful emotional wildness. But afterwards he murmured words of tenderness till she grew calm, till a tranquil sense of peace and security came over both of them, and they dozed off, folded in each other's arms.

It was the awareness of her absence that gradually penetrated deeper and deeper into his consciousness till it forced him into wakefulness: suddenly he was wide awake and desperately aware that she was not with him. For a wild moment the same mood of panic that had possessed her earlier swept over him. He fought it off, groped into his trousers and hurried out of the room.

She was in the kitchen doing things over the three little stoves; and Dicky Naicker was near her, dicing up bits of meat. Both looked up as he burst into the room. And in the split second before the sense of relief took over, Dee saw the terrible desperation mirrored in the man's face. He really loves me, she thought; and the calmness with which she accept the thought brought a faint, startled smile to her lips.

"Its allright, my dear," she said quickly and watched his face grow calm and composed. We'll always be very close, she thought, and nearly told him her thought; but she sensed, rather than saw, Dicky Naicker's embarrassment and his attempts not to look at them. The one at the door was barefooted and naked from the waist up, and the contrast between his natural colour and the stained parts of

his body stood out shapely. He hadn't even buttoned up his trousers: and all these things embarrassed young Dicky Naicker.

"You do have time to wash and dress before we eat," she said, pursing her lips and laughing at him with her eyes.

When he had gone from the door she said casually to Dicky Naicker: "I love him very much and I hope he will marry me one day," then, matter-of-factly, she carried on with what she was doing, humming softly. Dicky Naicker kept his head down, so confused that clear thought was not possible.

As soon as he had done, Dicky Naicker hurried out and up the sloping land. He scrambled up furiously as though driven. Once or twice, in his haste, he slipped and slithered and had to go on all fours. At last he reached the top, winded and panting.

The need to do something violent was desperate, so Dicky Naicker picked up a big loose boulder and pounded it against the living rock of the hill on which he stood. Time after time he raised big piece of rock the impact the ~~hammer~~ and brought it down with force; and each time/~~jarred~~ sent shock waves jarring painfully/through his body. But he carried on with the pounding till hands hurt and there was the feel of sweat under his arms and on his back and on his brow. And as the pounding grew less violent, partly because he was getting terribly tired and partly because a subtle sexual rhythm was creeping into it, the thoughts that he had suppressed forced ~~a~~ images dancing in his mind's eye.....The doc's kid sister, pretty high-class thing even with her bad leg, giving it to black man like she hungry.....Shame on all of us.....Come running to give it to him.....Why not Sammy.....Why not Sammy.....Why not Sammy..... And then he admitted the frightening thought.....Why not me.....I'm not black.....And then he wept like a little child, loud and long.

Dicky Naicker

For a long time after his weeping had ended/lay face down on the earth, numbed by a sense of misery he could not express or control. He tried to think but his mind refused to function, refused to fight off the heavy load of depression; and so the weight of it pressed more heavily on him and he seemed to sink deeper and deeper till he reached bottom and there could be no further sinking. And then he felt the earth beneath his body; and he felt his heart beating against the earth, and he became aware of his fingers caressing it. He tried to embrace the earth but there was too much of it. Still, he felt strangely comforted after the attempt. He got up and made his way down the hillside. He washed his face at the outside tap, fished the greasy comb out of his hip pocket and combed his hair, using the fingers of his left hand to do the work of the mirror. Then, bracing himself as for an encounter, he went into the kitchen.

They were not there, but he heard their voices from the front room: and all he had to do was to close his eyes to see the way she looked at him....Always kissing him with her eyes: kissing him with her eyes....The mental and emotional confusion threatened to sweep over him again. He walked quickly across the room to the cooking table. One of the stoves was on low and a dish of food was keeping hot ~~XXXXX~~ over a pot of simmering water.

She called from the other room: "Dicky!"

He hesitated then went to the door and looked into the front room. ~~XXXXXX~~ She had made a small eating place for them by the window and instead of the bright lamp a flickering candle shed a soft light over the tiny table and the food they ate. Vaguely, remotely, as a faint echo in a distant chamber, Dicky Naicker's

mind registered the thought: just like in the fillums.

She said: "Where were you? We were looking for you all over the place....." Then the little man put his hand over hers and she stopped suddenly.

"I went up to the look-out," Dicky Naicker said.

"All right. Your food's on the stove. We leave in an hour."

He shut the door between them: he tried to shut the sound of their voices from his mind while he ate.

Later, he stood by, quiet and withdrawn, while Dee Nunkhoo took leave of her black lover. Then he drove her down and out of the valley and across the dark land.

When she neared the village where her car was waiting, hidden, she spoke for the first time in nearly two hours. And Dicky Naicker recognised it as the voice of the old Miss Dee, decisive, authoritative and with that ~~xxxxxx~~ hint of aloofness that those in the Movement knew so well, and that some also feared. She said:

"If there is something on your mind you should speak it. We are all supposed to be comrades in the Movement; so speak your mind. Or are you a coward who thinks things but dare not say them."

"You dee's sister, Miss Dee," he said tightly.

"So?....."

"And Sammy.....and we all.....love you Miss Dee....."

"So?....."

"Nuttin'!"

"I see....Allright. If you've finished, there is something on my mind too and I'm not a coward about what is on my mind. You are one of our bright young men, one of tomorrow's leaders, one of Sammy's

bright ones and you go sick with prejudice because you see an Indian woman give herself - no, let's use the right words for your little mind - because you see an Indian woman sleep with a black man. You made me ashamed of you; ashamed of being one of you, of being in the same Movement with you; and you shamed me before the man I love and respect more than anyone else I know because he is free of this rotten cancer. You're supposed to be fighting against prejudice but it's in you already. We're all of us caught up in this rotten sickness. It isn't only the whites. It has spread to us. The black people have it too; and the brown people. You and I, and our movement too. God! The unspeakable dirt that must have coursed through your mind when you thought of me lying with my lover! How dirty and sordid did you make it? You're just a stupid rotten filthy minded little coolie!"

"No!" Dicky Naicker brought the Land Rover to a stop. "No!"

"Yes! Foul and filthy!"

"Stop it Miss Dee!" he said dangerously.

"Or you'll knock me down and do what he did?!" She bared her teeth and glared at him savagely, barely able to resist clawing his face. "You just try it, you foul minded brute! Filthy minded little coolie!"

For the second time that night, Dicky Naicker broke down and wept like a little child, loud and long.

Slowly, ^{in waves,} like a tide going out, the savage fury left Dee Nunkhoo; the painful pounding at the back of her eyes and above her ears, stopped; her body ceased trembling; the impulse to destructive violence died. At long last she touched the young man and he raised a tear-stained face from the steering wheel.

"Come, we must go on," she said wearily.

He brushed the tears away with the back of his hand and tried to see her face, but there was not enough light. The moon was up but it shed very little light this night.

"Miss...Dee...." There was a world of tentativeness in his voice.

"Yes?"

"You not angry any more?"

"No, not any more."

"But you're unhappy now and it sound worse."

"I'm tired and there's a long drive ahead of me."

"Miss Dee...."

"Yes?"

"I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry too."

"You right. What say is true. I mean about the things in my mind. But I didn't want it to happen. I don't want to have prejudice, Miss Dee. Honest, I don't want it. It's like you say, we all sick with it. But I honestly don't want it, Miss Dee. I didn't want to think those things. I want to be like you - and him. But it come up, like you say, like a sickness. How can I stop it, Miss Dee? Honest I want to."

"The only way to stop it," she said, "is by changing our world."

"But for now, so I don't get these thoughts?"

"I don't know, Dicky; I don't know. I don't think it can be done without changing the society and the control of power in the society."

"He said even then it may be bad for us. He said not all change is good."

"I'm very tired" she said. / He started the Land Rover.

~~BOOK TWO :~~
TWO

Bough
.....When the/Baw Breaks

-1-

and very tall. ^{late}
Earl Van As was a very handsome/young man in his ~~early~~ thirties. He was also rising fast in his country's service and he knew all he had to do was to keep going like this and keep out of trouble and the day would come when he would be one of the half dozen most powerful men in the land. But somehow, this prospect was not as exciting as it had been a few years earlier. In those days, especially during his stints as a junior diplomat ^{first} in London, then in Paris, then ⁱⁿ Washington, the excitement of a bright future had been like heady wine, lifting his spirits and spurring him on to greater effort. Now, rising was not a fraction as exciting and he was disturbed by an odd feeling of depression that lurked just below the surface of his consciousness, like some beast of prey, waiting to leap and overwhelm him the moment his guard was down. He had to fight off this lurking depression all the time now. He knew that part of the reason for this depression had to do with what had happened to the country in recent years. The expulsion from the Commonwealth - for that is what the 'withdrawal' really meant - had been the most painfully personal blow for him and a handful of others whose jobs had meant personal and intimate dealings with others doing like jobs from other parts of the Commonwealth. In an international gathering in Paris or Washington the Commonwealth diplomats, at all levels, always stood out as a team, a good team that understood the rules and had a clear pattern of play, and with each member knowing where the team was going without having to consult and check back; there had been a spirit of freedom about it that all the other diplomats envied; and it was fun being a part of that. And then, of course, there were the personal things: the way the Commonwealth types

worked and played together, and the way in which they all knew and understood certain special jokes and certain special symbols; all small things, many of them foolish taken out of context, but taken together they added up to a striking manifestation of something they all understood very clearly and described very vaguely as the 'Commonwealth spirit'. And then there was that last mission on which he went to the United Nations. Till then the expulsion had been simply a political thing. In New York, and later in Washington, it had become very real at the personal level of the small things that are so important. There had been nothing clearcut about it; no-one had been rude personally, not even the spokesmen of the Afro-Asians who wanted to drive the country out of the organisation. They had just ignored him at the personal level. Many a time he had walked into a room was in either gay or serious conversation: they had note his entry, then they had deliberately eliminated his presence from their consciousness. Not even the white Commonwealth members, the Australians, the New Zealanders, the Canadians, had wanted to acknowledge his presence; the British had been more subtly polite, ^{about it} perhaps, but even with them he had ~~known~~ been aware that his presence was awkward and embarrassing.

His office door opened and he looked up as his secretary ~~xxx~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ came in. She was a tall, striking girl; striking not because she was beautiful but because of the animal vitality she generated. Her features were blunt but her big boned body gave off the feel of massive peasant strength. Karl Was As did not like his secretary and did not bother to hide it. She was a leading member of a group of young female extremists who advocated the emasculation of any male found having sex relations outside his own

racial group. He knew that it was because he did not like her and because he had not bothered to hide it that she had developed an odd passion for him. They really had nothing in common; there was not even the attraction of opposites. She was not interested in thinking, in reading, in what went on in the world. She came to office to work, then she went home and changed for the beach, and then she and her friends lay on the beach, rolling this way and that, their bodies oiled so that every little part of it could be burned a ~~light~~ light golden brown; then they came home and ate too much, and drank too much and fornicated as a necessary act of being in the swim of things. So one day runs into the other with slight variations..... He fought down the mounting contempt he felt for all that this girl represented. He wondered, fleetingly, whether he was being unjust to her; whether his resentment did not stem from the sense of isolation he felt, the ~~xxx~~ sense of being out off from the world both personally and nationally. He thought: apart from her tendency to emasculationism she had harmed no-one.

The girl waited patiently till he raised his head again.

"The man from the ^{Department} ~~Ministry~~ of ^{Records} ~~Public Affairs~~ is here."

"With everything we want?"

"Two bulging briefcases."

"Fine; give him a cup of coffee and make him wait. If I'm longer than five minutes with Dr. Snel/call through. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Right?"

"Right, sir." She looked quickly at her watch and went out.

He rose ~~quixxly~~ and went out by the private door and down the narrow back corridor to the office of Dr. Ludwig Snel, Chief of the Natal Bureau of Internal Security. He knocked and went in. As usual,

Snel had his airconditioning working so high that his room was positively chilly.

He was a big man, bony and white haired and with a heavily lined and leathery face. There was an air of utter weariness about him. The only life in him seemed to come from his unusually bright eyes.

"Well, Karl?" It was almost like hearing the voice of Jan Smuts again.

"You said to look in this morning, sir."

"Oh, yes."

Snel found a sheet of paper among the pile on his desk and pushed it across. Van As picked it up and walked to the window reading it. Automatically, he reached out and reduced the air-conditioner from 'cold' to 'cool'. The letter was what he expected. The Minister's Private Secretary had phoned him about it at his flat last night. ~~xxxxxxxx~~ It was a week now since ^{the murder of} that fellow who called himself Hans Coetzee and who turned out to be that Westhuizen who had been classified as Coloured a little over a year ago, and so far there was absolutely no progress to show in the case. The Native who was with Coetzee-Westhuizen has disappeared completely and this has created an atmosphere of serious uneasiness among wide sections in the country, in the party and even in the government. The Minister understands that the police ~~xxxxxx~~ have in their possession the Passbook of this Native, Richard Nkosi. In the circumstances the Minister cannot understand why this Native has has not so far been apprehended. A handful of party backbenchers have been persuaded to defer raising the matter in Parliament for a week. The Minister therefore expects this case to be closed within the week.

Van As put the letter back on the desk and Snel automatically shuffled it back so that it was lost halfway inside the ~~xxxx~~ pile of letters on his desk. He's denying the letter its importance, Van As thought; he's protesting. And his sympathies went out to Snel. Snel was one of the fast disappearing band of public servants who had grown up under the leadership of Smuts, ^{the} at a time when the white man's mission was more than just to fight to preserve what he had, ^{the} at a time when the voice of the land, in the persons of Smuts and Hofmeyer, ^{was} ~~1/xxxx~~ heard with respect throughout the world. And it was because Snel, and the three or four like him, compare these times with those times, and because they make, and make, the men now in power know this, that they have been banished from the seats of power, from Pretoria or Cape Town, to little backwaters like this office in Natal. And now this Snel who had once exercised more power than all except the most senior Cabinet Ministers had to receive this kind of letter from a party hack with no vision beyond the protecting of his own skin and advancing of his own interests.

"Suppose you knew about this," Snel murmured.

"Yes, sir; the P.S. phoned me at home last night."

"How characteristic!" Snel's contempt was obvious.

"Sorry, sir."

The hint of a smile flickered across Snel's face.

"Not your fault young fellow....How long can ^{you}/- what's your favourite phrase - 'keep out of trouble'?"

Again, as he had done so often, Snel made Van As feel guilty.

"I don't know," Van As said quietly. "for as long as I want to, I suppose."

"yes....But don't ~~be~~ allow yourself to be too strongly influenced by me, young man. After all, we failed, and that is the reason for

things being what they are today. I would hate not to influence you at all, but every time I say something that hurts, just remember that we failed. If we hadn't failed they wouldn't have won power and the country would have taken a different course."

"There are those who say this course was inevitable, sir."

"They may be right, son. All I know is there was a moment during the war, a very brief moment of a few months, when everything flowed strongly for a single integrated community. I was at the centre of things then. I knew all the Cabinet secrets: I sat in and had a hand in the making of some of them. I felt the moment and like all the others, I was frightened of the moment. We were all afraid; all, except one. And we all shied away from discussing the nature of our fears...."

"And the one, sir?"

Snel shook his head.

"There was a thing about not revealing the attitudes ~~sm~~ of individuals at Cabinet meetings. Smuts was very strong on that. And none of us, civil servants or politicians, have ever broken that thing - not even people who fell out with him or broke away..... It is a long time ago and I've thought and thought about what ~~made~~ us frightened. And you know something? To this day I don't think I can honestly say what we were afraid of. The ultimate loss of ^{and economic} political/power to the Africans? Yes, that was part of it. The guilty fear that they might do unto us as we had done unto them? Yes, that too. The fear of wholesale miscegenation? This one I'm not sure of. After all, it is we, the whites, who took the initiative in bringing the Coloureds into being. We did the miscegenating and if we need any protection, it is from ourselves, not from the black

people. No one among us in those days thought that getting rid of the colour bar would result in a wholesale mixing of the races. It was a nice way of exploiting the sex jealousies of the male white: he wanted to have no competition where his own women was concerned and yet he wanted to be free to have his fling with the others. He had found the black woman very exciting and so all anyone had to do was to suggest that the white woman might find the black ~~wa~~ man equally exciting. But the excitement is that of the forbidden fruit." Snel paused and smile, a far away dreamy smile that briefly softened his stern face. "I remember how important it was when I was young to have one's first black girl....It was a combination of the mysterious and the forbidden and all the sweeter for that. I should be surprised if it is any different today, in spite of all these tsupid new laws."

"No different, sir," Van As said quietly. "Only more diffcult."

"Because of the laws?"

"Yes. But mainly because of the women. I understand in your days they were willing...."

He became brisk and businesslike.

The softness went out of Snel. "You cannot do what ~~they~~ ^{he} are doing without building up a storehouse of hatred....Now, for this thing...?"

Van As replied equally briskly:

"I've ~~gve~~ a man from Pretoria waiting for me with their master file on Nkosi. The Natal records show no-one missing. I rather suspect its a cover for a real identity and that would make it difficult. But I'd like to have a go at it, sir."

"Allright: drop everything else."

"I'd like maximum clearance and co-operation from the police, sir."

"You'll get it. And the letter...."

"I'd like to answer it."

"Thank you,"

Snel's secretary came in with a tray of letters. Van As knew that part of this one's duty was to report to the local party any ~~in~~ sign of disloyalty inside the office, so he remained silent until she left. ~~the office~~ Then he went ^{to} the window and turned the airconditioning temperature control back to 'cold'. By this time Snel was immersed in the new batch of letters so he did not notice Van As leaving.

In his own office, Karl Van As ^{phoned for} ~~asked~~ his secretary to bring in the man from Pretoria. When she did usher the man in she towered over him like a golden Amazon. The man was small, round shouldered, very sallow, and he wore heavy glasses with very powerful lenses. He would look like an ordinary desk bound little man in any other presence; small nondescript but normally human. Standing beside Miss Anna De Wet, however, he was reduced to something that seemed slightly less than human: a sickly, shrunken, creature, sluggish in its paleness.

The contrast between the girl and the man irritated Van As. He knew that, using ^{the} purely ^{an} physical standards of ^{an} the animal, she had judged this little man and dismissed him. Now, it seemed ~~that~~ that she lingered there to emphasize the contrast.

There was an edge to his voice as he said:

"Thank ^{you} ~~the~~ Miss De Wet! That's all!"

Whenever he called her Miss De Wet in that voice she always reacted as though he had slapped her. Now, he watched as first hurt then rage showed in her eyes. Then she turned and shut the door behind her.

He held out his hand to the little man then indicated a chair.

Van As said: "well!"

"Your kaffir, Nkosi, has given us a lot of trouble." His voice was weak and reedy and yet managed to convey a feel of great authority.

He opened one briefcase and ~~xxxxxx~~ extracted a number of files from it. He stacked these carefully to the left of him on the desk. Then he opened the second briefcase and ~~stacked~~ its pile of files to his right on the desk.

"All there," he said looking from the one pile to the other. Next, he took an official looking envelope from his breast pocket and took from it the Passbook of 'Native, Richard Nkosi'. With an air of delicacy, the air of one handling something very special, he opened the Passbook to the page that showed the picture and the vital facts and figures concerning 'Native Richard Nkosi'. He put the Passbook between the two piles of files. "All here," he repeated

"Forged?" Van As asked.

"No sir!" The little man showed stained yellow teeth in a smile of reluctant admiration. "The book is real; a few slight changes here and there, but nothing even the expert would notice."

"But you noticed...."

"You flatter me, Mr. Van As. I didn't. I examined the book, checked it with the master file and found nothing wrong with it."

"But....."

"I know sir. The slight adjustments made in the book had also been made in the master-file, so Passbook and master-file agreed in every detail and every respect down to the last comma and fullstop

"Then how did you find what you call the flaw?"

"These files, sir! These contain the source documents. The

master-file of every Native is built up from these source documents. You know the form, sir."

"I'm afraid I don't."

"I'm surprised. I know most people are ignorant of the things we do at Records but I would have thought that everyone in Security would have at least a working knowledge. Anyway, birth registration, school registration, the old time pass registrations, the oldtime travel permits, residence permits, work permits, tax receipts, everything: we have carbon copies of all these in our files. So we can tell you not only when and where a Native was born, but also how much time he spent at school, when he took his first job and with whom, and how much he was paid; we can also tell, almost to the hour, when he made his first trip from his village or location, where he went, when he arrived there and how long he stayed. In fact, we have, in these files, an almost complete record of everything that happens to a Native from the moment of birth to the moment of death. He can do nothing of any importance without it coming into these files."

"Only Natives?" Van As asked quietly.

Again the little man showed his teeth.

"No sir. We are reaching a point where we can give you a complete record of every single person in the land. Our system of Native control is naturally most perfect. We've been at it longest. But you just give us a little more time - as little as another two years and we'll be able to do for you with everyone what we can now do only for the Natives: build up an almost day-by-day record of a person's life from our files. Of course, we're up against a serious space problem. We have the largest government building now but we're

already desperately overcrowded. But that's an internal matter."

"And I'm sure you'll get all the space you want..."

"Oh yes. We'll get it. We're too valuable for them to refuse. But I'd appreciate it if you'll keep to yourself ^{the} fact that we're building as complete a system of control for others as we've done for the Natives. I don't know why but most people seem shy of government having a complete record of their lives. Can't see anything wrong with it myself...."

"Unless you break the law," Van As murmured.

"But there are some law-abiding people I know - "

"Yes," Van As cut in quickly, "there are people like that."

The little man seemed to withdraw into himself suddenly, and now Van As was aware of a sharp and sensitive intelligence at work.

"Sorry: didn't mean to bore you," the little man said.

"But you didn't. Depressed me a little perhaps."

Now he almost felt the forceful probing of the little man's intelligence. It was this that the Anna de Wets of this world would always miss and therefore under-rate.

"You one of the shy ones too?"

"Suppose so," he said carefully.

The little man let out a dry, rasping laugh.

"You're in very distinguished company. Just two days ago my chief got a serious telling-off from a very senior Cabinet Minister because the Minister found out how complete a file we had on him....."

"What happened?" Van As was suddenly interested.

"Nothing," the little man smiled. "He wanted us to destroy his file but we don't destroy files....I know what you're thinking, Mr. Van As. Perhaps one day someone will come who will use the contents

of the files to build up an empire of power for himself. The answer is that there will be a file on that person too....."

"Which could be destroyed or doctored...."

"You're thinking how the master file of your case was doctored?"

"Yes."

"But don't you see the beauty of it! Because of your case we are making a routine check of all our master files. Our computers are working overtime and this checking job which would have been all but impossible a few brief years ago should be done in between three and six months. By that time we will have devised something that is proof against this kind of doctoring. Also, we will arrive at a pretty close estimate of the time when the master file was tampered with...."

"And that will give you a pretty clear idea of the people who were working on that section of records at the time of the tampering."

"You've got it!"

Karl Van As hesitated then looked straight at the little man.

"Don't misunderstand me. But who keep files on people like - you and your chief?"

The little man lowered his head till his chin nearly rested on his chest; he stayed thus for the best part of half a minute, then he raised his head, took off his glasses, fished a handkerchief out of his pocket and polished the glasses vigorously, ~~tho~~ while peering at Karl Van As through very pale, very weak eyes. He was, suddenly, a very helpless and half-blind little man. Then he said, quietly, softly, musingly:

"You know Mr. Van As, you've put your finger on the great flaw in Records. There is a handful of us on whom nobody can keep files."

We are the keepers of the records but we are above the records because we are not entered." An odd smile played across the helpless looking face. "It worries me - so much, I sometimes wake up in the night."

Then the little man put on back his glasses and once more Van As was in the presence of a forceful and searching intelligence. Suddenly, Karl Van As felt ~~again~~ fear as a strong physical force; but, sitting there facing the ^{intelligent} /little man with the bad teeth, this brand of fear seemed foolish and fanciful in the extreme.

The little man looked at his watch. "Ah, my plane leaves in just over an hour. Better get over our business."

"Yes: the flaw."

"Very simple and very clever," the little man said. "Instead of forging a Passbook, they forged a person. The man you want; the man ~~exists~~ whose picture is on the Passbook, is not Richard Nkosi. In fact the files will show that the real Richard Nkosi died five years ago, that his Passbook has been used at least twice before, and that each time the photograph of the forged person was officially stamped at Records. The picture of this present Richard Nkosi was stamped at Records seven months ago and it could only have been done ^{one of} by/the handful of us who are above the records....Just look at this." He opened a file and pushed it across the desk to Van As. He waited till Van As had finished then he pushed another file across. And so ^{as file followed file} emerged slowly, bit by bit,/the picture/of how the Passbook and the name of a dead man had been used by the underground. ~~and then the files~~ ~~ended~~ According to the files, the first forged person had clean disappeared. But his name and his background and his history were there on record. And there were neat and careful notations to suggest

that he had skipped the country, probably ~~for~~ to some communist state for training in guerrilla warfare. And a special, boxed note said that this man was dangerous and his return would be a serious disaster for the country so a print of his picture had been sent to every point of entry into the country with instructions to shoot on sight. The picture was that of a peaceful-looking, sleepy-eyed, puffy-faced and not ~~xx~~ too bright young man in his early thirties. According to the records his forebears were of the Xosa tribe but almost all Xosa characteristics had been crossbred out of him by generations of city-dwelling, and his face now was the detribalised face of just one of the many millions such to be found in the dark backwaters of the great cities and towns of the land. A dangerous man, a wanted man, an enemy of the state: the first forged Richard Nkosi whose real name the methodical organisation of Records had proved to be Walter Mahlengi.

The second forged Richard Nkosi had been one of these doubtful, borderline coloureds, the type where the registration officers had to toss a coin to decide whether he should be classified coloured or black. This one had been classified coloured and the slightly greater freedom of movement enjoyed by a coloured had made him a good choice as courier for the underground. He had been caught and sentenced to death and executed as John Voerster: it was only now, two years that they had found out after his death/that Voerster had slipped into and out of the identity of Richard Nkosi.

Finally, the little man pushed the last of the files across to Van As.

"That's the one you want," he said. "We haven't much on him. The fact of his birth, his name....His father was a privileged induna

on the Joh'burg mines so he lived outside the mine compound with his woman so the child was born in Joh'burg. The induna was a minor chief called Dube. The boy was name Richards. And that about all we have on the boy. When they came back to Natal no records were kept and so we have nothing on this one and scores of hundreds of others. And the person responsible for Native Affairs in this part of the world at that time is dead. So we know nothing about the latest Richard Nkosi except that his real name is Richard Dube...."

Hold on! Hold on! Karl Van As told himself and stared at the single sheet of paper in the folder till he felt himself under control.

"Not even a picture?" Van As said carefully.

"Only the duplicate of this in the master-file."

Van As held out his hand and the little man pushed the Passbook across the desk.

Karl Van As braced himself before looking at the picture in the Passbook; he told himself what to expect, but just to make sure he pressed the buzzer for his secretary, and it was only when he heard her at the door, ~~that~~ only when he knew that the little man's attention was distracted by her entrance, that he looked down quickly. It was as he had expected, and yet he felt the jerk of excitement. Had the little man not been looking at Anna de Wet he would have noticed. Yes! He knew this man, this latest forged person! Then, as an act of will, he banished this knowledge from his consciousness.

He looked up and the little man was smiling at him.

"I know something about how cunning you people from Security are, Mr. Van As. And of course I looked you up before I came and I know something of your record of service; so, if you want to copy

anything here you can do so without resorting to any subterfuge. I promise not to mention anything I see or hear here to any person."

~~Frank~~ Karl Van As smiled a broad conspiratorial smile to cover his relief.

"We're not all that good you know. I just wanted Miss de Wet to make a copy of the little you have on Dube." He passed the last file with its single sheet to his secretary. Quickly, she copied the contents of the sheet into her note book. Then he ^{pushed} ~~passed~~ the Passbook to her. "These too." He flashed a smile at the little man, confident and sure of himself now. "I understand the police have copies of this picture?"

"Terribly bad ones. His mother wouldn't identify him by those."

"Then we'd better let them have others."

"I think so too. You sound very clearcut suddenly."

"I have all the facts now."

"And know what to do?"

"I think so. The facts dictate a certain line of enquiry."

"You know they're very worried about this thing in Pretoria."

"I know."

"Then that's it, Mr. Van As." The little man got up.

"Why not join me for lunch," Karl Van As suggested.

The little man shook his head. "Very kind of you but it's a very long flight up and there's a hard day ahead tomorrow. I'd like to get back as soon as possible. But thank you so much." He packed his files back into the briefcases.

To his secretary, Van As said: "Car ready?"

She nodded. The little man shook hands with Van As and followed the strapping golden girl to the door. He paused there and called back: "Good hunting!"

Good hunting!

Good hunting indeed! A wave of bitter dejection swept over Karl Van As, and mingled with it was ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ^a sense of resentment which, because it was directed at no-one and nothing in particular, threatened to feed on itself to overpowering proportions. But after a while, as usual, he got the better of his emotions and thought took the place of feeling. Depression and a hint of despair remained, of course, but as a familiar undercurrent with which he had learnt to live.

Richard Nkosi-Richard Dube. Richard Dube, the third forged Richard Nkosi as the little man from Records called them. He recalled the Richard Dube he ~~kn~~ had known. A ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{small man} ~~chap~~ with a great stillness about him; a man of art and sensibilities. But then, ~~they~~ ^{seen from} whole world, ~~in~~ Paris, had seemed a place of art and sensibilities. The clear-eyed, direct way the little chap had looked at him when they first met....What was the name of the little French girl who had taken him to the party?....Never mind. Not important. What is important is that Dube was there; quietly having a good time. One of those big studio affairs where most of the people got awfully ^{and} drunk, ~~where~~ junior diplomats had to watch their step and avoid getting publicly compromised with some all-too-willing pretty miss. It had been a pretty mixed party - all types, races and colours - the kind that would have given the good old Dutch Reformed Church elders in Pretoria the willies had they known that some of their brightest young men attended! Dube had seemed quiet and subdued beside the bubbling, rather cocky exuberance of the ~~other~~ West Africans and West Indians ~~xxxxxx~~ there: and he had seemed genuinely

more relaxed, with greater inner reserves than the other dark-skinned guests; not chippy at all, but certainly not humble or cringing. And then the girl - what the devil was her name? - recognised him Dube and purred 'Richard' in a way that made him jealous. But she had introduced them and that was something....

Van As leaned back and closed his eyes, trying to recall the details of that encounter.

The girl - dammit what was her name? - had soon recognised someone else and left them. What had they talked about? Awfully hard to remember at this distance in time. What was it, seven, eight years ago? Two things stood out sharply: ~~the~~ one, ~~the~~ the great stillness that was about them, as though he radiated peace; and two, the ~~sharp~~ strong feel of belonging that was between them from the moment they looked at each other and exchanged words. They were the only South Africans at that party and although they were meeting for the first time, and although they came from different racial and colour, ~~backgrounds~~ and social and cultural and educational and economic backgrounds, the fact of being South Africans set them apart, in a very special and striking way, from all the other people at the party. The things common to them, the shared birth in the same land, mornings with the same sun coming up over hills and mountains whose reality they shared, and with the same mists whitening valleys; they both knew; ~~breathing~~ and assimilating as they grew, the feel and the tensions and the hurts and the tender-nesses and the harshnesses of the land, a special vision, a special comprehension, a special compassion, special words, images, jokes postures, ways of speech, of eating and laughing and making love and hating united them and all those born in the land, and made them different from all other human beings who are not South African.

All this had invested that meeting with Dube with the rare quality associated with discovery..... Things began to come back, but mistily, from the very far, eight-year-old recesses of the mysterious storehouse of memory..... He had mentioned this South African thing to Dube, and the sense of discovery he felt about it. ~~ix~~ And clearly, across the gulf of time and space and a world of intervening petty experiences, he heard the voice of Richard Dube as clearly as he had heard it that far-off night:

"But we have to leave South Africa to discover the transcendent importance of our South Africanness: ironic and tragic, is it not?"

And now everything was clear, as though remembering the sound of Dube's voice was the key to the past of that special night. He could recall, now, all the details: what Dube looked like, what he wore, how he moved his hands, the timbre of his voice, the lines around his mouth and the disconcerting directness of his gaze..... And of course he could, now, remember the girl's name too: Manique, as nice and ordinary as the girl herself....

They had talked, he remembered now, as South Africans do outside South Africa about South Africa and South Africans - and, of course, colour. But he had been inhibited by Dube's remark that South Africans had to leave South Africa in order to discover the transcendent importance of their South African~~ness~~. It had been said gently, without any hint of rebuke or even criticism. But its impact had devastated Van As and he had felt disarmed and at a disadvantage, and so unwilling to commit or even declare himself. And so the talk had become ^{all} surface and politeness, with both aware of the possibility of real contact but with one waiting for the first move and the other afraid to make it.

The following night, after getting the address from Monique, he had walked by way of the square of ^{cent} San Sulpice up the narrow Rue Servandoni to the leaning old house near the top. Once he had climbed the stairs to the very door of the studio on the fourth floor, but then courage had deserted him and he had come down without knocking. Then he had walked up and down the narrow street with its leaning houses, hoping that Dube would come out so that they could attempt a new beginning with what appearing a casual encounter. But the studio light had stayed on; Dube had not come out; and when the people of the narrow street began to eye him suspiciously, he had left.... And now Richard Dube, artist, was Richard Nkosi, wanted underground agent.

He fought off a wave of utter weariness, got up and went out by the private door that led, by way of the little dark passage, to the private floor of Dr. Snel.

Halfway there, he pulled up, stood deep in thought for a while, then swung about abruptly and went back to his office.

Richard Dube, artist: Richard Dube, underground agent. The sudden wealth among the detainees, the evidence that the underground suddenly has all the money it needs, all this could mean only one thing: Dube had brought money into the country. He had come by way of the sea.

He picked up his private phone and dialled the private number of the head of the Natal C.I.D.

"Japie? Karl Van As. Yes. I want the two fellows who spotted Coetzee-Westhuizen. Yes. I think I have a lead. No. I want them now. I think your Native was the money courier and came in from the sea. I want to drive out there with them. Yes: fine. See you."

He put down the phone and the thought jumped at him: If Dube was the money courier and if he was in the company of Coetzee-Westhuizen then Coetzee-Westhuizen must also have been an agent of the underground. The white man who had been declared coloured had revenged himself by serving the underground. He recalled Dr. Snel had suggested this might happen at the height of the ~~Westhuizen~~ Westhuizen scandal. At the time he, Karl Van As, had felt that the old man was reading more into what was after all an unfortunate personal tragedy for one man; now events had proved the old man right. Westhuizen had become Coetzee and Coetzee-Westhuizen had been the guide who brought the man in from the sea.

Again he dialled the private number of the head of the Natal C.I.D.

"Japie, me again. About Coetzee-Westhuizen - I'd like a detailed report of everybody he has come into contact with over the past three months; repeat everybody - without exception.....Yes.....Doesn't matter who or what.....Yes.....The old man has been on to you; fine! Give it top priority....No, can't tell you yet. But if you give me everybody he's had any dealing with I'm sure his link with the underground will be one of them. Our problem is to recognise and identify that link....Yes, I've no doubt he served them....I don't know that yet: it doesn't make sense for Pogo to kill an agent of the underground - at least, not on the surface. But there's something under the surface to be found. Yes.....Yes..... Soon as possible and as it comes in. Remember no detail is too trivial. Tot siens."

He tidied his desk mechanically, locked the draw that contained his confidential papers, washed and tidied up in his private wash-room and went out for lunch, letter his secretary know where, *To*

reach him

After lunch he drove to his flat and changed from his immaculate city clothes into khaki bush clothing and tough but soft Boer walking boots. He was tying the gunbelt round his waist when Anna de Wet phoned through to say that the two police patrolmen had arrived. He began to tell her to send them round to his flat, then changed his mind: The fewer the people who knew where he lived the better. You're a damn fool, Karl Van As, he told himself dispassionately. He told her to tell the patrolmen to wait.

He arrived at the office five minutes later. Anna de Wet had obviously had a wonderful time with the two patrolmen. She was all vibrant animal, glowing, strong, rudely healthy. And while he shook their hands the two patrolmen could not quite shake free from the spell she had cast over them. He felt unkind about it but could not suppress the thought of two dogs and a bitch on heat. Life here in this room, for now, was reduced to a most unsophisticated and overpowering sense of sex: and reduced to this it was sordid beyond words. ~~Briefly~~ Fleetinglly, for no more than three seconds, the distaste he felt showed on his face.

Anna de Wet saw and misread his expression. Jealous! she told herself triumphantly; jealous at last! Only a hint of it, but enough! Quite enough for a start. Yes, quite enough....And how very Afrikaner he looked dressed for the outdoors. This was the real Karl Van As, the real descendant of the Voortrekker Paul Van As and his wife, Elsie, who had been with that small honoured band who had gone forth to conquer a wild land and who had laid the foundations of this nation with their blood and their sacrifice. One day, when he had rediscovered who and what he was, when he had turned his back on that world that now holds such attraction for him, she will lie

beside him and in a moment of peace and harmony between them, perhaps after loving, she will tell him about his great-great grandfather Paul and his wife Elsie, and how her own ancestor had left a diary that told of the meeting between Paul Van As and Elsie Bezuidenhout in the days of the Great Trek and of the flowering of love between them and of their marriage and of the death of Paul at the battle of Vegkop....One day she would take out that diary and show it to him. But not yet, not till he had found his way back to his own people: and the way back was through her. This was something she had known for a long time now, for nearly all of the three years that he had been back from working overseas and that she had worked for him. She had watched and waited.....

She noted his instructions mechanically and smiled warmly for the benefit of the patrolmen. Then she was alone in the office.

.....She had watched and waited this long; she ^{could} watch and wait a little longer.....

The telephone rang and a brisk, businesslike Miss Anna de Wet answered it.

"This is the place," the first patrolman, the one with the gruff voice said. He was the driver and the spokesman, but on the long drive Van As had discovered that it was his partner, the smaller, quieter one who was the brains of the partnership. Gruff Voice appeared to lead but on all important matters he automatically looked to his partner for guidance in the form of quiet suggestion. So now he said, "This is the place", and looked quickly for the nod of confirmation from his partner. They stopped and got out of the patrol car.

Van As walked about looking at the ground, both on the highway and a little off it, but there was nothing to see, nothing to connect this spot with the encounter between these two and Coetzee-Westhuizen and Nkosi-Dube. He thought: I really have no business to withhold what I know about Dube from Snel. He was conscious of the patrolmen watching him, almost as though they expected him to perform some feat of magic. The tribalism in us, he smiled inwardly.

"Tell me again what happened," he said.

The first time, in the car, Gruff Voice had told the story. Now the quiet one told it, more sharply, more clear, more incisively, bringing in details that had been missing from Gruff Voice's account. When he had done Karl Van As felt that he knew every detail of what had happened. Dube had acted his part perfectly, much better than Coetzee-Westhuizen.

"What aroused your suspicion?"

"Something about Coetzee - of course we know now he wasn't really Coetzee - there was an odd unnaturalness about him...."

"Remember you connected him with all the other things," Gruff Voice cut in.

"That was afterwards," the quiet one said.

"And the Native?" Karl Van As said, "The kaffir?"

"He looked allright. You know, startled and shocked because he'd been asleep. Nothing suspicious."

"You looked in the car?"

"Briefly, before the Native woke up. Nothing in it, only an old bag with his things. ~~in it~~"

"Checked it?"

"No, I've seen so many of these smelly kaffir bags, and that

one really stank, sir!"

He thought: Allright, here's you piece of magic, and said, quietly and deliberately and calculated to impress:

"That bag was stuffed with money; probably more money than all three of us have seen together in all our lives."

Gruff Voice said "Allejesus!"

The quiet one suddenly looked drawn and pinched.

"And I let them go," he said bitterly.

"Not your fault," Van As murmured. "Could happen to any of us. To me. How were you to know."

The quiet one shook his head: "Not to you, sir....And the Native was the big one?"

"Yes. He had come in from the sea: Coetzee-Westhuizen was bringing him in in order to protect him against just what happened - meeting up with a patrol."

"And I let them go," the quiet one repeated with a world of self-reproach.

Gruff Voice murmured: "A bagful of money!"

The land about them was flat and scrublike, a sudden patch of the parched Karroo in normally lush tropical Natal.

"Where's the road to the beach you mentioned?"

"About a mile further," the quiet one said. "It's more a track than a road." He looked down at his hands and clenched them.

That's what you'd like to do with Richard Dube, Karl Van As thought. Aloud, he said: "You must have had a close look at him."

"The Native; yes, I suppose I did....."

"Think you'll recognise him?"

Suddenly, explosively, the quiet one let out a string of bitter,

obscene curses that encompassed the Native and his mother and his mother's mother and his father and his father's father; and while he mouthed them his body trembled and his face worked. When it was over he shook himself as one coming out of a storm. He avoided Van As's eyes and mumbled: "Sorry, I had to do that."

Karl Van As fought down the disgust that well up in him in waves. This one, he knew, was more representative of his people than he himself was: this one and Anna de Wet and Gruff Voice and the little man from Records and a million and more others. But the knowledge was cold comfort and the sense of despair which he had always managed to escape when he was out in the country was strongly with him now. Soon the reality of his people will take from him the solace he had found in the open veld. A part of his mind whispered: The circle grows smaller.

"Come, I want to see the road to the beach."

They got back into the car and drove for a mile further along the highway then they turned off it to the left and bumped across the land, retracing the way Coetzee-Westhuizen had come when he had brought the courier with the money from the sea. At the solitary house a mile from the beach they found an old couple who had chosen to live out their retirement cut off from the rest of the world. They were hostile but the patrolmen assured Van As they were allright. As on the road, the rock outcropping on the beach gave no clue to the coming of Nkosi-Dube; but standing there Karl Van As built up a remarkably accurate picture of what had happened. The thing now, he thought calmly, is to find the living link, the person to whom Dube was handed over. He began walking away from the beach as he imagined Coetzee-Westhuizen and Dube-Nkosi would have done.

Gruff Voice made to follow him but the quiet one gestured for him to stay back.

"He doesn't want us now. He's found what he wanted."

"But he only stood and stared...." Gruff Voice said.

"Are you blind, man?" There was a hint of tolerant contempt in the quiet one's voice. "Come, we'd better take the car to the road."

"But....."

"He'll come out there."

"If you say so," Gruff Voice said doubtfully.

"Come on!"

It was a little over an hour later that the waiting patrolmen saw Karl Van As come striding across the barren land towards the highway. He looked lean and long and he moved with the easy loping grace of the African ~~antelope~~ leopard, at home in wild and solitary places.

When he reached the patrol car the quiet one laid his hand on the arm of Gruff Voice to stop him speaking. Van As looked back at where he had come from then he got into the car and said "Drive along" in a remote, impersonal voice.

At every turning off the highway, wherever there were signs of a minor road or even a track that could take a car, he told Gruff Voice to go along it. And so they spent the afternoon following one track after another until, at last, in the very late afternoon when the sun sat low on the horizon, they turned into the track that Coetzee-Westhuizen had taken with the courier from the sea. They pulled up at a point not far from where Coetzee-Westhuizen had pulled up. Karl Van As got out. They were, now, on the edge of canefields, and the cane tops rose higher than the height of the

patrol car. Van As walked this way and that, examining the ground carefully, until he came to an opening between two canefields; it was the width of a ten-foot road way, enough to take a small tractor, ~~ex~~ cutter or loader. He followed the opening a little distance, eyes searching as he went. Again there was nothing to see, nothing to find; but again, as down at the beach, his nerves tingled painfully and some primeval, inexplicable, perception, perhaps an instinct going back to man's more pronouncedly animal past, told him ~~thaxx~~ he had found the point where the link between Coetzee-Westhuizen and the underground had been made. He stared about him intently, as though willing the ~~parakeet~~ earth and the tall cane shoots to tell him what he wanted to know.

Back at the car, Gruff Voice looked at his watch and grumbled:

"We'll spend the night here at this rate!"

"So what?"

"I want to get home."

"You know who he is?"

"Sure: bloke from Security named Van As."

The quiet one shook his head pityingly.

"You should read, man; or listen to what goes on. This bloke from Security, as you call him, has more pull than anybody else in Natal and more than most of the leaders in the whole land. He was secretary to the President before the President became President; and he worked with the Prime Minister before he was Prime Minister. They say he's a favourite of both. Last few times the Foreign Minister went overseas he went along as chief adviser."

"Then why's he in Security now?"

"That how they train these people for high places."

"I'd still like to go home."

"You've no ambition beyond bedding your wife! She'll still be there when you get back - and all the warmer for the waiting. It's a wonder that you come out to work at all.....You know, whenever there's a special and important party or whenever a big foreign visitor comes they invite him to stay at the Presidential Palace..."

"Allright: so he's important; does that mean we've got to stay here all night?"

"D'you want to spend the rest of your life as a lousy patrolman going on nightshift every two weeks?"

"No....."

"Well then; a casual word from him means more than twenty recommendations for promotion from the sergeant....."

"There he is! He's waving to us to come."

"Drive on and take it easy; and don't show any eagerness. They say this one is devilish clever and I've seen it for myself now; so you just be quiet: hear!"

"Allright!" Gruff Voice snapped sullenly as he moved the car forward.

Van As got into the car and directed them to ^{go} ~~drive~~ along the lane between the two fields of cane. A couple of miles along, past a small pumphouse, the lane split in two, one leading to the estate house and the other, in a gentle climb back to the road.

Van As was puzzled. He was convinced that the detour off the main road had been made and the transfer of Nkosi-Dube had taken place back there on the edge of the canefields. But why.....

"Allright," he said. "That's as much as we can do today. We can go back now. And thank you both very much. You've been most helpful."

By now the sun had gone down behind the western hills of Natal and only its reflection still bathed the land in a subdued light that seemed slightly unreal. But there would not be the long and tender twilight that is found on the Transvaal highveld. There twilight, like spring, has a lingering, transitional quality to its tenderness. Here, in tropical Natal, it was like the flick of a switch: the sun goes down: the land is bathed in its afterglow; click, the afterglow is gone; darkness is on the land.

Gruff Voice switched on his headlamps. The patrol car picked up speed and steadied to a gentle cruising hum at sixty miles.

Once, the quiet one turned back to Van As and murmured:

"We hope you found what you looked for, sir."

Van As said "Thank you," with off-putting dryness.

There was no further attempt at conversation till the patrolman dropped him outside his office building. ^{Van As} Then/~~he~~ said:

~~Thank you, sir~~ "I'd like you gentlemen to do a little work for me tomorrow. In fact, I'd like you to drop whatever else you're doing, get into mufti as early as you like tomorrow and go back to where we spent this afternoon. I'm sure somebody must have seen Coetzee-Westhuizen's car on its way to meet the Native with the money, and I'm also sure that somewhere along the line someone must have seen another car sometime during that night. Ask around and dig around till you find out. Take as much time as you need, a day or two or three. But you realise of course that the longer it takes the less the ~~less~~ chances of success."

The quiet one said: "Of course, sir. How do we report? Twice daily?...."

"You don't: not until you have something to report. Then you

phone my office, no matter what time of day or night."

"Right, sir. Our sergeant....."

"I'll arrange it. You just get out there. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, sir!"

When he thought they were out of earshot Gruff Voice looked quickly at his partner and said "You were right" with a hint of wondering awe in his voice.

At the office one of the men on night duty gave Van As a sealed note from his secretary. He took it into his office to read. It ~~was~~ ~~text~~ ~~gave~~ him a series of numbers and the times at which his party could be reached at any given number. He checked his time, ticked off one of the numbers against the list and called the special operator at the telephone exchange. The woman recognised his voice instantly.

"I was waiting for you, sir."

"You have the list of numbers?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fine. I'll be at my private personal number in two hours' time."

~~Right~~ So the nine-fifteen number is the one."

"That's right; and make absolutely certain that its clear all the way."

"Right, sir. I'll call you."

He thought: At this level we're devilishly efficient; wish to God the underground people understood that better.

He forced any further thought on the subject out of his mind. He took out paper and pen and began to write, setting out in fine

detail all he had discovered about the case so far, his thoughts on it and the line he felt should be pursued. The only thing he left out, the thing to which he made no reference at all, was his personal knowledge of the identity of Richard Dube.

When he had finished writing it was twenty minutes to nine. He locked what he had written into his confidential drawer and left the office. He felt hungry and tired suddenly, and desperately lonely, as lonely as he had not felt for two years. That was how long it was since he had last seen her, and he knew that tonight her sense of pride would prevail over his.

It was three minutes to the hour when he reached his flat. It took him slightly over ten minutes to shower and change and he was just settling down to a drink when the telephone rang at his elbow. In spite of himself he felt pride at the fineness of his timing. Then the familiar voice came to him, clear as though in the next room instead of in faraway ~~Prater~~ Cape Town, nearly a thousand miles away.

"Karl...."

"Yessir! Good to hear your voice again...."

"And yours boy! Listen. This business....I understand its been turned over to you...."

"Yes, sir. The man who was killed. You know, the one who called himself Coetzee, well he was guiding a courier who had come in from the sea."

"So that's where their sudden wealth comes from. We want that man, Karl! We want him badly! And we want to know whose ship carried him....But listen. You'll get the reports in the morning. A myth is being created and that is always dangerous. At illegal meetings

in Pretoria and Johannesburg and all up and down the Reef there has been talk about a new underground hero who cannot be captured and who cannot be killed because he is the spirit of freedom and is therefore invincible. Its popping up all over the place, boy! And his name is Richard Nkosi and they say he's just slipped into the country bringing half a million Rand for the underground and that he's gone out again. And that he will come and go as he pleases because there's nothing we can do about him.....You know the sort of thing....."

"Yessir."

"Well boy, I don't want this thing to catch on. It could be serious if it did. We've got to destroy the myth before it spreads."

"That means catching the man who is currently identified with the myth and putting him publicly on trial...."

"And then destroying him publicly, boy! And I want you to do that for me, for the nation! Go to it! And we don't have much time. We don't want the overseas press and those baboons at the United Nations to pick it up! So I leave it in your hands. Call for whatever you need. Alright?"

"Right, sir."

"Fine then. I've people here so personal matters must wait till later. Goodnight and kill that myth, Karl!"

"Goodnight, sir."

Karl Van As put the receiver back on its stand, leaned back and closed his eyes. After a while the phone rang again. He picked it up, knowing it would be the special operator at exchange, and said:

"Everything was fine, thank you very much."

She said: "Thank you; goodnight, sir," and started the dismantling of the special connection that had disrupted ^{normal} service all over the lan

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Karl Van As tossed down his drink then reached for the phone again. It required no conscious effort to remember the number although he had not used it, or thought of it, for nearly two years. He dialled it briskly, without^{that}/hesitation which is part of remembering. It rang half a dozen times, and he felt nervous tension growing in him. What if she were not there? What if she had gone away? Two years is a long time. He breathed in deeply.....It rang four times more then there was the click. He closed his eyes and waited.

Her voice had not changed; the coolness of it had the old familiar effect of fingers across his forehead.

He said: "Hello, Mildred."

The silence of a mild shock, he thought. Then she said:

"Hello, Karl....What do you want?"

"How are you, Mildred?"

"Does it matter?...."

"I deserve that. But it does matter."

"Because you're bored and lonely?"

Now the effect of the cool voice was savagely, cuttingly hurtful. He stood up to better withstand the painful impact.

"And that, too," he said quietly. "But you're right; I am lonely. Not bored, though. May I come around?"

"Just like that!"

"Yes."

In the long silence that ensued he swayed gently on his feet, willing himself to an unnatural relaxedness, the better to absorb any shock.

"I thought you'd leave me alone now."

"So did I. But I can't."

"Can't? A man like you?"

"Allright: won't; don't want to: but the real word is 'can't' -/ ever
for a man like me. Mildred...."

"Yes?"

"Please....."

"To what end, Karl?"

"What end do you want?"

"Peace of mind and my work, such as it is."

"And have you had it these past two years?"

"You're getting more skilled at your business everyday, Karl. "

"That really hurt." He said it quietly, casually: but the woman at the other end of the line knew him, knew what it meant for him to say that.

When she spoke again the cutting savagery had left her voice.

"It's just no good, Karl....."

"Have you had ^{the} peace of mind you crave?"

"No."

"Neither have I. Please....."

"To what end, Karl? That you and I should one day have to stand up in court? You know this. Think of your career....."

"Please Mildred....."

There was a long pause then the woman spoke in an ~~anxious~~ ^{unhappy, lost} child's voice: "Allright....But....."

And Karl Ven As reached out and completed the words and the thought for her: ".....Yes, its on my own head." Then he allowed the suppressed tenderness to break through his voice: "Give me ten minutes."

The little house stood on the very edge of the coloured quarter. You have the main road as the dividing line between the coloured section and the white section. And by convention the coloureds who live here, just across the way from the whites, are the best coloureds ~~xxxxxxx~~ those closest to the whites in looks, manners, education, affluence. Without ever talking about it, or consciously thinking about it, the coloureds who live on the dividing line behaved like people on permanent probation. Their children never played out in the street; they never made any noise; if they had parties or quarrels or fights they had them quietly and behind closed doors. The whites across the line were of the working class or less, anyone who could afford to moved elsewhere as soon as possible. So, at the weekends, ^{and} there was noise/~~ax~~ fighting and periodic bouts of savage verbal exchange from the white side: never from the coloured side. Most of the coloured houses had high walls and locked gates or else very thick and very high hedges. The little house on the corner had both. The walls around it rose a good eight feet and were topped with two strands of barbed-wire and there were jagged pieces of broken bottle embedded on the top of the walls. And, towering above the walls, and in the time of flowering littering the walled-in garden ~~xxxx~~ as well as the pavement outside it with their flowers of white and red and violet and blue, ~~the~~ temple trees, fern trees, and flame trees ~~xxxxxxx~~ made a higher, fragrantly lush inner wall for the little house. Lower down, much of the ^{concrete} walls were hidden behind climbing roses. And underfoot was a carpet of lush, broad-blades, well-cropped grass. In fact, the little house on the corner had been transformed into an island of tranquility in a world most lacking in that quality.

Apart from an old Griqua woman, Miss Mildred Scott lived alone in the little house. The old Griqua woman was Miss Scott's 'inheritance' she had nursed Miss Scott as a little child and when/^{Miss Scott} grew up the old woman had become her personal maid and attendant. Later, when Mildred Scott left the family farm in Griqualand East to go to the university of Cape Town the old woman had gone with her to keep house for her in two rented rooms, and to cook for her, and to clean for her and to see that her clothes were always clean and/^{ironed} ~~xxxxxxx~~.

The old Griqua woman was the only ~~xxx~~ witness when Mildred Scott brought Karl Van As to the two rooms in the quiet Cape Town suburb a long, long time ago now. She had served them their first meal that night. And she had been present on all the other nights to serve their needs and then stay out of their way while they talked and laughed and shared their studies. Often, she had prepared a basket for them to go to the beach on moonlit nights. In those days, a dozen years and more ago, many things were still possible in a place like Cape Town, and especially among the young people who attended the university. There was the need to be cautious, of course. But many things were still possible then. There were many discreetly conducted mixed parties in private homes; and there were a few restaurants ~~where~~ the lights were not too bright and where the management was prepared to overlook certain things provided the young man was known to have the right background. And so the old Griqua woman had watched the unfolding and flowering of a very special relationship; and it was the most natural thing in the world when she found, one morning, that the young man had spent the night. She had braced herself then for the inevitable day of the wedding and made her own secret plans. When ~~the~~ ^{that} day had not come she had accepted

that as one facet of the scheme of things, not the ideal perhaps, but inevitable too.

The young man had been the first to finish and leave the university. He had gone away and come back and gone away and come back. And always there had been the letters from all over the world. And he had gone and come and gone and come.

And then Mildred Scott had finished and taken her first job in the Free State, and her second job in the Transvaal, and her third job in the Cape. And always there had been the letters; and always, too, she had insisted on absolute privacy so that she could receive him in private at very short notice. For this reason she made no friends, had as little outside social intercourse as her work demanded and made of her home, wherever she was, an island of self-contained beauty which she enlarged and enriched as she earned more money. At first the leaders in the communities where she found herself teaching had tried to draw her out. Ladies had invited her to their clubs and gatherings. Young men had come paying court. But in time both the ladies and the young men had given up and Miss Mildred Scott was left to the sole companionship of the old Griqua woman, which, as far as the world was concerned, was all she seemed to desire. A few curious old ladies had tried to sound out the old Griqua woman. But they, too, had soon given up. Thus the years passed and the ardent young woman who had left university at twenty-two to start her career was now, at thirty-five, at the top of her profession, respected, poised, self-contained, a brilliantly successful headmistress - but a woman who had, outside her professional duties, set herself apart from the life of the people around her, and of the land. Or so it seemed to all those who thought they knew anything about Miss Mildred Scott.



The car swung off the road and the old Griqua woman flung open the gate. Karl Van As drove in and kept going till he had eased his car into the garage beside Mildred Scott's tiny and very old English car. The old Griqua woman shut and bolted the gate and hurried back to the house, to be on call. Karl Van As and the old woman met at the ~~steps~~ first step to the verendah.

He said: "Hellow Lena," as though they had seen each other every day over the past two years.

She said: "Mister Karl," with ^{an} ~~the~~ easy casualness which suggested that an absence of two years was the most normal thing in the world. He looked up at the verendah and
/ A part of his mind protested: She could come out to meet me!

He composed himself, willing ~~himself~~ his heart and mind into the state of quiet calm that was part of the presnnee of Mildred Scott. He went slowly up the six steps and through the open french window into the sitting room. The scent of roses assailed hissenses. And then she came through another door and he found himself holding on, unsure and anxious and awkward as on that first far-off day when he had worked up the courage to speak to her.....This is the only woman I ever want to marry..... Suddenly, uncertainty and anxiety and awkwardness fell from him and he was at peace and the heavy load at the back of his mind was lifted. Here, at last, he was not alone; here, in her presence, as always peace was possible.....But peace is a dangerous weakness in an embattled world..... He tried to look at her with the seeing eyes of a thinking man, but feeling kept intruding and memories of emotional intimacies merged the images so that he saw standing in front of him, at the same time, all the different faces of this woman as he had known her over the years, at everyone of their brief meetings.....This is constancy; this is

the face of constancy as only woman can show it.....

A shadow flitted across the woman's face, a minor emotional convulsion, then the automatic, polite social smile that he remembered from other awkward times showed on her face.

"You've lost weight, Karl - but it suits you."

"What do I say?"

"Two years is a long time. I'm not surprised you find it awkward."

"Please Mildred....."

"Allright! What am I supposed to do? Fall on your neck because you've condescended to come back? Or is it that you've become infected with what you profess to detest?"

She turned her back on him and found a chair. Briefly, he was consciously aware once more of the strong scent of roses. Every corner of the room had a large vase of roses.

"I wrote you, Mildred. I explained."

"And explanations cancel all hurt! Explanations make the blind see and the halt walk and the crooked straight!.....Please don't tempt me into saying what I don't want to and don't mean. The thing is: I took you at your word. We had agreed that we would be honest and say when either of us couldn't take it any more. So when you wrote I took you at your word. You were staying away; you had chosen to. That was the fact. The explanations were unimportant - ways of justifying or excusing a decision. The fact was that you were not coming back and I adjusted myself to this fact. And now....."

He cut into her words, with a quiet casual insistence familiar to her from other times: "I don't know where I'm going any more....."

The woman became still. All rage and resentment left her. Her stillness pervade the rose-scented room and reached out at the man.

This, she told herself calmly, is the man for whose sake I turned my back on everything except my work, and that, in the beginning at least, was only in order to stay alive and fresh and in touch with the living and growing ferment which is the essence of life. I know this man. I have given all I have and all I am ~~EVER~~ to him, so I know him well and I know direction and purpose are crucial to him.

He said: "D'you understand what I'm saying, Mildred?"

"I'm trying to."

"If you do you'll understand why I wrote and why I'm here."

"If not?"

He shrugged and walked away from where she sat. "Then I might as well give in."

"Give in?"

"To the hate-mongers and the fear-mongers."

The woman thought: There was a time when I leaned on him and he gave me strength and comfort and confidence; but that was oh so long ago. And now?

She said: "Have you eaten, Karl?"

He said: "I don't want anything."

She got up and went out of the room. When she returned she poured two drinks for them. He came to her and said:

"Please, may I touch you?"

She offered him both her hands. He squeezed them then he pulled her into the folds of his arms and pressed her hungrily to his bosom. Then he kissed her, gently, like an anxious child pleading. She took his hand and led him out to the little verandah. Sitting there, they could see a section of the night sky and a little tip of the Milky Way. After a while the old Griqua woman, Lena, brought a tray with cold chicken on it.

Mildred Scott said: "Thank you, Lena; you'd better go to bed now." And she remembered the thousands of times she had used the same words in the past when Karl had come to her.

Karl Van As looked up quickly at the old woman, and suddenly, for all three of them, time past, time present, time future, merged into a static moment of endless ritual.

The old Griqua woman accepted the moment with the same casualness with which she accepted God and magic and death and ghosts and miracles and talking trees and weeping rocks - for who is to draw a line and ~~fare~~ say 'this is life' or 'this is no-life'?

Karl Van As allowed the moment to wash over him - a cleansing ocean of unutterable relief and heart-filling tranquility.

in the mind of
Only Mildred Scott was there a vague, uneasy protest against the meaning of the moment, like someone brushing away invisible cobwebs that threaten to bind and stifle and choke and kill without hurting.

The old woman said: "'Night Mister Karl, Miss Millie...."

Afterwards, she coaxed him into eating. And then they sat in silence for a long time. And then he began to talk, telling her of his last trip abroad and the terrible new isolation of the country and his own depression. And as he talked his voice changed, the undercurrent of the gentleness of the dreamer returned to it, and the self-assurance too. And whenever he paused, she prompted with a question or suggestion, and he went on again. And speaking as freely as he could only to this woman, he purged himself of all his pent-up misery and confusion. And so he told her about his latest job, the tracking down of Nkosi-Dube and to her, of course, he could reveal his knowledge of the identity of Richard Dube and he could tell her

that he had withheld this knowledge from his superiors. There was a hint of the self-important pride of the young man on the way up when he told her of the telephone call he had received earlier that night. Then he pulled himself up.

She thought: Now, at last.

An oddly tentative boyish smile flickered across his face.

"I'm showing off!"

"I know. Does it matter?"

"Very much. You're the only one I want to show off to; the only one I want to be proud of me; the only one who matters. Doing what I do becomes important in relation to you."

"You mean to my approval after you've done it."

"That too; but its more than that. If I were less important than I am it would be more difficult for us to meet."

"You know that's a trick argument," she said softly. "You've still not learnt to catch yourself out when your mind deceives you and leads you into clever rationalisations."

"But I do have relative freedom in coming to you."

"But is that really the point?"

"It is an important factor."

"Allright."

"Allright so it is not the point. You tell me what is."

"But you know it , Karl. You're just giving in to this -"

"Trick of the mind!" he jeered.

"Yes! Mock but its true! You want my approval after you've done whatever you needed to do."

"You're right, except that it isn't as simple as that." He thought for a while and then his words came out with a careful

delicacy. "You can't walk alone. Many have given the illusion but none have really walked alone. Man is not made that way. Each man is bedded in his people, in their history and their culture and their values....And so, each man wants and works, almost automatically for the approval of his people. This is over-simplification but you know what I mean."

"I know: now you connect."

"When a man believes his people are taking the wrong turning it becomes difficult. If you're a Jan Hofmyer you stand up and you speak your mind and you live and die with the burden of being rejected by your own people. But we're not all cast in that mould. There are people who cannot bear the burden, so they do not stand up. But they think and they feel -"

"And they hurt," she said softly.

"Yes, and they hurt...."

"And when people hurt they need comfort."

"Yes! You're right, of course. But was it need of comfort that made me come to you all those years ago? Is that why I never married in spite of all those matches everybody tried to arrange over the years?" Of course people need comfort when they hurt."

~~XXXXXX~~ Mildred Scott said: "Oh dear," in a very small voice. After a while she went on normally. "But in this at least we are equal, Karl. Or are we?"

"I'm only defending myself against an insinuation...."

"That you need comfort?"

"In what is somehow a disreputable way. Is it disreputable for for a man to turn to the woman he loves for comfort?"

"No. But it is disreputable to try and pad love with a super-

structure of explanations and reasons. This is something subjective and emotional and irrational. The only real question for us, Karl, is why you stayed away for two years - and I'm not thinking of what you wrote in that letter - and why you are here now."

Karl Van As got up and walked down the verandah steps and on to the carpet of thick green grass. The woman went into the room and fixed another drink. As she passed a tall mirror, she looked at her reflection. She noted the beginnings of crows feet around the eyes and the faint hints of loose skin about the jowl. Time was showing. At thirty-nine Karl had withstood the ravishes of time much better than she had done. I'm a spinster of thirty-five now, she thought, and the thought startled her a little. She didn't feel thirty-five: anyway, how does one feel at thirty-five? She felt more controlled, more certain of herself ^{hard} than when she had met Karl in those far away ~~nineteen~~-year-old days. ^{but nothing more} Then, he was twenty-three and even ~~shy~~ ^{his} more shy and vulnerable; but even then she had seen that capacity ^{his} for detail and strength of mind. Also, of course, there was the physical thing which had flowered between them from the first moment and which had never died. Sixteen years of an odd kind of love. "But that's what I wanted," she murmured to the mirror. / Then she carried the drinks out into the garden.

She had not thought the affair would last this long. For her it was love right from the outset, and she knew it: something that went deep and would last a lifetime. She had resigned herself to his going away and to the end of it. And she had seen herself marrying someone who was a nice and decent and likeable person and rearing a ~~far~~ family for him and being physically faithful to him and a good mother to their children.

Of course she had known that Karl loved her; but different people loved differently, and for some love dies in absence or when the going gets rough. So she had been surprised and suspicious and a little disturbed when he kept writing, and when he came back, and kept coming back. In the end she had realised that it went as deep for him and would last as long. She had quiet and carefully adjusted the pattern of her life to this new reality.

She joined him under the tallest of the flame trees.

He said abruptly, with a hint of violence about it:

"I was afraid. That's why I stayed away."

"D'you know what of?"

"Of what they are doing! Of having to choose between you and them."

"But you chose, Karl."

"They are my people, Mildred! You don't just turn your back on your people because they are marching to disaster. Because that's how it must end. The only question is that of time...."

"And how much blood."

"As you say, and how much blood....And I know you feel about these things too, Mildred. You've never talked about them; you've never shown. But I know you feel and I think there must be moments of hate."

"Never for you, Karl. But I think you're wrong for the others even. I think we are reaching a point beyond hate. We've lived with uncertainty and with fear for so long that we have achieved a balance in spite of these. I think that's what it really means to be coloured in this land now."

"I was afraid but I did come back!....Oh, Mildred. Also of what they might say and do, if they caught us. They are my people."

Together, they walked back to the little house.

Miss Anna de Wet was disturbed. Two days ago she had seen the first hopeful crack in the control of Paul Van As, a fleeting flash of jealousy because of her teasing attitude toward the two patrolmen. But the following morning he turned up late, a flower in his button-hole and a hint of mockery in his eyes. The mood of return to his people that she had sensed earlier was gone as though it had never existed; in its place was a gently ironic, slightly mocking detachment against which she felt helpless. But he did his work, and he did it with a new zest and gusto.

The outside telephone rang. She picked it up and listened, then she flicked a switch and spoke to Van As:

"Mr. DuPlessis on the line, sir."

"Put him on."

She did and listened for while; then she cut herself off.

"Japie?...What's new? Hope you've got something for me...."

"I have. Coetzee-Westhuizen was seen three times at three different places with an Indian named Naidoo. Interesting thing about Naidoo is he led the biggest ~~xxxx~~ coolie trade union until ^{the} compulsory registration and approval of officials law came in. Then he just faded away. Didn't even make the gesture of seeking government approval."

"Interesting, Japie. Go on."

"A little digging showed an amazingly militant young friend Naidoo about twelve-fifteen years ago; so militant, in fact, that one of the communist sheets/we dug up/ ^{of the time} ~~xxxx~~ attacked him fiercely for what they called his 'ultra-Leftism'. But suddenly, with the outlawing of communism and the control of the unions, Naidoo became so meek and

and mild it isn't funny."

"What's he do for a living?"

"Works as a clerk for Moola's; you know, the big coolie merchants. But we think this is a front."

"You amaze me Japie! All this in two days!"

"Come off it, Karl. We've been keeping a routine watch on Mr. Naidoo for years now."

"That's better. Why?"

"Partly because of his past; partly because his new attitude is good too/gum to be true; partly because it is routine; also because his elder brother is in the force. But he's a completely different kettle of fish."

"A good coolie, I suppose."

The man at the other end paused briefly as though swallowing, then he said: "I'm sorry, a good Indian."

"That's right, Japie, they're Indians, not coolies. Every time you say coolie its like spitting on them."

"I said I'm sorry."

"Allright. You have the reports of the meetings between Naidoo and Coetzee-Westhuizen?"

"Naturally"

Karl Van As smiled gaily at having put out Japie DuPlessis.

"Could you send them around please? And everything on Naidoo?"

"Will do. But there's a very special bit I left for the last. We're establishing a link between Naidoo and Dr. Nunkhoo. It is thin and vague so far. But at least twice Naidoo was in the company of Nunkhoo within an hour of being with Coetzee-Westhuizen. Anyway, its all in the file and I'm sending it over to you now."

Karl Van As sensed that the man at the other end was still smarting under his rebuke. He knew too that the man had taken it only because it had come from him. Had it come from anybody else Japie DuPlessis would have exploded: anybody else within reason, that is; another pro for instance. Japie was one of the old hands, a dyed-in-the-wool nationalist but a first-class pro at his job. But the pros also knew they had to walk warily with the types on the way up, the types being groomed for political power. What Karl Van As did not know was that Japie DuPlessis had invited his assistant to listen in. And that Anna de Wet, checking on whether he had finished talking, had heard him rebuke Japie and stayed listening. So, rubbing salt into the wound, he said:

"Excellent work, Japie. But bear in mind the wisdom of saying 'Mister' rather than 'Jim'. It's no skin off our noses and we might get farther." See you..."

But Anne de Wet did not hang up and so she heard DuPlessis say:

"Heerthat! Of all the arrogant, pompous, political sons of bitches God help me if I don't get him one day!"

And she heard the voice of DuPlessis' assistant cautioning:

"Easy, chief!"

Then the line went dead.

Anna de Wet ^{sat deep in} ~~was sitting in~~ for a while, then she put the phone back on its cradle, got up and marched resolutely into Van As' office. He looked up and sensed that this was something special.

"I should like to speak to you, sir."

"Personal or business?"

"The phone call that just ended."

"You listened?"

"To the last part of it, unintentionally."

"Go on."

"I came in at the point where you told Mr. DuPlessis about the wisdom of saying mister rather than Jim. After you had hung up I heard him speak to someone who had listened in. He said: 'Hear that! Of all the arrogant, pompous political sons of bitches! God help me if I don't get him one day!' And then I heard ~~him~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ Inspector Jansen say: 'Easy chief!' I thought you should know, sir."

"Thank you, Anna....But cheer up. Nothing to be gloomy about."

Anna de Wet fought back the strong impulse to warn him, to beg him to be careful. She swung on her heels.

For a long while Karl Van As thought over what Anna de Wet had told him. He knew that on the point of saying 'Mister' to Indians and coloureds and blacks she saw things the DuPlessis way. Her warning him was part of that personal thing she had sold herself into believing she felt for him.

He thought: I'd better cover myself over this in case Japie ^{of it} makes an issue/ later. He rang for his secretary and dictated a confidential note to Dr. Snel reporting the outlines of developments in the Coetzee-Westhuizen case, his telephone conversation with DuPlessis and his suggestion of the wisdom of being polite, wherever possible, in dealing with non-Europeans. It was, he noted, the government's intention to implement its policies towards non-whites with as little friction as possible, avoiding all acts that might ^{non-white} lead to/bitterness.

The file Japie DuPlessis promised arrived just before lunch so he did not go out. Instead, Anna de Wet brought him sandwiches and coffee. By late afternoon he had done with the file, knew every

significant detail of its contents. As far as he was concerned, the Coetzee-Westhuizen-Naidoo link was clearly established by the file. Next, the Naidoo-Nunkhoo line was thin but ~~xxx~~ it held together sufficiently, especially when you examined the extraordinary coincidences of the doctor having to deliver Indian children at times and places that made for his meeting Naidoo after Naidoo had met Coetzee-Westhuizen. Naidoo has no car. Nunkhoo as a doctor has a freedom and mobility denied most other Indians. So all logic and reason point to a rendezvous between Coetzee-Westhuizen on the one hand and Naidoo and Nunkhoo on the other that night on the edge of the canefields when Nkosi-Dube had come in from the sea. Certainly it was an interesting theory to test and to check.

Karl Van As personally took the file back to Japie Duplessis's office in the great C.I.D. building. As he hoped, Jansen was with DaPlessis.

"I want to apologise, Japie," he said without preamble. "When I hung up earlier today I realised what I had said could be misread in a very nasty sort of way. And though I'm sure you didn't do that, I just wanted to make sure in my own mind." He turned to Jansen and explained what had happened as though he didn't know Jansen knew. Then he apologised again. Finally, pointing to the file, he said:

"I would say a talk with friend Naidoo is indicated. Perhaps we can do it tomorrow. Anyway, many thanks: and goodnight gentlemen."

"I'll be damned! Japie DuPlessis said wonderingly after Van As had left.

"They say he a very big man in the making," Jansen murmured.

Van As and Mildred Scott had a party on a quiet, white sand beach that night.

They picked up Sammy Naidoo late that night. There was no need to, the order that came through was to have him at the C.I.D. building in the morning. They could have picked him up at his home or at his place of work any time the following morning. But things were slack and the patrolman who was not driving was bored. There nothing new to talk about so he said to his partner "Let's go'n get that coolie/ Naidoo."

"The order's for tomorrow."

"I know; but let's go'n get him all the same."

The driver did not particularly want to. He/didn't enjoy messing up these people. But his partner was popular among the other ~~patrol~~ patrolman and he could make you feel awfully uncomfortable by the way he told a story in a crowded canteen. That's why the driver had been distressed when he had been assigned to go on patrols with this older and more responsible man. Odd thing, few of the/chaps liked him or wanted to go out with him but none dared turn his back on this chap. So he said: "Allright."

Naidoo was in the act of putting on his tie when they burst into his room. He braced himself, wiped out all thought and feeling as you snuff out a candle, and turned to them and stood waiting, forced relaxed.

"Pretty tie," the younger ~~patrol~~man said, prowling about the room, seeking for liquor, communist literature, anything.

"You Sammy Naidoo?" the older man snapped.

"Yes."

The young/~~man~~ ^{one} measured himself against Naidoo and decided that even with his special training he would have a hard time handling this one in a fight: unless he was a coward, of course. Big frames and hard muscles have often hidden cowardly hearts. He walked up

close to Naidoo and tried to stare him down. It was very difficult. Even after stretching himself as tall as possible he still had to tilt his head upwards to look Naidoo in the eye.

Briefly, a faint flicker that was out as quickly as it came, ~~there~~ young patrolman read a message of mocking derision in the Indian's eyes. The impulse was to smash the round black face in front of him. But his own mind sent a quick, sharp warning message: this one would strike back and his big ~~fixate~~ fists might do the smashing. He stepped back.

"Sammy Naidoo - curry arse, heh!"

"Yes," Sammy Naidoo said quietly.

"Inspector Jansen wants you at headquarters," the older one said. "You'd better come."

"This time of night?" Naidoo said.

"Yes! This time of night!" the younger one suddenly screamed.

"Come," the older one said.

Naidoo pulled off the party tied tie and tossed it on his bed.

"Not taking the pretty tie," the young one teased.

Naidoo slipped into his jacket. The older patrolman motioned for his partner to go in front. He wanted to see what went on all the time. He had sensed that flash~~ing~~ of controlled savagery in his partner. Naidoo walked between the two policemen out of the little room and down the dirty passage of the rooming house.

Shadowy figures stood in small clusters in the dimly lit street. Naidoo's landlady waited at the little gate that led to the street. From across the street a voice called out a question in some ~~outland~~ Indian tongue. Naidoo called back "No!"

"Officer," the landlady spoke to the older man, "please, sir,

Mr. Naidoo arrested?"

"No," the older one said.

"Not yet!" the younger snapped

"He come back, sir, please?"

Naidoo said: "Don't worry. Nobody's to worry. Tell....."

The young one turned and shoved him.

"That's enough!"

The cringing woman straightened up. There was the feel of movement from many directions. A shadowy figure cursed the police fluently, in English. The possibility of violence was suddenly all about.

Again, Sammy Naidoo called out "No!" and the tension dispersed.

"Put away your gun," the older patrolman said to the younger.

The sergeant on duty at C.I.D. headquarters was angry when they brought in Sammy Naidoo and he discovered there was no charge order and the ~~order~~ was for him to be brought in next morning. He knew there was something special about this Naidoo affair and that the very powerful Mr. Van As of security was involved. From the hints of the elder patrolman he also knew that the younger policeman had it in for the big Indian. He was therefore not prepared to assume the responsibility of booking in Naidoo for the night. All the young fellow would have to do is gather half a dozen of his friends, go into the cell where Naidoo is kept and tease him until he could take it no more, then they would be free to do a little bloodletting in safety. No, he wasn't prepared to take the responsibility. On the other hand, to send Naidoo home now might prove even more dangerous. If he let Naidoo go and Naidoo disappeared they would blame him.

He reached for the telephone and dialled Inspector Jansen's home number, bracing himself against the Inspector's wrath.

Inspector Jansen phoned Karl Van As' flat but there was no reply. He knew Japie DuPlessis was at an important banquet with political overtones so he decided not to disturb him. Ideally, the thing was just to leave Naidoo there till morning but the desk sergeant was not happy about the attitude of one of the patrolmen who had brought him in. And Jansen knew how some of these strong young fellows tend to get restive. This was one of the ways of letting off steam from time to time, but this particular boy would have to be disciplined for bringing in a suspect before the time specified. Inspector Jansen was also angry at having his evening off spoiled.

Before setting out for C.I.D. headquarters/^{he} tried the Van As number again but again there was no reply. Where the devil could the man be? Thinking about it he remembered that very striking secretary of his. A really beautiful girl. De Wet....He looked her up in the book. If Van As was with her he/^{might not} ~~would~~ want it to be known. In the circumstances that was a chance that/^{had} ~~would~~ to be taken.....

"Miss de Wet? Ah, Inspector Jansen C.I.D. Sorry to disturb you but something urgent has come up and I'm trying to locate Mr. Van As. There's no reply at his flat. I thought you might know."

The girl remembered what had happened earlier in the day when she had listened in on a telephone conversation, so her replies were guarded. She didn't know where Mr. Van As was. Had Mr. Jansen tried his club?

Jansen detected her guardedness and misread it. Allright, miss/^{he's} with you but you're afraid of letting on. Aloud, he said:

"I'll ring there now. But just in case he isn't there and gets in touch with you later -"

"He never does this time of night, Inspector."

"But just in case, Miss de Wet. Please tell him one of my foolish young men picked up Sammy Naidoo this evening instead of tomorrow morning. He's at headquarters now and I'm on my way there. Alright, miss?"

"But - alright, Inspector."

When the Inspector hung up Anna de Wet phoned the duty officer at Security and told him of Inspector Jansen's call. The duty officer checked at all the numbers where Van As could usually be found, then he arranged for a phone call to be made to his flat every five minutes.

It was twenty minutes before ~~midnight~~ eleven when Jansen phoned Anna de Wet. It was five minutes after one when Karl Van As rushed into his flat and picked up the ringing telephone and the duty officer at Security told him what had happened.

Van As phoned through the C.I.D. headquarters. A very short tempered Inspector Jansen was still there.

"Sorry I've been out of town," Van As said. "How long have you had our man."

"Since ten o'clock."

"Then everybody will know he's been picked up?"

"Yes. It was semi-public and you can be sure everything's been covered up by now. "

"But why tonight?"

"Some witless idiot who'll be sorry when I've done with him!"

"And our man?"

"Here, in the next room. Tight-lipped. I've been at him for over an hour but he has nothing to say. I know how you feel about force but we'll have to force this one into speech."

"What do you mean? That he hasn't said a word?"
about himself

"Oh no; he answers questions/or questions that are harmless and pointless. He tell you all you want to know about himself: where he was born, how old he is, his background and education. He'll even discuss his ideas and beliefs with you. But ask him if he knows Coetzee-Westhuizen and he doesn't say a word....."

"By refusing to answer?"

"He doesn't even bother to do that. He just does not answer. I tell you the only way is for answers to be forced out of this."

"Hold on till I get there...."

"Might as well tell you the rest," Jansen said. "The half dozen people we were especially interest in have dropped from sight, vanished into thin air."

"All of them?"

"With the exception of Nunkhoo."

"I hope you left him alone."

"Yes."

"Good man; I'm on my way."

Karl Van As got out of the clothes he had worn to the beach, showered quickly and put on a lounge suite. He phoned Mildred Scott's number and when a sleepy spunding Mildred answered he said:

"Sorry to wake you but I'm going to be very business over the next couple of days or so."

"I understand."

"Goodnight: and take care."

"Goodnight; and you're the one to take care."

"Listen....."

"No. You do your work. Goodnight."

Karl Van As threw open the door and gestured for Sammy Naidoo to enter the room ahead of him. Except for the iron bars across the window, it did not look like an interrogation room. It was largish, with wall-lamps properly shaded and shedding a subdued and relaxing light. For furniture it had a settee under the window, two comfortable looking old armchairs and an executive desk and chair so angled that its occupant could see both door and window. An occasional low table and a good though old carpet on the floor in front of the settee completed the impression of the room being used partly as an office and partly for conferences and relaxation. Only the bars across the window somehow belied the general impression. The room was on the top floor of the security building. And as soon as he had looked Sammy Naidoo over Karl Van As had decided that his best chance of getting anywhere was to get Naidoo away from C.I.D. headquarters. He had been surprised by the speed with which Jansen had welcomed the idea.

"I thought you might prefer for us to have our talk here," Karl Van As said. "I'm sure you didn't like the air of violence at the C.I.D. place. I certainly didn't. I feel more peaceful here."

"And there's no chance of my getting out," Naidoo murmured.

"Naturally. We don't have as many doors, and nobody's ever escaped from here. Anyway, please sit down. The settee is the most comfortable."

Naidoo said, a little wearily: "You know it doesn't make much difference what method you use, soft or hard."

"You have great confidence, Mr. Naidoo."

"No. It's just that I won't play."

"Perhaps we can begin by finding why. But you look tired so

He picked up the telephone on the desk. "Send up some coffee please. A large pot: two cups. Yes, if you have any. Fine." Then he turned back to Naidoo. "They're sending up some sandwiches too."

Naidoo looked at his wrist watch; it was a few minutes off two.

Karl Van As sank into one of the armchairs.

"Sorry to have you here at this ungodly hour. The instruction was for them to bring you in in the morning. This sort of thing often happens when we have to use the services of the C.I.D. But Security is a small specialist force and we cannot spare men for routine jobs. Anyway, apart from your loss of sleep and my loss of sleep the real loss is that everybody has been warned by this premature action....." Karl Van As waited a while, watching Naidoo closely, then asked: "Aren't you going to protest?"

Naidoo said: "I am tired, you know."

"It's awfully difficult," Karl Van As said, "to make contact with a man who deliberately blanks out his personality." It forces one to do this rather silly fishing."

"I agree it is rather silly."

"Then please don't force me to continue it."

Surprised interest flickered across Naidoo's face, then died out. He said, slowly, with a hint of preoccupation:

"Do you really expect people to climb on a cross and meekly stretch out their arms for the nails to be hammered in, just because you call them mister and speak politely?"

"I wonder if we are talking about the same thing," Van As said.

"If we are not then why am I here?"

There was a knock on the door. Van As went to it and took the tray from the person outside, then he kicked the door shut and carried

the tray to the low table in front of Naidoo. He poured the coffee.

"Now, Mr. Naidoo. To business. Why are you here? Let us forget the prematurity of the action: you are here because we face a straightforward problem of the breaking of the law of the land, and without the rule of law civilised living is impossible. Bear with me and let me tell you everything I know as well as everything I have deduced from what I know. Let us begin with the man who was known as Coetzee to us and as Westhuizen to you and who was murdered eleven days ago. I'll get up the files for you if you wish so that ~~xxx~~ you can see how complete our background knowledge is. Evidence is coming in that this man acted as a small-scale paid mercenary for the underground. It is not yet conclusive but take my word for it we'll have everything we need before this week is up - within the next three days. Next we have established - and the proof is conclusive - that you, Mr. Sammy Naidoo, knew Coetzee-Westhuizen both as Coetzee and as Westhuizen. I think you knew his role and indeed used him on behalf of the underground; and this means that I think you are part of it. But this is what I think and what I think is not evidence. I think, too, that on the last night before Coetzee-Westhuizen died, you and someone else met him and he delivered to you an African named - or, to be more precise, going by the name - Richard Nkosi who had come off some ship. This man was a courier carrying money. Now, here's an additional piece of information for you; by one of the sheerest flukes I know the real identity of the man called Richard Nkosi.....That surprises you. Never mind, I'm the only one who knows so far. You must understand, Mr. Naidoo, there are many things that are happening now that I don't approve of. But however unpleasant some of its aspects, we must uphold the law

or else we sink into anarchy and barbarism.

"So, without stretching things out, I know that you, Mr. Naidoo are linked with the underground and have dealt with Coetzee-Westhuizen. I'm satisfied in my own mind that you know where I can find Richard Nkosi - oh, do you want proof that I know his real identity? That I know a little man, an artist with a very direct stare, a gentle voice and a very sharp brain? I don't think so, do you?"

Karl Van As stopped talking, poured himself a second cup of coffee and leaned back.

Naidoo thought: If I jump him and choke the life out of him the identity of Nkosi would remain a secret. And before the thought was completed he began to play it out. He flung himself at Van As, big hands out/^{to}~~the~~ wrap themselves around the man's neck and choke the life out of them. He felt Van As, felt the neck and closed ~~the~~ his big hands. Now all he had to do was hold on and squeeze. Then there was a terribly sharp and sudden pain shock, brief and agonising, then nothing.

Consciousness returned; Naidoo opened his eyes, his mind was clear but movement was impossible. He cursed himself bitterly for failing. The man was still in the armchair, calmly sipping his coffee.

Van As said: "Don't worry, the paralysis will soon pass. That was very foolish, you know. Consider the consequences of success. Forget what they would have done to you and think of your community. Fellows like that young patrolman who wanted you for no especial reason would have had supreme sanction for an orgy of violence. And believe me, people in high places wouldn't have been quick to call them off. A hundred or more of your people might have died had

you succeeded, Mr. Naidoo. It was a foolish attempt and no fault of yours that it failed."

Naidoo thought: He's not going to do anything about it. And it amazed him.

"Now, Mr. Naidoo: I think you know that I have⁸/pretty clear idea of what happened. Let me add that I liked and respected very much what I saw of the man we shall continue to call Richard Nkosi . But I've a job to do and I want him and you can give him to me...."

"Go to hell!" Naidoo spat out.

"I see speech and movement are back....Good. This is my ~~proposition~~ proposition. You give me Nkosi and we'll leave you and Nunkhoo and all your other people now on our list alone. In other words, give me Nkosi and I'll arrange to have the slate wiped clean for your people. The alternative is a clean up of all your leading people. I've so far persuaded them to hold off on detention orders for your key people like doctors, nurses and teachers. If you don't play detention orders start going out within the next twelve hours. Are you prepared to assume responsibility for that? For what would happen to the sick and the young?" "Are you, Mr. Naidoo?"

Naidoo felt cool and calm suddenly. He knew that this was the point to which ~~all~~ his life had been moving all the time, that all his actions and reactions, that all he had learnt^{and felt and thought}/between that~~time~~ off moment of birth and this moment in this room with this man, was all of a pattern, whole and complete.

His lips were purple with fatigue, his eyes bloodshot, there was a tremulousness inside him that that would not be stilled, but a faint smile ~~played~~ tugged briefly at the left corner of his mouth.

"But you and I," Naidoo said casually, "we know that I don't

really have any alternative."

He leaned forward and refilled his coffee cup and, for the first time, he took a sandwich from the plate. Van As grew alert and speculative. He had handled many men in this room and he was acutely sensitive to subtleties of mood.

"But I posed one for you: to wipe the slate clean for your people."

"That is if I ~~accept~~ agree to deliver Nkosi. What if I don't?"

"I told you."

"But not everything."

"No, not everything. I'm sure you can work it out for yourself."

"I'd like you to tell me?"

"Why?"

"Because I think I'm entitled to. Of course I may be wrong but let us examine it. If I ~~accept~~ you at your own evaluation, ^{and accept} that you are serving the law even though you find many of its features ugly and repulsive, ~~to you~~, then I'm entitled to find out why you invite me to commit what I consider an act of great betrayal. So, what if I don't deliver Nkosi?"

"You mean other than what will happen ^{to} to your people....."

"Yes."

Karl Van As hesitated in the act of putting down his cup; then after a full minute he completed the action and got up in one smooth motion. He walked to the window then to the door then back to the window.

"We'd still get the information out of you," Karl Van As said quietly. "It may take time. You're a strong man and a stubborn man but in the end we'd get it. I think you know this, Mr. Ndoo so why

make it difficult for yourself as well as for me."

"We're agreed then that I have no real choice. Whatever I decide you'll still get the information on Nkosi out of me, either painlessly or painfully."

"Yes; we're agreed."

"And you, Mr. Van As, would prefer it painlessly?"

First time he's acknowledged my existence as a man, Van As thought

"Yes, I would."

"Why?"

"Does it matter? I object to unnecessary violence; I blame my people for letting things get to this point; I think we need bridges of understanding; I think everything that's happening is bound to lead to violence in time. For all these reasons and many more."

"But if needs must, and all that you feel notwithstanding, then you will resort to violence to get the information out of me?"

"I do not believe in non-violence, Mr. Naidoo."

could

"Then you did think you/talk me into betraying Nkosi?"

"No. But I hoped you'd see reason."

"Reason being the betrayal."

"It depends on how you look at it."

"How do you, Mr. Van As?"

Karl Van As felt oddly defensive suddenly. Almost imperceptibly ~~xxxx~~ there had been a shift in the quality of the relationship. Somewhere along the line he had ceased to be the interrogator even though power was still with him.

"We're getting away from the point, Mr. Naidoo."

"I'm not so sure. But I really would like to understand why you went to the trouble of bringing me here. Did you honestly think I'd tell you?"

"No."

"Then why?"

Karl Van As thought of that night when he had walked up and down the Rue Servandoni because he could ^{not} work up the courage to go up to Dube's studio. This was one of the very few things he'd not told Mildred.

"Because we are South Africans and because I hope that one day there will be a reconciliation between your people and my people."

"And for this hope of yours you invite me to betray what I believe?"

"Don't you believe in the rule of law?"

"Come Mr. Van As! Don't spoil your reputation. The rule of which law? That might is right?"

"That's a simplification. Are we to surrender all ~~all~~ that we have created?"

"Who asked you to?"

"You do! Your underground wants power. It won't compromise or see any of our problems. I've told you there are many of us who do not agree with all that is happening."

"But you work the system: ⁱⁿ ~~you~~ fact you are its real brains. Without people like you, without your brains and your talents, the wild fanatics of Apartheid would not be able to operate for long. You and I know that the genuine believer in Apartheid is a curiously stupid and gullible creature. But it is you, Mr. Van As, people like you who keep the sytem alive and strengthen it. You are the really guilty men, and you know it. You try to suppress it and some of you go in for coloured women or good services to the so-called natives, but you know it, and we know it too. You know the difference between

between right and wrong, between good and evil, and all your world of rationalisation cannot hide what you really know you are....."

"You said coloured woman," Van As cut in.

"Yes. D'you think we don't know."

"I wondered."

Watch yourself, Sammy; this one's no fool. He'll not make another slip like that.

"And now you're worried that we might use our knowledge." God! If only he could get this information out!

"Well, won't you?"

"I can't, but my friends can. And I'm sure they will."

Karl VanAs rose smiling.

"Then I'd better pass you back to Inspector Jansen. When his men are done you'll be glad to tell me all you know. " Van As crossed to the desk and picked up the phone. "Please arrange to have Mr, Naideo transferred back to the C.I.D. "

Sammy Naideo took another sandwich and in doing so shifted the coffee ^tpoint. His foot kicked accidentally against the ^{little}table. The tremulousness of his body now registered only remotely, ^e somewhere far at the back of his mind. He thought of Dee Nunkhoo and a wave of desperate loneliness swept over him. To get away from it, he said:

"The difference between you and Jansen, Mr. Van As, is the difference between the straight and the crooked. He will break my body with clean cruelty; you would first deprive me of my manhood. You are the uglier, the more evil of the two!"

"We'll talk about that to," Van As said, "but later."

There was a knock on the door and Van As called 'Come!'

Now! Naideo told himself. Now!

The door opened and a man entered. In a single sweeping motion Naidoo grabbed the coffee pot and hurled it at Van As' head. Van As ducked but too late, and the surprise and impact sent him staggering back. The man at the door dug into his coat pocket and shouted "Hold it!". Naidoo grabbed up the little table, raised it high and advanced on Van As. The man at the door fired. Naidoo seemed to falter then he gathered strength and kept moving.

"Don't shoot!" Van As shouted.

But the man at the door had already fired the second shot.

Naidoo pitched forward on his face. Karl Van As turned him over. He was either dead or dying fast.

"He was going for you, sir," the man at the door said, seemingly petrified.

"You did what he wanted!" Karl Van As snapped.

"A doctor?"

"Too late; arrange for him to be removed."

The man left.

Van As went down on his knee beside Naidoo. Blood was bubbling up in a tiny trickle through his purplish lips now. Van As bent low.

"Naidoo! Naidoo! I'm sorry."

Naidoo's eyes opened. He stared up vacantly, then he recognised Van As, and with recognition came a hatred so strong and forceful that Van As saw and felt it. Naidoo worked his mouth as one working up saliva to spit. Then he died.

Van As remained kneeling beside the dead Indian until he had absorbed the shock of the fact of death. Death was no stranger, He had seen and been almost as intimate with it before as now. But it always came as a shock. And there was and always would be something

especially shocking about this man's death. This man did not have to die; did not have to suffer even. If only....

Van As closed the dead eyes. As he touched the still warm flesh a spasm of trembling shot through him.

He rose quickly and walked to the window. He looked out but it was still the bleakly neutral world of night. In an hour, perhaps, the grey pre-dawn light would begin to filter in from the east. He felt stifled and oppressed suddenly, and anxious to get out of this room which had, until this moment, been one of the most comforting rooms he had known.

He didn't have to die and he died hating me: Not Jansen or Japie but me.

He walked back to the body and took one last, lingering look at it. Then he went briskly out of the room and down to his office to write a report of what had happened.

When he had finished it was close on four in the morning^{and} the grey pre-dawn light was all about the world.

He knew there was no hope of keeping the fact of Naidoo's death secret the moment the body left this building. As soon as some none-European had anything to do with it - and that would be very soon - it would get about. He phoned the duty officer and told him to make sure that the newspapers carried nothing about Naidoo.

The death van pulled up as he left the Security building. And because Naidoo was an Indian the people in this death van were Indians. He knew that before he reached his flat everybody who mattered ~~was~~ among the Indians would know of the death of Sammy Naidoo and of the manner of his dying. He thought: that brother of his would be too great a risk in the force now; remember to talk to Japie about him.

The streets were empty and very wide, much wider than he had realised; wide enough to easily take four cars abreast: tree-lined and smoothly glossy in the dawn light. And driving through the empty streets and freed of the need to be alert and watchful, the familiar mood of lurking depression crept over him. He fought it off, held it in check, but consciously, and so he was aware of it and being aware of it it was real and heavy even though he had contained it with his mind. When he arrived even his comfortable flat seemed bleak and depressing. He long for Mildred Scott with an aching desperation. And the face of Sammy Naidoo, dying, and mouth working to raise saliva for a final spit of hate, fought to invade the surface of his consciousness. But some trick mechanism of the mind held it in check and so he was aware of it only as part of the lurking depression that was always there in the shadows of his consciousness, waiting for that unguarded moment when it could jump him....If only Mildred were with him now.....If only those damned fools did not deny him the comfort her presence brought with their stupid laws.....

He poured himself a stiff drink and took it to his bedroom. He changed into pajamas, got into bed, ~~reached for the little bottle of tranquilisers on the bedside table, took out two and used the~~
~~stiff drink to wash them down~~ *and Tossed the drink* in one long gulp. Then he turned off the light and closed his eyes. But bone-weary though he was it was a very long time before sleep came. And in the long space between wakefulness and sleep the thing in the shadows of his consciousness played all manner of tricks to make him see the face of Sammy Naidoo. But at last ~~the drugs took over~~ and he slept.

It was just about the time that Karl Van As fell asleep that

Dr. Dawood Nunkhoo shook his ^{sister} ~~sister~~ awake. She opened her eyes and said:

"What is it?" And yawned sleepily.

"Sammy's ^s dead."

She blinked uncomprehendingly at him.

"Sammy's dead," repeated.

Suddenly Dee Nunkhoo saw Sammy Naidoo as clearly as though he were in the room with them. She saw the matt blackness of his round face, the steady little eyes with the tiny blood veins in the corners of the eyeballs, the purplish sheen over his lips, especially pronounced when he was dog-tired or desperately hungry; his bigness, the hard big body and big strong hands; solid, reliable Sammy. What would they do without Sammy? He was the rock on which their movement was built. Sammy's dead.

"Oh no!" she cried, again and again and again, each time more desperately than the time before. Then she broke down and wept. Her brother wrapped his arms about her and held her close till she had cried herself out.

The tall thin woman called Cissie brought in a tray of tea. Her eyes were red but she had finished her outward weeping and her face was bleakly remote and aloof. Inwardly she would weep long, till time blurred the memory of the man and of his gentleness to her and those she knew and loved and of the dreams ~~her~~ and hopes he had been guardian of for his people and for her; as long as she remembered these things and associated his face and his voice and his special feel with them, for so long would she weep the death of her Mr. Naidoo: but inwardly and alone so no man knew.

"What shall we do?" Dee Nunkhoo said hopelessly.

"Carry on," her brother said gently.

"Like he always said," Cissie said bleakly. "But no one to teach us now."

"There are many," Nunkhoo said. "And some of them very good."

"Not like him, doc," Cissie said coldly. "Some better but not like him."

"You are right, Cissie," Nunkhoo sight. "Not like Sammy."

Cissie left and Dee asked:

"How?"

"We'll never know but what the people who collected the body said suggests that he provoked it. The C.I.D. picked him up about ten last night. He was with them till the very early hours of this morning when the brilliant and ruthless Mr. Van As...."

"That hateful man!" Dee cut in.

".....showed up and had him removed to security. There, in Mr. Van As' notorious 'Interrogation Room' Sammy died a little over an hour ago."

"Dawood...." she hesitated then blurted "Did they hurt him?"

"No, my dear. I assure you. Two shots in quick succession. I dare not go down and examine the body myself. But his brother knows all about police methods of hurting without showing it, and he checked the body very carefully."

"His brother.....Poor man."

"Yes. This has finally convinced him and he's at the disposal of the Movement but I expect Van As to anticipate."

Dee thought of Nkosi and sudden alarm showed on her face.

"Easy," Nunkhoo murmured, "easy, my dear. Sammy gave them nothin

She closed her eyes, swayed slightly, took a deep breath and

opened her eyes. All fear and alarm, now, were banished from her face.

"What now?" she asked.

"I must go underground too now. All our key people disappeared when they picked up Sammy. I was supposed to stay on the surface to see what happened to Sammy. Sammy would not have provoked his own death unless he was convinced they were too close to the truth to be misled. As long as they were just fishing Sammy could just remain silent. The worse they could have done was a detention order. What has happened means that Van As, at least, knew enough to make Sammy take this way out. And that means they've got something definite to go after. And that in turn means that I shall be next for Mr. Van As' 'Interrogation Room'."

"And so you must drop from sight, which will be the signal for a fullscale search." "It means the end of your usefulness here."

"Yes." But only openly."

"I'm sorry, Dawood," Dee said firmly. "The decision was that anybody whose usefulness had come to an end should try to get out and act from outside. If you remain here, on the run, you'd be a burden to the movement and to all of us, and you know it."

She swung out of bed and limped to the window.

He said: "So I must go?"

"Yes; you must go."

"And what happens to you, little sister?" he ^{said} asked gently.

"I don't know," she murmured without turning. "I don't know. All I know is that for the present at least I must stay and make my contribution. And I pray God I do half as well as you and Sammy."

"You'll be alone, my dear: in fact, more so than ever."

"Also less so than ever, brother. Don't forget that, brother."

He went and stood beside her by the window. Day, now, was breaking fast.

He said: "We've never talked about him; you've never even bothered to tell your big brother about being in love and the man in your life.

"There is nothing to tell. I love a man and he loves me. Its as simple as that."

"What manner of man is he, little sister?"

"Gentle and radiant and upright. Very clean and very wise, big brother; very clean and very wise."

"I'm glad you think him wonderful, little sister."

She reached up and fondled his hand.

"Remember when we were children: with me very little?"

"Yes."

"And running - or rather hobbling - after you and daddy like a puppy?"

"I remember."

 unafraid
"And how ~~unafraid~~ I was?"

"Especially when you were daddy's puppy: yes."

 the
"And remember/~~that~~ day I tried to explain to you how it was?"

"No.....No.....I don't."

"It was by the river. You'd just fished me out....."

"Yes. Yes. I remember, You felt nothing could do you harm, not even falling into the river or among snakes. You said daddy's presence

"And yours, big brother....."

"And mine, made you invulnerable."

"But I didn't know the word and you gave it to me. Remember?"

"Yes, I remember."

"In all the years since I have looked back and remembered ~~how~~

and marvelled at this, this - invulnerability - this feeling of assurance and secureness that nothing could really disturb. All the fighting and the crying and quarreling did not disturb that. And then daddy died and it died and I grew up and realised that I was a cripple. And I thought that special childhood feeling was part of the innocence and ignorance of childhood, something known briefly and lost forever and contributing to man's sense of aloneness here on earth. And now...."

"And now, my dear. ~~Please go on.~~"

"It's come back, Dawood. Fantastic and unbelievable, even to myself, but its come back! ~~Byn~~ Do you understand?"

"I understand, little sister."

"Even if he died....I'd be in the most bloody awful mess....But it won't be like before....I'll always know where I'm going and what is right. It is like knowing your way through the jungle. You may not get through, that is a chance, but you know ~~that~~ the way and you ^{that whatever happens} know/you can't get lost. I hope we get through, I'd love to have his children.... But you understand why I don't want you to worry?"

"I understand, my dear. And thank you for telling me....You know what to do and say when they come?"

"I know. And if you see him explain the importance of the myth business to him....Please take care, Dawood."

He felt her brace herself for his leaving. He kissed her gently on the cheek then left her.

"I'll be in touch," he said.

The door closed behind him. She thought: and so our men must leave; some to die; some to hide; some to go to far lands. And we must be alone in the land, waiting the day of reunion, the long day

that must follow this terrible but passing night. Perhaps Dawood will not be at the morning of reunion; perhaps he will not be there; perhaps I will not be there. Certainly, Sammy, like many others who have fallen in battle, will not be there. But the morning will come and there will be millions to welcome it. It is to make it a good morning that Sammy died and Dawood has just gone underground and that he came and is now in hiding. For this we must do many things, endure many things and see our men leave.

She turned from the window and looked at her bedside clock. There was no point in going back to bed. She'd have to help the nurse to deal with the simpler of Dawood's cases and find other doctors for the more difficult one. This was going to be a long and hard day. The police should be here looking for Dawood within the next hour or two.

She began to prepare for the events of the day.

She was in the surgery with the nurse, ~~examining~~ helping to inoculate a swarm of five-year-olds when the first police car came. This morning the waiting-room was full to bursting point and it was some time before the policeman succeeded in bullying and forcing his way through to the surgery.

"Where's the doctor?" he demanded.

"I don't know," Dee said without interrupting her work.

"Well who does? You?" He pointed at the nurse.

"No."

"On his rounds?"

"No," Dee said. "His car and his bag are here. He's got a big surgery this morning as you can see; no appointments till after midday."

"Then where the hell is he?"

"I don't know. All I know is he didn't sleep in his bed last night."

"Then why the devil didn't you report it?"

For the first time since he came Dee Nunkhoo raised her head and looked at the policeman, a coldly hostile and steady stare.

The policeman swung about abruptly and forced his way out to the waiting police car with its radio telephone connection with headquarters. He was put straight through to Inspector Jansen. After he had reported Jansen ordered him to stay on the spot, but outside the doctor's house. Then Jansen called Van As, first at Security then at his flat. In his phone call last night - or, rather, earlier this morning - Van As had anticipated this: he had said Naidoo's death might mean the disappearance of Nunkhoo.

When a thick-tongued Van As answered, Jansen said:

"Jansen here. You were right. Nunkhoo's gone under."

There was a brief pause then Karl Van As, awake and alert, said:

"This is it. Round up every suspect on your lists. Go the whole way."

"Indians only?"

"The whole lot, man! Indians, Africans, coloureds, whites: the whole lot."

"That'll mean close on two hundred. What about housing?"

"There's a plan for emergency arrangements at the prison; they know all about it. Get someone to phone them. And we're going to need a lot of men to sweep the countryside. One of my people has the special areas mapped. But I'm on my way so get things rolling."

"Do we pick up Nunkhoo's sister?"

"Anything on her?"

"Only the fact that she's his sister. She's a cripple, you know."

"I didn't. Better let me talk to her first."

"Right!" Jansen snapped and hung up, too excited by the coming action to wait for the man who was, officially at least, his senior to hang up first.

Before Van As was ready to leave his flat the first of the wave of mass arrests ~~was made~~ was made. By the time he left his flat five people had been rounded up and were being questioned at C.I.D. headquarters. By the time he reached his office everybody, people on the streets, people at work, children at school, all knew that a big operation was in process.

His first action was to alert his opposite numbers in Johannesburg and Cape Town and Pretoria. They, in turn, alerted other important centres. And the great state police machine went into operation and the waves of arrests were nationwide.

~~And in all the dark places of the land the word went out that the battle was on and that everyone had to be calm and peaceful; no one should resist, no one should fight back, but no one should co-operate. In this phase the battle was between the hunters and the hunted. And everybody knew who the hunters were and everybody knew that the hunted was and is and will be Richard Nkosi until the battle is over and victory is won. . . . And this was the word to spread. The time for a different form of battle would come soon enough: for now this was the battle-order.~~

The word spread until it, too, was nationwide like the arrests; whispered from man to man, ^{from woman to woman,} passed on even from child to child till, in the end, it reached up to even the highest places in the land.

"Will this do?" Dee Nunkhoo said coldly.

He followed her into the groundfloor living room and shut the door behind him. He crossed the room, opened the french windows and looked out on the walled-in little garden. It reminded him of Mildred Not the same artistry, not the same delicate touch for colours but created to fulfil a similar need for privacy, tranquillity and escape from prying eyes. He knew his insistence on their being alone had driven her to a point of anger verging on unreason. How to undo some of it? Wouldn't be too bad-looking if it hadn't been for that crippled leg. Nice shape too.

"Nice little garden," he said.

"What is it you want?" she said coldly.

He turned to her and smiled. It was a combination of apology and appeal. She thought: The charm of this man is fantastic. Then, deliberately, she cut off all thought.

"I'm sorry to disturb you especially now but...."

"What is it you want?"

There was a hint of helplessness in his shrug then he took a few steps towards her. Her steady impersonal gaze never wavered from his face. But there was no life to it, no feeling, like the eyes of a caged snake that knew it could not strike.

"Shall we sit down," he murmured.

She moved hands and body a little, the slightest of gestures; and he knew it said you do not need my permission. But she remained standing so he stood with her.

"Miss Nunkhoo, when did you see your brother last?"

"At dinner last night."

"Then what?"

"Then he went out on his evening rounds."

"Then what?"

"That's all."

"Nothing more?"

"No."

"Did you hear from him?"

For the first time the steady gaze wavered slightly. She compressed her lips and shook her head slightly. An honest woman, he/ ^{thought}

"Miss Nunkhoo, I should hate to do it but if I have any reason to believe that you are withholding information from me I shall be forced to have you detained. I shall be forced to let them take you down to C.I.D. headquarters for questioning and I'm afraid many of the people there are not as thoughtful as we would like them to be. Don't misunderstand me, please. We will not permit anybody to molest you but just as there are unclean and ugly-minded and foul-mouthed people among the Indian community so there are among my community. And unfortunately some of the worse riff-raff/ ^{find their way into the force} This is one of our hard problems in race relations. Do you understand, Miss Nunkhoo?"

"Perfectly!"

"Allright then. Did you hear from your brother?"

"Yes."

"You know, the sooner you give it all to me the sooner this will be over. When?"

"A little before five."

"How do you know the time?"

"I was in bed. The phone woke me. I turned on the light."

"Thank you, Miss Nunkhoo. It was wise of you to tell me the truth. I have a shrewd notion of what happened. Now, what did your brother say?"

"That his usefulness was over and he had to leave the country."

"That all?"

"Yes. He expected me to be questioned so he said the less I knew the better. He was ringing to say goodbye."

"We'll get him, you know."

"I think not!"

"You mean you hope not."

"Both."

"You knew he was in the underground?"

"I don't know anything about any underground. I know he worked against the government."

"And you?"

"I'm a woman. But I wish I were a man!"

"I also wish it were different, Miss Nunkhoo. I don't like Apartheid any more than you do. But I have [^]duty to do. Did he tell you about Naidoo." _^

"No."

"But you know?"

"Everybody knows. Everybody knows he was murdered."

"He wasn't; it was an accident he provoked."

"He was murdered!"

Her face, now, was hard and her expression mule-like and blindly stubborn. He thought: This is how they want it and this is how it will be recorded and the wall of hate will rise a little higher.

"You knew Naidoo?"

"He came to see my brother."

"Often?"

"Yes, often."

"And you knew why?"

"Their manhood demanded that they plan resistance and revolt. To do otherwise would be to deny their manhood."

"Let me give you some advice, Miss Nunkhoo. I know you're angry and I know you're upset. But you know, you've just confessed that you knew of people whose actions and intentions amounted to treason. By keeping silent about it you are a party to it. My advice is keep your thoughts and feelings to yourself when dealing with any other law officers."

"If I were a man....."

"Please Miss Nunkhoo! You are a woman, not a man, and if you express these views and sentiments to any other officer of the law you will be arrested. Do you understand?"

She's upset, he told himself and felt a wave of sympathy for her.

Have you done?
~~"Can I go now?"~~

"One last question. You say Naidoo came to your brother. Did your brother even go out and return with Naidoo?"

"Many times."

"With other people?"

"Yes."

"Indian?"

"Yes."

"European?"

"Once only."

"Coloured?"

"No."

"Never?"

"Never."

"African?"

"No."

"Never?"

"Never."

"You understand you'll be in very serious trouble if it turns out later that you've lied to me; and believe me, Miss Nunkhoo, if you have, we'll find out."

"Have you done?"

"Yes. Thank you." He inclined his head slightly and turned to the door. She followed him.

"Our telephone...." she said.

"It's routine to disconnect the phones of people like your brother."

"But what of the patients?"

"He should have thought of that."

"Please; there are sick old people....children....who may come needing emergency help and we may need to arrange quickly for another doctor to see them....."

He went out of the room without replying. The passage and the waiting rooms were still crowded. It seemed that suddenly all of Dr. Nunkhoo's patients had become ill and needed attention. But Van As knew it wasn't as simple as that. It was one of those group things with which he had become familiar. Whatever the time of night or day whenever some important leader was being taken or questioned or hunted for the group would suddenly be there, appearing from nowhere and everywhere. And it had a very distinct presence, hard to pin down, hard to define, but forcefully real. And it was this that had led many a policeman to jumpy and stupid action often resulting in the outbreak of unnecessary violence and rioting. He felt the presence of the group now, all about him, not hostile but assertive, ensuring

that he understood its nature and purpose which was to warn of the ~~possible~~ hidden forces behind the wanted leader and that those forces would protect his loved ones and the things that are his.

One of his men came quickly down the stairs.

"Nothing there: an attic though which could easily be missed. But they pointed it out to us."

"Allright," Van As said.

The men called up the stairs and two others who had been searching with him came down the stairs, arms laden with papers. They carried the papers out to their car and a couple of uniformed men/ ^{came in} to bring down two more loads of papers as well as a pile of books.

At the door Van As turned back to Dee Nunkhoo and said: "I'll see what I can do about the telephone." Then ^{the police} ~~they~~ left/ that particular house. But the search went on elsewhere.

All that day, and all through the night, the massive police round-up went on. Scores of hundreds of men and women were picked up and taken to C.I.D. centres all over the land. The overwhelming majority were released after questioning. A few were held: no more than seven hundred. But even this number would, after careful screening and questioning, be cut by close on half. In the early hours of the following morning the police achieved their first major success of the massive sweep. They picked up five ^{men} people in a little hut outside Bloemfontein. Two were white, three ~~were~~ black. Two of the black men had been convicted of sabotage and treason and had escaped while on their way to prison. They had been at large for five months. The other three, the two white men and the one black man, had been named as Communists and had been on the run for over a year.

In Cape Town the sweep yielded up a named coloured communist ~~who~~

the officials had written off as being out of the country. And in Johannesburg they got no less than six men suspected of being pretty close to the top leadership of the underground.

Later the following morning, in crowded courts all over the land, hundreds of people were sentenced to house arrest.

And in all this activity Karl Van As stayed in the radio room at Security, examining the information as it came in, ^{sifting it,} /checking ~~over~~ the hundreds of names that came through: searching, waiting. Now and then he issued a special instruction.

On the ^{third} ~~second~~ day of the massive sweep he knew that he had lost both Nkosi-Dube and Nunkhoo. If they were picked up now, it would be more by accident than design. And yet he knew how close to success he had been. Two days ago, with Sammy Naidoo in his hands, he was on the verge of breaking the Nkosi myth and perhaps the underground with it. Now, from everywhere there came reports of the whispering campaign of the victory of the hunted over the hunters.

Government spokesmen in parliament had hailed the sweep as a great victory for the forces of law and order and a great defeat for the subversive agents of communist revolution. But ^{he, & they,} the Nkosi myth was spreading.

At ^{midnight} ~~noon~~ on the ^{third day,} ~~second~~, after nearly two days without sleep, he handed over control of the local operation to Japie DuPlessis and went to ^{bed. He slept} ~~sleep~~ for eighteen hours. But now, in the long sleep of utter physical and mental exhaustion, the lurking thing in the dark shadows of his consciousness stepped boldly into its centre and transformed sleep into a sustained and torturing nightmare that pinned him to his bed. And so the man tossed and sweated in sleep, fighting to break free of the nightmare; moaning, protesting, mumbling, seized by sporadic convulsions. And a central feature of the nightmare was the face of Sammy Naidoo, now laughing, now crying, now pleading, now screaming, and always with a look of terrible pain on his face.

THREE

The cradle will fall
.....~~Baby, Cradle & All~~

by sporadic convulsions. And a central feature of the nightmare was the face of Sammy Naidoo, now laughing, now crying, now pleading, now jeering, and always raining spittle on his face.....

-1-

Old Man Moola, ^{was} the richest Indian in the land, ^{he} ^{also regarded} ^{on} ^h ^h was ~~accepted~~ as just about the most reactionary non-white in the land. He had expressed himself frankly and openly as against the resistance. He made no secret of his very large ^{money} ^A donations ~~in~~ ~~of money~~ to the party in power. He thought, and said, that the Indians who tried to fight the ~~their~~ government were fools fouling their own nests. And for him the greatest foolishness of all was for the Indians to make common cause with the blacks. He said, and this went home with most Indians, the Indians had more of a future under the white man than they would have if the blacks took over: for them the lesser evil was undoubtedly white rule. And Old Man Moola had dramatic factual information of Indian experience in East Africa to underscore his point. And because Old Man Moola was ^{rich} ~~a multi-millionaire~~, and the largest single employer of Indian labour ^{in his} ^{in his} ^L ^L on his sugar estates, factories and warehouses, many of his fellow Indians listened to him.

For the same reason, and because his views met with their approval, the government left Old Man Moola alone. None of his land had been expropriated and when the Indian tenement area of which he was landlord, and in which he had built himself a large mansion, was designated a 'European Area', Old Man Moola, unlike others elsewhere, was fairly compensated for the value of his land and was allowed to retain freehold title to the land on which his home stood and to go on living in it. And so Old Man Moola was the only Indian - indeed the only non-white - in the land living in ^{a white area} ~~what had been declared a~~

Old Man Moola was just a little over sixty, short and very round and a very great lover of food and drink. 'Old Man' was universally accepted as his first name. Once, a very long time ago, he had another first name, but somewhere along the way it had been lost. Now all important papers, cheques, deeds and the like which bore the style 'Old Man Moola' were honoured as properly endorsed. The world had begun to call him 'Old Man Moola' way back in his early twenties when he had started his road to financial success with a ^{little} market stall/~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ where he earned the first two pounds which he immediately lent out at twenty-five percent. In those days he had been small and thin as a rake, and always hungry. Since then the pound had given way to the Rand and the land had ceased to be part of the Commonwealth and Empire, and the vast sums he had given to charity in the hopes of an eventual knighthood were wasted. But in spite of all the changes the fortunes of Old Man Moola had grown, and he had shown a greater capacity for survival and expansion than most men in the land.

Now, his ~~name~~^d only son - inevitably name 'Young Man Moola' by the rest of the world - entered the large cool office from which Old Man Moola controlled his empire. Young ^{Man} Moola was of medium height, much fairer than his father and he had the poise and assurance that came from a European education, and the air of physical fitness and well-being that came from having represented his college at games. He had been in his first year when Dawodd Nunkhoo had been in his final year at the same university in Scotland. Unlike Nunkhoo he had worked for a business degree rather than a medical one.

The younger Moola slid into a visitors' chair opposite the great desk and waited. After a while the old man looked up. The young

man fought down the usual and oddly disturbing feeling - a compound of exasperation, affectionate contempt and a tinge of shame - that was the background to all his personal dealings with his father.

"I want to talk to you, father."

"Talk; I'm waiting."

"No, not like that. This is serious, very serious."

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Old Man Moola leaned back in his huge chair, intertwined his fingers, thumbs pressing against each other, and rested his hands on his paunch. He knew his only son disapproved of him and in spite of himself the knowledge hurt. Trouble was he could not help reacting and responding ~~xxxx~~ to his son as he did toward the Europeans. All that training had made the boy more European-sounding than all the Europeans of the land.

Old Man Moola looked at his fancy desk clock.

"How much time you want."

"That really depends on you. I think this matter can be settled within the next five minutes but knowing you I'd say not less than half an hour; it might even run to an hour."

"You in trouble?" Old Man Moola examined his son's face searching

"Not the way you mean."

"Not politics," he said quickly.

"Better take one of your pills. You'll need it."

"Is it politics?"

"Take one of your pills now, father."

And because the boy sounded more European than usual, Old Man Moola quickly swallowed a pill from one of his drawers. Then he picked up one of the telephones and said:

"I don't ^{want} to be disturbed at all! Understand!"

And because it was to one of his employees, he spoke in a nagging, high-pitched half-shout. He knew his son disapproved of this too, but how else do you speak to your servants? How else do you show that you are the boss?

"No! Not at all!" he shouted in response to a question from his very efficient coloured secretary. "For nobody! Not till I call you! Understand?" Then he banged down the receiver and returned to his son, mentally bracing himself.

Young Man Moola said: "You know Dawood Nunkhoo, father....."

"I don't have time to waste. You know I know him. I also know the police want him and he's disappeared. Go on."

"You know why....."

"You in this damn-fool politics of his?"

"Yes. Now that his usefulness is over he has to leave the country and I must take his place as the leader of the Indian underground resistance....."

Old Man Moola began to swell up, ^{like a ~~frog~~ ^{bul}} ~~like a frog~~. His face ~~turned~~ ^{looked} as though bloated suddenly. He grabbed at his collar/~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ choking, then he jumped up and began to scream, hopping about the large room like a man gone mad. This went on for perhaps three-quarters of a minute; then the storm passed as suddenly as it came. He went back to his chair, took out a snowy handkerchief and wiped the spittle from the corners of his mouth.

Without looking he could conjure up the expression of disgust on his son's face, the same as it was that very first time the boy had seen him explode like this. He thought: they don't understand; they are born to wealth and they don't understand what it took to make it. He wanted to explain to the boy but there were no words that

could make the boy see and understand the terrible wounds he had sustained. If it had been a cut or a bullet wound on his body they would all see and understand it.....

"You fool!" Old Man Moola murmured wearily. "You damn-bloody-educated-shit-arse fool! This what I spend my money for? They going catch/^{you} and they going jail you and they going beat all that education out of you and turn you back into a begging coolie. That what I work for? When they catch you they going drag me down too and take everything. Educated fool! Why?! Why you have to do this to me?"

"Because you educated me, father."

"I wanted you to be a better man than me, not a fool!"

"Like you, father? So choked by what they, and you, ^{to} do/yourself that you have to go screaming mad every now and then?"

"Like me, yes! You sneer! But if it not for me where would you be! I not good enough for you but I make you! I'm rich and I ^{can} pick up the telephone and call a government minister."

"I want you to make such a call, father," young Moola cut in.

"But not to a Minister. To Chief Inspector DuPlessis."

"I won't! I'm not having anything with you and your fool politics!"

"I'm sorry but you must, father."

"I won't! And I disown you! Leave my house! Leave me alone! You no son of mine! Go!"

"Think, father. And please listen for a moment. Dawood and another friend of ours, one even more wanted than Dawood, an African, are in your house at this moment. Three days ago, at the start of the great round-up, I took them from where they were hiding and brought them to your house. If I had not done this they would have been caught and Sammy Naidoo would have died to no point...."

~~XX~~

~~XX~~

"Oh no!" Old Man Moola pleaded. "No!" He closed his eyes and swayed from side to side, making soft moaning noises deep in his throat.

"I'm sorry," the younger Moola said more gently. "I wouldn't have done it but there was nothing else to do. Yours was the safest house, one of the few Indian homes not suspected and not searched and in a white area too."

"And you bring this danger on your mother and your sisters and me?"

"They would have been caught, father!"

"I don't care about them! They are nothing to me!"

"I care, and you'd better care now because if they are caught you will be undone too."

"I'll say I know nothing about it! I'll swear! I got friends in high places, people who owe me favours!"

"They won't believe you, father."

"They will!"

"So you trust them that much."

"Trust doesn't come into it."

"I've shown I'm a friend. I've given money. I give them presents. I've expressed my opposition to all your political nonsense. They'll believe me, you'll see!"

"They won't father; I'll see that they don't. If my friends are caught because you won't help I'll see that there is evidence to show that you were really a secret supporter and financier of our movement and that your friendship and gifts to them were just a front."

"No! You won't!"

"You just try me!"

"But you are my son! I'm your father! You can't do this me; to your mother and your sisters!"

"I can and I will."

"What kind of a son are you?"

"One who had to stand up because he was a man, and who had to try and make up for his father."

"Blood is --"

4 "Blood is blood, nothing else...."

The flow of sympathy, now, had dried up.

"Please, my son; I'm an old man." It is hard to bear the bitterness of a son."

"God how you waste time! Please understand that your best hope of remaining safe and holding on to what you have is to help us. Of course, sooner or later, they are going to take everything you have, whatever you do. But you won't believe that until it happens. You've gotten this far on your wits and by bribing and pleading so you entertain the ~~entertain the~~ delusion that you can ride out the storm this way."

"You despise your father," For the first time the son felt that his father spoke from the heart. ~~The father felt that the son had~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~ "No. But I do not respect what he is and what he holds importa

There was a sudden, blinding flash of anger.

"What do you know about it? You never been hungry or pushed aside or beaten up and called curry-arse! I made sure it never happen to yo

"I know. That's why I can never despise you. There was no one to help and protect you in the jungle like you protected me. I understand that. But we are men and we must fight to be men rather than brutes in the jungle."

"And in this world of men my son would blackmail his father."

"Only in order to help the fight to replace the world of brutes by the world of men."

"And these black friends of yours who murder and massacre Indian are these the people of your world of men? You would risk all we have for them?"

"For ourselves, father! For ourselves! You're not a fool and you know it!"

"No, I'm not a fool. You are the fool who believes the fairy story that in the end goodness must win. With all your goodness you will lose."

"Then we must lose. To do nothing would be worse than losing."

"What is worse than losing everything you have?"

"I think you know that, father. You're trying to shut your mind to it but you know."

"God help us if the blacks take power...."

"God help us right now if we waste anymore time. The police/^{last nig} picked up the only person who knows I took Dawood and our friend to your house."

Old Man Moola leaped out of his big chair and his son had troubl^{a another new} fit of screaming and calming him; but in the end, after a stormy ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ cursing, Young Man Moola did calm his father down.

But it was another ten minutes and a large brandy later before Old Man Moola felt sufficiently in control to make the phone call his son wanted him to make.

DuPlessis was not at his desk so the private number rang without answer. In 10 min. and Old Moola rang again. H.Q.
The call took some time to get through and Chief Inspector Japie ^{To} in the interrogation room. He
DuPlessis did not sound ~~as though he was~~ glad to receive it. But the matter was urgent so Old Man Moola ignored DuPlessis' coldness. The man owed him a world of favours.

"Sorry to bother you, Chief Inspector, especially with this business on but two things. One: I don't know if Mrs. DuPlessis got the material I sent. It was very expensive and I wanted to make...

"Call me at home tonight, Old Man," DuPlessis snapped.

"Sorry I can't. And your private number didn't answer."

"I've got to get to my office to receive an urgent private call in five minutes' time. Perhaps later...."

"I understand," Old Man Moola said at the other end.

"Fine" DuPlessis said, "and thanks for thinking of me, old man. I'd have loved it if things were less busy." He hung up and said, "Imagine someone wanting me to go and play golf at this time; now, where were we."

Inspector Jansen and the other detectives in the room spiled prefunctorily and went back to the business of questioning their suspect. Japie DuPlessis stayed with them for four minutes then went up to his room and locked himself in. A minute later Old man Moola rang again.

"I told you not to call except at this number," DuPlessis said.

"Sorry but its something special and I wanted to give you first refusal. Our friend from customs is coming on a warehouse inspection at two. In preparing for him, I ~~have~~ just discovered a half case of ^{like so much.} But I thought that stuff you ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~. I know he'll want it. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ maybe you don't have any more left. If you not interested I'll give it to him. But....."

"No: put it aside for me, Old Man."

"I thought you might want it. And I also have something special for your good lady. So the sooner you come for it, the better."

"I'll drive by your home on my way home tonight."

"Fine, Chief Inspector! And you can try my special brandy."

"Allright. About six. Now what is it you want?"

"I must have your promise of confidence, Chief Inspector."

"Depends, Old Man."

"Something my enemies, especially my political enemies, would use if they knew. Son of mine nobody knows anything about. You know, a young man's mistake, only I wasn't so young."

Suddenly, Japie DuPlessis was in great good humour. Dirty old coolie and I thought he was too busy making money to have time for such things! He let out a gay roar that did violence to Old Man Moola's eardrums at the other end of the line.

"Allright, I promise, you dirty old man!"

"Well, I have a little place up in the mountains, about twelve miles beyond my estate. Last night your people reashed up there and found the boy, he wouldn't tell them anything about himself so they arrested him. He wouldn't tell because of me."

"All right, Old Man. Nuff said. I'll look into it for you. You're on our side and I'll see to it that you and yours are allright. What's the boy's name?"

"He calls himself Dicky Naicker. Nice boy, really, but a big liar Chief Inspector. Low class mother, you know, but I like the boy."

"Don't fuss so, Old Man! I promised, didn't I?"

"Thank you, Chief Inspector. I have good friends. I'm lucky."

"He'll be out of here in the next ten minutes. Dicky Naicker. Allright, Old Man, see you later."

Less than ten minutes later Old Man Moola's phone rang and someone asked for his son. The son listened for a while then hung up

"Your friend has kept his promise, father. Dicky Naicker has just been released. Thank you."

"He's not my friend!" Old Man Moola Snapped. "I make use of his greed; that's all. Will you remove your two friends from my house now?"

"Sorry but I can't yet."

"So there's more blackmail from my son?"

"No, father. As soon as we get instructions from the underground the African will be taken away. I will then get Dawood into Portuguese territory."

"When?" the old man said urgently.

"As soon as we hear: today, tomorrow, next week, I don't know; as soon as we hear."

"They'll catch you, my son. And we will all be undone."

"That is a chance we must take....I promise you, I'll move them as soon as possible. And thank you again."

The young man rose abruptly and walked quickly to the door. The old man called: "Joe.....Tell me....."

The young ^{man} stopped ~~at the door~~ and turned slowly back to his father. Long, long time since the old man had ^{last} called him Joe ~~last~~; last time was before ~~he~~ left for Europe. His mother, who had been born in India (the old man went there to get her) had always called him Jasphet; the old man had given it the European touch and called him Joseph; Joe, ~~when~~ during moments of special intimacy. He thought: I'd better watch out otherwise I too might lose my first name as he has done, and end up signing myself 'Young Man Moola' to show that I am the son of 'Old Man Moola'. Remember that is your name: Joe, Joe Moola.

"The black man," the old man said slowly, tentatively. "He the one all this fuss and search is about? The one they say can't be caught and can't die? That him?"

"Yes. That's him."

"You don't mind me asking."

"No."

"And they know: your people - the underground - they know he's in my house?"

"No. All they know is I've taken over responsibility from Dawood for him. Nobody knows he's in your house." "Only you and I."

"And the boy Neicker."

"He doesn't know. Under real pressure he could have been forced to tell that it was I who took them from the house in the mountains."

"And if you get them away?"

"Then its a small victory for us." He suddenly understood his father's concern. "But there'll be other things to do; some less tricky, some as tricky as this one. But there will be other jobs."

"So there is no end to the danger?"

"No. Not for those of us in the movement. But when this is over I'll try and keep you out of it. I only took them to your place because it was and still is a serious emergency."

"No end," the old man repeated softly.

"Only for me, father," The young man felt compassion for his father. "You're out of it after this,"

"Except if there's another really bad emergency."

"But I'll try even then to keep you out. In fact, it might be an idea for me to move out of the house when this is over."

"If you don't get caught."

"That's right."

"What if you do get caught?"

"The penalty for what they call 'treason' is death."

"Can't you get away - like doctor Nunkhoo?"

"Only if your usefulness to the movement is ended, when you're on the run and they're after you. To stay then is to endanger the rest of the movement."

"But you can go into Portuguese territory with Dawood?"

"No, father."

"You mean this movement won't let you?"

"I mean I won't go as long as I can be useful."

"But its only a matter of time, Joe....."

"When the time comes and if I'm lucky I might be able to slip away an hour or so before they come for me. In that case I will join the band of exiles fighting from elsewhere. If I'm not lucky then they get me. But whatever happens there'll be someone to take my place because our work must go on."

"So this is a long thing, Joe; a thing without end....."

"A long thing, yes, father; but not without end."

"And can you see the end?"

"No."

"And still you risk your life?"

"I have to."

"You know I don't agree with you....."

"Or I with you."

"But at least....." Then the old man changed his mind and added: "Take care, Joe; for all our sakes....."

The young man walked briskly down the passage and took the lift to the floor below. Here, on the third floor of the four storey building, the real administration of the Moola empire was carried on. The old man upstairs was more figurehead than executive boss now

His senior employees still took the little lift up to the tranquility of the top floor to consult him on all major policy decisions, but before carrying out any major new directive from the old man they always, and as a matter of course, checked with the younger Moola. And just as all his senior employees called the older Moola 'Old Man' so they had slipped into the habit of calling the younger one 'Young Man'.

Upstairs, the pace had been easy, the offices sparsely populated by workers who had grown slow and shaky in the service of the Moola empire. Downstairs, offices were crowded to bursting and there was the steady racket of typewriters and adding machines, the hum of an army of voices and the constant purposeful movement of people at work.

Before he reached his own office Joe Moola was stopped three times to make important snap decisions. Inside his office he rang for the chief accountant, a man of the same physical type as Sammy Naidoo. If anything ever happened to him this man would in all probability be the next leader of the ^{Indian} movement in Natal.

Now, quickly, tersely, he put the man in the picture about all that had transpired upstairs with his father. He had no doubt in his own mind that his father would not betray them but his duty to the movement demanded that ^{he} provided against even such an unlikely ~~possibility~~ possibility.

Then they discussed some of the problems involved in quietly getting a little more of the assets of the Moola empire out of the country without the knowledge of the authorities. Just as land, and the right to freehold title, had been taken from the Indians and all other non-whites, so the day might well come when their businesses, and the right and freedom to do business, would be taken from all

non-whites. And without the knowledge of his father, Joe Moola had quietly started to provide against just that possibility. It had to be very small because the authorities were on the alert against the sudden flight of native capital, but at least it was something.

His secretary phoned to say that Dicky Naicker was waiting, so he dismissed the accountant.

As he walked into the office Dicky Naicker said quickly:

"They allright, sir, Mr. Joe?"

"Yes, Dicky; they're allright. And you?"

There was a slight puffiness under Dicky's left eyes and a dirty handkerchief was bound tightly around his right wrist. But he was smiling happily now.

"I'm fine, Mr. Joe. A fat bull poke me in the eye and I catch a nightstick on the wrist but I'm fine. But jeez, sir, Mr. Joe; they beginning to get rough now. They beating up our people to hell-and-gone for no reason. I see a bull kick one fellow in the balls for no reason and I tell you I scared."

Young Moola said: "Just a minute, Dicky," and reach^{ed} for the ~~switch~~ the internal telephone. He dialled two ~~xx~~ numerals, waited, then said "I understand they're getting rough at C.I.D. headquarters. I think we need some lawyers down there. You know what to do." Then he hung up and turned back to Dicky: "Anybody question^y at all?"

"No sir. I was still in the cell with most of the fellows when they call my name. I think they going quiz me; and I tell you I scare to hell Mr. Joe, sir, cause I don't know how long I can hold out if they hurt me. But then they take me to the big man and he say some- about Old Man's bastard and laugh and tell them to let me go."

"That's fine. Go down to the canteen and have something to eat.

One of our trucks leaves for your town in a little while. The driver ~~will~~ knows what to do. When you get home, Tell Miss Dee everything ^{Tell her} is fine. The doctor and our friend are safe. Tell her we can go back to normal work and I will let her know as soon as I get word from Johannesburg. Have you got that?"

Dicky Naicker repeated his instructions almost word for word.

"Fine," Joe Moola said. "Off you go now."

Dicky said: "Mr. Joe....."

Joe Moola sensed what was coming and grew very still.

"Yes, Dicky?"

"About Mr. Naidoo....."

"Its true, Dicky. He's dead."

Dicky swallowed twice then squared his shoulders. And looking at the youngster, Joe Moola wept inside.

"Helluva guy, that Sammy Naidoo," Dicky Naicker said quietly, then he swung about and left the office abruptly.

"So he was," Joe Moola said to the empty room. "So he was."

Dicky Naicker arrived home just as the sun went down. Miss Dee and Cissie and the young girl were waiting for him at the door. As he looked at them it flashed through his mind that this had become a house of women: it was up to him, now, to make up for the absence of the doc and Sammy - and that other one. And he knew that he would never be able to do that. And knowing this he would still make the effort, because that was the way it was, the way it had to be.

He felt the terrible tension beneath Miss Dee's outward calm, so he said quickly: "They awright, Miss Dee; they both awright."

She shut her eyes briefly and then he saw the glowing relief.

"Thank you, Dicky. Welcome home."

I'm the man of the house now, Dicky Naicker thought soberly.

It was a little after six when Karl Van As woke from his long, ~~but~~ restless, ~~and~~ disturbed, sleep. For a brief while, in the very first moments of wakefulness, the nightmare face of Sammy Naidoo ^{boldly} continued to dance/in front of the mirror of his mind. It retreated grudgingly, unwillingly, when thought took over. There was an unclean taste in his mouth and an odd heaviness at the pit of his stomach. He rolled onto his back and lay still for a little while. He wondered how long he had slept, turned his head slightly, and looked at the luminous dial of the bedside clock. It had to be six at night, otherwise it meant he had slept for only six hours and that he knew, ~~that~~ was highly unlikely. He reached for the bedside lamp, changed his mind, got out of bed in the dark and went to the window, avoiding pieces of furniture with the sureness of one who knew exactly where everything was. He drew the curtains aside and looked out at the ^{black} clear/sky with the evening star in bold brilliant relief.

He thought: How desolate. And with the thought came a sense of desolation so intense that a sudden wave of fear swept over him. He turned quickly from the window and now, reaching for the light switch he stumbled against a chair and bumped into his dresser. Don't be a fool, he told himself sternly.

^{overhead} The/lights ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ seemed unusually bright, strained his eyes, so he turned on the softer bedside light and turned off the others. He went into the bathroom and cleaned his teeth, trying to get rid of the filthy taste in his mouth. His reflection in the shaving mirror showed a stubbly three days' growth of beard and bloodshot eyes, seemingly set far back in their sockets.

He started a hot bath and while it ran he phoned, first the dut,

officer at Security, then the officer in charge of night duty at C.I.D. headquarters. Both reported fully on all that had happened over the past eighteen hours.

The arrests were continuing, though on a smaller scale. The most important arrest had been made up in Johannesburg just a few hours earlier when an African suspected of being either the head of the underground or else one of the leading figures in its inner council was taken in one of the Native locations. His capture had led to violence and a bitter pitched battle was now in progress between police and gangs of blacks. In the main the blacks were using stones and bottle was weapons but a few of them were in possession of small arms. A dangerous new feature was that the blacks were becoming very expert at the making and throwing of Molotov cocktails. So far twenty-eight Africans are known to have died in the fighting. And three policemen were murdered. Once a gang of blacks had even tried to storm the police station where the captured man was held. These were well armed and they only retreated when an armoured car was brought up.

~~after the arrest~~ But there was still no trace of Nkosi or the Indian doctor.

After these reports Karl Van As put through a special call to his opposite number in Johannesburg.

.....Yes, there was no doubt about it. The fellow they held was one of the really big ones in the underground. Might even be the top man. How else explain the determined, almost suicidal, attempts to free him.....Talk? Hell no! They'd used everything they knew without getting anything out of him. He'd gone out twice and each time he came round he'd shown ^{the same} an ugly smile.....Doctors going to try some

drugs on him. You know, the story-book stuff. Truth drugs and so on but they say he's too weak right now. Couple of these rough fellows had been at him before we took him out of their hands..... We must do something to stop this violence in the force.....Sure thing. We'll call you as soon as he says something or anything big breaks. But frankly, after what he'd gone through and held his tongue the chances of any drug doing anything seem remote.....

The world, now, was more desolate than it had ever been, an arid place; bleak, lonely, distressingly, heart-rendingly oppressive.

He picked up the phone again and dialled Mildred Scott's number. She answered almost immediately and her voice was like a fresh cool breeze touching the temples on a stifling hot day.

He said: "May I come?"

She said: "Yes. Have you eaten?"

He said: "No. In ten, fifteen minutes."

She said: "Allright."

He waited for her to hang up and the heaviness of the world, now, was a little more supportable.

He shaved, bathed and dressed quickly, a slight tinge of frenzy to his haste. Then he went out into the early evening. The world, outside, seemed too normal. The lights were on; traffic flowed easily; and bars near the centre of the city the restaurants/were brightly lit and filled to overflowing. And on the pavements people of all shapes, shades, colours, conditions, ambled casually, freely, taking the air, window shopping; boys looking for girls, girls for boy; and some older lonely ones hoping that by walking up and down the brightly lit streets someone, fair and kind and understanding, would recognise their loneliness and help dispel it. An ordinary night, a normal night, familiar the world over to the children of mankind.

As usual, Lena, the old Griqua woman, opened the gate for him and secured it carefully after he had driven in. As she did so she noticed that someone, a woman, from the other side of the road, that white side, had taken careful note of the coming of the car. She must remember to warn Miss Millie about Mister Karl turning up so early in the evening. People will notice. Only last week they had sent a couple to jail because the man was white and the woman coloured. And respectable people too. She must warn Miss Millie.

Van As found Mildred Scott waiting under her favourite flame tree, a large jug of iced orange juice at hand and a tall glassful waiting for him. And of course, here, in this sheltered and scented garden, sitting beside Mildred, the world was as the heart desired: peaceful and uncomplicated.

He said, very suddenly: "I should have married you!"

"Oh!" She was startled; and she had thought he would not be able to do that again. Just goes to show, she told herself.

"It was possible in those days. Remember those days?"

"But you didn't," she said, curious now to see if he would complete the thought-pattern, and how.

"It would have settled things," he said.

She thought: He's really in trouble. No, he's been in it for a long time, but he's only just beginning to see it. Poor Karl. Poor Karl.

"It would have been an act of choice, Karl. Not doing it was also an act of choice. So things were really settled then."

He was silent for a very long. And now she felt the pain in him. When he spoke again there was a terrible bleakness to him.

"Then really you agree with Sammy Naidoo."

"The man who died?" she asked softly.

"The same," he said.

"Tell me, Karl.....They say....."

"I know what they say but its not true; he wasn't murdered and he wasn't tortured. He chose to die. It was what you just described as an act of choice."

"Oh Karl! Why does it trouble you so?"

"Because if I'd married you it wouldn't have happened."

Against her will

"I see." ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ she felt herself withdraw and grow cold toward him.

He felt it too and a grimace, tick-like, tugged at the left corner of his mouth.

"You don't see, Mildred. Not this time. God knows I want the comfort only you can give, but not in the way you just thought..... Before he died Naidoo said I and people like me were the real enemies of the non-Europeans. He said without our brains and skills the system wouldn't work. D'you agree with him?"

"Does it matter?"

"Please, Mildred!"

"Allright, Karl...." She thought for a while and chose her words with care. "I'm not sure that you, as an individual, could stop the system, no matter how much you want to. So I disagree with Naidoo, if that is what he said. But if what he said meant you as part of the generation who went to ~~xxxxxx~~ university with both of us then I agree with him. We feel (I hate to speak as a non-Eupear to you but since you've forced me I will, this once) that Apartheid has been strengthened and reinforced and propped up by people who ^{were} ~~xxx~~ not themselves rabid racialists. When you and I were at university, Karl, did it look as though the country would ever come to this? Remember

how easily you and your friends laughed some little nationalist on campus out of countenance? But the prevailing values were such that each was concerned with furthering his own personal ambitions, which led, ultimately, to each in his own way becoming the defender or the upholder or the plenipotentiary of the Apartheid ~~UNDER~~ WHICH WE live today."

"So the act of choice was made as far back as that. Is that what you are saying?"

"Yes, Karl. That is what I'm saying."

"So if I'd married you then the choice would have been equally clearcut?"

"Yes. As clearcut as these things ever are."

"Did you know this then?"

Poor, poor, Karl. "Yes."

"And still you"

"I loved you, Karl. And choice, for you, in our context, had greater possibilities of disaster ~~xxxxx~~ than for me. We both knew this. That's why you shut your mind to it."

"But you faced it. I loved you too, but I shut my mind to it. I took your life from you and shut my mind to its meaning."

"I chose it, Karl. You must'nt blame yourself."

"Would you do it again? Now?"

Oh my God! What did this man Naidoo do to him?

She pulled herself together.

"That's not fair, Karl. Our world has changed."

And now, at last, she could open the doors of her mind to the knowledge that love had been dead a long, ~~time~~ long time. But the tenderness, the concern, the compassion - the afterglow - would always

be there because it had once been a clean and beautiful and sustaining love.

He thought: If only I'd known this then. But even as he thought he ~~knew that knowing would have made no difference to his choice~~ it was assailed with doubt about the nature of his choice.

"I still love you," he said. "I always will."

From the deep dark recesses of memory he almost heard the old philosophy professor again. A silly looking little old Englishman with filthy teeth and horribly tobacco-stained fingers.... Something about men's circumstances/~~determining their vision of the~~ determining their vision of the world, and their vision of the world, in turn, determining their circumstances I am what I choose to be; but what I choose to be depends on what I am.

He said: "He really hated me, you know."

"The man Naidoo?"

"Yes."

"I think you better tell me about him, Karl." Its all very unreal now, she told herself; as though he's gone away and this is just an echo of him, a sort of solidified shadow.

He made a quick motion as though wiping something ^{from} his cheek.

"Not to tell. Big fellow. Strong but doesn't know anything about judo. Knew where that fellow Dube-Nkosi was but wouldn't tell. Didn't have to die, though."

"He knew you'd make him talk somehow or other."

"So he chose to die instead. But, Mildred, it wasn't even for one of his own people!"

"Once you would have understood that, Karl."

"But the blacks are not going to reward him or his people for it"

"That's not why he did it."

"But one's people are important, and survival is important."
He thought: But this is not what I mean to say to her. I'm saying all these things, anything that comes to mind, because I want to stop her going away from me.....

.....going away from me.

It required very great effort indeed but he pulled himself together. She felt the shadow recede and the man return from wherever he had been. She thought: God how he's trying; and her heart overflowed for him.

"Did it have to come to this, Mildred? Hate everywhere?"

"The lines are being drawn more sharply every day, Karl."

"You know I tried."

"I know, Karl."

"But you've turned against me."

"Not against you, Karl. Against what you've become."

"But I haven't changed! You believe what Naidoo said and I'm not like that!".....going away from me....."Mildred, please listen. We are not like that. We Afrikaners are not monsters. You know that. You've known me more intimately than anybody else. Sure there are brutes among us as among all people. But there are decent ones too; honourable people, moral people, upright people, as in all societies. All they are fighting for is survival, and they are my people."

"We are getting nowhere now," she sighed. "Let's not get involved in a pointless political argument. We both know that we have long gone beyond the question of the survival of any group, yours or Naidoo's or mine....." She stopped in mid-sentence and thought: how can I say this to him now? He's opened his mind to it and nothing can keep it out.

She felt unutterably weary suddenly, in a dully deadening manner that made even thought an effort. This was the end of love, and all that was left was hollow. It had been a great love once, all-consuming, all-giving, with the fine careless inexhaustibility of an ever-flowing fountain. Now it was exhausted, dried-up, empty, hollow.

"So now there is no point to talk between us," he said bitterly.

She thought, escaping into the relatively safe role of history teachers: They do not record anything of the people caught in the crossfire of the great moral and spiritual battles of history; people caught in the crossfire, people like us, are on the edge of things, not involved, so not worthy of being recorded; and yet the most terrible casualties are there. No, that's not true. He's involved; he always has been. It was I who thought non-involvement possible. But it isn't any more: not now, not in this land, not for those born in this land.....What had he just said? No point to talk between us.

"That's not true, Karl. All I meant was we shouldn't becloud the basic issues of our age with the pointless political argument of what is expedient. Certainly, that is unnecessary between you and I."

"So you are saying that the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, is to be measured in numbers. The mob is right! The mob is God, especially if it is black."

"Is this what talk between us is reduced to now? No, Karl. This has nothing to do with mobs or God's colour or even colour. It has to do with tyranny, with oppression, with human cruelty: all the things minor ties have always done throughout history when they tried to hold power against the will of majorities. And now, here, in our time, the issues have been reduced to the basic conflict between good and evil."

"I see. White rule is evil. Black rule will be good."

"No, Karl. I don't know that. What I do know is that there is no hope of good any more in white rule. You insisted on this conversation, Karl. No hope of good. And when there is no hope of good then the evil is complete. Black rule may indeed be the terrible thing you fear. From the little we hear and read it has ^{not} been all that terrible in other parts of Africa. But even if it were, because it would be majority rule, there would be hope for good. I think that is why your Sammy Naidoo died that a black man may escape you...

Now I've done it, she thought: finally and completely.

She rose abruptly.

"Goodbye, Karl."

He rose too. And rising, he too knew that everything was finally and completely done. She began to walk away from him, toward the house.

"Mildred...."

She faltered.

He said, brokenly: "I tried."

She carried on to the house, head up, body erect. The old Griqua woman came to her and she said: "Mr. Karl is leaving, Lena."

The old woman went to the gate and opened it for Karl Van As to drive out. Then she shut it, knowing, instinctively, that she had seen the last of this man.

Karl Van As stopped at the first bar, downed two double brandies very quickly then looked up the telephone number of Anna de Wet.

When she answered, ~~Maxphong~~ and found out who it was, her eager invitation filled him with a terrible fear. And as he drove to ~~the~~ ^{Anna de} place he ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~for~~ ^{was} ~~the~~ ^{was} ~~man~~ ^{man} he would have liked Karl Van As to be. ~~The man was dead forever.~~ ^{He was dead, briefly.} ~~Then he braced himself~~ ^{Then he braced himself}

for the night's ordeal that lay ahead without