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Just very rough draft

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THE PATRIOT

Peter Abrahams

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I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow

PROLOGUE

Man is born to die.

There is no excitement about that. No wonder. We all live with it and one of our greatest points of genius, as man, is to take the wonder out of anything we live with and make it ordinary.

So we have made death ordinary: even unnatural death. To kill has become ordinary. To kill by the thousands, by the millions we have made even more ordinary by giving it a name: war. And in the name of war or for the prevention of war we have fashioned new refinements to ensure that man who is born to die die more quickly, in larger numbers, more efficiently.

But all that is old stuff, old as man himself. It is in the storehouse of our inheritance that we call our history. The stuff of our tale is new, distictive, twentieth century, up-to-date. It is a tale of how a man dies, yet lives. This is our unique contribution to death.

We of the twentieth century have invented ways of killing a man without stopping the beat of his heart, the coursing of his blood through his veins, the steady rhythm of his breathing. We kill a man and he gets up and walks away, often unaware for a long time that he has died, filled with the wonder of it, for it is not yet ordinary, still a new thing that has to go into the storehouse of our inheritance.

Such is the tale of Johan Jansen, the man who died yet lived. It is unique in that it could not have happened to many man earlier than in our time. And ours is a great time: the age of man's conquest of space. It is also the age of the man who died.

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I. THE RAID

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And I water'd it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

1

The sun was a ball of fire. It hung low ~~in the west.~~ And all the western world was aflame. A baleful sun, it seemed, spiteful enough to consume all the western world in its fiery wrath. And from the east came the darkness, even more baleful. And where it passed it cast a blanket of black that smothered the flames of the west. Thus it was that in the east the hills and mountains and valleys were of darkness, and in the west they were of flame.

The point where the three young bucks played was midway between the darkness of the east and the fire of the west. The whole universe, all time, all space had conspired to make this point, briefly, the balancing point of the earth; the point between darkness and light, and, therefore, without darkness and without light. A point of innocence.

The baby bucks were smooth and clean. Their coats shone fresh and new. Their eyes had the frank helpless strength of innocence. Their bodies had all the grace, ~~and~~ all the beauty of the beautiful world. And where they played was a strip of green, protected ~~from~~ on all sides by boulders that made a high wall for the little garden of green. At the foot of one of the boulders, ~~from~~ between two rocks in the earth, a spring bubbled up, shot a foot into the air and sent ~~its~~ cool water dancing down a time-worn path to join the narrow river that crawled through the tiny garden.

While two of the young bucks butted each other playfully, the third dipped it head down to the bubbling spring water. Suddenly its body tensed. It had heard nothing. This warning came out of its heritage. It raised its head. Cocked its ears. No sound. Still its body quivered.

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No smell. Yet its heart pounded and the fear grew, the inherited fear. The fear grew to a point of desperation. And still no sound or smell. It leapt away from the spring and the sound was with the leap.

B-A-N-G!!!!

It echoed through nature's garden. And two of the young bucks fled. And the point ceased to be the centre of the world. The darkness of the east came rushing in on it, forcing the flame of the west to retreat.

The man straightened up from the boulder behind which he had crouched. He was tall, deep-chested and lean-hipped. Everything about him announced physical strength: his big hands, his thick wrists, the muscles of his neck and shoulders, and the lean hardness of his face. His eyes were a deep grey and there was an earth-colour over all of him. It was as if this man and the earth had talked their differences out and now understood each other. There was harmony between man and earth. And both gave off the same cold, almost cruel, aloofness.

The man climbed over rocks and walked light-footedly down to the spring. He carried his black, shining rifle in his left hand, swinging it easily. When he reached the spring he propped the rifle carefully against a stone. Then he went to the water. He knelt down and caught mouthfuls of the upward spurt. He got up after a while, put the little finger of each hand into his mouth, and whistled two notes. From where he had come a horse appeared, picking its way with care between rocks and boulders. Some of the coldness left the man's face. A hint of tenderness touched his eyes as he watched the horse.

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Then, abruptly, he turned, and the tenderness left his eyes. He looked at the darkness of the east and calculated how long it would take to reach him. Not long, not long at all. But the sky promised a peaceful night. His stare was that of a person used to looking across great distances.

The horse reached the spring and drank. The man fondled its mane with fingers gone gentle and tender. As between man and earth, so there was harmony between man and beast.

The man went to where the young Springbok lay. His eyes searched for the bullet hole. Yes, it had gone where he had meant it to go. He bent forward and heaved the carcass on his shoulder. Then he picked up his rifle and walked towards a flat ledge some way beyond the spring. This was the best place to spend the night. It had a natural shelter from wind and rain and offered only one way of approach for wild beasts.

He put the carcass down. He whistled for his horse and it came immediately. Quickly, he unsaddled the horse. The horse went back to the spring and the lush grass around it. The man moved among the rocks gathering fuel. He soon had enough and went back. The darkness was over him now. He worked quickly until he had a fire going. From his blanket-roll he took a round Boer loaf, and a tin for making coffee. He went down to the spring for water and put it on the fire.

By now the last angry shadows of the flaming sun had gone. The darkness of the east was over all the land. There was no sky; only darkness curving away in all directions. And the fire was an island in a sea of darkness.

With his hunting knife, by the light of the fire, the man peeled

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back part of the young buck's skin. Then he cut off long strips of meat and flung them over burning sticks. When the meat was done to a tender brown, shining in the firelight, he took it off. He carved the Boer loaf into slices. Then he ate. He finished with strong coffee. The bitterness of the coffee balanced the sweetness of the meat.

When he had done he carried the rest of the carcass out of the protection of the ledge. He put it on a stone where the cool night air would keep it fresh. He went back and opened his blanket roll. He whistle and the horse came up from the spring. He got it down in the most protected part under the ledge and flung a blanket over it. Then, squatting near the fire, he made a bed for himself with the remaining two blankets.

He took a pistol out of his coat pocket and put it on the ground. ~~Then~~ He took off his coat and rolled it into a pillow. He pushed the pistol under the pillow. He loosened his belt and boots but did not take them off. Last of all, he took off his wide brimmed hat. ~~and~~ He built up the fire. He examined his rifle and, using it as bed companion, crawled into the blankets.

For a while, the man lay staring at the limitless blackness of the sky. Then he shut his eyes and turned his face to the fire so that he could feel its warmth. And the flames leapt gaily, seemingly aware of the high duty of light in a dark world.

The man woke when the dawn shadows fled from the east. The horse was already at the lush grass near the spring. The man put wood on the glowing embers and blew at them. He put his coffee on

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~~to wash~~ and went down to the spring to wash. He came back, fried another strip of meat and broke his fast. Then he rolled and tied his blankets, whistled for his horse and saddled him. He put out the fire with great care, ~~then~~ mounted and rode westward.

And as he journeyed there was a misty dampness in the valleys of his route and a nippy sharpness on the hills. And over all the world hung the magic half-light that came from nowhere and was everywhere. And the land was silent and self-contained, quiet and aloof: The man like the land and the land like the man.

The sun came up slowly. A cool wind travelled through the land from the west. The mists lifted from the valleys. The sharpness went from the hills. The sun climbed higher, grew warmer, grew hot. And through the changing day the man sat straight-backed in his saddle, and the horse travelled at an unvarying pace.

Sometimes the earth was brown and rich, sprouting lush green life; sometimes the earth was red and yellow, claylike and damp, giving, but not so richly; sometimes the earth witheld and only the hardiest shrub could wrest life from it; sometimes the earth was a dusty stretch of sand that denied life completely. Sometimes there were hills and mountains; sometimes the land was flat. But always, the mountains of the far horizon were blue and misty.

Toward late afternoon the horse topped one of the many ledges that make up the Ridge of the White Waters. The man tugged at his reins. The horse stopped. The man pushed back his hat, leaned forward and looked down at the sprawling town in the valley.

For a long time the man stared into the valley. At last,

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with a slight sigh, he took the pistol out of his pocket and balanced it in his hand. An odd little smile, bleak and humourless, tugged at his bearded lips. Instead of putting it back into his pocket, he pushed the pistol into his belt. And with this act some of the impersonal aloofness left the man. He ceased to be as closely related to the mood and character of the earth as he had been up to this point. He lost the godlike majesty of objectivity and became a man, involved in some battle as man must always be. Almost sadly, he ran his hand over the horse's mane and urged it forward, down into the town that nestled in the valley of the White Waters.

The horse turned down the wide main street of the town. The street was dotted with badly filled potholes where men had prospected before the town had sprung up. Without turning his head, the man rode down the pockmarked street. His cold grey eyes darted from side to side, studying the buildings that lined the street and the people who hung about in front of them. For the most part the buildings were shacks of corrugated iron or wood with here and there a fine brick or timber buildings. And for the most part those who hung about in front of the buildings were ~~rough~~ miners. And many buildings carried the magic invitation:

B A R.

Again, the bleak little smile pulled at the bearded lips. ~~And~~ A new tautness crept into the man's bearing. The horse jogged daintily down the wide street. And all about rider and horse were the noises of a town.

Some way down the road a group of men came out of a ~~diner~~ building.

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building than the rest. They were better dressed than the majority of people on the street. There were six of them. Men of substance. Their clothes, the way they filled the wide street, their bearing, announced them as men of substance. They came up the road street, taking up all its width. Their voices and laughter reached the horseman coming down the street. Except for the tightening of his left hand on his reins, he seemed undisturbed.

He was twenty yeard from them when they became aware of him. Now, all they had to do was to move aside and he would ride past. Some of them began to give way. But the one in the lead centre stopped them. They made a human line that barred his way and came on. At five yard he pulled up. They came to a halt.

Right of way
The right of the middle of the street was his. He was the mounted, the horseman. His eyes were expressionless as he looked watched at the foremost of the men on foot. This was the man who had stopped his companions when they had been on the point of giving way.

"Ever heard the name Prince, Mister?" It was one of the others one of them said in English on foot, the one on the far right-hand side.

"Best shot on the diggings," another said.

"I want to get by - please," the man called Prince whispered.

They all waited in silence.

"Move before you die," the one on the far right first one said.

"Just a dumb Boer," someone said. "He can't understand."

"Make way or he'll kill you," someone else said in Afrikaans.

A man next to Prince said:

"Drop it, Prince....His eyes."

"Room, gentlemen, please," Prince murmured.

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The others moved away leaving Prince facing the horseman.

Prince took several steps back.

"You'd have more of a chance on foot," ~~he~~ Prince called.

The horseman sat as though deaf or, if he heard, completely uninterested.

"Suit yourself," Prince murmured. "....Someone count three..."

There was silence, then a voice called out:

"O-N-E...."

And all the silences of all the world was in the street.

"T-W-O...."

The horseman looked into Prince's eyes. All the tautness went out of his body. There was, now, an icy edge to the calm of his mind and body. He was in a situation for which all his past and all his life had prepared him: that of carrying the burden of his life in his own hands.

"THREE!"

He knew then, in that split second, that the man Prince was a coward, that a man ~~can~~ could kill or attempt to kill out of cowardice. He fired once as Prince's hand flashed out of his pocket. In his death-jerk Prince fired once ~~but~~ into the ground at his feet. The horseman's heels dug sharply and the horse shot away. By the time Prince's friends ~~had ascertained~~ realised that their man was dead the horseman was almost out of sight down the far end of the street.

~~Once sure that he was not followed~~ After a while the man eased the horse to a walk. Though he did not know the town his directions were clear. At the bottom of the street, almost on the edge of the veld in the direction of Langlaagte, he turned left. ~~/~~This was the old part.

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Here farmers had lived and worked before gold had been discovered and the valley had been turned into a mining town. He turned into a high-fenced narrow lane between two rows of buildings. At the far end ~~of the lane~~ he dismounted. The journey was over. He tried the last gate on the right-hand side. It was bolted. He hammered on it with the butt of his pistol. Moments passed, then he heard footfalls. The bolts slid back. The gate opened.

He looked at a tall, powerfully built old man with a silky white beard and hair.

"Yes?" The old man's voice was harsh.

The horseman hesitated as though reluctant even now to break the silence of the long journey to this place. When he finally spoke his voice was soft and husky and slightly gutteral.

"Is this the house that Seisma built?"

"It is." The harshness had gone.

"Then it is the house of a friend."

"Whose friend?"

"The people's friend."

The old man swung the gate wide. The man led his horse in. Then the old man bolted the gate ~~behind him before speaking~~ again.

"I'm Gert Seisma," the old man said

"Uys Jansen," the ~~traveller~~ horseman said.

~~They shook hands~~. A black boy came and led Jansen's horse away. They walked towards the house.

"Long ride?" Seisma said.

"Blaauwberg District."

"You'll miss the clean air."

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"Some things a man does because he must."

"Shoot them, I say," Seisma declared with sudden heat. "Shoot them all! Tell them they have till a certain time. And if they are still here by then, shoot! Shoot them out of hand!"

Uys Jansen smiled and shook his head.

"Times have changed, Oom Seisma."

"Times never change between us and our enemies. If you'd been on trek you'd know that."

"There are many ways of fighting, Oom."

"So they all say," the old man snapped. ~~as they reached the house.~~ They reached the house. The old man ~~H~~led the way to the big front room, flung open the door and said:

"Uys Jansen has come."

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Uys Jansen put down his mug and waited for the man from Pretoria to speak. He had washed and eaten. Now Seisma and his wife had withdrawn and the business on which he had come would begin. Three other men were in the room.

He looked at the man who sat at the end of the table to his left. His name was Klaas De Jong. He thought: If he had to choose a companion to share danger with he would choose this big, lazy-looking man. He looked at the man at the end of the table to his right. Commandant Hans Smit, a hero of Majuba, a friend of President Paul Kruger, head of the police in the most lawless town in the Republic. This man had been a friend of his father. This man and his father had been comrades in arms. This man had lost a friend when his father fell at Majuba. Somehow he had not expected the great Hans Smit to be round-faced and jovial and fat. Fat lumpkins are soft. to have the look of someone who over-ate.

The third man, opposit him, was Villiers, the man from Pretoria, the government man. He had the pale skin and soft hands of one who spends all his life in an office. Men like him have been, and are being, assimilated down in the English Cape Colony.

Villiers cleared his throat and said:

"How much do you know?"

Uys Jansen heard the patronising tinge in the man's voice. Thus, in that same tone, had the late Prince and his friends addressed him. But this man was no Uitlander. He was a fellow Boer, albeit a citified one. His eyes went sombre. Commandant Smit looked at Jansen' face and eased himself deeper into his chair. De Jong raised his head and stared up at the ceiling rafters, whistling soundlessly. Only the man from Pretoria seemed unaware of the atmosphere he had

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~~created.~~

"What do you mean?" Jansen said.

"Simple enough. How much do you know?"

"Oh that. Yes, that's simple enough. Let me see how much I know. Probably didn't spend as much time as you at school but I know the sun comes up and I know the sun goes down: I know when it rains and you're out you get wet. Enough or shall I tell you some more, sir? I know...."

"Mister Jansen!" Villiers' face ~~was~~ turned red.

"I know," Jansen went on "I know Uitlanders speak of and to our people with condescension and I know I don't like it."

"Hear! Hear!" De Jong said.

"I'm here on the President's business!" Villiers snapped.

"I know another thing," Uys Jansen said coldly. "I know Paul Kruger never has and never will speak to any of his burghers in the tone of voice with which you began."

"He's right, you know," Commandant Smit said softly.

"There must be some authority!" Villiers said.

"Men and women have died to see it is the kind they want," Smit replied. There was that in Commandant Smit's voice that made Uys Jansen tell himself he had been ~~wrong~~ fooled by the man's appearance.

The fight went out of Villiers. He had been in Pretoria too long not to know the importance of being on the right side of the right person. Smit was the President's friend. ~~Villiers lowered his eyes and said:~~

"I'm sorry."

There was a long, awkward ~~pause~~ pause which lasted till Smit snapped briskly:

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"To business!"

"No hard feelings," Uys Jansen said.

Villiers relaxed.

"You've been out of the country so we want to know how much you know."

"Fair enough," Uys Jansen said.

"As you know, this trouble goes back to our war of independence of 1880. The English haven't forgotten or forgiven Majuba."

"Jansen's father fell at Majuba," Smit said.

"And a lot of others," Uys Jansen said.

"They're out for revenge," Villiers continued. "Always have been. For years they've been planning to avenge Majuba and have their flag flying over Pretoria. That's the background. The discovery of diamonds in the Freet State Republic and gold here has inflamed their desire for our land. Rumours - and more than rumours - have reached the President that the Uitlanders are going to start something here. ~~This might lead to anything. To war.... or anything...~~"

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There was a knock at the door and Seisma's wife came in with a pot of steaming coffee. They remained silent till she had gone.

"You know of Rhodes, of course?" Villiers said.

"Of course."

"The Reform Committee?"

"Heard of it."

"National Union of the Great Dissatisfied?"

"No."

"Well, this is how it works. Rhodes, we know, is in touch with

the English Government. We also know that he is master of the Reform Committee...."

"Sole master?"

"Sole master."

"How does he control them? They're not all English."

"He has control over the gold and diamond fields. He can make or break any man."

"So he controls them through their fear....?"

"And their self-interests," Smit cut in. "You must not forget the type of men they are, Jansen. They are men without roots; many are men without God or country. They sell their loyalty to the highest bidder. They belong nowhere and their hearts ~~can't~~ go out to nothing but gold and diamonds. They are the scum, the thrown out filth of all the countries of the world. They carry vice and evil and violence wherever they go. The kind of order and godliness of our republic is against everything they represent. So, in order for them and their ways and the licence they call freedom to survive the Republic must die or else they will be crushed."

"And these are Rhodes' tools?"

"These are his tools," Villiers said. "They have formed themselves into the National Union of the Great Dissatisfied."

"I take it that they are dissatisfied with our rule, that they would prefer English rule?"

"Rhodes is much too shrewd for that. Through the Reform Committee the National Union agitates for what they call 'civic rights and amenities'. They want the Government to set up special schools ~~on the Rand~~ for their children. They want us to pay that

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their children might be educated in an English way. ~~Also,~~ They want the government to pay for roads and drains for them in spite of the fact that most of our own people haven't got these things. But most important of all they want the vote. All the other things only lead up to the demand for the vote. We have about 75,000 voting burghers in the whole of the Republic. Here on the Rand alone the Uitlanders can muster ~~something like~~ 100,000 voters should they get the vote. See what that will mean?"

"Yes....Yes...."

"If," Smit said slowly. "If the Uitlanders get the vote the Republic can be voted into the British Empire."

"The Reform Committee," Villiers said, "has seen the President. ~~as the representatives of the National Union.~~ They have asked for the vote for the Uitlanders. The President and the Raad ~~has~~ have refused them the vote. They are now drawing up a petition to be sent to England ~~on the question of the vote~~. All above board, it seems. But word has reached the President that the petition is the screen behind which something else ~~will~~ is being planned. ~~In fact, we know something is going to happen~~. The President wants to know what it is before it happens. That is your task. We thought that as you've just returned from Holland the Amsterdam News would be a good cover and would give you good access to Uitlander secrets."

Villiers took a thick envelope from his pocket and pushed it across the table to Jansen.

"Your papers. You work out the rest with the Commandant and de Jong...." He got up and shook hands all round. "If there's anything you want from us in Pretoria, Commandant Smit knows the way.... Goodluck, Jansen." He went out.

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"A minute," Uys Jansen said. "It's good to know these things in advance. How far can I go?"

Villiers hesitated for a long while, then said:

"There may be circumstances in which we may have to ~~must~~ deny you."

"I didn't mean that. I told you about Prince. Supposing he hadn't invited his death but it was necessary to get what we want?"

"I....I..." Villiers looked desperately at Smit.

"This is war," Smit said.

"In war you do what must be done," De Jong said.

"Just wanted to know," Uys Jansen said.

"Well....I must go. Much to do in Pretoria." Villiers letf quickly.

"You upset Villiers," De Jong ~~sneered~~ said.

"Now Klaas!" Smit said.

Old Seisma brought in a lamp. His wife followed with more coffee. Outside, the sun was fast sinking. But it was not the same red ball of fire that had gone down yesterday. ~~And the darkness that crept over the land was as unrelated to the darkness of yesterday as the sun of today to that of yesterday.~~

Commandant Smit took a bite at his tobacco plug.

"The thing that worries me, ~~Jansen,~~ about the Prince affair is not the death of Prince. He was just a hired killer. We know of at least five murders he's committed. But we couldn't prove anything. No, the thing that worries me is that those friends of his might recognise you."

"They won't," ~~the silence-loving~~ De Jong said.

"How's that?" Smit said.

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"You're slipping, Hans. A year ago you wouldn't have asked that. That's the thing I want to warn you about, Jansen. Without noticing it, Jansen, we slip into ways of accepting the Uitlander."

"And how does my question prove that?" Smit asked.

"You assumed the Uitlanders who saw him kill Prince would know him when they next see him because you would recognise Jansen with or without his beard. His change of clothes wouldn't fool you. But because you would recognise him, you think those men would do so too. You've ignored the fact that to them the man who killed Prince was a dumb uncivilised Boer whom they despised. When they meet Mr. Jansen of the Amsterdam News, shaved, dressed like them, speaking their language, their equal, it would not cross their minds that he could be the dumb bearded Boer who killed their killer friend. They don't confer on Jansen or you or me the human status you confer on them."

"You talk too much, once you begin," Smit snapped.

"A year ago, Jansen, Hans would have known that in their minds you would never be a person but a thing called 'Boer', but today his mind is softened - not consciously, but softened all the same. Their very presence here is a danger. It blurs our vision. Look at Villiers. Oh sure he's a patriot by certain standards....."

"Enough, Klaas," Smit said sharply. Then, to Jansen: "Don't get him going on this, Jansen."

"We're all becoming too reasonable to be true patriots," De Jong snapped. "We're trying to outplay Rhodes at his own game and he's going to beat us hands down."

Uys Jansen looked carefully at the big, powerfully built Klaas De Jong. The man didn't look much older than himself. A Man to be

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reckoned with, he decided. And a man who saw things.

"Time you went," Smit said.

"Yes," De Jong said. "We must meet that train."

They went to the yard where their horses were ready. The sun had gone completely and night had fallen. From the heart of the town the sound of Uitlander revellers came distantly to them.

"Hear the ungodly...." old Seisma muttered

Commandant Smit gripped Uys Jansen's hand.

"We depend on you, Jansen."

"He'll do," De Jong said.

A black boy opened the gate and they spurred their horses down the narrow lane, that led straight on to the open veld. From the other end of the lane, the end that led into the main street and the heart of the town, the noises of the Uitlanders came a little more sharply than in the yard.

They rode steadily up the sloping land till the slope came to an end. They stopped on the rim of the valley and looked back. The town was directly below and they were higher than had appeared from the angle at which the land had sloped.

The moon was up ~~by now~~. And though the stars were not out yet the sky was clear and distant. The light of the moon was strong on the earth ~~for the moon seemed very near it~~. And below them, like stars on the earth, thousands of lights twinkled upwards and mapped the ~~same~~ area of the town. The Uitlander town. They watched it for a while then spurred their horses on, away from the rim of the valley. And where they rode was the wild veld: quiet except for the creature noises that were a part of its quiet. And the light of

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the moon was enough to guide them across the the rolling land that swept away in all directions.

~~And they journeyed in silence~~. They were in deep accord with the silent land. This was their land, their heritage, the birthright their forebears had bought with blood and sacrifice: this land, its silences, its clear faraway skies, its misty blue mountains, ~~on the horizon~~, and the cool remoteness of its undulating spaces; all this was theirs ~~land~~ and they knew and understood it.

The moon rose higher. The land turned lighter till it seemed like poor daylight instead of poor darkness. And the two riders travelled in silence for hour after hour in the half light that blurred all harshness and gave the land an unreal, fairy-like softness. At last, they pulled up at the mouth of a long valley.

Faintly, Uys Jansen saw the railway line that ran through the valley. And, ~~at~~ parrallel to it, but twisting like a writhing snake, ran a river. At the far end of the valley, where the river and the railway line parted company, was a low farmstead, white in the moonlight. The river swung away behind the white sprawling houses. The Railway line passed near the main building.

Uys Jansen broke the long silence.

"That the place?"

"The train stops there and we can trust the man. Come..."

Uys Jansen turned from the window and looked at Klaas De Jong. His face was shaved clean. It was a long lean face, stern and austere like the land. His hair was cut short and brushed back neatly.

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His homemade burgher clothes had been replaced by a fashionable Uitlander suit with a dark crimson cravat with a diamond-headed pin in it. The sallowness of his face, after its year behind the beard, gave him a deceptive air of physical weakness.

"Not long now," De Jong said.

"You'll take care of my horse."

"Yes....Don't worry about anything like that. Take care of yourself. Those Uitlanders are not fools."

"Nor are we."

"We are new to this way of fighting, Jansen."

"I know."

"Give me a gun every time, I say."

"Could we hold England in war?"

"We did at Majuba."

"Could we do it now?"

"Only by believing in ourselves and our cause....But Oom Paul knows what he's doing so we'll do it this way."

"Ever met Paul Kruger?"

"Yes. Do your part well and you'll meet him."

"I'll do my part."

Yes. I'll do my part allright. Jansens have done their part throughout the history of their country. A Jansen will do so now. Something to match the heroic past: something to cap Oom Stefan's tales of the great days of the trek. Those days had been stern. Sterns days of the trek. Hettie Van As' people were in the same party. Oom Stefan said so. Hettie Van As. Stern days. Sterm days. Well, these days could be stern too, and hard. Not the same kind of

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sternness but sternness all the same. A man's destiny is to meet the sternness of his day. Always, it lay ahead of him, calling. And a good man went forth to meet it. That is his duty to the past and to the future. To touch hands with the past and the future and join in the battle, that is his destiny.....And Cornelius Jansen, my father, was born at Vegkop in the hour of battle. And grandma Anna Jansen had died that he might live. And the same Cornelius Jansen, my father, born in one battle, had died in another....For us there is no time for anything except to fight till our land is free and safe.... Talk to Hettie Van As under the old marula. Why does her grandmother dislike the Jansens so?....Kasper Jansen, my grandfather, had helped to found this republic. He had been an elder when Paul Kruger was a boy. He and his brother, my grand-uncle Koos Jansen, they had handed down the family creed. To fight in order to be free and safe. Kasper Jansen had seen his brother Koos and his wife Anna, my grand-uncle and my grandmother, die at Vegkop. And Oom Stefan had been a boy with a rifle in his hands....For the sake of Hettie Van As and the children they were going to have.....

From a long way off, it seemed, Uys Jansen heard the shrill blast of the train whistle.

"It is here," De Jong said.

The old station-master opened the door.

"It is here," he said. ~~"Please hurry."~~

"Remember," De Jong said. "When you get to Johannesburg remember I'll always be in the background if you need me."

"Come. It is here," the station-master said.

UW Libraries

3.

He got off the train and stood on the brightly lit platform. About him were the other passengers and those who had come to meet them. At the tail-end of the train black porters worked feverishly to clear the baggage van. The last stop was Pretoria and the government was trying hard to get its trains to run to time.

A strapping black boy stopped in front of him.

"Carry your bags, baas?"

He studied the boy's face then nodded. Too late, the boy realised this was not the kind of customer he wanted.

"Jansen's the name," he said. "Find the baggage and wait there."

A tall thin young man came hurrying down the platform. His shoulders stooped. His arms were too long for his sleeves. A worried frown twisted his thin pink face. He went from person to person, from group to group.

"Mr. Jansen?" he murmured to each person or group in a rusty voice that squeaked between childhood and manhood.

Uys Jansen watched him work his way down the platform. At last the boy stood facing him. He toyed with the idea of letting the boy carry on right down to the tail-end of the train. But the hopelessness in the boy's eyes changed his mind.

"Mr. Jansen?"

"Yes."

The boy stopped dead with a jerk. His mouth fell open. He stared as though he could not believe he had finally found his man.

"Mr. Jansen....I'm so glad....I was afraid you'd gone off into the town and got lost....I.."

UWI Libraries

"What's your name?"

"Dirk Bosman, sir."

"Didn't know burgher boys worked in the Uitlander town."

"I'm not really a burgher boy, sir."

"But your name....?"

"Oh that. My people ran away from Poland, sir. You see, they are Jews. They went to Holland. My grandfather changed the name because then we won't be noticed." The boy ~~had~~ poured it all out in a self-conscious rush.

"I see," Uys Jansen said. "All you family here now?"

"Yessir. My father says a man can make a new start here. I want to have my own newspaper when I grow up."

"And how do you get on with the burghers?"

"They don't like us, sir. But my father says everything will be better when Rhodes' plans mature."

The train pulled out. The platform crowds began to thin.

"Better be going," Uys Jansen said.

"I'll take you to the hotel, sir."

"No. Give me the name and I'll find it."

"Portland Hotel."

"Good. Off you go. I'll see you in the morning."

"But you might....."

"Off you go, Bosman."

Young Bosman left reluctantly. ~~This one seemed more of a man than his former boss had been. Feld had been a weak soak with whom he, Bosman, had been able to take liberties. This Jansen chap wouldn't stand for any of that. Something frightening about his~~

UWI Libraries

~~calm. Something cold about it. Better watch you step, Dirk.~~

Uys Jansen ~~turned and~~ walked down the platform. ~~The noise that had been a hum now turned into the voices of people, distinctly heard.~~ A white station official supervised the pile of luggage. Black boys stood guard over ~~various~~ piles ~~belonging to their masters~~ of luggage. ~~But none of them~~ They were not allowed to remove the luggage till vouched for by their masters. The strapping black boy stood guard over Uys Jansen's two bags.

"Name, sir?" the official said.

"Jansen."

The black boy picked up the two bags and followed Uys Jansen out of the station.

"Boy."

"Baas?"

"Know the Portland Hotel?"

"Yes, baas."

"Far to walk with those bags?"

"Not too far."

"If I help you?"

"Then it is easy, baas."

"Give me one."

He took one bag from the boy and they set off across the town. About them moved the people of the town who were yet strangers to the land: the Uitlanders - the outlanders, the outsiders. As he watched them, Uys Jansen thought: These are the uprooted. They would be uprooted anywhere on earth.

"Boy."

UWI Libraries

"Baas?"

"What's your name?"

"Luke Dabula, baas."

"Where you from?"

"The land of the Matabele."

"Why did you leave your land?"

"My king is dead. The land is taken."

"Others stayed."

"I am the son of a general who preached resistance."

"But your people believed the promises of Rhodes."

"Yes, baas."

"Now you have to carry my bags."

"Yes, baas."

What was behind that dead voice? What did he feel? What did he think? Luke Dabula, son of a Matabele general carrying bags in the Uitlander town. The handiwork of Cecil Rhodes. They'd been a proud race of kaffirs, these Matabele. A proud, savage people, great in battle. His ancestors had fought them, so he knew. Now, a son of one of their generals was carrying his bag, thanks to Mr. Rhodes. Better be careful Uys Jansen or your son might be doing this for an Uitlander a generation from now: like the once proud Luke Dabula. These Uitlanders walked over peoples' hopes. They trampled on their dearest dreams. As long as there is gold they will dig without caring whether the land lives or dies. When it is gone, when there is nothing more to be had from the land, they will go. They will not look back. They will have no pity for the desolate land. They will have no pity for the people of the desolate land. Luke Dabula knew

UWL Libraries

the meaning of that. He knew allright, with his dead voice and sightless eyes. Briefly, a wave of warmth for the black boy passed over him.

"It is a hard world for the defeated, Luke Dabula."

"Yes, baas."

"The one called Rhodes is a hard man. He took your land."

"Yes, baas."

"Dabula?"

"Baas?"

"I can send you to a farm where you will be well treated if you work well...."

"The baas is good...."

The warmth froze in him. Stupid to have given way to the impulse. Should have known no kaffir would appreciate it.

"But?"

"But I would learn the ways of the town, baas."

"So it is still the Uitlander you prefer."

The black boy said nothing. Never mind. It didn't matter either way. Luke Dabula and his kind were the defeated. The defeated on the one side and the uprooted on the other. He, Uys Jansen, had first discovered his roots consciously in Holland. Many years ago now but he still remembered it as though it were yesterday, ~~or the day before.~~ It was in Amsterdam during his first years away from home. He knew nobody at the university and he was lonely and homesick as boys sometimes get in a strange land. So, one warm night, he'd gone down to the docks to see the great ships come and go. It had made him feel nearer home. An old Dutch grandfather in wooden clogs

UWI Libraries

had stopped beside him.

"Strange place for a young man to be. Or are you one of those peo fellows?"

"No, grandfather."

"Then why are you here instead of among the young? Or, why is there no pretty lass with you?"

"I'm a stranger, Oupa."

"Where is your home?"

"The South African Republic."

"I see....That is a long way away young man...."

And they had talked about South Africa. The old grandfather had asked him many questions. And in answering them he had come to feel his land, to touch his roots as never before. History had come alive. Blood had become a rope that bound his people, not some thin red stuff. Then the old grandfather had told him of Piet Hein and the Silver Fleet and that had ended his homesickness. The land of Piet Hein was no strange land to him. The people of Piet Hein were no strangers to him. He had got to know the land and its people and that had helped him to know his own land and his own people. They, the people of Piet H had never been defeated like the Matabele kaffirs. His own people would never be defeated like the Matabele kaffirs....

"We are there, baas," Luke Dabula said.

Uys Jansen liked the look of the Portland Hotel. It was clean and quiet. The manager was a little Englishman called Thomas, red faced and beery.

Thomas led him upstairs to his rooms. The black boy, Luke Dabula, followed with the two bags.

UWI Libraries

Thomas and the black boy waited at the door while he inspected his rooms. There was more room than he had ever had for himself. At home he shared a smaller room than this bedroom with Johan. He certainly didn't have a sitting-room and the tiny study that went off it.

"It's not really a study," Thomas said as he looked at it. "It's a box room. But you journalist gentleman have so many papers..."

"It was thoughtful," Uys Jansen said.

"If there's anything...."

"I like it. I'm sure I'll be happy, Mr. Thomas....Boy!"

He flipped a shilling in the boy's direction. The boy caught it , and looked briefly at it before pocketing it.

"Baas...."

Uys Jansen caught the fleeting expression on Thomas' face. Not so mild, after all. The boy turned and went out.

"Boy! Luke Dabula!"

The boy came back. Uys Jansen pushed his hand into his pocket and brought out a fistful of silver.

"Here! Come here....Baas Thomas' eyes tell me he thinks I have not given you enough...."

"Mr. Jansen...."

Uys Jansen ignored Thomas' protest.

"Come, Luke Dabula! Take what you think would make it enough. I am a stranger here. I do not understand the ways of people here."

Slowly, the black boy tilted his face till he looked into Uys Jansen's eyes. The white man's eyes spoke to him, said: We understand each other, you and I. Your ancestors fought mine, but in

UWI Libraries

clean battle. But this one belongs to Rhodes and you know how they fight.... The Black boy lowered his eyes. When he spoke his voice was dead and heavy with the burden of defeat on two counts, by two enemies.

"The baas was wrong, baas."

Uys Jansen put his arm about the boYs shoulder.

"Sure. Don't be afraid."

"Sure, baas."

He walked as far as the stairs with the boy.

"Goodnight, my friend."

"Goodnight, baas.

When he got back Thomas said coldly:

"Thank you, Mister Jansen."

"What for?"

"Don't overstrain your advantage, sir."

"You're right, Mister Thomas. It isn't always wise. But it's one of the unfortunate things about you English that you always under-estimate others. Don't forget we have colonies too and know how to deal with native peoples."

"The Cape was once a Dutch possession too, wasn't it,Mister Jansen?"....I'll send up sandwiches and coffee."

Thomas left him abruptly. That last one stung his pride as though he were a genuine Dutch citizen. In spite of what he'd said about the English he had done the major piece of under-estimating. Thomas was far from mild, far from foolish. Odd how certain people are instictively hostile to each other. That surely lays the one about man being a rational animal.

UWI Libraries

For a while he stared at the open door with a rueful little smile playing about his lips. Then, with sudden decision, he shut the door. His movements, now, had the ease and speed of a precise and neatly decisive mind. He went to the windows, pulled the curtains aside and flung them open one by one. Bedroom windows, sitting-room windows, study window. Let the clean air in.

He put his bags on the bed, opened all the cupboards and transferred his clothes to them. Then he pushed his empty bags under the bed.

A boy brought up the coffee and sandwiches Thomas had promised. When he had finished eating he turned out the lights and undressed by moonlight. He pushed his head out of the window and looked up at the stars. Then he looked at the flickering lights of the town.

In his mind, he saw the people at home and knew how they slept. At home there would be no change. There, only the seasons changed and man and beast were only changed by the hand of time. The earth remained eternal. And the ways of man and beast, on a smaller, time-bound scale, also remained eternal. Here, things would be different, that he knew. He did not know the nature of the difference but he knew he could cope with it. Of that there was no doubt.

A light sprang on in a window facing his on the other side of the hotel's small quadrangle. He could see nearly all of the interior of the other room. It was small. The door was behind the window, in line with it. The door opened and a woman moved in, back first. She lingered at the door, saying goodbye to someone on the other side.

....Wonder what she looks like. Decent figure. Modest dress. Slight stoop to the shoulders. How long are you going to lean against

UWI Libraries

that door woman? Turn and show yourself. Old or young? Ugly or beautiful? Dar or fair? Your back and your figure and your hair says you should be young and dark and beautiful. Your face should be long and narrow to go with that figure. Hettie's face is broader than it is long. Turn....

The woman turned and was as he had guessed: young and dark and beautiful. She moved out of his line of vision. He moved till he could see her sitting on the edge of the bed in the left corner of the room. She was undoing her dress. He pulled up a chair....

....The little boy walked round the house and looked causually into the window and saw the woman and she was naked. He was interested He had never seen a naked body before, not a woman's naked body. It was interesting to watch, nothing more. He stood and watched interested. He did not know he was doing wrong. He was as yet unaware that what he did was a crime, against the tenets of Anglo-Saxon puritanism and so he watched openly and he was caught watching. And they beat him in order to beat the devil out of his mind; they beat him to the point of sickness. And it was a week before he could go into the fields again and do his work. The boy, growing, had seen other naked bodies, but by stealth, and the seeing had always been unclean: there had always been dirt and guilt in the boy's mind. In time, growing, the boy had forgotten the beating but the dirty guilt and excitement had grown with his growing body....

The lights opposite went out. Uys Jansen sighed and went to his bed. It took him a long time and all the strength of his will to compose his mind and go to sleep.

UWI Libraries

4.

The sun was brightly harsh. A morning like this held the promise of a sweltering day. It was still as though the air itself was without motion. And from the earth heat-waves rose in faintly seen hazes. In all, the town looked drab and dusty. Its ugliness was only relieved by the green of the sloping hills surrounding the town.

Uys Jansen and Dirk Bosman walked side by side through the town. The streets were all ~~but empty~~ crowded though it was early morning. Men talked animated at street corners. Republican police patrolled the streets in pairs at rare intervals. Few women were abroad. Mostly, it was a man's town, a mining town. And on the streets of the mining town were the honest men and the liars, the wise men and the fools, the thieves and the blackmailers, the heathen and the christian, and gold was the magnet that drew them all. Gold meant riches; riches meant power.

As they walked through the streets young Bosman pointed out the well-known buildings and people they passed on the way. That's where they had the killing last week, sir.... And that's the building of the Joel brothers. Mr. Feld was a great friend of Mr. Woolf Joel's. ....Oh, look, sir! That is Count Von Veltheim. Some people say his mother was a German Princess. There are lots of stories about him, They say he's wanted for murder in Australia and England. Everybody here knows about Count Von Veltheim....

And thus, with Dirk Bosman pointing out the sights and personaliti they passed, they walked till theyreached the Amsterdam News office in President Street. As they entered the office a man rose from the biggest and most comfortable chair in the room. He was short and

UWI Libraries

fat. He had a pink, baby face with a skin that showed the slender blood-veins under its surface. His hair and moustache were blonde. Only the sharp shrewdness of his green eyes belied the impression his appearance made. He rose slowly and bowed stiffly.

"Jummy Higgs at your service, sir....'Lo Bosman."

"Morning Mr. Higgs."

"Better introduce us, Bosman...."

"Sorry sir: yes sir....This is Mr. Higgs Mr. Jansen. Mr. Higgs of the STAR."

Higgs pushed out his hand.

"Glad to know you," Uys Jansen said.

"I've been appointed by the other pressman here to meet you and do whatever would help. There's a little do for you tonight at the club."

"Very thoughtful of you. I'm most grateful, Mister Higgs."

"My friends call me Jimmy."

"Mine call me Uys..Sit down."

"Anything special you want to do?"

"To whom do I present my papers?"

"Police Commandant. Not a bad sort. Called Smit. But I didn't mean that. It's policy to make them wait a day or two. Thought you might want to meet someone. Anyone at all and we can fix it."

"I thought I'd find my feet first. Get to know the place."

"Good idea. Want me to take you round the town?"

"I think I'll spend today learning about the office. What about tomorrow?"

"The Higgs motto is service. Tmorrow then. I'll collect you

UWI Libraries

at sundown for this evening's do. Don't work too hard. So long."

Higgs left. Uys Jansen looked at Dirk Bosman.

"How did he get in? Don't you lock up at nights?"

"I do, sir. But Mister Feld gave Mister Higgs a key."

"Why?"

"They were friends and Mister Higgs left things for Mister Feld."

"What things?"

"Stories and things, sir." Bosman was getting worried.

"Didn't Mister Feld go out and find his own stories?"

"Only if they happened here, sir."

"Why?"

"There never was enough money. That's why he never went to Pretoria for Raad meetings."

"I bet Mister Higgs gave him the information."

"Yessir. Mister Higgs gave him a copy of his own report."

"Mister Higgs is very kind."

"He is, sir."

Uys Jansen went to the window and looked out. Kind Mister Higgs: so anxious to help. He turned to the long table that held the files of Rand papers. What a collection. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven; all good children go to heaven: when they die they say goodbye; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. The first one had the most apt name of the lot, the Golden Age. The rest were rather pedestrian: Goldfields News, Eastern Star, Daily News, Transvaal Mining Argus, Star, Standard and Diggers News. And in a place of honour, all by itself, was the Amsterdam News file. He sat down, pulled the Amsterdam News file to him and began to read. He went right through

UWI Libraries

the file, then turned to another, and after that another. At lunch time young Bosman brought him sandwiches and coffee and he went on with his reading. As the day developed he discarded first his coat, then his waistcoat, then his cravat. Occasionally, a person drifted in, consulted one of the file, and drifted out again.

By late afternoon he had finished his reading. His eyes were pink and stung somewhat. It was a very long time since he had read as much in one day. But it had been worth it. He got up and stretched himself, flexed and unflexed his back, arms and shoulder muscles.

"Get me some coffee, Bosman."

Yes. It had been worthwhile. Jimmy Higgs had written practically every one of the stories sent to the Amsterdam News by Feld. In most cases Feld hadn't even bothered to write a new introduction. In on e or two place/ he had rewritten the pieces, but only in one or two places. And the Star was the most anti-Republican and anti-burgher of the seven papers. And of all the writers in the Star the stories of none were as bitterly hostile to the Republic and its people as those signed 'James Higgs' who was the political correspondent.

Uys Jansen went to the big desk in the corner. It had obviously been a piece of furniture under Mister Feld. Well, it would be used now. Might be an idea to partition the corner off into a small private office. Because he had had so little of it before the thought of privacy appealed immensely to him. He opened the drawers of the desk. They were all empty.

Bosman returned with the coffee.

"Paper and ink, Bosman."

He wrote steadily for a long time. When he had finished he

UWI Libraries

reread what he had written. The last paragraph ran:

"I found then that Feld relied for his information on the reports of the Star's representative, a man called James Higgs. As proof I enclose cuttings of the Star's main political reports by Higgs for you to compare with Feld's dispatches. The date in the top right-hand corner shows when it was published in the Amsterdam News. I found further that Feld never attended Raad sittings at Pretoria so that his reports on that are again reflections of Star and Higgs opinions. As you may know, the Star is the most violently anti-Republican of all the English Rand papers. When I saw Dr. Leyds' representative he told me that you had not been too happy about Feld's dispatches and that you wanted the truth of what went on here. It is in the interest of truth that I send you this personal report on Feld's work. You will appreciate that I do not enjoy reporting thus on a man who is dead and cannot defend himself."

He attached the cuttings to the report, put it into an envelope and sealed it carefully then pushed it in Bosman's direction.

"See that it goes today. And Bosman...."

"Sir?"

"We are going to run this office as an office. Both you and I are going to earn our money. We are not going to depend on anybody for news. Understand?"

"Yessir."

"Allright then. Be here bright and early tomorrow so that we can take stock of things. We'll make the rounds tomorrow. By tomorrow night I want this corner partitioned off into an office. And by the way, nobody who doesn't work in this office shall have a

UWI Libraries

key of it."

"Yessir."

Bosman had come over from his desk near the door and now stood in front of Jansen's with his hand on the envelope Jansen had sealed.

"And Bosman." Uys Jansen rose as he spoke.

"Sir?"

He waited till Bosman raised his head and looked into his eyes. He waited till the boy was uneasy and the uneasiness showed in the boy's eyes. When he spoke his voice was quiet and level.

"In working for the Amsterdam News you are working for me, Bosman. I want you to forget what went on when Mister Feld was here. Mister Feld is dead. You are not working for Mister Feld any more. And whoever works for me must be loyal to me and to me only. So, whatever you hear or see or read in this office must go no further. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"No matter what it is."

"Yes, sir."

"Good.... You can go off now."

Uys Jansen stood at the window looking out at the darkening world. Men were streaming back into the town from the diggings. The bars had begun their brisk nightly trade. He would see some of the night life tonight. He heard Jimmy Higgs come in but remained looking out of the window.

"Hello there!"

He spun round as though caught by surprise.

UWI Libraries

"Hello, Mister Higgs."

"My friends call me Jimmy, Uys."

"I forgot."

"Well, how's it been?"

"Been checking things.... Which reminds me you've got an office key. Could I have it please." He held out his hand.

"It was useful my having it, Uys. I could leave copy for Feld. You might like that too."

"I'd still rather have the key, Jimmy."

"In the old days...."

"It's different now, Jimmy."

Uys Jansen felt the change that came over Jimmy Higgs.

"Hoped you wouldn't turn out a new-broom-johannie, Uys...."

"And what if I did?"

Higgs relaxed.

"Don't misunderstand, old fellow. It was just a hope."

"I'm not misunderstanding, Jimmy," Uys Jansen was friendly. "I have to feel my way. I'm new. I owe my paper something. My boss wasn't satisfied with the job Feld did so I must be careful."

"Say no more, old boy. Shall we go?"

"The key, please, Jimmy."

Higgs took the key off his ring and handed it over in silence.

"Thanks. You do see my point, don't you, Jimmy?"

"Yes, old boy," Jimmy Higgs said, but the friendly assurance had gone out of his voice.

They went out. Uys Jansen locked the office door after them. About them moved the citizens of the Uitlander town. And above them,

UWI Libraries

clear and bright and alone in the sky, was the evening star, beautiful as no other star of the heavens. Uys Jansen saw and felt and knew the evening star. It and the morning star had for years been his only guides as to the dividing line between day and night.

"She's beautiful and bright tonight," he whispered.

"Heh...?"

Of course this fellow couldn't be expected to know what he was talking about.

"Nothing," he said hurriedly.

Jimmy Higgs chuckled.

"Caught you off guard, heh! If she's as beautiful as that then I hope she waits for you. But I warn you there are women in this place too. You engaged?"

"No," Uys Jansen said with a private smile. "She's my sister."

"Oh..."

Further conversation was interrupted by their coming on a fist fight as they turned a corner. A crowd of men had formed a ring and inside the ring two men fought. At the same time a group of Republican police came hurrying from the other end of the street. "Police!" someone shouted. The crowd hustled the fighters into a nearby doorway. When the police arrived they mocked and jeered openly.

"Oom Paul's brainless boys!"

"Hooray for the Kruger brigade!"

"That one looks as though he's unused to shoes!"

"They all are!"

"Pretty good at smelling out harmless fun. What about the Boer

UWI Libraries

who killed Prince!"

"Find Prince's killer!"

"Find Prince's killer!"

"Prince's killer!"

"He's a Boer!"

"A Boer killer!"

The Republican police retreated ~~under~~ while jibes were hurled at them. The young officer in charge had difficulty in restraining some of his men.

Jimmy Higgs chuckled with glee.

"That's the stuff to give 'em."

"You don't like them, do you?" Uys Jansen said.

"You bet I don't. Go on, I know you think I'm biased. You probably think that as their ancestors came from your country you know them. You're wrong, my friend. You're a Dutchman. You're a European. These Boers are not Europeans. They'v e been here too long for that. They're primitive as the natives. You wait till you get to know them."

"That's exactly what I want to do, Jimmy."

"Come on," Jimmy Higgs said impatiently.

They walked to the end of the town away from Langlaagte and the mines, away from the low mounds of white sand that would, in time, become the man-made mountains of the golden reef. And as they walked other stars joined the evening star. And the Milky Way sprang, as if from nowhere, into the sky directly overhead. The shadows of the houses merged into the general darkness and there were no more shadows on the earth. The land sloped upwards, quite steeply.

UWI Libraries

They turned a dark corner and immediately ahead a brightly lit building stood out against the darkness all about.

Uys Jansen followed Jimmy Higgs into the bar lounge. The place was crowded. And the many voices of the many people speaking together sent a steady buzz echoing round the walls. Higgs said something. Jansen couldn't hear but creased his lips in a humourless smile and nodded. Too late, he realised he had agreed to them having a drink in that crowd. Higgs fought his way to the bar counter.

Uys Jansen rested his back against the wall near the door. They lived at quite a pace in the golden town. Quite a number of women here too. And two or three of them frankly drunk. And it was quite early in the evening. His eyes came to rest on a woman who stood, half crushed, against the wall at the opposite end of the room. A smile touched her lips. She'd been watching him. A wave of warmth gripped his stomach. Her smile deepened....That girl in Berlin where he'd gone for his first holiday was called Eli. Really, she'd been just a cheap slut. She'd picked him up at the beerhouse. She'd taken him to her room. She had taken his money. And then, because he'd not known what to do and because he had trembled she'd laughed at him and given back the money and said training him would be too painful. Just a slut. And so, after drinking too much, he'd gone to that other, less choosey, older.... He forced a smile to his lips. But his heart pounded violently. And somehow the smile wouldn't stay put but kept dropping so that he had to keep on hauling it up again. His hands felt clammy and his body trembled. The old God of the burghers says the flesh is sinful always. Surely it is an unjust God who imposes sinful desire on one. She was saying something with her eyes.

UWC Libraries

His emotions came between his understanding and the message of her eyes. An unjust God surely. And then Jimmy Higgs was beside him, offering him a glass. Higgs shouted something but the buzz of the room was again too much. He felt better though. It was as though the tight rope that had been choking him had been relaxed when he turned his eyes from the woman with the coming of Higgs. He raised the glass to his lips and looked again. It was easier now. He could even look at her face with a certain objectivity. Pity he couldn't see her figure. She raised her glass and inclined her head in a silent toast. And it seemed that she liberated him from all his fears with that little gesture. He responded to the silent toast.

Jimmy Higgs suddenly saw the exchange between Uys Jansen and the woman. He called out something and roared with unheard laughter. The trembling and sense of guilt took hold of Uys Jansen again. Higgs emptied his glass and pointed to a door near where the woman stood, the smirk still on his face. He began to push his way across the room. Uys Jansen followed close behind.

He was very near the woman when he reached the door, two or three yards. He raised his eyes. His heart pounded. But she was not alone any ~~more~~ longer. Between this moment and his journey across the room she had been joined by a thickset man with a golden tooth. He fought back his strange disappointment. Not as young as she had looked from the other side of the room: face too full, figure too ripe. Something familiar about her, something he had seen before, met somewhere before. But where. Well.... He followed Higgs through the door and the ~~silence~~ buzzing sound suddenly faded to a distant noise.

UWI Libraries

"You've certainly hit on her!" Higgs said.

"Who is she?" Uys Jansen said. The dirt in Higgs' mind made it easy to talk, freed him of the strong sense of guilt.

"Calls herself Cath Marlowe. Came here with a dancing troupe and stayed. She has an appetite and picks her own men. She likes you so it's just a matter of time."

"Where's she from?"

"Interested, heh....Max Shulman of the Diggers News is your man. Great pal of hers. One of the few men she really likes. Oh she's not slept with him so you don't have to worry about competition. He'll tell you all about her - or as much as he wants to."

"Where's this Shulman?"

"Come on! He's upstairs."

They turned left at the top of the stairs and went into a long low room. A long table was laid in the centre of the room. In the far corner, near a table heaped with drinks, about a dozen men, mostly Rand journalists, stood talking and drinking.

A murmur of welcome greeted them. A tall white-haired man came forward and held out his hand to Uys Jansen. Jansen looked into the bright consumptive eyes set in the narrow face and wondered how long the man would live.

"Pat O'Hara," Higgs said. "Next to the Deeckers he's the oldest journalist on the Rand."

"In experience, you understand," O'Hara said. "Not years.". But to hell with that. Welcome to the hell-hole of gold, young man. And never forget you are in Rhodes' empire now."

"Cut it out, Pat!" Higgs said.

UWI Libraries

"To hell!" O'Hara said.

"O'Hara gets more pro-Boer with every drink," Higgs said.

"And without!" O'Hara snapped. "Here am I, the best journalist on the Rand, and will anybody let me write a story? No! And why? I'll tell you why. I've offended the great God Cecil John Rhodes! That's why! But they couldn't break the spirit of Ireland and certainly won't break Pat O'Hara!...."

"What about the introductions, Pat!" someone called.

A black boy brought a tray of drinks. O'Hara took one and poured the alcohol down his throat. The fierce anger died out of his face. He reached for another. This is exciting, Uys Jansen thought as he tasted his drink. It was fun to see Higgs incoherent with rage. A gay, challenging smile creased O'Hara's face into many lines. He was, suddenly, the wise and respected elder of Rand journalism. He gluped down the drink, cleared his throat and rested one hand on Uys Jansen's shoulder.

"Welcome to our little band, Mister Jansen. Permit me to present you to your colleagues and a few of their friends who will soone be your friends as well...." He called out each man's name in turn.

Uys Jansen noticed Max Shulman. It was impossible to remember all the other names and faces. That would come with time. Shulman was a broad Jew with a quiet, pre-occupied air. He would try and get a word with Shulman later. He smiled and responded politely to the others and sipped at his drink. This was certainly going to be fun. After the introductions O'Hara led him to the head of the long table. The others took their places.

Four black boys came in carrying huge trays of food. Two others

UWI Libraries

served the drinks. And it was the boys who served the drinks who worked hardest. As fast as they filled them glasses were emptied.

Uys Jansen looked down the table. Jimmy Higgs was decidedly drunk by now. His face looked ready and sweaty. He was in heated argument with his neighbours.

"Drunk as a lord, he is," O'Hara said.

Jansen looked at O'Hara and thought: And so are you.

"They all are," O'Hara went on.

"Not all, Pat," It wa s Max Shulman talking from across the table. "You and Higgs and one or two others but there are some who are sober."

"You shu-up," O'Hara said. "You're sober because you're afraid of your wife."

"Which makes him the luckiest of us all," Shulman's neighbour said.

Something about the man's voice made Uys Jansen look more closely at him. The man's face was round. His nose had been broken and leaned heavily to one side of his face. His hairline was far back on his head giving the impression of partial baldness. His eyes were hidden behind thick horn-rimmed glasses.

"You're only here as a visitor, Blumenfeld so shut-up," O'Hara said.

"Ah-ha! So you also believe in suppression!"

Uys Jansen was again compelled by the intimate warmth of the man's voice. The man, Blumenfeld, looked at him and their eyes met. The same warmth was in the smile. It changed the man's ugly face into appealingly handsome.

UWI Libraries

"To hell with you, Mark Blumenfeld!" O'Hara said.

Mark Blumenfeld laughed in good humour and addressed himself to his food. O'Hara turned to the man on his other side. Jansen's neighbour said something he could not hear. He filled his mouth with food so that he would not have to reply to something he had not in any case heard. Shulam and Blumenfeld were having a private talk of their own. And at the other end of the table Higgs' argument was becoming more violent. Suddenly, as often happens, all the talkers stopped at the same time. And in the silence a solitary voice at the far end echoed round the room:

"Rhodes said so himself! I heard him."

All eyes, all attentions were transferred to the far end of the table.

"Rubbish!" Higgs said.

"I tell you I heard him, man!"

"Rubbish!" Higgs repeated.

"Interesting!" Max Shulman shouted. "Now tell us what you heard Joe so that we can decide whether Higgs is right."

"I heard Rhodes say that when the blacks came under the British flag they would automatically get equal rights. I heard him, I tell you!"

"Rubbish!" Higgs said aggressively. "I also heard him. He said we must treat them as our wards. Protect them for the children they are...."

"Damn big children!" someone snapped drunkenly. "Wouldn't trust my women with any of those children!"

"To hell!" Higgs shouted.

UWI Libraries

"I say, Jimmy!" It was Shulman's neighbour, Mark Blumenfeld.

"Yes?" Higgs was getting more aggressive.

"When do these children come of age?"

"What the devil are you talking about?"

"You said the blacks were like children. Well, you and I were children. We, I hope, ceased to be children when we were twenty-one. Whether in fact we did or not, the law accepted us as adults after the age of twenty-one. When do the blacks cease to be children? And who determines it? And how? And why?"

"I don't know what the hell you're driving at!" Higgs shouted.

"Then I'll tell you!" Pat O'Hara yelled, jumping up. "Sure I'll tell you, James Higgs esquire! So listen! Young Mark here wants you to climb off your superior moral horse. He wants you and Rhodes to admit that you don't care a hang about the blacks. You are here for what you can get and to hell with the blacks. So why pretend? The Boers are at least honest enough not to pretend they are here to serve Johnny Kaffir. They're out for themselves and they don't dress it up in superior moral tones. Not like you bloody hypocritical English. Look what you people have done to Ireland! Look what your God Rhodes has done to Lobengula! D'you see any difference? Does filth smell any the better if you call it scent? Rhodes' Lobengula deal is the most shameless piece of trickery and murder of our time. It is a measure of the English genius we hear so much about that an old illiterate black king...."

Jimmy Higgs jumped up scattering plates and glasses.

"To hell with you! Bloody Irish murderer! And the rest of you continentals! You're jealous of our empire!..."

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"You shut up and..." Pat O'Hara's shout ended in a spasm of violent coughing.

The man on Jimmy Higgs' left took a drunken swipe at Higgs. He missed and fell across the table. Someone grapped at the fallen man. Someone else grabbed at the grabber. A fight developed. Men jumped at each other shouting. They flung liquor over each other. They yelled at the top of their voices. And through it all the four black boys moved about quietly, picking up a glass here, filling a glass there. They were not part of this world of drinking, brawling white men. What happened to these white men was no concern of theirs.

Of all the white men only Uys Jansen and the two ~~men~~ opposite him, Max Shulman and Mark Blumenfeld, seemed uninvolved in the general madness. Uys Jansen looked across at them and laughed softly. Blumenfeld raised his glas in a toast. Jansen drank.... To you, my unknown friend. You started this little row. Why? Must get to know you. Wish you would take off those glasses so that I could see your eyes. Anyway, to you, brother Jew~~s~~ Blumenfeld....

Pat O'Hara's coughing spell ended. He grabbed an empty bottle and thumped on the table. Mark Blumenfeld shouted something at O'Hara but it was lost in the general din. At last the thumping had some effect.

"We have a guest here!" O'Hara shouted.

"Another damn journalist!" somebody shouted back.

"That's right!" Uys Jansen shouted.

There was a burst of laughter, and then comparative peace settled over the room. A few men called out good humoured remarks. Only Jimmy Higgs still glowered at everybody.

"The sooner we wind up, the better," O'Hara said. "Otherwise

UWI Libraries

there'll be murder."

"Hey, Pat," someone called. "Talking about murder. Any news of the Boer who killed Prince?"

"You'll never hear another word about that dirty murdering swine," Higgs said bitterly. "Trust your honest Boers for that!"

Uys Jansen had to hold on to himself.

"Drop it, Jimmy!" O'Hara snapped with an unexpected soberness and authority.

Higgs glowered at his glass and finally emptied it in one gulp.

O'Hara cleard his throat. A wistful look crept into his eyes.

"Well friends, journalists, writers, dreamers and - fellow sots. We have drunk; we have eaten; we have fought; we have cursed: now I will make my after dinner speech and then we'll get the hell out of here before we start another fight. Let me make one thing clear. I will speak. Jansen will reply. And that will be all. So it's no damn good anybody else jumping up and trying to make a speech. I've instructed Johnny to punch anyone who tries. No speeches except myself and Jansen. And we want a short one, Jansen....

"Well now boys. and you our special guest, Jansen, I want you to leave something at the bottom of your glasses for our toast....Jansen, I welcome you, we all welcome you to this hell-hole of gold. You've seen some of our fighting, some of our differences. We don't hide them. But in spite of them we can sit down together and eat and drink before cursing each other. Why is this? It is because our differences cannot hide the fact that we know we are having ringside seats at the making of history and that we are the recording angels of that history in the making. It is our words, yours and mine and Jimmy's, that will tell

UWI Libraries

those who come after us what went on here. The people who will write the history books will use our words, our newspaper stories as references. Yes, my friends! some bloody professor of the future with a string of degrees behind his name and a high and mighty air about him will, if he's an empire-building type ~~////~~ quote extensively from the reports of one James Higgs. If he is no empire builder he might quote me or Shulman. And we will be what they aall 'authoritative sources'! That is the thing we know. And that is the thing that keeps us together. Say, Jansen! Have you ever thought of recording angels with beery, boozy breaths? Well, Look at us! Look at jourself. Yet, when they write of us in the future, if they do, we'll be sober and respectable and pioneers. All this we know. All this we see. And we are trying, here and now, by our lives and by our deeds to minimise the historical lies they are going to erect around us and our times...." O'Hara's voice softened. His eyes became watery. "And it is this, my friends, this knowledge of how they are going to twist our deeds and words to give them a purpose we never thought of, it is this awareness of how the future is going to defeat us because we won't be there to defend ourselves against it, it is this that saddens and isolates us and makes us drink and dream....

"I give you the toast, my friends. To us, the recording angels with drunken eyes and beery breaths; to us, the defeated victims of the future who dream in spite of the futility of our dreams. On your feet, gentlemen! Raise your glasses. To us!"

Uys Jansen raised his glass and drank. He had been wrong to dismiss this O'Hara. Dying or not, a fire burned in that man....And he's on our side....

UWI Libraries

Uys Jansen remained on his feet as the others took their seats. He looked down to where Jimmy Higgs sat. Fat pink face of a Boer-hating Englishman. You're right about one thing, though. You'll never hear about the Boer who killed Prince. He is among you and you do not know him.

He looked at O'Hara and felt more friendly to the men who had arranged this party for him. No, not for him. He was only the excuse. Any excuse to get together and drink and share the loneliness O'Hara talked about. You're always lonely if you're a foreigner in a strange land. And you are foreigners here: Uitlanders.

"My friends: As one of you so rightly said a little while ago, I'm just another damned journalist. Mr. O'Hara has made me very proud of that...."

"Call me Pat me boy!"

"Thank you, Pat. That's about all I have to say. I'm happy to be here and I look forward to getting to know you all better. Thank you." He sat down.

The party broke up slowly. Jansen turned to O'Hara and then realised the man beside him was saying something. He caught the tail-end of it.

"....When I was in Berlin they did it quite a lot, especially among the poorer classes."

Did what? By the way the man waited it was clear he wanted an answer: but to what? O'Hara saved him.

"I don't know about Germany but I can tell you about Ireland. And that will be the same as telling you about Germany. People are the same under the skin, no matter what country they're in. Now Irelandds

UWI Libraries

a Catholic country but even there, in spite og the holy fathers, there is amny a young man who meets a young woman by moonlight and after the tasting of the sweet fruit they set up house without any lines being read."

"Then you don't think it's a foretaste of the new century that's almost on us?"

O'Hara roared with a suddenly gust of laughter.

"Oh Tony me boyo! And did anyone have to tell you how to feel when you first saw a pretty piece of skirt? And did anyone have to tell you how to feel when a woman's neck and breasts and arms first warmed you? No me lad! Before the blessed Nazarene walked this earth to be destroyed by the fears of men's minds, before Moses the great father of law-makers, a man saw a woman and took her and their bodies were the only lines and the only blessing they needed. If they were living in sin, and if the poor unhappy blacks of this land are living in sin today because no priest said lines for them, then tell me this: what is sin? Where does it begin? When? And how do we judge it? Tell me that, Tony."

"Trust O'Hara to confuse issues," Mark Blumenfeld said, and moved closer to them.

"And will the great Mister Blumenfeld condescend to tell us where I confuse the issue?"

The room was emptying. Every now and then men called out farewells and drifted out in twos and threes. The four black boys worked methodically at the business of cleaning and clearing up.

Mark Blumenfeld moved till he was beside Uys Jansen. He sat on the edge of the table.

UWI Libraries

"You confuse the issue;"/ he said. "By ignoring the fact that sin is relative. In our time, living in sin is sin."

"That's a beauty!" O'Hara jeered. "Living in sin is sin. The master has spoken!"

"Restrain some of your Celtic fire and listen, Pat, listen."

"Proceed, master!"

Blumenfeld stuffed an unlit pipe into his mouth and explained patiently. Uys Jansen tried to see the eyes behind the thick glasses.

"Since that day, before the Nazarene and before Moses the law-giver, when your first man saw your first woman in the fields and took her, since that day the world has changed and grown complicated. Man's relations with man are more complicated now than they were then: man's dependence on man is more complete. For that reason man has, over the years, built up a body of laws to regulate man's relations with his fellow man in order to make possible fairness and justice in their dealings with each other. To break any of those laws is therefore to sin against your fellow men. Because living in sin breaks one of those laws, living in sin is sin. There is no sin other than relative sin. When a man murders it is a sin because it is an act that goes counter to the body of law man has built up over the centuries. But when one lion kills another lion that is not sin. There is no body of law in the history of lions to say it is a sin to kill. Thus there is no sin in a lion killing while there is in a man doing so. It's all relative."

O'Hara snorted.

"Better be moving;Shulman said. "They want to close up."

"You'll soon have us arguing about ants and bess," O'Hara said to Blumenfeld as they moved down stairs.

UWI Libraries

The bar, downstairs, was as crowded as it had been earlier. Uys Jansen looked for the Cath Marlowe. Perhaps this Shulman fellow would introduce them and.... But there was no sign of her. He felt jealous, suddenly, against some unknown man who might be with her now. God you're a fool Uys Jansen. Pull yourself together man. The one woman you should feel jealous about is Hettie Van As and she won't give any reason for jealousy. Wonder why Tant Elsie's so bitter about us. Not even Oom Stefan knows. Pity about this Cath Marlowe but don't be foolish about her.

O'Hara fought his way to the bar counter and yelled:

"Come, Mark! Let's go into the history and culture of lions!"

"I'm for bed!"

"To hell.... Come on Tony: Jansen."

The man , Tony, followed but Uys Jansen shook his head and indicated the door. O'Hara waved then fought his way to a group in a corner. Jansen followed Shulman and Blumenfeld as they fought their way to the door.

The night air was cool and, after the stuffy bar, held a heady freshness as they walked away from the bar and the noises that spilled out of it. The stars of the heavens stood out clear, near the earth. Only the Milky Way was a long way off. The moon was a big Chinese lantern over the western hills, just above the town. Any man could, standing on the highest point of the western hills, take a giant leap and come close to touching the moon: or so it seemed. The night was a loving mother and man was her child. And, as with mother and children, s he gave the three men, walking, a strong sense of protected peace ~~as they walked~~ in the silence under the bright stars.

UWI Libraries

Uys Jansen soon realised that the two men were guiding him away from the town, but he did not mind. This was a moment of peace. All work had such moments. Then let there be peace for the moment. He felt grateful ~~for~~ to these two for this moment.

The land began to slope. They climbed the sloping land. When they reached its top a cool breeze played about them, gentle and refreshing but not cold. The moon lifted from the western hills. Now no leap, however fantastic, could take a man up to touch it. It was no longer a Chinese lantern but a real moon, cast in the terrible distances of space. Thousands of years ago a star had streaked across the sky. "Look," Mark Blumenfeld said as they saw it. It made a wide curve of light that ended in sudden darkness.

They stopped on the crest of the sloping land. And, in front of them and still away from the town, the land sloped into another valley and rose to another crest beyond that.

Max Shulman sat on a smooth rock and pulled out his pipe and tobacco. Mark Blumenfeld flung himself down on the grass and rolled onto his back. Uys Jansen sat on the rock beside Max Shulman.

"Homesick?" Shulman said, thinking how far Holland was.

"A little," Uys Jansen murmured, thinking about the farm in the Blaauwberg District that was a day's ride from this place. And of Hettie Van As.

Mark Blumenfeld raised himself on one elbow and pointed across the valley in which the town nestled.

"See that dark spot over there to the left, the one near the mine dump?"

"Yes," Uys Jansen said.

UWC Libraries

"That's Langlaagte," Blumenfeld said.

"Where gold was first discovered," Jansen said.

"Did you know the owner tried to sell it for twelve oxen?"

"No," Jansen said.

"And the buyer wouldn't go above eight," Shulman said "And no sale was made."

"And now that spot has given up millions," Blumenfeld said. "And millions more to come."

"Life's odd," Shulman said.

"This country's odd," Blumenfeld murmured. "A little while ago it wasn't worth twelve oxen to anyone but a Boer or a black and now everybody's scrambling."

"Sound as though you regret it," Jansen said.

"I do."

"Don't let him take you in, Jansen," Shulman said. "Mark has large mining interests and he's a member of the Reform Committee."

Uys Jansen tensed then relaxed and felt very still. There are no moments of peace, he thought and the thought was tinged with bitterness. He felt cheated.

Blumenfeld laughed.

"Max is a genius at simplifying things, Jansen. Everything is in black and white."

"How can you see the Boer viewpoint," Shulman said, "admit that there is reason in it and still be a member of the Reform Committee and a friend of Rhodes? I don't see it myself."

"It is an odd position," Jansen said casually.

"What would you have me do?" Blumenfeld said.

UWI Libraries

"Not so fast!" He grabbed the mine-seller and brought him back.

"You want to charge this man?" The first policeman was still uncertain. Uitlanders never co-operated with the police.

"Yes," Jansen said.

"Not if you want to live here, Dutchy," someone called.

"One more word and I'll charge you with obstruction," the second policeman snapped at the onlookers.

"Name please, sir."

"Uys Jansen."

"Burgher?"

"No. Hollander. I'm the new Amsterdam News representative here."

"Could I see your papers, sir?"

He showed the policeman his papers.

"And the charge is attempted theft?"

"He tried to sell me a gold mine for fifty pounds."

"I deny it!" Mine-seller said.

"I'm his witness someone called. The Dutchman's lying."

"Don't worry about them, sir. And thank you for co-operating. The sooner we can get rid of criminals like this the better for the country."

"Get rid?"

"He'll be tried, sir. If found guilty he will be deported."

The policeman marched the would-be mine-seller away. One or two onlookers flung threats at Uys Jansen then moved away. As he moved away Jansen looked back and saw old Thomas standing at the hotel door.

UW Libraries

"Either live up to the principles you profess," Shulman snapped. "Or else admit you are part of the scramble."

"Or..." Blumenfeld said quietly.

"Or you lay yourself open to the charge of hypocrisy. It is a charge the Boers can make to stick with many of us."

"So everything must be clear and sharp, black and white. Snap! This is good, this is just, we do it. Snap! This is bad, this is evil, we don't do it....Oh hell, Max! Life isn't like that...."

He jumped up and walked briskly away from them, down to the town.

"We'd better go," Shulman said softly. "I didn't know he was so low.

They followed Blumenfeld down into the valley.

"Always like that?" Jansen said.

"No. Something special."

"Could be me. I'm a stranger, you know."

"It's nothing like that."

"Sure? Nobody likes to be criticised in front of strangers."

"You'll find out when you get to know him."

They were silent after that. They caught up with Mark Blumenfeld on the outskirts of the town. When they were near the centre of the town Blumenfeld spoke and his voice was an apology.

"I wonder if the people of 1995 will also feel the problems of their day represent the greatest crisis for mankind?"

"You mean some of the people," Shulman said softly. "Not everybody tear themselves to pieces worrying about humanity."

"Some of the people, then."

"Can't ask them, Mark." The gentleness was more pronounced in Shulman's voice.

UWI Libraries

Uys Jansen sensed, vaguely, that something new had come up. It was there behind the new gentleness in Shulman's voice, and in the new assurance that he felt coming from Blumenfeld. It wasn't just assurance either. And they weren't trying to hide it from him. Almost, it seemed that they would welcome him into it. And suddenly, for a a split second, he was frightened and compelled and confused. Then the moment passed. And he dismissed the unknown thing that had brushed his heart and mind as Jewsih emotionalism.

"Makes it difficult," Blumenfeld said.

"Unless you go back to your poets," Shulman said. "The thing about the age that is dying...."

Blumenfeld said:

"The poet says

'For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.'

He offers nothing but change and no clue to the nature of the change. Change becomes a virtue because without change there can be no life. What do you think, Jansen?"

Jansen smiled in the moonlight. He was beginning to follow the workings of this man's mind. Terribly complicated yet very simple at the same time. Once you get the key to it, that is. Very like the mind of a kaffir in many ways.

"I don't like change," he said slowly. "I suspect I am conservative by nature."

"But nature is revolutionary. Nature believes - or, rather, nature is change."

"The tight little smile tugged at Jansen's lips. He was glad of the dark. He had prepared himself well for everything except this

UWI Libraries

verbal intimacies.

"I was born on a farm," he said carefully. "I grew up on a farm. We found nature conservative, not revolutionary. There were the seasons and there was man, and neither changed very much. The cycle of change was limited: birth, growth, maturity, decay, death. That was all."

"And the minds of men?" Blumenfeld said.

"It was part of the cycle. We loved the earth we owned. We worshipped God in our own way. We helped our neighbours."

"And the long dream?"

"What long dream?"

"Oh, the dream of the ages. The dream that has carried man forward from the jungle and the darkness."

"Surely that is to be found in the way the farmer understands the seasons, and tends his land and cattle, in the way he worships his God, and in the justice with which he deals with his neighbour."

"Is that enough?" Blumenfeld said.

The caution left Uys Jansen. He felt calm and clear now. These two really didn't understand at all. He would tell them. It had never occurred to him that they might really not understand.

"Have you ever tilled the earth, Blumenfeld?"

"No."

"You Shulman?"

"No."

He suppressed the slight wave of anger that rose in him.

"Then how can you understand the Boers? How can you understand what they want and dream of. When you, Blumenfeld, asked me whether 'that' was enough you did not know what the 'that' meant and yet you

UWI Libraries

had already decided that it was not enough. Go out and till the earth. Spend days and months and years behind the plough, as I have done, as the Boers of this country have done. Get to know the smell of the earth as it falls open and breathes at you. Get to know it as something that is alive and friendly and good. Get to know the seasons and the sky and the stars and the silences and then come and we will talk. You see, Blumenfeld, I'm a countryman. I know the countryman's ways. I think the conservative countryman's cycle is more real, mor enduring than your townsman's revolutionary cycle. That is why my sympathies are with the Boers. The things they value mean more to me than those that Rhodes and the Uitlanders value...." He stopped abruptly, embarrased at having said so much. His people were not a wordy people.

"Yes," Blumenfeld said quietly. "Yes. But we're back to Max's position again: all virtue on one side, all evil on the other. To the Boer the Uitlander carries all evil; to the Uitlander the Boer carries all evil. They shut each other out. And the concept of enemies is born. Each rejects the good in the other."

About them the streets were emptying. There were less people abroad. The lights were going out in nearly all the bars. And the streets were strangely quiet. Occasionally they passed a drunk weaving his way home. Occasionally they passed Republican police on night beat in pairs.

"What would you have, Mark," Shulman said.

"What would I have....I would have understanding, Max. I would have an attempt to eliminate the concept of enemies. I would have an attempt to understand the point of view that is opposed to mine."

UWI Libraries

"That means," Jansen said. "That you want Paul Kruger to see, to understand, Rhodes' point of view."

"Yes. And for Rhodes to see Kruger's. I would like to see them co-operate for the good of the country. But for that to happen the concept of enemies must be dropped."

Jansen spoke calmly and coldly. This was something he knew about, not the fancy stuff about men's minds and long dreams.

"From what I heard and read it seems that the Matabele king, Lobengula, acted according to your ideas. He wanted to drop the concept of enemies you spoke about. He wanted to co-operate with Rhodes for the good of his country. You know what happened to him. You know how Rhodes forced war on him and took his country. You know the old king died in the swamps fleeing from his friend Rhodes. Don't you think Paul Kruger knows that too?"

"You shouldn't forget, Jansen," Shulman cut in. "That this land of Kruger's, the South African Republic, once belonged to Lobengula's father, Mzilikazi. And it was the Boers who drove Mzilikazi and his son, Lobengula from their land here."

"They say old Mzilikazi was not as peaceful as his son Lobengula. They say he was bloodthirsty and attacked the Boer trekkers first. The Boers fought cleanly. In any case, the Boers have never taken any people's land under the cloak of friendship. And...."

"What difference does it make," Blumenfeld said. "The Boers fought Mzilikazi and took his land. Rhodes fought Lobengula and took his land. Must Rhodes and Kruger now fight?"

"What can they fight over?" Jansen said. "Is there anything they can fight over except the land that belongs to Paul Kruger and his

UWI Libraries

people?"

"But it isn't as simple as that, Jansen...."

"I must leave you," Shulman said.

They were near the station. Shulman turned right and walked down the sloping land in the direction of the Market Square. Jansen and Blumenfeld carried on towards the heart of the town.

"You were saying," Jansen said.

"It isn't as simple as you make it."

"Why not?"

"Because it isn't."

"It is for the Boers. They have everything to lose."

"And to gain."

"No. Only the Uitlanders have everything to gain."

"What of the wealth they are bringing the country?"

"Gold and diamonds?"

"Yes. Gold and diamonds and developments in their train."

"They haven't brought the gold and diamonds."

"Alright. It was in the earth all the time. But what good was it? The Republic was broke until they brought it out."

"For love of the Republic?"

"Of course not."

"So the Republic allows them to get the wealth from the earth and gets paid for it as a man would get paid for letting a room. But the room would still belong to the man. The land, the country, still belongs to the Boers. They have that to lose."

"But the Uitlanders don't want to take the land from them."

"Would you say Rhodes doesn't?"

UWI Libraries

"We do not all think like Rhodes."

"Yet he took the land of the Matabele."

"If Kruger gave the Uitlanders the other things they want...."

"Like the vote?"

"That among other things."

"And let them vote the Republic into the British Empire?"

"It might not happen."

"It might."

"Then what would you have, Jansen?"

"Why not make your wealth and leave these people and their land alone?"

"What of those who want to make their homes here? Who have something to give the land?"

"And what of the empire builders? The men who want to paint the map of the world one colour. The people of Holland think very highly of the Boers, not only because of the blood link but because they prize freedom as highly as the Boers do."

"And do you think this will halt the change that is inevitable? Gold and diamonds have set a process in motion that neither Kruger nor anybody else can stop. It seems to me that our duty is to make this change come about as smoothly and easily as possible."

They entered the hotel. The black night watchman saluted them.

"Do you understand the love of land?"

Blumenfeld stopped. He turned his head to Jansen. A faint flush spread over his face.

"I wouldn't have said this except that it is in your mind, Jansen, behind your question. The Jews have been without a land of their own

UWI Libraries

for a very long time. Perhaos you are right and I do not understand the love of land. But perhaps I do, precisely because we have been without a land of our own for so very long. What I do know and what I do understand is that the love of land can be both beautiful and ugly. You reminded me of its beautiful side when you spoke about tilling the earth. The ugly side of love of land is when it drives you to exclude and deny others for then it has turned to greed of land. And can you show me any land that is as much of a miracle as the awareness of the silliest person on earth?... But perhaps you are right. I am a Jew and the Jews have been without a national home for so long that they don't understand love of land. Goodnight." He turned abruptly and hurried up the stairs.

For a while, Uys Jansen stood staring after Mark Blumenfeld. Then, slowly, his lips twisted into a smile that did not touch his eyes. He pushed his hands deep into his pockets.

"Boy."

"Baas?" The night porter came forward.

"Baas Blumenfeld. His room near mine?"

"On the other side, baas."

"What number?"

"Sixteen."

Must be near where that young woman had stripped last night. It would be fun to get to know her. Interesting fellow, this Blumenfeld. Quite a useful evening. Something strange about all these people. A sort of instability. Rootlessness probably. Makes it tricky. Blumenfeld's weak and sentimental and should be easy for information - unless he's decided he doesn't like me. But not bad, not bad at all for my first night out.... He climbed the stairs to his room.

UWI Libraries

5.

He woke quietly, without moving. He opened his eyes and was immediately fully conscious and alert. After a while he turned his head and looked at the open window. The light suggested the angle of the sun. Early for a townsman but late for a farmer. The sky itself was distant and clear, but nearer earth thin cloud streaks, like tobacco smoke, wafted past the square of sky framed by the window.

At home the best part of the day's work would have been done by now. The women would have finished milking hours ago. His brother, Johan, would be riding across the farm supervising the kaffirs at their work. Old Oom Stefan who had been a boy on trek, as had been the President, would be sitting in the sun repairing harness while the children played nearby. And his mother would be in her kitchen seeing to the family food. It was all just a day's ride from this place but it seemed a world away. But this will pass. Only that will remain. That is real and this is false. Perhaps the gold will dry up and then the Uitlanders would leave. Perhaps they would have to be fought. Whichever happened, in the end they would go. Only the old Boers ways would remain. And, perhaps, many years from now, his children's children would ride through this valley and remember that the Uitlanders once came here and that their grandfather had a hand in getting rid of them.

There was a knock at the door.

"Yes?"

A black boy came in with coffee on a tray.

He dressed quickly afterwards. He would have to go to the

UWI Libraries

police today to register as the new correspondent of the Amsterdam News. But that wasn't important. He hadn't anything he wanted to see the Commandant about yet.

He looked for Blumenfeld downstairs in the small dining-room. But there was no sign of the man. Old Thomas greeted him, but coldly. He was tempted to provoke the little man some more but changed his mind. He might nedd the old man for something at a later stage. He responded warmly to Thomas' cold greeting.

He finished his breakfast and went out. He had expected the streets to be comparatively empty but he had been wrong. They were crowded. And they were noisy. Life here began early and stopped late. He had gone about twenty yards from the hotel door when a man stopped him.

"A bargain, friend, a bargain! Gimme fifty quid and go out and make your fortune!"

"Yes?"

"Yes! My old lady's sick in England so I have to go. Fifty quid andd it's yours!"

"What is it?"

"You're new here, aren't you?"

"Yes," Jansen said and smiled. "I'm new."

"Come to make your fortune. Well, here's your chance friend. It's a gold mine I'm offering you for fifty quid!"

"A real gold mine?"

"What do you think! And it's yours for fifty quid. Here are the papers, friend. Now my train leaves in half an hour's time so you'd better buy quickly! This is your lucky day, my friend!"

UWI Libraries

The man had grown more confident with each sentence. He now took hold of Jansen's lapels. A handful of loiterers had drawn near and stood watching. About them people moved up and down the dusty stree Jansen moved back to pull away from the man's hold.

"Where you from, friend?" the man said.

Jansen looked at the puffy face and bloodshot eyes. A big man who had once been strong. But his strength had been wasted in drink.

"Holland," he said.

"Come to make your fortune, heh?" The man still held his lapel. "These Boers like you Dutchies. They'll help you with the mine. Come on, you've got fifty quid in your pocket."

"It's a bargain," one of the onlookers said.

The mine-seller patted Jansen's breastpocket. Jansen knocked the hand away from his lapel and pushed hard. The man staggered back several yards. Surprise showed in his face for a second. He steadied himself. His expression changed. He moved forward slowly. He stopped suddenly and pushed his hands into his pockets.

"What goes on here?"

Jansen turned. Two Republican policemen had come up behind him.

One of the onlookers spoke quickly:

"You're a stranger here, Dutchy so you ought to be told we always settle our troubles without them."

"Well, sir?" the policeman said, but as one who expected nothing.

Jansen smiled.

"That man tried to rob me of fifty pounds," he said.

The second policeman leapt forward as the mine-seller ~~tried~~ began to move away.

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He walked slowly through the town, taking a round-about way to his office. He wandered among the stalls in the quarter-mile long Market Square. Everything was on sale here. And prices were high. There was wealth in this place and everybody was scrambling for it. This was a boom town alright: rough, dirty and arrogantly aggressive as any boom town. He watched and listened carefully as he moved among the crowds wandering from stall to stall. All the nations of the world were here, and most of the tongues of the world. But the dominant tongue was English. French, Germans, Greeks, Italians, Americans and a host of other nationalities gave the English language the characteristics of their own tongues. And there were hardly any of the people of the land. It was as though the people of the land, the burghers, had been driven away from this place. They would be the foreigners here. Indeed, he had passed a Boer couple. They had moved like guilty people, had stepped out of everybody's way as though they knew they were intruders here.

He left the Market Square and moved more briskly to his office. Young Bosman met him anxiously. A pair of blacks under the guidance of a Coloured fellow were hard at it partitioning his corner off.

"As I didn't know when you would arrive I told them to get on with it, sir."

"Very good, Bosman."

Bosman sighed with relief. He must have been wrong about Mister Jansen. Nothing really frightening about him. He's reasonable and friendly. Firm, because he's not s silly drunk like Feld, but just and reasonable. But somehow, the uneasiness about his new master persisted. There was no reason for it, nothing he could pin down.

UWI Libraries

But he was afraid of this tall, lean-faced man: and he knew he would never get over his fear.

"Coffee, sir?"

"Excellent idea, Bosman. And get some for yourself as well."

The Coloured man looked quickly at Uys Jansen then continued planing a piece of wood. Jansen moved over and stood watching him.

....So you'd like to have coffee with us, Mister Coloured Man. Quite fair, heh. Not very much darker than me. And wavy hair. Feel almost white, don't you. Above these kaffirs and good enough to have coffee with us. But nothing can stop you being a hotnot, kêrel, nothing....

His voice was quite friendly when he spoke to the man.

"How long do you think this'll take?"

"Depends on how fast I can make these fellows work, sir."

Yes, you do feel almost white. That 'sir' was an act of good manners not of reppect.

"Don't they work well?"

"Well enough: When you're watching them. I've three other jobs on this morning. And I've to run from one to the other to keep watch on these fellows."

"Why not get better workers whom you can trust?"

"You're new to this country, arent you, sir?"

"Yes."

"Well, when you've been here a while you'll find that they're all alike."

"I see. So there's no point in sacking them and getting another lot."

UWI Libraries

"None at all."

"You're what they call Coloured in this country, arentt you? In Holland they'd take you for a white man."

He watched the conflicting emotions mirrored in the man's eyes. He'd not had much to do with Coloureds. There were few of them on the farms. But the little he'd had to do with them had made him dislike them heartily, especially the fairer ones. They were the dangerous ones with their ideas of being white.

"They don't understand us, here," the Coloured man said. "They think we're like these fellows." He indicated the two blacks. "But we've never been blanket kaffirs."

"I hear you've better treatment in the Cape."

"They understand us better there. The English...."

"Then why don't you go there?"

"It's harder to make a living there. That's why I'm up here. As soon as I've made enough I'll go back."

Just like the Uitlanders. Out for what you can get. No thought for the land or its people.

Bosman returned with the coffee. Jansen went to his desk and wrote out a list of things he wanted the boy to do. He drank his coffee, looked through the papers and then got up.

"I'll be back after lunch, Bosman. See to these things." He gave the boy the list.

He moved to the door and all the while he felt the Coloured fellowss eyes and mind on him. The fellow needed another piece of recognition. Well, he would have to go begging.

"Bye, Bosman."

UWI Libraries

Uys Jansen raised the glass to his lips. An inward sense of excitement possessed him. There was something to be had here. And he might have missed. He might so easily have missed it. Just his luck that he returned to the hotel just as Blumenfeld was going out. He had intended not to return and then, most unlike him, he had changed his mind. He had decided to take the evening off, write letters to Hettie Van As and the family and then go to bed early. And then he had met Blumenfeld on the hotel steps, dressed up to go out. And, as he had expected, Blumenfeld seemed to have forgotten the little outburst on which they had parted last night. And now he, Uys Jansen, stood at the bar of the club for the high ups in the Uitlander world.

And something was brewing here. He had a clue as to what might have caused the thing that was brewing. He had seen Commandant Smit this morning, and Smit had told him of the President's decision to close the Vaal Drift, ~~between the Cape and the Republic~~ the point where the railway line crossed the border from the Cape into the Republic. Smit had explained that this was part of the battle against Rhodes....

Just behind him, a voice said:

"Old Kruger has done it at last!"

He looked into the bar mirror.

"I'll say he has!"

These two were happy about the closing of the Drift. There was something odd about this. Smit had expected a howl of protest. Instead there was this controlled glee. He had noticed it about the man who had whisked Blumenfeld from his side ten minutes ago when they entered. They were pleased about the closing of the Drift. But why?

UWC Libraries

What was it Smit had said about this closing of the Drift? Let's see. Until this year Rhodes had had the right to fix rail fares in the Republic as well as in his own Cape Colony. Result of an early treaty the Republic had been forced to sign. But that had now come to and end. The Republic now had control over all aspects of its own railway. The Republican Railway ran the Durban-Delagoa route. This was a shorter line than the line from the Cape to the Rand. In fair competition, therefore, the Republican line was likely to get more business than the Rhodes line. And so Rhodes had cut his fares to such an extent as to make fair competition impossible. As revenge the Republic had decided to charge the Rhodes lines three times the normal rates the moment his railways crossed onto Republican territory. The Cape merchants had refused to pay the high rates between the border and the Rand. They had unloaded their goods at the border. Then they had loaded their goods on ox-wagons and crossed the into the Republic by the Vaal Drift. The President and the Raad had decided to close the Drift. That was the story. On the face of it the President had outwitted Rhodes and his Uitlanders this time. Then why their excitement?....

He sensed a presence and turned quickly. Max Shulman stood there.

Shulman said:

"You were far away so I let you be...."

"Hello," Jansen said. "Have a drink."

"Mark here?"

"Yes. He was whisked away."

"It's the Committee. Suppose you know about this Drift affair?"

"About its closing? Yes."

UWI Libraries

The barman brought Shulman's drink.

"There's more to it than that, but handle it carefully. It could be the worse kind of dynamite. I know Higgs called on you and I don't want to do a Higgs on you from the opposite end. But you are new here so be careful."

Jansen watched Shulam carefully. The Diggers News man was certainly disturbed.

"Surely the Kruger people expect the Uitlanders to make a fuss. Commandant Smit told me that."

"If that were all.... But Rhodes could use this."

"How?"

"You know Rhodes would grab for his empire."

"But how? The Uitlanders would be silly to try fighting. The"

"By themselves - yes."

"I see. But would Britain dare?"

"I don't know. But I don't like what I hear, Jansen."

"Shulman, tell me this: you and Blumenfeld really are neutral?"

"You seem surprised. But you're wrong. We're not neutral. At least, Mark is less neutral than I am because he's more involved. We just don't want to be swept into the extremes of prejudice. It's easier for me than for him. I'm on the side line, recording. He's trying to shape things."

"And what's the shape you're aiming for?"

"Unity between Boer and Uitlander. The country's future needs it."

"Yes. Blumenfeld told me something like that."

"But I'm inclined to give up," Shulman said. "They're bent on being enemies. I sometimes feel it's a waste of time trying to

UWI Libraries

stop what seems inevitable."

Jansen looked into the mirror. Blumenfeld and three men were walking to them. Even at that distance, and though only a mirror reflection, he sensed the tension of the group.

"Blumenfeld," he murmured, and Shulman turned with him.

"Part of the Committee," Shulman whispered, and then the men were with them.

Blumenfeld was agitated. His face was flushed. His nostrils looked pinched. His hands trembled. Again, Jansen wished he could see the eyes behind the thick glasses.

The big, burly man was the first to speak, and his accents were those of an American.

"Hello there, Max.... Whiskies all round, barman. I need a large drink."

Shulman introduced them. The big American was called Hays Hammond. Jansen had heard the name before but couldn't place it. Jansen tensed when Shulman named the next two. Colonel Frank Rhodes and Dr. Jameson. Words reached him remotely after that. It was as though he were in a fog; but a perfectly clear fog. He heard words and responded to them. But the sharpest edge of his brain was digging behind the words, watching every expression on these faces.. Frank Rhodes was the most odinary-looking of the three. Nothing to single him out in a crowd. Just an Englishman, until one knew he was the brother of Cecil Rhodes. Then one looked again. And now, suddenly, Hays Hammond fell into place too. He was the American engineer who was Rhodes' chief adviser in all his big mining deals. And the bright, charming man, small and neat and with the lined face and

UWI Libraries

twinkle in his eyes, was Jameson. The Jameson. Nothing much to look at until you looked behind the tinkle of his eyes. Old Lobengula was fooled by that twinkle and that soft and attractive voice. Fooled right out of his Matabele kingdom.

But for all their casualness they were tense and concerned about Blumenfeld. And Blumenfeld leaned against the bar, his back to them all, body shaking. All his instincts told Uys Jansen what this meant. Rhodes had found a way of using the closing of the Drift to further his own plans. And what were his plans? To turn the Republic into part of the British Empire, of course. But how? Only one way. He must have persuaded Britain that the closing of the Drift was a good excuse for going to war. The President would expect protest but no more and wouldn't take it seriously. And then he would wake one morning and find himself at war. Could be no other reason for the excitement and the glee of the others. He would have to see Smit tonight about this....

He took the drink Hammond had bought him. He forced his mind back to what they were saying and away from his thoughts.

Jameson touched Blumenfeld's arm.

"We're going, Mark. Much to do. Coming?"

Blumenfeld swung about.

"You can't go through with this!" His voice was tight.

"Easy now, Mark," Hammond said softly.

"But think of what it means," Blumenfeld said. "Think of the suffering of war...." He stopped then, leaving his sentence hanging in the air.

There was a silence that lasted as long as it would take a man

UWI Libraries

to count up to eight. Then Hammond said:

"Mark's upset. I think he'd better come with us, Doctor Jim."

Frank Rhodes said:

"Some people don't know what they say when they're upset."

Jansen knew they were all disturbed about him. He said:

"I have to see someone so I'd better be going. It's been nice meeting you gentlemen." He nodded to Shulman and touched Blumenfeld's arm.

Blumenfeld pulled himself together with an effort. He smiled heavily at Jansen.

"Sorry about this but it's important."

"That's all right."

"I think I'll come along with you," Shulman said.

He followed Jansen out.

"What's the matter with you?" Jansen said.

"Bloody politicians make me sick!" Shulman snapped. "I think I'll get drunk tonight. Damn Rhodes and damn Kruger! Want to come along? There's a party at Cath Marlowe's. She asked about you. God how I'd like to murder all politicians."

"So Rhodes has cooked up a war," Jansen said softly.

"Yes," Shulman said bitterly. "Coming?"

"Can't. I've got to see this man I told you about. Tell me where it is and I'll come later."

Shulman told him and they parted. Jansen hailed a passing hansome cab and got in.

"Where to, sir?"

"Drive on, I'll tell you."

UWI Libraries

He knocked on the door then turned and looked up at the stars. They were bright and clear, bright and clear. Stars all shining so bright and clear, bright and clear. And moon sitting so big and near, big and near. And all the happiness of the world was in him.

It was the sound and the light on the ground that told him the door had opened. He turned. Yes, it was Cath Marlowe herself. And her smile told him she recognised him and was glad. And he was glad too, for he had done a good day's work.

"Max Shulman..." he began.

"Max is here," she said. "He told us you'd be coming."

He relaxed. Her voice had a caress that made him relax.

"I hope...." he said. What do I hope?

She held out her hand. He took it. It was soft and warm.

"Come in, Mister Jansen."

He was bold, suddenly.

"My friends call me Uys and I'd like you to be one of them."

Music, and the sound of voices reached him as she shut out the street noises. And while her back was to him his eyes ran caressingly over her body. Not fat at all, not even plump. Just round. Round and soft and creamy. The sort of relaxation a man wants after a good day's work. She turned. He looked at her face. You want to be careful, Uys. You want to be careful. And then he knew suddenly why there had been something familiar about her when he had seen her across the bar that first time. Of course, that's why he'd thought of Eli when he'd first looked at her: that's why he was thinking of Eli now. She reminded him of Eli. But why? Eli had been young and beautiful. This one was in her middle thirties,

UWI Libraries

at least: and though attractive, no one who had seen young Eli would call Cath Marlowe beautiful.

"Where is she?" Cath Marlowe said, and her eyes smiled.

"Who?"

"The one you're comparing me with."

"I'm not."

"Where is she?"

That was it. That was what reminddd him of Eli. Like Eli, this one seemed able to pick the thoughts from his brain before he had dressed them with words.

"I wasn't comparing you," he said. "You made me think of her."

"Where is she?"

"I don't know. I met her in Berlin. Only once...Years ago."

Cath Marlowe smiled. And it was Eli's face when she'd given him back his money.

"Come."

She led the way to the room where the voices were. Jansen's hands were trembling so he pushed them into his coat pockets. He felt paper in his left pocket. The letter he had received from home that day. The letter that had told him that Hettie Van As and Tant Elsie, her grandmother, had sold their farm and gone to Pretoria. Never mind. He would find her in Pretoria and they would marry and have those children in spite of Tant Elsie. All that would come later when the work in hand was over. He was older now than when Eli had sent him away in Berlin. He would know how to deal with Cath Marlowe.

They entered
~~She led the way into~~ the noisy room.

UWI Libraries

Max Shulman had carried out his intention. He was drunk. A woman sat on his lap. When he saw Uys Jansen he pushed her off and staggered across the room.

"Uys Jansen. My friend. They don't know what we know. Give the man a drink, Cath!"

Jansen and Cath Marlowe caught him as he swayed dangerously.

"Another drink," he said.

"You've had enough," Cath Marlowe said.

"Another drink!" Shulman yelled.

"Better let him have it," someone said.

Cath Marlowe went for the drinks. Jansen held on to Shulman, preventing him falling. In the far corner of the room a man and woman wrestled in silence. Every now and then they stopped for a drink. Nearer, on the settee, a couple were locked in each other's arms as though only they were in the room. And in the corner behind the door three men surrounded the woman playing the piano. Though only Shulman was drunk, none of the others were sober.

"I'm going," Shulman mumbled. "Leaving this damn country. No good. Better go back to your home, Uys."

"What about Mark," Jansen said.

"Hell with Mark. He's another politician now."

"So you're leaving your best friend?"

"Drink's my best friend...." He flung back his head: "Drink!"

Cath Marlowe came to them with a tray of drinks.

"Drink!" Shulman said and lurched towards her.

Jansen grabbed him again. He struggled till Cath Marlowe gave him a drink. Then he allowed himself to be led to a chair. The

UWI Libraries

woman who had sat on his knee earlier came and claimed him. Shulman told her he would take her to Germany with him. She said would he marry her first. He said no. She said then she wouldn't go with him. She sat on his lap and they quarrelled about this.

The pair in the far corner had stopped wrestling and leaned against each other while they had another drink. The two on the settee seemed suddenly to grow bored with each other. The woman walked over to Uys Jansen, looked him up and down carefully, and then kissed him on the mouth experimentally. She shook her head and walked away, dissatisfied.

And then Cath Marlowe was beside him again.

"Hungry?"

He nodded. She took his hand. As they passed Shulman Jansen saw that he was fast slipping into a drunken stupor. Cath Marlowe led him to the kitchen, but others had already taken charge of it. She shrugged and led him out and up a flight of stairs. He found himself in her bedroom. She laughed at the look on his face.

"You're obvious, Uys Jansen. But you're wrong. Wait here."

She went out. He moved about the room, looking at things. A woman's bedroom. First real woman's bedroom he'd ever been in. He looked at the bottles on the dressing-table. His first sight of a woman's private world. Wonder if Hettie Van As has things like these in her room. Do Boer girls have rooms like these? And, looking at these things, Cath Marlowe suddenly became infinitely desirable: not just a woman but a woman who was a challenge at the same time. He picked up a flimsy bit of lace and put it down again, hurriedly. Did Hettie Van As wear little things like this? He went to the window and looked out. The moon was far to the east.

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Day was not too far away now. He should have had more to drink. Much more.

Cath Marlowe returned with food and drink. She sat on the bed and he sat beside her. For a while they ate in silence, only her eyes mocking him with something in them that was beyond his understanding. And suddenly he felt as helpless in her presence as he had been in the presence of that Eli in Berlin. But that was long ago and he was a grown man now. Now, the helplessness did not show on his face and in his eyes.

She said:

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"You're withdrawn."

"It's nothing. Give me another drink."

She refilled his glass.

"Were you thinking of that girl in Berlin?"

He half-emptied the glass in one gulp. He turned his head and looked into her eyes.

"Yes."

And it was she who turned her eyes away from his.

"I think you'd better not tell me," she said.

And then she looked at him quickly and saw the little smile tugging at his lips. She began to say something but there was a sudden outburst of voices and bumps from downstairs.

"Time to end," she said.

The noise grew louder. They hurried down. Shulman had passed out. His companion sat on the floor nursing his head in her lap.

UWI Libraries

At the other end of the room, near the piano, two men and a woman were fighting. And on the divan the two who had been in such intimate embrace earlier were wrestling violently. The woman sobbed as she fought the man off.

"They've gone mad," Cath Marlowe said. "Stop it! Allof you! You cope with those three."

She went to the divan and Uys Jansen went to the fighting trio.

Cath Marlowe grabbed the man by the hair and slapped his face resoundingly. He let go of the woman. All the ardour went out of him. He rose unsteadily and went away from the woman. Uys Jansen pushed the two men apart. One of them turned on him to give battle. But Cath Marlowe's voice stopped him.

"That's all, Louis. The party's over."

Already, the drabness of the morning after was settling on the room. It had that peculiar stale smell that is created only by alcohol and tobacco.

Cath Marlowe suddenly seemed disgusted with these friends of hers.

"I said the party's over. Get out! All of you!" Her voice had a new harshness.

And looking at her, Uys Jansen realised that she, too, was drunk. She's only an Uitlander woman, he told himself. No better than the others. But she carries it all very well.

"What about Max?" the woman on the floor said. "I'd take him with me if I could shift him.

"I'll take him home," the man Cath Marlowe had slapped said.

UWI Libraries

He turned from the open window as she came back into the room. They were alone at last. She walked across the room to him. Higgs had said she had the appetite of a man; that she picked her men. And now he was alone with her. Had she picked him? Or had he picked her? A full-bosomed woman, this. Plump and full-bosomed and with clear blue eyes. Don't forget she's an Uitlander woman too. But, at this moment, that wasn't as important as it should be. Or perhaps it was. Would he be here now if she knew he was a Boer? But to the devil with that. He had done his work earlier.

She stopped beside him at the window.

"I'm tired," she said. "So tired." It was in her voice.

She's sobering, he thought.

"Want me to go?" His voice was casually disinterested.

She looked quickly at his face and then out of the window.

"No." There was a sigh in her voice.

This was going to be different. Not like with that Eli in Berlin. Remember, Uys Jansen, remember uncertainty and weakness show. You know this when dealing with men and problems. Why not with women? It's really the same. He put one hand on her shoulder. She was soft to the touch. And he felt her tremble. Yes, this was going to be different. He turned her till she faced him and then he pulled her to him. She did not resist. She did not resist when he wrapped his arms about her and kissed her.

He ran his hands over her trembling body, then he picked her up and carried her up the stairs. It was only when she was on the bed that she began to fight. It was a little while before he realised that she was fighting him off. And talking. And when he

UWI Libraries

did the fire went out of him with a startling suddenness. He let go of her and sat back. His hands shook. She opened her eyes and looked searchingly at him.

"What is it?"

"You're angry," she said. "I'm sorry. I just can't. I'm sorry, Uys. Please."

"Then why ask me to stay? Why let me go so far?"

He got up and walked away from the bed.

"I wanted you to stay," she said. "I wanted you." She sat up and pulled the dress down over her legs. "Please, Uys."

He leaned against the door and looked at her.

"Then why stop me?"

"It would have been dirty."

"Dirty? After all the other men?"

"That's just it. The other men."

"You picked them, used them, then discarded them. Didn't you?"

"Yes," she said quietly, completely composed of a sudden.

"And wasn't that dirty?"

"To you - yes."

"But not to you?"

"It would have been dirty if you had taken me. With the others there was feeling, there was desire and respect," her lips curved in a smile. Yes, respect. They reached a point where their desire overflowed into tenderness. But you were cold at peak of your desire. No tenderness. Only lust." She relaxed and got up. "Come and I'll make you some coffee."

He did not move.

"So I should have told you I loved you...."

UWL Libraries

"No. You don't undertsnd. When I first saw you I felt you were clean and understanding. I still do. But you had none of it for me even when you were on the point of taking me. The controls are too tight, Uys. You'd be studying me while you took me, and your own feelings wouldn't be involved."

He looked at her. He had so very nearly had her. So very nearly. A new wave of desire swept over him. So very nearly. He took two steps across the room and gripped her shoulders.

"I can still take you!" he said.

He flung her down on the bed. But there was no fear in her eyes.

"The controls are too tight," she said.

Damn you! Damn you, you Uitlander whore!

"How much do you want?" he said bitterly.

Cath Marlowe was up in a flash. Her eyes were suffused with rage. She grabbed something from the dressing table and flung it at him. Then her hands were clawing at his face. He grabbed her wrists and held them till she calmed down.

"Get out!" she said. "Get out! Get out!"

"I'm sorry," he said.

"Get out!" she said.

"Please..." he said.

Her face was purple with rage.

"Get out!"

He let go of her wrists and walked quickly out of the room and down the stairs.

UWI Libraries

6.

Pretoria, the capital of the South African Republic, was laid out in 1855. It took its name from Commandant Pretorius who had led the trekkers against Mzilikazi's impis Matabele impis and who had later become the first President of the Republic. It lies on the northern slopes of the Aapies River. Two bridges span the river. Summer floods have damaged these bridges often in the past and rendered them dangerous. But that was in the days when the Republic was poor, in the days before the coming of gold and the Uitlanders. Now, the bridges are stronger and kept under constant repair.

The town itself is planned in parallelograms. The streets are wide. Most of them are lined with luxuriant willows that cast soft inviting shadows. The market square is the heart of the town. And in the centre of the market square, in the core of the heart, stands the Dutch Reformed Church. It is the church of the State. The main street of the town takes its name from the church: Kerk Straat. The Uitlanders call it Church Street.

Commanding all this are the new government buildings. Their white stones glisten in the clear air, a testimony to the newfound wealth of the Republic. They rise three storeys, face the market square, and overlook the whole town. They dominate it. They are the most impressive buildings in all Africa. In them the two chambers of the Volksraad meet. In them, the business of the Republic is carried on. To them, come Uitlanders: some to beg for favours, others to fight against the harshness of their lot; all to try and move the stolid men whose offices are there.

UWI Libraries

And if you were to move south of the government buildings and climb to the summit of Signal Hill, you would stand four hundred feet above the valley in which the town lies. You would see all the town and all that is in it. The air is so clear, you would see all the people moving about the streets. And you would marvel. For you would be looking on one of the most beautiful cities ever set in a wilderness. You would look about and see the wilderness stretching in all directions. Then you would look into the valley and there would be the city with its wide streets and graceful trees, with its squares and its gardens, with its shining white government buildings, with its museum and library, with its schools and play-grounds. And if you came from the Old World you would perhaps be led to think that a new race of men had come into being who are dedicated to beuty and the peaceful arts of living. For so you would be led to think by the sight of such a fair city set in the wilderness.

The slanting rays of the morning sun had started bothering him quite a while back. But Blumenfeld had been too comfortable to want to move. He had sat thus for two hours now. And only his eyes had really moved. He had looked down at Pretoria, then beyond it at the wilderness. And his mind had spun, lazily as might a sluggish spider, a web of dreams. His body had been so relaxed that the hard earth and the rock supporting his back had become softer and more comfortingly enfolding than the softest bed he could remember. But now the sunrays struck his glasses

UWI Libraries

fully. He knew that movement would end the moment so he faced the sunrays till tears ran down his cheeks. Then he sighed and gave it up. He turned his head, took off his glasses and wiped the tears from his eyes. The world, when he looked again, was less beautiful than it had been. He got up and stretched.

"Better be going," he said aloud. His mind said: Of all the hills I've ever know none has been as kind to me as Signal Hill. Then, abruptly, briskly, he moved down into the valley where the town nestled. For all his townsman's dress and appearance he moved with assurance across the rough ground, and there was an attractively awkward grace about his carriage and the slight stoop of his shoulders. He hummed all the way down the hill.

The sun had climbed to a point above Signal Hill by the time he reached the market square. The square was crowded with burghers. And even those who looked as though they lived in the town moved with the unhurried and unhurrying ease of countrymen. He moved among them and listened to their Afrikaans that made him homesick for his childhood Germany. He had to control the strong impulse to go up to some of them and start talking. Did these peaceful burghers know how close to war they had been? If Kruger had not opened the Vaal Drift yesterday morning these men might not have been walking about this square today. Did they know how very nearly they had been at war with the greatest power on earth? Of course not. Men rarely new about the people and events that shaped their destinies. Thank God Kruger had opened the Drift. These quiet, solidly respectable burghers deserve peace. They are a clean and upright people who have

UWI Libraries

paid dearly....Damn you for a wooly idealist, Mark Blumenfeld. What about old Mzilikazi and his people and the wealth the Uitlanders brought the country? They too have paid something. If only things were in black and white. I suppose it's really that I prefer the way these people live. And yet the change must come. The world does not stand still for one man's preferences. Still.... What a beautiful girl! What an unutterably beautiful girl. God! I've never seen such beauty before. Oh hell. She's seen me looking at her. Turn your face, Mark. It's rude to stare. That's right. Turn your back and walk away. But if I walked away from here and kept walking in a straight line, crossing seas and mountains and all hell, I'd still remember that face. God but you're an ass. A lumbering ass. A round face. Lumbering ass. And were the eyes a light grey or brown? Shut up you big oaf. Think of something else. You're just a fool.

"So sorry. Stupid of me to bump into you."

"That's allright, Neef."

Wouldn't have called you cousin if you'd said that in English. Big chap too. One punch and you'd have been laid out for a week, Neef. Better not think about their women, Neef. All these Neefs would use you for a football if they caught you at it. Then you'd be some Neef, Neef....But it's no good. I'll not forget that face for an awful long time. And if I marry anybody else I'll always compare my life with that somebody with what might have been if it had been this girl. God but you're impossible! You're only set eyes on this girl for a few seconds. Anyway, you'll never see her again now. That's right. You're being unutterably foolish.

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You'll never see her again. You don't even know what she looks like, really. You need a woman, that's all. Go to one of Cath Marlowe's parties when you get back. You'll soon find something there to satisfy you for a night. Go on, look back if you like. You've walked so fast, she won't be anywhere in sight. Anyway, it's silly....Ouch!

"Sorry man, Neef man. You weren't looking where you were going. Give me your hand and I'll help you up."

"That's all right, it was my fault - Neef. Thank you."

"You seem to be dreaming, Neef. Look where you're going. Ha. Goodbye."

"I'll be careful, Neef. Goodbye."

Every Boer is every other Boer's cousin. And I'm the knocked down cousin. Neef on the seat of your pants. Bah! Prize ass. But she wasn't in sight. Forget her and you'll forget that you sat on your seat in Pretoria's market square. If an ox had run into that Neef it would have been forced to sit down. Giggle for all you like, young ladies! Better get some fruit for the train journey and get out of here. Just one look at ....No! There's the fruit stall. Better hurry before something else happens or some other Neef knocks you down.

"Oranges, grapes and bananas please...." Oh God no. am I beginning to see things....

But it was real. She had come to the stall. And there was recognition in her look and laughter in her eyes. Had she seen Neef knock him over?

Mark Blumenfeld pulled himself together.

UWI Libraries

"Serve the lady first, please."

"Thank you butI'm in no hurry."

"My mother told me always to give way to ladies."

Could this be real? Had he really spoken to this soft-voiced creature of beauty and had she really answered him? Careful, Mark. Careful. He stepped purpopsefully to her side and took the well filled basket from her hand.

"I'll help you with this."

He braced himself to resist her protests, but none came. Instead, ~~////////~~ she looked quickly at his face then turned and ordered her fruit. When she had done he collected his oranges, grapes and bananas. They walked away from the market square side by side.

In Church Street, she said:

"I live off the lower end of Church Street. Thank you for helping me. I can manage from here."

"Please don't send me away yet."

"But...."

"I know. You don't know anything about me. My name's Mark Blumenfeld. I'm a nice harmless person, really."

"But you don't speak like an Uitlander."

"I am one, though."

"Do they all know our language?"

"I wish they did. But look: you've never met an Uitlander. Treat me as curiosity. I'm an Uitlander. Find out what I'm like."

Her laughter reassured him.

"I don't know," she said.

UWI Libraries

"I really am harmless," he said. "And quite alone and lost for the next two hours."

"Why?"

"My train is not till then and I know no one here."

"It's a long walk."

"I love long walks!"

"All right."

They set off down the street.

Blumenfeld cast about in his mind for something to say. He could find nothing. Dear God. Must I see her to her door and then say goodbye forever? How long would the silence last?

"I saw you bump into the big man and sit down," she said with a straight face and looking straight ahead.

He looked at her till she turned her head to him. They burst out laughing.

"I was looking for you," he said at last.

"I thought you might be. You were funny when you first saw me."

"I felt funny. No. Not funny. Strange." Look. See that ~~corner? Look. See that corner?~~ corner?"

"Yes."

"Just a little way up it is a small place where two old English ladies make the best tea and scones in all Africa. I'm going to ask you to have tea and scones with me there and I'm going to be heart-broekn if you refuse. But I don't even know your name so it's difficult to ask you."

"I'm Hettie Van As. Are you always like this?"

Blumenfeld stopped, put down the basket, and doffed his hat

UWI Libraries

to her. Then he became aware of the stares of passing people. He replaced his hat hurriedly and picked up the basket.

"I'll go home alone if you do that again."

But the laughter in her eyes reassured him.

"Will you take tea with me, please, Miss Van As?"

"You're a strange person and I don't even know you."

"Please say you'll come."

"All right."

"Thank you, Miss Van As. Thank you."

They turned off Church Street and into a narrow lane that led to a small house in a small quadrangle. As Blumenfeld opened the door a bell tinkled somewhere at the back. They went into small room. It was cool and fresh and an air of great gentleness hung over it. There were lace curtains at the two small windows. There were four tables in the room and four chairs round each table. A man and woman who were obviously English were on the point of leaving at a corner table. Blumenfeld led Hettie Van As to the other croner table near the window. A thin, straight-backed old lady with white hair came through the curtained door from the back of the house. The Englishman paid and escorted his partner out. When they had gone the old lady came to their table. Blumenfeld rose. He spoke in English.

"So nice to see you again, Miss Adamthwaite. Everything well, I hope."

"Thank you, Mister Blumenfeld."

"This is Miss Van As, a very dear friends."

"So glad to meet you, my dear."

UWI Libraries

Hettie Van As took the old lady's hand mutely, unable to understand or reply."

When the old lady had gone, she said:

"I wish I could speak English. I wish I could speak many languages."

Blumenfeld repressed the impulse to offer to teach her.

"I like this place," Hettie Van As went on.

"Then we must come here again. I come to Pretoria often. You will let me bring you here again.... But I've got you here now. We'll deal with that later."

Suddenly, impulsively, he took off his glasses. The face of the girl in front of him was a hazy, mist-tinged blur. But the memory of the face was clear, down to the dark mole on the left side of her chin. A roundly curving chin, cream coloured and overlaid with the finest sheet of stored sunshine. It didn't matter about what the eyes saw through the haze. Her image was clear in his brain. And he knew, without fuss or bother or excitement, that it would be so always.

Part of the man's deep seriousness touched Hettie Van As. Almost, she regretted the gay impulse that had made her talk to this stranger and then come here with him. She looked down at the spotless tablecloth.

"Put of your glasses, please." It wasn't fair of him.

"Please," he said softly. And again: "Please."

Unwillingly, she raised her head and looked into his face. His sight must be very poor for him to screw his face up so.

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"You're embarrassing me," she whispered.

He replaced his glasses quickly.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to."

Oh dear, she thought. I've hurt him.

"I didn't mean that," she said.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I wanted...."

"Please don't be so upset."

Old Miss Adamthwaite returned with tea and scones. She unloaded her tray and went away again. Mark Blumenfeld looked at Hettie Van As. His mind said: I'm going to lose her unless I pull myself together. Then I'll never see her again.

"I..." he began.

I must stop him, she thought. He's like a child, hurt like a child. She felt older suddenly, older and more responsible than ever before.

"Tell me about the old lady," she said quickly.

"You're very good," he said with quick embarrassment." Then: "There are two of them. There's old Miss Adamthwaite and there's old Miss Pringle. Miss Pringle's the elder of the two. She rarely comes to the front now. Two years ago these two sold up the house they shared in London and came out here and set up this place. I've often marvelled at these two old ladies who decided to uproot themselves so late in life and start in a completely new country. I've often wondered why...."

"Have you asked them?"

"Yes. Old Miss Pringle said the impulse suddenly took them. But it's what caused the impulse that interests me. It is some

UWI Libraries

strange quality in the English character that makes it possible for two old ladies to come out to an unknown land to serve tea and scones. I don't understand what that quality is but I admire it."

"You admire yourself, then."

Oh no. No. I'm not English. I'm German. A Jew from Germany. I think it's that same quality that made these two old ladies come out here at the end of their lives that is responsible for the English being the most adult people in the world. At least, I think they are."

"Do you know this man Rhodes?" she asked.

"Yes."

"D'you like him too?"

"Yes. He's a very good friend of mine...." He brust out laughing at the expression on her face. "Easy, miss. old Piet Cronje is another very good friend of mine. And I like him better than I like Rhodes."

"D'you really know Commandant Cronje?"

"Yes."

"To talk to?"

"Yes."

"And our President too?"

"Yes. I've sat on his stoop and drunk coffee with him and talked to him."

."I wouldn't know what to say to our President. What did you say to him?"

"I talked about the need for understanding and peace between

UWI Libraries

the burghers and the Uitlanders."

"I see," she said seriously. "And is that what you talk to Rhodes about?"

"Yes. But please don't start believing in me. I'm a member of the Uitlander Reform Committee and I'm a shareholder in Rhodes' Gold mining empire."

"But Piet Cronje is your friend?"

"Yes. If only there were more like him on both sides."

"And you want peace?"

"Yes. I sometimes fear that those of us who are for peace might fail. But I want it with all my heart, Hettie."

He had spoken her name! He watched her closely.

He's really very shy, she thought. But very nice.

The self-conscious smile lit up his face. She'd accepted his calling her by her name. He had survived the awkward passage.

I like him, she told herself. And Gran will like him. He's her kind of person. Gran always said: Blessed are the peacemakers. She'll say he's blessed and she'll like him.

Hettie Van As. This was it. This was the long dream, the hope he had carried within his heart all these years. Now, it was personalised in a Boer girl called Hettie Van As. Now she sat facing him. Hettie Van As. Hettie Van As. Dear God, would they get married and have children one day? Hettie Van As.

"We must go," she said.

"Did you like it?" he said.

"Very much. I must lean to make these scones."

"I will get you the recipe and translate it for you. I will

UWI Libraries

get from Miss Adamthwaite now."

"Good. Then I can bake some for you when next you come...."

Oh dear, she thought. But then, in a flash, she was glad when she felt the radiant joy in him. He's so easily please - or saddened. And all his body seemed to express his feelings. His heart was singing like a boy's now. So easily made happy.

"Miss Adamthwaite!" he shouted.

The old lady hurried in, agitated.

"Oh, Mister Blumenfeld...."

"So sorry, Miss Adamthwaite. Didn't realise I was yelling quite so loudly."

"We feared something was wrong."

"Nothing at all. I am sorry. It's just that we are leaving and I wondered if you would be good enough to give Miss Van As your recipe for scones. She thinks they are wonderful."

"Certainly, Mister Blumenfeld. But you will remember Miss Pringle is...."

"I promise you it won't happen again, Miss Adamthwaite."

He paid her and she went away to write out the recipe.

"I'm in disgrace for shouting," he said to Hettie Van As.

"I could see that," she said.

"I'll bring flowers as a peace offering next time," he said.

In a little while, Miss Adamthwaite came back and gave the recipe to Hettie.

"I'm sorry I can't speak English but thank you very much."

Blumenfeld translated and added: "I hoep she will in a few months."

UWI Libraries

He wrote out the translation on the back of the recipe and then they left.

The sun had climbed to a point midway between Signal Hill and the centre of the sky. It gave off more heat than it had earlier. And the willows gave off more shade. They walked slowly and in silence down the wide Church Street, from one pool of shade to the next. The silence, in this street, in this town, was in violent contrast with the noise of Johannesburg.

And between them, the man and the woman, there was harmony that need no words. They had reached a point of understanding where silence was as important a part of comunication as language. The sky was clear, bright and remote to a point of non-existence. Whatever air there was moved so softly, so gently, as not to stir a single leaf of a single willow. But the valley was not over-hot or over-oppressive.

UWI Libraries

They turned out of Church Street into a by-lane. They passed two modest houses set in their own grounds. They stopped at the third.

"This is home," Hettie Van As said.

"I have some business in Pretoria day after tomorrow," he lied.

"Come here for scones and tea afterwards," she said.

"What time?"

"Soon as you've done." She took the basket from him.

"Thank you. Goodbye for now, Hettie."

"Goodbye, Mark." Her smile dazzled him.

He watched her to the door then he turned and walked briskly away from the third house in the little by-lane.

"That you Hettie?"

"Yes, Gran."

"You've been long."

"I had English tea and scones with a man."

"Better come here and tell me about it."

"In a minute. Want some coffee?"

"Better come and tell m e."

"Want some coffee?"

"All right. Make me wait. You always do."

She smiled as she carried the laden basket into the kitchen.

"Coffee please, Maisie," she said to the black girl there.

"Yes, missus."

She went to her room, took off her bonnet and put it away. She returned to the kitchen, washed her hands and collected the coffee.

Old Tant Elsie Van As sat near the window in the front room. But all the curtains were drawn and the room was in darkness.

"Why are you in darkness, Gran?"

"Waiting for you."

She's too young to understand, the old woman told herself.

"Why didn't Maisie draw the curtains?"

"Told her not to."

"Why?"

"Didn't want her to."

"But why?"

How can I make her understand Paul was with me....

"Because I didn't want the curtains drawn."

UWI Libraries

"That's no reason."

"Only one I've got, child. Now stop this and tell me about this English tea you had with a man."

"Not till I've drawn the curtains."

The old woman sighed. Goodbye, Paul....

"All right."

Hettie put the coffee ~~down~~ on the table and went to the window. The old must live very much with the dead and the past. Gran had been sitting in the dark because her heart and mind were with the dead and in the past. She hesitated.

"Well, get on with it!" Gran said.

Hettie pulled back the curtain quickly. She moved to the next window and pulled back the second curtain. The bright light of day streamed into the room. She turned and looked at her grandmother. The old woman sat huddle up, lost in the largeness of the comfortable chair. So frail she looked: so frail, and lined of face. For hair, thin white wisps tied tightly at the back of the head. So frail and lost looking. Only the watery blue eyes, set in many folds of skin, belied the air of frailty. She went to her grandmother and kissed her on both cheeks.

"About the tea and the man...." Tant Elsie said.

"Your coffee first."

She brought the coffee. Then she moved a chair so that she could sit facing her grandmother.

"Now," Tant Elsie said.

And Hettie told her grandmother how she had met Mark Blumenfeld and all that had happened and all they had talked about and that

UWI Libraries

she had asked Mark Blumenfeld to come here day after tomorrow.

As she listened, the old woman pushed herself further down in her big chair. Her watery blue eyes watched Hettie's face intently. When Hettie had finished the old woman said:

"And you like this ugly young man who is nearly blind without his glasses?"

"Yes, Gran."

"Is he a good man, child."

"You'll see for yourself when he comes here, Gran."

"I am asking you, child."

"I think so. He's a peacemaker, Gran."

"Many say they are. You are not sure?"

Hettie hesitated, then nodded with certainty.

"I am sure. Mark is a good man."

"Do you love him?"

"Oh Gran! I've only just met him."

"You know you like him. You know he's a good man."

"But that's different."

"Do you think you could love him? Do you want to love him?"

"I don't know. No. Besides there's..." she stopped dead.

"I see," Tant Elsie said. "There's that Uys Jansen. That was what you meant to say, wasn't it?"

There was silence between them then. The old woman went still further down in her chair. Her staring eyes saw nothing. Hettie sighed.

"Gran. Gran, please tell me something. Why do you hate the Mansens. I know you do. It isn't only Uys. It's all of them. Why?"

UWI Libraries

Tant Elsie stirred. He toothless gums worked for a while, and then she was calm again. No use getting work up, Elsie. The child has asked. You must answer. You know you must answer. That's what Paul wants. Remember his last words: Teach our child. This is our child and she had asked. No. Not a child. The child of a child had grown to be a woman. Hettie is a woman. She must be treated as a woman, she must be answered as a woman.

"I will tell you, my child. It is not a pretty story, but you have asked so I will tell you."

Tell her. Tell her of the time when you were young Elsie in the far-off days of the Great Trek. It all came back as if it had happened yesterday....She was sitting by the river with the foolish dreams of a foolish girl because no one had told her things. And Koos Jansen came to her and she did not understand the look in his eyes and she was flattered. Paul had warned her. But she had not understood. Not till it was too late and Koos Jansen had struck her down. Not till then. And,after, Paul had said: If treating kaffirs the way he did could lead him to do that to you then there was something terrible about it. Paul with his wisdom had said that. He was always speaking to her from the grave these days, was Paul. Always. Sometimes he was so near she could almost reach out and touch his hair. It distressed her a little that he was as young and good looking as he had been on Trek. Only she had aged. That's why she drew the curtains so he should not see the lines of her face and that all her teeth had fallen out....But on that last day, that day he died, he had said: Teach our child. Well, she had tried. But she hadn't succeeded to well with the boy. He had been

UWI Libraries

a good boy: not cruel or hard. But he had gone to war and he had died in war in 1881 leaving his daughter Hettie and a wife who had soon followed him to the grave. And Hettie was their child through the boy. She had taught Hettie not to hate. Now Hettie wanted to know why she hated. She turned her watery eyes to Hettie and steeled herself.

"I will tell you, my child."

"Not if it makes you unhappy, Gran,"Hettie said quickly.

"But tell me something first. Do you love Uys Jansen?"

"I don't know, Gran. I don't know."

Never thought I'd have to tell this to a grandchild of mine. Never told anyone. Only Paul and I and Koos Jansen knew. Paul and I and Koos Jansen. Jansen. Jansen. She said slowly:

"A long time ago, in the days of the trek, when I was very young, as young as you perhaps, or a little younger, I was sitting by a river one day...."

"Please don't tell me any more, Gran."

"The brother of Uys Jansen's grandfather, Koos Jansen, came and sat with me. I was young and did not understand till it was too late...."

"Please, Gran."

"By then he was mad with lust. I tried to get away so he knocked me down and did what he wanted to do...."

"Oh Gran!"

"And Uys Jansen's grandfather, Koos Jansen's brother, Kasper Jansen helped to kill his wife Anna by his hardheartedness. So Uys Jansen's father was born out of death and hate. That is all."

UWI Libraries

The old woman leaned back and closed her eyes. It had all happened long ago, so long ago as to have been in another world, in another lifetime. Yet it all grew fresher with time. Fresher and heavier. Heavier, like a huge wooden cross one carries up a steep hill that keeps going without any end. Only, the end is near now. And Paul would be there at the end, and all would be well, and the burden would be removed.

A bee buzzed in through the window and shattered the silence of the neat little room. It was slightly tight, slow, and very loud. It circled the room and then returned to the window. It flew straight against the window pane, bounced off, and fell to the floor on its back. It lay dazed for a while, kicking its legs. Then, with much noise, it righted itself and tried again. It was successful this time, and silence returned to the room.

Hettie Van As sighed after a long while.

"You shouldn't have told me, Gran," she said heavily.

"You asked me, child."

"I didn't know what I was asking."

"Now you know."

"And I wish I didn't."

"Go away, child. Go away and leave me alone."

"Gran...."

"Not now. Draw the curtains and leave me alone."

Hettie Van As drew the curtains and went out. Old Tant Elsie sat alone in the dark with her eyes closed.

Oh Paul, how much longer....

UWI Libraries

7.

The white-coated black waiter stopped beside the three men. Each of the men took a glass from the tray. Max Shulman flipped a coin onto the tray. The black boy went away.

They were in the grounds of the club. The strains of a Viennese waltzz, fragrant as the warm summer night, drifted to them. The new moon was full and very near the earth. The night was clear and light. Shulman raised his glass and smiled mockingly at Mark Blumenfeld.

"Since you had to visit Pretoria on business on Christmas day we'll drink our Christmas toast a day later. Merry Christmas, Mark, but I'd still like to know whom you saw in Pretoria yesterday!/ Wouldn't you, Uys?"

Uys Jansen chuckled softly and raised his glass.

"What's she like, Mark? Merry Christmas."

"I tell you it was business," Blumenfeld said.

"Some business this must be!" Shulman mocked. "Come, Mark. Stop insulting our intelligence by suggesting any good burgher would do business on Christmas day. For the last two months you've been doing this business in Pretoria that nobody knows anything about. Better tell us about her or we'll hint to the Reform Committee that you're in Kruger's pay. She can't be that ugly."

"Go to the devil!" Blumenfeld snapped.

Jansen roared with laughter.

"Let him be, Max," he said between gusts of laughter. "He'll talk when she's got him tied up."

UWI Libraries

"I don't like it," Shulman said. "Just consider...."

"You ought to laugh more often,Uys," Blumenfeld cut in. "It softens your face. You look so cold...."

"He's trying to wriggle out," Shulman said. "I see nothing wrong in Uys's face but I do see something wrong in your frequent trips to Pretoria of late. As I said, just consider, these trips began the day after Kruger opened the Vaal Drift. The more I think of it the more I feel there's a link. I think I'd better drop a hint to the Reform Committee."

"Women or spying?" Uys Jansen said.

"Drop it now," Mark Blumenfeld appealed. "You've both been at me all through dinner. Let's drop it now and go in and dance."

"Then you won't talk?" Shulman said.

"Not now. I'll tell you all about it when I'm ready."

"We'd better accept that," Jansen said quickly, and then wondered why he had said it.

"Thanks, Uys. Max is in one of his torturing moods."

"All right," Shulman said. "You 've split the front. The toast then. A merry Christmas to you, Mark myserious Blumenfeld on Boxing night of our year of grace 1895."

"The year is very close to its end," Blumenfeld said. "May it end in peace."

They emptied their glasses. On a sudden impulse Blumenfeld flung his glass violently at the base of a nearby tree. It burst into fragments. He sighed and straightened up.

"That music reminds me of another life," he said quietly.

"Do we do the same," Shulman asked.

UWI Libraries

"No.... Let's go in. I want to dance." He swung about and led the way to the music.

The club's big hall was gaily decorated. And those who danced in it were equally gaily dressed. The emphasis was on colour and ostentation. The rich showed off their wealth in rings with huge diamonds in them, men and women alike. There were many gold-capped teeth among them men, and gold chains and gold pins. Women carried strings of diamonds and pearls round their necks and in their hair. Among them moved the white-coated black boys, dispensing champagne. The orchestra, especially imported from Europe, was in the corner furthest from the door.

Mark Blumenfeld soon saw someone he wanted to dance with. Then, Max Shulman went off. Uys Jansen took a glass of champagne from a passing waiter and made himself comfortable on a windowsill near the door. He enjoyed watching these things more than taking part in them. People passing called out greetings to him. He was a citizen of standing here now, well entrenched, he told himself: an Uitlander among Uitlanders. A private humourless smile flitted across his face. A good citizen of six months' standing. He'd handled the process of intergration rather well.

On the outer edge of the dancers, and steered by her partner so that they would pass near him, he saw Cath Marlowe. She looked gracefully slim in her party dress. Her eyes shone and her mouth was open in laughter. He hadn't noticed her hair before. It was like golden corn on a summer's day. He hadn't seen her since that night. How would she react? What would she do?

Her partner swung her about. She saw him.

UWI Libraries

"Hello there, Uys!" she called.

She left her partner and came to him.

"Hello, Cath."

"Still hate me?"

"Never did."

"I expected you to come and make peace sometime. It's a lady's privilege. But then, you don't think me a lady, do you?"

"You're being unfair now."

"I'm not sure I wasn't wrong, Uys...."

"It's all over."

"Is anything ever."

~~//////////~~

"I think so."

"Another point of disagreement between us. But let's be friends. You see, I really do like you, Uys Jansen. But I can't make up my mind about you."

"What about?"

"My partner's waiting. I'll keep the next dance for you and then we'll find out, perhaps. I'm at a corner table near the band."

She left him. And as he eased himself back onto the window ledge, he saw the big American, Hays Hammond, weaving his way past people to him. He waited, cold and alert. He thought: This man is one of the sharpest so be careful. He will know when they plan to strike, if they plan to strike. Of course, they planned to strike. There were too many arms about for it not to happen now. But this Hammond wouldn't give anything away. Not him.

"Hello, Jansen."

UWI Libraries

"Hammond. Quite a party, heh?"

"Yes. Look Jansen, you know I think you've got a biased slant on the setup here...."

"Biased?"

"Hell yes, man. But let's not beat about the business. You're a Dutchman and we all know Holland's sympathies are with the burghers and old Kruger...."

"What's all this to do with me?"

"You're a Dutchman -"

"And you're an American."

"As a Dutchman you're automatically pro-Kruger."

"As an American, are you automatically anti-British?"

"We're getting nowhere?"

Jansen smiled.

"All right. Where should we get?"

Hammond signalled a passing black boy and ordered drinks.

"Will you listen for a few minutes?"

"Certainly."

"Without any of your clever come-backs?"

"You flatter me, Mister Hammond."

"See...."

"All right. I'll listen."

"I began by saying you have a biassed slant on the setup here because your background is Dutch and there's been conflict in the past between the British and the Dutch over the Cape. No, don't interrupt. Let me finish. We expected that when you came. Higgs confirmed that after he first saw you. But he also said you were a

UWI Libraries

highly intelligent man. Others confirmed this."

"You're all very kind. I'm flattered."

"Please don't start that again. Well now, when we'd found out that much about you we decided to let you be. See, I'm being quite frank with you, Jansen."

"I see."

"We let you be.... Oh damn that music....because we realised that not to let you be would simply put up your back. You couldn't, like your predecessor Feld, be bought. We thought, Dr. Jim in particular, that once you got to know the setup as it really was you would see how silly Kruger's stand was. This country can't go on as an old-fashioned Old Testament kind of state. You don't have to approve of Rhodes to see that. The old Burgher Republic must either come into the modern of its own accord or be swept into it. And those who resist this will end by destroying themselves. Your pal Mark knows that. He hates it like hell, but he knows it. And he's more attached to the Boers emotionally than we think you are. Yet he's had to face this fact."

"That the Republic must go under? "

"That the Republic either changes or goes under. The thing that's staggered us is that you, an intelligent man, a first rate reporter, should fail to see this. You know the Germans are making great play with your Amsterdam News pieces. Everyone of them's been reproduced lately. The Old Man got a batch of them a few days ago. I tell you frankly he's worried by the kind of reaction your pieces are creating in Europe. He wants you to go down to the Cape to see him. He feels a frank talk between the pair of you would

UWI Libraries

be useful. We feel, quite frankly, you're too good a reporter to be so hostile to us. And we feel you haven't got the picture straight. Will you go? Everything will be laid on; and this isn't bribery. You'd be going as his guest. Can you leave tomorrow morning? I can promise you there'll be a big story in it for you."

"You're very persuasive, Hammond."

"I mean to be. You're an honest man and you're wrong about us. That could be dangerous - for us."

"I know, of course, that this is the kind of invitation men here would sell their souls to get...."

"Does this mean you're turning it down?"

"No, Hammond. I would like to see the great man. It is just that things are much too tense for me to leave here now. Could a later...."

"Later may be too late."

"I must take that chance."

The black boy returned with the drinks. The music stopped. Dancers left the floor. Black boys in white coats with trays in their hands darted in all direction, satisfying the great festive thirst. Voices, everywhere, grew louder. Behaviour grew more relaxed. The prim and respectable, those who had to keep up 'appearances' left. And the party entered a new phase.

Hammond, who had turned to watch the dancers leave the floor, turned back to Jansen. His lips smiled but his eyes were sober.

"One personal question, Jansen."

"Yes?"

UWI Libraries

"Apart from what you conceive as your duty to your paper, where do you stand personally?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. For all his idealism, Mark Blumenfeld's had to take a stand."

"You forget, Hammond, that I'm not a shareholder in the great gold empire of Rhodes."

Hammond stared at Jansen for a long time; a searching stare. Jansen laughed, and there was genuine humour in his laughter.

"This thing is big," Hammond said slowly. "We want you to be fair, and careful. The fact that you can reach the people on the continent should make you all the more careful."

"I'll be careful all right. I can promise you that."

"I'm glad. But try and go down to see Rhodes tomorrow. It really will be worthwhile. You know where you can get me if you change your mind. And I do hope you don't write anything you, or we,will regret about what's happening here just now."

"A man does what he must do, Hammond. You know that."

The music struck up again. Uys Jansen eased himself off the window ledge. Hammond still seemed anxious about something and eager to talk. He started to say something then stopped. Uys Jansen watched him for a while then moved deliberately.

"A lady promised me this dance."

"I know Rhodes," Hammond said. "And I wouldn't like to run up against him. But I'm telling you something you know. So-long, Jansen."

"Thanks all the same," Uys Jansen said and walked away. So,

UWI Libraries

the great man, the Old Man, had taken notice of him. But why get him out of the way tomorrow? Why the rush? Could they be planning something big for tomorrow? Hammond had seemed a little distracted, a little worried. But then, Blumenfeld would have been a sure indication if anything big were to happen. Blumenfeld was like an open book to him. Well, perhaps not an open book. But certainly a good pointer. Except that he hadn't seen Blumenfeld much lately. Anyway, things were coming to a head, and the government was not exactly out of touch. But this was a time to watch and he would watch.

He caught sight of Cath Marlowe at last. She was sitting at a table with a host of old friends. Pat O'Hara, Max Shulman, Jimmy Higgs and the couple from the Diggers News were there. The only strangers were two young women who sat on either side of Cath Marlowe.

The sight of Higgs amused Uys Jansen. After that first encounter Higgs had developed a dislike for him that verged on hatred. Whenever they'd met, since, Higgs had tried to provoke him and he had refused to be provoked. This had so maddened Higgs that he had started a fight once. Jansen chuckled to himself. Higgs wouldn't do that again: he'd carted a black eye around for a couple of weeks.

He reached the table. Couples were already filling the floor.

"Uys, me boy!" O'Hara cried. "Come here and talk to me. I hear you've offended the Great God Cecil John! I salute you and congratulate you. Now there are two men of the Reef the imperialist

UWI Libraries

master cannot buy. Pat O'Hara, Irishman, and Uys Jansen, Dutchman!" He rose unsteadily to his feet. "Let us drink to the Irish and the Dutch, the only two people with enough guts left to defy Rhodes!"

Most the liquor ran down the side of O'Hara's mouth and on to his snowwhite shirt. Max Shulman grabbed O'Hara's arm and pulled him back into his chair.

"Sit down and don't be provocatively Irish."

Shulman, too, was not far from extreme drunkenness. Jimmy Higgs pushed back his chair violently and walked away.

"The Black eye still hurts," Shulman murmured.

"There's your chair, Uys," O'Hara yelled.

"We're dancing," Cath Marlowe said and rose.

She was lovely tonight. Lovely enough to make a man forget the things they said about her. Straight and fair. Creamy white skin: plumply round yet full of line and curve. So easy to forget. He followed her till she stopped and turned. Smooth of skin but something about the eyes that told she was not as young as she looked. The peak of ripeness. You picked a peach when it was at the peak of ripeness. You took a bite and it melted and the juice ran down the sides of your mouth. But if you didn't pick it, if you left it till the next day and then picked it, it was softly soggy, perhaps bruised and worm-ridden. The peak of ripeness is the time to pick a peach.

"Thank you," she said softly.

He put his arms about her and they moved with the dancers.

"What for?"

"The desire in your eyes. Or is it lust?"

UWI Libraries

"Desire."

"Yes. It was. Thank you."

They caught the lilting rhythm of the music and danced to it. She relaxed. Her relaxation relaxed him. And his her, and hers him till they achieved the close intimate harmony of rhythmic motion. They moved slowly, easily, not attempting the intricate paterns of movement of most of the other dancers. They danced with their feelings, not with their brains. And they were entranced by the grace abd beauty of their feelings.

The music stopped. Uys Jansen became aware of his arm about Cath Marlowe's waist. And there were people about him, talking and laughing. She looked into his eyes. He began to see a message in those eyes and then his functioning brain interfered. And then the eyes were not the same. An open window had been shut in his face. They had been a message. Now they were eyes, light brown and clear, but eyes. Silly to have seen a message there. The music must have made him drunk. Like a peach at the peak of ripeness.

"Won't you give yourself a chance," she said.

"What now?" he said.

Others were leaving the dance floor.

"Let's go out," she said.

They moved to the nearest door. From the corner table Pat O'Hara yelled: "Jansen!" But they went out without looking back.

The moon was brighter than earlier. But now, clouds had invaded the heavens and moved rapidly westward, giving the impression that it was the moon that moved eastward, peeping out

UWI Libraries

of every break in the clouds to flood the earth with light. Bright light and deep darkness played on the earth in irregular sequence.

They walked away from the building in silence in the alternating play of light and dark. They passed other couples, some in intimate embrace others in quiet conversation. They stopped at a seat where a large Rhododendron bush cut off their view of the building they had left. The warm night, here, was a tumult of creature noises.

Cath Marlowe stood quiet for a while. Then, with an odd appeal in her movements, she turned to Uys Jansen and swayed forward. He put his arms about her. He felt the utter relaxation of her body. The moon sped between two patches of dark cloud and illuminated the night. He looked into her upturned face. Her eyes were bright and searching, with something else as well: the look he had seen in them when the dance had ended. Then, some part of his heart had sensed a message. Now, his brain saw only desire. He kissed her, and she responded with passionate fierceness. She strained at him with all the force of her body and mind. He felt it. He felt elated in it....As a peach at the peak of its ripeness....This was surrender all right. There was no going back on this....The peach at its peak....His arms tightened about her.

She groaned.

"It's no good, Uys, it's no good."

She was fighting, now, to break free of him. She had come to him. Now she wanted to break away from him. Anger swept through him in waves. She had no right to play with him like this. He would teach. He would teach her. The moon slipped behind the clouds and left the world in darkness. He felt cold now, with a calm and

UWI Libraries

brutal anger. He would teach her. ~~He pinned her to him~~ He circled her body with his right arm, pinning her to him. His left hand explored her body roughly, hurtfully. He would teach her.

Her body went limp and passive suddenly. The moon appeared briefly. Her face, by its light, had gone passive too. The eyes that looked into his were cold and impersonal, indifferent. His arm relaxed. He pulled his right hand away from her dress.

"I really am sorry." She sighed heavily.

The moon disappeared again.

"What do you want of me?" he said.

"I've never heard any voice as cold and brutal as yours."

"Well?"

"I'm just a woman, Uys. And I want you. But I don't want to be a glass of water to you or any man. At my place, that other time, I thought you wanted me as a glass of water. But I wasn't certain after you'd gone. I wondered whether it could be that you'd never had a chance to feel, that you were a prisoner. You are a prisoner, Uys. You're afraid of yourself. You're afraid to free your feeling and see yourself. I'm very sorry for you. But I'd much rather lie with a raw native than with you. I'm sorry for you and, God help me, I'm afraid of people like you."

A violent momentary rage swept over Uys Jansen.

"You..." he choked "You English whore!"

His open palm cracked against her face. She staggered back and nearly fell. The rage left him as quickly as it had come.

"I suppose I deserve that," she said. "I didn't say what I said to hurt you. I wanted to make you understand. I'm sorry."

UWI Libraries

"I didn't mean to hit you, Cath. I'm sorry."

She sounds much softer, he thought. There are women who want a man all the more if he beats them.

"We'd better go back," she said and started walking back to the lighted building.

"I realy am sorry, Cath. I didn't mean to hit. You drove me."

"Yes, I did."

"Then you forgive me?"

"For hitting me: yes."

"Oh come now, Cath! What I said was said under provocation. Surely you won't hold that against me!"

"You know you're lying, Uys. The first time you thought it. This time you said it. But it doesn't really matter. People like you don't spend sleepless nights over things like this so why make a show. It isn't necessary to do so for my benefit."

"You're being bitter now. And it's I who has been frustrated."

"Of course. Forgive me but I was forgetting that there's only one point of view. But tell me just one thing Uys: Do you know why I brought you out here and stripped myself of all self-respect in front of you. Just forget for the moment that you think me a hot-blooded English/whore. I'll concede you your virile Dutch manhood and attraction. But there ~~is~~ was another reason too. Have you guessed at it? Have you thought about it?"

"Why did you?"

"I wanted to help you come alive. Now laugh."

They were near the club building now. There were people all about them. The music of the orchestra was everywhere in the air.

UWL Libraries

"Help me come alive?"

"Odd, isn't it? Me wanting to help the strong, masterful, confident Uys Jansen. You may see it one day....I can't go in. My face is swelling. Will you tell the others I've gone home."

"I'm sorry about your face, Cath."

"I'm not, Uys. I might have fallen in love with you and that would have been a special kind of hell. You are very attractive, you know....Goodnight."

He watched her walk away to where the cabs stood in line. Then he turned and mounted the steps to the great hall.

A black boy moved down the steps carrying a tray of drinks. Something about the boy made Uys Jansen look closely at his face. Jansen stopped.

"Luke Dabula."

The black boy stopped and turned to him.

"I remember, you see. It is many months since you carried my bag from the station, but I remember."

"Yes, baas."

"And how is it that the son of a general who was for resistance now carries wine for his conquerors?"

The black boy lowered his head.

"It is life," he said quietly.

"To serve those who robbed you of your land?"

"I must go," the black boy said. "They wait for these drinks."

"And the warrior still prefers the work of women to being a man on the farms?"

UWI Libraries

The black boy raised his head. For a moment, his eyes were alive and fierce as he looked into the white man's eyes. Then, under the mockery in the white man's eyes his own went blank again.

"What is it you want of me, white man?"

"To know where the manhood of the conquered goes."

The black boy turned abruptly and descended the rest of the stairs. Uys Jansen chuckled as he went up.

At the top of the stairs he stopped and faced about. He didn't really want any more of this celebration. Very unlikely that he would learn anything more here. Old O'Hara and Shulman were much too drunk, by now, to be any real fun. And Blumenfeld seems to want to be on his own. Interesting about these trips to Pretoria. But De Jong had checked and they were harmless. Ordinary visits to people. Lovely night this. They'd be sitting out on nights like this at home, telling stories. And Oom Stefan would be telling of days and nights on the trek. Once, he'd walked with Hettie Van As on a night like this. That was when he'd just returned from Europe. Just over a year ago, now. They'd walked in silence and he'd felt at peace. Fresh as the wind and clean as water she'd been. And he'd decided that she'd be his wife and the mother of his children and the guardian of all the future Jansens of his line. So cool and fresh is Hettie Van As. Young and straight and modest and clean. No man had ever kissed her, had ever touched her body. This other would soon go soggy and over-ripe. Wanting to help me. What does a woman like that know of love. Love is for the clean and the pure of womanhood. A man is allowed a little lattitude when he's

UWI Libraries

a long way from home. But not a woman; never a woman. The little Russian, Sammy Marks, had dug up most of the information about the the supply of Uitlander arms....

He went down the stairs and walked away from the club and the merry-making. He ignored the calls of the Coloured cab-drivers who sat perched on their high seats, whip in hand. He walked with easy grace towards the centre of the town.

....Wouldn't mind borrowing one of their horses for a ride. Long time since I felt a horse under me. Not since I killed Prince. Long time ago, that was. But longer since I saw Hettie Van As. They say the lion and the jackal sometimes lie together. Hell, now why that? Or is it the lion and lamb? And who's the lion? And who's the lamb. My name is Uys Jansen, burgher. Grandson of Kasper Jansen who was one of the founders of this republic. But anyone of the other young burghers would do this too. Its only luck that you were picked, Uys. Luck and that you were unknown and knew the language. And, of course, the fact that the Jansens are known as a family of patriots. Though I may roam throughout the world and win the wealth of all the earth; my mother-land, nurse of my love, I'll love you still more than all else. Yes. Uitlander arms. It was Sammy Marks who found out. The little Russian's a soulless man without any roots. Not even loyal to his fellow Uitlanders. He's selling them to us for a price. His people sold the Lord Jesus Christ. A damned people. The curse of God's on them. Funny little dialogue Marks reported. Still makes me smile when I think of it. Smart of Smit not to let Marks see me. That kind of traitor can alway betray again. "And I said to Mister Hammond: 'They say you've got

UWI Libraries

thirty thousand rifles, Mister Hammond'. And he said: 'I don't know exactly how many we've got but that figure seems rather large'. Then I said: 'About srtillery, Mister Hammond: I hear you've got thirty guns'. And Hammond said: 'Good heavens no, Sammy," he's my friend, you see. 'I'm sure we haven't got that many'. ". There had been a lot more like that from the little Russian Jew. They'll pick him up dead one morning. That Hammond's a cool customer and there are many like the late Prince who would be happy to do his killings at a price. How far the stars are. And how clear, now that the clouds have gone. Hell but that Cath Marlowe was exciting tonight. Got old Luke Dabula on the raw all right. Poor bloody kaffir. That Rhodes must be stopped or he'd turn us into poor bloody kaffirs too. Wonder what she meant, wanting to help me. Help me into her bed all right. But she wants it with love. She should have seen me with Hettie Van As before deciding I can't feel. But she's no fool. Can still feel her ripeness. Pity the peach will go soggy without my tasting it. Never mind. Hettie Van As will be there when this work is done. Days and weeks and months and years of Hettie Van As. In spite of that old grandma of hers. Wonder why she hates us Jansens so. One thing Oom Stefan couldn't throw any light on. Months and years, a lifetime, of Hettie Van As. But that Cath Marlowe was certainly hot when she came into my arms. If she comes anywhere near me again I'll play her like a cat plays a mouse. One gets awfully lonely for a woman sometimes. Like tonight, like now. Damn Cath Marlowe. But work comes first always. Remember that. Always. My people and our blood. Damn Cath Marlowe! Blood....

He was walking, now, near the railway station and not far from

UWI Libraries

the centre of the town. The street, about him, was filled with revellers. Bars were packed full and drinking men spilled out to the pavements. And when their glasses were empty they fought their way back to the bar for a refill before being pushed out into the street again.

Uys Jansen felt lonely suddenly as he strolled past these drinking, talking, men. He was on the outside of all this, not a part of it. This was an Uitlander feast of happiness and he had no share in it. Uitlander voices were all about him, disturbing in their insistence. An unutterably desperate longing for the sound of burgher voices, for burgher presences with whom he belonged welled up in him. People of his own, or else, to join with these with all his heart and mind. People....And beneath it all ran the strange new current of loneliness. He'd never been lonely before. Never. Being alone is not the same as being lonely. Never. He began to walk faster.

"Hey there! Uys Jansen!"

Had he really heard his name called? What was happening to him?

"Jansen!"

The call rose above the noise of the other voices. And he recognised the calling voice now. He stopped and turned. And when he saw Mark Blumenfeld relief touched him as might a cool wind a man in the desert at noonday. He was not aware of the soft sigh he let out.

"Saw you leave," Blumenfeld said. "But I was dancing and couldn't abandon my partner till the dance ended. I gambled on your

UWI Libraries

walking and doing it this way."

They fell into step and continued walking slowly towards their hotel.

"You lonely too?" Jansen said.

"You don't often admit to Emotions, Uys."

"Haven't noticed that."

"I have. There's no way of knowing your feeling till one gets to know you."

"And you do?"

"Better than most here. Don't hold yourself so much. Its good for the soul to relax. But you're right. I am lonely."

"For someone in Pretoria?"

"Could be. And you?"

For someone else now in Pretoria, Uys Jansen thought.

"Oh just lonely,"he said. "Had a chat with your friend Hammond. He told me Rhodes has invited me down as his guest."

"Are you going?"

"Don't tell me you're anxious for me to go too."

"I am. Not because I want you to be converted to his view. I don't think you will. But I think you'll see that he's not a monster but a man."

"Not from you too, Mark."

"Your latest pieces do make an evil genius of him."

"Isn't he to the Boers?"

"That's not the point and you know it."

"Never thought I'd have to listen to a defence of Rhodes from

UWI Libraries

you."

"I'm not defending Rhodes."

"Then what are you defending?"

"The change of which Rhodes is the instrument. I feel about the Boers as you do. But I also see that they have all history and all progress against them in the stand they are now taking."

"And does history choose unscrupulous land-grabbers and intriguers for instruments?"

They made a wide detour of a drunken fight.

"Yes," Blumenfeld said. "Look at the history of Europe. Some of its greatest developments have been brought about by what you call land-grabbers and intriguers."

"So you invoke history to condone it."

"I do not. You know I'm fighting Rhodes on the means he often uses. But I can't fight him, or the other Uitlanders in their desire for change. The Republic must make room for the Uitlanders, it must change. They've earned that right by the wealth they've brought it. Christ man! Do you think its easy for me to have to fight the Uitlander extremists on the one hand as well as the Boer extremists on the other? Your pieces are only adding fuel to the fire of the extrenists. It is possible for Boer and Uitlander to live and work together and to progress to a happy future. Instead we're on the brink of...." He stopped talking abruptly.

"On the brink of what, Mark?"

"It's not my secret , Uys. But I can tell you this. I've fought against it with everything I've got."

"Without success?"

UWI Libraries

"Without success."

"Then tell me. Perhaps publicity would stop them. The Boers are convinced Rhodes is planning a coup of some kind. Tell me..."

"Shut up, Uys! You're abusing our friendship. I'm going to forget you ever made this suggestion."

"I thought you were for peace," Uys Jansen said cynically.

"Not a traitor's peace," Blumenfeld said, more calmly.

"Fine words," Jansen said.

"Which I happen to believe," Blumenfeld said.

They walked in silence after that, each conscious of the tension in the other; each trying to still the passion aroused by the encounter.

Blumenfeld thought: He's solid and reliable; a strong, quiet sort of chap after my own heart. If only he'd understand how I'm trying to fight this wretched thing and help. I think I would have told him about Jameson's coming in if his journalist's greed for scoop copy hadn't driven him to making that horrible suggestion. But he's a decent man and I'm sure he's ashamed of himself now. Must make him know I understand before we part.

Jansen thought: I made a mistake there. Should have known that wasn't the way to approach it. Bloody fool, Uys Jansen for letting your eagerness run away with you. What an utterly stupid thing to do. Damn his stupid sense of honour. Better watch yourself, Uys. You're slipping. Your luck that Blumenfeld's stupidly trusting. Watch yourself.

They arrived at the hotel and climbed the stairs in silence.

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Jansen hesitated when they reached his door. A strange indecision possessed him. Without being consciously aware of it, he feared that the sense of loneliness might return once Blumenfeld left him.

He turned the key in his door.

"Want a drink?" he said casually.

Blumenfeld flung an arm about his shoulder and hugged him. The embrace was quick, and quickly over.

"Thanks, butI've a letter to write, Uys. Give me an hour then come over to me if you feel like it and we can have that drink."

Blumenfeld strode briskly away, slightly embarrassed, as one man often is after showing emotion to another.

Jansen went in and shut the door behind him. He took a box of matches out of his pocket. Before he could strike, there was a scratch from the far end of the room. The match flame flared up.

"Klaas!"

"Hello, Uys," De Jong said and got up from the chair in the corner. "Expecting anybody?"

"No. Did they see you come in?"

"No. But it doesn't matter much now. The lid's blowing off."

"All the more reason for care," Jansen said and lit the lamp.

"Your friend has what we want, Uys."

Jansen turned from the lamp and looked squarely at Klaas De Jong. The big man looked less relaxed and lazy-looking than Uys Jansen had ever seen him look before. He was tense. Uys Jansen grew tense.

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"Why friend?"

De Jong laughed appreciatively.

"Hell man! You had me in a sweat when you asked that Jew in for a drink. I nearly crawled under your bed! Your friend!"

Jansen grinned.

Then, immediately, they were tense and serious again.

"Someone saw Hammond give Blumenfeld a paper. I'd swear that paper has what we want to know. And I think what's brewing will come to the boil very soon, Uys. You know I don't agree with Smit and some of the others who think we've got time. I think it will be tonight or tomorrow or the day after or the day after that. You've seen them drilling on the Wanderers Ground. They're getting so damned sure and arrogant. So I say we must get that paper tonight at all costs. There's a strong English force on the Bechuanaland border. Are you with me?"

"How much should we risk?"

"There'd be no point in your being here if we can't stop this."

"All right. What do we do?"

"I think the first thing he'll do is take that paper out of his pocket and lock it away. So the thing is to get him out of his room and give you a chance to get in and search."

"What if I don't find it?"

"He won't have time to put it far. You know him so you can think out his likely places of hiding."

"Yes. He's trusting. But suppose it's still in his pocket?"

"Then we'd have to lay him out and take it from him."

"It might mean the end of me here."

UWI Libraries

"We must risk that. Now this is my plan: I'll go down and ask for him downstairs. When he comes down I'll keep him there as long as I can. The rest is up to you. This is our chance, Uys. Make the most of it. All right?"

"All right."

"I'll be waiting in your room if all goes well. If not, I'll be backing you up. See that you're armed."

A man to have with you in a tight corner, Uys Jansen thought, as De Jong moved towards the door. He won't let you down. He'll always back you up, no matter how rough the going. But then, he's of my people. My people are like that. They don't let you down. And they don't forget their enemies.

"A drink?" Jansen offered.

"I'm not as used to the stuff as you've grown," De Jong said and went out.

Jansen watched the door close. He stood dead still for a few second. De Jong's words had cut like a whip. He had grown used to the stuff. But what else could they expect if he were to live like an Uitlander and be accepted as such? He'd had no choice in the matter. The one thing was to get what he was after. And none of them could deny that he'd done that. Filthy stuff. But he'd grown used ot it, because he had to . Had De Jong meant to rebuke? No. No. Klaas said what he felt straight out. No hiding behind words with him. Like all my people, he's straight and forthright. Stop imagining things, Uys. There's work to do. You'll get out of the habit soon enough.

UWI Libraries

He went to the dressing table and from beneath his shirts in the top drawer he took his pistol. He examined it. De Jong should be downstairs now. He put the pistol into his jacket pocket. No. Perhaps not yet. It takes a little time to get downstairs. And it will take a little time for someone to come up to call Mark. Time enough for a little drink. God! It has become a habit. The sort of habit burghers detest. But he'd get out of it. He poured a small whisky. De Jong should be there now. And the kaffir should be on his way up. He emptied his glass in one gulp. He went to the door and opened it slightly. Very quiet. Nearly everybody would be out celebrating . For them Christmas and the day after are no more than an excuse for a feast of drinking. Just as well that they're all out. Would make it easier should anything go wrong. Time that kaffir came up. Poor Luke Dabula, having to serve his conquerors. And a good sort for a kaffir, too. So that's why Hammond wanted me out of the way. Hope De Jong's right about this. He's sure to be. There! The kaffir at last. A boss for you downstairs, boss. That's what he'd say. And Mark would go down to see who it was. Pity it should be Mark. Or is it? One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Hell you're getting excited, Uys. Stop it now! There they are! Going down. A little more time. Now!

He went out and shut his door quietly. He would have to hurry, but calmly. He walked quickly along the passage. He paused briefly at the head of the stairs. No one coming up. Speed is the essence of this operation. Speed. He hurried to Blumenfeld's

UWI Libraries

door. He slipped his left hand into his trousers pocket. There would be one key among the bunch in his pocket that would open this door, if need be. He tried the door with his right hand. No need for the key. And the lamps were lit. These rooms were better furnished than his. But then, the great Mister Blumenfeld, friend of Rhodes and member of the Reform Committee, lived in them. He, Uys Jansen, was just a Dutch journalist. There wouldn't be much time. He'd have to hurry. But he knew this room. He'd been in it often enough. He went to the table in the corner under the window. It was piled with letters, mining reports and journals. They were all neatly arrange.

First, he went carefully through the letters, then the reports. He held the journals downward so that any sheet of paper tucked between their pages should fall out. Nothing there. What about the bookshelf? No. That would be hopeless. Besides, he'd hardly have had the time to hide it behind the bookshelf. And if he has tucked it in a book....Better try the two end books and then the middle book. But they, too, held no sheet of paper. He opened the two drawers of the table and went quickly through Blumenfeld's personal letters.

He went to the door and listened. Not much time left now. De Jong wouldn't be able to keep him much longer. It looked hopeless. Better just try the bedroom. He hurried into the bedroom. The lights, here, were on too. The smell of Blumenfeld's tobacco filled the room. And on the pillow was a solitary book, open and face down. Mark must have been in here, must have been reading that book when the kaffir came to call him.

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A feeling of elation shot through him. He was sure that book held what he had come for. Sure as he'd every been of anything. Sure as he'd ever be of anything. He picked up the book and a sheet of folded paper fell out. This was it! He opened the paper.

De ZJong had been right! The thing was nearly on them. The President would have to see this personally. In his excitement Uys Jansen did not hear Mark Blumenfeld come in. And as he turned to leave the sight of Blumenfeld standing in his bedroom doorway stunned for a few seconds. Had Blumenfeld acted then he would have overwhelmed Jansen. But he waited too long.

"I want that paper, Uys."

Jansen pushed his hand into his coat pocket and kept it there.

"The President of this Republic wants it too, Mark."

Something about Blumenfeld warned Uys Jansen. Watch this man, he told himself. He's not as soft as you thought him.

"And how much will you get for it?"

"Want to cap the price?"

Blumenfeld wasn't seeing him, Uys Jansen, any more. Jansen smiled.

"Yes," Blumenfeld said.

"Then try to cap nothing," Jansen said.

"Nothing.... Then...."

"I'm Uys Jansen, burgher, Mister Blumenfeld." Harshness crept into his voice. "I was born here, grew up here. I've watched you Uitlanders trying to take over my country and we are fighting back. Cap that with money, Mister Blumenfeld! "

Blumenfeld was the stunned one now. Jansen felt avenged.

UWI Libraries

"I see," Blumenfeld sighed. "Becoming my friend was a trick."

"You're a fine one to talk. Peace lover! Friend of the Boers!" Jansen raised the hand that held the paper. "Here's the proof of your love of peace and dislike of Rhodes' methods."

"Shut up! You filthy thieving rat! You....You.... Friendship is sacred among decent men. What do you know of peace or friendship or honour!" Blumenfeld shook with the rage that possessed him. He took a step forward. "I want that paper."

Jansen brought his hand out of his pocket and showed the pistol.

"Keep your distance."

"I want that paper."

"Don't force me to shoot."

"Give me that paper."

"Away from the door."

"Give it to me!"

Jansen raised the pistol.

"I'll shoot if I must. I'm going out now. Try anything and you die."

Jansen looked into Blumenfeld's eyes. The damn fool was going to try something. He'd have to shoot for the right shoulder and hope not to pierce his lung. Then he saw De Jong. And De Jong had a club of some sort in his hand, raised. Two more steps and De Jong would be in position.

"This is your last chance," Jansen said.

"You'll have to kill me to get out with that paper," Blumenfeld snapped, bracing himself for action.

The club in De Jong's hand crashed down on Blumenfeld's head.

UWI Libraries

Blumenfeld staggered and went down on one knee. Jansen gasped with a sudden intake of breath. De Jong struck again. Blumenfeld groaned, crumpled up and lay in a heap. Dark blood oozed from the gash in his head.

"Hard-headed Jew," De Jong gasped. "Come on. Was I right?"

"Yes. Jameson has a force at Pitsani and is just waiting for Hammond's signal. They've fixed on the 29th."

"We'll have to make straight for Pretoria."

"The President?"

"Yes."

Jansen stepped over Blumenfeld's body and followed De Jong out.

"Someone will have to ride to warn the burghers," De Jong said.

"I can."

"It's Preotia for us, brother. Let's stop at Smit's home. He will send someone riding as soon as he's seen your paper. I'd like to read it too. But there's no time now."

"Someone will have to see about my clothes," Jansen said.

"Smit will send someone to get them."

Jansen pushed the paper into his breast-pocket as they went quickly down the stairs. They slowed down somewhat when they reached the lobby. There was no one about except the black night-watchman .

"Better send him up," Jansen said tentatively.

"You must love that Jew," De Jong mocked. "All right."

"Boy!"

"Boss?"

UWI Libraries

"Boss Blumenfeld wants you in his room. Go inside if he does not answer. Under stand?"

"Yes, boss."

"Come on," De Jong said.

They left the hotel and walked briskly away. About them Uitlanders were still making merry although it was long past midnight.

An hour later a sick and bandaged Mark Blumenfeld was one of a group of men gathered in the Boardroom of the Consolidated Goldfields Company. The Reform Committee was in emergency session. They were all tense and anxious.

"I haven't given Jameson the starting signal," Hammond said.

"He might start without it," Someone said.

"The messenger should reach them before they do," another said.

"You know Jim," Hammond said. "The messenger will reach him in time but you know Jim."

"Damn your carelessness, Mark!" someone else snapped.

They all looked at the sick Blumenfeld who sat holding his throbbing head in his hands.

"Enough of that!" Hammond said. "Jansen took us all in."

"Wish I could lay my hands on the Goddamn Boer!"

Later, in the faraway Cape Colony, someone handed the Prime Minister a telegram. The contents disturbed the great Cecil Rhodes more than he had ever been disturbed in his spectacular career.

UWI Libraries

And in Pretoria the old President of the Republic, who had been summoned from his bed, sat sipping coffee audibly and occasionally puffed at his pipe while he studied the paper and listened to the two younger men who still had the dust of the road on them. The sacks under his eyes, normally large, were out heavily. His sallow face, with the beard so cut to reveal his stubborn chin, was grim.

The two young men finished their story. The President opened one big hand, looked at it, then shut it tight in a knotted fist. This was the chance he had waited for. Now he could crush his enemy: that man Rhodes who was the curse of Africa.

"You have done well," he said. "What you have done will not be forgotten. We will be ready for them! Yes, we will be ready.... I knew your grandfather and your father, Jansen. Kasper Jansen was a great man, a great son of his people. And your father died for his country. They will be proud of you this day."

"I did my duty, Mister President." A glow of pride spread through Uys Jansen. He had justified his inheritance. He <u>was</u> the grandson of Kasper Jansen who had been one of the founders of this Republic.

And through the moonlit night, in many directions, Boer horsemen travelled. They stopped at lonely farmhouses and called out. And at each farmhouse a farmer got out of bed and came to his door, rifle in hand. And they spoke to him and rode off. And the man dressed hurriedly and saddle his horse and rode away from his home.

UWI Libraries

All through the hours of the dark farmers turned soldiers rode through the land. General Piet Cronje, hero of Majuba, Commandant of the Potchefstroom district, was in command. And when the bright summer stars grew dim and the moon, sinking, had shadows in its valleys, the Boer farmers had been turned into a Commando army, ready and waiting.

And among them was Uys Jansen, and beside him was Klaas De Jong.

UWI Libraries

8.

Saturday, December 28, 1895, was a quiet day; one of the most perfect and one of the most peaceful days on the veld. The sun beat down warmly on the parched veld. Now, because it was early morning, it was only warm: later it would be pitilessly hot. The still, windlessness of the clear sky held that promise.

The group of Boers sat their horses in silence near the railway track. They were in a hollow between two boulders where the line turned sharply for a train. The train would have to slow to a crawl for this turning.

High through the sky, from the north, a giant African eagle swooped southward. It was on its way to a dead carcass, far beyond the reach of human sight or smell.

The long silence stretched to an hour. A horse pounded the earth restlessly with a foreleg. Another shifted its weight a little. Yet another stretched its neck and nibbled, uninterestedly, at the dry shrubs at its feet. The bearded Boers stared southward with that clear-eyed intensity that comes of looking over great spaces all the long day. Here, a man tilted his hat over his eyes; there, a horse snorted. The long silence stretched to another hour.

At last, after the best part of another hour had gone by , they saw what they were waiting for: first, there was only the smoke, then the goods trains came puffing heavily along. It slowed down as it neared the turn.

The horsemen's leader said: "Now!" and urged his horse forward. The men followed him. The leader fired once into the air. The

UWI Libraries

train stopped a few yards from the horsemen.

The driver poked out his head.

"What's the matter?"

"You, this train's under arrest. By order of the President."

"Arrest? What for?"

"Smuggling arms into the Republic for the Uitlanders."

"We know of no arms."

The Boer leader turned to his followers.

"Two of you go and see....Get down from your engine."

"You can't do this," the engine-driver protested.

Two Boers raised their rifles and took aim.

"Get down!" the Boer leader snapped.

"All right! All right! "

The engine driver and his mate got out of their engine. Two horsemen went to the end carriage and took the guard prisoners The leader sent two ~~men~~ more men to go and help the two who were searching for arms. Time passed. Then one of the searchers whistled. The Boer leader rode down and joined them. The carriage in which they were was full of packing cases marked 'mining equioment'. One case had been opened. It was filled with brand new rifles.

"That's it," the Beoer leader said. "Come on."

The warm sun was warm no longer. The quiet day had advanced to a point where the sun sat directly overhead. And the noonday sun was pitilessly fierce on the Uitlander town of Johannesburg.

UWI Libraries

Like the vast veld, the usually noisy town was quiet. Men moved about as though waiting for something. Groups of men, in bars and in the streets, were strangely quiet. And outside the town, mines were barricaded. And here and there, strongpoints had been built and men lounged near them, casual but alert.

In the board room of Consolidated Goldfield the Reform Committee was in session.

The chairman said:

"There's nothing new to report. I think you all know that Rhodes as well as the British High Commissioner have sent messages to Jameson telling him not to start."

"But have you or they heard from Jim?"

"Not a word."

"And we don't know whether he still plans to go on?"

"We don't."

"God! The fat will be in the fire if he starts now!"

"Britain will have to step in once the shooting start."

"Don't under-rate Britain's enemies in Europe."

"They won't dare interfere."

"Germany might."

"If Jameson starts we'll have to go his help," Blumenfeld said firmly.

"Thought you were against it, Mark," Hammond said.

"It was but it's too late for anything else now."

"Some of our arms have gone astray," someone said.

"The Boers have them," Hammond said. "Held up the train this

UWI Libraries

morning."

"And how are we off for arms?"

"We have three thousand rifles here, as far as I can tell."

"Then we're agreed to going to Jameson's aid?"

"If he starts, yes."

"But Chamberlain's repudiated us. We can't fight them without Britain."

"We can't leave them to walk into a trap without doing anything," Blumenfeld said.

"Why are you hot on fighting now, Mark?" someone snapped.

"Because there's nothing else to do. When there were other ways you were hot on fighting. Now you want to let down the people you've persuaded into this. You should have thought of this and the poor bloody fools likely to die when you voted for this!"

"You're a fine one to talk. If you'd kept secrets...."

"Enough of this!" Hammond cut in sharply. "I'm with Mark. If Doctor Jim starts then we go to his aid. But pray God he doesn't!"

"But we were supposed to take the town here as a signal for him to come to our relief. Shall we make a try for it?"

"Hell no! They'd murder our men if we did."

A message was brought in. All waited anxiously while Hammond ripped the envelope open and read it.

"From Jim?"

"No. Rhodes. He wants to know if we've heard from Jim...."

"We'd better adjourn for a while," the chairman said.

UWI Libraries

They went out to a room where drinks and piles of sandwiches waited. People who were not members of the Reform Committee joined them there, anxious for news. Max Shulman joined Mark Blumenfeld.

"Any news?" Shulman asked.

"No."

"Then there's still hope."

"I've a dreadful feeling that our only news will be that he's crossed the border."

"What then?"

"If these heroes had their way they'd wash their hands of the whole thing now. They were tough enough when everything looked rosy. It those who were most blood-thirsty who are most cowardly now."

"But there's nothing to be gained either way now, Mark."

"That's no reason for letting Jameson down, Max. Look Max. Uys Jansen and those like him despises us or want. If we give up without a fight because it looks hopeless they will be confirmed in their attitude. And then it'll grow till it consumes them. They can so easily set themselves apart from the rest of humanity. I've had time to think, Max. About Jansen. About our talks and our walks and his attitude to things. The way he thinks. There's....There's something abnormal, almost unclean and unhuman about the hard coldness in him and others. And if that wins....And it's that that is fighting against change. Hell Max! I've talked to Kruger often enough and he has it too. But in Jansen it's almost purified to a point of where there is room for nothing else except this creed

UWI Libraries

of volk and blood. Oh Christ!...."

"Easy, Mark. Try to forget him. Nobody really blames you. If he'd picked on most of the other Committee members he would have had a much easier time getting what he wanted. He was a clever, unscrupulous spy who deceived you. It's natural that you should be bitter. But try to forget him."

"Oh hell, what's the use. Even you don't understand. Sure I'm bitter but I'm not talking out of my bitterness now. But never mind...."

Another message was brought to Hammond and Blumenfeld hurried across the room to join the group that crowded anxiously about the big American.

The long day ran its course. And the warm night was as quiet as the day had been. The only event of the night was a sudden thunderstorm that hurled hailstones as big as marbles at the parched and thirsty veld, and sent forked tongues of lightning licking across the heavens and ocassionally touching the earth.

UWI Libraries

9.

Pitsani was a small African town turned British garrison. It lay just inside the newly acquired British Protectorate of Bechuanaland. It was north of Mafeking, almost on the western border of the South African Republic, and a hundred and eighty-five miles west of the Uitlander town of Johannesburg.

It was late afternoon on Sunday. The entire garrison was on parade. Fifteen hundred men sweated on their horses in the scorching sun. Five hundred of them were police of Rhodes' Charter Company. A thousand were regular British soldiers, men of the Rhodesia Horse. In command was Sir John Willoughby, an officer in Her Majesty's army.

Dr. Jameson and Sir John Willoughby rode to the head of the parade. The troop came to attention. Jameson cleared his throat and spoke:

"Officers and men! It is my duty to explain to you why we are going into the Transvaal and what we propose to do. We are going in response to a letter from the people of Johannesburg asking us to help relieve them of their intolerable burdens. I have the letter here. They list their grievances - and you know them as well as I do. And, I'm reading from their letter now: 'Not to go into details, we may say that the Government has called into existence all the elements necessary for armed conflict. The one desire of the people here is for fair play, the maintenance of their independence, and the preservation of their public liberties without which life is not worth living. The government denies these things and violates the national sense of Englishmen at every turn....It is in these

UWI Libraries

circumsyances that we feel constrained to call upon you to come to our aid should a disturbance arise here. The circumstances are so extreme that we cannot but believe that you and the men under you will not fail to come to the rescue of people who will be so situated'. There you have it. There is fighting in Johannesburg. They are our people. We cannot fail them. That is why we are going into the Transvaal. We start this evening. Sir John Willoughby here whom you all know, will be our military commander. We meet a column of the Border Police under Colonel Grey at Malmani tomorrow morning. That is all, and good luck."

The troop dismissed. Men dismounted and wandered off in little groups, talking.

A pair found a shaded spot and sat down to a smoke.

"Wonder if it's all as he says."

"He read us the letter."

"I get suspicious when they start telling the poor bloody soldier things."

Another joined the pair. Then two more.

"Doctor Jim's like that."

"Still don't trust it."

"Weere you with us at Bulawayo?"

"No."

"If you were you'd know that Doctor Jim's all right."

"Say! Know that Wood and Hore are cutting the telegraph wires?"

"No."

"They sneaked out of Mafeking last night disguised as prospector

"Any news of them?"

UWI Libraries

"No."

"Bet you Johnny Boer's got them."

"Fellow in the Officers' Mess heard the people in Joh'burg want to call this off. Say there've been messages."

"I don't like this. Hope the powers don't think this is going to be as easy as Lobengula at Bulawayo."

"Why not? Doctor Jim knows what he's doing."

"I say Johnny Boer is no simple black."

"I want to know if we can trust those blighters in Joh'burg."

"Shut up, will you! I'm writing to my girl."

"Listen to him. Writing!"

"Never had a girl in his life."

"Signs for his pay with crosses!"

"Perhaps the girl can read crosses. Hah!"

"How d'you spell 'Transvaal', lover?"

"Hey, don't go away!"

"Let him go. He really wants to get that letter off."

"His first action?"

"Yes. He's just a boy, really."

"I wonder how my boy is...."

"Your home's in Sussex, isn't it?"

"No. Essex...."

Three junior officers stood talking in the corner of the empty mess.

"Eeven Rhodes has sent a message not to start."

"Doctor Jim knows what he's doing."

UWI Libraries

"But Rhodes...."

"They understand each other."

"You were with them in Rhodesia?"

"Yes."

"Got a to take a chance, I suppose."

"If it comes off all the world will be at our feet."

"And if it doesn't?"

"Then we're for it."

"Some chance to take."

"The prize is worth it."

"I'll say it is!"

In another place, Sir John Willoughby and his senior officers pored over a map of the South African Republic. And near them, the little Scots doctor who was Rhodes' right-hand man sat deep in thought, staring into space.

The Jameson force moved out of Pitsani at sundown. After the hot day the evening was cool and fresh. The noises of the small creatures of the veld were everywhere. They muffled the hoofbeats of the horse.

There is the song of the wild dove calling to her mate: a soft song it is, soft with all the tender beauty of a love song. And at waterholes there are singing frogs, and the more they are in number the more discordant their music. And, of course, always, on the veld in Africa, the crickents sing with a bold clarity of note nowehere else achieved.

UWI Libraries

Night had fallen by the time the Jameson forced crossed the border into the South African Republic. At their head rode Dr. Jameson and Sir John Willoughby. They travelled as silently as was possible for such a force. They were in a hostile land now. They sent scouts ahead to explore. The scouts returned and assured the commanders. There was no sign of even a solitary Boer. They forged ahead.

The moon rose and shone big and yellow over the north-western hills behind Pitsani. The land grew dark. Darker. A good night for those who wish to travel unseen. And above the hoofbeats rose the noises of the creatures of the veld.

Shortly after midnight an officer who had been far in the rear rode up to Jameson and Willoughby. He was worried. He felt that they were being followed. Had he seen anything? He could not swear. He had looked back once and felt sure he had seen something. But when he had ridden back a little way there had been no sign of anybody. Willoughby knew his officer and sent a couple of scouts back. The scouts returned in a little while. Yes. They were being followed by a large body of Boers. Word passed from man to man. The Boers were behind them. There was no way back, no way of retreat. There was no time for rest either, now. They would have to press on and get to Johannesburg as soon as possible. The hope, now, was that the citizens of Johannesburg would not let them down. In sny case, the road back was closed. They grew more alert, sat their horse more tensely, strained their eyes against the dark.

The moon grew bigger, brighter, as it rose higher in the sky. They climbed a hill and looked back into the valley behind. Now,

UWI Libraries

clearly, they saw the following Boers: a ghostly company, vaguely outlined by the moon which cast long shadows into the valley.

The Jameson force journeyed all through the night. And the Boer forced kept behind them, just out of range. When morning came the Jameson force discovered that there were Boer forces on both their flanks as well now.

Sir John Willoughby turned weary eyes on Jameson.

"Is your idea the same as mine?"

"That they're escorting us to where they want us? Yes."

"That's what it looks like."

"We'll beat them yet.... If the Reform Committee takes care of its end."

"Will it, after those messages to stop?"

"We'll see, Willoughby, we'll see."

When, later in the morning, the column of the Bechuanaland Border Police under Colonel Grey approached the escorting Boer force on the right flank fell away and allowed them to join the Jameson force. Then the Boer escort moved into place again.

When they stopped to eat, the escort stopped too. When the mounted again the escort did the same. The sun rose, grew hot, then hotter, and then burned down fiercely. With day break the creatures of the veld had stopped the noises. The veld was silent except for the hoofbeat of horses. The day wore on, long and tedious. A long day in the saddle, journeying over brown hills and across green valleys, sweating in the ~~100~~ burning noonday sun.

A halt was called in the late afternoon and the men of the Jameson force dismounted with relief. But this time the Boer force

UWI Libraries

moved in on three sides and opened fire. The Jameson force returned the fire, but they were forced to remount and keep moving. When they were on the move the Boers stopped firing. But now the Boers stepped up the pace. They moved in closer, and made the Jameson force travel faster.

The long day wore on. The hot sun burned down. Men grew saddle weary, fell asleep in their saddles, grew too weary to eat their rations while moving on horseback. The day ended. Still they were forced on by their escort. Creature-noises kept them company allthrough the night. Behind them and on both flanks was the ever-present escort, pressing close, silent, menacing.

That night Jameson sent a messenger ahead to Johannesburg. He was to report the position and tell the Reformers to come out to meet Jameson. The force was now some twenty miles from Johhanesburg. The way ahead was clear so the messenger should get through.

So the dawn broke on New Year's Day. The Jameson force was near the Rand now. Krugersdorp was only a few hours' ride away. And at Krugersdorp the relief from Johannesburg should be waiting for them. Let the escort keep on escorting. There would be a small surprise in store for them at Krugersdorp. They crossed a hill and moved into the valley of Doornkop. And then they saw the trap they had ridden into.

They were in a valley that was like a saucer with one small piece chipped out of its edge. The chipped edge was the normal way in and out of the valley. But their Boer escort gad driven them in, over the edge of the saucer. And now the entire

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area of the boulder-studden saucer edge bristled with armed Boers. The way out of the valley, the chipped edge, had been turned into a fortified strongpoint.

The Jameson force came to a halt.

"We're boxed in," Jameson said.

"They're all about us," Willoughby said. "They've chosen time and place. All right!" He raised himself in his saddle and shouted: "Time for fighting!"

Willoughby order and artillery attack on the strong point. There was no reply from the Boer strongpoint. But from all about them Boer marksmen sniped with deadly accuracy. After the bombardment Willoughby ordered a section of his men to attack the strong-point.

The British horsemen weaved as they ~~rode through the~~ galloped down to the strong-point. Jameson and Willoughby watched anxiously. If their men reached and took it they way out would be clear. They would have a fighting chance then.

"Looks as though they're going to make it!"

"By God!" Jameson replied. "Yes!"

And so it did look. For the horsemen were a mere hundred yards from the strong-point and only a few had fallen.

And then, clear above the whining sound of rifle fire, a Boer voice called:

"The whites of their eyes! Now!"

There was a brief, sharp rattle of cross-firing from three points. The British horsemen went down like a clump fo scythed grass, cut by the hands of an expert. Then there was silence from the

UWI Libraries

strong-point. Jameson turned his back to shut out the sight of such slaughter.

"It's murder," he said.

"Looks hopeless," Willoughby said.

"If only the Reformers would attack from the rear!" Jameson said fiercely. "We'd be able to do something then."

"The messenger's had time to get there and back."

"Yes," Jameson said, and his voice was tinged with bitterness.

"We must break out," Willoughby said. "They're slowly murdering my men while we wait here. We must break out!"

Another force of horsemen rode down to the strong-point. And again it seemed that they would reach it and cut a way through the Boer ring. And again they were wiped out by the deadly cross-fire of the Boers.

And among those who remained a man died nearly every time there was the whine of a sniping Boer rifle.

At last, the long, bitter day ended. Darkness ended the deadly Boer sniping. Willoughby sent out scouts. There might be one small hole through which they could slip under cover of the dark. The scouts returned. There was none. The Boer chain was without a weak link. And so the living and the dead lay where they were all through the long night. The living were too weary to keep awake, and too desperately anxious to sleep restfully. But the Boers left them in peace that night. The ring that encircled them was dotted with glows from burning fires where Boers brewed coffee and had comfort from the dark. They, the encircled, stayed in darkness and many of them prayed that morning would bring the relief column promised by

UWI Libraries

the Reformer.

The long night passed. With the coming of dawn the deadly sniping began afresh. There was no relief column. And so, on the second day of the New Year the Jameson force raised the white flag and the one-sided battle was over.

Uys Jansen was one of those who rode with General Piet Cronje, the hero of Majuba, when he went to accept Jameson's surrender. He was a cold, aloof, Boer Uys Jansen. He had a five days' growth of beard. He sat his horse with the ease of one born to the saddle. His rifle rested comfortably in the crook of his arm.

When the surrender ceremony was over he urged his horse closer to that of Jameson. Rhodes' right-hand man was weary and sleep-hungry. The air of defeat covered him like a blanket.

"Remember me, Doctor Jameson?"

"No." Jameson said tiredly.

"Look closely. The name is Jansen. Uys Jansen. Blumenfeld introduced us. Remember?"

Despite his great weariness, the ////// doctor straightened his back. His eyes went cold, then blank.

"Well, sir?"

A smile, bereft of any humour, tugged at Jansen's lips.

"Not like it was with Lobengula's kaffirs, is it, doctor?"

Jameson turned away. From a little distance away where he was disarming prisoners, Klaas De Jong/s called jubilantly:

"Uys! Come and have a look at this!"

"Not the same," Uys Jansen murmured at Jameson's back, then he turned his horse and joined de Jong.

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10.

Uys Jansen walked down the broad, tree-lined Church Street. Beside him walked the young man who was to show him the house. When he had asked ~~about~~, at the government buildings, if anyone knew the whereabouts of Hettie Van As they had all rushed around as if it were a matter of national importance. And now this young man was taking him to the house. It had made him feel good.

It was late afternoon. The red sun was dipping behind the western hills. There was peace over the land. Jameson and his followers were prisoners of the Republic. And so were the Johannesburg leaders of the Reform plot. Rhodes had had to resign his premiership of the Cape Colony and had gone to England in disgrace. All the world, now, was the friend of the Republic. Britain had been unmasked for what she was. She had been forced to denounce the actions of her favourite sons. But the world had not been fooled. The clever Mister Cecil John Rhodes had met his match in the old President and he, Uys Jansen, had had a big hand in it. The safety of the Republic, now, was secure for a while. For the present Rhodes would not dare try anything more. But they would have to watch him and his gang....But enough of that. It was a lovely day and he was on his way to the home of Hettie Van As. A day to remember, this.

They turned out of Church street and passed two houses.

"It's the next house," the young man said respectfully.

"Then I can go on from here by myself."

"If you wish. Or I could wait for you."

UWI Libraries

"No need. I can find my way back. Thank you." He held out his hand.

The young man gratefully shook the hand of this hero of the Republic. Then he turned and hurried back to the big white buildings from where the business of the Republic was conducted.

Uys Jansen went on more slowly.

....Hope I don't encounter that old grandma of hers. But perhaps she wouldn't be so hostile now. Remember to ask Oom Stefan about it. Would Hettie still look the same? Small and young and more beautiful than words? Would her dark eyes still glide quickly over your face and then away? And would her cheeks still be touched with the pink of roses? Of course. Only more so. Much more so....

He stopped at the little gate. He stood still for a while. Then, resolutely, he opened it and went in. He was halfway toward the house when some movement made him look to the right. He stopped dead. Then, slowly, he turned and walked across the grass to where Hettie Van As sat.

She got up as he drew near. He took off his hat.

"Uys Jansen," she murmured.

More beautiful than all my dreams, his brain said. Oh Hettie Van As! Oh Hettie Van As!

"I've thought of you all the time," he said.

An odd expression, like a cloud across the sun, touched her face and was gone.

"I hear you're a hero now," she said.

He relaxed a little. A warm smile touched his lips and glowed in his eyes.

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"All the time," he said. "I never once forgot you. Remember the times on the farm when we met insecret because of your grandma? Remember our walks, you on your side of the fence and me on ours? I've remembered all that and I've dreamed about you night and day. I want you to...."

"I hear you've been very clever," she cut in.

"Oh that. They were stupid and I was lucky....It's so good to see you again,Hettie. I find I can't talk to other women but it's different with you. Let's sit down...."

"Was Mark Blumenfeld stupid too?"

His relaxing nerves snapped tight.

"Blumenfeld?"

"Yes," she said quietly. "Mark Blumenfeld."

"How do you know about him?"

"I saw him at the prison today. I visited him."

Disbelief showed in his eyes. Then, as he looked at her, it went.

"she went on quietly."
"I visited him everyday./When he told me what had happened I told him I knew you."

Wonder, desperation, fear, fought each other in Uys Jansen's heart and mind. They left him limp and helpless.

"But how?" he said weakly.

"We met here, in Pretoria, months ago." Her quiet voice was silent for a while, then as an afterthought, she added: "I love him. I'm going to marry him when he's free...."

"But, but..." the words seemed to choke him. "Jew! Jew!"

And then darkness descended on Uys Jansen, and the land.

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PRELUDE

THE END OF TIME

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1.

The young warrior expelled his breath in a sigh. For a few more paces he moved on tiptoe, then he remembered the huts were behind him and allowed his heels to touch the hard earth. How quiet Bulawayo was here. Yet this was the heart of the city. He had been here for months now, yet still the silence of this place struck a strange fear into him: like being among the dead. Of course, it was that old man and the women. The fuss they made over one old man! The king himself came here often. Just for an old man .... A man older than the hills called Dabula. Strange .... Yet he was afraid. He hardly breathed when he had to go into those huts. And what for? For that long, bony old man who lay on the bed staring at nothing, so old that he was a child all over again .... Well, they said this was promotion and a soldier must do his duty.

He reached the guard and whistled softly. No noise, he reminded himself. The king had ordered the silence round this circle of huts. And in it were just an old man and the two women who took care of him. And, apart from the king's huts, this was the only place in Bulawayo that had a sentry-post and warriors to guard it and enforce the law of silence.

He entered the sentry-post. The three warriors looked up. The induna came through from the inner hut. That was another thing. Normally an ordinary captain of warriors would be in charge of a sentry-post. But here, for only five warriors, they had an induna over them. And just for an old man. Almost, it

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seemed they made this old man more important than the king .... And such an old one, the induna was. Almost as old as the old man himself. This whole business was strange. Nothing like it had ever happened before in Bulawayo or in any of the other military or civilian kraals or cities of the Matabele, or, for that matter, in any part of the land of those feeble Mashonas.

"Well?" the old induna asked.

The young warrior shrugged and leaned against his spear. Perhaps, if the old man died, they would promote him to the king's bodyguard and he would be taught to use one of those gun things. That would be more interesting than this business with an un-military man over him. Not that he wasn't a nice old man.

"The old one is dying," he said. "One of the women called me in and said the old man wanted me."

"And you saw him?" the old induna's voice was eager.

"Yes." He saw one of the other warriors grinning and turned his eyes away quickly to avoid doing so himself. All five of them, the warriors on guard here, had come down from the very far north. They had been the best soldiers in the northern army and they had been promoted - to this! They had been so excited at coming down to the king's city; and they had to nurse an old man and two women, with another old man to command them! How those up in the north would laugh if they knew!

"What did he look like?" the old induna asked. "And did he speak?"

"He looked like an old man, so old that he was almost a child again. I thought he was asleep and was going out when he spoke ..."

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"What did he say?"

The young warrior could not suppress the grin that cracked his face. How excited this old man was. But it was better here than near those huts. Here no nameless fear was always at his back. Yet they all spoke in hushed voices even here.

"He said, 'Tell them I am tired. Very tired. Tell them to come before I go to sleep again.' I waited but he said no more..."

"Fool! Proud and stupid whelp of a fool!" The old induna seemed to grow large and commanding. His fingers jabbed at one of the other warriors. "You! Get to the king's court! Give him the message of this stupid dog! And run! Your life depends on it!"

For a brief second they were petrified, then the warrior jumped up and streaked out. The young warrior who had brought the message began to tremble. Was this the old induna with the soft voice? Was this the one whom they had mocked privately? And what had he done that this old man should throw all this wrath against him? He could feel it beating at him. And who was that dying old man called Dabula? ....

"Pray to your ancestors," the old man said quietly. "If Dabula dies before his family and the king arrives, your life will be crushed out like that of a crawling worm!"

The young warrior fought down his fear.

"Lord," it was the first time he had addressed the old induna thus. "Lord, what have I done wrong?"

The old induna smiled without humour.

"What have you done wrong? I will tell you. Dabula gives you a message. And even while he gives it to you, you have mocking

UWI Libraries

thoughts about him. And you come, as a man with no important matter, strolling slowly. And I, the man under whose orders you are, have to ask questions while you play with me as a snake with its prey. And you ask what you have done wrong! Because your blood is polluted with that of the Mashona you have the false arrogance of the Mashona. Do you think I am a fool? Do you think I do not know of your railing against your duties, against Dabula whom you call 'the old man' with a mocking note in your voice? Or against me whom you think of as just another old man?"

The young warrior jerked himself erect.

"My lord!" the young warrior said.

"Well?"

"We may have been wrong about many things, my lord ...."

"You were wrong about many things."

"We were wrong, then, Lord. But we acknowledge only the Matabele blood in our veins."

The old man smiled. His eyes mocked the young man.

"If you are such a good Matabele warrior, young man, tell me this. Who is Dabula whom you have mocked these past months?" He turned and looked at the other two, and when they all remained silent, he nodded and went out.

He hurried to the circle of huts. The younger of the two women met him at the door.

"How is he?" he asked.

"He asks for the king and his family. Will they come?"

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"They will come."

"There is not much time, my lord."

"Fear not, my daughter, they will come."

"Oh, my lord, what are we to do when he is gone?" She brushed tears from her eyes.

"We can only mourn him, my child."

"Oh, my Lord...."

"He is tired, my child. Remember, we have had him for a very long time."

He passed through the huts and went into Dabulas's. He stood by the bed. Dabula's eyes opened. They were watery and misty. The face with the many folds and lines turned to him. The toothless mouth moved and the shadow of a smile passed over it. One hard, horned, bony hand moved on top of the blanket. The bald head glistened in the light of the oil lamp. The voice, quite strong, spoke to him:

"Ho, Dhlamini."

"My Lord Dabula."

"Come near, my friend, and sit."

Dhlamini took a stool and sat close to the bed.

"Tell me," Dabula said. "How is it outside? Day or night?"

"It is day, my Lord."

"A good day?"

"The sun is shining and the wind is tender so that the sun does not burn you too much."

"That is good. I want to go outside, my friend. I want to see the sky and feel the wind. I want to say goodbye."

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having seen it again would have been wrong somehow, like leaving an old friend abruptly, without that parting touch that shows the specialness of friendship. He tried to look at the sky but it was too bright. Never mind, it was up there. He could feel it.

"Thank you, young men."

"Get stools," Dhlamini said. "Many. There will be many people here."

The warriors went away and returned with stools and went away and returned with more. The older of the two women came out and fussed about Dabula, pulling the blankets close about him.

"Stop it, Nontando," Dabula protested. "I am not a child."

"Hush," the old woman said while her wrinkled face creased in a smile. She ignored him and continued to fuss.

Dabula looked at the three young warriors.

"Are they all here?"

"No," Dhlamini said. "One went to get the king and your family. The other guards the back."

"There is no need for guards," Dabula said testily.

"It is the king's orders," Dhlamini said.

"The king is a fool."

The three warriors tensed and looked at each other. No one in all the land spoke thus of the king of the Matabele! Those watery old eyes seemed to pick the thoughts from their brains and they felt uncomfortable.

"Take these boys and give them beer," Dabula said to Nontando, "And the other one too."

"Do not talk too much," Dhlamini said. "You will tire yourself"

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"And come back," Dabula said to Nontando.

Nontando led the warriors into the huts and told the young woman to give them beer and to get the other one as well. Then she went back to where Dabula lay in the shade of the old tree.

"Sit, friends," he said. "Maybe the others will come soon and we will have not much time to talk."

Nontando sat close to his bed on the right and Dhlamini on the left. And about them was the still warmth of the African afternoon, the soft gentle breeze, and the quiet. And the sky was very far away and dazzlingly clear and bright. The leaves of the old tree only suggested movement. And all the world was still.

"You two will feel it most," Dabula said.

"The whole nation will mourn you," Dhlamini said.

"Their mourning will be different."

"Yes," Dhlamini said reluctantly.

"They will remember only an old man who is a god to them," Nontando murmured. She sighed heavily. "It is always so."

"But we remember other things," Dhlamini whispered.

"Memory is like a child's game," Dabula said. "It plays with you. And you cannot hold it. And there is so much of it ...." He turned to Nontando. "You remember Ntombi?"

"You ask!" Nontando glared at him.

"What is clearest?"

The old woman smiled.

"The memories of the southland are clearest, the days of Inzwinyani, when you had gone to battle or on hunts with my Lord

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Gubuza. It is those days I remember. They come back clear as the things I did yesterday.... We worked in the fields, singing and laughing and playing as young women do. Each day was a feast day for us. And yet we always prepared for your return. Often, we talked of you. I remember a day, she said, 'We must find you a husband, Nontando. There are men who want you but you do not look at them.' I cried out and said No, and we did not talk of it any more.... I remember other things too, but it is those days in the fields, singing and talking..."

"It is a long time to remember," Dabula said.

"We have remembered, you and I and Dhlamini," she said.

"We have remembered," Dhlamini repeated.

"And you, Dhlamini?"

"I do not know, my Lord...."

"Is it of battlefields and girls that your memories are made up?"

"My brain is asleep now. Maybe later I will wake up and recall my memories .... Now do they not come?"

"My poor Dhlamini...."

"Lord, we have shared much."

"There is no need to weep, my friend. When a man is tired he must sleep. There are times when I feel the clearness going from my brain, and it is better for a man to sleep forever before he becomes a child again. In a body I am a child now...."

"And you, Dabula?" Nontando asked.

The smile flitted across his toothless mouth. He closed his eyes and was silent for a while.

"You will be angry, perhaps, my good Nontando. But my memories

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are not built on Ntombi or even the children or even the good things we shared in the southland. I remember them. There are times when they are as clear as with you. But they are like the stars in the sky when the moon is very bright and you can only look at it though you know the stars are there. For me, memory is Mkomozi and the things he showed me and the thoughts we shared. It is the long dreams. And the searching. Oh the searching for the answers!"

"Do not excite yourself," Nontando murmured and took his hand.

"Oh the searching," Dabula murmured and opened his eyes.

Dhlamini turned his head. Across the wall that circled the huts, he saw a procession coming toward them. It moved fast.

"They are coming, my Lord."

"That is good .... And you my friends." He looked at each in turn and held out his hand to Dhlamini. "I am sorry to leave you for we have shared much. But a man must do all the most important things of his life alone. Alone, he must come out of the dark and be born; alone, he must go back into the dark and die .... And how shall I say thank you for all you have given me in youth and age?"

"It was an honour to serve you, my Lord," Dhlamini said.

"They are here," Nontando said.

The king's personal guard lined the entrance to the circle of huts, and Lobengula, king of the Matabele, walked hastily toward the old tree where the three old people waited. Behind him came Dabula's two sons, his two granddaughters and his grandson. The son of Mzilikazi was dressed in European clothes and there was sadness on his tender, brooding face.

To Dhlamini, Dabula said:

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"Bury me near Mkomozi in the Matopas that we climbed so often together .... And do not weep, my friend. To die is the easiest part of life. It is the living that is hard."

Now they had all come, all his children, except the daughter who was named after old Nontando. She was too far away, in Mashonaland, to come. He was proud of her for having taken as husband a Mashona. The Matqbele still looked down on the Mashona. Had all his talking and explaining been for nothing? And would men in the future still have racial and tribal prejudices? It is not knowing that is so disturbing. Yet a man must learn to live with uncertainty if he is to live at all as a man .... He looked at the people clustered about him. All his children. Even Lobengula. He had brought the boy up and taught him all he knew. So they were all his children.

He turned his eyes to his eldest son. In the southland he and Ntombi had called him The Boy and the name had stuck. The Boy was an old man now, grey and bent and walking with a stick. His son, an old man. He said: "Ho, Boy," and remembered the days when The Boy had been a boy.

"Greetings, my father," The Boy said.

He turned his eyes to his second son. This one was the dreamer. How else could one call one son when both are called Dabula? So they called this one the dreamer. A fat and rich one this, with much cattle, and the father of his three grandchildren. Only The Boy had been unfortunate with his children. Four he had had, and they had all died; and their mother with the last one. And he it was who had taken only one wife. Now the Dreamer had many wives. And the three children by his first wife lived and

UWI Libraries

were here now. To the Dreamer, he said:

"Ho."

"I greet you, my Lord,"

Strange what different children the same parents produced. He did not like the Dreamer. He reminded him too much of the cunning of Tabata who had been a general in Mzilikazi's army. Gubuza had thought that by taking Tabata into battle he would rid the nation of a schemer. So many things Gubuza had not understood or thought about. Still, his heart had been big, he had loved, and that is a great thing. His eyes ran over his grandchildren and he smiled. He did not want to speak to them. There was nothing to tell them. To them he was an old man of whom the world made too much noise. Perhaps, the boy, Young Dabula, was different. He it was who had taken on the white man's custom of having two names. He it was who visited and even spoke the language of the white missionary who was here at Bulawayo.

"What is the name you took from the shite man, my son?"

"It is Luke, my Lord," the boy said.

"And how do you use it?"

"Among the white people they would call me Luke Dabula."

"And where does the name come from? It is strange."

"It is out of the book the white father uses, Lord."

"Yes .... The book of wisdom. He gave me one. It would have been good for Africa if we too had made a book of wisdom. Now it is all lost and nobody will remember the wisdom of Mkomozi after I am gone ...."

"Lord ...." The boy started eagerly, and then checked himself.

"What is it, my son?"

UWI Libraries

"Nothing, my Lord."

"Then say it."

"It is only that I wish it were possible to talk with you of the wisdom of Mkomozi and of many other things."

Dabula closed his eyes. So this was the link. So the dreaming and fearing and seeking would be carried on through this boy. Suddenly, for the first time, he regretted this tiredness that meant death was so near.

"I wish it were possible, my son." Quickly, he moved his eyes from the boy's face and looked at Lobengula. Luke Dabula. It sounded good.

"Nontando."

"Lord?"

"The white man's book of wisdom is in my chamber. You will give it to the boy."

"Yes Lord."

"And now you, Lobengula...."

"Oh my Lord, my father! What shall I do without you?"

"You, my children," he looked at his family. "Leave us. Stay well, all of you."

In turn, they approached the bed and took their leave of him. Last, as the youngest, came the boy, Luke. And Dabula remembered that far off day when Mkomozi had smiled at him for the first time and he had gone south to find Mnandi, carrying that smile close to his heart. He smiled at the boy and said:

"Stay well, my son, Luke Dabula."

He saw the boy fighting to keep back the tears. How full of

UWI Libraries

emotion the young are!

"Go well, my father ...." The boy turned blindly and hurried away after the others.

"The young are so full of emotion," Dabula said.

Now only Lobengula and his two old faithful friends were with him.

"My father," Lobengula said. "I will send for the white medicine man, the one called Doctor Jameson. You remember, he cured my last sickness. He is here in the land. It will not take long."

"There is no sickness to cure, my son."

"But Lord ...."

"There is no medicine against time, my son ...." A rush of tiredness came over him. He felt dizzy and closed his eyes. Lobengula said something, but his mind would not grasp the words.

.... To have called this place Bulawayo - The Place of Killing - was strange, for they had wanted to live in peace. But they were strangers in a strange land. They had to put fear into the Mashona and the Makalaka in order to live. Fear in order to live. That was the story of the world....

"Talk of your affairs," he said and opened his eyes.

"The white men are everywhere," Lobengula said. "These men of that one, Rhodes, are not keeping their word, father. When they came they asked only for permission to hunt for gold. Now they are everywhere. They are building cities and farms and they are coming in vast numbers. Reports say they bring their women and children and behave as people who come to take the land and stay. The chiefs and indunas are impatient and for war. And they are right for these

UWI Libraries

men do not keep their word. Even this Jameson, who is as a brother to me, he does not keep his word. It was he who promised, in the name of Rhodes and their great Queen, that the land would be ours and all they wanted was this gold. Now they are everywhere. What are we to do, father? You said the ways of peace would win. What are we to do?"

.... Still the white man. Always the white man. How his coming had changed the world of black men! He came, striding across everything, and there was nothing to hold him. Mkomozi had reported that it was thus the arab barbarians came striding across the desert and destroyed the African empires of old in the north. He had said that in those old empires they had known the secret of keeping wisdom in books as the white people do now. But that was long ago ....

The voice of Lobengula called him back.

"Father!"

He opened his eyes. Lobengula was leaning over him and there was fear on his face and his eyes were wet. He felt a sudden impatience. He was tired of all these people. Why could they not leave him to die in peace?

"Fear not, my son."

The king sighed and went back to his chair. Dabula smiled. Really, Lobengula was a good boy. He recalled, for no reason, that day when they had left Inzwinyani and he had led The Boy and Lobengula on the long march to this place. Ntombi had walked beside him.

The sun had shifted. There were a few specks of white in the distant sky. He screwed up his eyes and looked at the sky through the dancing leaves. Fear in order to live.

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"What are we to do, father?"

What to do? Why, there was no holding the white man. He had something they did not have. And it was not the rifle. It was the force that made the rifle. They had that. Maybe it moved as a circle. One time one nation had it; another time, another nation. How to make it so that all nations have that force at the same time? Perhaps, if that could happen the age of peace and wisdom would come to all the world.

"Get what they have, my son."

"What is that, father?"

"Heh?"

"What do you mean?"

"Get what they have."

"They are cunning and warlike. They are without honour. They practise all the ways you taught us to be against."

He turned his head and looked from the dancing leaves to the king. He explained.

.... The things they have are good. They have the understanding that makes the earth and the sky and the wind work for them; they harness the flowing water where it goes over the fall and it brings them light; they make a way through a mountain; when it's cold they dig up black stones and burn them for warmth and food; they build huts and in the walls they put transparent matter that lets in the light and air; they build great wooden things that ride on the seas and can carry men from land to land; soon, all the lands of the earth will be known, if it is not so yet. And these are only a few

UWI Libraries

of the things of which I have heard. I am sure there are many others. And I am certain soon there will be many more. All I have to do is close my eyes and I can see them riding in the skies and under the earth. Maybe, one day, they will go up and visit the moon. You think it is madness? I do not. And soon, perhaps, it will be possible for a man here to talk to another man in another land without going there. There is a magic that these people carry with them. It promises much for the ages to be. But they have no wisdom, my child, no wisdom. And that is the strange thing; that they should have so much and be so unwise. For I see in them the same tribal prejudices that are common among our people. They move mountains: yet as the Matabele despises the foreigner, so do they. They move across seas: yet like the Matabele they speak the language of war and arrogance. Assuredly, that future in which man would travel through the skies is promised by what they have. Yet how are we to trust the future to the hands of people with this wonderful knowledge and are yet so utterly without wisdom? It is for that reason that I say: Get what they have. For they have much and we must impart wisdom to it. Even this white priest who is here with us - and the priest is the man of wisdom - speaks in prejudices and knows nothing of our past and calls us savages because we would not worship this god of his. Get what they have and use it with wisdom, my son. Perhaps it would be the start of the age of peace and love on our earth ....

Lobengula and his two old friends saw his mouth move, but did not hear a word. For he only thought he said these things.

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Nontando looked at Lobengula and shook her head.

"He is going, Let him be, Lord."

"Liar." Dabula murmured, but the weariness was marked in his voice.

At the entrance to the circle of huts, there was a slight commotion. The three with Dabula turned their heads. The white missionary was trying to get in and the captain of the king's personal guard held him.

"What is it?" Dabula asked, looking at Lobengula.

"It is the white priest," Dhlamini said.

"Let him come," Dabula said.

The king waved his arm. The captain released the priest who hurried along to the old tree. He moved close to the bed and Dhlamini made way grudgingly.

"I came to take leave of you, O Wise One," the white man said.

"You are kind," Dabula murmured.

"And to ask of you a last service to the peace and love you teach," the priest said.

"Then ask, my friend."

"It is this, O Wise One. You are honoured as the wisest in all the land ...."

"Yet my wisdom is little."

"Join with me. Let us be brothers in Christ my God. He is the God of love and peace. He preaches what you do. It will be a great example to your people and many will follow it. Do that and you will be honoured in heaven this day; and on earth the wisdom of Dabula will be spread to many who are in darkness now. You are a Christian Saint in all but name, become one in fact, O Wise One.

UWI Libraries

I appeal to you for the sake of the future peace and happiness of the world that is so close to your heart ...."

"Let my Lord die in peace!" Nontando said bitterly.

The ghost of a very tired smile tugged at Dabula's mouth. His eyes played with him. There were moments when it was hard to focus, then, suddenly, everything was clear again. He waited till he could see the white priest clearly. The strength returned to his voice.

"Wisdom, my white friend, has it that each man's gods are his own private affair. Wisdom has it that it is a man's dealings with his neighbour that is the concern of the social life of the tribe or the nation. Your gods are your own affair. I respect them because I respect you. My gods are mine. If your god is of peace and love then teach his lessons to your own people. They need it as much as my people. Have you taught your people? I have tried to teach mine."

"But Wise One ...."

"I am tired, my friend. Take leave of me. Lobengula will now give you the protection I did."

"Then let me pray for you, Lord."

"To go into the darkness from which I came? .... No .... Raise me, Lobengula."

They raised him till he sat up in bed. The blanket fell away from his shoulders and all his ribs could be seen, and the bulges and hollows of his body where the bones came out or flesh fell away. There was a noise in his ears. He leaned forward, against his drawn up knees, and closed his eyes till the noise and the dizziness passed. Then he opened them.

UWI Libraries

"Now leave me," he said.

"But Lord...."

"You too, Nontando," He felt very strong, almost young all over again. Strength flowed into him.

"Stay well, my friend," he said to the priest.

"Go well, O Wise One .... Go well."

And the white man had tears in his eyes. It amused him and at the same time it made him feel tender toward the man.

"Stay well, my Lobengula and comfort our people. They need it.

"Go well, my Lord."

A lonely person, this Lobengula. But wisdom always brings loneliness to men. He would be more so now. To stand between the past and the future is to stand on cruel ground. Lonely Lobengula. For with him was surely the end of the Matabele as a free nation.

He looked at Nontando and Dhlamini. These two had poured their lives into his. They had loved him for himself, because they loved him.

"You will live together here. And you will take care of each other."

"Yes Lord," Nontando said.

"Yes Lord," Dhlamini said.

"It would be more comfortable and you will not be so lonely if you slept in the same bed."

They were silent. There was a gleam in his watery eyes.

"Come now. All passion is spent. It is only for company. You will do it?"

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After a long moment, Nontando said:

"Yes Lord."

Dhlamini opened his mouth but ended by only nodding.

How these two loved him .... Lonely Lobengula.

"Now leave me."

And they left him sitting up under the old tree. They went to where the others and the soldiers were. They stood among them, among the children and grandchildren of Dabula. And behind them, and behind the soldiers, a great multitude of the people of Bulawayo had gathered and were standing, waiting, waiting. The Wise One, the heart of the Matabele, was dying. The last link with history and the past and wisdom was going from them. Dabula was dying.

And under the tree the old man sat. He could feel the people about him. All the people of the city. And still the feeling of youth and strength was with him. Soon now, he thought. He strained his eyes. For a brief moment he saw part of the mass of people. They meant well, but really, a man prefers to die alone.... Such a long time he had known .... Such a long time.

Had it been worthwhile? Would the world ever learn to live by wisdom? .... No. That was stupid. .... A man lived out his life according to the depth of his own wisdom and understanding .... But had it been worthwhile? .... Perhaps it was all change. One change following another. And wisdom? .... Well, that was the question ... Flying through the skies without wisdom. Like a bird.

It is coming. He felt it coming.'''

It hurt to love them ... It hurt to love and pity people so. Mkomozi had taught him that love .... No. It cannot be taught. Had helped to bring it out in him.

It was near now. He swayed and felt his knees moving away

UWI Libraries

from his chest.

Suddenly, pointedly, the earth-smell reached him. Oh the smell of the earth! The warm, loving smell of the earth! A leaf fluttered down and settled on his lap. Green leaf and earth-smell. Oh the beauty of it all!

The link was his grandson, Luke Dabula. It had a good sound.

He tried to straighten his back so that he could fall backward. There was no strength in him. Never mind. What did it matter how he fell? And the people were out there. All of them. So many. So afraid of death. The children, oh the children. His children. Oh my children ....

The green leaf took him up and carried him swirling away. Away, away up, on a tiny strand of wind. And there was music everywhere. And the voices of Gubuza and Mzilikazi and Ntombi and Mkomozi all spoke to him. Then, suddenly, there was nothing ....

Dabula toppled over and dragged the blankets to the ground with him.

The boy, Luke, was the first to reach him. The Wise One was dead.

The young warrior who had been on guard, touched Dhlamini's arm.

"My Lord, who was he? Who was Dabula?"

Dhlamini looked at the warrior with tears in his eyes, then shook his head. He hurried to where Lobengula and the others were lifting the lifeless body back on to the bed ....

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Lobengula leaned back and stared at his European desk. The chiefs and indunas had left. The ndaba was over. Now he had to find a way out, if there were one. Was there a way out?

"Captain!"

The captain entered.

"My Lord?"

"Go to the white man who is the representative of the English here. Tell him to come to me."

The captain went out.

Lobengula ran his fingers over the polished surface of the desk. If only Dabula were here to counsel him. But the teaching of Dabula was that of peace and wisdom, not of cunning. This was a moment for cunning. The chiefs were restive about the white man. They were for war. And Gambo, the husband of his favourite daughter, was at their head. The attack on the Mashona for stealing a few head of cattle was only an excuse. Really, they wanted to attack the white man. He could understand their feeling. But they did not understand the power of the white man. An impi of Gambo's warriors had followed the Mashona to the white man's city called Salisbury and the white man would not give them up. There was danger in the situation. The chiefs had been against him at the ndaba but he must find a way of peace.

Moshesh of the Basuto had been the man of cunning. If he were here, if this were his problem, what would he do?

The old, familiar pain suddenly jabbed at his heart. Breathing became difficult. The white medicine man, Jameson, had said not

UWI Libraries

to fight for breath. He closed his eyes and gripped the edge of the desk. Small spear-points jabbed at his heart. He forced himself not to fight for breath. Things moved round and round in his head. His lungs burned. He opened his mouth and relaxed his body. Slowly, in receding waves, the pain left him. The jabs grew less fierce and breathing became easier. It passed. He closed his mouth and opened his eyes. He thought: One day it will come and not pass and then I'll be finished. But it didn't interest him. It was only the pain that he hated. Life was lonely enough for death not to be any lonelier. It must have been good to be king in the days of his father, before the white man had come to their land. In those days there had been so many wise men. Those had been the days of Gubuza and Moshesh; the days when his own father had been young; days of wisdom; those men had living memories of the great Chaka. Most of them had spoken to Chaka in person. Some, like Gubuza and his father had served under Chaka. And, of course, there had always been Mkomozi, giving out wisdom. They must have had great moments for talking, those old ones! Great moments .... Now, Dabula, who had been a child among them, lay buried in the Matopas.

He forced his mind back from the past. This was the year of the white man. He looked at the calendar the white missionary had given him. The year of the white man, 1893 .... What would Moshesh have done? Moshesh believed in dividing his enemies.

"Captain!"

The captain came in.

"The representative of the English is on his way, Lord."

"Good. Send for the representative of the Boers and bring him

UWI Libraries

to me when I have done with the Englishman."

"Yes Lord."

Perhaps there was a way still. The way of Moshesh, the way of cunning. If only he could control the chiefs and warriors. If only

He got up and walked about the royal chamber. Against one wall hung the spear of Mzilikazi. He fingered it. Could it tell the number of bodies it had robbed of life? Or was it something that did not care? Anyway, the day of the spear was over.

The captain came in.

"The Englishman, Lord."

He turned to the door.

"Let him come in."

A tall, red-faced Englishman entered.

"I greet you in the name of my Queen, King Lobengula."

The Englishman looked from the king to the couches ranged against the walls. He will stand, Lobengula decided and felt sorry that he should have to do it to this man who had done him no wrong. He moved to his desk, sat down and stared long at its polished surface before looking up at the man.

"When your leaders came to me they asked only for the right to seek for gold. They did not say they would take my land, have farms and bring many white people into them and build cities."

The Englishman sighed. What was the wily savage up to? First he insults me by not offering me a seat, now he rakes up old history. We've had been over all this before.

"We have spoken of this before, King Lobengula."

UWI Libraries

"Still you persist with these things."

"The paper to which you put your mark gave us the right to do these things."

"When I put my mark to it you did not tell me it was for all this. You said it was only to seek for gold."

"The representatives of the company to whom you gave the rights say they told you what it would mean."

"They lie!" Lobengula said bitterly.

"They are men of honour."

"Men of honour!" He banged his fist on the desk. In this rare moment of anger his eyes glowed as did those of his father when angered. "Do you think of me as a child? What grown man would give away all his land, all the land of the Matabele for one hundred pieces of your gold, one thousand of your rifles, one hundred thousand bullets and a boat on the Zambesi? It is the thing a child would do. Not a man! Am I then a child?"

"Yet it was done," the Englishman said mildly. He couldn't help feeling a little sorry for the old boy.

"By a trick!"

"The paper is the evidence. Your mark is on it."

Bitterly, Lobengula said:

"And does your Queen need land so much that she must accept all the trickery of her captains?"

The Englishman pulled himself up.

"Those are dangerous words, King Lobengula."

Suddenly, Lobengula felt tired. What was the use of railing

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against this man? He was only an instrument. Nothing would come of it.

"Sit down," he said wearily. When the Englishman was seated, he said: "You say my words are dangerous. Yet they are true. I put my mark on that paper because I wanted friendship between your people and mine. I was for peace and friendship. I thought your leader, Rhodes, was a man of honour. I thought you had come only to dig for the gold that you worship, now it appears that you have come to steal my land, the land of my people."

For no reason that he could explain, the Englishman felt angry and ashamed and looked away from the old king.

"But that is not all I called you for," Lobengula said. "My people are bitter about the land. Now, some members of the Mashona have stolen cattle from one of my kraals. One of my impis followed them to punish them and take back the cattle. It seems these Mashona ran to your city called Salisbury and are now under the protection of your people there. I want you to tell Jameson to give up the Mashona thieves, otherwise I will not be able to control some of my generals and warriors and my promise to protect the lives of your people will be weakened. This is a matter of great moment. When this is over I will talk to Jameson about the land."

The king stood up to show the audience was over. The Englishman felt strangely moved. There was something about the old boy that moved you. And, dash it all, he was a king, though black.

"I am only a servant," he said, adding in the fashion natives

UWI Libraries

would with their king "Lord."

"I know," Lobengula murmured. "Tell me .... This Rhodes who is the master of you all, have you seen him?"

"Only from a distance," the Englishman said.

"And it is he whose brain conceived all your plans here?"

"Yes, King Lobengula."

"I wonder what the people of the future, in your land and mine, will say of this man and his great and ruthless ambition ...."

The Englishman stood in silence.

"Send my message to Jameson and tell me his reply."

"As soon as possible."

Lobengula nodded and indicated the door. The Englishman stared briefly into the sad eyes of the black king, then bowed and went out.

The Englishman was just in time to see the Boer representative being led into a door. All his pity for the black king was pushed aside. Something was brewing here. He was a servant of the Company. This had to be reported. He hurried home and wrote out Lobengula's message to Jameson. As a postscript he reported he had caught sight of the Boer representative being hurried out of his way as he left the king's presence. Perhaps Lobengula thought of an alliance with the Boers. He entrusted the letter to a carrier and said:

"This must go into the hands of the Administrator himself. Hurry!"

The captain ushered the Boer representative into the royal chamber. Lobengula looked up from his desk. These were the people

UWI Libraries

who had driven his people from their home in the south. Still, he had to deal with them. There was no other way. In some ways they were worse than the English for the black people. But he had no choice.

"I greet you, my friend," the king said and waved his hand to the couch nearest his desk.

"I greet you in the name of Paul Kruger, President of the South African Republic, King Lobengula."

"I understand there is bitterness between your President and the Englishman, Rhodes."

The Boer remained silent. Lobengula smiled.

"I do not speak to spy. The men of Rhodes do not keep their word. They are overrunning my land."

"We warned you," the Boer said.

"A man does not heed the warning of those who behave as his enemies."

"What do you want, King Lobengula?"

"Before I speak of that, is what I hear true about your President and Rhodes?"

The Boer hesitated. You can never trust these blacks. This was the son of that savage, Mzilikazi whom his forebears had fought at Vegkop. You couldn't trust them.

Lobengula waited. At last the Boer said:

"What you hear is true. Rhodes is the curse of Africa. He is plotting against our Republic."

Then this is the way, Lobengula thought. It is a sad way but

UWI Libraries

there is no other. Perhaps it will work. If it does not work there would be nothing left.

"Listen then: I made a treaty with Rhodes some years ago. By that treaty he alone had the right to seek for gold in my land. I was not sure you Boers would not cross the Limpopo and follow us here. You had fought an unprovoked war against my father. You had driven him from his home. So I made this treaty in order to have a powerful friend. But I was wrong. Rhodes does not keep his word. He had now taken much of my land. Tomorrow he will take all. My generals and warriors are restless. But all this you know. The thing of moment is this.

"If I ended this treaty with Rhodes and the English because they have not honoured their side of it, and offered the same treaty to your President, would he honour it? And, and this is of great moment, would he stand with me in dispute with Rhodes and the English? I called you to ask these two questions. What is your answer?"

Lobengula watched the Boer closely. Yes! He had made the right move! The man was so excited he could hardly sit still. He got up and paced about the chamber. The king watched every expression on his face as he moved back and forth in front of the shining desk. At last he stopped and leaned both hands on the desk.

"What is your answer?" Lobengula asked.

"You will understand I must take this to the President and my Government."

"You know what they will say ...."

"I think I am sure of what they will say."

UWI Libraries

"And what will that be?"

"I am sure they will agree."

"To both questions?"

"To both questions."

"And they will honour the treaty and not try to take my land?"

"We keep our word."

Lobengula sighed and leaned back. It was done. He had found the way out. The land of the Matabele may yet be saved. But these Boers would have to be watched. Honour is a light thing among white men. He looked at the excited Boer.

"Then hurry to your President and let him make this treaty. We have not much time."

The Boer stroked his beard for a while then said:

"I think it would be a better thing if we wrote the treaty now. Then you can make your mark on it and I will leave with it for Pretoria, tonight. Thus I shall be back in a month's time and I shall bring some burghers with me. We know how to fight the English! They took our Republic in 1877. We fought our war of independence in 1880. We beat them at Majuba in 1881. Don't you fear! We know how to fight them and their clever Mister Cecil Rhodes!"

He reached for the pen and ink on the king's desk.

"Give me some paper!"

Lobengula held up his hand.

"This is a treaty. I must know what you write."

"I will translate it for you."

"You have an interest in it."

"You cannot call the agent of the company. He is the enemy of

UWI Libraries

both of us."

"You speak with reason .... But there is the missionary."

"No. He is an Englishman. He will inform."

"I know him. He will not. He is one of the few men of honour I have met among you white people."

"I do not like it. The English are our enemy."

"Not this man. I, Lobengula speak for him."

"All right. But you may find you have made amistake."

"I am sure of him .... Captain!"

The Captain came in.

"Get the white missionary. Bring him here immediately."

The captain went out.

"Paper," the Boer said.

Lobengula pushed the paper toward him. He began to write. He was still writing when the missionary arrived.

"Greetings, King Lobengula."

"Greetings, white teacher."

The missionary and the Boer bowed stiffly in the manner of men who had not much time for each other. The Boer finished his writing. Lobengula looked at the missionary.

"I have sent for you that you might do me a service. It is that you translate for me what has been written. But first I must have your promise that nothing that you read will be told to the English."

"If it is not against the lives of amy people I will promise."

"It is against the life of no man. It is a treaty that promises peace."

"Then I promise."

UWI Libraries

The Boer representative pushed the paper across the desk to Lobengula. The king took it, looked at it, then handed it to the missionary. He listened closely as the missionary translated. There must not be another mistake. He must not again put his mark t to something dishonest. The missionary finished translating. The Boer had only written what they had agreed. Good. He took up the second copy and handed it to the missionary.

"They are the same?"

The missionary looked it over, then nodded.

"They are the same, King Lobengula."

"Good." He turned to the Boer. "I make my mark at the bottom?"

"In the corner on the right."

The king took the pen, dipped it in the ink, leaned over the paper and hesitated. Briefly, he raised his head and looked at the missionary. Then he bent forward and made a bold cross at the bottom of each of the two sheets. He blew on the sheets then pushed them toward the Boer representative.

"I thank you, white teacher," Lobengula said to the missionary.

The missionary bowed and went out. The Boer folded the sheets carefully. He put them in the inside pocket of his coat.

"I leave tonight, King Lobengula. I will bring back your copy signed by my President."

"Greet your President for me. I hear he is a great hunter. This is good hunting country. He must come and hunt as my guest."

"He is an old man now; but I will tell him."

UWI Libraries

"Go well, my friend. And may this treaty protect us from the cunning of the Englishman, Rhodes."

"We know Rhodes. We will deal with him. Stay well, King Lobengula."

The Boer left. The king leaned back in his chair. He was pleased with the work done. From what Dabula had told him, this was the way Moshesh would have done it. There was great wisdom in the method of Moshesh. It was the wisdom of Dabula applied to the cunning of affairs. Maybe there would not be war now. Perhaps, he would be able to persuade the chiefs and generals to forget the affair of the Mashona thieves. When the Boers were here he would end the treaty with the English. There would be enough time for war then, if the English wished it. People must fight for their land. It is their life.

"Captain!"

The captain came in.

"Lord?"

"Call the chiefs, the generals, and the indunas to a council."

"Yes, Lord."

The captain went out. Lobengula leaned back and stared into space. Perhaps it could be done and the land be freed. It would need patience to make the chiefs and generals and indunas see it was the path of wisdom.....

The Englishman, the agent of the Charter Company, had watched the missionary enter and leave the royal enclosure. Now he saw

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the agent of the Transvaal Republic come out and hurry off to his huts. Something was afoot. The missionary's presence could only mean the king had wanted either a witness or someone to translate a document. Nothing else. And the Boer agent had been alone with the old king for quite a while. No doubt about it: something was afoot and it was his duty to find out what.

He whistled to one of his Bechuana boys. When the fellow came, he said:

"Go after the Boer Boss, but do not be seen. Perhaps he leaves; find out!"

"Yes Boss." The boy hurried away.

He lit his pipe and strolled in the opposite direction, toward the enclosure where the missionary lived his solitary life. Funny people, these missionaries. Why did the old boy stay on here? He had precious few converts and these blacks didn't seem to need any God to redeem them. The old boy didn't get anything out of it. Damned if he could see why the old boy stuck it. Now he was agent to xxxx the Company for what he could get out of it. When he'd made enough he was getting out of this damned land. He was out here because he had dreams of a farm in Buckinghamshire. But this old missionary .... Well ....

The missionary greeted him at the door.

"You are just in time for tea and toast."

Again, as always on previous occasions, the agent was startled as he stepped into the hut. It was like stepping into an English sitting room. Books, furniture, everything, was so English, it made him almost homesick. And on the little table, as in any English

UWI Libraries

home, was the teapot with its traditional woollen cosy. Almost, the agent felt he was back in England. Beside the pot, on a little tray, were two hand-made clay cups and saucers and a plate of toast and a pot of jam. The agent looked at the two places laid. How could the old boy have known he was coming?

"Were you expecting me, sir? It would be extremely odd if you were."

The old man looked at the two prepared places and laughed gaily. He's very lonely, the agent decided.

"Oh dear, no!" the missionary exclaimed. "I am not blessed with foresight. Truth is, I'm expecting another guest, a very interesting guest. I might say he was a friend at one time."

"Oh ....?"

"Yes. You know the Wise One who died last year .... Well, his grandson, Luke Dabula. He's been away with his regiment. He came back yesterday so I asked him to tea today. You should meet him. His progress with English is amazing. At least, it was before he went away. I don't know about now."

"I must not interrupt your reunion ...."

"I would rather talk privately to him. But you must stay. I could always talk to him another time."

"Thanks, sir, but I have rather a lot to do. Perhaps another time."

"But er ...."

"Really, sir."

"Then take a quick cup of tea."

"Only if it is ready."

UWI Libraries

"But it is."

The missionary darted forward and poured the tea. The agent took a sip. It was as fragrant as the English countryside .... Would Jan Williams still be unmarried when he got back? ....

"Pardon, sir?" He'd missed what the old boy had said.

"Your tie - it's Cambridge, isn't it?"

"Yes." He fingered it selfconsciously. "Only wear it for an audience or when some big nob from the Company comes."

"I myself am an Oxford man," the missionary said with pride.

The agent thought: They say Rhodes is an Oxford man too. Funny that. Two men, both English, both from the same great university, and one goes ruthlessly after power while the other in the name of Christ prepares tea for a young black pagan. Funny ... He recalled the point of his visit.

"Tell me sir, your visit to the king ...."

All the fussy twitteriness disappeared from the old boy. Suddenly, the agent saw a transformed person.

"Do not say any more, Mr. Dean. It was in confidence and I cannot tell you anything about it."

"But sir ...."

"Mr. Dean, you do your duty as you see fit, I do mine. My word as a Christian has been given to the king."

"All right, sir .... I'm sorry ...." The agent finished his tea and got up. "I have much to do. Thank you for the tea, sir." He held out his hand. The missionary took it.

"Goodbye, Mr. Dean. Come again. Any time. I have some new books you might like to look at."

UWI Libraries

"Thank you sir. I will do that. Goodbye."

Outside, the agent passed a tall, broad-chested young man in faded flannels and a brown shirt, both too small and tight for his big frame. The young black seemed selfconscious, as though he had put on the clothes for the first time. He entered the gate of the missionary's enclosure. The agent thought: Luke Dabula to tiffins, I bet.

The warm spring sun was nearly down and the horizon to the west was a reddish gold. A slight, cool breeze blew through the city and the women of the city had put on their blankets. Only children stil went about their play either completely naked or else wearing only togas over their privates. Over the whole city there was the sunset hush. Most people were indoors, sitting by the glowing dung-fires. Across the valley, on the hill to the east, faintly, herders could be seen driving their herds home for the night. And over all Bulawayo, there was the tranquility, the half-deserted quiet that was the prelude to night.

Quite a city this, when one gets to feel it, the agent decided as he entered his huts. The boy he had sent to spy on the Boer agent was waiting for him. The boy reported:

"The Boer Boss has left on a journey."

"What direction?"

"Toward his own land."

For the third time that day the agent dispatched a messenger with a letter for Dr. Jameson at Salisbury. Dr. Jameson was the Administrator of the Company, the man who acted for Rhodes.

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"Try one of these scones, my boy." The old missionary beamed at Luke Dabula. "Not as good as my mother made them, but quite like real English scones." He refilled his guest's cup.

Luke Dabula took one of the little scones, opened his mouth wide and pushed it in. It all but melted in his mouth so he swallowed without chewing. The old missionary restrained his impulse to tell the boy how a scone was to be eaten. I must be patient with him, he told himself. Luke Dabula took another scone, then another, and another. Then he turned to the bread and jam. The missionary kept refilling his cup. At last, all was eaten.

"That was good," Luke Dabula said and leaned back.

"How has it been with the regiment?" the missionary asked.

"We took our battle courses," Luke Dabula answered.

"I do hope you did not fight anybody. All these preparations for war are wrong. War is an evil thing."

"Nations must be strong or they will be attacked."

"I hope you have not forgotten our lessons and talks, Luke. You've been away for over a year. I have not seen you since the death of the Wise One. Do you remember our lessons?"

Luke smiled: "I remember." He pointed at the missionary and said in English: "You man."

"You are a man."

"You are a man."

"Fine! And what is that with which you are pointing?"

Luke looked hard and long at his hand, then he nodded: "Hand!"

"Yes, but you are not pointing with all your hand. What is

UWI Libraries

that thing that is pointing at me?"

Luke looked at his pointing finger, then at the missionary, then back at the pointing finger.

"Little hand," he said tentatively.

The missionary shook his head and laughed.

"You have forgotten our lessons, Luke."

Luke smiled sheepishly.

"But never mind, we'll start again. Do you remember your alphabet?"

"No, umfundis, as I came here I tried to say it but I could not remember all of it."

"Well, we'll begin with that and our Bible lesson. Tell me, they will not send you away again? We can't get anywhere if they keep on taking you away. I shall have to speak to the king about it!"

"I do not think they will send me away again soon. But it is not certain because of this affair with the Mashona thieves."

"I do hope that is settled without any trouble .... Another thing, Luke, you are nearly twenty now. You must be baptized soon if you are to follow my God and His Son, Jesus Christ. You cannot be a Christian without being baptized, you know."

The boy closed up. The missionary sensed his sudden restraint. With all of them the mention of Christianity created this. Like fighting an invisible wall. Their faces became black masks and you realized just how strange they really were. A wall of black faces at the name of Jesus Christ. Perhaps it would be easier if they were under British rule .... What was he thinking! What price a saved soul? But surely British rule wouldn't be so terrible, and they

UWI Libraries

would be shown the light. The Lord commanded: Lead ye my people. But that could only be done if they did not resist all the time. Lead ye my people .... Would it be so wrong for them to be under British rule? It would make the bringing of the gospel easier. So hard to know what is right sometimes. What would Our Lord do in my place? So easy to say Lead ye my people. But what could he do if the mention of the name of the Lord made Luke Dabula remote and not like a boy any more? Lead ye my people. How reserved and self-contained he had suddenly become. The missionary tried to smile and said:

"When shall I baptize you?"

"Umfundis ...." This was a Matabele warrior talking to him, not the boy, Luke Dabula.

"Yes, my son?"

"I am not certain of this god of yours. In my mind there are questions about him. When all is clear in my mind, I will come and speak with you. And maybe I will be baptized and maybe not."

"But I am trained in the service of my God, my son. Trust me and I will guide your steps."

Luke Dabula smiled knowingly.

"I am a servant of the king, Umfundis. The Mashona and Makalaka would be foolish if they sought my counsel in a dispute with my king. Your god is your king. You will guide my steps in the interests of your god, not that I might see clearly. So I cannot let you guide me. There is much I can learn from you, but the choosing and the guiding must be my own."

The missionary smiled a little wearily. Is this really what

UWI Libraries

we Europeans call 'a primitive heathen savage' talking? He had come out here among these people to bring them the light. But for all his years here, there was not one genuine Christian to show. Oh, some of them came to his services all right. But there was not one practising Christian among them. Come to think of it, they seem to have had more effect on him than he on them.

"But you must have faith," he said appealingly .... Perhaps it would be better if they were under British rule. Conversions were always easier under a Christian rule. There couldn't be anything wrong in it.

"This god of yours," Luke Dabula said. "Is he a white man?"

"Why do you ask that, my son?"

"Because only white men know and speak of him. He is a stranger to the Matabele and all the other black people."

"There are no black and white with Him."

"But he, himself, is a white man."

"I will make all these matters plain in our lessons, and then, later, you will read His Book for yourself."

Oh Lord, how does one sow the seeds of the gospel on stony ground? Surely, it would be easier under our own flag. The king is a good man. There are many good men here, but they are not Christian. They resist the glory of Thy good and Thy name.

There was a knock at the door. The missionary went and opened it. A black man in European dress was there. The man spoke in English.

"Father Smith?"

"Yes."

"I am deacon Ndolo. I bring you a letter from the Bishop,

UWI Libraries

Father."

"Come in, deacon, come in."

"My horse, Father ...."

"We will take care of that."

The deacon entered. Father Smith called the Mashona boy who kept house for him and told him about the horse, and to prepare food and a place to sleep for the deacon. He turned back to the deacon.

"This is my young friend, Luke Dabula. He is the grandson of the Wise One."

The deacon nodded to Luke.

"The letter is urgent, Father. The Bishop told me to tell you that." The deacon took it out and gave it to Father Smith.

Father Smith read in silence, a frown growing on his forehead as he read. Luke Dabula got up and moved to the door.

"When shall I return, Umfundis?"

The priest looked up blankly, then shook his head.

"I do not know, my son. This is a letter from my Lord, the bishop of our church, commanding my presence. I must leave in the morning."

"But you will return?"

"Perhaps. I do not know, my son."

Luke Dabula nodded slowly.

"Then go well, Umfundis."

"Stay well, my son .... And the protection of the Lord be with you." Suddenly, on an impulse, the old missionary got up and moved to Luke Dabula with outstretched hand. "In my land, when friends take leave of each other they embrace with a handshake." He took the young man's big black hand in his and shook it vigorously.

UWI Libraries

"Stay well, my son."

Luke Dabula went out.

Father Smith turned to the deacon.

"It looks as if this means war, deacon."

"Yes, Father."

"I wonder if we are right .... Never mind. It is out of my hands now."

"It was hard for the Bishop to decide to bless the army," the deacon said.

"He will do that?"

"Yes Father .... For all your years of toil here, there is not one convert among them. They are savage heathens. I, as a Mashona, know."

So, even a black man thinks that. But then, he hasn't lived among them. Still, perhaps it would be better after the flag. Still ....

"It's so drastic ...."

"We didn't decide, Father. It's the Company."

"Yes. It's Mr. Rhodes' Company...."

But to bless the army that would kill the Matabele? It's hard to know the right thing. But it was the Bishop's decision. It was out of his hands. The flag would come. Perhaps the work would be easier then ....

Lobengula, king of the Matabele, brooded behind his big desk. Everything had failed. That man, Rhodes, had wanted war and Jameson was his instrument. What more could he have done?

He had sent three ambassadors: they had been taken prisoner and

UWI Libraries

one had been killed. Yet they had been a king's ambassadors.

Then, he had sent out a force to collect the stolen Matabele cattle. Ahead of the force he had sent word that no white person, anywhere, would be touched. The whites had attacked them. To honour the word of their king, his warriors had retreated without giving battle, without firing a shot or throwing a spear. Many had been killed but they had not fought back. What more could a man do for peace?

Intelligence had come that the white men were arming everywhere. Then, too, had come the news that the Boer who had carried the treaty to his President to sign, had been found dead with no papers on him. It had been the same with the Boer representative, Grobler, many years ago. He had taken a treaty and died on the way and Rhodes had got his concession. Now, again, there was no treaty and Rhodes was having the war he wanted. The plan of Rhodes was clear now. He meant to swallow up all Africa .... A man could not sit smiling while a stranger came and took all that was his. So, in spite of his desire for peace, he had sent his men to war.

What manner of man was this Rhodes? Why did he have this savage lust for power? The lives of people seemed to mean nothing to him.

Lobengula felt old, old and tired - and sick. He moved with difficulty and the attacks of stifling breathlessness that was his sickness, came frequently. One day, one would come and not pass.

"I did all I could for peace," he said bitterly.

A man entered the chamber.

UWI Libraries

"My lord."

"How goes the battle?"

"It is against us, lord. The enemy is pressing hard and we cannot hold him long in this form of battle. The generals held an ndaba on the field. They sent me to put their plan to you. If you agree it will be carried out."

"What is it?"

"It is this. We are being defeated in this type of battle. The generals suggest that the army be broken up into small groups that do not stand and fight. Each group would attack at a favourable moment and then retire. That is the plan. Attack and retire; attack and retire."

"Where will they retire to?"

"Into the hills, Lord. We know those hills. Our ancestors are buried there. The great Mzilikazi is buried there. Our wise men, Mkomozi and Dabula are buried there. We know those hills, my lord. We will hold them."

"It is a good plan. We will start immediately and I will move to the hills ...."

"There is danger in that, lord."

"What do you mean?"

"There is the danger of your capture, Lord. The armies can move fast. Your train cannot. The enemy is almost between Bulawayo and the hills now. And Khama and his Bechuana have joined the enemy ...."

"So .... And does he think that would protect him? Fool! The white man will swallow them too. It may be soon or it may be a long time but in the end the white man will swallow them. He wants to

UWI Libraries

swallow all Africa. That is the white man's plan. All Africa."

"Yes, Lord. But your safety ...."

"Yes .... What are their plans?"

"It is that you, our Lord, move north to the great Zambesi with a strong guard and I am to be one of your two indunas.

"North again." The king's voice was bitter. "To start another kingdom for the white man to come and take?"

"No Lord. Only to escape being captured by the enemy. If he were to capture you we would be forced to make peace on his terms. You are the heart of the nation. But with you safe, we can resist till the enemy grows tired, then we can make peace without losing all our land and all our freedom. It is for that reason that they beg the king to go north."

Startled, Lobengula said:

"But this is the voice of wisdom, not the voice of my generals who are always for war!"

"Defeat teaches wisdom, Lord. They have suffered great defeats.

"Why is defeat the only good teacher?"

"Then you agree, Lord."

"Yes .... Now let us have some beer. Sit."

"There is no time, my Lord. The enemy may be here before the day is out. I must send a messenger to the generals and make ready for us to move. May I go, Lord?"

"Yes."

The induna went out. The king leaned back and closed his eyes. So this is the end ....

In a little while the induna returned.

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"All is ready, Lord."

"Are they so close?"

"Very close, Lord. Word came that they would be here before the sun is down."

"Will the whole city come?"

"No Lord. Only you."

"Then I wish to speak to the white people who are still in the city. Bring them here. But one other thing." Slowly, painfully, the king raised himself from his chair and moved to the edge of his desk. He pointed to the corner behind the chair. The induna moved closer and looked. Two paraffin tins, filled with golden sovereigns stood side by side. "That was the gold they gave me for the right to dig my land. I did not know it was a trap with which to steal our country. We will take it with us for white men value it more than their lives."

"I will send warriors to take it." The induna went out.

Painfully, with stiff limbs, the king moved about his council chamber. If only there was someone with whom he could talk as a friend.... This whole business was so tiring .... Life was so tiring .... Everything weighed the spirits down .... A man has to have a great deal of love to see life as Dabula had seen it .... A great deal of love .... He had tried hard enough ....

Two warriors came in. He pointed to the corner. They staggered out with the two tins of gold. Then the induna herded in the white people. A small group. Five men and three women. He leaned heavily against the desk and looked at them. They tried not to show their pleasure at the victories of their fellow whites. Maybe, after he had gone, they too would behave toward his people as

UWI Libraries

he had heard white people behaved toward black people in their cities. Maybe they would keep his people out of their stores and call them names and kick them. Maybe they would even turn this into a city of white people in which no black people may choose where they live. He looked at the trader.

"You will remember I told you no harm would come to any white person who stays in my city."

The trader replied: "Yes, Oh King."

"Have any of you a complaint against any of my people? Have you been spat on, insulted, attacked? Have any of your possessions been taken?"

The trader said: "No, Oh King."

The king nodded. "I asked so that you might see we have kept our word. I know you are pleased about the victories of your fellow white people. There is no need to hide it. But that is not what I want to speak of .... I am leaving the city. I am leaving my people. The thing I want to ask you is this: when your people come, will you give my people the same protection and safety I gave to you? They will be old men and women and children. There will be no warriors among them. They have harmed no one. That is my wish."

The trader said: "We cannot speak for the army, King Lobengula. But I promise you this. When they come, we will all testify to the protection you have afforded us, and we will tell them of your wish for your people and I am sure that they will respect it."

The king nodded. "That is good .... I thank you."

The white people moved out. At the door, one of the women

UWI Libraries

turned impulsively and bowed low.

"I'm so sorry, your Majesty ...." she murmured.

The king smiled sadly. The white people went out.

The induna said: "We must go, my Lord."

"I am ready."

Outside, the wagon waited. Five warriors lifted the king in. Settled, he looked at the guard. Among them was Luke Dabula. The king beckoned.

"So you go with me, my son."

"Yes, my Lord."

"It is a sad day."

"Yes, Lord."

The wagon moved off. The warriors flanked it. Most of them had rifles. The mourning city watched its king's departure and awaited the coming of the conquerors....

A week later, a messenger from Bulawayo caught up with the wagon moving north. The message was from Dr. Starr Leander Jameson, Administrator of the Company. If the king surrendered, he would be treated as a king. The wagon kept its northward direction.

Some days after that, a scout reported enemy soldiers approaching. The wagon was hidden. Two of the soliders were captured alive and taken to the king. He gave them the gold he had and said:

"Take this to Jameson as a sign of my goodwill. Tell him I will not surrender but I want an honourable peace."

The gold did not reach the Administrator. The wagon carried on to the north. And in it, the king was sick. About, all about, the land was wild and swampy. Warriors died of fever. Others were

UWI Libraries

attacked by beasts of the wild. The party was halved when they neared the Zambesi, and the king, as well as the sickness that took his breath away, had fever and his joints were swollen. To ease the pain, he drank a great deal.

Another party of enemy soldiers neared the wagon. They were ambushed and every one was killed.

Luke Dabula took the clothes from one of the dead soldiers and carried them with him in a bundle.

Five days later, the king said to the induna:

"Stop. I can go no further."

They made a couch for him by the tall grass near a rivulet and laid him on it. All the long day the remnants of his army kept watch with him. The fever got worse. The king was too hot. The indunas scooped water from the rivulet with their cupped hands and cooled his body. Near sundown, the fever abated. But they knew the king was dying. In low voices, the warriors sang the songs of their ancestors.

Before he died, the king seemed to be completely without pain. He whispered to the induna and the induna gave his message to the assembled men.

"I am sorry I have failed to protect you, which is the duty of good kingship. I have tried but I have failed. Now you must protect yourselves for the old days are dead and this is the day of the white man. Stay well, my children."

Luke Dabula went close to the king.

"Go well, my Lord."

UWI Libraries

Wearily, the king smiled at him. Luke Dabula touched one of the swollen hands, then he turned away, picked up his bundle and slipped away into the jungle. The world was a big place. If he could avoid capture he would make his way down to the southland. Maybe life could be lived there. Maybe he could learn to understand things there. The world was a big place .... But it was a lonely place too. A hard and lonely place ....

Lobengula, king of the Matabele, died at sunset while his warriors chanted their songs of mourning. The son of Mzilikazi, who in his heyday in the south was lord of the earth and sky, master of the elephant and the lion, devourer of the jackal, protector of his friends, destroyer of his enemies, emperor of all central South Africa; the son of that Mzilikazi died in a swamp with only a handful of men about him. And when they said Bayete! It was not even an echo of the royal salute of the great days of the past.

The king died on January 23rd, 1894. The curtain of night had fallen over the black spear forever. And, it had been Gubuza who, in the long ago of the South land and of Inz ani, had said: "Time has an end, my brothers. That we know."

And in faraway Bulawayo word went round that it would be a very good idea to name this newly conquered land after the man who had planned it .... Thus, Rhodesia came into being. The dream of one man. The end of another.

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PART ONE.

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The twins rode slowly down the wide street. It was a dirty street, dotted with badly filled potholes. Men had prospected here before it had become a street, before the town had sprung up about it. Johan Jansen, big and blonde, turned his head to his small dark brother.

"So this is it."

"Yes," Uys said. "The Uitlander town".

A man came out of one of the many bars that flanked the wide street.

"Look!" Johan pointed.

"Don't point your finger," Uys said sharply.

But the man had seen Johan pointing. He stepped into the middle of the street and held up his hand. The twins pulled up. The man was dressed as no Boer had ever been. A Long grey cutaway coat tapered to a tail behind his back; below that were dark green stovepipe trousers, and light gray spats covered his shoes. The The whitest of silk shirts showed beneath his cream-coloured waistcoat and his cravat was striped in scarlet. His long, thin pear-shaped face was smoothly shaved and a monocle perched precariously in his left eye. Crowning all this was a grey silk topper with a scarlet band. But for his cold, knowing eyes, he looked a figure of fun. And the two young Boers in their rough homespun clothes had never seen a man like this. They could not help staring.

"You gentlemen know mw?" the stranger drawled in English.

The twins stared blankly, not understanding.

"I asked you a question, gentlemen! One of your pointed". Without understanding the words, they felt the menace in the stranger's

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Johan's fingers curled round his rifle. A tiny pistol suddenly appeared in the stranger's left hand.

"Well gentlemen? I give you two seconds to answer."

Uys shook his head to show they did not understand. A dangerous little smile tugged at the stranger's lips, and Uys did not like it.

A group of men spilled out of the bar. They saw the little scene, stopped talking and hurried into the middle of the street. The foremost, the eldest and most quietly dressed of the group, said:

"Hey! What goes on here, Price?" His accent was strongly American.

"These gentlemen have approximately one and a half minues to explain why they find me funny". The man called Prince drawled.

Another of the group said:

"Easy, Prince. I think these are raw Boers. I don't think they understand a word of what we are saying. Kill anybody else and its all right. Kill a Boer and hell breaks loose from here to Pretoria and back. It will be just what old Kruger wants to start something."

"And remember the Committee's plans; we don't want anything to go wrong." the American said.

The twins felt trapped, lost in this strange Uitlander world and its language, cut off from their kind with no way of escape.

The man who had said they might be Boers, spoke to the twins in Afrikaans:

"Why did you alugh at this gentleman?"

Uys looked quickly at Johan.

UWL Libraries

"Let me speak, Johan ... We did not laugh... Johan, my brother pointed out the gentlemen. That was all."

"Didn't you know it's a foolish thing to do?"

"It's the first time we've been here."

"So. Well, take my advice, sonny. Men have died for much less than that... Don't point or laugh at strangers. Better still, stay away from Johannesburg till you are older and wiser." The man turned to his friends and said in English "Better let them go. Its their first trip here and they did'nt understand."

The pistol in the monocled strangers hand, vanished as quickly as it appeared. He waved his handkerchief in front of his face.

"Consider yourselves fortunate, my fine Boer friends. I have been persuaded to give back to you that most precious commodity you had forfeited - life. Guard it more jealously in future. You may go." He waved them on.

The twins rode on in silence till they were out of right round a group of sprawling corrugated-iron buildings.

"He meant to kill us," Uys said.

"God damn all the Uitlanders!" Johan said explosively.

"Better not point any more," Uys said.

"Anyone would think this was England," Johan said.

"That's what they want it to be," Uys said.

"Oom Paul was right when he called them godless people of Baal; drunkards, murderers and thieves."

"I don't think those were his words."

"That is what he meant."

"The President always says what he means."

"I'd like to kill that glass-eyed Englishman!"

UWL Libraries

Uys suddenly laughed boisteriously and smacked his thigh:

"His clothes were funny!"

Johan tried to smile but the bitterness of the experience was still strong in his mind.

They rode down the wide dusty street of Johannesburg, and around them moved the Uitlanders, a rag-tag-and-bob of diverse Europeans races and originas: some rich, dressed in the splendour of their new found wealth; others ragged and bumming. But with all of them, men and women, rich and poor, there was the air of limitless scope and hope, the promise that, perhaps the poorest of them might strike the richest gold vein tomorrow. The Golden Fleece was close at hand and with star-crazed hearts and grasping hands the new Jasons reached riotously for the prize.

At one point, the stage-coach, a mule-drawn covered wagon, forced the twins to get out of the main street and travel on the outskirts of the corrugated-iron town. Here they had their first sight of men digging for gold. In holes dotted all over the parched landscape, groups of white men and kaffirs, stripped to the waist, dug. A terrible, many-languaged din, rose like babel unleashed. Every now and then a single voice carried above the din; every now and then there was a hush of silence that was more startling than all the noise.

"Is that all it is?" Johan asked in amazement. "I thought there was more to it than that."

"Perhaps there is," Uys said. "We don't know".

"Look!" John fairly shouted but was careful not to point.

Walking toward them, caked in diggers' dirt, came two drunken

UWI Libraries

white men, and between them walked an equally drunk black man. And one of the white men actually had an arm on the black man's shoulder - and they were laughing together! Of all the things the twins had seen, this was the greatest shock. All they had heard about these Uitlanders, became real, charged with meaning.

Stiffly, without looking, they rode past the three drunks. They rode on in a taut, shaken, ashamed silence. They had witnessed a breach of the most fundamental law of their Republic and they had done nothing about it. It was the only law they really wanted and understood and observed rigidly and they had seen it broken and done nothing. They turned their horses and swung in, to the centre of the twon again. And far down the broad sandy street, they swa the flag of the Republic hanging above a building. The old Vierkleur. Where that was, was home for all Boers. The twins felt less isolated. Johan pointed. Uys nodded and smiled. They urged their horses to a trot. The Vierkleur drooped dejectedly in the breezeless morning sun.

The twins tied their horses and looked at the writing on the building. It was the first sign in Afrikaans they had seen since their arrival. Inside would be burghers like themselves. This was their land. Their South African Republic! And this was the Johannesburg office of the Republican Police force. They went in.

"Good day, burgher" Johan said to the policeman at the desk.

"Good day burghers" the policeman smiled up at them.

"We have come to see Commandant Smit" Johan said.

"He's a busy man, burgher. What is your business?".

"He expects us," Uys said. "We are from the Raad member, Karel

UWI Libraries

Jansen".

The policeman looked impressed.

"Say we are -" Johan began.

"That is all." Uys interrupted quickly.

The policeman looked from one to the other then got up and went through a door.

"Karel said not to give our names," Uys said.

"I gorgot," Johan murmured, crestfallen.

"Doesn't matter. We did'nt do it".

"But we gave Karel's name".

"He doesn't know Karel's our borther."

"That's right."

The policeman returned.

"This way please, burghers."

They followed him through the door and through two others. They came to a door marked 'Commandant'. He knocked and left them.

"Come in!"

As they entered they just saw someone leaving by another door. They Commandant beamed at them. He was a tall, lean, bearded man with clear piercing eyes that seemed to laugh at all the world. He shook each of them by the hand.

"Sit down, burghers. Sit down! You didn't tell your names, of course."

"I was going to when Uys stopped me," Johan smiled.

Uys shook his head but Johan didn't see it.

"Oh so...." the Commandant murmured. "Hope your journey was all right?"

UWI Libraries

Uys tried to signal silence at his brother, but John was beaming at the Commandant.

"We had a strange experience," Johan said and laughed.

"Oh .... Tell me about it" The Commandant said.

Johan told the story in great detail and finished up with a report on the three drunks, one of whom was black.

"You are sure they called him Prince?" The Commandant looked at Uys.

Uys nodded.

"We know him" the Commandant said. "He's a very dangerous man. He's not a prince, he's a glambler."

"Gambler?" Johan asked.

"He gambles in everything," the Commandant said. "In gold, diamonds, cards, in women and in lives ... but now to our business. Which of you is Uys Jansen?"

"I am."

"Will you come in here with me for a minute." The Commandant smiled at Johan. "We will be back soon."

In the other room, the Commandant said to Uys:

"What we need is a small body of very trusted men for very important special work. That is why only selected Raad members like your brother know of it. Your brother Johan is too open for this kind of work. We cannot take any-body who might talk. When you know what it is you will understand. I will tell you only one thing now. We fear that Rhodes is behind a plot and the life of the Republic is at stake. I can see you are a man we need; but not your brother."

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Uys said, ruefully:

"Johan does talk too much .. But we've always been together."

"You must separate now. Shall I tell him or will you?"

"I think I'd better."

"Good. Now after you've told him, I want you to go out and rid away with him as though you've finished with this place. Some of our people are in the pay of the Uitlanders and we have to be careful. Now, when you return I want you to come by the back way. I'll show you. Come." He led the way out through the back and showed Uys the way. "Come back that way and knock once at my door. That's all for now ... Oh, I forgot to ask you. You'll take on the job?"

"Yes, Commandant".

"Good. I'll introduce you to the others and then we'll start work." The Commandant moved to the door where Johan waited.

"One thing, Commandant .. .. I should like to see Johan out of Johannesburg".

"Afraid he might meet the glass-eyed Price imposter?"

"Yes ... and he might decide to shoot."

"All right."

They went back. Johan got up.

"Everything arranged?" He was eager.

"Yes, Johan."

"Good! What do we do?"

"You go hom."

"Home? Why? And you?"

"I stay here."

"No!"

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Uys said, ruefully:

"Johan does talk too much .. But we've always been together."

"You must separate now. Shall I tell him or will you?"

"I think I'd better."

"Good. Now after you've told him, I want you to go out and ride away with him as though you've finished with this place. Some of our people are in the pay of the Uitlanders and we have to be careful. Now, when you return I want you to come by the back way. I'll show you. Come." He led the way out through the back and showed Uys the way. "Come back that way and knock once at my door. That's all for now ... Oh, I forgot to ask you. You'll take on the job?"

"Yes, Commandant".

"Good. I'll introduce you to the others and then we'll start work." The Commandant moved to the door where Johan waited.

"One thing, Commandant .. .. I should like to see Johan out of Johannesburg".

"Afraid he might meet the glass-eyed Price imposter?"

"Yes ... and he might decide to shoot."

"All right."

They went back. Johan got up.

"Everything arranged?" He was eager.

"Yes, Johan."

"Good! What do we do?"

"You go hom."

"Home? Why? And you?"

"I stay here."

"No!"

UWI Libraries

"It is for the Republic, Johan. You must go home and help on the farm."

"But Karel said they may take both of us."

"They only want one."

"But why you? It's not fair!"

"They want someone quiet for this work. You talk too much; you know that. Now, don't you?"

The twins stared at each other and the anger passed from Johan.

"That the truth?"

"Yes."

"If it isn't I'll kill you even if you are my brother."

"It's the truth."

"All right." He moved to the door. "Good day, Commandant."

"I'm coming out with you," the Commandant said.

In the first room, where the policeman sat, the Commandant shook them both by the hand. At the door he said out aloud:

"I'm sorry we don't need anybody on the force just now, burghers."

"Don't say anything," Uys hissed at Johan and hurried to the horses.

They rode in silence till Johannesburg lay far below and behind them. They stopped on a ridge to the left of Langlaagte, near the farm the widow Oosthuizen had sold for so much money only to discover, when it was too late, that the land she had sold was worth millions and millions and millions of times more than she had received.

"I must turn back," Uys said.

"Any message?" Johan asked.

"Tell them I'm all right."

UWI Libraries

"Good .... Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

Johan urged his horse forward. Ahead of him was a long stretch. For the Jansen farm lay fifteen miles to the west of Johannesburg.

Uys watched till Johan was out of sight behind one of the many ridges that dotted the parched landscape. He lifted his eyes and looked west, into the misty, distant hills. Johan should get there before sundown. And Hettie Van As was there. And his, Uys' heart, was with Hettie Van As. Lucky Johan. He doesn't know how lucky he is. Going back to where Hettie Van As is .... Wonder why old Tant Elsie Van As doesn't like our family? She'd stood between him and Hettie. Wonder why?

A wave of acute homesickness attacked him ... Hettie Van As ... Hettie Van As .... An Afrikaner girl called Hettie Van As .... That was home. It had been home ever since he'd met her in the ridge above the two farms .... Hettie Van As ....

He wheeled his horse and rode back to Johannesburg. The Commandant would be waiting. He said the Republic was in danger from a man called Rhodes.

Who is this Rhodes, anyway?

UWI Libraries

"Safely on his way?"

"Yes, Commandant."

"Good .... Now to work." The Commandant leaned back and folded his arms across his chest. "First, I want to give you a picture of what's going on here."

"One question, Commandant."

"Yes?"

"Who is this Rhodes you mentioned?"

"He is the heart of the picture. We'll come to him .... Some of this you will know, some you may not. After the kaffirs were cleared from the land and much trouble and fighting among our leaders our Republic was born. That you know. You know also that as soon as we were settled, the English came and took our freedom, as they had done in the Cape. You know also of the war we fought against them from 1880 to 1881 and regained our independence."

"Yes, I know. My father was killed at Majuba."

"Majuba was a great victory for us and the English have not yet forgotten it. After that, we lived in peace until diamonds were discovered in the Free State Republic, and later, here, gold. After the discovery of gold the English looked with envy on our free land and Uitlanders flocked here in their thousands.

"This is where Rhodes comes in. You ask, Who is this Rhodes. President Kruger says he is a man who will cause us trouble. He is an Englishman. He is head of the diamond fields. He buys men and uses them as tools.

UWI Libraries

"A year ago his Charter Company broke the treaty they made with the kaffir king, Lobengula. They made war against him and took over his land. Some of the kaffirs are still fighting in the hills but their king is dead and their power is broken.

"Now here is the important thing. After the defeat of the Matabele in the north, things start happening here. Oh we've had trouble with the Uitlanders before. All you have to do is look at the Godlessness of these people to know there is bound to be trouble where they are." Suddenly the Commandant burst out laughing. He laughed long and loud. "I remember the President came to address a meeting here a few years ago. He began: 'You Afrikaners! You burghers! And you Uitlanders - yea, you thieves and murderers!' It was a sight!" Again the Commandant's laughter rang out loud.

"But to business! As I was saying, we always had trouble with the Uitlanders. But after Rhodes had finished Lobengula it changed. It became something organized and planned. They formed what they called the National Union of the Great Dissatisfied. Nearly all the Uitlanders on the goldfields are members. But more important. They started a Reform Committee. That is the real power here in Johannesburg. Even some of the Volksraad members in Pretoria are controlled by this Committee. The most powerful and richest of the Uitlanders are on it."

"What do they want?" Uys Jansen asked.

"They say they want only the vote. They complain of other things but that is the most important."

"And will they get it?"

"There are about 75,000 voting burghers in the Republic. Here

UWI Libraries

alone, the Uitlanders can muster over a hundred thousand voters. Think of what would happen if they had the vote ...."

"What would happen?"

"Rhodes has said publicly that he wants a united South Africa under the British flag. He wants all Africa under the British flag. The President feels that now that he's eaten up Lobengula, we are next. The Uitlanders are drawing up a petition which they will send to their Queen in England. But that is not all. We've heard whispers of another plan. Nothing clear. Only whispers of a plan.

"That is where you and one other come in. You must become Uitlanders, you must join their National Union and you must find out what is going on and what they plan. "

"But I don't speak their language," Uys said.

"That is our problem. You will be given lessons and you must work hard at them. I think the best plan is for you to appear on the goldfields as a Hollander. But you will be given a few months' lessons before you appear here. Your being a Hollander will explain why your English is not so good."

"But won't they suspect a Hollander?"

"All European races are here and many of them speak no English. But to find out anything you must know some English."

"I see."

"That is all. Everything clear to you? There is some sort of a plot. Keep your ears open and report. Know what you are looking for?"

"Yes."

"Good. Go out the back way, the way you came. There will be

UWI Libraries

a man in torn khaki clothes and a grey hat."

"I saw him as I came in," Uys said.

"Yes," the Commandant smiled. "Go past him and whisper 'Vaderland', but do not stop or speak to him. Get on your horse. By that time he will be some distance away. Follow him without seeming to. This place may be watched, so we have to be careful. I will see you when I have the time." The commandant got up and held out his hand. "Good luck, Jansen. And don't be amused by the mystery game we are playing. This is what the President said not so long ago: 'Rhodes means to fight me, I am preparing for it.' You are part of that preparing. This is important."

"I will remember, Commandant."

"Good. Your grandfather and father served the nation well. The President expects the same of you and your brothers. Good luck.

They shook hands and Uys went out the back way. The man in the torn khaki clothes still leaned against the wall with the brim of his hat over his eyes. Uys passed near him and whispered:

"Vaderland."

A deep, rumbling and low "Vaderland" came back to him.

He crossed the street, tied his horse, adjusted its harness and mounted slowly. A little distance up the street, the man in khaki had mounted a mule and was jogging along easily a few hundred yards ahead, going toward the eastern outskirts of the town. Uys followed slowly, wondering where this would lead. Making sure of not losing the man in khaki, he looked about him.

The street was almost empty, as were those that cut across it at irregular intervals, And the street itself was just a long, wide dirt track with buildings on either side. Galvanized-iron shacks stood beside imposing three and four storeyed brick buildings

UWI Libraries

a contrast in crude poverty and ornate riches. This same contrast showed in the few people on the street. Rough, khaki-clad, unshaved toughs rubbed elbows with dandies in the latest men's fashins from the great houses of London and Paris. An elegant trap drawn by a prancing grey moved sedately down the street. Uys urged his horse to the side to make way. The liveried coloured driver sat his seat like a king on his throne, his top hat at a jaunty angle. Inside t the trap two women, one old and the other young, looked disdainfully on the dirty street, the hint of a sneer about their nostrils. Uys caught a fleeting glimpse of rich silk and lace. Then he was encased in waves of sweet smelling scents as the trap shot by.

.... I should like to see Hettie Van As dressed like that ....

A man suddenly shot out of a bar across the way. He was ageing, bearded and dirty. A woman followed him out. The sight of her shocked Uys. He had never seen so much of a woman before. Her dress had no sleeves and her white, fat arms, showed all the way to her shoulders. And the front of her dress was cut so low, he could see parts of her big bosoms. Against his will he stared. Her dress reached down only as far as her knees and her legs were bare for all the world to see .... A man should not look on such disgrace .... He jerked his head round and looked down the street till he saw the man in khaki far ahead. The loud voice of the woman followed him down the street as she cursed the old man who had shot out of the bar. Uys felt strangely relieved that he could not understand her language .... So that is what the Good Book means by a harlot....

Ahead, the man in khaki turned into another, narrower, street. Then he turned into what was no wider than a narrow lane. By the

UWI Libraries

time Uys reached it the man had disappeared and there was no one in sight. He hesitated a while, then urged his horse down the lane.

Near the end of the lane, a man suddenly stepped out of a gateway. The man held up his hand and smiled. This was not the man Uys had followed - or was it? He didn't know. He had not seen the man's face. There was only the mule, the hat and the old khaki shirt and trousers. This man had no hat, no mule and his shirt was hidden by a coat.

"Vaderland," the man's deep voice rumbled.

Yes, it was the man. Uys relaxed.

"This is one of our houses," the man said. "Come in. You must meet Seisma so that he should know you when you are alone. Oh, my name is de Jong, Klaas de Long. I'm the messenger."

"I'm Uys Jansen." Uys dismounted and shook de Jong's hand.

They went through the gate into a yard. A native took Uys' horse and led it to a trough of water near a pile of hay. Uys and de Jong went into the house where Seisma, a wizened, white-bearded old Boer, awaited them.

"Burgher Seisma: burgher Jansen ...." de Jong said.

"Going to the farm?" Seisma asked, shaking Uys' hand.

"Yes," de Jong said. "He's one of the specials."

Seisma's old wife entered: "Food is ready."

They followed her into another room where a table for four was laid. On each plate was a large piece of meat and potatoes. In the centre of the table was a huge Boer loaf and a jar of milk. The grouped round the table and lowered their heads while Seisma, from the head of the table, thanked the Almighty God for their food and asked His blessing and protection on their land and their people and

UWI Libraries

their freedom. Then he took the Bible that lay beside his plate, and read a verse from it. They said Amen and sat down to their meat

Seisma's wife said:

"Ours is probably the only house here where the word of God is spoken before eating."

"What else do you expect with all these Uitlanders," Seisma snapped. He turned to Uys. "You far from here?"

"Not very far. To the west. About a day's ride by wagon. Quicker by horse."

"You are lucky to be so far from the Uitlanders. All your fami there?"

"All except my father. He died at Majuba."

"We lost our two sons in that war," Seisma's wife said.

"Yes," Seisma said coldly. "And now their eyes are on our land again."

"Our youngest boy was only seventeen," Seisma's wife said as she got up and cleared the plates away. She went out and returned with a pot of steaming coffee and a plate of cookies.

"I say Oom Paul was wrong to let them dig for gold. He should have refused to let any of the Uitlanders into our land after 1881. We had won that war, hadn't we?"

"There would have been more fighting if Oom Paul hadn't agreed" de Jong said.

"What I want to know," Seisma said, dipping a cookie into his coffee. "Did we or did we not win that war?"

"My brother," Uys said, "said the Raad in Pretoria needed the money from the mining concessions. The Republic had no money befor then."

UWI Libraries

"Money!" Seisma snorted. "Our forefathers lived and brought up their families without this nonsense. All a man needed was a piece of land and the strength of his own right arm. Old Piet Joubert was right when he said this gold would bring blood to our country. You are young men. You do not know what we went through to build this nation. But you will see just how cunning the English can be. Mark my words."

"Well," de Jong said. "The gold is here now, the Republic is rich, at night there is electricity in Johannesburg."

"You mean those little lights of theirs?"

"Yes." De Jong grinned.

"I suppose God's stars don't give enough light!"

"What are these lights?" Uys asked.

"The devil's work," Seisma snapped.

"You will see them soon," de Jong said. "We must go now." He pushed back his chair and got up.

Outside, their horses were waiting for them.

"The mule?" Uys asked.

De Jong laughed. "It will stay here till I need it."

Seisma said: "See that you young people guard our Republic as well as we did in the past."

"That we will," de Jong said with conviction.

They rode out and down the narrow lane and emerged on open, wild country. Far away, to the right of them, miners were active and they could see small human dots moving about. But here where they rode was the wild quiet veld, its shrubby rolling stretches sweeping away to the far horizon. And the Johannesburg behind them seemed an unreal mirage, out of place in this austere Boer land.

UWI Libraries

Uys pulled up on a knoll and twisted his body till he looked back at Johannesburg. Beside him, de Jong laughed.

"Everyone do this?" Uys asked.

"Nearly everyone who sees it for the first time."

"Hard to believe it's real."

"There it is. It will be stranger still at night."

"It's - it's like a dream. It's so out of place. Like a dream."

"It's very real."

"Will it go on?" Uys asked.

"As long as the gold goes on."

"How long?"

De Jong shrugged expressively, a movement that said: Who knows? Who knows how much of this stuff the earth contains and how long it will take before running out? There is always the asking, but who knows the enaswer. He smiled a wry, twisted, humourless smile. His sombre eyes looked bleak.

"Our problem is to defend our land, Jansen, however long the gold lasts."

They spurred their horses down the knoll and Johannesburg was out of sight, and there was no hint to suggest that the wild land had ever been polluted by men and their infernal machines, that across that knoll men were blowing pieces out of the earth with dynamite.

In deep accord with the silent land, the two Boers rode knee to knee, in silence. This was their land, their heritage, their birthright; the silence and the clear, farawy sky, and the parched, undulating shrubland. Born into it, they would be content for it to go on forever. They knew and understood the silence and the space.

UWI Libraries

The sun, big and yellow with a rim of red around it, was far to the west when they pulled up on the edge of a valley. Deep in the valley, like a long snake, a stream twisted its way round giant ant-hills, past huge boulders and was lost behind a sprawling farm-house, behind which large stretches of upturned soil swept away to the far end of the valley.

Uys broke the long silence:

"That where we're going?"

"Yes."

They rode down into the valley.

He lay on the narrow bed and stared up at the ceiling. His room was a little box with a bed and window, one chair, and a cup-board filled with Uitlander clothes. The man in charge - he'd forgotten the man's name - said he'd have to have his hair cut and his beard shaved off and start wearing Uitlander clothes so that he could get used to them. Somehow, he felt lonely and alone without de Jong. But de Jong had drunk coffee, rested for a while then gone back to Johannesburg, He didn't know anybody here. He had only met the man in charge and his wife. They had said he would meet the others at meal time. In a little while someone would come to cut his hair and he would shave off his beard. In the morning he would begin the training for the work that lay ahead.

And ahead lay so many things. He must work hard to serve his country and his people as his father, Cornelius Jansen, who had been born at Vegkop and died defeating the English at Majuba, had done; and as his grandfather, Kasper Jansen, had done. His grandmother, Anna, had died at Vegkop giving birth to his father. And his grand-uncle, Koos, had also died in that battle. The Jansens had

UWI Libraries

served their people and their country well. And always, the enemies had been the blacks and the English. Now it was so again, and he, Uys Jansen, must carry the burden of service.

He turned his mind to home. Wonder how old Oom Stepan is getting on? He hoped the old man didn't die while he was away. Wonderful old man. He'd been a boy in the trek. Wonderful stories he told of those times. And nippy for his age.

And Hettie Van As .... Hettie Van As .... Hettie Van As.

From outside, footsteps drew near. They stopped at his door. He swung off his bed and stood facing the door. This was the first ordeal of that training to serve his country and his people. Slowly, the door opened.

UWI Libraries

3.

The two men were shifting shadows, one moment to the right of him, the next moment to the left. He steadied himself as best he could and stood swaying. Oh stop moving men, stop moving from left to right! I want to come to you and how can I do it if you won't be still?

Drunk as a lord, one of the two men said.

But he did not hear them. He only saw their shifting shadows.

God, he's tight, the second man said.

Too many of them getting like that, the first said.

Wait a minute, I don't know if he's tight, the second said.

Stop moving men! Stop moving! I want to come to you. So many days without food is hard on a man's strength. Stop moving, damn you!

I think he's sick, the second man said.

Only a Kaffir, the first man said.

You're getting like these Boers, the second said. Don't let it get to the ears of the Boss. He says anybody who's in the Empire becomes our equal straightaway.

He's still a Kaffir, the first said. Anyway, I'm sure he's drunk. Let's go and see.

Oh don't go away men! Don't go away. I can't go on ....

The second one touched his shoulder.

Hey, you! What's your name?

Food, boss, food.

God! the first one said, the bugger is starving.

Told you he wasn't drunk, the second one said.

Food, boss, food.

The second man spoke slowly. We will give you food. Now tell

UWI Libraries

us your name. Where are you from?

I'll go and get two kaffirs to carry him in, the first man said and walked away.

The second man took a tiny flask from his hip pocket and went on his knees. Dammit, he may be a kaffir but he was a human being.

Drink this. Drink.

It seared his throat. He closed his eyes and swallowed more. Strength returned to him. He opened his eyes and saw the white man properly.

God! He looks starved.

Better?

Yes, Boss.

Now tell me, who are you, where are you from?

Boss?

Name.

Luke Dabula.

And where are you from, Luke?

Boss?

Home?

Matabele. King Lobengula.

All the way from up there.

Food, boss, food.

Soon, boy, soon.

UWI Libraries

4.

For the second time, Uys Jansen rode into Johannesburg. This time it was night and the streets were crowded. Also, this time he was dressed as a fairly prosperous Uitlander. His face was shaved smooth. His hair was trimmed short, Uitlander fashion. Three months had passed since he had ridden into Johannesburg with Johan to see Commandant Smit. In that time he had learnt much of Johannesburg and its Uitlander population.

He turned a corner and pulled up. A crowd, spread in a circle blocked his way. And inside the circle, two large, barechested men fought. Their faces were puffed and bloodstained, and from the sluggishness of their movements it was apparent they had been fighting for some time. The onlookers were quiet, a businesslike air about them. No words of encouragement were made to either of the fighters. Critically, the audience watched to see if both were giving their best. And stolidly, the two men battered each other. A voice, harsh and immediately in front of Uys, called out:

"Fifty pounds Jones won't stand up!"

From the other side of the circle came a reply:

"Make it a hundred and I'll take you!"

"All right! A hundred! That you, Adamson?"

"Yes!"

Another voice, to the left, said: "Who wants another hundred against Jones?"

It was soon taken on. For a while there was brisk and high betting. From his perch, Uys saw a group of blacks to the far

UWI Libraries

right of the circle. One of them said something to a white man and the white man called out a bet.

My God! They not only allowed kaffirs to look on! They allowed them to bet! Kaffirs betting on which of the two white men would give the other the hiding of his life!

He clenched his teeth, wheeled his horse about and dug his heels savagely into its flanks. He would not stay to see this.

As he rode away, a man ran past him, shouting:

"Police! Oom Paul's boys are coming!"

Uys pulled up and looked back. It would be nice to see them running. And perhaps some of those kaffirs would be arrested. God! These people were a danger if they allowed kaffirs to do that.

Far up the street, a body of policemen approached at a brisk trot, in formation. Instead of running, the Uitlanders broke the circle casually. Only the two fighters were hurriedly hustled into an hotel. The natives strolled slowly down the street. And when the police arrived the Uitlanders stood around, smiling impudently at them and talking about the fight. The officer in charge addressed the Uitlanders:

"Gentlemen! It is your duty to help the police in the carrying out of their duty. Will you please tell me where the fighters are."

There was a long silence while the Uitlanders turned mock questioning looks on each other. Then, clearly, a jeering, English voice said: "Gone to heaven, old thing .... Gone to heaven."
For a while the officer stood still, his face flushed a dark red, then he turned and marched his men away. Before they were out of

UWI Libraries

sight a voice called:

"Better finish the fight. There's a lot of my money in it."

Uys rode down the street. Behind him the circle re-formed. And everywhere about him, was the raucus bustle of the citizens of this town founded on gold.

He felt depressed and hurt; he had shared the humiliation of the police officer. These people set the Republic and its President and its laws at nought. Not only that, they jeered at it. He had been tempted to tell the officer where the fighters were, then he had remembered the importance of his job.

He dismounted in front of an hotel, tied his horse and went in.

"My name is Jansen," he said deliberately to the old man at the little desk. "I sent you a letter from Cape Town."

"Oh yes. Yes, Mister Jansen. You are the gentleman from Holland?"

"Holland? Yes. Holland."

"Your trunk has arrived. It is in your room."

Uys frowned.

"Speak slow. I do not understand English well please."

"Bless you, don't let that bother you, Mister Jansen. Many come who know even less than you, and in no time they speak like an Englishman! Don't you worry, Mister Jansen, in a few months' time your English will be as good as mine.... "

"Thank you," Uys murmured. "My room please?"

"Oh dear me yes. Your room, sir ...." The old man turned the register. "Just sign here please."

Uys signed.

"My horse. You have a place?"

UWI Libraries

The old man frowned.

"As a rule, Mister Jansen, we do not keep horses for our clients We haven't really got a stable, you see. But there is one behind Leek's Bar, round the corner. They're expensive but they take good care of the horses.... I can send the boy round with the horse. They take good care of the animals, really good care; but they're quite expensive, as I said." The old man rubbed his chin. "We could, of course, make an exception in your case - but keep it quiet - and it will cost something ...."

Silently, Uys cursed himself for not having thought of this before. He understood enough of the old man's words to see the old man was trying to get more money out of him. Better take the horse to Seisma's tonight. He should have done that in the first place.

"Shall I let the boy take him, sir?" the old man's flow of words came to an end.

"It is no matter," Uys said. "Please, the room."

The old man took keys from his drawer and came round the desk. Uys followed him up the dark and narrow stairs to the first floor. The old man stopped in front of a door marked 6. He opened it.

"Your room, sir."

A largish room with dark roses on the wall, peeling in places; a comfortable looking bed against a wall, near the bed a washstand with a bowl and pitcher on it; opposite the door, a window with yellowing but clean curtains; in a corner, a clothes cupboard; and under the window, a small table and two chairs; the colour scheme was a faded, rusty grey; such was Uys' new home. His trunk was in the middle of the floor.

UWI Libraries

Uys went to the window and looked out on to the back of another hotel. The old man's voice followed him:

"One of the best rooms we have. Nothing wonderful - dear me, no. You should have come to us at our hotel in Brighton. We had proper service there and served meals. Our clients always came back. You just ask the missus .... Hated to leave it but them, everybody has their troubles, haven't they, Mister Jansen? Titled gentry we had coming to us in Brighton.... "

As Uys' back remained turned, the old man's voice trailed off into silence. When he was sure of the silence, Uys turned.

"Thank you."

"Just ask if there is anything you want, Mister Jansen." The old man withdrew and shut the door behind him.

Uys opened the window top and bottom and allowed clean air to seep through the stuffy room, washing away the musty smell left by the last person who had lived here. He looked into the cracked mirror above the washstand. Distortedly, his face looked back at him. A lifeless smile touched his lips. Well, Uys, what now? You've got here, what is the next stage? .... He remembered his horse. That was the next thing to do. He touched the switch above his bed and turned out the light. He stepped past his window to get to the door. As he did so, a light was turned on in a room of the hotel opposite. The window of the room was directly opposite his, and the light was many times brighter than his own. He saw a section of the room clearly. And, just inside the door of the room a woman stood facing him. Really, she was facing her own window but it was as thought she faced him. Only, of course, he was in darkness so she could not see him. He went near the window and looked across.

UWI Libraries

Her face, in the bright light, was extremely white, but more than that he could not see clearly. She seemed young, young and no ugly; perhaps beautiful: but it was hard to tell. Her face was just round and white. She turned from the door and moved out of his line of vision.

He thought: It's unnatural for people to live like this. Strangers living so that they can overlook each other. A person ha no privacy that way. Boers would never live like that.

The woman moved back into sight. She had taken some of her outer clothes off and her arms, up to her shoulders, were bare and white and fleshy. She moved toward the window.

Uys turned his head away. It was wrong to look at that. Wrong and sinful; he had no right to. Resolutely, he turned from the window, felt his way round the trunk on the floor, groped his wa to the door and went out. He would erase the woman's bare arms fro his mind, he would never again look across at her. Damn them, they ought to have curtains up.

He went down. At the desk with the old man was an overpowdere old woman who was all chest, almost all the way from her chin down. With them was a young man, thickset and dark, with drooping, melancholy eyes in an ugly face that had a gentle, laughing mouth.

The old man said:

"Ah! Mister Jansen ... Meet our new guest, my dear .... I have the honour to present my wife, Mister Jansen. Missus Thomas; Mister Jansen."

"Madam." Uys bowed slight. He'd practised that a lot but he'd never thought he's need it on someone like this.

UWI Libraries

The lady said:

"We want you to be happy with us, Mister Jansen. We want all our clients to be happy with us." She turned to the young man. "That is our motto, isn't it, Mister Blumenfeld? .... Mister Blumenfeld has been with us for quite a while now."

Blumenfeld smiled an apology at Uys. Uys hesitated awkwardly, uncertain what to do as the three looked at him, then he bowed stiffly and went to the door. Blumenfeld caught up with him as he untied his horse.

"They're all right," he said, waving his thumb back at the hotel. "Two very small crooks. They'll do no more than charge yo more than they should and search your things whenever they get a chance. And their story about the wonderful hotel in Brighton is as old as they are ...."

Uys like the soft friendliness of the man's voice. He turned to him and smiled.

"Sorry, I understand not well English. I'm Hollander."

The man smiled and repeated what he had said in Dutch. He went on to say: "I hope my Dutch is good. I learnt it with my sister in the black forest of Germany. For our holiday one year we went through the black forest. We decided we would learn Dutch and we did."

"Why?" Uys asked.

"Oh, for no reason; we just wanted to know more. But that's nothing. I have a cousin who worked in a factory. He found his lunch hour long so he decided he would study philosophy. He is now a doctor of philosophy."

"What is philosophy?" Uys asked.

UWI Libraries

Blumenfeld looked sharply at him, then laughed.

"You should have known my cousin. He was always testing what people knew. I would say something about sound and he would say 'What is sound?' Or someone else would speak about a theory and he would ask 'When you say theory, what exactly does the word mean?' You're like him .... Philosophy is the study of that department of human knowledge that cannot be proved except by reason. All right?"

"Ja," Uys said and cursed himself for his first mistake. He should not have asked that question. At the school they had told him not to ask direct questions will he was certain of a person.

"I must go now," he said.

"See you," Blumenfeld said.

As he rode down the street he felt oppressed by all the people about him. There were too many of them and he was not used to them, not used to all the noise and voices. They took up too much of his air, too much of his breathing room. They made it hard for him to think. God, what a mill!

At Seisma's he said the pass-word and a stranger let him in. Seisma and his wife stared so much at his Uitlander clothes, cut hair and smoothly shaved face that he did not stay to supper as he had hoped to do. He had thought of this place as the one island of friendliness in this town, now he could no longer do so. Their curious, searching stares made him hurry away after he had left his horse. Perhaps they thought he had changed into an Uitlander in fact as well as appearance. He felt dismally lonely, oppressively sad and cut-off as he walked back to his hotel. His stomach rumbled with the first signs of hunger. He would have to find food somewhere.

UWI Libraries

Suddenly, he felt fed up with this whole affair. Why could they not have found someone else to do this? There are many Boers who live in Johannesburg, who understand English and know the Uitlanders, many Boers who would enjoy doing this. Why did they have to choose him? Or, better still, why did they not just drive the Uitlanders out? He wanted to be back on the farm, doing the things he knew and understood, riding the veld in freedom and not having to hold himself in all the time. Not having to think carefully before he said anything, not having to lie about who he was and where he came from. It is unnatural and unclean for a man to live like that! It was lying and cheating like these Uitlanders .... And what would Hettie Van As be doing now? Wonder if her arms are like the arms of the woman opposite, white and full? Never thought of them before. Never thought of any woman's arms before, Damn! Damn! Damn! It was this Uitlander town; it crept into a man, rotted his moral fibre and put forbidden thoughts in his mind. He would suppress them! I'm Uys Jansen, descendant of Kasper Jansen who fought these people and all they stand for. I'm Uys Jansen ....

"Mister Jansen ...."

He stopped and looked to his left. It was the thickset man from the hotel. What's his name again -? Blumenfeld. He was glad to see the man. It was someone to talk to. Then he remembered the business about philosphy and smiled tightly. Damn the whole business.

"Mister Blumenfeld."

"Stop the Mister," Blumenfeld said joining him. "My name's Marcus: my friends call me Mark. Look .... You're a stranger here, it must be quite strange and lonely for you. Why not spend

UWI Libraries

the evening with me? We can eat at my club and then go the the Globe. Some actors have just come from America and it should be good .... "

Uys hesitated. He didn't really know this man. As though reading his thoughts, Blumenfeld smiled gently.

"It's all right, you know. My name is Blumenfeld and I'm not a crook."

"I didn't mean that -"

"Good! But it's just as well to be careful. There are a lot of sharp gentlemen about and they can smell out a stranger .... Shall we go? "

"Yes."

"Fine."

Skirting the densest sections of the crowded streets, they made their way westward. Presently, after half an hour's silent walk, they reached a less crowded part of the town. Here, even the houses crowded each other less. There was space between house and house, and in the dark and by the light of the street lamps they all seemed well made brick buildings.

Uys half-turned his head to his companion:

"Tell me .... Are there children? I have not seen any."

Blumenfeld laughed softly. "Yes. Johannesburg isn't only those rough drinking men you've seen. That's what Pretoria and the Boers and their President cannot understand. There are famili here: people with children who are making their homes here. That's why the Uitlanders are so bitter about the education."

"What's the matter with the education?"

"To understand that, you must know a few things. First,

UWI Libraries

before gold was discovered about 1885 on the Rand, the Boer Republic was so poor, it never had as much as a hundred pounds in its treasury at one time. It was broke, flat out. Gold brought it more riches than it had even thought of. And it was the Uitlanders who dug for the gold. They brought the Republic its wealth. Without them it would probably have been bankrupt by now. When people have done that much for a country you can understand them expecting something in return .... "

"But they themselves got rich," Uys said.

"Some of them. But they also made the country rich, very rich

"Go on."

"Look, here's an example. I've just got hold of a working. I think it's a promising place to work. With some backing I bought it from a syndicate of four men without capital who handled it badly. I want to work it properly, so first I've got to get dynamite. Now here's the rub. Not only do I pay mining taxes, but I am forced to buy my dynamite from one company. I know I can get my dynamite for a quarter of the price I am paying now if I am allowed to buy it at its real price. But the Boer Government has given the right to sell dynamite to one single Company. D'you see?

"What's that to do with education?"

"Just this: the Uitlander pays nine-tenths of all the country' taxes but he has no vote, he has no say in the running of his town, there are not enough police to keep the peace, the town is filthy and shoddy and Pretoria does not care a hang. And as for education the government pays nine pounds for the schooling of each burgher child and only two shillings for the schooling of each Uitlander child. You will find, Jansen, that there's a lot of bitter feelin amoung the responsible people here."

UWI Libraries

Uys was glad of the night. He felt elated and in daylight it might have shown. His first night and he had touched the edge of the Uitlander conspiracy! Wonderful luck!

"And what," Uys made his voice very casual, "are the Uitlanders going to do?"

For a while they walked in silence. Blumenfeld's ugly yet strangely attractive face was a dark shadow. And Uys silently cursed the night he had blessed earlier. If only he could see the man's face.

"They'll do something all right. That's just it. Being people, they have to do something. That's the tragic glory of it all .... But here we are ...."

They turned into a gate and walked up a long lane to a large house set in its own wide grounds. At the door of the well-crowded place, Blumenfeld made a mock bow and waved Uys in:

"It is my pleasure to introduce you to one of the two most exclusive clubs of Johannesburg, Mister Jansen."

Everybody seemed to know Blumenfeld; the man who took their hats and sticks and dusted their coats; people passing called out to him or stopped for a few seconds; women nodded to him. And it dawned on Uys that his chance meeting might be even more important than he had thought. Perhaps this Blumenfeld was a member of the Reform Committee.

To the tall, elegantly dressed man who met them at the dining room door, Blumenfeld said:

"Hello Jones .... A table for two."

"I'm sorry sir. There's not a small table free. You should have let me know, sir. You usually join one or the other of the big parties."

UWI Libraries

"It's all right, Jones. It's not your fault."

Jones looked toward the far corner.

"Doctor Jameson and Mister Hammond, sir; they've finished their meal. Perhaps they wouldn't mind retiring to the bar to carry on their conversation."

"Excellent idea. Let's go."

Here and there among the tables, Blumenfeld stopped to exchange a word with friends. They stopped at Jameson's table.

"Hello you conspirators," Blumenfeld murmured.

Jameson scooped up the papers over which they were leaning.

"Hello, Mark," Jameson's voice was soft and gentle.

"Could we relieve you of your table? Mister Jansen and I are starved. Oh, Mister Jansen's a new arrival. Doctor Jameson, Mister Hammond, Mister Jansen."

The two men got up: Hammond was fair and robust; Jameson small, a lined face and clear, dazzlingly bright eyes. He smiled and his face lit up.

Uys shook them by the hand. So this is Rhodes' man, Jameson. The man who took the land of the Matabele and turned it into Rhodesia. Not much to look at.

"How's Rhodesia, Doc?" Blumenfeld asked.

"At it again," Hammond said in the nasal tones of an American.

"Fine, you should visit it," Jameson said. "A real British colony now."

"And the king?" Blumenfeld asked.

"You mean Lobengula?"

"Who else?"

UWI Libraries

"The silly old chap wouldn't come back when I promised to treat him as a king. He died in the swamps near the Zambesi. He was a good old fellow, I liked him."

"And sent him to his death, Doc?"

"You don't understand, Mark."

"Either that or I understand too well .... I repeat my old one, Doc? Why do you want to paint the map of the world in a particular colour?"

Jameson smiled tolerantly.

"I told you once."

"We didn't get to the bottom of it."

"I don't know what your bottom is."

"It wasn't mine, it was yours we were concerned about."

For some reason Uys could not understand, they seemed to find this funny, and laughed uproariously.

"You leave my piles alone, Mark," Jameson said.

"Sorry Doc, it slipped out. How are they?"

"Asleep at the moment."

"Coming back to our point, Doc. The last we got to, was when you said it was for the good of the people and I asked what kind of good it was that you had to force on them with blood and thunder. Remember?"

"Thought you said you were hungry," Hammond said.

"You've no sense of history, young Mark," Jameson said. "Rhodes couldn't understand your failure to see what it all meant." Affectionately he put his arm about Blumenfeld's shoulders. "Trouble with you, Mark, is you believe in the myth of a perfect and total freedom. The result is you are forced to oppose progress.

UWI Libraries

You are the classic exile, the wandering Jew of the world seeking a dream that does not exist, a dream that is utterly without substance. Your kind of freedom will never be, my young friend."

Blumenfeld's sad eyes glowed.

"Philosophers again!" Hammond said in disgust.

It was all above Uys' head.

"Perhaps you are right, Doc," Blumenfeld murmured. "But I'd like to think you are wrong. We all comfort ourselves: I like to comfort myself by thinking there is point and substance to the dream, that the exile, Jew or otherwise, will reach home one day and find peace there."

"And the nature of your peace, Mark?"

"Oh nothing much, Doc, just a place and state where there are no conquerors, where the captains of empire are known for what they are, where gold is just a metal, and where human life and human dignity are the two points on which all else is built."

"Some dream, Mark!" Jameson laughed.

"At least it has more permanence than yours, Doc. You and Rhodes can build as big an empire as you like, one day it will fall apart. The poet says,

For each age is a dream that is dying,

Or one that is coming to birth.

Only the dream of human dignity will last, Doc.... in spite of all the progress in the world."

Jameson smiled.

"Brilliant, Mark, but what does it all mean?"

"Words," Hammond said.

"Shall I order for you, sir," Jones asked. At Blumenfeld's nod he went off.

UWI Libraries

"Next you'll say the Boers have a case in treating the Uitlanders as they do," Jameson said.

"But they have, Doc. A case based on fear and experience. Recall how they trekked and fought for this freedom of theirs."

"Therefore they are right in taxing us without giving us the vote?"

"I didn't say right, Doc. I said a case. Anyway, in exchange for the vote, would you be willing to give up your British passport and British citizenship and become a burgher bound only by the laws of the Boer Republic?"

"God! He's Kruger's advocate all right," Hammond said.

"Would you, Doc?"

"No," Jameson said.

"You strengthen their case."

From what he could make out, it was clear to Uys that Blumenfeld was defending the Boers against the Uitlanders. Yet Jameson had said Blumenfeld was a Jew, and at the school they had said that next to Rhodes the Jews were the greatest enemies of the Republic. What else did he know about Jews? Yes, when he was a small boy and had gone to school, a school for children, not for spying, the teacher had said it was the Jews who killed God. Blumenfeld's people killed God!

Jones, followed by a black waiter dressed in white, returned with trays of food.

A Jew who defended the burghers and their Republic and said Rhodes was wrong. At least, it sounded like that. In a daze, he shook the two men's hands and watched them go. Now he was going

UWL Libraries

to sit down and eat with a Jew. What sort of a picture had he built up in his mind of a Jew? No picture at all, really. Only, it was the Jews who had killed God. Wonder what Blumenfeld would say if he asked him outright. Supposing he said: Tell me, why did your people kill God? What would he say? He slid into the chair opposite Blumenfeld. He'd better be careful; Blumenfeld was looking curiously at him.

"I thought Jameson was bigger," he said.

"Everybody who hasn't met Doctor Jim expects that." A faint, private smile touched Blumenfeld's lips. "I think he's bigger than the Old Man in everyway. He suffers horribly from piles, poor old Doc."

"The Old Man?"

"Rhodes."

"Is he old?"

"No, but he was never young."

For a while they ate in silence. And about them was the droning hum of many people talking without a single voice being loud enough to make it sound like human speech. So a hive of bees make a uniform noise and there is only one noise. As he ate, Uys looked about. Almost, it was hard to believe that outside, and not very far from this place, rough, drunken and not very clean men were brawling and cursing and drinking and falling over each other. Everyone here was well dressed, well mannered, and the whole place was smooth and glittering. Men held chairs for women as they got up or sat down. Champagne bottles popped frequently. This was rich, rich beyond measure. Uys thought, so this is what gold

UWI Libraries

gives them. He recalled that in the Bible there was a passange where people ate and drank and followed a life of sinful living till the wrath of God descended on them. Yet, and he had to admit it, this did not seem sinful. His mind turned to Rhodes. He looked at Blumenfeld and realized the man had been watching him all this time. You must be careful Uys.

"All very new to you," Blumenfeld said.

Forgetting himself, Uys said:

"I grew up on a farm." Oh God! He's betrayed himself. Now this Jew would know he was a spy for the Republic.

" I wondered," Blumenfeld said. "That explains it. But try to relaz .... Silly thing to say. You'll learn to relax in time, when you get used to it."

"Yes," Uys murmured. Inwardly he sighed with relief.

"I don't want to poke into your affairs but I can help with a job if you need it."

Blumenfeld looked at him with such warm friendliness that, in spite of himself, Uys was touched. This man, a Jew, really wanted to help him .... But would he if he knew I was a Boer? His reserve came back.

"Thank you but I don't need it." He hesitated, then said: "I sold the farm before I left Holland and I have enough money."

"It doesn't last forever unless you earn more, you know."

"I have enough now." He thought rapidly. "I've also got some relatives here - my father's brother's family. They are burghers. They have a farm. I may get myself one later." He waited anxiously, watching Blumenfeld.

UWI Libraries

"Any family left in Holland?"

How easy it is to lie!

"No."

"So you'll be settling down here."

"Yes. I think I'll become a burgher."

Smiling, Blumenfeld said:

"Well I hope you and I are not against each other in the clash between burgher and Uitlander."

"Will they clash?"

"I think so."

They finished their food. While the native waiter cleared away, Blumenfeld beckoned to Jones.

"See if you can get us a carriage Jones."

Jones went away and returned after some time.

"There'll be one in a few minutes, sir."

Blumenfeld paid and they went out. The moon was up and the sky was clear. The Milky Way was bright and near. And the other worlds of the universe each glittered in their private mystery. Blumenfeld looked at his watch.

"We've time. Come, I want to show you something."

Blumenfeld set a brisk pace and they walked to the left, up the slight incline of moonlit earth. At its summit they stopped. Pointing east, Blumenfeld said:

"See that big building there: that's the hospital. One day it will be a very great hospital .... Now look to the left. See the beginnings of a building? That place with two walls standing?"

"Yes?"

"That's mine. I'm building it for my nother. She and my

UWI Libraries

sister and young brother will come over as soon as it is ready."

"Then you are staying here?"

"Yes, I'm staying here. This is a new land. There is a chance of a new beginning here. In Germany things have been hard. My mother never had the things a mother should have. Here I will give them to her."

Uys looked closely at Blumenfeld's face. It was unusual to hear a man speak with such emotion. He could almost hear the tears in the man's voice. At home, and among Boers generally, they did not speak with such emotion. He felt awkward, like an intruder in some very private place. And for the first time in his life he wondered what really went on inside another person, not only what that person was thinking, but what he was feeling and what colour his feeling had.

"The carriage will be waiting," Blumenfeld said. His voice was soft and normal again.

They went back. Uys thought: He will build a house here and bring his family here and they will live here forever. Perhaps that's what all the Uitlanders are planning: to build houses and bring their families and live here forever. But the land is ours. It is Boer land. It is the South African Republic.

The carriage was waiting. As it drove away, Uys turned to Blumenfeld.

"Tell me about Rhodes .... You don't seem to like him."

"I do. That's the trouble." Blumenfeld laughed bitterly.

"But - "

"I know. A farmer's hates are straightforward. Well, I'm

UWI Libraries

not a farmer, my friend. Wish I were .... Rhodes is a wonderful man if you are his friend. But he's a ruthless man too, He's a good companion and a heartless enemy. He has no principles, or, if he has any, they are peculiar to Cecil Rhodes. If you are on his side there is nothing he will not do for you; if you are agains him there is nothing he will not do to you. He knows what he wants and I don't know if Kruger can stop him."

"What does he want?" Uys asked.

"All the world .... But for the moment all South Africa will do."

"The Boers have beaten the English before now."

"There was no gold then; there was no Rhodes then; there was no quest for the golden fleece, my friend."

"Golden Fleece?"

"It is a story in ancient Greek myths -" Blumenfeld stopped dead and laughed. "I keep on forgetting you'r e a farmer .... Well, a long time ago, so long ago in fact that it was before Christ was born, there lived a man called Jason. One day Jason collected a group of men ~~together~~ and they took ship and set sail to seek for the Golden Fleece. This was supposed to be fleece as we know it today - only it was golden or made of gold. Jason travelled all over the known world of his time, experienced all sorts of things, but failed to find the golden fleece. It did not exist you see. It was a dream, a very beautiful dream; as beautiful as the dream of the child who decides one morning to put a piece of bread in his pocket and walk to where the sun comes up that he might touch it."

"But they were grown men, not children."

UWI Libraries

"Are grown men more than oversized children? I don't know."

The carriage rattled through the crowded streets and stopped in front of the Globe. They got out. A group of men stood about the entrance, watching and remarking loudly on the dress, manners and possible origins of the people who went into the theatre. They had just had a fine time with a fat, effeminate young man and a very robust young woman.

"The police ought to do something about this," Blumenfeld said.

One of the loungers heard Blumenfeld speaking in Dutch.

"Hey!" he called. "Here are two of Oom Paul's boys! What d'you rhink of that?"

All eyes turned to Uys and Blumenfeld.

A coarse voice said, "No!"

"Heard them speak!" the first man said. "Bet they hide thei faces when the girls show their legs!"

There was a roar of laughter. If these were two Boers the men would really have a time with them. Blumenfeld raised his stick; he pointed it at the first man.

"You!" he shouted.

Startled, the man stepped back as though struck: then he recovered and moved forward again. He glared aggressively at Blumenfeld.

"Speaking to me, Dutchy?"

"Do you know the difference between Dutch and Afrikaans, you lout?"

Blumenfeld's stick tapped the man's chest.

A voice urged the man on:

UWI Libraries

"Smack him, Joe!"

"Yes, Joe," Blumenfeld said. "You start something. It will give me great pleasure to kick your backside till your nose bleeds!"

A joyous roar of laughter went up; but this time it was against Joe. Joe lowered his eyes before Blumenfeld's cold stare.

"The toff's challenged you, Joe!" a voice called.

Somebody close by, said:

"Hey! That's Ikey Blumenfeld, he's on the Reform Committee!"

Suddenly, all the men fell silent. Joe shuffled back, mumbling an apology.

"You'd better behave if you don't want to be run out of the diggings, Joe," Blumenfeld said.

Uys thought: So he's on the Reform Committee. The thought left him feeling lost and uncertain, depressed and cheated. But that's what I'm supposed to find out, he told himself. Yet it brought no comfort. There was something wrong in Blumenfeld being on the Reform Committee. The man was no enemy of the Boers. He followed Blumenfeld into the theatre. A leering voice called after them: "Easy on the girls Ikey!"

They took their seats in the second row. The lights were on and Uys looked about. So this is a theatre, he thought and wondered what would come next. Again the glittering display of wealth he had seen at the club, was about him. It was only in the back seats and up in the gallery that it was different. There, the likes of Joe, and all those others outside, were jammed together. They were loudly boisterous, coarsely exuberant. And some of them had bottles which they used frequently. Yet others, could be seen

UWI Libraries

through the doorway, jamming the bar while pretty barmaids relieved them of their money.

Somehow, to Uys as he sat there, it was all without reality. It seemed the lives of these people had no point, no basis from which it sprung. It gave him the feeling of looking and listening to shadows rather than people. Only Blumenfeld seemed real, a being of solidity, of bone and flesh. Yet even with Blumenfeld, there was something elusive, something to which one puts out a hand only to touch nothing. Did these people believe in God? Had they ever worked the earth? And when they went away from here, did they go to some special place called home? What did home mean to them? ... Blumenfeld was bringing his people here. Would he ever miss the land of his birth?

The lights dimmed. Men streamed through the door from the bar People clapped. The curtains parted to show a bare stage with only a piano. A man came on. He was wildly applauded. He held up his hands for silence but nobody paid him any attention. In the end, he roared his announcement to an unhearing audience. They applauded wildly as he went off. A man and woman came on. She was big and fat and the man was small and thin. The man sat at the piano, the woman leaned against it. The man ran his fingers over the keyboard. The noisy hall was hushed. In a hoarse, intimate voice, she sang:

(Fill in music hall songs of the period.)

At the end of the song, she called:

"Come on, sweethearts! Altogether now! As one voice, the hall joined in the chorus. Beside Uys, Blumenfeld, and about him, all the well dressed people, sang as lustily as the roughnecks in the gallery. While the crowd sang the chorus , a barmaid brought drink

UWL Libraries

for the singer and pianist. They raised them to the singing audience, then gulped them down. Then she began another song.

After the music hall songs, a tall, stooping man with a hooked nosé, piercing eyes, and a bald pate with a white fringe round its edge, played the piano. The gallery did not appreciate his music and Solly Joel, one of the mining kings, had to go on to the platform before there was enough silence for the pianist to be heard. The boxes and the front stalls loved the music. The back seats and the gallery listened in sullen silence.

Blumenfeld called an usher, wrote out a cheque for fifty pounds scribbled 'Brahms' Lullaby' on a piece of paper, and gave it to the usher. When the pianist ended his piece, the usher gave him the cheque and slip of paper. He read, nodded vaguely to the front row and played.

Blumenfeld leaned back and closed his eyes. And waves of music, waves of dreams, flowed from the singing notes .... A child rocked to sleep by its mother .... A child begging food from its mother .... A child, broken hearted, against its mother's knee .... A child, gay, joyously carefree, laughing with its mother .... Oh, mother, mother, what is mother? Oh mother, mother, why is mother? Go to sleep my little one; rest your head upon my breast. Go to sleep my little love .... Oh mother, mother, why is love? What is it? ....

Again, Uys felt an intruder in a very private, unknown, world; again he felt as he had felt when Blumenfeld had pointed out the two walls of his unfinished house. But this time the man was silent, his eyes closed, he had not spoken a word. Yet it was stronger now than earlier. His mind and heart shied away, he wished he was

UWL Libraries

not sitting beside this man. He felt ashamed, slightly disgusted, by the warm emotions this man radiated. It was alien to his Boer's nature and the cold, undemonstrative, puritanic hardness in which he had been nurtured. Were all Jews like this? Or was it that all Uitlanders were like this?

He was glad when the music ended and the pianist left the stage. But, almost immediately, his misery began again. The orchestra struck up and a row of young women danced on to the stage. For all the clothes they wore, they might as well have been naked. Their dresses were hardly dresses and their arms were bare so high that you could see right under their armpits as they turned! And you could see all their uncovered backs! He was restless and uncomfortable. They kicked their legs into the air. He would not look. He lowered his eyes. From the gallery and back seats, roars of joy went up. This was what they had come to see. Voices called to the girls to kick a little higher and show a little more. Another row of girls came on the stage. The women twisted their bodies suggestively, winked as they danced. Leering suggestions flew from back seats and gallery, coins were flung on the stage.

The devil's dance, Uys told himself. It is turning these men into savage, lustful animals. The devil's dance. He turned to Blumenfeld.

"I'll go now."

"I think so too."

They went out and walked slowly through the crowded streets, toward their hotel. It was very late but the life of the town was at its pitch. Lights glittered everywhere and the bars were jammed with drinkers. There was a cool touch to the air and the

UWI Libraries

stars were more brilliant than earlier.

"Let's stop here a minute," Blumenfeld said.

Uys wanted to go on but agreed. They went into a crowded, smoke filled place. In a far corner, a man pounded a piano. They pushed toward the bar. Blumenfeld ordered two beers. At the tables, men and women laughed, loved, sang and drank.

It is so everywhere here, Uys thought.

A woman climbed on top of the piano. She was young and good to look at. Men turned to her.

"Here I am!" she called. "To the highest bidder for the night!"

"What's that?" Uys asked.

"Selling herself," Blumenfeld said.

"What?"

"Not so bad now. They don't do it as much as they did in the early days."

A voice called: "Five pounds!" It was greeted by a jeer from the crowd.

Another said: "Fifteen!"

"But you can't allow that," Uys said.

"Twenty!"

"Thirty!"

They finished their beer and went out.

"Fifty!" It trailed after them.

In silence, they reached their hotel. Uys went to his room. The room facing his window was in darkness. He was glad. He undressed and got into bed. He turned out the light. In a while, it became too stuffy. He went to the window and opened it, letting in the faint noises of the outside. He went back to bed and tried

UWI Libraries

to sleep. But sleep would not come. Instead, all the strange and new happenings of this night danced through his mind - a bewildering mosaic of undigested experience .... The Jew, Blumenfeld, and his deep and easily shown feelings; Jemson, remarkably unlike a fighting man, small, delicately fashioned and suffering from something called piles; and all the riches of the Club; and the odd experience of people going on a stage and performing for others; and the women. God in heaven! The women; shameless, showing their bodies, showing all of themselves .... And the one in the bar, selling herself, selling herself with a smile on her lips.

At home, the sky would be clear and there would be silence and the stars. Peace .... Those naked women! ... What would he feel if Hettie Van As showed her body? .... He buried his head in his pillow and clenched his fists.

And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity.

UWC Libraries

Commandant Smit and Klaas de Jong, watched Uys Jansen as he pushed his cigarette into the long holder.

Smit thought: He not only looks like an Uitlander, he behaves like one. The months in Johannesburg had wrought a great change in the young Boer lad who had first visited him less than a year ago.

De Jong asked:

"How did you find out?"

"Blumenfeld," Uys said.

Commandant Smit said:

"You said he was a critic of Rhodes."

"He's still a member of the Reform Committee. Things get to him."

"He's right," de Jong said.

"How did you find this out?" the commandant asked.

"I told you."

"You only said 'Blumenfeld.' Explain it."

"I tell you, it's true."

"I still want to know the details, Jansen."

"You like Blumenfeld?" de Jong asked softly.

Uys took the holder from his lips, and lowered his head.

"He's a Jew, you know, an Uitlander, an enemy."

Stubbornly, without raising his head, Uys said:

"I told you a long time ago what he said to Jameson about Rhodes."

"You also said he said a clash was coming," the Commandant said.

"Better tell us," de Jong murmured softly. "There are times when the work we have to do isn't pleasant.. We understand that."

His head still lowered, Uys spoke in a low, unhappy voice:

UWI Libraries

"Mar - Blumenfeld has two rooms at the hotel. I often to up to his place and go in without knocking ...."

"Of course," de Jong said.

"I ... I went in. Men were talking in the other room and they did not hear me come in. The other door was slightly open. I was just going to knock and go in when a voice, not Blumenfeld's, said: 'We've got old Kruger now! He's closed the Vaal drift and so broken the London Convention. Britain is sending an ultimatum. Kruger i stubborn, he'll resist. There'll be war and Rhodes and the Cape will be behind England' ..... That's all. I came out as quickly as I could."

"No one saw or heard you?" the Commandant asked.

"No."

"The voice of that man - d'you know it, ever heard it before?"

Uys looked up and shook his head.

"Can't you even guess?" de Jong pressed.

"No. It could be any one of a number of people ...."

"But not Jameson?"

"No."

"Nor Hammond?"

"No."

"What about Frank Rhodes?"

"I don't think so."

"Sure?"

"I aan't be sure. He could be one of the number of people it might be."

De Jong turned to the commandant:

"Suppose we arrested Blumenfeld and tried to force the name out of him ...."

UWI Libraries

"There'll be such an uproar."

"He won't tell," Uys said. "I'm sure."

Suddenly, unexpectedly, de Jong asked Uys:

"Like some coffee?" Without waiting for an answer, he went out the back way.

Someone knocked at the proper door of the office.

"I'm busy!" Commandant Smit shouted. "Take everything to Captain Oosthuizen! I don't want to be disturbed!"

Footsteps moved away. Miraculously quick, de Jong returned with a pot of steaming coffee. From the tiny cupboard behind the Commandant's chair, he brought cups, sugar and biscuits. While he poured the coffee, de Jong said, looking at the Commandant:

"He ought to know what it's all about."

The Commandant nodded. "Tell him."

"You've done a wonderful piece of work, Jansen," de Jong said. He handed out the coffee. "Don't be put off by Commandant Smit's manner. He cannot get used to the changes our school make on those who pass through it. He wants them to look like Boers disguised as Uitlanders, forgetting the Uitlanders would also be able to see that if he does."

Smiling an apology, the Commandant said:

"I still expected you to be the same as the day I first saw you."

"Now about this business," de Jong said. "It's all part of the railway war between Rhodes and us. Rhodes' right to fix the fares within our Republic, ended earlier this year. His plan is to have a railway from the Cape up to Beira, and later, much further north. He calls the north 'My North.' Our railway runs the Durban-Delagoa route. Now get this clear. Our line is shorter than the Rhodes line from the Cape

UWI Libraries

get a good share of the business. But Rhodes cut his prices to such an extent that if we were to compete, we would lose heavily. To fight back, our government decided that since we now could fix rates even for Rhodes' railway in our own land, we would pay him back by charging three times the normal rate between the Vaal and the Rand. As you can see, this is all part of the fight between Rhodes and Oom Paul.

"Well, the Cape merchants, as we expected, didn't like this. But instead of pointing out to Rhodes that it was his price cutting that brought them to their sorry state, they unloaded their goods at our border, and to avoid paying our rates, brought their goods to the Rand by ox wagon through the Vaal Drift. So, the President and the Raad decided to close the Drift. They knew there would be some protest among the English, so they would not have paid any attention to the ultimatum - and we would have played right into Rhodes' hand, and had war. But now, thanks to you, Oom Paul will know what to do. You've saved us from war, Jansen .... That's why we pressed you so hard. We wanted to be sure you had heard right."

"You've done a great piece of work," the Commandant said.

Uys relaxed. A warm, satisfying glow illumined his mind and body. Yet, the memory of the sharp suspciousness with which these two had first met him still lingered at the back of his mind. Why had they behaved like that? Didn't they trust him? He would ask them outright!

"You didn't seem to believe me," he said. He got bolder. "I felt, when I came in, that you didn't trust me. Why?"

De Jong looked quickly at the Commandant and spoke as though to forestall him:

"We had to make sure, Jansen. Remember, it means the difference between war and peace. Believe me, we are more than

UWI Libraries

satisfied with what you've done. Better still, you've served your country well. The President will hear about it, have no fear."

Somehow, though de Jong's explanation was reasonable, Uys felt vaguely dissatisfied. And the thought of Blumenfeld was a disturbir shadow at the back of his mind.

"What do you want me to do now?" he asked.

"Carry on as before," the Commandant said.

"Perhaps Jansen would like a little rest," de Jong said. "Perhaps he'd like to go back to the farm to see his family."

"Yes," Uys said eagerly. "I should likethat." It would give him a chance to be away from all this, to relax, ease up his nerves. He wouldn't have to be on the alert all the time. Things were weighing a bit heavily here. "I should like that," he repeated. It would give him a chance to forget Blumenfeld for a while.

"The Commandant nodded: "I think you deserve it .... All right, go home for a week."

"Thank you," Uys said. He had forgotten what Hettie Van As looked like. "And when I get back, do you want me to come here?"

"No. Just carry on till you have something important or till you hear from us."

Uys got up. De Jong moved toward him and smiled.

"Anything else you've noticed? You know, the kind of thing that makes you say, 'Now why is this like that?' or 'This may mean so and so', nothing concrete .... Can you think of anything?"

Uys thought for a while.

"Yes; two things: I think they are fighting about something in the Reform Committee."

"Why?"

"Blumenfeld returned angry from the last two meetings. He is

UWI Libraries

not easily angered."

"And the second?"

"There's something going on about arms. I don't know what, but I've heard stray words about guns and barrels when I've suddenly gone into a room."

"Nothing more?"

"No."

"Well, good rest and good luck, Jansen." De Jong shot out his hands and gripped Uys'. His face creased in a rare smile. "We kno just how hard this has been on you."

The Commandant put his left arm about Uys' shoulders as he shook his hand.

Uys walked slowly down Johannesburg's main street. So he'd stopped a war. It did not mean much to him. But they'd bested Rhodes, and that was something. He'd helped in that. He went into a bar. It was late afternoon, but still too early for the diggers to have stopped working, so there were only a pair of old men leaning against the counter. He went to a corner and sat down. A plump, smiling barmaid whose face he could not remember came up.

"Alone today, Mister Jansen?"

His lips parted in an automatic smile.

"Yes .... A beer please."

"A bit down?"

He looked at her full face. Quite pretty.

"Not terribly."

"Haven't dropped a packet, have you?"

"What's that?"

"You know - lost money."

"Oh, no," Uys smiled.

UWI Libraries

That's good.... All the girls like your crowd. Never take liberties unless invited. They say you don't even take liberties when invited, Mister Jansen."

Uys tried to put some life into his smile. "Bring a sandwich with the beer."

"Anything special?"

"No. Ham or beef. Anything."

The girl went off, swaying her plump hips. Soon, very soon, h would be seeing Hettie Van As. And he wasn't afraid any longer. He would go up to the house and ask for her. And if Old Tant Elsie Van As was there, he would ask her straight out what she had against him. An old woman could not forever stand between him and Hettie. He was not a child to be afraid of the anger of an old woman. He would find out what was behind this hatred of Tant Elsie Van As against all Jansens. The plump barmaid was beside him.

"Oi! Mister Jansen. Now if I'd been a snake. I say, you are feeling blue, aren't you? Almost makes a girl want to cheer you up."

He looked up at her face, then lowered his head. He was still not used to the invitation in a woman's eyes. It left him floundering and fearful, a man groping in the dark, encircled by unknown pitfalls, anyone of which might hold death.

"I'm leaving today," he said hurriedly.

"For good?"

"No, only for a week."

"A change, like."

"That's it; a change, like."

Her face told him her interest had passed. Now she was being polite to a customer. Two men came in and she moved toward their table. He finished his beer and sandwich and went out into the

UWI Libraries

partially deserted streets. When he reached the hotel, Blumenfeld had not returned. Either at his diggings or at the office of Consolidated Goldfields, he thought. Those were the two places from which Blumenfeld worked. Uys was glad he was not back. He went up to his room and wrote a note.

Dear Mark,

I am feeling tired and depressed with Joh'burg and long for the country. I will go to see those burgher relatives of mine. I will return in a week.

Uys.

He pushed the note under Blumenfeld's door, made sure that all his property was safely locked up, then went dowstairs. Old Mister Thomas was at his little desk.

"I am going away for a week, Mister Thomas. If you let my room, Mister Blumenfeld will tell me. My things are in the room. I give you my key. I hold you responsible."

"What an idea, Mister Jansen!"

"Goodbye, Mister Thomas."

He went out and walked toward the outskirts of the town, in the direction of Seisma's. His horse and his old Boer clothes were there.

De Jong said, stroking his beard:

"He's touchy, you want to be careful."

The Commandant said:

"He stayed away for so long .... And he stepped right into the centre of it all. The very first night!" He shook his head. "Right at the heart of the matter."

De Jong laughed. "Just luck. You pray for a good spy and

UWI Libraries

when you get one you don't like it."

"Is it really luck?"

"Yes .... He delivered the goods, didn't he?"

"But why didn't he keep in touch?"

"Nothing to report .... Let him be, man! When there was anything, we got it. And what a report! Jansen's a find."

"He's changed," Smit said.

"Jesus, but you are difficult!" De Jong said. "You train a man to behave like an Uitlander, let him loose among them, and then get frightened when he behaves as he has been taught to."

"It isn't that," Smit frowned. "It's not his behaving. It's his being like them. He now drinks and smokes."

De Jong walked over to the door and leaned against it.

"That boy has had a hard time, Smit. You and I receive information and sift it and test it, we're on the outside of this Uitlande town. We look on. And we send others into the town, but we remain outside, so it does not touch us .... For us, Blumenfeld is just an Uitlander, a name, a Jew. For Jansen he's become a person, a friend Don't you see? It's been hard for him."

"You, yourself, are changing, Klaas," the Commandant said, looking searchingly at De Jong.

De Jong's mouth twisted into a bitter grimace. He said softly:

"I do not sit at a desk all day, Hans."

The Commandant flushed, lowered his head and stared at the top o his desk. After an interval, he looked up, a tired smile tugging at his lips.

"Sorry," he said. "This kind of work gets at a man. I don't like it. Fighting and being a policeman is one thing, but this twisting like a snake and lying ...." He spread his hands and shrugged.

UWI Libraries

"Someone must do it," de Jong murmured. He pulled himself up, squared his shoulders. "It's Pretoria for me. Oom Paul must know .... Remember, Hans, like you and I, Jansen is doing his best."

"You know," Smit said broodingly. "I sometimes wonder if it is worthwhile throwing our young folk into the way of sin and temptation

"Why?"

"I sometimes wonder if we can hold Rhodes."

"Stop it!" de Jong said briskly. "You're getting Rhodes on the brain .... Well, I'm off. See you tomorrow."

"I'm sorry about Jansen," Smit said.

"I understand. It all seems hopeless sometimes. But Jansen's information shows it isn't. We can fight them in their own way....' De Jong laughed suddenly. "We've won a victory, man! What are we miserable about! We're a step ahead of the enemy .... See you tomorrow."

His felt hat pulled over his eyes, his hands pushed deep into the pockets of his khaki trousers, de Jong slipped out by the back door and made his way to Seisma's. From there, transformed, he would board the Pretoria train, and make his way to a modest house in a wide street where a massive old man, with heavy bags under his eyes, sits on a stoop receiving visitors, drinking coffee, and smoking his interminable pipe.

The night was black and starless when Uys Jansen reached the family farm. The dogs knew him and did not bark. They fussed about his feet. The house was in darkness. Eager though he was to see the family, he decided not to wake them.

He led his horse to the stable, then, groping in the dark, he climbed to the top of the mountain of hay. As he lay down, the warm smell of hay, the familiar smell of animals, of earth, new-

UWI Libraries

turned earth, reached him. Winter was going and it was comforting.

He closed his eyes. Home ....

UWI Libraries

6.

From a long, long way off, it seemed, the noise came to him, insisting, till his consciousness could resist it no longer. He opened his eyes and stared up at the dark rafters. The voices were immediately below.

"Why did you not tell us before?" That was his mother's voice.

"But where can he be?" That was his sister Sara.

"There's his saddle." Oom Stefan.

He moved to the edge of the mountain of hay and looked down.

"I only saw it now, missus," the kaffir boy said.

"Kaffirs see nothing," Oom Stefan said. He was as straight as ever, and his long white beard was silken.

"But where's Uys?" Sara repeated.

"Here," Uys said.

They looked up, startled. He edged toward the ladder near the wall and climbed down. He checked his mounting excitement and moved toward his mother. She offered him her cheek.

"Why did you sleep there?"

"It was late when I came. I didn't want to wake you."

Sara stared curiously at him. Her look made him feel a stranger

"What've you done with your hair?" Oom Stefan came closer to peer at him. "Where's your beard?"

Sara's boy, young Koos, came running into the place. He stopped dead in his tracks when he saw Uys. Uys laughed and went toward him. The boy took a few steps back. Uys stopped and turned to the grown-ups of the family. Why did they all look so oddly at him?

"What's the matter?" Oom Stefan asked.

"You sick?" his mother asked.

Why wouldn't Sara speak to him? Nobody would think he'd been away for nearly a year. Why did Sara stare at him?

UWI Libraries

"Nothing wrong," he said a little heavily. "I'm just glad to see you."

"We can't stand here all day," his mother said.

"He's hungry," Oom Stefan said.

They moved toward the big kitchen. Oom Stefan walked near him, watching his face with disconcerting intensity. To get his mind off Oom Stefan, he asked:

"Where are the others?"

Again that curious stare from Sara.

"In the fields, of course," his mother said.

Yes, of course, it was stupid of him to ask. Where could they be but in the fields?

"Are you home to stay now?" Those were Sara's first words.

He took his old seat at the big table and looked at his sister. How different she was from the women of Johannesburg. You saw her ar up to the elbow, brown and sinewy; you saw her neck and face - and that was all of her body you saw. You wondered whether she had bosoms or whether she was flat-chested. You had no way of knowing.

"I'm here for a week," he said, as she pushed a mug of coffee toward him.

His mother sat near him, carving pieces of bread from the immense Boer loaf. Oom Stefan, at the far end of the table, still had that cold, questioning look in his eyes. What was it? His fingers trembled when he raised the mug to his lips. He put it down without drinking, reached into his pocket and brought out cigarettes. Over the dancing flame of the match, he saw his sister's face. He looked quickly at his mother, then at Oom Stefan. Instantly, he saw that lighting his cigarette had been a mistake. He should have prepared them for it. But he hadn't even thought about it. Smoking was a habit now. Now. When he had left home he'd not smoked. Still

UWI Libraries

they stared.. What did they want? Is this really home? Each evening when he had seen Blumenfeld there had been more warmth in Blumenfeld's greeting than in the greeting of his mother, sister and uncle .... They seemed to want something from him. He felt it. They willed him to say something. What? Three wills commanding .... What?

"What is it, mother?" There was a hint of appeal in his voice.

"You've been away long, Uys."

Had her voice softened? He was not sure. He gulped down his coffee and got up. He had not touched any of the bread.

"I'm going for a ride," he said, going to the door.

He walked away feeling their eyes on him. They would talk about him as soon as he was out of hearing. Baffled and hurt by this strange welcome, he entered the stable. Sara's boy, Koos, was working on some harness in a corner. Seeing him, the boy turned his back and buried his head over his work. The kaffir boy was cleaning the stable.

"My horse, you!" Uys yelled at the black boy.

Startled, the boy gaped at him, shocked into immobility. Uys jumped at him and pushed hard against his chest. The boy grabbed at a horse's flank, missed, and sat down directly under its belly.

"Get up! Saddle my horse!"

Quickly, the black boy jumped up, grabbed the saddle and worked with quick, frightened fingers, keeping a safe distance between himself and this angry white man. Young Koos was now frankly watching, and it was Uys who ignored him.

As he rode away, Uys felt better. The passage with the kaffir had relieved him somewhat. He urged the horse left, down to the stream. There, he washed his face and wiped it with the sleeve of his shirt. He ran his damp fingers through his hair, smoothing it down.

UWI Libraries

He rode on, to the right, up the sloping land, till he was on the ridge that ran like a wall on the one side of the farm. He kept on along the ridge. Far across the dry, flat earth, men guided three ox-drawn ploughs. Young kaffirs would be leading the oxen. And two of the ploughs would be driven by kaffirs; the third would be handled either by Johan or Niekerk, Sara's husband. Yes, it would soon be time for sowing.

He kept on. Now he could see, far away, near the horizon, the cattle grazing. Nearer, at the cattle kraals and dip, men were at work. Again they would all be kaffirs, except for Niekerk or Johan, whichever one was not at the ploughing. He rode on along the ridge till the farmhouse, gray and sprawling, the men ploughing, the men at the cattle dip, were all out of sight, till he reached the boundary of the Jansen lands. Then he turned right, skirted a hillock, and pulled up. There, across a vast stretch of ploughed land, leaning against a sloping hill, was the Van As farmstead. Hettie Van As was there. He would see her in spite of old Tant Elsie. He would go right up to the house and ask for her, and if Tant Elsie told him to go away, he would ask her why. He would ask her why she was against the Jansens. He spurred the horse on.

His resolution wavered as he neared the farmhouse .... Better go back Uys. See Hettie first. Ask her if this is the best thing to do. She may be against it .... But I've only got a week here. I may wait for her along the ridge day after day, and she may not come riding that way. She may not know I have returned. I may wait there till the week is up. And then it will be too late .... Now is the time.

A kaffir maid came out of the back door then went in again when she saw him. He dismounted and waited. A buxom, middle aged woman

UWI Libraries

came slowly out of the kitchen .... This cannot be Tant Elsie. When Oom Stefan was a boy on the trek, Tant Elsie was a young woman, so she had to be older than this.

"A good day to you, Madam."

"Good day, sir." She rubbed her hands on her apron. "If you are looking for my menfolk, they are out on the potato fields. There is a lot of work to do."

Menfolk? There was only Tant Elsie and Hettie; apart from the kaffirs, that is. Hettie's father had been killed early in the war of 1880-1. She had told him so.

"I would like to see Miss Hettie," Uys said uncertainly. "Miss Hettie Van As."

The woman frowned then smiled.

"You mean the old lady's granddaughter."

"Yes," Uys said eagerly.

"But they are in Pretoria. At least, that's what the old lady said. She didn't want the girl to be here alone in case she died."

"Pretoria?" What was this woman talking about?

"Yes. The old lady sold the farm to us ...."

Sold the farm .... So they really were gone. He felt hollow, unalive, incapable of emotion. Hettie gone. Pretoria.

" .... I still don't feel good about it. Oh, I don't mean this farm. We paid full value for it. I'm thinking of those Uitlanders who bought our farm near Johannesburg. We took too much money for that and I'm sure it is wrong ...."

Gone. Did she think of him when she went away? And where was she now? What was she doing? Gone. The woman's words washed against his consciousness as water against a dyke. Gone.

" .... Van Heerde, that is my husband, says it is their affair if

UWI Libraries

they are willing to pay so much. He says the President agrees with him. Paul Kruger is a good man, but I say it is to God that we must make our account. And I'm sure He does not want us to take too much money even from Uitlanders ...."

Uys said "Yes," quickly, though he had not heard a word of what the woman had said. "Do you know where they are in Pretoria? Didn't the young woman leave a message as to how they could be found?"

The woman stopped a new onrush of words and looked closely at the young man. Really, being alone so much made one inconsiderate of other people. This young man looked very unhappy. He must be very in love with the girl. Why didn't she leave word for him?

"I am sorry," she said. "They left no word." The misery on his face evoked a rush of sympathy in her. Perhaps he would like to talk about the girl. "Perhaps you would like a cup of coffee ...."

"No, thank you very much ... You are sure there was no word?"

"No word."

She watched him ride away then went in to the loneliness of her work. Poor young man. He must be very much in love. Wonder why the girl didn't leave some word for him. World is changing: in the old days - her young days - girls were straightforward with young men.

UWI Libraries

7.

Uys pulled up and dismounted. It was here they had first met. On a day like this it was: winter giving way to spring; the earth turned for spring sowing; the parched landscape, flat and rolling away, beginning to show signs of green; and far to the east, a dark thunder cloud moving westward from the horizon; a day like this it was, but sunset. He'd ridden up and seen her leaning against that tree over there. Crooked old tree.

He walked over to the old tree. Did they speak that first time? He could not tell. But sometime, at some point in their meetings, they had spoken. When? What did they say? Did he tell her he loved her? When was it she had told him of Tant Elsie's bitterness against the Jansens? What did they say to each other? How did she look at him?

So often they'd met and he could not remember a single thing.

Had he ever been close enough to smell her? He's smelled so many women in Johannesburg since. Did she smell like any of them? Do Boer women use scent? No, of course not.

Did he ever say to her: I love you? .... What had he been like before he had gone to Johannesburg? Look at Johan and you will know. He sat at the foot of the old tree and stared away to the western horizon.

"Hettie Van As .... Hettie Van As. Listen to me, Hettie Van As. My name is Uys Jansen. You know me. We've met here often. Perhaps I did not know how to let you know my feeling then. Perhaps I did not know the right words. Now I do. I've been away and returned. Remember, I told you I would go away and come back. Well, I've come back and I know how to tell you. I love you, Hettie Van As, I love you. I have seen things and I will get things for you, because I love you. You will be my wife and you and I will live together, because I

UWI Libraries

"So it's you. When did you come?"

Again he felt disappointed with the casualness of the greeting. No doubt he was unreasonable. This was the Boer way, the way of his people. He wanted it this way. He could not understand his disappointment. But it was there, unreasonable but real.

"Last night I slept in the stable."

"Seen anybody?"

"Mother, Sara and Oom Stefan .... What's wrong?"

"Didn't they tell you?"

"No."

"Niekerk will."

Then it was something important. Niekerk was head of the famil married to the eldest daughter. He came next to Karel, and Karel wa in Pretoria.

Uys watched Johan's face. He was still the same. He'll tell me.

"What is it? Sara looked as if I were the devil."

Johan shaded his eyes as he looked up to guage the time by the sun. A miserable sort of a sun, darting in and out of clouds travelling fast from the north. He shifted his eyes back to Uys.

"Niekerk will tell you."

"Niekerk's stooge!" Uys said with all the contempt he could muster.

Johan grabbed at him. He swayed away then flung his body at Johan's head. They went down in a flurry of dust. The horse moved away. Uys was on top. He pinned Johan's arms with his knees and leaned far forward to avoid his kicking feet.

"I'll kill you!" Johan said bitterly. "Damn you! You stay away for Christmas and come back and think you can do as you like.

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I'm going to kill you, Bastard!"

Sit tight, Uys! Hold on! Remember he nearly did kill you the last time he got loose. You were in bed for a week. Remember Uys.

Johan twisted and turned. His feet shot up. Uys leaned forward, his face low over Johan's blonde head.

"You'll die when I get up!"

A mighty heave nearly upset him. He put his hands on Johan's throat and pressed lightly.

"Stop it or I choke you!"

Johan spat. The spittle spread over the left side of Uys's face. Rage welled up in Uys. He smacked Johan across the face. Again. Again. Johan's body heaved up.

He'll be free soon, unless I do something.

Uys grabbed a fistful of Johan's hair and pulled. With the other hand he increased the pressure on Johan's throat.

Be calm, Uys. Don't get angry. He'll have you if you do.

"Listen, Johan! I'll get up if you promise not to beat me. I'm sorry for what I said about Niekerk. You know I didn't mean it."

"You hit me."

"Only because you spat on me. Wouldn't you do the same if I spat on you? And wouldn't you use your fist? I used my open hand. Now wouldn't you use your fist?"

"I would!"

"Well, there you are .... You promise?"

"No!"

"If I get up you are going to beat me. You are stronger than I am. Once you nearly killed me. This time you might. I'm afraid of that."

"You're a coward!"

"I've got you."

UWI Libraries

"I'll wait till you get up, then I'll kill you!"

"I know you will, so I'm not going to get up."

"You must."

Faintly, from the house, came the sound of the horn, signalling the noonday break for food. The kaffirs had all stopped working and looked on.

"I'm hungry," Johan said.

"Better tell the kaffirs to go."

"You tell them."

"Go on, you!" Uys shouted. "Go on!"

Suddenly, Johan heaved. Uys tugged viciously at the hair. Johan screwed up his face in pain.

"I'll take you hides off if you don't go!" Johan yelled at the kaffirs.

In a bunch, they moved off to their huts in the far western corner of the Jansen land.

"Well?" Uys said.

"I can wait."

"I'm not going to let you. If you don't promise, I'm going to start choking you. I'm going to choke you will you lose your senses. Then I'm going to leave you."

"I'll still get you."

"No. While you are lying here, I'll be riding to Johannesburg. Please promise."

"You're afraid of me?"

"Yes."

"And you didn't mean that about Niekerk?"

"No."

"And you're sorry you hit me?"

"Yes. And I've brought something for you."

UWI Libraries

"All right."

"You promise?"

"Yes."

"On the Bible?"

"On the Bible."

Uys jumped up and moved away quickly. Johan got up more slowly. There was admiration in the smile he turned on Uys.

"One day you will not be so clever and I will get you."

Uys trembled. He was afraid. You're afraid, Uys. Supposing he hamd't promised, what would you have done? Don't do it again, Uys; never again.

He looked at Johan. And his brother was a stranger: a stranger dangerous to cross, even in play. You've found out what you wanted to know- it was all about your absence at Christmas - but don't do it again, Uys. The risk is too great.

"Come on, I'm hungry," Johan said.

Uys walked beside his brother to their horses. He must work out some explanation about last Christmas. He couldn't tell them he'd gone to a Christmas-eve party with Blumenfeld, that he'd got drunk for the first time in his life, gone to bed at dawn, and slept till Christmas evening. He had meant to ride home early on Christmas morning, but there had been that party. He couldn't tell them that .... And still there was no calming the trembling of his body. Supposing ....? He looked at his brother as the horses moved off. Why was he not tender and gentle, like Blumenfeld?

Side by side, the twins rode home to the noonday meal; and one was small and dark, and the other was big and blonde. And the small one trembled; and the big one was calm.

UWI Libraries

He followed Johan in. They were all there, at their places. And Niekerk at the head of the table and Sara dishing up. And all their eyes on him. He touched Niekerk's huge hand cursorily and went to his old place, on the right of the head of the table. They stood up and he lowered his head with the rest.

Niekerk prayed: "Dear God, we thank You for the food we are about to eat; we thank You for our good health. Bless this house and all who live here, bless the land that the crop may be good. And lead us, Thy children, that we may live by Thy laws. Amen."

They sat down. They waited for Niekerk. He had to start the eating. The boy, Koos, had his eyes fixed on his father's right hand, hovering over its spoon. Niekerk picked up the spoon and pushed it into his food. That was the signal. They ate the meat, potatoes and gravy in complete silence.

It was only with the coffee and fatcakes that conversation began. Now is the time, Uys thought, as all eyes were turned to him. Better come in first, Uys. Get in your word first.

"Well, Uys?" Niekerk said.

"This is secret," Uys said with an importance he did not feel. "None of this is to be talked about." He looked at young Koos. "Understand?"

Yes, he had them. He could see it by their faces. They were interested. Now, how to begin? Shock them! That's it. Shock them!

"There may soon be war between us and the Uitlanders." He paused and looked at the faces about him. Yes, that has shocked them all right. Even the boy had stopped his guzzling.

"No!" It was Sara; she stared anxiously at her husband.

Afraid he would go and be killed, Uys thought and felt sorry

UWI Libraries

for her. It wasn't such a big lie either. It might yet happen. Blumenfeld thought so.

"Why do you say that?" Niekerk asked slowly.

"My job has been to spy against the Uitlanders," Uys said. "That's why I couldn't come home at Christmas. On Christmas eve I found out a plot which might have led to war." He thought: they may ask Karel. But Karel wouldn't know when I'd found out the closing of the Drift might lead to war. "I had to make sure and it took me all Christmas."

"What was the plot?" Johan asked eagerly.

"Oom Paul had ordered the closing of the Vaal Drift because the Cape merchants were sending their goods by ox wagon through it to avoid paying our railway charges."

"Well, why not?" Niekerk asked. "It is Republican land."

"Yes, but Rhodes got the English Government to protest. He says we were breaking a convention."

"What is that?" Oom Stefan wanted to know.

"I think it is like a treaty."

"That Paul Kruger is a fool!" Oom Stefan said bitterly. "He's been on trek; he should know you lose your freedom once you start making treaties with the English." The old man stroked his beard and recalled his days as a boy on trek. "On trek my father, your grandfather, and my Oom Koos, used to say the English are devils. They said we should have nothing to do with them. Paul Kruger was on trek. He should know that. We'll soon have no country if he's allowed to go on with his treaties. I'm against the man!"

"Karel said he couldn't help it," Niekerk said.

"Couldn't help it!" Oom Stefan shook with rage. "Karel's just another one. It's all this politicking! Government and taxes and

UWI Libraries

money! We lived without these things before and the country was better off! It's all Paul Kruger's doing!"

Their mother said: "Paul Kruger is a good man, Stefan."

"What d'you know about it Lennie? You're a woman." Oom Stefan pushed out his lower lip and sulked. Little these young people understood what was going on. They hadn't been on trek; they hadn't fought the kaffirs; they inherited a peaceful land. And now they were letting the English take it from them. All this nonsense about money ....

"Go on, Uys," Johan said.

"Our government knew the English would protest about the Drift," Uys continued, "and they were not going to open it. I found out the English were hoping the President would ignore their protest so that they would have an excuse for war."

"What I want to know," Niekerk said, "is the Vaal Drift ours or theirs?"

"It's when you start asking questions like that that you lose your land," Oom Stefan said disgustedly. These young people would never understand that the only way to deal with the English is like with the kaffirs. They should send a Commando to the Drift with orders to shoot every Englishman in sight. All this nonsense about treaties .... He got up and stumped out in a rage. At the door, he realized he would miss the rest of Uys' story, so he returned to his seat.

"So now the President will open the Drift?" Lennie Jansen asked looking at her son.

Uys nodded. He said: "If I had come home at Christmas we might be preparing for war now."

"But Karel is in the Raad and he came home," Sara said.

"Uys has done more than all the Raad put together," Oom Stefan

UWI Libraries

snapped.

"My work is different from Karel's," Uys said.

"I should like to do the same work as Oom Uys," the boy, Koos, said, suddenly very full of hero-worship.

"Hush!" his mother said sharply.

"And you live in the Uitlander town?" Lennie Jansen looked anxiously at her son.

"Yes," Uys said.

"But I understand they don't like burghers," Niekerk said.

"I'm not supposed to be a burgher," Uys said.

Niekerk looked blank.

Uys said: "To find out what's going on among them, I have to live with them."

"With them?" his mother asked.

"Yes. As one of them. I've got to make friends with them, or, at least, pretend to. That is the only way I can find out things."

"Do you dress like them?" Johan's face cracked in a broad smile as he remembered the glass-eyed Uitlander who had wanted to kill them.

"Yes."

"With a glass in your eye?" He burst out laughing.

"Then you must be like them, eat with them," his mother said slowly, groping toward the meaning of all this.

"They drink and I hear their women ---" there was horror on Sara's face. "Then you must live in sin," she finished.

"Does that mean you have to say you are an Uitlander?" Niekerk asked.

"Yes," Uys said. The trend of the talk disturbed him.

"Then you are lying all the time," his mother said. "Disowning your folk and blood and lying to those whose bread you eat."

UWI Libraries

This he had said to himself, often when with Blumenfeld; now his mother was saying it to him. He gave her the answer he had given himself.

"I'm doing it for my country, mother. I'm serving my people."

"A shame to your country!" Oom Stefan said. "A sin on your people! In my young days no one was ashamed of being a Boer .... It's all that Paul Kruger's doing!" Suddenly, surprising even himself, Oom Stefan felt waves of rage growing in him, tides of anger washed his mind and body till he shook. His parched face turned blood red, his eyes stung. He could sit there no longer. He would not listen to this. He grabbed his coffee, spilling some, and stalked out.

Uys looked after his old uncle. That was his father's brother, the man at whose knees he had grown up, who had, sitting in the warm sun in winter and the cool shade in summer, taught him to love and cherish his folk and his land; Oom Stefan had taught him about those ancestors of the trek, those wonderful old men, Kasper and Koos Jansen, and about grandma Anna Jansen. He felt, suddenly, as a boy who had been slapped in the face for doing what he had been told to do. And, as with such a boy, there was anger too. He looked at the cold, suspcious faces about him.

"I did not choose to do this work. Karel asked me to and all of you agreed." And as he thought of it, his anger increased. "Do you think it was easy!"

He pushed back his chair and went to the door.

"Uys," Niekerk called.

Uys faltered, then kept on going. To hell with them. He'd come back because he thought they would understand. Well, they didn't. To hell with them.

"Uys!" Niekerk's voice was sharper.

Uys be damned! I'm not a child any more .... He passed Oom

UWI Libraries

Stefan on his bench in the sun and kept on, down toward the little stream. When he reached the stream, his anger had passed and he felt strangely depressed and hollow. He sat on a boulder near the stream and stared away with unseeing eyes. The cloud-flecked sky was clearing and there was brightness over the land.

I want to go back, Uys felt. I want to go back and be with them. Be with them as I was before I left here. They are my family; this is my home.

He hurried back and went to the kitchen. Only his mother and Sara were there.

"Niekerk?" he asked, looking at Sara.

"You should be ashamed of yourself," Sara said.

His mother stopped kneading her dough and looked at him.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"Better tell Niekerk that," Sara snapped and turned her back.

Worriedly, Uys thought: really, it's something wrong with me, not them. But what?

"Uys."

He turned his head and met her searching eyes.

"Yes, mother?"

"You have been good?"

Good. What did she mean .... He recalled that, at other times when he was younger and had been on some journey with Karel, she had asked this same question. Yes; and he'd known what she meant then. Did she mean the same thing now? .... Better answer her: she's looking at you.

"Yes, mother."

Satisfied, she turned away and carried on with her kneading.

"Niekerk ploughing?" he asked Sara.

"Yes." She sounded more friendly, more like the sister he had

UWI Libraries

remembered while away. She looked sideways at him. "You left your coffee. I kept it warm."

He smiled his thanks. Her cheeks reddened and she looked away hurriedly. Casually, she pushed the coffee toward him across the table. She bent toward the oven and brought out a plate with two warm fatcakes left on it. He waited for her to look at him as she put it in front of him. He wanted to smile and thank her with his eyes, to see her smile. But she kept her face averted and turned away quickly, as though ashamed of this show of emotion. He wondered if even Blumenfeld, for all his power to make people respond, would be able to get a smile out of Sara. And at the far end of the table his mother worked. He had missed the quiet in Johannesburg. Now, he was acutely, uneasily, aware of it .... And what would Sara look like, dressed as one of these Uitlander girls? Did Afrikaner girls ever look at men as the barmaid had looked at him yesterday, with such open invitation? Before they were married, did she look at Niekerk like that? Would Hettie Van As look at him like that? I'm going to Pretoria and I'm going to find her, he decided.

He looked at his mother and saw her eyes darting away from his face. What now?

"The Van As people have gone," she said.

"Yes." Sara said and turned to look at his face.

"I know," he said.

"Know?" his mother was surprised.

"I went there this morning."

"To the house?"

"Yes."

"No Jansen has ever been to the Van As house," Sara said.

UWI Libraries

"What will you do now?" his mother asked.

"The woman there told me they are in Pretoria."

Sara said: "I think it is a shame for you to run after that girl if that old woman thinks they are too good for us!"

"Did she leave any word?" his mother asked.

He thought: leave it alone; it's my affair. He remembered that he had started it. He had talked to them about it in those days when he had first met Hettie Van As. Nothing was private then. Everybody talked about their affairs. He decided: I don't want them to talk about it, I don't want them to talk about any of my affairs.

"Not a word?" his mother repeated.

"I did not ask."

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

"Nothing."

"Are there Afrikaner girls in the Uitlander town?" Sara looked inspired.

"Yes," Uys said. He wondered whether there were Afrikaner girls in Johannesburg.

Sara looked at her mother, and her eyes said: there, he's met someone.

"The Afrikaners in the Uitlander town," his mother said, "are they ..... like us?"

"Yes," Uys said.

He got up and went out, setting across the fields in the direction where he had seen Niekerk ploughing that morning. He moved fast, as he had always moved here, taking long strides, his arms swinging freely. And the flat, rolling land was before him, greenish

UWI Libraries

brown, and sweeping along to the meeting point of earth and sky, far, far away .... O Boer land! O Fatherland! I love you above all else. Though I may wander throughout the world, though health and wealth may come to me; if I'm not home close to your heart, that health and wealth will hold no joy. O Boer land, place of my birth, I love you above all else. So they sing a love song to the earth. And they sing it with their hearts. And they sing it with their minds. And they sing it with all the strength contained in their bodies.

And as he walked, Uys felt the song, and because of it, and because he realized, ashamedly, that he was winded, he stopped and looked back at the house. Grayish white, it sprawled low in a hollow bit of the lap of the earth; and behind it, a long way behind and merged with the horizon, the black mountain - Swart Berg - reared its points. And over it, and over the ploughed lands, and over the grazing lands and over the cattle pens and sheep pens, and over the native huts in the valley, and over the fruit trees; over all the silent land, was the sky. Not an ordinary sky. A sky of distance. A sky in which a man looks up and knows he is looking very, very far away, because there the blue of the sky is further away from the land than anywhere else on the earth.

Uys Jansen felt close to the spirit of his forebears as he stood there, slightly winded and looking at the house where he was born. His heart, his blood and his senses, all said: this land is mine. The roots are deep; blood roots, love roots, hate roots, need roots; they are very deep.

UWI Libraries

Niekerk said:

"See that they plough all this field tonight. We are behind."

Uys nodded and Niekerk went off to the wheatlands where a group of natives worked alone.

Uys stepped behind the plough and gripped its handles firmly. He had done this often, year after year, and knew how.

"Right!" he shouted to the black boy in front.

The boy tugged at his reins. The oxen moved forward. Uys brought his weight down on the plough. Steer a steady furrow, brother: a straight line. The earth rolled over, damp and warm. Deeper, brother. He brought down all his weight on the handles, half-riding them. Unexpectedly, the blade stuck, tilting the handles high. For a second Uys swung up in the air. He let go of the handles, missed his footing, and sat down on the new-turned earth.

Damn! What could have done it?

"Wo-o-a!" he shouted.

The native boy came to a stop and waited. Dusting his seat, he went forward. Suddenly, he realized the other natives were looking. They hadn't stopped their work so he couldn't shout at them. In a rush of sudden anger, he shouted at the black boy leading his pair:

"You! Don't go so fast, bloody fool!"

"Yes boss."

He knew it was not the boy's fault, and this angered him more. And he was conscious of the eyes of the other blacks. They knew it wasn't the boy's fault.

UWI Libraries

"Turn," Uys said. "We will start again."

That would give him something to do. The boy turned and spent a long time coaxing the oxen back into their original position. About him, the other two ploughs worked steadily. But every time the natives got near, Uys felt their eyes on him, appraising him, seeming to know he had lost his assurance at handling the plough. Were they watching for him to make another mistake? All right! He'd show them.

He gripped the handles again.

"Right!"

The boy moved slower. His body weighed against the plough. But it seemed reluctant to cut the earth deep. It kept coming up. He strained to keep it down. His armpit burned with sweat-acid and his shoulders began to ache. Were the kaffirs still watching him? He dare not look lest something went wrong. God, the earth was hard. Beads of sweat stood out on his forehead and ran into his eyes, and his arms began to feel leaden. It had never been like this before. It had been easy, almost as easy as playing .... He felt: can't keep this much longer. But the kaffirs were there and perhaps they were looking at him.

Quite suddenly, the plough blade slid into the earth right to its limit. It felt right. Cautiously, he eased his weight off the handles. The blade stayed deep and the brown earth rolled over. His body relaxed. No need to strain, only to hold it and guide it. Only that. How his arms and shoulders and back ached! Even his legs. He could not have gone on much longer the other way.

UWI Libraries

No doubt, the kaffirs would have liked to see him give up. They would have had something to talk about. Well, he'd give them something to talk about. Just wait till he got his strength back. So they would look at him, would they? All right! He'll give them something to look at.

For a while he walked easily behind the plough. The blade was really deep in the earth. There was no shifting it now. And the brown earth rolled over.

"Faster!" he shouted to the boy.

Far ahead, one to the left and the other to the right of him, the other two ploughs turned the brown earth. He would catch up with them and then he would make them move faster.

He roared at the oxen. The boy trotted. Uys took long strides. And the brown earth rolled over.

"Faster!" he shouted.

The blade cut through the earth as a knife through butter, smoothly, easily. He'd show them! So they wanted to have a private laugh at the expense of a white man ....

When they neared the other two, he shouted:

"Come on, you lazy kaffirs! We've got to finish this before sun down. Faster! Both of you, faster!"

When he got back to the house, long after sun down, Uys was sick with tiredness. So sick that he left the others at table and went to the room he shared with Johan. He could not eat. He lay on his bed and his body was a ball of nerves. His eyes stung. His lungs were on fire. The ball of sickness in his stomach made him want to vomit .... But he had shown those kaffirs. He'd shown them, all right .... After a while, he dozed off ....

UWI Libraries

He dreamed. And in his dream he was with Mark Blumenfeld. And they walked beside still waters. And the trees by the waters had eyes and turned and looked at them. And the trees spoke in English and he understood them.

And Mark said:

"Uys."

And he said:

"Mark?"

And Mark said:

"Let us jump."

And he said:

"No."

And Mark said:

"Yes."

And he said:

"All right."

And they jumped. First one, then the other. First Mark, then he. Higher and higher. Higher than the trees and the trees looked up. Mark went high. And he went higher. Then Mark went still higher and he went higher even. Higher than the houses. Higher than the hills. Higher than all the mountains. Right up to the clouds. And Mark went high. And he went higher.

And in a chorus, with singing voices, the trees said:

"Uys Jansen jumped highest! Uys Jansen jumped highest!"

And then he was rich. He rode on the golden fleece and it was a carpet of red. And all the people of the world came out to look at him. And Mark was among the people looking and clapping their hands. Then Hettie Van As was beside him. And she looked at him

UWI Libraries

as Uitlander women looked at men. And he did not turn his eyes away. And she spoke but he could not hear her voice for the clapping of the people.

And a man said:

"How rich are you, Uys Jansen?"

And he said:

"Richer than any man alive. I have gold and I have land and I have cattle. More of each than any man alive."

And a voice said:

"That is true."

And it was the voice of Mark Blumenfeld. And the people laughed jeeringly at Mark. And some said:

"You are only a Jew."

And they jostled each other to shake the hand of Uys Jansen. And they said among themselves:

"Uys Jansen is a great man."

And he was alone with Hettie Van As. And the place where they were was wonderful. And he said, pointing to her dress:

"Take that off."

And she took it off and there was another under it.

Again he said:

"Take that off."

And again there was another under it. And she kept on taking off dresses. And always, there was yet another underneath. And soon the room was full of dresses and still she had a dress on. And soon the dresses covered him and he could not see and he could not breathe. They choked him. And he fought his way out that he may get air to breathe freely. And still the dresses were on him ....

Uys woke, fighting with his blankets. And the light of the white

UWI Libraries

moon, streaming through the window, fell full on his face and covered half his body. He lay still and spent, wearied by his battle with the dresses. His heart beat fast and his hands were clammy. The dream played itself back through his mind. He looked at the moon.

"Moon-mad," he whispered, thinking of himself. But it had been a fine dream - all except for the end. Better get out of the moonlight, he told himself, but made no move. He looked at Johan's bed in the corner near the door. Johan was asleep. Must be very late, he decided: or, perhaps, very early. Shift you bed out of the moonlight, Uys. But his mind seemed too weak to command his body. He lay still for a long time. Then he sat up and swung his feet off the bed. He was fully dressed. He had only taken off his shoes. He pushed his feet into them. Where to shift the bed to? Half the room was bathed in moonlight. Perhaps directly under the window. The moonlight would shift from there soon. On the point of shifting the bed, he decided he could not sleep any more. Quietly, not to wake Johan, he opened the window and climbed out.

He walked away from the house and the world shone in the weird cold light of the white moon; am strange ethereal light. One of the dogs came streaking foward him from the front of the house. It looked a savage beast in the white light, a silent beast of prey. The moon maddened these creatures sometimes, and they attacked their masters. He called softly to it, tensing his body in case it attacked. It slowed down and fussed about his feet. In his relief he patted its head.

He sat on a piece of high ground and searched his pockets for

UWI Libraries

his cigarettes. He took the packets out and held them in his hand. Only three left. Not many. You smoked two since your return and these will have to last a long time. Better go easy. He took one out and put the rest back into his pocket. Smoking had started as a luxury. now it was a necessity. Must spin them out, you've still a long time k here, Uys.

A long time? Yes. The week was going to be long; much longer than a week. And, quite suddenly, his mind revolted at the idea of having to spend a whole week here. But why should he object? This was home. He was among his people. In the past, before he had gone to Johannesburg, he had never objected to being home. He had always been at home. Always. Why now?

And, what was more, he did not like Johannesburg or the Uitlanders. He'd never really been happy or comfortable among them. Then why was he longing for the noise and the sounds of them? They were a vulgar Godless people. He'd had a chance to see that for himself .... He would stay here: he would stayamong his people and this longing would pass. It was not real. He would stay the full week. He would work on the land and forget the Uitlanders and their town. And when he'd finished his work there, he would come back and never return to Johannesburg. A third of this farm was his. He would take his third and he would build a house. To the house he would bring Hettie Van As. And they would live in it and be happy. He would live as a good Boer among his people, and his people would know how he had served them in their struggle with the Uitlanders and with Rhodes. But far away, deep inside him, was a new uncertainty, a new doubt, that he could not get hold of.

And over the dark land the white moon cast its cold light.

UWL Libraries

10.

The sun, a little warmer than usual for the time of the year, was bright in a clear sky. Uys sat beside Oom Stefan on the long bench in the warm sun. He leaned his head against the wall of the house, his hat tilted over his eyes. This was the fourth day home and he was glad it was Sunday. Sunday was the day of rest. He welcomed it for every muscle in his body ached. Before he'd gone to Johannesburg he had taken the hard work for granted, but these last four days had nearly killed him. Yet his pride had made him hide from the others just how great the strain was. And every time Niekerk had said:

"Do that, Uys."

He had said yes; and he had driven the kaffirs. He had the oddest sensation about the kaffirs. It seemed they knew when he was tired and beat. So he'd driven them hard, and himself as well.

Four days of hell. And now a day of rest only to start the hell again tomorrow. And his cigarettes had run out. He had almost come to hate Niekerk with his long narrow face, close-set eyes and big, stooping body. He never seemed to tire. And Johan too. But he'd not tried anything with Johan since that first day. Johan couldn't understand why; he'd seen that by the way Johan looked at him. Johan thought he'd changed. Well, he had. He thought often of Blumenfeld. His longing for Blumenfeld was painful, and he rarely slept through a night. He would come in tired and go to sleep; then he would wake in the middle of the night, unable to sleep again, and lay waiting for the day to come. And he was lonely. And none of them seemed to see it. They did not need anything. Only he. And now he had no more cigarettes.

UWI Libraries

I'll go tomorrow, he told himself and felt afraid of the decision he was making. He pushed his hat back from his forehead and looked away to the north, where the blue mountains reached up to the sky.

Oom Stefan grunted beside him. The old man was getting older. Before he had gone to Johannesburg, the old man had not been so quick of temper. Now, almost anything could set him off. You say something harmless to him and he gets into the most awful rage. And you try to explain that you meant nothing and that makes it worse. Strange old man .... Wonder why he never married? The story goes that after Vegkop only he and grandpa Kasper Jansen and the baby who turned out to be his, Uys', father were left. And that they brought up the baby between the pair of them. A man, a young bo y and a baby, and all this farm to work. Of course, there were the kaffirs. Perhaps they had a kaffir woman to look after the baby. But his father got married. Why didn't Oom Stefan? Was it that he did not want to? He must have met some women. His brother, Uys' father, met and married Lannie Van Wyck. There must have been some women. Wish I could ask him .... He was tempted to .... Better not. It may only bring on his temper. To be so old one must remember a lot. A great deal indeed. Such a lot to remember.

He turned his eyes from the blue mountains and looked at Oom Stefan .... So much I would like to ask you, old uncle. Did you ever feel lonely within your family? No, I don't suppose so .... The old man seemed to be staring away at some fixed point in the distance.

"What is it?" Oom Stefan asked unexpectedly.

"I was wondering," Uys said tentatively.

UWI Libraries

They were silent. Uys felt uneasy.

"Well?" the old man sounded impatient.

"I was wondering about you, Oom Stefan."

"Can't you come out with it?" His temper was rising.

Uys held himself ready for the storm and said:

"I wondered why you never married, Oom Stefan."

The old man jerked his head toward Uys. It's coming, Uys thought.

"What?" he sounded very surprised.

"Why you never married," Uys said lamely.

"Yes .... Yes ...." Again Oom Stefan stared at some fixed point in the distance. "Never married .... Yes, I never married ...."

He sounds sad, rather than angry, Uys decided in surprise.

".... Never knew how to," the old man went on. "After your grandma, Anne Jansen died, I never spoke to a woman till Cornelius brought your mother here. Never spoke to a woman before then, except to my mother before she died. Didn't know how to. Would have liked to but didn't know how to. Would have beem nice ...."

Yes, Oom Stefan was really sad. Must be terrible to have wanted to be married all these years.

"But my father got married," Uys said.

"Yes, he married .... Your grandpa wasn't as strict with him as with me. And he didn't remember your grandma and Oom Koos. Only your grandpa and I did. He could speak to women. I never could ... Doesn't matter now. It's too late ...."

They sat in silence after that. A long stretch of silence. Uys wondered how he would feel if he had to live out his life without getting married. How did Oom Stefan really feel, apart from being sad?

UWI Libraries

And sadly, and a bit hopelessly, Oom Stefan thought of the long years that had left only him living. All the others had gone; even his younger brother. And only he was left. And for company he had a new generation of Jansens to whom the trek was something that happened long ago. A piece of dead history. Did these young people understand how much had been sacrificed for them? .... Only himself left now. Himself and a ghostly collection of memories of growing from childhood to manhood while a wild land was being tamed; of growing from manhood to old age while a new generation grew up and took the land for granted .... Did they know how much had gone into it?

Six fine white bits of cloud, almost transparent and all in a line, passed rapidly over the face of the sun. They hardly marred the clear blue of the sky at all.

"Tell me about grandma Anna," Uys said.

Stefan thought about his mother .... What is there to tell about one's mother? Was there anything he could make this boy understand? Why did the boy ask? ... Memory brought back the shadowy outline of a thin wasted face. His mother gave him food and she was his mother. Jus t his mother. How could he make the boy, or anyone else, understand that? A mother is just a mother. She was just his mother.

The silence was so long that Uys thought Oom Stefan had not heard him, or intended to ignore the question.

"Your grandma was a good Boer woman," Oom Stefan said slowly. "A great Boer woman. She suffered much that you children should live in peace and freedom." Would the boy understand that? Do they know how to guard this freedom? "People today don't understand, they are not guarding that freedom."

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The note of sadness in the old man's voice touched Uys more than his words. He'd never heard Oom Stefan speak in that tone of voice. It sounded so desperately hopeless.

"We will guard that freedom, all right," he said stoutly. "I met men in Johannesburg who feel as you do, Oom Stefan. Good men who will fight for it. There's a man called de Jong with whom I work. And there are others. Don't you worry, we'll guard our freedom."

Oom Stefan turned bright eyes on Uys and looked steadily at him; a hard, disconcerting stare that forced Uys to say:

"I promise," and turn his head away.

After a long while, he felt the old man's eyes shift from his face. And again the silence settled over them, and lengthened.

The position of the sun said the long day was still ahead. A long day of little talk and no work, and therefore, to Uys, boring. After the midday meal, he would lie down to rest, then, later, he would saddle his horse and take a long ride. Tonight, he would tell them he was leaving in the morning. He dreaded that. But another day here would be impossible without cigarettes and with the silence .... Better tell them you are going to Pretoria to find Hettie Van As. That way would be easier .... Still, he dreaded the coming of evening and the making of his announcement. Perhaps, by this time tomorrow, he wouldhave seen Blumenfeld. Perhaps they would be having lunch together. People lunched earlier in Johannesburg .... It would be good to be among people talking, not be watched as curiously as they sometimes watched him here. It would be good not to see Niekerk again. He looked up at the sun. Yes, a long day was still ahead .... He would keep his promise to Oom Stefan and his people. Perhaps things would be better later, when he came home again. Time went by. It went slowly, but it went. And the long

UWI Libraries

silence between Oom Stefan and himself stretched to an hour or more.

From the front of the house Sara's boy Koos, blew the horn for the midday meal ....

UWI Libraries

11.

Luke Dabula left the Simmer and Jakc mine, the property of Cecil Rhodes. He made his way down toward the town. He had a pocketfull of money and he wanted to spend some of it. Some of the boys with whom he worked said there was pleasure to be had down there if a man had a little money. He would go down to the black section of the town and have some of that pleasure. He had worked hard. He deserved some pleasure.

Two black men, well-dressed and prosperous looking, watched his descent toward the town.

That's him, one said.

Good, the other said.

When Luke Dabula was abreast with them, the taller of the two went to him.

I greet you, my brother. Are you not the one called Luke Dabula who comes from across the great Limpopo?

I am that one, Luke Dabula said.

Good. In the town is a relative of yours who has sought you a long time. He has asked my friend and me to find you and take you to him. He has good news for you.

Who is he? Luke Dabula asked.

He is short and fat, a rich man. He says he is your uncle and is known as the dreamer.

So these men really brought a true message.

I will go with you, Luke Dabula said.

He walked between the two men toward the twinkling lights of Johannesburg. The road here was crowded. People were going to the mines, and others were coming from the mines. Every few minutes,

UWI Libraries

they passed a group of people; and there were people behind them.

At last, they left the mine road and skirted the town, walking in the direction of Fordsburg and the black section.

In a dark strip of hollow land, and with no person in sight, the two men came to an abrupt stop. Luke Dabula turned to ask them why they stopped, and moved his head instinctively. He had just caught a flash of the swinging stick in the short man's hand.

Run, Luke Dabula, run!

Again the stick came down, this time it struck his head with full force. The tall man kicked him in the stomach; and with one more sickening blow on his head, the world ceased to be.

When he came to, a policeman was prodding him roughly.

Get up! the policeman snapped.

He staggered to his feet and awayed, hardly able to support himself. The policeman's torch shone bright in his eyes. Dried blood stuck to part of his face. His head throbbed. His intestines were twisted so that he could not stand up straight. He felt in his pockets. The money was gone.

They attack me and rob me, boss.

You're drunk, the policeman said. Come on!

And as he moved, doubled up, the cruel prodding of the policeman's stick urging him on, Luke Dabula realized through his pain and confusion, that a very strong smell clung to his clothes. It was the stench of cheap brandy.

Go on! the policeman snapped, prodding his bruised and battered body. And doubled-up, Luke Dabula made the journey to jail.

UWI Libraries

12.

It was noon on Monday when he rode into Johannesburg. He stopped at the first store and got himself some cigarettes, then he went on to Seisma's. Blumenfeld rarely came back to the hotel before going to lunch, so there really was no chance of seeing him unless Uys went to the club or to some of the other places where he lunched. Perhaps he would do that.

Seisma and his wife were more friendly. Probably because he was dressed in the old, handmade country clothes of a Boer. They asked about his people and he told them.

"Eat with us," Seisma invited.

Seisma's wife brought coffee. Uys drank the coffee but excused himself from the meal.

"I ~~xx~~ have important work to do," he said.

He went into the little room they kept for the purpose, and shaved. Then he changed into his Uitlander clothes. He looked at himself in the mirror and decided he needed a haircut ... Perhaps he'd go over to the club and catch Mark at lunch. Mark wouldn't expect him and it would be a surprise. Funny, he found it hard to think of Mark as a Jew all the time. Probably just as well, he decided. If he did, Mark might notice it and become suspicious, and that wouldn't be any good for his work. Pity about him being a Jew, though; if he ~~xxxx~~ hadn't been one it would have been nice to have him for a real and permanent friend. Then he could have told him about his work. That would have made him feel better ....

He left Seisma's and walked slowly through the now familiar

UWI Libraries

streets of Johannesburg. He felt at home here, now, a part of the town and of its people. Down Commissioner Street, toward the hotel that stood at its extreme end, in the direction of Langlaagte. Almost, he felt freer and more at home here than he had felt on the farm.... They had not liked his leaving so soon. He'd felt it about all of them. He thought: you have changed, Uys. Quickly, he pushed the thought from him. When his job was over he would go back and take Hettie Van As with him and claim his land and settle down. Nothing to worry about now. Just the job to be done. He'd promised Oom Stefan he would see it through. Poor Oom Stefan, he'd wanted to marry and he never had. Funny old man, though. I'm not going to be like that when I grow old. I'm going to be different. I'm going to have children and grandchildren, and they will all love me and the little ones will ride on my knee, just a s Mark said it had been with his father. And I'll tell them about the days when I was an agent for the government and how I fooled the Uitlanders. They'll be proud of their old man. And Hettie will be firm and say:

"Now, Uys, stop your stories. The children must go to sleep." But her eyes would be smiling.

He thought: I'll go to Pretoria and invite her to Johannesburg to meet Blumenfeld. Then Blumenfeld will take us to the club to eat. That would impress her .... He abandoned the thought. It couldn't be done. Blumenfeld would know he had lied about coming from Holland. Damn! He'd have to think carefully about that.

He went into the hotel. Mister Thomas looked up from his little desk.

"Mister Jansen! We didn't expect you for another two days."

UWI Libraries

"I came back early."

"So I see, sir. A bit awkward."

"Why?"

"We were going to have your room properly cleaned tomorrow. The truth is, Mister Jansen, Mister Blumenfeld thought your room could do with new wallpaper and a general cleaning up. The natives have just papered the walls. They are not dry yet; and the place is in a filthy mess .... I don't know what we are going to do ...."

"Could I have my key?"

"But you can't sleep there tonight, Mister Jansen."

"I'd like to see."

"Allright, sir, but you really cannot sleep in that room."

Old Thomas followed him up the stairs and stood back as he opened the door. Yes, the old man had told the truth. The walls were newly papered. A plain cream coloured paper in place of the ugly brown with the huge dark red roses. Quite a change: in spite of the piled up bed, the room seemed lighter and gayer, as though the sun were actually in it. Mark's rooms were like this. Only very orderly. Gay and light rooms.

Remembering the old man behind him, he said:

"Very nice, Mister Thomas."

"But you see you can't sleep here tonight."

No, he couldn't. But he felt grateful. They had thought of him and his comfort.

"Doesn't matter," he said.

In a rush of appreciation, he offered the old man a cigarette. Really, they were nice people.

"With the new bed, one just like Mister Blumenfeld's, and a

UWI Libraries

wardrobe that takes up less room, it's going to look very much bigger."

"I'm very pleased," he said, lighting the old man's cigarette.

"But what are we to do about you for the night, Mister Jansen?"

He didn't know and said nothing. Perhaps it might be a good thing if he went straight to Pretoria to find Hettie Van As. He could always spend the night at Karel's place. Yes, that would be his best plan.

"How is Mister Blumenfeld?" he asked.

"He's away for a few days too, Mister Jansen. He left yesterday. Said he'd be away for a day or two."

They went downstairs together. The immense Missus Thomas was at the little desk, her huge bulk encased in shining yellow satin.

"Mister Jansen!" She offered her hand with the grace of a royal elephant. "Seen your room? All will be ready tomorrow. Naughty of you to return before your time! We planned it as a surprise." She wagged a fat finger playfully at him.

Uys closed up in face of this familiarity. It robbed him of any means of showing his gratitude.

"There is the problem of where Mister Jansen is to sleep," old Thomas said to his wife.

"He can use Mister Blumenfeld's rooms," Missus Thomas told her husband. She turned to Uys. "You are such good friends. I'm sure he wouldn't mind."

For a split second, Uys' mind recoiled against the idea; a feeling of revulsion passed through him. Then it was gone. He nodded.

"A good idea, Missus Thomas."

"There," she said in triumph. "Your room will be ready tomorrow."

UWI Libraries

"Want to go up now?" Mister Thomas asked, reaching for the keys.

"Not now," Uys said and went toward the door.

When he had gone, Missus Thomas said to her husband:

"I don't like him, Albert. There's something close and tight about him. If it weren't for Mister Blumenfeld ...."

"He is a bit tight," Mister Thomas said. "But perhaps he can't help it my dear. Blumenfeld said he came from a farm. Perhaps he was an only child."

His wife shook her big head.

"No Albert. And don't you go telling me it's my fancies. I've spent thirty years in the hotel business and I know when a person isn't right. Something wrong about that young man. He's never brought a woman into the house in a whole year."

"Nothing wrong in that, my dear."

"It's against human nature."

"He pays his rent, and I told you Jones at the bank said he was all right "

Missus Thomas shook her head.

"If it weren't for Blumenfeld ...." She went into a little room.

"My dear," Mister Thomas called after her. When she turned, he held up the half smoked cigarette Uys had given him. "I think it's the first time he ever gave anybody anything. He didn't know how to do it. His hands trembled. It reminded me of that child who came to us in Brighton. Remember? She'd run away from her guardian who wanted to put her in an asylum."

And because these two understood each other, she shut the door

UWI Libraries

of the little room without a word.

Uys Jansen was hungry. Would they let him into the club without Blumenfeld? He'd been there often with Blumenfeld and they knew him. Surely, it would be all right?

He looked about but there was neither a carriage nor rickshaw for hire in sight. A nuisance. He set out at a brisk walk for the club. As he neared it, doubts assailed him. Would they let him in? And if they let him in, would people stare at him? He had a vision of the people at all the other tables turning their heads and looking because the headwaiter, Jones, had said something and he had not understood it. All those eyes on him. Staring at him. Eyes of Uitlanders staring at him. Staring at him. His heart began to pound, his body to tremble.

He walked hurriedly past the club, keeping his eyes on the ground. A deep sense of shame and darkness overwhelmed him. He walked on in the cloud of darkness. When he again became aware of his surroundings, he was near the Johannesburg station. Close by was a modest little restaurant. He went in and chose the darkest corner. A sullen, ugly young woman served him. He ordered hurriedly and ate hurriedly. Over coffee, a measure of his assurance returned. Really, it was quite foolish not to go into the club. Of course they would have served him. He'd go there alone one day to prove it. Not that it needed any. People do these foolish things sometimes. Never mind now..The station's just across the way, why not go to Pretoria straight from here? Why not?

He paid and went out. He crossed to the station and asked when the next train for Pretoria left. In an hour's time. That

UWI Libraries

would give him time to get his things for an overnight stay. You do not want to go into an Uitlander hotel without a toothbrush and your towel and comb and razor. Blumenfeld had told him there was an Uitlander hotel in Pretoria. Yes, they were even in the President's own town, these Uitlanders. Well, he was one of them now. That was his job .... Wonder what being in a train would feel like?....

An hour later he sat in a first class carriage of the Pretoria train. He held himself in stiffly and stared straight ahead. And about him people talked and laughed. Across the way, three men played a game of cards. Facing him, were an old man, fat and red, smoking a stinking cigar, and a frail young woman Uys took to be his daughter.

When would this thing move .... Don't let them see you are nervous Uys. Relax. He stared out of the window. Relax Uys. Don't let them see you are afraid. He lit a cigarette and puffed furiously.

The frail young woman appealed to her father:

"Could the window be opened, please, papa?"

The fat man glared at Uys through a cloud of cigar smoke. Uys felt he had done wrong. But what? The old man was making more than he, and his cigar stank. The train jerked violently and nearly flung him into the old man's lap. Then, jerkily, and with many a mechanical groan, it moved. And still the fat man glared at him. Fleetingly, he looked at the man then turned his eyes to the young woman. She, too, stared strangely at him. He turned to the window. Why? What had he done wrong? He held the cigarette cupped in his hand, as though to hide it. After the first few puffs that had caused the glare, he had not smoked. Now, the

UWI Libraries

smoke escaping through his fingers embarrassed him. Did they want him to put his cigarette out? But the old man was smoking a cigar.

The fat man got up and towered above Uys.

"Come my dear," he said.

The young woman followed him to another part of the the carriage. And from all about, eyes turned and looked at Uys. He felt as though all the people on the train were looking at him, as though all the people in the world were looking at him. And all the eyes looking were hostile and cold. He kept his eyes fixed to the window but did not see any of the many things that rushed by. Nor, later, did he see the greenish brown earth, in waves, rolling and racing with the train. He felt numbed and cold, blinded and choked, humiliated and terribly hurt. What had he done? These things never happened when he was with Blumenfeld. What had he done?

The train whistled and sped on. And to the eagle, far up in the sky, hidden in the sun, it was a snake twisting its way along the vast African landscape; a large and new kind of snake that had invaded the land.

For Uys Jansen, huddled in his corner, afraid of looking at the laughing and talking people about him, there was no joy in what had promised to be a great new adventure. The fat man and his daughter, two Uitlanders, had taken it from him. And for no reason that he could understand.

Across the way, the three men played their cards. One said;

"It would be better if we were four. Let's invite him." He indicated Uys with his head.

One of his companions looked.

UWI Libraries

"He's got something on his mind."

The third said:

"Better leave him alone. He's probably thinking hard how to get round some of those damned incompetent officials of Kruger's."

The first one said, dealing the cards:

"Their new young fellow in the State Attorney's office - I think his name's Smuts - he isn't as bad as the rest. Had some business with him last month and he was quite reasonable."

"I hear he comes from the Cape," the third man said.

"I hear he's even tried to persuade Kruger to give us the vote," the second one said.

"Not a hope," the first one said bitterly. "But I wish they had more like Smuts."

"It's that pro-German Hollander, that Doctor Leyds I don't like," the third one said, throwing down a card. "They say he's got more influence with Kruger than any other man."

"Well, I shall see that I only have to deal with Smuts," the first one said.

They played in silence after that. And the train crawled across the vast rolling land.

In his corner Uys smoked cigarette after cigarette. He had noticed the three across the way glancing at him. He was sure they were talking about him and about why the fat man and his daughter had gone to another seat .... Suddenly, his mind rebelled against his misery. To hell with them! They were only Uitlanders foreigners in his land. To hell with them and what they thought.

He turned from the window and looked at the people with new

UWI Libraries

found arrogance. They were only Uitlanders.....

"Seems to have solved his problem," the first man said. "Let's ask him now."

"Not worth it," the third one said. "We're nearly there."

The train puffed up the slight rising that led to Pretoria station.

UWI Libraries

13.

Pretoria, capital of the South African Republic, was laid out some forty years ago, in 1855, and named after one of the leaders of the Great Trek, Commandant Pretorius, who later became the first President of the Republic. It lays on the northern slopes of the valley of the Aapies river, and two bridges spand the river. Summer floods have damaged these bridges a number of times. But that was in the days when the Republic was poor, the days before the finding of gold. No doubt, now, something will be done about them soon.

The town is planned in parallelograms, and the streets are all equally wide. Most of them are lined with luxuriant willows. There is a market square in the heart of the town. In the heart of the square stands the Dutch Reformed Church, the Church of the State. From it, the main street gets its name - Church Street.

Commanding all this, beautifully white in the clear air, are the new Government buildings, surely the most beautiful buildings in all Africa. Rising to three stories, they face the market square and overlook the whole town. They dominate the town, give it its life, dignity and feeling. Here the Volksraad, both the upper and second chambers, meet. Here the business of the Republic is carried on. Here Uitlanders come to beg for favours, to fight against some of the hardness of their lot, and to try and move the stolid men who sit in these offices.

And if you were to go south, not far south, just a little way, and climb Signal Hill to its summit, you would stand four hundred feet above the valley in which the town nestles. You would see all the town and all that is in it. And you would marvel. For you would be looking on one of the most beautiful cities set in a wilderness. You would look about and see the

UWI Libraries

wild country stretching as far as you can see. Then you would look into the valley and there would be the city with its wide streets and leaning trees, with its squares and its gardens, with the most beautiful government buildings you've ever seen, with a ground for playing, with a museum and library, and with schools and ~~xaky~~ playgrounds for the children of the citizens.

And perhaps you will think: these people have conquered the wilderness and shaped a city of beauty; surely their government buildings are the fairest in all the land; and the land itself is fair. In such a fair land, with such a fair city, surely men must feel as brothers one with another and must live in peace and brotherhood. You would think so, for so you would be led to think by the sight of such a fair city in such a fair piece of wilderness ....

Uys walked up Church Street, wondering how he would find Hettie Van As. The city was bigger than he had thought a Boer city would be. And more beautiful and clean and orderly than Johannesburg. Much more beautiful. And about him, people passing spoke Afrikaans, the language of his forbears. It made him feel good. He found he was less conspicuous than he had thought. Many Afrikaner men were dressed as he was. The only difference was that most of them had beards.

What to do? Stop someone and ask if they knew Hettie Van As? Among so many people it was unlikely the person he stopped would know of Hettie. He went into a coffee-house. A young Afrikaner woman, showing no part of her arms or legs, served him. Should he ask her? He looked at her stern unsmiling face and decided against it. She was not likely to know. He looked at her again. Perhaps. He said in Afrikaans:

"Excuse me, I'm a stranger here. I'm looking for a family -

UWI Libraries

two women, one young and the other old - who moved to Pretoria recently."

The young woman's face relaxed.

"I thought you were an Uitlander," she said.

They smiled at each other and Uys felt it was good to be dealing with one of his own people.

"I dress like this for my work," he said.

"Government?"

"Sort of."

"Now about these women?" she asked.

"They are called Van As," he said.

"Van As ...." She thought for a while, rubbing her chin. At last she shook her head. "No. Can't say I know anybody bythat name .... D'you know which part of the town they live in? Which street?"

"All I know is they are here. When I returned to our farm from my work, they had gone."

"The young one your girl?" She smiled warmly.

"Yes," he said with pride.

"You wait here. I'll ask some of the others."

She took the orders of two bearded Boers and said something to them. They smiled and stopped staring at Uys. She went into the kitchen and came back with a tray of coffee. She served the two men then came over to his table.

"Any luck?"

"No, nobody knows any Van As. But they say your best plan is to go to the church. It is almost certain someone there would know."

Of course! Why had he not thought of it himself.

"I will do that. Thank you!"

He got up and hurried to the door.

UWI Libraries

"Hey!"

He turned and remembered he had not paid. The Boer girl was laughing at him with her eyes. He paid and hurried out .... Now the way to the church. Silly of him not to have asked her. He looked down the street and saw it on the market square. No need to ask the girl. Would they know Hettie Van As, though? Of course, all Boers belong to the Church. But some were Doppers, the President himself was a Dopper. Perhaps Hettie was one too .... Well, better find out. He walked quickly down the street and stopped at the church. What now? Into the church or round the back?

He went up the steps and looked in. It was empty and dark. He went round to the back. Perhaps there would be someone there. There was. An old man moved about slowly with the aid of a stick.

"Day," Uys said.

"Day," the old man replied.

"I'm looking for someone," Uys said. "I thought I might find the Predikant here."

"Want the Predikant?"

"Not the Predikant," Uys said.

"Then why are you looking for him?" the old man sounded vexed.

"To find someone," Uys said.

"Matter with you? You speak like a Boer but you sound like an Uitlander!" the old man's anger was clear now.

"I'm looking for a family called Van As," Uys said patiently. "I thought the Predikant might know where they live. I'm a stranger here."

"Why didn't you say so in the first place," the old man snapped.

Uys remained silent.

"Predikant knows nothing," the old man said. "Young fellow

UWI Libraries

from the Free State. Good, but young. Want to ask me. I know everyone in Pretoria .... What name did you say?"

"Van As."

"Van As?"

"Yes, Van As."

"What's the man called?"

"There's no man."

"You said a family."

"It is Tant Elsie Van As and her grand-daughter Hettie."

"That's no family! That's two women! Say what you mean young man!"

"I'm looking for them," Uys said.

The old man turned abruptly and stood with his back to Uys. What now? Uys wondered. He looked like getting nowhere with this old man.

Without turning, the old man said:

"Know Paul Kruger's house?"

"No." Uys said.

The old man snorted.

"Everyone knows Paul Kruger's house. He's the big man here now. Though heaven only knows why. We don't need a Dopper for leader. You know Church Street."

Again Uys said: "No."

The old man swung round and glared at him. Deliberately, he spat at Uys' feet.

"When you go out of here, you get into a street. That is Church Street. Do you know Church Street?"

"Yes."

"You know where the west is?"

"Yes."

UWI Libraries

"Paul Kruger's house is at the western end of Church Street. You go to the end of the street. You walk past Paul Kruger's house and don't pay any attention to those silly young men playing at soldier at his gate. Silly nonsense about guarding his place! None of our real Presidents were ever guarded! Go past without looking at them. You are then at the end of the street. Turn left. Left, not right. You know that?"

"Yes."

"Good. Turn left and walk past ten houses. The eleventh house is where those two Van As women are."

Abruptly, the old man turned and hobbled away to a tiny building in the churchyard.

"Thank you very much," Uys called.

The old man moved as though he did not hear, or, if he did, did not care. Uys turned and went to the street. West. On past the President's house, then left. The eleventh house. Strange old man.

He walked down Church Street and his mind was in a cloud. He was a man walking alone. He did not see the shops or hear the people about him. Soon now, he would see Hettie Van As. What would she look like? He tried to remember her face. What did he know about her? Was she beautiful? Was she tall or short, dark or fair, big or small?

When we met under that old tree, out there at home, did we talk to each other? We must have. What did we say? .... When I see her, how shall I address her? Did I call her Hettie?

What if she does not want to see me?

When I furst told them about her at home, they laughed. Then they stopped laughing. Then they became serious and said to bring her home. Then it was Oom Stefan had told of Tant Elsie's hatred

UWI Libraries

for the Jansens. But he didn't know why. Nobody knew why.

What if she does not know me?

Is she dark; is she fair; is she tall; is she short? ... Though I may wander throughout the world, though health and wealth may come my way .... When a man loves a woman - what then? Is she dark or is she fair?

Uys came out of his cloud. A little distance ahead, two armed men stood at ~~the~~ a gate, one on either side. That must be the President's house. Not very big. Smaller than their house at the farm. But nice. It looked comfortable. So that's where the President of the Republic lives. Karel sometimes came here for coffee with the President. Karel had told them so. They say any man can just go in and speak to the President about his problems. Would the President be able to help about Hettie Van As? No. A man does not talk of that sort of problem. He turned his head and looked as he came abreast with the house. The chairs were there to be seen. But there was no one on the [illegible] Pity. He would have liked to see what Paul Kruger looked like. Paul Kruger, President of the South African Republic. An important man. More important than any Uitlander, no matter how many gold mines he may own. More important even than that Rhodes. Paul Kruger, a Boer. It would have been good if he'd been able to help about Hettie Van As.

But I don't need any help.

He turned left, out of Church Street, and counted the houses. What would he say to her? And supposing it is the old woman, Tant Elsie, who opened the door. He'd say: I would very much like to see Miss Hettie, please. Just like that. And if it was Hettie herself?

The tenth house ....

The eleventh house was smaller than most of the others, set

UWI Libraries

back in a neat little garden. Its hedge was high. A young acacia grew at the side of the house. Under its leafy branches were a table and two chairs. A quiet little house.

Now that he had found it, he was less assured. Misgivings were strong, and fear was stronger .... Go in Uys. This is what you came for. Go in.

He opened the little gate and walked up the neat pathway. She is in that house. She whom you have longed for all this time. He was halfway to the door when it opened and a young woman, carrying a basket, came out. Both stopped and stared at each other.

Hettie Van As, he thought. That's what she looks like, of course. The memory came back to him as he looked at the life of it. She was small, very small. Reached only up to his shoulder. How could he have forgotten? Small and dark, with dark eyes and a face wider than it was long. Everything small. Everything, that is, except her eyes. They were big. But everything else was small. Her hands, her mouth, her nose, her ears. A small, whispering voice too. How could he have forgotten?

He took off his hat and walked toward her. One of her eyebrows arched in a question.

"Good day," he said, suppressing the impulse to add "Hettie."

"Good day," she said. And there was a frown on her face, as though she were trying hard to remember something.

She didn't know him. He felt hurt. Then he remembered how changed he was. She could hardly associate the long-haired, bearded, Boer-clothed Uys Jansen with the shaved and shorn man in Uitlander clothes who faced her.

"What is it you want?" she asked politely.

"I wonder if --"

"Of course! I thought I knew your voice! You're Uys Jansen."

UWI Libraries

She remembered him! She'd not forgotten!

"I wondered if you'd forgotten me?" he said softly.

"Of course not," she smiled. "But what are you doing here? You're changed." She looked at the door. "Better come with me before grandma finds you."

They walked side by side along Church Street. And all the many things he had planned to say to her when he saw her, all the beautiful words he had put together to make her understand his feelings were fled. And he was silent, unable to call forth one of them.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"I came to find you," he said.

"Find me?" She looked quickly at him the looked away.

"Yes."

"Why?"

Now he could tell her. She'd asked him so he could tell her.

"I wanted to." He felt a fool as he said it; but that was all he could say.

She kept darting quick little glances at him, at his clothes. He wondered if she were ashamed to be seen walking with what seemed an Uitlander.

"I have to dress like this for my work," he said.

"I like it," she said.

His reserve passed to her, and they were restrained. He felt he was making a mess of the whole business. Why wouldn't all those words come? He knew what he wanted to say but, somehow, he knew of no way of doing so.

She went into a shop and he waited outside. Then they continued along the street.

"Don't you miss the farm?" he asked.

"Sometimes, but it is better here. There are people and I'm

UWI Libraries

not always lonely."

"I went there when I got back."

"Where?"

"Your place. The woman there told me you had come here."

"Are you back on the farm for good?"

"No. I only went for a few days."

"What is your work?"

"It is secret. I'm supposed to be an Uitlander."

"So that's why you have no beard and your hair is cut." She sounded disappointed.

"~~Yes," he said~~

"Yes." He wondered why she was disappointed.

"And you are still in Johannesburg?"

"Yes."

"I went there one day," she said.

They walked along and the long shadows were everywhere. The sun was nearly down and there was a softness in the air that made men move more slowly. It seemed to say: the time for rest is near at hand.

So much I want to say to her, Uys thought. So much. He looked at her round little face under the gay sunbonnet. So much and here he was walking in silence beside her.

She went into another shop and came out with her basket laden. He took it from her and the smile she gave him warmed his heart.

"Can I go back with you?" he asked suddenly.

She stopped and looked at him.

"But you know - "

"I want to ask her why," he said.

Again they walked in silence. At last, she said:

"Perhaps it would be best if I asked her first."

UWI Libraries

"I'd like to be there," he said, unexpectedly stubborn.

"Hello there, Uys!" It came from the other side of the street.

He looked. Good God! Mark Blumenfeld! What was he doing here?

"Who's that?" Hettie asked.

"An Uitlander from Johannesburg; a Jew called Blumenfeld. I have to pretend to be his friend for my work." Now, was that true? Did he pretend friendship? Why was the fellow a Jew?

Hettie looked at him, and her eyes had that curiously cold quality his sister Sara's had had that day at home. Damn Mark Blumenfeld!

Blumenfeld crossed the street and doffed his hat before he reached them.

"Uys! I thought you were still in the country with your relatives. Fancy seeing you here!"

Blumenfeld's warm smile made Uys forget his resentment. But how was he to explain Hettie Van As?

"I got back today."

Blumenfeld looked at Hettie.

"Aren't you going to introduce me, Uys?"

"I'm Hettie Van As," she said quickly and held out her hand.

"D'you know, Uys never told me a word about you. Must be wanting to keep you all to himself."

Avoiding Hettie's eyes, Uys said:

"We just met - on the farm of my relatives."

"Yes," Hettie said softly. "We just met."

"And you followed her straight here," Mark laughed. "Good for you. A man should know beauty when he sees it. Well now, why not go and sit somewhere instead of standing here. You've finished your shopping, haven't you, Miss Van As?"

"Just one more place," she said.

UWI Libraries

"Good. Then we'll find a nice place to sit down."

"It may be late for Hettie," Uys said, deliberately using her name.

"I would love it," Hettie said.

"Fine," Blumenfeld said gaily.

Uys thought: what is he so gay about? He's spoiled my plans.

They carried on along the street, Uys on her right, Blumenfeld on her left; the one smallish, dark and not unhandsome, the other thickset, ugly-faced, with melancholy eyes and a tender mouth. And between them was Hettie Van As, a Boer girl, small of feature, small of stature, broad of face and fresh and dainty. And the shadows were long. Night was falling. And about them walked the people of the quiet Boer town of Pretoria. And all the world was peaceful. From soemwhere near at hand, a church bell pealed over the evening quiet.

"The bell of the English church," Hettie said.

Uys fought down the resentment he felt against Blumenfeld. The man had done many things for him.

"What are you doing here, Mark?" he asked.

"Oh, business. Permits and licences. Very boring."

"Beating against the stonewall of Boer officialdom," Hettie said and laughed.

"So you read the English papers," Blumenfeld said.

'I read them to my grandma. They make her laugh. Here's my meat place. I'll be back soon."

She left them outside and went in. Across the street, a man whose back seemed vaguely familiar to Uys, stared into the window. Uys watched. When the man turned the face was unfamiliar.

"Missed you, young man," Blumenfeld put his arm on Uys'shoulder.

He had done this often in Johannesburg, but here, in Pretoria,

UWI Libraries

it embarrassed Uys. He felt that all the undemonstrative Boers of Pretoria were looking on with disapproval.

"I missed you too," he said.

For a while they were awkward, as men are when they think they have shown much emotion to each other. Hettie's return ended the awkwardness.

"Now for that seat," Blumenfeld said briskly.

"Yes; where?" Hettie asked.

"Just follow me. I know a place. Of course, the German Club's the best, but they are so silly about women."

He led them out of Church Street, down another street and into a quiet, narrow lane that ended on a quadrangle. Through x clean and delicate lace curtains, they saw people at little tables.

"English tea," Blumenfeld whispered. "English tea and English scones prepared by two old ladies. Whenever I come here and drink their tea and eat their buttered scones, I marvel. I ask myself; Why are these two old women here serving tea and scones? Why are they not in a small English town where they belong?"

"And what do you answer?" Hettie asked.

"That I'm glad they are here because their tea and scones are so good. I have an admiration, a strange kind of admiration for the English."

"For yourself?"

"Oh no; I'm a German." He looked at Uys and added, "A Jew from Germany."

"I see," Hettie said softly. "Do you admire the English because of their tea and scones?"

"Partly. But also because they strike me as the most adult people in the world. It's hard to explain. They are the nearest to reasonable people as a nation. At least, that's how I find them."

UWI Libraries

"What about Rhodes and that Jameson?" Uys said. "What about all the trouble the Boers are having with them?"

"Your relatives have persuaded you," Blumenfeld said.

They settled at one of the little tables. The embroidered tablecloth was snowwhite. On each table was a little vase of fresh flowers that gave the room a fragrant smell. Hettie looked with appreciation.

"I like it," she said.

Uys looked at her then at Blumenfeld. He had a sneaking sense that he was the outsider, not Blumenfeld. But Hettie smiled at him and he forgot it. One of the two old women, white haired and trim, came to their table.

"Tea, scones and jam, please, Miss Pringle," Blumenfeld said.

"You seem known here," Hettie said.

"All the world seems to know him," Uys said. "There's not a person who does not know him in Johannesburg."

Blumenfeld smiled, looked quickly at Hettie, then lowered his eyes.

"Shall I tell you two a secret?" he said. "I need people so I try to make friends with everybody. The more friends I have, the happier I am; the more people I know, the less lonely I am. Oh, not to talk to necessarily; just to know that I know them. It makes me feel part of them."

Why is she staring at him like that, Uys wondered. She seemed suddenly angry and unhappy.

"Mark loves telling stories," he said quickly, with forced gaiety.

"And do you ever feel part of anything?" Hettie stared at Blumenfeld.

With his eyes still lowered, Blumenfeld murmured in English:

UWI Libraries

"But we, with our dreaming and singing,
Ceaseless and sorrowless we!
The glory about us clinging
Of the glorious futures we see,
Our souls with high music ringing:
O men! it must ever be
That we dwell, in our dreaming and singing,
A little apart from ye."

"Give him any chance and he'll recite his poetry .... What's the matter Hettie?" Uys was alarmed by the sudden redness of her face.

"Nothing."

"But your face has gone all red."

"Nothing," she repeated sharply, closing her eyes.

He looked quickly at Blumenfeld. Was it something in that poem that had caused this? Perhaps there had been something dirty in it that he had missed. No, Mark was not that kind. He wouldn't do it with a girl like Hettie. And his head was still lowered as though he were in a trance.

"It happens sometimes," Hettie said more calmly. "It's really nothing."

Uys held his peace. Sometimes, at home, there had been a mystery when his sister, Sara, had sudden fits of illness. Perhaps this was one of those strange fits .... Never can tell with women.

The old woman brought the tea and scones and jam and put them near Hettie.

"What do you do with the tea?" she asked, looking at Blumenfeld.

He told her how to pour it.

"I've never had tea before," she said.

"Better let Uys do it then," Blumenfeld said.

While they took their tea, Blumenfeld sat quiet, eyes downcast, distant and remote. Something had suddenly shut him up. But it

UWI Libraries

was not new to Uys. Mark was like that sometimes.

Hettie, on the other hand, talked a great deal. She talked so fast and so gaily, that Uys found it hard to follow her. Yet there was comfort in it. She told him of all the funny things that had happened since they came to Pretoria; of some of the funny people she and her grandma Elsie had met; of the friends they'd made. And breathless, exciting, rush of words made him feel she belonged to him, wanted to tell him these things because of that. Good thing they'd met Blumenfeld. They were close together now, talking to him with shining eyes. Oh the comfort of it all .... Hettie ....

This was the long dream come true, the hope he had carried within his heart all these days. A Boer girl called Hettie Van As; and she sat facing him, talking with all her heart. It would be easy now, easy to say I love you, Hettie I love .... And they would get married and build a house on the farm and have children ....

When she had finished, he told her of the old man at the church who had directed him. And because he felt the warmth of her interest he made the story very funny. Her laughter held the promise of gay years ahead .... As soon as they were alone he'd ask her to marry him ....

They finished tea. The first stars flickered faintly in the fading light.

"Wake up, Mark!" Uys said, gaily.

Blumenfeld seemed to come from a great distance. He took out his watch, looked at it and jerked upright.

"Good heavens! That train goes in twenty minutes. Going back?"

"Yes," Uys said. "We have time to see Hettie home."

"You go with her. I'll wait for you at the station."

Uys was glad. He had hoped for this. He looked at Hettie.

UWI Libraries

She seemed glad too.

Hettie and Blumenfeld parted casually, without shaking hands. But as they walked away, Blumenfeld stood looking after them x for a long time.

Uys thought: better explain about Blumenfeld.

"Mark is like that," he said. "Gay one minute and silent and moody the next. Really, he's very nice. The nicest Jew I ever met.

"Have you met so many?" she asked.

"Johannesburg is full of them," he said.

"What does he do?"

"Mark? ... He's bought a mine. Like all the Uitlanders, he's after gold. Only, he means to stay here. He's building a house for his family."

"Family?"

"Mother and sister and young brother."

"And you're watching him?"

"That's my job. He's on the Uitlander Reform Committee."

They walked the rest of the way in silence after that. At her gate. he gave her the basket. It was not so easy to ask her. Her gaiety had gone. Perhaps it would be easier next time. Yes, better not rush her. Next time.

"Can I come again?"

"What about your work?"

"I'll find time."

"All right, if you want to."

"I'm very glad I found you today."

She said nothing so he said:

"Next time I'd like to meet your grandma."

"Perhaps," she said. "Now you must go or you'll miss that train. Goodbye."

UWI Libraries

He pulled her to him and kissed her. He had not thought about it. It had just happened, happened without any will or control of his.

She stared at him for a brief moment then turned and hurried to the house.

Was she angry? Had he done wrong? Angry or not, he was glad. Now she knew how he felt. Next time he would be able to tell her. It would be easier. Sweet lips of a woman. The first lips he had ever kissed. Lips of Hettie Van As. Soft and warm they'd been against his. And soft and warm had been the feel of her body. And the scent of her hair still clung in his mind .... Oh beautiful world that held Hettie Van As. Oh beautiful world!

"Goodbye," he called as she entered the house.

With a singing heart he turned and made for the station.

UWI Libraries

"That you Hettie?"

"Yes, Grandma."

"You've been long."

"Yes; I had English tea with two men."

"Better come in here and tell me about it."

"In a minute .... Want some coffee?"

"Better come and tell me."

"Want some coffee?"

"All right. Make me wait. You always do."

She smiled as she carried the laden basket into the kitchen.

"Coffee for old missus," she said to the black maid there.

"Yes, missus," the girl said.

She took off her bonnet and put it away, washed her hands and returned to the kitchen to collect the coffee. It was ready.

Old Tant Elsie Van As sat near the window in the front room. And though it was dark, there was no light in the room.

"Why are you in darkness?" Hettie asked.

"Waiting for you."

"Why didn't you get Maria to light the lamp?"

"Didn't want to."

"That's no answer, grandma." She tried to sound severe.

"Only one I've got, child. Tell me about this English tea with two men."

"Not till we have light."

She felt her way to the table and put down the coffee. Feeling where she knew they were, she got the matches. She struck one and lit the oil lamp that hung from the ceiling.

In the spreading light, she looked at her grandmother. Huddled up like that, the old woman seemed lost in the largeness of the

UWI Libraries

comfortable chair. So frail and lined of face; for hair, thin white wisps tied tightly at the back of the head; so frail and lost looking. Only the watery blue eyes, set in many golds of skin, belied the air of frailty. She kissed her grandmother on both cheeks.

"About the two men ...." Tant Elsie said.

Hettie looked around the neat, essentially woman's, room and smiled gently. She looked closely at her grandmother.

"One of the men was Uys Jansen," she said.

Had anyone but Hettie looked at Tant Elsie, it would have seemed the name meant nothing to the old woman. But Hettie saw the passing glint in the watery blue eyes. She said:

"Why do you hate the Jansens, grandma? Please tell me."

The old woman pushed herself down further in her chair. The day had come and now she had to tell the child. No. Hettie was no child. She had to be treated as a woman. That is important ... She wants to know why I hate the Jansens and I do hate them. Tell her ...

And as she thought, she was young Elsie again; young Elsie in those faraway days of the trek. And she was sitting by a river with the foolish dreams of a foolish girl because no one had told her things. And Koos Jansen came up and she did not understand the look in his eyes and was flattered. Paul had warned her but she had not understood .... Not till it was too late and he had struck her down. Not till then. And, after, Paul had said: If treating kaffirs the way he did could make him do that to you, then there was something terrible about it. That's what Paul had said. He was always speaking to her from the grave these days. Always. Sometimes he was so near she could almost reach out and touch his hair. That was why she had not lit the lamp. He had been with her .... And on that

UWI Libraries

last day, that day he died, he had said: Teach our child .... Well, she hadn't succeeded too well with the boy, so he went to war and died in 1881. But she knew better now and she'd made up for it with Hettie. And Hettie was their child too. Their child through the boy. Teach our child, he'd said. She'd taught Hettie not to hate and now Hettie wanted to know why she hated. She turned her watery eyes to Hettie and steeled herself.

"Not if it makes you unhappy, grandma," Hettie said quickly.

She doesn't miss much, Tant Elsie thought.

"I'll tell you," she said heavily. "But first, tell me Hettie, and tell me truly. Do you love Uys Jansen?"

"I did not know until today."

"And now?"

"I don't."

"I'm glad. I'm very glad, my child." It would be easier to tell her. It won't be hurting her as much as if she were in love with this Uys Jansen. Never thought I'd tell this to anybody else. Only Paul knew. Paul and I and Koos Jansen. She said slowly: "A long time ago, in the days of the trek, when I was very young, I was sitting by a river one day. And the brother of Uys Jansen's grandfather, Koos Jansen, came and sat by me. I was young and did not understand many things till it was too late. By then he was mad. I tried to get away so he knocked me down and did what he wanted to .... And Koos' brother, Kasper Jansen, helped to kill his wife Anna by his hardheartedness. That is all ...." The old woman closed her eyes and leaned back. It had all happened so long ago, but it all grew fresher with time. It all seemed to come back more clearly than earlier.

There was a long silence in the neat little room. A moth that had managed to get in, flickered crazily round the lamp, whirling

UWI Libraries

nearer the flame. And the old woman leaned back with her eyes closed. And the young woman grappled with a revelation from the past that was the proud history of her people, the Boers.

At last, Hettie said:

"Forgive me. I'm sorry I asked you."

"It is better that you know." Tant Elsie didn't open her eyes.

"I don't know."

"I know, my child."

"And grandpa Paul?"

"I told him."

"I'm glad."

"Better get me my glasses and my wool, Hettie."

Hettie went out. With her heart, the old woman said: Paul, I think I have taught her as you would want. I didn't succeed with her father, but she has no hardness in her, Paul. I think I've done what you wanted .... It has been a long time, Paul, but I've done what you wanted.

When Hettie returned Tant Elsie's eyes were open and she was sitting upright.

"And who was the other man, Hettie? And tell me about the English tea."

"The man was called Mark Blumenfeld. Uys Jansen insisted that he was a Jew."

"What is a Jew?"

"I don't know, but there are Jews in the Bible."

"Does he look like an ordinary person?"

"Yes. He's rather ugly. I think you would like him. He sounds like the many things you told me about grandpa Paul."

Tant Elsie looked sharply at Hettie.

"What does he do?"

UWI Libraries

"He's a German Uitlander who has a mine in Johannesburg."

"D'you like him?"

"I think so ...."

"Now tell me about this tea. What does it look like? What does it taste like? How do you make it?"

Hettie laughed:

"One question at a time, Missus Van As!"

"Answer me, Miss Van As!"

The black girl came in to say the food was ready. They went to the kitchen arm in arm.

UWI Libraries

15.

The moon was high and the stars were bright, when Uys Jansen and Mark Blumenfeld walked out of Johannesburg station. The streets were crowded as usual at that hour of the night. The working men, Cornish miners, adventurers from all the countries of Europe, were out parading the streets, spending such money as they had, and, always on the look out for the chance of something good coming their way. Among them were American adventurers who had not done well in the earlier gold rush to the American north. Some had better luck here. Others drifted luckless, hiring out their strength as they had done in their own homeland in an earlier day.

But tonight was different from all the other nights. On all the other nights Uys Jansen had seen them unarmed. Tonight nearly every-one of them carried a rifle. And they stood in groups, talking. Uys felt a subtle sense of tension in the air. It had been very different earlier. But there had hardly been anybody in the town then.

Angrily, Blumenfeld said:

"Damned fools!"

Uys saw he was looking at all the armed men. And still the men clustered about in groups, talking more earnestly than was their wont.

"What's going on, Mark?"

Blumenfeld's mouth twisted ruefully.

"While you were away, young fellow, things happened."

"What happened?"

"The Raad has rejected another Uitlander petition."

"And what are they going to do?" Uys indicated the armed men.

"They are bloody fools to be showing their arms."

UWI Libraries

They passed a largish group where a ginger-haired giant held forth:

"The sooner the bands of the Great Dissatisfied of the Rand arise, the better for us and our kids. These Boers think they can treat us like they treat the kaffirs. I'm fed up to the gills."

All along Eloff Street it was like that. And it was so in Commissioner Street too. And Von Brandis Street. And all the streets of Johannesburg. And it was not only the Great Dissatisfied, the small and ordinary men of the Rand, who talked like that. When they entered the Rand Club, three men at a nearby table were deep in a loud conversation:

"And Sammy Marks said to Hammond: 'They say you've got thirty thousand rifles, Mister Hammond'. And Hammond said: 'I don't know how many we've got but that figure seems rather large.' Then Sammy Marks said: 'About artillery, Mister Hammond, I hear you've got thirty guns.' And Hammond said: 'Good heavens, no! I'm sure we haven't that many.' Cool customer, that American. Rhodes knows how to pick them."

"Is it true that Marks is a Kruger spy?"

"Listen to this! Hammond had him followed. He went straight to the station, caught a special to Pretoria and went straight to old Kruger's house."

"I always distrust that little Russian with his philosophy."

"Something unpleasant ought to happen to him."

"He can wait till afterwards."

Uys knew he was on the edge of something big and important. Waves of excited Uitlander voices told him so. Uitlander voices coming from all around him with angry, disturbing insistance.

"Drilling on the Wanderers' Ground ...."

"About time something happened ...."

UWI Libraries

"Notice there are no lordly Boers on the streets ...."

"Did you know Sammy Marks is a Kruger spy ...."

"Hang the little bastard ...."

"They'll come to our aid; sure they will ...."

"She won't let us be kicked around ...."

Blumenfeld looked up from his food and tried to smile and Uys. It was a poor effort. Whatever it is, Uys thought, it has hit him hard.

"I tried to stop this, young fellow," Bluemfeld said.

"What is it, Mark?"

"Not my secret, Uys .... And unless some of these big mouths shut up it won't be anybody else's .... Finished? Let's get out of here. I'm fed up with Johannesburg tonight."

Uys thought: These men who nod and smile at me now, they would probably kill me if they knew I was another Kruger spy. I wonder what Mark would do if he knew? He looked sideways at Mark Blumenfeld.

"Let's walk," Blumenfeld said.

In silence, they climbed the sloping land toward Hospital Hill. Uys thought: We are going to his house. He's really feeling bad. He realized with a shock how well he understood some of Mark Blumenfeld's moods. There were times when Blumenfeld was a complete mystery; at other times he seemed to catch and understand every shade of every passing mood of Blumenfeld's.

Just below the hospital, they turned left over some wild land. The high moon in the clear sky softened the hard skeleton of Blumenfeld's house. Blumenfeld unlocked the gate and they walked across the stretch of grass toward the house.

"This," Blumenfeld said casually, "was to have been the front lawn, dotted with flower beds."

UWI Libraries

He led Uys from room to room on the ground floor, stopping at each and looking long at it. The moon gave just enough light for them to pick their way through the roofless rooms. They went through to the back. There was a vast piece of fenced-in land.

"This was to have been the garden," Blumenfeld said quietly. "I had planned it all carefully. Here, where we are standing, was to have been a fine lawn with comfortable chairs under that tree. Here my friends and family, and perhaps my wife, would have sat in a cool spot on hot days taking tea. And over there," he pointed. "Under that big tree, I was going to have especially thick grass because of the children. You see, I thought of having a big family. And those branches are made for swings. So if they fell the thick grass would ensure thair not getting hurt too badly. And further down, I had planned a tennis court .... So men plan without taking regard of events."

"It ~~wx~~ may still happen," Uys said. He felt very warm toward Mark Blumenfeld suddenly.

Blumenfeld sank to the grass and stretched himself on his back.

"That's it! It may still happen. You cannot live if you're always afraid of tomorrow or of events. Better ignore them and live as though eternity is now. Eternity <u>is</u> now. You are right, young Uys. Eternity is now. If men didn't believe that there would have been no music, no poetry, no building, no creating; really, there would have been no living. Eternity is now: and let events hit us if they dare. It is important that the core be tranquil and inviolate."

Uys said, looking down at him:

"Sometimes I feel you belong to the country, Mark. I feel you should have a farm and be away from towns. I don't know why. But sometimes I feel you would like things to go on in the same way.

UWI Libraries

Things go on in the same way on farms. One day after the other: only the seasons to worry about. Only the weather and your crop." Now why had he said that? It had rushed out of him just as kissing Hettie Van As had rushed out of him.

Blumenfeld offered him a cigarette. He went down on the grass. They lit up. And the night was calm up here, calm and warm; and without the tension that had been in the heart of the town. The sky was clustered with stars.

"Strange mixture you are, Uys," Blumenfeld said. "Simple and, at times, very subtle without realizing it. But not sophisicated. Lots of blind spots. You are just like the Boers."

Tell him you are a Boer. Tell him and it will be done, Uys. He's your friend and you'd feel clean about it. To the devil with the Commandant and de Jong. He's your friend even though he is a Jew. Tell him you're a Boer and tell him everything ... Blind spots. Just like the Boers.....

"Farming people must be much the same the world over," Uys said.

"And town dwellers," Blumenfeld said.

They were silent for a long spell. Nearby, at the base of one of the half-finished walls, a glow-worm called to her mate by turning on her greenish light. A long-tailed shooting star made an arc across the clear sky. And from everywhere in the grass came the song of the cricket.

"See that cross made by the four stars?" Blumenfeld said.

"Yes."

"Know what it's called?"

"No - what?"

"The Southern Cross."

"Ahem."

"Know why?"

UWL Libraries

"Because it's in the south."

"Have you ever lookedup at the sky?"

"Yes."

"And what did you think?".

"What do you mean?"

"When you looked at the stars."

"Nothing. They're just stars."

"You're wrong. They're not just stars."

"Dreaming again?"

"No. This is fact. If you were on one of those stars and you were to look at the earth, it would look like just another star to you."

After a while, Uys said thoughtfully:

"If you are right then each of those stars is as big as our world."

"Some are bigger, others smaller."

"And would we shine to them?"

"Yes."

"And are there people on them?"

"We don't know. Those who think they know say no. But really, we don't know."

"There could be?"

"There could be, on some of them."

Uys' mind groped forward.

"Then - if what you say is right ...."

"We are not the centre of the universe. The heavens and all that are in them, do not revolve about us. We are a very small part of them. Like one of those small stars. It's only to ourselves that we are important, that we are the centre of all creation."

Remembering that heaven was up there, Uys said:

UWL Libraries

"And God and heaven?"

"God is our need and heaven is our creation. But there is neither God nor heaven up there. Each day of your life you carry them both within you. Up there, there are only other worlds and space."

"Is that the Jewish religion?" As soon as he had said it, he wondered whether he had hurt Blumenfeld.

Blumenfeld laughed.

"No. It is the cosmological creed, the religion of the madmen who try to live creatively although they have to live with uncertainty."

"Madmen?"

"Those who are certain of nothing or little and yet manage to live with love .... Talking about love: are you in love with Hettie Van As?"

With his mind full of the stars that were as big as the world, and madmen, and religion, Uys said:

"Yes."

Blumenfeld jumped up.

"Better get back."

They walked slowly down the sloping land toward the town. And were those stars really as big as the world? Couldn't be. They seemed so small. No. Couldn't be. Space and stars. And how could heaven be inside you when the Bible said it was up there? And how did Mark know these things? Never mind, you can talk to him another time.

"Do you like her, Mark?"

"Heh?"

"Do you like Hettie Van As?"

"Oh, yes ... Yes ...."

"I'm going to marry her."

Blumenfeld turned his head slowly and looked carefully at Uys.

UWI Libraries

"Does she know it?"

"Not yet."

"Then I shouldn't be sure, Uys. You never can tell with women."

"But why not? I kissed her when I left her."

"Oh. Of course, that makes it different. Good luck."

"I don't know if she was angry or not. Didn't give me a chance to find out. She hurried into the house."

"Damn - ".

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing. I bumped my toe."

Blumenfeld increased his pace and they walked fast through the excited clusterings of armed men. At the hotel, Blumenfeld said shortly:

"I'm tired, Uys. Goodnight."

Before Uys could respond, Blumenfeld hurried up the stairs to the next floor where his rooms were.

Uys stared at the stairs then shook his head. That was not like Mark. He'd never done anything like that before. Probably this arming business. He'd better see the Commandant w in the morning. But with the men parading their arms so openly the Commandant was sure to know. Better tellhhim this Sammy Marks was known, though. He opened his door and touched the light switch, then he stared in amazement.

"Shut the door!" De Jong's voice hissed.

He shut the door and leaned against it, shaken. This was an Uitlander de Jong, without a beard, dressed as a dandy. Uys had recognized him by his voice, but now, as he looked closely, he recognized the eyes and hands and mouth.

"How did you get in?"

De Jong held up a piece of twisted wire.

UWI Libraries

"And downstairs?"

"I slipped in when nobody was about .... You've seen the men armed?"

"Yes."

"There's going to be trouble soon. But we've got to know exactly when. We are almost certain your friend Blumenfeld has some paper that will tell us. It's urgent, Jansen. You must find that paper tonight."

"But I can't. He's just gone to his room."

"It must be done!"

"How?" Uys' hands were clammy with sweat.

De Jong got up from the bed and moved to the window. He stood staring out, rubbing his chin. After a while he swung round.

"I've got it. I'll go downstairs. I'll have him called down. I'll try and keep for as long as I can. While I do that you'll go into his room and find the paper."

"But supposing he locks it?"

"Take this," de Jong held up the piece of wire. "It will open any door here."

"He's got many papers. How will I know the right one?"

"You're a spy!" De Jong said sharply. "Use your intelligence as a spy. This paper will have something about an attack, a raid or a rising. They might even be marching on Pretoria."

"No!"

"This is no playing matter, Jansen. The hand of Rhodes is at the back of all this."

"But Mark is against it."

De Jong laughed.

"So he tells you. But are you sure you've fooled him. Is he such a fool that he hasn't seen through you and is fooling you? Jews

UWI Libraries

are very clever about such things .... Anyway, the proof is in the paper and I'm sure you'll find it in his room."

"All right .... But give me a moment."

Uys went to the window and turned his back on de Jong. Oh God! Why did he get himself involved in this business? Why did he ever meet Mark Blumenfeld? ...Why everything? ... Why? He steeled himself and turned to de Jong.

"I'm ready."

"Don't get excited, seach calmly. Better take this." De Jong gave him a pistol. He put it into his pocket and suddenly wondered about something.

"Why didn't you get it yourself?"

"Didn't know his xxxx. room. Still don't."

De Jong gave him the piece of wire and went to the door.

"Listen for when he comes down then hurry up. And remember, Jansen, this is for your people and your country." He went out.

Uys stared at the piece of twisted wire. Your country and your people. He lit a cigarette and drew strongly at it. He went and stood close by the door.

Time stood still and his mind was completely dead. Only his heart. That beat so furiously that he heard it as an audible sound. And time stood still to the beating of his heart ....

From a long, long way off, old Thomas began to mount the stairs. One ....Two....Three....Four....Five....Six....Seven....Eight....

Would he never get there? Why was he so slow? Faster, Thomas! Nine....Ten....Eleven....Twelve....Thirteen....Fourteen.....

Faster man! Faster! I can't stand here all night! Faster! I've got to get that paper. The Uitlanders may march on Pretoria and there is nowhere else we can trek to. I'm a child of the trek. I

UWI Libraries

must guard its fruits. Faster man, faster!

Fifteen ....Sixteen.... Seventeen.....

He passed the door.

Uys felt calm. His mind was alive. He could think. A man's country and people came first. Those Uitlanders were armed. He waited.

At last, they came down, passed his door and descended the seventeen stairs. Lights on the stairway were dim so he opened his door and stole out before they had reached the bottom of the seventeen stairs. There wouldn't be much time. He would have to hurry.

He tried Blumenfeld's door. It was unlocked. He went in and passed into the inner room. The light was on. He went to the table in the corner near the window. The table was piled with papers and journals, and there was a pile of newspapers. Had they been tidy, his search would have been easier. Where to begin? Where would Mark put an important paper?

He went carefully through the pile at the working end of the table. These would be the latest. Nothing about an attack or raid there. Systematically, he went through all the papers on the table. He held journals downward so that whatever they held would fall out. He pulled out the drawer. There was a neatly tied bundle of letters in German from Blumenfeld's family. All the other papers dealt with mining.

He'd searched all the table, gone through all the papers on it. He turned to the bookcases near the bed. It looked like a long job. How much time did he have? Hope de Jong keeps him a while longer .... That book .... That book on the bed! That was paper sticking out of it. He bent forward and opened the book. There was a folded sheet of paper. He opened it. There was too much writing on it to read it there. But in the top corner, in Mark's handwriting he read:

UWI Libraries

"Jameson to start from Mafeking 29."

This was it! De Jong was right. Blumenfeld had fooled him. He turned to the door and stopped dead. Blumenfeld stood there watching him. For a long while they stared at each other.

"Well, Uys?" Blumenfeld said at last.

"I want to get out," Uys said stiffly.

"Give me that paper."

"I want it for the Government."

"Give it to me!"

Uys took the pistol from his pocket.

"I'm getting out even if I have to shoot you."

"I want that paper!"

Blumenfeld moved forward. He raised the pistol. Behind Blumenfeld he saw de Jong. De Jong's hand, something dark in it, crashed down on Blumenfeld's head. Blumenfeld staggered. Uys gasped with a sudden intake of breath. Again de Jong struck. Blumenfeld crumpled up and lay in a heap.

"Hard headed Jew," de Jong gasped. "Got it?"

Uys held up the paper.

"Good! Dome on!"

"Is he all right?"

"Don't ~~xxx~~ worry about him. He'll give the alarm in a few minutes."

As they h urried out, Uys said:

"I've got things in my room."

"Forget them. Government will buy you others."

They walked quickly down the stairs and out into the street. When they got to the first corner, they began to run in the direction of Seisma's.

UWI Libraries

16.

It was long after midnight when a group of men gathered in the board-room of the Consolidated Goldfields Company. Among them was Mark Blumenfeld: a dishevelled, sick-looking Mark Blumenfeld. Some of the men had been dragged from their beds.

The chairman of the Reform Committee said:

"Well, Mark, what's this all about?"

"You've got to call Jameson off," Blumenfeld said.

"We've settled all that," a member said sharply.

"The Boers know," Blumenfeld said.

"What!"

"They stole my copy of the document asking Jameson to come to our aid."

"Stole it?"

All eyes turned on Mark Blumenfeld. And all the men recalled how bitterly he had fought against the plan.

"Sure it was stolen?" a man asked coldly.

Blumenfeld stared at the man.

"Drop it, King," the chairman said sharply. "You know Mark wouldn't sell us .... How did it happen?"

"That fellow Jansen is a Kruger spy. I'd been out of my rooms. When I returned I caught him with the paper. Before I could tackle him an accomplice attacked me and knocked me out."

"That's not serious. They don't know when "

"I had pencilled the date at the top."

"What the hell for?" another member snapped.

"Too late for that," the American, Hammond said. "What now?"

"We must call it off," Blumenfeld said. "Send a wire to Jameson ...."

They argued the matter heatedly for half an hour. In the end

UWI Libraries

they decided the rising should be put off.

"I'll wire Doctor Jim," the chairman said.

Mark Blumenfeld walked wearily back to the hotel. He felt weak and spent. His head throbbed painfully; felt oversized. And the lump on the crown of his head was an area of intense pain.

And through the moonlit night, in many directions, Boer horsemen travelled. They stopped at farmhouses and called out. And when a farmer gote out of bed and came to his door, they spoke hurriedly to him then rode away to another farm.

Among those commando raisers in the moonlit night was Uys Jansen.

And brightly, the stars shone down on the warm summer night and there were shadows in the valleys of the moon.

UWI Libraries

He had just changed his prison uniform for his own clothes. And his own clothes were crumpled. They had been rolled into a bundle when he had gone in, and now they were all creases and wrinkles They had been such good clothes. He had paid three pounds for the whole outfit. He looked ruefully at his trousers.

Do not worry about them, the old man said.

The old man had befriended him in prison, had guided him, and they were both discharged on this day.

I cannot understand it, Luke Dabula said as they walked away from Marshall Square.

It is finished, the old man said. Do not think of it.

But I did no wrong. I was robbed. It is not just.

Do not seek that the white man should be just to black men.

Perhaps the old man was right. They had not believed his word when he told them the truth. Instead they had beaten him and sent him to jail for seven days.

I must go to my place of work, he said heavily.

It is a waste of time. They will not take you back.

There is a good white man there.

You will learn, the old man said. I will go with you.

The old man was right. They did not want him at the Simmer and Jack Mine. Another boy had taken his place. And the good white man who had first helped him did not want to see him.

But I do not understand. I have done no wrong.

Better come with me.

UWI Libraries

18.

Warmly, the December sun beat down on the parched grey veld. Now, because it was early morning, it was only warm; later it would be pitilessly hot. The still, windlessness of the clear sky held that promise.

The group of burghers sat their horses in silence near the railway track. They were in a hollow between two boulders, not easily seen. High through the sky, from the north, a giant African eagle swooped southward. It was on its way to a dead carcass, guided by its mysterious special knowledge.

The long silence stretched to an hour. A horse pounded the earth restlessly with a foreleg. Another shifted its weight a little. Yet another stretched its neck and nibbled, uninterestedly, at the dry shrubs at its feet. The bearded burghers stared away south with that clear-eyed intensity that comes of looking at great spaces all day long. Here, a man tilted his hat over his eyes; there, a horse snorted. The long silence stretched to another hour. And still they did not speak.

At last they saw what they were waiting for. The goods train from the Cape puffed heavily as it approached on its way to Johannesburg.

The leader of the burghers nodded. The men rode from their shelter and made a barrier across the railway line. The leader raised his rifle above his head and waved to the oncoming train. It puffed to a halt a few yards from them.

Two men flanking him, the leader moved to the engine and said to the driver and his mate:

"By order of the President and the government, this train and you are under arrest."

"What for?"

UWI Libraries

"Smuggling arms into the Republic for the Uitlanders."

"That's a lie!"

"If you've nothing to do with it you'll be set free."

Meanwhile, the rest of the men were unloading cases marked 'Dynamite' from the goods wagons.

The leader rode down and dismounted. The engine driver and his mate were guarded by the two mounted burghers.

The leader opened a case. There were sticks of dynamite all right. He moved them. Underneath, were brand new rifles. He stared at them and nodded slowly. His men worked in silence.

UWI Libraries

19.

In Simmond Street, in the board-room of the Consolidated Goldfields building, the Reform Committee was in session. Things had got out of control. Mines had been barricaded and built into strongpoints all along the Rand, and the Committee's message that the raid was off, did not seem to have reached many people. Worse still, the Committee felt it had lost all control over the organisation of the raid. And worst of all, there had been no reply to their wire. Jameson had either not received it or, if he had, had decided to ignore it.

"Well gentlemen," the chairman said. "There's nothing new except to report that both Rhodes and the British High Commissioner have sent messages to Doctor Him telling him not to start."

"And still no reply?" someone asked.

"Still no reply."

"God, the fat will be in the fire if he starts now!"

"If he does we'll have to go to his help."

"I thought you were against it, Mark."

"Too late for that now."

"Some of our arms have gone astray."

"Bet the Boers have got them."

"What have we got?"

"Three thousand rifles, as far as I can tell."

"What about the relief expedition to meet them?"

"Last I heard they were all ready."

"I'm sure Jameson will make it. He'll never fail us."

"Not old Jameson! He'll never fail us!"

"Great man is Doctor Jim. He'll either go back or get through. In either case we'll be all right. Trust Doctor Jim."

UWI Libraries

Thus, having comforted themselves, the Committee felt better. They lit their cigars and talked about defence plans in case Doctor Jim came, and about food and arms.

At noon, the members of the Committee adjourned to lunch. Then, quickly, they drifted back to the board-room. And each pretended surprise on seeing the other there. And each said to the other:

"Just in case something comes through, you know ...."

And met with the reply:

"Same thought."

And a tense smile.

And the long and hot Sunday wore on.

UWI Libraries

Pitsani, a small native town turned British garrison, lay just inside the newly acquired British Protectorate of Bechuanaland. It was somewhat north of Mafeking and a short distance from the western border of the South African Republic, some one hundred and eighty-five miles to the west of Johannesburg.

It was three o'clock of a Sunday afternoon and the garrison was on parade. In the scorching afternoon sun fifteen hundred men sweated on their horses. Five hundred of them were police of the Charter Company, and a thousand were regular British soldiers, members of the Rhodesia Horse, under the command of Sir John Willoughby, an officer in her Majesty's army.

A few minutes after three, Doctor Jameson, accompanied by Sir John Willoughby, rode to the head of the parade. The troop came to attention.

Jameson said:

"Officers and men, it is my duty to explain to you why we are going into the Transvaal and what we propose to do when we get there. We are going in response to a letter from the people of Johannesburg asking us to relieve them of their intolerable burdens. Here is their letter." He held it high. "I'll read to you from it. They list their grievances - and you know them as well as I do. Then they go on to say: 'Not to go into details, we may say that the Government has called into existence all the elements necessary for armed conflict. The one desire of the people here is for fair play, the maintenance of their independence, and the preservation of their public liberties without which life is not worth living. The Government denies these things and violates the national sense of Englishmen at every turn .... It is under these circumstances

UWI Libraries

that we feel constrained to call upon you to come to our aid should a disturbance arise here. The circumstances are so extreme that we cannot but believe that you and the men under you will not fail to come to the rescue of people who will be so situated.'" Doctor Jameson paused, then said: "They are our people. We cannot fail them. That is why we are going into the Transvaal. We are going in to answer this appeal for help. We start this evening. Sir John Willoughby will be our military commander. We will meet a column of the Border Police under Colonel Grey at Malmani tomorrow morning .... That is all, and good luck."

Dismissed, the troopers stood about in groups, talking.

"Wonder if it's all as he says."

"He read us the letter."

"I get suspicious when they start telling the poor bloody soldier things."

"Get away with you!"

"That's a way of Doctor Jim's."

"Still don't trust it."

"Say! Know Wood and Hore are cutting the telegraph wires?"

"No."

"Sneaked out of Mafeking last night disguised as prospectors."

"Johnny Boer will get them."

"Hope the powers don't think this is going to be like with Lobengula and his boys at Bulawayo."

"Shut up there! I'm writing to my girl."

"Listen to him.. Writing!"

"Never had a girl in his life."

"Signs for his pay with crosses."

"Perhaps the girl can read crosses."

"How do you spell 'Transvaal' lover?"

UWI Libraries

"Hey, don't go away!"

"Let him go. He really wants to get that letter off."

"His first action?"

"Yes."

"Gets them like that sometimes."

"Doctor Jim looks as though his piles are giving him hell just now."

"Wonder how my boy is ...."

"Sussex?"

"No, Essex."

Three junior officers sat in a corner of the empty mess.

"Even Rhodes has sent a message saying not to start."

"Doctor Jim knows what he's doing."

"But Rhodes...."

"They understand each other."

"You were with them in Rhodesia?"

"Yes."

"Even the High Commissioner, you know."

"Got to take chances. If it comes off all the world will be at our feet."

"And England?"

"Don't know; but stray words I've heard suggest Chamberlain's in the know."

"And if it doesn't come off?"

"Then we're for it."

"Some chance to take."

"The prize is worth it ...."

"Rhodes' idea, I suppose".

"No.... He's never been quite certain of this. He's agreedto

UWI Libraries

it, but not with his usual certainty."

"There's his position."

"Yes."

In another place Sir John Willoughby and senior officers pored over a map of the South African Republic.

In his quarters, in great pain, Doctor Jameson anointed his piles with ointment and lay on his bed, waiting for the seizures to pass. Each time he had an attack, he resisted the natural impulse to tighten his rectum. It needed great force of mind against such naked pain. He closed his eyes, opened his mouth and willed each muscle in his body to be relaxed.

The raw pain came in receding waves with lengthening intervals of relief. At last, it passed. Jameson got up and washed his face. To himself, he said:

"Must go to England and have this seen to." He smiled, remembering how often he'd told himself that.

UWI Libraries

21.

On the other side of the border, the Boer side, there was also activity. A commando was hidden just out of sight of the British troops at Pitsani. Each Boer was dressed in his everyday clothes. Each carried his rifle, and slung across his shoulders a cartridge belt.

The Boers were a group of men, individuals, rather than of soldiers. There was no attempt to be or appear military. No formations, no saluting, no separate spots for officers and men. For one thing, there was no way of knowing who was the officer and who ~~was~~ the private. These were citizens, burghers, not soldiers, and they behaved as burghers, not soldiers.

They made themselves comfortable with the assurance of men used to the open. The shadow of a large boulder was a cool place; so was the ground under the belly of a friendly horse.

They lounged in groups, talking. And they called their commanders by their first names.

Among them was Uys Jansen and his twin brother, Johan. Niekerk had remained behind on the farm. There were enough men here. Another commando was being raised to wait at Potchefstroom. But even here, men kept riding up to join this, the advance guard.

And they talked about the crop. And how dry the land was this year. And the price of potatoes. And they talked about their children and about ploughing. About how the young calves were doing and the damage done by locusts.

Occasionally, a Boer would pass the spot where Uys Jansen sat. He would stop and shake Uys by the hand, a firm strong grip; then he would pass on. Somehow, it had got around that Uys had had much to do with the discovery of this plot. And these handshakes were part

UWI Libraries

of the reward for work well done. All day, and on the days preceding this day, Uys had lived in a glow of emotional satisfaction. And, sitting beside him in the hot sun, Johan shared it. Each time a Boer shook Uys by the hand a deep flush suffused Johan's fair face.

De Jong walked over and squatted beside Uys.

"How does it feel to be a hero, Jansen?"

"I only did my duty." Uys looked away.

"Wish I had your chance," Johan said.

"You may get it, young fellow," de Jong said.

De Jong's saying 'Young fellow' brought Blumenfeld to Uys' mind. That Jew had fooled him all right. All the time he had pretended to be against Jameson and Rhodes he'd really been hand in glove with them. He'd known about the raid. Shows what comes of trusting those people.

As though reading his thoughts, de Jong said:

"You were wrong about the Jew Blumenfeld."

Yes, he'd been wrong about the Jew Blumenfeld, all right. No getting away from that. He'd been dead wrong. Only his dream had been right. He'd jumped higher than Blumenfeld.

A sturdy, elderly man, rather old for commando work, paused near them and looked at Uys.

"My father was on trek with your people, young man. The name is Elst. My father was Moses Elst. My grandfather was a great friend of Kasper Jansen."

"That's our grandfather," Johan said proudly.

"I know," the elderly man said. "He was a great patriot. So are you." He nodded at Uys and moved on.

De Jong said:

"Well young fellow, feel it has been worth it?"

UWI Libraries

"Yes," Uys said. "Yes," more firmly.

The long day was hot and bitterly dry under the pitiless sun. Even the rough scrub of the veld wilted in the scorching heat.

Toward late afternoon the Boers gathered and laid their plans.

UWI Libraries

22.

It is usual on the veld that after a particularly hot day, the evening is mild and cool and fresh. The noises of the creatures of the veld are legion. There is the song of the wild dove as she calls to her mate; a soft song it is, soft with all the beauty of a love song. And where there are water holes, there are singing frogs, and the more they are in number, the more discordant their music; and of course, always, on the African veld, the crickets sing with a bold clarity of note nowhere else achieved. And after a hot day, the sky is further away than usual in that land of distant skies. In fact, there is no sky. Only dark space, relieved by the brightness of the stars. And the stars are truly bright, bright and near.

The moon, big and reddish yellow, was low over the north-western hills when the Jameson force moved out of Pitsani. They crossed the border into the South African Republic and headed for the Rand and Johannesburg. At their head rode Doctor Jameson and Sir John Willoughby. They moved as sildently as such a force could, for they were now on the land of a hostile foreign state.

And all that night the bright moon climbed. And all that night the stars were bright.

It was shortly after midnight that they became aware that a burgher force was following them. They were about to camp for a night, when Jameson was told of the burgher force. He consulted Sir John Willoughby then ordered:

"Break camp!"

They moved on into the moonlit night. After a few miles, they realized they were not only being followed. Groups of Burghers appeared on their left and right flanks. A ghostly company, vaguely outlined by the moon, which cast long shadows into the valleys.

The raiders had little sleep that night for they expected an

UWI Libraries

attack at any time. But the burghers seemed content to keep their distance and keep the raiders in sight. And the raiders kept moving all through the night.

So passed the night of Sunday December 29, 1895.

Early the next morning the raiders were joined by the column of the Bechuanaland Border Police under Colonel Grey. The burghers on the right flank obligingly fell away to allow Colonel Grey's force to join the raiders.

Sir John Willoughby was worried:

"What do you think of it, Doctor Jim?"

"Escorting us to where they want us."

"That's what it looks like."

"We'll beat them yet if the Reform Committee takes care of its part."

"Will it, after those messages to stop?"

"We'll see."

All that day they moved. And all that day their excort was with them; just out of reach but with them. And the hot sun was more pitiless than the day before. Man and beast were weary. Again the night was cool and fresh and filled with music. But the raiders hardly rested. In one respect they were fortunate. Along the line of their ride, food depots had been arranged, and they found these intact.

On the morning of December 31, the last day of the old year, they halted at Doornpoort. They would rest there briefly, eat their rations, feed their horses, and move on. The escort seemed content to let them be. This affected the men more than if they had attacked. This silent guard was unnatural.

As they got ready to move on, a dust-stained figure rode into

UWI Libraries

the raiders' camp.

"I bring a letter from the High Commissioner for Doctor Jameson."

He was taken to the weary, pain-racked Jameson.

Jameson read the letter in silence, then gave it to Willoughby and smiled rather tiredly.

"We can't go back and we can't stay here," Jameson said and walked away.

One of the junior officers said to his friend:

"Looks as if they're going to throw us to the wolves."

His friend looked at the soldiers:

"Poor beggars are falling asleep in their saddles."

"This is a blow for Doctor Jim."

They moved on. And their excort moved with them, seemingly drawing closer; not very much, but still drawing closer.

They were nearing the Rand now. Krugersdorp was only a few hours' ride away. At Krugersdorp the relief from the Rand would be waiting for them. Let the escort keep on escorting. There was a little surprise in store for them at Krugersdorp.

Weary, and beginning to feel the pinch of hunger as there were no more supply depots, they moved on into the night, on toward the Rand.

And then it was midnight on the veld: the midnight of the old year and the morning of the new.

> Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
> The flying cloud, the frosty light:
> The year is dying in the night;
> Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

And the noises of the creatures of the veld were the ringing bells.

UWI Libraries

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

In Johannesburg the bells rang from all the churches, but people were not celebrating the coming of the New Year. The town was in ferment.

The Reform Committee was in session even on this New Year's Day. It had been in session continuously since Lawley, a Committee member, had rushed into the board-room with a telegram on Monday evening. Lawley had cried:

"Boys! Read this!"

Many hands had grabbed the telegram. It had said:

THE CONTRACTOR HAS STARTED ON THE EARTHWORKS HOPES TO REACH TERMINUS ON WEDNESDAY.

Someone had said:

"My God."

And the committee had been in continuous session since. Then, on the Tuesday morning, the Pretoria Government had invited the Committee to send a deputation to Pretoria to try and settle Uitlander grievances. The invitation had been for this Wednesday, New Year's Day. And, this morning, the deputation had left. It was made up of Lionel Phillips, Abe Bailey, Max Langermann, Mark Blumenfeld and G. Auret.

And still the Committee was in session. There was not much to talk about, but for all that, the Committee remained in session.

In Pretoria, Boer Commissioners received the Reform Committee deputation. Before they agreed to deal with them, they wanted to know whether the Reformers did, in fact, represent the people of Johannesburg. Who are the Reformers? was the question. The depu-

UWI Libraries

tation supplied them with a list of names. Then the discussions began.

And over the veld, burgher horsemen raced. And when they s stopped it was to ask:

"The way to Potchefstroom?"

"The way to Krugersdorp?"

The escort had ceased to be just an escort. The burghers were now pressing the raiders, driving them on; they were shooting at them; moving closer. The advance guard came to a halt on a hill. The position was clear now. They were completely surrounded. The Boers had guided them to where they could best deal with them. And this was the place. The raiders were on a hill with the sky for background. The Boers were all around, tucked into the crevices of rocks: deadly unseen marksmen.

"Time for fighting," Sir John Willoughby said.

The raiders opened with artillery. The Boers did not reply. But every now and then the air was rent by the whine of a solitary rifle shot. And each time that happened, a raider died. The Boers nursed their ammunition, picked their targets carefully, and when they fired they rarely missed.

The advance guard of the raiders rode down a slope to attack.

"Not till you see their eyes!" A Boer voice called.

Now they were close enough. There was a brief, sharp rattle of Boer rifles. Then silence. Nearly the whole of the advance guard was wiped out.

"Position's hopeless," Willoughby said.

"If the Reformers only attacked from the rear," Jameson said.

UWI Libraries

"Yes, that would help."

"Better send out scouts to see if there's a way out," Jameson said. "We must break out."

The deputation returned to the Reform Committee from Pretoria to report that they had agreed to an armistice to settle all differences peacefully.

The Committee could not agree. Some were for going to the aid of Jameson, whatever the cost; others were for peace. Great friendships were broken.

And down in the south, in the British Cape Colony, the news of the raid caused a government crisis.

The Prime Minister was at his home, Groot Schuur, when the news first arrived. William Philip Schreiner, a member of Mr. Rhodes' Government and brother of the young woman, Olive, who had, some ten years earlier, written The Story of An African Farm, went to see the Prime Minister. Schreiner was an important man in the Cape affairs, and he had a strong influence over the Afrikaners in the colony.

He found the Prime Minister in his study. Rhodes already knew of the raid.

"Yes," he said. "It's all true. He has ridden in and ruined me."

Later, after there had been much coming and going between Groot Schuur and Cape Town, after the Prime Minister had resigned, a few friends watched him drive away to Rondebosch. As the cart moved off, he turned and in his almost feminine voice, said:

"Well, there's a little history being made; that's all."

By a brilliant manouvre, Sir [illegible]

UWI Libraries

right through the Boer circle. Night had fallen and gave him cover to get his men safely out of the Boer trap. It seemed rather easy, easier than they had thought it would be. But they were grateful, for they were tired and hungry, and they were on the Rand, within reach of their objective.

They had a chance to rest that night. The hot night was, unexpectedly, silent. They seemed to have escaped the Boers. At dawn, a little refreshed, though very hungry, they moved between the mines dumps in the general direction of Johannesburg. They were not sure of their direction, for this was not their planned route.

Jameson's pile seizures began again, and sitting his horse was torture.

For ten miles they moved forward, seemingly unobserved. Then they found themselves on a summit that seemed familiar.

A junior officer exclaimed:

"God! Krugersdorp again!"

They had moved into another trap; a repitition of the Krugersdorp trap. Only, this encirclement was more elaborately prepared. The Boers had artillery. Their forces were greater than at Krugersdorp.

The battle was fierce but short. There was no way out for the raiders. They were hungry and weary, their friends had not come to their aid, and a vast number of their companions had been killed in the fight.

The white flag went up on the morning of January 2, 1896. The summit where this happened was called Doornkop.

Uys Jansen was one of those who witnessed the surrender of Dr. Jameson to Piet Cronje, Commandant of Potchestroom and hero of

UWI Libraries

Majuba. On an impulse, Uys said in English to Jameson:

"Remember me, Doctor Jameson?"

He smiled arrogantly at the weary, sleep-hungry and pile ridden little doctor.

"No," Jameson said tiredly.

"The name is Jansen, Uys Jansen. I met you at the Rand Club with Mark Blumenfeld. Remember?" Jameson nodded and turned away.

UWI Libraries

23.

Uys awoke suddenly, and it was like opening a flood of light on a dark room. A moment before he had been asleep. Now, quite suddenly, he was awake. In darkness a moment ago: now, in light. Strange, that. Sleeping must be like being dead. Just nothing, unless you dream, of course. But he didn't dream. He hadn't dreamed since that time at home when he had jumped higher than Mark Blumenfeld ....

.... Mark Blumenfeld ....

He stared at the white ceiling and recalled the events of the last week. Things were quietening down now. After Jameson's arrest the Uitlanders of Johannesburg had laid down their arms. All the members of the Reform Committee were in Pretoria jail. And from what he had heard and seen in the papers, all the world was talking about the raid; and all the world, except England, of course, was on the side of the Boers. The English Government now pretended it had nothing to do with Jameson. But de Jong had told him that was all lies. De Jong was very busy these days. He had a big office in the Government Buildings and he ordered everybody about. Perhaps he, Uys, would be like that one day ....

.... And Mark Blumenfeld was in Pretoria jail at this very moment. What was he thinking? How was he feeling?

Why did he have to think of Blumenfeld? He didn't want to. But it was hard not to think of him. It had been easy while things were happening; during the raid and after when all the country was in a state of excitement and Uys Jansen a hero. There had been too much to do to think then. But as things quietened, ~~down~~ Blumenfeld crept into his life again. And he longed for the times they had been together, for the walks they had taken, and for the strange

UWI Libraries

talks they had shared. Quietly, persistently, Blumenfeld has crept into his life again. A bit more each day. At first it had been just a passing thought; then it had been a little longer. And then a little longer. Now, this morning, it had begun almost as soon as he had woken.

Sannie, Karel's wife, knocked and came in with a mug of coffee.

"Morning Uys."

"Morning Sannie."

He liked her. She was a Bœr woman but could be mistaken for an Uitlander by the way she dressed and the freedom of her smile. In the days he'd been here he had seen how well she controlled Karel. And Karel, too, had changed. He was more a townsman than a farmer now. And very important. You could tell that by the way he spoke and walked. And it was good to have coffee brought to you in bed. No one at home had ever done it for him.

Sannie Jansen sat on the edge of his bed.

"And how's the hero today? Slept well?"

"Yes .... Karel gone?"

"Karel's a busy man. The Raad is meeting. Now I must get out too. I have things to do .... Tell me Uys, when are you going back?"

"Back where?"

"Home: to the farm."

"I haven't thought about that."

She got up and went to the door.

"Well you'd better. You can't stay here forever, you know. Karel and I were talking about it this morning." She went out.

Uys lay still, and hurt grew in him. He stared at the closed door with unseeing eyes. Sannie whom he liked; Sannie, his

UWI Libraries

brother's wife, had told him he must leave. She hadn't used those words. But that was what she meant. When he'd ridden in with Jameson as prisoner and all Pretoria was cheering, Sannie had said:

"Stay as long as you like, Uys."

Now .... All right! He would go! He had served his country. He would go .... But why did they want him to go? They were his family, Karel was his brother.

He got up, flung on his dressing-gown and went downstairs. The breakfast table was still laid and the morning sun streamed through the lace curtains. He rang for the kaffir maid. When she came, he said:

"Bacon and eggs, Maria."

"We have none, baas."

He flushed with anger and banged the table.

"Get it!"

The maid moved backward.

"The missus said not to buy any, baas."

His anger evaporated and a feeling of emptiness took its place. They knew he liked bacon and eggs. Each morning that he'd been there he'd had that. Neither Sannie nor Karel ate any more than was on the table now: bread, jam, cheese and coffee. But they knew he liked it and they'd got it for him each morning. Now Sannie had shamed him in front of the kaffir maid. Why? They'd said he could have what he wanted. Was it because he came down late? But they'd said he could sleep as long as he liked.

"All right," he said.

Shall I warm the coffee, baas?"

"No."

He looked at the food on the table. So they didn't want to

UWI Libraries

give him what he wanted. All right. He would go out and get it. And he would leave. He would not stay here and be insulted in front of the kaffirs. He would show them!

As he went upstairs, his anger grew till it was out of control. In front of the kaffir maid! When he got to his room, he was trembling with rage. He tore the dressing-gown off and flung it into a corner. Karel's. When Sannie had brought it to him that first morning she'd said it was Karel's best. Perhaps they now resented his having used it. Well, they can keep it!

He dressed with trembling fingers. He flung water over his face and hair and rubbed vigorously with the towel. He felt a little better after that. His anger was more controlled, like a boiling pot with a tight lid on.

He pulled his new leather bag from under the bed and packed the new clothes he had bought. He packed his toilet things. He looked about the room. Yes, he'd taken everything that was his. He went out, slammed the door and went downstairs carrying his bag. Should he leave them a message? No. They wanted him to go. Well, he would just go. He went out into the bright morning sun.

He went into a restaurant near the station and ordered bacon and eggs. But, somehow, he did not enjoy it as much this morning as he had done on other mornings .... Now in Johannesburg .... There, every morning, Mark Blumenfeld had had becon and eggs and a pot of steaming, milky coffee sent up to his rooms. And there had been thin slices of thickly buttered bread. Those mornings had been wonderful. With Blumenfeld he had always felt on the edge of things in a world not far removed from the discovery of great magic. Suddenly, with surprising intensity, he longed to talk with Mark Blumenfeld. It would be so good to hear his voice again, to listen

UWI Libraries

to his dreaming words again .... But Blumenfeld was in jail. He was an Uitlander. A Jew. A member of the Reform Committee. An enemy of the Republic....

He finished eating. When the waitress came to take his money, he said:

"Can I leave my bag here?"

They knew him here. The girl said:

"Yes sir."

"I'll collect it later."

He paid and went out. The sun was getting hotter, and the air was very still. He thought: later it is going to be stifling .... Mark Blumenfeld .... And Hettie Van As .... He'd called twice at her place. But each time, the kaffir maid had answered and said she was out. He'd prowled the streets without seeing her. For over eight days he'd been in her town and he had not seen her. ~~For over~~ He'd left a message with the kaffir girl after the first time, saying he would call again at the same time the next day. But the next day she had again not been in. Should he go to her place now? He wanted to. But an inner fear, strange and unnameable, counselled against it. It said: better not. Something may happen. But what could happen? And that inner little voice said: why was she not in the second time?

And, suddenly, the world was a very desolate place.

He walked briskly up the hill toward the Government Buildings. De Jong was up there. And de Jong was a friend who understood. He would go up and talk to de Jong. Perhaps he would have coffee with de Jong. Whenever he'd been up there, de Jong had always sent out the two women and a man who worked for him. And they'd talked and had coffee together. And it had made him feel good that such an

UWI Libraries

important man should be his friend. The first time he'd gone up there, just after they'd taken Jameson to jail, de Jong had led him in and said to the people in his office:

"This is Uys Jansen, a great patriot." And they had looked at him with respect.

He climbed the many steps, breathing a little heavily. Then he was at the office. He stopped at the outer office where a girl sat alone.

"Good morning."

"Morning, Mister Jansen."

"May I go in?"

"I think Mister de Jong is busy. Just wait a moment, Mister Jansen, and I'll see."

She went into the inner office. He stood near the door. De Jong would get rid of whoever was with him and then they would be able to talk and have coffee.... The girl was taking a long time. As he thought it, she returned.

"Was there anything special you wanted to see him about, Mister Jansen?"

"No - no. I just wanted to see him."

"I'm afraid Mister de Jong is very busy. He wants you to come about six this afternoon."

Uys tried not to let the disappointment show on his face. He did not want this girl to see how important this was to him.

"Thank you." He turned to the door.

"Mister de Jong said you must not fail to come this afternoon."

"Thank you," he said again and went out.

.... And Mark Blumenfeld is in Pretoria jail....

"I'll go and see him," he said aloud, and there was resolve in his voice.

UWI Libraries

But when he neared the jail, his resolution left him. He wanted to turn back. But there was nowhere else to go. And he did want to look on Blumenfeld's face again .... Blumenfeld would be angry, of course. But he would understand. Uys would explain and he would understand. A man must serve his country and his people. A man had to do his duty. He was sorry about taking the paper from Blumenfeld's room. He would have preferred it to be another person's room. He was sorry, too, about de Jong hitting Blumenfeld. But there had been nothing else to do. Mark would understand. He'd always had sympathy with the Boers .... And he did want to speak to him. Someone to speak to ... Someone who cared how he felt.

He was fortunate at the jail. He met a jailer who had seen him in the company of de Jong and who knew something of the part he'd played.

"Is it possible for me to see one of the Reformers?" he said.

The jailer laughed.

"Why not? You helped put them there."

The jailer took him to a little room where a policeman was on guard. He wrote down his name, nationality and where he lived.

"Now, which one is it?"

"He is called Mark Blumenfeld."

He sat on a wooden bench and waited. And all the things he had meant to say to Mark, all the explanations, were fled from his brain. He felt numb and frightened, as he had felt while listening to old Thomas mounting the stairs.

Then Mark Blumenfeld came in through a door he had not seen. Blumenfeld hesitated when he saw Uys, then continued into the room. The jailer went out but the police guard came in and lounged against the door.

UWI Libraries

Uys thought: He hasn't changed. His clothes are crumpled and a bit dirty, but he hasn't changed. Only, his face is so cold He looks at me as though I am a stranger. But we are friends. We've shared things in Johannesburg.

They sat facing each other across the little table.

Uys thought: why doesn't he say something. Why doesn't he greet me. It's hard to know what to say with this policeman here.

"Hello, Mark."

Blumenfeld's eyes stared coldly into his, and he lowered his head.

"I only did my duty, you know. A man must serve his country and his people."

Please say something, Mark. Say something!

"Sorry we had to hit you...."

Then, quite suddenly, it dawned on Uys that he was not talking to a person, or, if he was, then the person was the policeman who looked so curiously at him. Mark Blumenfeld was a stonewall who did not hear a word of what he said.... And suddenly Mark Blumenfeld was the most important person in the world to him.

His eyes filmed with tears. He got up and turned away. He would not let Blumenfeld see that. He moved toward the door. Before he reached it, the other door closed with a bang. He turned Blumenfeld had gone. The policeman was looking at him in open disgust. He turned again and went out. Ashamedly, unhappily, furtively, he brushed the tears from his eyes .... And what is friendship? And what is the meaning of it? And where does it begin? And where does it go? And how does it end?....

As Mark Blumenfeld crossed the little stream that ran through

UWI Libraries

the prison yard, a Reformer called out:

"Your little Dutch girl, Mark?"

Mark passed Colonel Bettington, shooting marbles.

"No," he called back.

"Then who was it?"

At the far end of the yard, Solly Joel and some others sat at a game of cards. And at the far end of the yard, where the stream flowed away under the wall, big Fritz Mosenthal was having his daily bath in the flowing stream. And the English colony, the majority, was having their daily joke at his naked expense. He ignored them completely. At another point in the yard, Frank Rhodes, brother to Cecil, Hays Hammond, the American, and Lionel Pjillips sat talking earnestly.

"Who was it?" the Reformer repeated.

"Nobody!" Blumenfeld snapped back in sudden anger.

He went into the shed he shared with four others. He flung himself on his bunk and stared at the low, cobwebbed ceiling.

Uys Jansen stopped at the eleventh house and looked over the little gate.

Was that really Hettie Van As sitting under the tree? He closed his eyes. When he opened them again, she was still there. He leaned against the gate and stared. She sat unmoving, her head bent forward, looking into her lap. So quiet. So still.

He opened the gate and walked up the pathway. She saw him as he stepped on to the grass. She got up and the book on her lap slid to the ground. He was near enough to see her face turn white. He stopped a few yards from her. As he looked at her he knew he should not have come. This was going to be another meeting with

UWI Libraries

pain. And he did not want her to hurt him. Not today. Not Hettie Van As.

"Hettie." His voice was tight and frightened.

"Good day, Uys." The colour returned to her face.

"I've been here twice."

"I know. I didn't want to see you."

He took a deep breath. His head swam and he could not see he clearly. His left hand moved in mute appeal.

"I want to marry you. Please, I want to marry you ...."

For a long time Hettie Van As was silent. And all the world waited. And all the anxiety of all the world was in Uys, waiting; all the fear-tainted hope that all the world had ever nursed. And love is the common hope to all the children of the world ... And Uy waited, looking hungrily at that little face that was broader than it was long, and at that little body, so upright and so firm. Wit it, in it, was all the promise that would make life more than a dream.

Quietly, Hettie Van As said:

"I've been seeing Mark Blumenfeld at the jail ... I love him.. That is why I did not want to see you.... "

Did he hear correcly? Did she say it?

"Love? Mark?"

No! No! There was something wrong with his ears. No!

"But ...."

"But he's and Uitlander and a Jew," Hettie said softly, but there was no softness in her eyes.

Yes.. He'd heard correctly all right. He'd heard correctly. His ears were all right. Nothing wrong with them. Nothing at all

"I'm sorry," he said politely and turned toward the gate.

UWI Libraries

He walked toward the gate quite easily; opened it, went out, and closed it again. And as he closed it, he looked at her. She was standing on the same spot and the book was lying at her feet. He turned and walked away from the little house.

.... And then darkness descended on Uys Jansen, and the land...

When Uys Jansen became aware of himself and the world again, his first sensation was of acute hunger; his second was of a great weariness that weighed his body down. His third sensation was of dismay when he saw how far he had wandered from Pretoria. He was on a hill overlooking the town. And behind him, the sun was nearing the horizon. He remembered closing Hettie's gate and seeing her standing with the book at her feet .... But that must have been a long time ago.

He walked down toward Pretoria.

He ate at the restaurant near the station and collected his bag. Then he climbed Church Street to the Government Buildings. It was after six.

He said to the girl in the outer office:

"Tell Mister de Jong I'm going home."

The girl stared at him then went into the inner office. De Jong came out immediately.

"So you're off home, Jansen. Good. No place like the farm for a man like you. Oh yes, there's someone who wants to meet you. You nearly missed him .... Now remember, you must address him as 'Mister President' or 'Your Honour'."

De Jong hurried him out and down a long corridor till they came to a big door where two soliders stood on guard. They went in.

Behind a big desk sat the President; a giant of a man with a stern face, piercing eyes with heavy bags under them. His nose was

UWI Libraries

broad and thick and his skin was coarse. A flowing white beard hung over his chest, hiding his shirt and cravat.

The piercing eyes turned on Uys Jansen.

"This is the young man, Your Honour," de Jong said.

The President got up, towering above them. He held out a hug hand to Uys.

"You've served your country well, Jansen. Your family has always been known when the Republic was in danger."

"Thank you, Your Honour."

Say something more, Uys. This is an important moment. You are speaking to your President, to the President of the South African Republic, your land.

But there was nothing more Uys wanted to say. And the moment didn't really feel important. He had hoped for it. But now it was too late. All that was important had happened earlier.

The President looked at de Jong and asked:

"What are your plans?"

"I'm going home tonight, Your Honour," Uys said.

"Home?"

"To our farm, Your Honour."

"Good place, a farm. That's where a man belongs. Not in towns. Good farm?"

"Yes, Your Honour."

Again the President looked at de Jong before saying:

"I want you to know the Republic is grateful for your work. De Jong has something for you. Good luck and the God of our fathers go with you."

Again he shook the President's big hand, then de Jong led him

UWI Libraries

out.

"I'm rather busy," de Jong said.

"I want to start before dark," Uys said.

De Jong went into his office and came out with a long envelope

"This is for you, Jansen. A small reward for your good work.

"Thank you .... Goodbye."

"Good luck, Jansen."

He pushed the envelope in his pocket, picked up his bag and went out.

At the stable where they had kept his horse, he changed into his old Boer clothes. He remembered the envelope, took it out and opened it. Inside was a thick wad of banknotes. He pushed the envelope into the bag and shut it. Firmly, he tied the bag to the back of his saddle. He paid what he owed them for having taken care of the horse. Now, there was nothing to keep him here.

He rode out of Pretoria.

He rode as a Boer rides, sitting his horse easily, back straight. And the townsfolk, as they often do, admired the easy grace with which this country cousin sat his horse. He seemed so proud, so aloof, so sure.

And Uys Jansen rode home with a hard knot inside him. He had done his duty as a Boer, and Hettie Van As, a Boer girl, had not understood that. Nor had Karel and his wife Sannie .... But he would not think of that any more .... Blumenfeld had refused to speak to him. But he wouldn't think of that any more.

He was going home; home to his own people; home where he belonged. Towns were not for him. It was foolish to think he would ever live in a town.

At home, Oom Stefan was waiting for him.

UWI Libraries

No. He would not think of what happened in the past. The past was dead. And the Hettie Van As of the farm was dead. He was going home where he belonged.

An eagle, high pu up in the sky, in search of carrion, saw a solitary horseman riding west over the darkening veld.

--- ... ... ---

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PART TWO.

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He waited for the morning sun to rise. There was no sense in moving till then, and in any case, it wasn't important. There was nothing further to be done here. At least, not for him. For a year he had done everything that had to be done.

He smiled as he recalled how, almost imperceptibly, his relations with the rest of the family had changed. Niekerk no longer gave him orders. And Johan had never recovered from the new respect he had found for him after the Jameson Raid. Johan now had a wife and child. He had brought her home from Potchefstroom after the raid. And now they had a child. Johan had become very masterful since then. But the respect was still there. And Sara was carrying her fourth child.

Niekerk still sat at the head of the table. But it was he, Uys, who was the head where the running of the farm was concerned. At least, he had been the head over this last year. And the kaffirs had more fear and respect for him than for anybody else. And young Koos, Sara's eldest boy, ran after him like a slave. Niekerks secret jealousy amused him.

Well, all that was over now. He had stood about as much as he could of this lonely life. The world was out there, and it called to him. He wasn't a young boy any more. He was a man and he would go out into the world .... It had been a lonely year. No getting away from that. A terribly lonely year....

A streak of light, tinged with orange, touched the western hill

UWI Libraries

and travelled fast across the sky. Soon now, the sun would be up. For a year he'd put it to bed at night and helped it up at dawn. And a year is a long time when a man is alone and lonely. And just hard work ceases to make you tired enough for sleep after a time. The streak of light broadened and spread over the land.

He turned to the two mounds that were small bumps on the back of the earth. With his back to the dawning day, he looked down. Two rude wooden crosses at the head of two mounds of earth; all that was left of Kasper Jansen and his son, Stefan.

His Oom Stefan had died shortly after his return, perhaps two months after. He wasn't sure. He'd sat in the morning sun as usual. And when Sara had taken him his coffee, she had found him dead. Somehow he'd managed not to fall off the bench and she found him wedged against the wall, dead. And now he lay beside his father; and father and son had become part of the land, part of the very earth that would, perhaps, one day be tilled to feed other Boers who would, in turn, go into the earth at the end of their lives.

He thought: At least they lie near loved ones who would look after their graves. Grandma Anna Jansen was less fortunate. Perhaps men walked over where she had been buried; perhaps some kaffirs grew their corn on the spot where she lies. And his father the younger son of Kasper and Anna Jansen, lay somewhere at the foot of Majuba Hill.

For a long time he stood by the two little mounds, then he turned abruptly and walked toward his horse. The sun showed part of itself behind the eastern hills, and day was on the world.

When he reached the house they had all assembled for breakfast.

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They were late this morning because they had been up late last night, talking about his leaving and about his share of the land. When Karel had left for Pretoria, he had given over his share to Sara because Niekerk had no land of his own. And, as Sara's husband, Niekerk therefore had a share of a third of the land. Uys had offered to sell his share to either Johan or Niekerk.

He stopped inside the doorway and looked at them. His mother said:

"Morning, Uys," and was followed by a chorus of other voices.

"Morning," he said and went to his place.

The boy, Koos, said:

"Oom Uys ---"

"Hush, Koos," Sara said.

Johan's wife, little Elli, served Uys first. She always did that.

From under his brows, Uys looked quickly at Niekerk.

"Still set on going, Uys?" Niekerk asked.

"I told you so," Uys said.

"But why, Uys?" his mother asked.

"We've gone over all that, " Uys said.

"Uys knows his mind," Johan said.

"That's what I say," Sara said.

Uys smiled. Really, it was only his mother and the boy, Koos, who wanted him to stay. Sara and Niekerk would be happy to see himm gone. Perhaps Johan too. He wasn't sure of that.

"What will you do?" his mother asked.

"There is much to do in Johannesburg," he said.

"I'm for dividing the farm," Johan said. "I want my share so

UWI Libraries

that I can build a house for Elli and our family. It is time we had our own house."

"Well, are either of you going to buy my share?"

Niekerk and Johan exchanged looks.

"I don't think we have enough money," Niekerk said.

"You, Johan?"

"Only money I have is my share of what the farm sells. And you know we use that for the farm."

"We got five hundred pounds for what we sold this season," Uys said.

"That includes the wool," Niekerk said.

"And the cattle we sold," Johan added.

"It is still five hundred pounds," Uys said.

"We'll plough over half of it back into the farm," Niekerk said Uys nodded and finished his coffee. Little Elli refilled his mug.

"All right," Uys said. "We'd better divide the land after breakfast so that I can sell my share to someone else."

"But you can't do that," Johan protested.

"It is mine, isn't it?"

"What do you want for your share?" Niekerk asked.

"Five hundred pounds; and you know it's worth twice that."

"But that's all the money we have," Johan said.

"And a third of it is mine," Uys said. "But I'll forget that.

After a long pause, Niekerk said:

"All right with me if Johan agrees."

"Can't we give him half now and ---"

"No, you can't."

"But Uys --"

"You don't have to buy, Johan."

UWI Libraries

"All right," Johan said sullenly.

"Then it's done," Uys said briskly. "You give me that money and divide the farm as you please." He turned to Johan. "If I were in your place I'd have the dividing line running north to south and choose the eastern side."

"We want the line to run from east to west," Sara said quickly.

"Johan is the male Jansen," Uys said. "He decides."

"I don't see the difference," Johan said.

"As you wish. It's your affair now."

"Better do as Uys says, Johan," little Elli said.

"Finished Koos?"

"Yes, Oom Uys!"

"Get my bag and hat from the room, will you."

The boy shot out of the kitchen.

"I don't know how we are going to control him now," Sara said.

"The boy's all right," Uys said.

Koos returned with the hat and bag.

"Now the money," Uys said, looking at Niekerk.

Niekerk went into the big room and returned with the money.

"You will come back again," His mother said.

"I'll come to visit you," Uys said. ".... I think my best way is to go to Krugersdorp. It's a shorter ride. From there I can take the train to Johannesburg."

While they stood around him, he counted the money slowly. It was all there. Five hundred pounds of it. They didn't know of the envelope full of new pound notes at the bottom of his bag. He put the five hundred pounds into an inner pocket. Most they'd ever made since they began selling their produce. Best season they'd had.

UWI Libraries

He turned to the boy.

"You can have my horse, Koos. But it'll have to take me to Krugersdorp first."

"I can come with you and bring it back!" The boy was eager.

"No," Sara said firmly.

"Time for work," Niekerk said.

"Johandwants to go," little Elli said quickly. "Remember, Johan?"

Johan flushed and looked away.

"Elli wants things for a baby." He looked apologetically at Niekerk. "There may be one on the way."

Their mother and Sara spoke excitedly to little Elli.

"Then we'll go together," Uys said. "And you can bring back Koos' horse."

"My horse," the boy said softly.

Johan got his hat and rifle, and they all trooped out to the stable. The kaffir boy had already saddled Uys' horse, and now quickly saddled Johan's.

Uys thought: now the goodbyes. He turned to his sister.

"Bye Sara."

"Goodbye, Uys."

There wasn't much love between them; never had been since they'd grown up. Perhaps it would have been better if there had been.

"Bye, Elli." She would make a good wife to Johan. All her world was made up of Johan. A real Boer girl, with a Boer girl's love of family. He was sure they would have many children.

"Goodbye, Uys. Take care. Johan and I have decided if the next is a boy we are going to call him Uys."

UWI Libraries

Now the boy. He ran his fingers through the boy's hair and punched him lightly on the chest.

"Bye, young fellow."

"You will come back, Oom Uys?"

I'll come back one day, just to visit you."

"Bye, ma." He took a step toward her and she lifted her face to be kissed. He kissed her cheek and his forehead brushed against her greying hair. He wondered, suddenly, what kind of a person she really was. He'd never before thought of her as a person. She'd always just been mother .... Mother .... Where did the word come from? How did it begin? .... Mother.

"You will take care Uys."

"Yes, ma."

"Take good care and come back again."

Niekerk finished tying the bag to the back of the saddle. He'd taken over from the kaffir boy. Uys put his hand on Kiekerk's shoulder. Now that he was leaving he didn't mind Niekerk. Well, really, he hadn't minded him for the whole of this last year. It was Niekerk who had minded.

"Bye, Niekerk. Take care of the family." Yes, that had been the right thing to say. He saw it in Niekerk's eyes.

"Good luck, Uys. We will miss you. Come back."

He almost belived Niekerk meant it.

He swung into the saddle and they rode away from the house.

Uys pulled up at the last ridge from which the house could be seen. He twisted his body and looked back. Johan moved on a few yards then pulled up and waited.

UWI Libraries

Uys stared long and hard at the low, whitish, house sprawling in the morning light .... When you leave home, whatever the reason, you feel sad. You feel you are taking leave of an intimate part of yourself. And still you go. You go because life is a coming and a going, a loving and a leaving, always .... Though I may roam throughout the world; though health and wealth may come my way; O Boer farm place of my birth, I love you above all else. The world and all the wealth it holds, can never buy the joy you gave. O Motherland! O honoured earth! I love you above all else .... O Boer farm ....

Johan called:

"Come on, Uys!"

Uys took off his hat and waved. And the little group waved back. He turned and rode down the ridge, urging his horse to a burst of speed that left Johan behind.

It was late spring, and, because the summer rains had come early that year, the land they crossed was lush and green instead of parched and grey. And when they passed cornfields they saw that, already, the dancing corn was topped with gold. If the locusts did not come, and if their were no bad storms, and if there were no fires, and if one of the sudden hailstone downpours did not come out of the night, and if the sky were not darkened by an army of damaging birds, and if there were no invasion of wild rabbits, then there might be a bumper crop this year. The promise of it was in the dancing ears of gold. But any of the many calamities might come to pass.

When they neared the outskirts of Krugersdorp, and the sun was sitting high in the sky, Johan broke the long silence;

"Uys ...."

"Yes?"

UWI Libraries

"I've been wanting to ask you .... I always thought you would marry before me. There was that Hettie Van As. What happened?"

"Nothing." He stared straight ahead.

"Didn't you see her in Pretoria?"

"I saw her."

"I always thought ---" Johan's voice trailed off.

"You thought wrong."

"You didn't want to marry her?"

"No."

"Is she still in Pretoria?"

"How should I know?"

"One never knows with you, Uys."

"Never knows what?"

"You know what I mean .... You've always been tight, but since you've come back it's been worse."

"What do you want to know?"

"Oh, I don't know .... Elli always wanted to talk to you but she was always afraid. That's one thing. And you and I, we've not had fun together any more. But what I really want to know is why are you going? And I don't think you mean to come back. Why?"

Uys turned his head to his twin brother. Johan was close to it. Why? Could he, Uys, tell why? Yes. Because he wanted to. He was going becuuse there was not enough on the farm for him. Could he make Johan understand that? No. He knew Johan.

"It's hard to explain," Uys said slowly.

"I always liked you better than all the others," Johan stared straight ahead.

UWI Libraries

They rode on in silence. After a while, Uys said:

"Remember to let the line run north to south and choose the eastern side."

"I've thought about it since you said so. The land does not slope there."

"And you can build your house so that you don't have to live next to Niekerk."

"I'll do it."

They jogged slowly down the only wide street of Krugersdorp.

"How will we know about you?" Johan asked.

"I can write to Krugersdorp," Uys said thoughtfully.

"I will come once a month. The first Saturday of every month I mean it."

"I didn't say I would write every month."

"I will come every month," Johan said stubbornly.

They dismounted at the station. And suddenly there was great constraint between them. Uys untied his bag and put it on the ground.

"Well, Johan?"

"Better go," Johan said coldly. "You want to go."

He grabbed the reins of Uys's horse, vaulted ~~xxx~~ on to his own swung about, and rode on down the street. For a while Uys looked after him, then he turned and walked toward the entrance of the little station.

He saw a tobacco stand at the little coffee room. Long time since he'd last smoked. He'd lost the habit. It would be a nice habit to start again. He ordered coffee and asked if they had cogarettes. No, they had only tobacco and paper. He bought some, made a cigarette and sat on a hard bench, waiting for the Johannesburg train.

UWI Libraries

The town had changed. There was more of it. Where, last year, there had been vacant spaces, buildings had sprung up. And as he walked slowly up Eloff Street, he saw mounds of earth rising against the far skyline. They were digging deeper for gold now, following the gold-bearing seams down into the bowels of the earth Perhaps, one day, those mounds would be mountains of earth. Man-made mountains.

People turned and looked at him as they passed. His lips twitched tightly. So the Uitlanders still despised the Boers. Well, they would see about that. A pair of town-clad Boers passe him, speaking loudly in Afrikaans. He watched to see if people would turn and look at them. No one did. So it was the way you were dressed; so it was the beard you wore.

He turned down Commissioner Street. There was the hotel. He wondered whether Thomas and his wife were still there. He went in and old Thomas looked up from his little desk.

"What can I do for you?"

"Remember me, Mister Thomas?"

Old Thomas got up suddenly. His mouth fell open, he gaped.

"Mister Jansen!"

"That's right."

Thomas looked from left to right as though for a way of escape

"Got a room for me?" Uys asked.

"My dear!" Thomas called suddenly.

The little door to the left opened and big Missus Thomas

UWI Libraries

came forth. Time had not changed her.

"What is it?" She looked Uys up and down.

"Mister Jansen," Thomas said.

"Don't be silly!"

"But it's true, Missus Thomas."

She gasped. Uys smiled into his beard.

"But --"

"My clothes and beard; I know. Haven't had a chance to chang yet. I've just arrived. If you'll give me a room I'll change and go out for a shave and haircut."

Missus Thomas pulled herself up.

"There isn't a room for you, Mister Jansen."

"Oh ...."

"When you were here last year unpleasant things took place."

"I see .... You've still got some things of mine."

"You left without paying."

"I left in a hurry .... Get my things and I'll pay you now."

"We sold them."

"Then I shall have to go to the police. How much do I owe you?"

"Better give 'em to him, my dear," Thomas said.

"Get them," Missus Thomas said.

Thomas went through the little door.

"How much do I owe you?" Uys asked.

"My husband will tell you," Missus Thomas said.

Thomas returned with the bag Uys had left a year ago when he and De Jong had fled from the hotel. Uys held out his hand but Thomas dumped it on the floor. Uys stared at the old man then knelt

UWI Libraries

and opened the bag. After a while he looked up and said:

"Two shirts missing."

"Are you suggesting ...." Missus Thomas said angrily.

"I'm saying two shirts are missing."

Missus Thomas flushed deeply. Thomas put a hand on her big arm.

"Remember your heart, my dear."

"How much do I owe you?"

Thomas took out an old account book and turned back the pages.

"Nine pounds," he said, looking up.

"Less the two shirts makes it six pounds. They were new."

"They only cost a pound each," Missus Thomas said quickly.

"How did you know?" Uys smiled.

"Boer!" she snapped and swished through the little door, banging it behind her.

Uys smiled frostily at the closed door. He reached into his inner pocket and brought out a wad of notes. He counted out seven, throwing them, one by one, on the desk. Then he took up his two bags and walked out. When he got outside, he realized his whole body was trembling.

He walked down in the direction of the Market Square. If he remembered correctly, that was the quarter where the failures lived, those whose stakes had not paid. He passed a number of dingy looking boarding-houses. A few yards further on, a drunk lurched out of a building and staggered down the street, watched by a pair of grinning blacks. He went into the building. Over the door was written:

NEW WORLD HOTEL.

The man at the reception desk did not look up from his paper.

UWI Libraries

"Yes?"

"I want a room."

"Rule is payment in advance. For how long?"

"Perhaps an hour."

The man looked up.

"Can't do that. If you do it you've got to do it without our knowing so that we're safe if it's a police matter. Professional?

"What do you mean?"

"The girl."

"There's no girl."

"No girl .... Then why do you want the room?"

The man was studying Uys closely now.

"I want a place to change."

"That all?"

"That's what I said."

"Wash?"

"Yes."

"Our kaffir can fix a bath for you .... Prospecting?"

"How much?" Uys said.

"I was just being friendly."

"How much?"

"All right. Five shillings."

Uys nodded. The man shouted:

"J-i-m!"

A young black boy came running from the back of the place.

"Prepare bath for boss! Double quick!" To Uys he said, "Use number one on the first floor. It's next to the wash-place. Here's the key. Five shillings in advance."

UWI Libraries

Uys paid the exact money and went up. Number one, on the firs floor, stank of the stale tobacco of its previous occupant. The window was shut and the bed unmade. The sheets were yellow with dirt. The wallpaper hung in peeling strips. Uys went to the window and pushed it up. He looked around the room in disgust. Well, he wouldn't be here long. He went to the faded mirror near the door and stared at his reflection. His beard was so thick his whole face, except his nose and forehead, were hidden. His hair, at the back, hung down below his neck. All that would soon be changed.

He opened the two cases and selected clothes. He covered par of the unmade bed and laid them out.

The black boy knocked on the door.

"Bath ready, boss!"

"All right."

Quickly, he stripped. He put on the brown silk dressing-gown of a year ago. Yes, he would make silk, and other things, his for always. And he would do more. Why should it be only the Uitlanders?

He went out and locked the door behind him. The black boy waited for him at the door of the wash place. He passed the boy.

"You can go."

"I wash your back, boss."

"Get!"

The boy went away, a puzzled look on his face. Uys climbed into the tub of greyish water. It was just warm. He scrubbed his body vigorously till the surface of the water was thick with scum. He got out and ignored the soiled towel. He had brought his own.

Back in number one, he put his hand into the case where the

UWI Libraries

envelope of money had been. It was still there. Good he had thi
things to do with that. What a Jew could do, he could do. He smile
as he remembered he hadn't counted it yet. No trouble about that.
It was his. Nobody else had touched it since De Jong had given it tc
him, so it was still all there. He'd have to count it soon. But
not here. He dressed quickly. He went to the faded mirror. All he
needed now was a shave and haircut and the townsman would replace th
farmer. He'd dealt with townsmen before; he would deal with them
again. He folded his old farm clothes and put them at the bottom of
one of the cases. He went downstairs. The man at the desk was stil
immersed in his paper. Uys put the key on the counter. The man
looked up casually, then looked again.

"Barber about here?" Uys asked.

"Yes, sir. Round the corner of the first street that cuts across this. Down."

Sir .... The beard half hid Uys' twisted smile.

"Thank you."

Uys picked up the cases.

"The boy can take them for you, sir."

"I'll take them myself."

The black boy hung about the door looking eagerly at Uys. Uys thought: damned if I'll give the kaffir anything.

The barber's shop was empty. Good. He could be seen to straight away. He was feeling hungry. An old Italian came from the back.

The Italian stared in dismay.

"Where have you been?"

"On the farms."

"But this is terrible!"

UWI Libraries

"Cut it off."

"It will be double price."

Uys sat in the chair and the old Italian began the long job. For nearly an hour the old man worked in silence, and Uys was half asleep by the time it was over. The bill was big. Three times wha he'd paid for a haircut the last time he'd been in Johannesburg. But it was worth it, he decided as he looked at the well groomed fa that stared back at him.

"Tell me," he said to the old Italian. "Do you know a good hotel? Not a big one."

"Those big ones want too much money," the Italian said.

"Yes."

"Now Mister Low's hotel is a good one. Mister Low is my client Every week he comes for a haircut. Same day, same time. He's a good man."

"Where's his hotel?"

"Bottom of Von Brandis Street."

Uys stopped an empty carriage and was taken to Von Brandis Street. He liked the look of the little hotel and went in. Yes, the had two rooms on the second floor and it would cost him two pounds a week. They were clean, light and airy rooms and the young woman who showed them to him was bright and cheerful. A bedroom and a sitting room for only two pounds a week. And the street was quiet too.

"I'll take them " he told the girl.

They went downstairs and she called:

"Daddy."

Unlike his daughter, there was nothing fresh about Mister Low.

UWI Libraries

His face had that red bloatedness peculiar to those who drank much cheap South African wine. His eyes were bloodshot. His neck was long and thin. His sagging, ball-like paunch was in strange contrast to the spareness of the rest of his body.

"Mister Jansen will take the two rooms on the second floor," the girl said.

"Good. Will you sign the register, Mister - er - Jansen. Sounds like a Boer name."

"It is," Uys said quietly.

"Daddy!" the girl said.

"Why not? I've got many Boer friends. What's wrong in asking Mister Jansen? You're too sensitive, Janet."

Uys relaxed. But he still didn't like this man Low. The important thing, however, was that the place was clean and his property would be safe. He paid for two weeks and took his bags upstairs. He would unpack later. He took out his money and counted it. Altogether he had just over a thousand pounds. Enough money to start a new life.

On his way, he had passed the Johannesburg branch of the National Bank of the South African Republic. He went out and made his way there on foot. Perhaps they would remember him from the last time.

But there was a new clerk at the old window.

"I want to open an account," he said in Afrikaans.

"Any references?"

"I had a special account here last year. The name in Jansen."

The clerk went into the inner office. When he returned he said:

"In here, please, Mister Jansen."

UWI Libraries

The branch manager ushered Uys into his office.

"I didn't want you to be standing out there while the business was put through. It takes a little time."

"It's good of you," Uys said.

"No more than my duty, Mister Jansen. We remember how you served the Republic."

This man would be familiar with the state of affairs, Uys thought

"What are things like now?"

"You on a new job for the Government?"

"No. I've just come in to see if I can beat the Uitlanders at their own business of making money out of gold."

"We should have done that earlier. They're in the saddle now."

"The Reform Committee still going?"

"They've got a new thing now. The South African League. It ha branches all over South Africa."

"What happened to Jameson and the Reformers?"

"You're joking, Mister Jansen."

"No, I went home immediately afterwards."

"And this is your first return?"

"Yes."

"Then you don't know any part of the story?"

"No."

"Well now, where shall I begin?"

"Jameson and the Reformers."

"Jameson and his men were handed over to the English."

"But I thought they were going to be shot."

"Many people thought so. Some were quite angry about it. But the President said it was better to make them, and England, look

UWI Libraries

small and guilty in the eyes of the world. And you should have see some of the things the rest of the world said! For months our papers were full of them. We have powerful friends all over the world now, Mister Jansen."

"And what happened to Jameson in England?"

"They sent him to jail for a few months then let him out befo the time. Said he was sick."

"And Rhodes?"

"Did you know he resigned as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony as soon as Jameson started his raid?"

"No."

"Well, he did. He went to England in disgrace. And then Chamberlain whitewashed him in the English parliament and said he wa a man of honour. Man of Honour! But he paid all right!"

"Paid?"

"Yes. Our Government demanded indemnity of a million pounds but they only paid a hundred thousand and all of it came out of Rhodes' pocket. And he had to pay for some of the Reformers too. I should say the Government made a million pounds out of the raid."

"What happened to the Reformers?"

The clerk knocked on the door and pushed his head in:

"How much is Mister Jansen depositing, Sir? and is it a current account?"

"A thousand pounds," Uys said. "Current account."

The clerk's head withdrew.

"The four ring-leaders were sentenced to death," the manager said "I don't know their names. But you would. You were on the inside.."

"Hammond," Uys said, "And Frank Rhodes. They were the real

UWI Libraries

leaders. The other two would be Lionel Phillips and George Farrar."

"You knew them all, didn't you?"

"Nearly all of them," Uys said. "And were they shot?"

"No. Uitlanders raised such a storm that it was changed to a fine of twenty-five thousand pounds for each of them. And they paid!"

"And the others?"

"The rest were each sentenced to two years in jail and a fine of two thousand pounds. But nearly all of them were let out after they paid their fines."

"And how are things now?"

"They're at it again, Mister Jansen. They want the vote: the streets are not clean enough; there is not enough playing space for their children. Taxes are too high; they want their children to be taught in English in State schools although the language of the State is Afrikaans."

"Then we are back where we were before the raid."

"Worse .... The English Government has been too soft on the raiders."

"There are many who think the same, Mister Jansen."

"Well," Uys said, getting up. "We'll see."

"Why not join me at lunch. It would be a pleasure."

"I should like to," Uys said.

That night, Uys went out to revisit some of the old places he had known in the past. There were many places he wanted to see; many things he had turned his back on that he would like to look at now. Perhaps the full-faced, blonde barmaid was still at that

UWI Libraries

bar near the police station; and perhaps he would again see a woman climb on a piano and offer herself for sale; and the girl in the room across the way from his at the Thomases, undressing herself by the window. The loneliness of the past year had given these memories a shining reality, had made them so clear that he could almost see flesh and hair, smell sweat and scent. Would it still be the same ....?

Tonight, he wanted to see people; to feel them close to him, perhaps to talk to them. Maybe tomorrow, or the night after, or th might after that, he would go to the theatre. But tonight he wanted to search for memories.

He would take his time about what he had come to do. A man sa better if he took his time, if he didn't rush into things blindly. That could wait. Now he would relax. The lights of the town were there to be looked at, and the people of the town were there to be enjoyed.

He walked up one side of Pritchard Street, right to its end, then he crossed the street and walked down the other side. And it was good to feel and hear people about him; to bump against them; to hear their voices; to look at the faces of the pretty women and try and see the shape of their bodies. After Pritchard Street, he walked up and down President Street. And the lights were everywhere even in the shop windows so that people could see the goods for sale

When the streets began to empty, he went into a bar in Commissioner Street. It was full of friendly faces, and some of them were drunk. He went into the more quiet private bar and sat in a corner. What should he have? Better not take anything too strong. It would be the first time in a year. Start slowly. The barmaid came to him.

UWI Libraries

Beer, he thought. Aloud, he said:

"A small whisky, please."

Two cheerful couples came in. From their talk it was clear they had been to the theatre and enjoyed themselves immensely.

"I liked that pianist fellow," one of the men said.

"Why are singing women so fat?" the prettier of the two women said.

"For the sound box, my dear," the fat man said and laughed uproariously.

"She sang like an angel," the elder woman said.

The barmaid brought the small whisky. Uys looked at her face. Not bad looking; rather white, but not bad looking at all. She looked tired. Again his mind went back to the woman whose window had faced his at the Thomases. Was she still there? Did she still undress by the window with the light on? And was another man looking at her now? That's why he'd wanted to go back to the Thomases. He sipped at his whisky. God, it burned as it went down. He'd forgotte that. The warmth reached down to his stomach.

A woman came in alone and went to the corner opposite his own. He couldn't tell her age from her face. Her clothes fitted tightly, more tightly than was the custom. Her eyes, cold and aloof, rested on his face for a second, then moved to where the two couples had settled at a table near the bar. He kept staring at her till she looked at him again, then he looked away quickly. The barmaid went to her.

How does one begin with a woman? ....

UWI Libraries

As the barmaid passed he ordered another small whisky. From the public-bar, unmusical voices rose high above the thimping piano. The woman in the corner took a mirror from her bag and stared intently at her face. Uys watched her closely till he caught the barmaid looking at him. He turned and looked at the four people near the bar. What they said was drowned by the noise from the public-bar. He felt the woman's eyes on him and turned to her. From the corner of his eye, he saw the barmaid looking at him. He thought the woman was asking a question with her eyes .... But the barmaid was looking at him and the smile wouldn't come to his lips. After a while the woman shifted her head slightly and stared at the door .... If only the barmaid had not looked at him.

A tall, fair man opened the door and hesitated on the threshold looking about the room. His eyes rested on the woman and he came in. He leaned against the bar and ordered a drink. And all the while his eyes were on the woman in the corner. Uys saw him raise an eye-brow as he took a drink. He looked quickly at the woman. A slight smile touched her lips and was gone. The man carried his glass over to the corner and sat beside the woman. He said something, and the woman smiled. They began to talk.

That was what he should have done .... He looked up and the barmaid's eyes were on his face. He felt she knew what was in his mind.

"How much?" he called and got up.

He went out without leaving her a tip.

Except for little clusters of drunks about the doors of the many bars, Commissioner Street seemed clear of people. A slight, warm, breeze blew over the town. And the bright moon and the many stars were up there as usual. The night was tranquil, and all the world

UWI Libraries

was hushed. Not even the noises of the drunks really disturbed the hush.

He strolled slowly toward Park Station .... If only that barmaid hadn't looked at him. Damn her!

Far ahead, a solitary woman passed under a street lamp and went down a side street. He hurried toward the side street. But when he got there she had disappeared. Further along, near the statior he saw two girls and called after them. They moved away faster.

He thought: when a man is lonely, it is terrible.

Near the Market Square, in one of the dark little passages found there, a woman stood just outside the range of a street lamp. As he came abreast, she said:

"Hello, sweetheart."

The muscles of his stomach bunched into a hard knot and his heart drummed so furiously, he felt it on his eardrums. He turned to the woman but found he could not speak. She stepped into the range of the street lamp and he r face was almost as old as that of his mother. He turned on his heels and walked away quickly, like a man pursued by something fearful.

He walked up one street and down another .... And all the world seemed to have gone to bed .... Up one street and down another .... And looking for a dream that was lost in his youth .... Up one stree and down another .... And each street was empty .... And his legs began to ache.

Then, at last, out of the night, he saw a woman walking slowly in the direction of Braamfontein .... Perhaps this would be it. She seemed lonely on this lonely night, like him. Perhaps this would be it.

And he would lie beside her and talk to her.

UWI Libraries

And it would be soothing to be relaxed and to know. To know what the dream was.

He followed her. And as he drew near, he saw that she was small and straight. Small and straight and a familiar body. Perhaps her face was wider than it was round .... No! To hell with that. He caught up with her on the other side of the market. And they were the only two people abroad in the town. And only the moon and stars could see.

Huskily, Uys said:

"Excuse me."

The woman turned her face to him; and it was wider than it was long: but it was black. Young and black as the night, with eyes and teeth for moon and stars.

He stood as though held to the ground. The black girl kept on walking, her pace faster than before. When he passed under a street-lamp, he saw the straightness of her body and the youth of it and something deep inside him said: she's a woman, a woman, a woman.

He hurried after her and called:

"Hey! Girl! I will give you money!"

She looked back once and began to run.

He called, and there was a plea in his voice:

"Please! I won't hurt you!"

But the girl ran faster. Wearily, dejectedly, he turned and made his way back across the Market Square.

"Must have been mad," he said aloud. "Of course I wouldn't have done it with a kaffir girl." No, not with a kaffir girl.

He passed the passage and looked to see if the old woman was still there. She had gone. Pity she's been so old ... Wouldn't have done it with a kaffir girl. No.

UWI Libraries

The bars were closed and the streets were empty. He made his way back to Von Brandis Street and Low's hotel. He passed people on the way, but there was no solitary woman among those he passed. He thought: if a man is lonely like this, surely, there must be women who are lonely like this too. But he wasn't sure. He didn't know about women. But he would find out. Yes, he'd do that.

The kaffir porter at the hotel was suspicious till he gave his name and the boy saw him in the light. They must have described hi to the boy. He went upstairs, undressed and got into bed. But sleep would not come. He was wide awake.

No. He wouldn't have done it with the kaffir girl. Of course he wouldn't have. Why, he'd even walked away from an old woman, even though she was white .... If only that barmaid hadn't stared a him so .... Then, quite suddenly, while his thoughts were flowing, he realized what he was doing but he couldn't stop the hand. He was lonely and he wanted to go to sleep .... The Bible said it was a great sin ....

When it was over he was sick with disgust and buried his head in his pillow.

But sleep did not come till that cold light that invades the world just before dawn, touched the window of his bedroom.

UWI Libraries

The days had been long and lonely. And he had spent them reading De Johannesburg Bode and Het Vrye Volk. Each morning, he had gone out, got De Bode, returned to his rooms and read it till it was time for lunch. Sometimes he had read it twice, sometimes three times. Then he had gone out for lunch. After lunch, he had walked about Johannesburg. In those walks he had got to know the town well; he knew almost every street, every hotel; he knew the town as well as he had known the farm. And, in spite of the people, the town had been as lonely as the farm.

One day, it had been at tea-time in the afternoon, he had walked into the Rand Club; that Club where he had been so often with Mark Blumenfeld. Jones had hurried to him.

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"Don't you remember me, Jones?"

"Yes, sir."

"I just want to come in."

"I'm sorry, sir."

Only Jones' words had been polite. His look and expression had belied the politeness of his words .... He, Uys, had turned on his heels.

And the evenings had been longer and lonelier. He had wandered from bar to bar till they closed. And each night, at each bar, he had drumk a little more than the night before. And after the bars had closed, he had walked the streets with a need grown more overpowering with the passing of each night. And at the end of each night he had returned to the loneliness of his rooms.

So, a month, then two, had gone by.

UWI Libraries

Then, there had been that evening with Janet Low.

He'd come home late, but earlier than usual. And she'd been downstairs, writing something into a big book. He had suddenly seen her as a woman. First time in all the time he'd been there. Withou thinking, without meaning to, he had stopped and talked to her. Usually, he just greeted her and went on his way.

"You're up late tonight," he'd said.

"Must do the work, Mister Jansen."

"What is it?"

"Oh, just accounts."

Then he's said it.

"Could you come up? I want to show you something."

"Won't tomorrow do?"

"No."

She'd left her work and gone up with him. He had not thought of it; he had not thought of anything; he had not thought of what he would do.

He had opened the door and she had gone in. Then he had turned on the light and closed the door.

And he had seen that Janet Low was beautiful to the level of al his desiring ....

"What did you want to show me, Mister Jansen?"

"Please sit down. Let us talk."

"It's late, Mister Jansen ...."

"Please .... I'm lonely ...."

Beautiful to the level of all his desiring.

"I can't stay here, Mister Jansen. It's late at night and I have work to do."

She had come toward him because he was between her and the door.

UWI Libraries

And he had put out his hands and touched her, felt her flesh under his fingers ... And his mind had been enveloped in a fog ....

The loud hammering at the door had reached his mind and the fog had dispersed. And the girl had been in his arms, panting and crying, her hair all over her face. He must have struggled with her, he must have tried to force her. He hadn't meant to. He had let her go. He had said: "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I didn't know ...."

Then he had gone to the door and opened it. A group of people had stood there; hostile people. The old man to the fore had struck at him with the stick he'd used to hammer on the door. He, Uys, hxx must have locked the door. He had caught the stick and grabbed it from the old man's hand. He had not heard any of the many words they had flung at him. The girl had hurried past him and he had called out after her: "I'm sorry, Miss Low. I'm sorry ...." And still the many Uitlander voices had been cursing him. Mainly women's voices. Only two old men.

Then the girl's mother had come and said:

"You must go! Now! Tonight! We will give back the money due to you."

"I don't want it."

He had wanted so much to explain to the girl's mother that he had not meant it; that he did not know what had happened to him. But all the faces had told him it would be useless.

"You must go now!"

"I will pack."

He had taken the door handle to close it.

"No!"

He had packed while they stood in the doorway and their angry,

UWI Libraries

Uitlander voices cursed him. But all that had clung in his memory had been a very English voice saying:

"That comes of letting Boers into our hotels. They're worse than the blacks. They're savage."

He had carried his bags out into the night with those words dancing in his brain.

Near morning, a policeman, a Boer like himself, had told him of a house in Braamfontein where he had seen, written in Afrikaans, a 'Rooms to Let' notice.

He had gone there. A sleepy, barefooted Afrikaner girl with coarse red hands and stringy brown hair hiding her face, had opened the door.

"Yes?"

"You have rooms."

"Better come in and go to sleep till pa wakes. He doesn't like to be woken."

She had taken the bags from him and led him into a room, lit a lamp and left him.

That had been over two months ago.

He called: "Katryn!"

"Yes!"

"Come here!"

She came and stood in the doorway. Her hair was swept from her face, and it was a broad sullen face touched with resignation. Neither beautiful nor ugly, it was just the face of a young woman. Her solid, somewhat squat body threatened to burst the cheap dress

UWI Libraries

that encased it. Her arms, sleeves rolled up to the elbow, were brown and strong. Her body drooped with a weariness more terrible than mere tiredness.

"This water's gone cold," Uys said.

"What do you expect when you lie on your back for half an hour after I've brought it." Her voice, too, was infinitely tired.

"Any more?" he asked, without turning to her.

"Yes."

She went to the kitchen, and her movements were slow and tired. Uys continued to lather his face. She returned with a kettle of water.

"How much?"

"I'll tell you."

He put a hand into the bowl of cold water, and she poured in the hot.

"Enough."

"What are you wearing? I'll brush it."

"The grey suit .... Your father in?"

"He's gone to see a man who might get him a job on the mines."

"Uitlander?"

"A man called De Melke. Must be the only Afrikaner working on the mines."

"He'll get something soon."

"He's been saying that for months. I don't see the Uitlanders giving work to us if they can give it to their own people or to kaffirs."

"This is our land, Katryn; not theirs."

"And they have all the wealth."

UWI Libraries

"That will come to an end."

She stopped brushing and looked at his back.

"Will it?"

"Of course."

He finished shaving.

"I want to dress," he said.

She threw the brush on the bed and went out. He threw off his dressing-gown and dressed. He spent some time over his cravat. The only trouble with this house was that it was dark. At Low's he'd had electricity; here, he had to manage by oil lamp.

He went into the kitchen where Katryn sat mending clothes. Her eyes brightened for a brief moment as she saw how well his clothes fitted.

"I've kept food warm," she said.

"I'm eating out tonight," he said.

"With one of your Uitlander women?"

A bitter little smile touched his lips. She misread it and said:

"What would she think if she knew Mister Jansen lived with a family of what they call poor landless Boers?"

"Who called you that?"

"It was in your paper this morning. Didn't you see it?"

"No. What did it say?"

"It said we are a problem. They call us a new community of poor whites."

"Nonsense."

"Look at your paper."

"Why worry what they say. It's our land."

"Is it?"

UWI Libraries

"You'll see."

"Wish we were back on our farm."

'Children asleep?"

"Out playing. I'm glad mother can't see them."

He thought: does she ever laugh? Is she ever happy?

"'Night, Katryn."

"Good night, Mister Jansen."

"Why the Mister?"

"Don't want me to call you Uys when you look like an Uitlander gentleman."

"Stop it."

She looked briefly into his eyes, then carried on with her mending. When he reached the door, she said, softly:

"Don't get too drunk. It only makes you sick."

As he walked away from the dark and gloomy houses of Braamfontein he thought, as he so often did, of the Boshoff family. There was Katryn and her father, Jan Boshoff and the two boys. The mother had died, and shortly after that Jan Boshoff had sold his farm to prospectors and they had come to Johannesburg. He had bought the house in Braamfontein. Where the rest of his money had gone, no one knew. Not even Katryn. Uys had asked her. All she knew was that one day her father had told her they had no more money and they had to dismiss their kaffir maid. What <u>had</u> happened to Boshoff's money? You don't ask a man such things when he so obviously did not want to speak about them. Still, it was intriguing. Where had his money gone to?

Katryn was terribly homesick for their farm. That's probably the reason why she's always so cheerless. But, in spite of

UWI Libraries

Boshoff's moody silence and Katryn's cheerlessness, they had both been very good to him. They'd treated him as a person rather than just a lodger. And they'd helped so much in easing his loneliness. Especially Katryn with her sour talk. Something he would do for them. Something to show them his appreciation. They were his people, Afrikaners like himself, and they's made him welcome. Only your own people can make you feel welcome when you are in a strange place .... I'll eat at the Continental tonight, he decided.

It was late and the Continental was full but the head waiter found a small table in a far corner. While he was ordering, a tall, handsome man moved between tables toward him. He watched the man with interest. Other people looked too. The light-footed manner in which the man moved, andhis distinguished air, commanded attention. Was the man going to stop at his table? The man clicked his heels and bowed. From his breastpocket, he took a card case, extracted a card and gave it to Uys. Uys looked at it:

Count Kurt Von Veltheim.

Uys looked from the card to the Count. The Count said:

"May I have the honour of sharing your table, sir? I regret this intrusion but the room is full and all the tables are occupied. It was stupid of me to overlook ordering one earlier."

"You are welcome," Uys said.

The Count seated himself. Uys finished his ordering. It was the Count's turn to order, and while he did so, Uys studied him. A wonderful figure of a man; taller than Johan; lean and broad-shouldered. Not an English Uitlander, Uys decided. The man's voice had suggested a Boer speaking English. His name sounded either Dutch or German.

UWL Libraries

The Count finished ordering and turned his eyes, green and of a piercing sharpness, on Uys. Uys felt as though the man stripped him with that piercing look, turned out the contents of his mind, and examined them, item by item, He wanted but found it hard, to shift his eyes from that piercing look. He said:

"Excuse me; your name sounds German or Dutch."

The Count smiled, showing white teeth, andthe hardness went out of his eyes.

"I am a Count of the great German nation."

"I'm honoured to meet you, sir."

"And you, sir? You sound like one of the gallant young men of the great President Kruger and the South African Republic."

"I am. My name is Uys Jansen, Count Von Veltheim."

"Jansen .... Jansen ....? It sounds familiar to me. It sounds very familiar."

The Count frowned in concentration. Uys smiled.

"I did a little service for my country two years ago ...."

"That's it! I knew I would get it. Two years ago, in the Jameson raid, we heard secret reports of the distinguished work of a young man called Jansen. You must understand, I was in Berlin at that time. So you are that gallant young man .... May I have the honour of shaking your hand, sir."

"I was only doing my duty," Uys said, but he felt he had done more than that. It had to be more than that if it had reached Berli

"You will know," the Count said, "how promptly our Kaiser, and the German people, showed their solidarity with you and your great President when we had news of the raid. You will know of the telegram."

UWI Libraries

"No," Uys said. "You see, I went home to our farm immediately after the raid."

"Just like a patriot!" the Count said warmly. "He does his duty and then he retires from the scene of glory .... In honour of this meeting, my friend, we will drink champagne. But first I will tell you of the telegram." The Count reached into his inner pocket and took out a little packet of papers. "I carry a copy of it wherever I go. It shows the great friendship that is between our two countri This is what our Kaiser sent to your President five days after the raiders attacked your land: 'I tender you my sincere congratulations that, without appealing to the help of friendly Powers, you and your people have been successful in opposing with your forces the armed bands that have broken into your country to disturb the peace, in restoring order, and in maintaining the independence of your country from attacks from without."

"It was a wonderful thing to do," Uys said.

"We would have done more had there been any need," the Count said.

The waiter brought the food.

"A bottle of your best champagne!" the Count said.

"Yes, sir!"

"Now, my young friend," the Count said. "While we wait to toast our two great lands, perhaps you can do me a little service."

"Anything I can ...."

"My problem is this: I have some money in trust for my young sister. I want to invest this money and ensure her future. I'm an adventurer, you know. I explored Australia, I was in two revolutions in South America and saw President Barros shot.

UWI Libraries

I am a man of action, and adventure may soon call me away again. And I want to be sure of Elise's future. You are a man of the world. You understand."

"Of course," Uys said.

"Elise is a modern woman. She does what she wants to. And of course, as a good brother, I do not interfere in her affairs. It is only that I want to protect her future ...."

The waiter brought vintage champagne.

Uys and Count Von Veltheim touched glasses.

"To the everlasting friendship of our countries!"

"To the freedom of our peoples!"

They ate a little and drank a lot. And Uys felt very good.

"About Elise," the Count said at length. "The problem where you can help is this; I have ten thousand pounds that I wish to invest for her. I know it is not much, but it's enough to keep a young woman modestly if she takes care. Do you know a good, safe way of investing that, Mister Jansen? Perhaps you've got investments?"

Fifty times the amount of money I started with, Uys thought. His mind could not grasp such a sum.

"It is very much," Uys said.

"Yes," Von Veltheim said. "But young women are not like us, my friend. For you and me, a thousand pounds is riches, but not for them. Can you help, my friend?"

"I'm afraid I cant help. You see, I'm in the same position. Our Government gave me some money after the raid, and I sold my share of the farm. I havent as much as you and your sister, but I've been trying to invest my thousand pounds ever since I've been here. It's been difficult because the Uitlanders I knew have been

UWI Libraries

against me because of my part in breaking the raid."

"Just so," the Count said understandingly.

"It's the Jews," Uys said with sudden bitterness.

"They are the curse of the world," the Count said.

The after dinner brandy worked in Uys.

"I introduced a Jew called Blumenfeld to my girl and he stole her." His voice was charged with bitterness.

"Your mistake, my friend."

"You are right, Count. I will not do it again."

"Call me Kurt. All my friends do. I will call you Uys .... One more brandy, heh, Uys. Then you must come with me. Elise would never forgive me if I did not take you to meet her."

"But it's late, Count."

"Kurt."

"Kurt."

"Now listen to an old campaigner, my young Uys. Where women are concerned, pay no heed to time. Be masterful and you can get whatever you want. Don't forget that, my dear boy."

The waiter brought their bills.

"It's mine," Uys said.

"I insist," the Count said.

"Please," Uys said.

"I insist," the Count said.

In the end, it was the Count who paid. A cab was just being discharged outside the Continental. They got it.

"Grand National Hotel," the Count said.

"It's very late," Uys said.

"Elise is a modern young woman." The Count laughed.

UWI Libraries

One of those sudden summer downpours enveloped the town in moving sheets of rain. The cab crawled through the beating rain, splashing through potholes. The driver crouched forward, peering, intently, through the falling sheets. For the summer rain, as was its wont, cast a haze that even the street lamps could not quite dispel. And everywhere, people on foot ran for cover.

At last, the cab pulled up at the Grand National. The Count opened the door and called:

"Boy!"

Uys paid the driver. A black boy with an umbrella ran toward the cab. Under the cover of the umbrella, Uys and Von Veltheim entered the hotel. Von Veltheim gave the dripping black boy a sixpence. There were no messages for the Count so he led the way to their suite.

"I'm expecting a message from a villain called Woolf Joel."

"I met him once," Uys said.

"That man is a rogue, my friend. Together we won half a million pounds at Monte Carlo, and now he wants to cheat me of my share. A Jewish rogue. But I will get him even if I have to shoot him!.... Here we are .... After you, my friend."

Uys stepped into a sumptuously furnished suite.

"Sit down, my friend." Von Veltheim busied himself at the liquor stand.

"What is it?" Uys asked as he took the tall glass.

"A drink for the gods, my friend. I brought it from Germany .. You drink that while I find Elise."

He went through a door and left Uys looking at the room.

Von Veltheim stood in the bedroom door and looked at Elise,

UWI Libraries

asleep. Surely the prettiest of the many women he'd used in his long and stormy career. And cut to pattern for that young Jansen and his thousand pounds. Not the most intelligent: the most intelligent had been the Russian, Nadya. He wondered what had happened to her. Last time he'd heard of her she's been earning a living as the widow of Count Von Veltheim who perished exploring the Andes. She had brains, that Tussian, but no obedience. Wild as an animal; passionate as an animal, too. Little Elise was colourless beside her, and beside many of the others. Too anxious to obey. No resistance. But beautiful to look at, like a piece of rare china without any blemish, or a delicately fashioned tree-leaf by a Japanese master. Yes, he almost loved her when she was asleep.

He went to bed and sat on its edge. And so young looking. Her greatest asset, that.

"Elise. Wake up." He smacked her face lightly.

She moaned and tossed her head. He pulled the bedclothes off her. Worth a thousand pounds to a ~~sxi~~ simple Boer.

"Wake up! There's work to do."

She sat up and pushed the golden hair back from her face; and her greenish-grey eyes were swollen with sleep. He went into the bathroom and returned with a wet sponge. He pushed it into her face.

"What is it, Kurt?"

"A thousand pounds is sitting out there and it is your duty to charm it into our pockets."

"Another fat man?" Elise said boredly.

"You're wrong, my child. There's a young man called Uys Jansen

UWI Libraries

out there, a handsome young man, a charming young man. You should enjoy yourself with him."

"What am i to do?"

"Before you start doing anything you must know about him."

"Cigarette?"

He gave her one and lit it for her.

"Mister Jansen is a Boer ...."

"Oh, no, Kurt!"

"Why not?"

"You've seen what they look like - bearded and dirty. Please."

"Stop displaying your ignorance! ... Jansen is as well dressed as I am; as clean shaven. We had dinner together and he used knives and forks."

"I thought ...."

"You just think about what you are to do .... Jansen is a Boer but that does not mean he is one of your fat fools. He's simple, but he's shrewd and suspicious so you've got to be careful."

"You make love to him. Real love, not just play. He's lonely and hungry for a woman."

"What do you mean, real love?"

"Just what I say."

"All the way?" She looked closely at him.

"Yes ... You are my sister. You are a modern girl who has her own way. I'm one of these casual, understanding brothers. I'm trying to invest money for you. You do your part and leave the rest to me."

"When you say: all the way, Kurt ...."

"Remember where I found you?"

"All right, Kurt."

UWI Libraries

His face softened in a quick smile. He patted her bare shoulder

"You'll like him. He's different. Something new and I tell you he's young and handsome. Oh yes, you must remember he's a great patriot, like all these Boers. He did something in the Jameson Raid that must have been of some importance because his Government gave him some money. Get him to talk about that. Get him to talk about himself .... And remember, after this week we are going back to Europe and we are going to live in grand style. So, this is your last job. Make it a work of art, my little Elise. I'll finish with that Joel before this week is over .... Now I'll go to him. Come as soon as you can."

"Nothing from Joel yet?"

"Not yet. But I'll get it."

He went out.

Uys was standing at the window, looking out at the pouring rain.

"Sorry I've been so long, my friends. I was right. She would have been angry if I didn't bring you. How do you like the drink?"

"Wonderful," Uys said.

Probably never had whisky and soda, my young friend, Von Veltheim thought.

"I'm glad you like it. It's a very special drink at home. We make it only for dear friends."

"I should like to visit your country one day," Uys said.

"You must. And you must stay with us. We have a house in Berlin and a house in the country. Ah, here's Elise!"

She came in, her golden hair hanging loose down her back, a flowing white robe half-concealing, half-revealing, the outlines of

UWI Libraries

her body. And in her eyes, there was the gaiety of the happy young.

"My dear," Von Veltheim said, taking her hand. "Our honoured guest and new found friend, Mynheer Uys Jansen, citizen of the South African Republic and a great patriot .... Uys, my sister, Elise, Countess Von Veltheim."

She took his hand and tilted her head slightly.

"I'm so glad Kurt brought you, Mynheer Jansen. Ever since we've been here, we've only met Uitlanders and I did so want to meet the people of the country. Now, perhaps through you, Mynheer Jansen, I will be able to do that."

"Call him Uys, Elise. He's our friend."

She smiled at Uys.

"Only if you will call me Elise. Will you?"

"If you want me to, Countess."

"No! No! If we are friends, then you are Uys, I'm Elise and Kurt is Kurt."

"Well," Von Veltheim said. "If you two will excuse me, I have one or two things to do. I'll come back later."

"It's rather late," Uys said, turning to the window.

"Nonsense," Elise said. "Just time for a nice talk."

"Told you she was a modern girl," Kurt said going out.

She went to the settee.

"Now come and sit here and tell me all about your country; so many things I want to know."

She's so beautiful, Uys thought. So beautiful.

He sat beside her and tried not to look at her leg where the robe parted. He tried not to show the stiff unease that was in him, that had been brought on by the beauty of his surroundings and the

UWI Libraries

greater beauty of the woman beside him. He had never, not even in his freest dreams, thought a woman could be so beautiful.

She thought: Kurt is right. He is different from all the others, different and a little frightenxing, like an animal under control who might break loose one day.

"Uys ...."

"Yes?"

"Use my name."

"Yes, Elise?"

"That's better. Now I feel we are friends .... Tell me, Uys; where is your home? What does it look like? Did you grow up there?"

"It is to the west of here," he said slowly.

"Tell me all about it. How many are there in your family?"

He told her. And each time he stopped, she asked a question till soon, she had him talking freely and easily. And as he talked, she felt him relax, felt the stiffness leave him. And as he relaxed, he talked, with growing freedom and ease, about his people and the country, about farming and the seasons, about good land and bad land for farming. All she had to do was ask a question every time he stopped. And soon, he was saying her name quite naturally. Soon he was telling her about Hettie Van As and Mark Blumenfeld. And when he had finished, she knew everything about Uys Jansen, or, at least, as much as anybody would ever know. And yet, for all his simplicity, there was something deeper than she had fathomed. She thought: if all the Boers are like him then their minds are not the minds of Europeans any more. What had made her think that? ....

The rain stopped. She got him a drink and stood close beside him at the window. The night was black and moonless.

UWI Libraries

"I must go," Uys said. "Where's Kurt?"

She laughed.

"Probably gone to sleep over his work. Kurt is like that; funny and old-fashioned."

"He's a wonderful man."

"Yes, he's dear once you get to know."

"I like him very much."

"Only Kurt?"

Uys looked quickly at her then looked away. She laughed gaily.

"You are very shy, Uys Jansen."

"I did not grow up among lots of people in Europe."

"That's what I like about you."

"I must go," he said.

"Yes you'll be tired in the morning."

"It wasn't that."

"Then what?"

"I was thinking of you."

"Then stop it."

"I can't."

"Oh Uys, you're actually flirting at last!"

"You're laughing at me."

"Come! Dance with me! You don't know how terrible it is trying to dance with Kurt. He's six foot four inches tall!"

"I don't know how to dance."

"Then I'll teach you. Come!"

She took his hand and moved to the centre of the room. Facing each other, a foot apart, she showed him how to waltz, humming the while.

UWI Libraries

But for all his trying, Uys could not move. Elise was too close, the scent of her body too fragrant, her laughing green eyes too gaily inviting.

She gave up.

"You are tired."

"No ...."

"Yes .... Better go home now. Would you like to lunch with me tomorrow? I know only men are supposed to have the right to invite ladies, but I don't care. I like you. Will you come?"

"Yes!" He wanted to say much more.

"Good. At twelve tomorrow, then."

She walked with him to the door.

"Say goodnight to Kurt for me."

She took his hand between both hers.

"Till tomorrow, Uys." Her voice was tender.

"Till tomorrow, Elise."

Just before he went out of sight, Uys turned and waved. She'd waited for that. In that, at least, he was like all the others. She shut the door. God, she was tired. She turned off the light and went wearily to the bedroom. Kurt was asleep, his long body across the bed, feet at the left corner, head at the right.

I'm too tired for this, she thought. She took two blankets and went back to the sitting-room. The settee would be more comfortable.

Uys walked home to Braamfontein through the wet streets. And the dark night was filled with the brightest star he had ever seen in heaven and earth. And the name of the star was Elise. He smiled happily at the people he passed.

UWI Libraries

He hummed gaily as he cleaned his shoes. The sun was shining, the sky was clear, and the world was a place of beauty.

Katryn passed the door and paused.

"You are very happy," she said sullenly.

He swung about and smiled at her.

"Why not! It's a beautiful day! Life is good! Why not!" How sullen and sour she was, how unlike Elise. Nothing light and dainty about her. Heavy and stolid. Not really as a woman should be: none of that light gaiety of Elise. But then, you can hardly expect the world to be full of Elises.

"Same as yesterday," Katryn said and walked away.

Silly girl; same as yesterday. What did she know .... He was counting his money when she repassed the door.

"See what she says when your money's gone."

"Hold your mouth!" he snapped.

She put down her pail of water and stared at him. He saw the hurt in her eyes and felt sorry.

"I didn't mean that, Katryn .... Trouble with you is you're getting sour. It's this being in all the time. You must clean yourself and go out sometime. You must put on a clean dress and comb your hair and make your face look nice." He got up and went to her. He cupped her chin in his hand and turned her face, first left, then right. "You want to take care of your skin, Katryn. Do what women do to their skins,"

"Like your Uitlander woman ...."

"She's not an Uitlander. She's a German Countess - at least, her

UWI Libraries

brother is a Count, but I don't know if that makes her a Countess."

"What is a Count?"

"Something like the son of a king."

Katryn's eyes showed her disbelief.

"Is she the daughter of a king?"

"I said like."

"What does that mean?"

"When you ask me to tell you of an important man in the Republic, I might name our President, Paul Kruger. Then you may ask me to tell you of another man who is like Paul Kruger. You would mean someone who is almost as important. And I might say our Commandent-General, Piet Jambert. See?"

"So she's not the daughter of a king ...."

"Of course not."

"And she puts things on her face?"

"To make herself beautiful."

"And you want me to be like that?"

"Why not?"

"And wear beautiful dresses."

"It will make you look nice."

She picked up her pail and moved toward the kitchen. She looked back and said:

"Buy me the dresses, Uys Jansen." Her voice was charged with bitterness.

Thoughtfully, Uys went back into his room and finished his toilet. Then he went into the kitchen. Katryn sat peeling potatoes. He stood in the door and looked down at her.

"I will buy you a dress, Katryn," he said softly.

UWI Libraries

Suddenly, teeth bared savagely, she flung a potato at him. It hit the wall near his head.

"Get out of here, Uys Jansen! Get out! I don't want your dresses and your money! Get out!"

"Katryn ...."

"Go to your Uitlanders! Get out! I don't want you here!"

She grabbed at the potatoes. He turned and hurried out. At the door he met Jan Boshoff coming in. He nodded to Boshoff and made his way to the centre of the town. Elise would be waiting for him.

Boshoff went into the kitchen of his house.

"Any luck?" Katryn asked.

"No."

"Perhaps this afternoon."

"Perhaps. They prefer the damned kaffirs."

"I've got some coffee for you."

He sat at the kitchen table and she poured him the coffee.

"Father ...."

"Yes."

"Uys Jansen may leave us."

"What? We won't be able to live without his money."

"I got angry and told him to get out."

"What's the matter with you, Katryn?"

"I don't know .... "I'll wait up for him and say I'm sorry."

"You'd better! .... These damned kaffirs should all have been shot, taking white men's work."

"You shouldn't have sold the farm," Katryn said, and lowered her head over the potatoes.

UWI Libraries

Elise opened the door and took both his hands; and the magic of the night before was with him again.

"Uys."

She seemed a little shy today; shy and younger and even more beautiful. She looked delicately fresh in her grey skirt and white blouse. A woman to be proud of.

"How are you?" he said.

"Happy now that you've come."

"Kurt?"

"He won't be with us. He's out to see about those investments for me. It won't bore you to eat with me alone ....?"

She looked so worried. He smiled, and with new confidence, patted her arm.

"Of course not!"

"I'm so glad."

A little table was laid in front of the settee. On it, daintily laid, was an appealing and appetising selection of cold food and a bottle of wine. Elise picked up the bottle and held it to the light.

"I hope it's good. I chose it all by myself."

"I'm sure it is."

They sat side by side on the settee, and somehow, Elise was so close that her leg kept rubbing against his, her arm against his. And all the many bright and wise things Uys had meant to say to her, were fled from his mind. But there was deep happiness; the warm intimacy of eating alone with a beautiful woman; of turning his head and seeing her face, only inches away from his; of drinking wine she

UWI Libraries

had chosen especially for him; the exciting rub of her leg against his; the delicate taste of the cold food. No need for talking. No need for anything .... Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, his arm was about her and he held her to him. She struggled a little.

"Uys .... The food ...."

Was she angry? He hadn't meant to do it. He remembered that night with Janet Low and was afraid.

"I'm sorry."

She looked quickly at him. God, how touchy he was!

"You don't make love at table, Uys," she said sweetly, lowering her eyes.

She didn't mind! She wasn't angry!

"Elise ...."

"Yes, Uys?"

"You like me a little, don't you?"

"Kurt and I like you very much, Uys. We talked of you all this morning."

"I don't mean like that. D'you like me?"

She turned her head away so that he saw only the smooth white line of her neck. Words rushed from Uys, tripping over each other in their eagerness to be out.

"We've only met and I'm only a poor Boer, not a Count. But I'll have money one day, lots of money and I will give you everything you want. You wait and see. I can do what any Uitlander can, and I will have a mine and have money one day. That Jew, Blumenfeld xxx did it. I can too ...." All the words were out now, and he felt a little ashamed of them, a little afraid. What would she say?

"Would you like me to get the boy to bring us coffee?"

UWI Libraries

"Yes, please."

She went to the door and pressed a button. She brought him a box of cigarettes. Instead of sitting beside him again, she went and stood by the window. Was she angry with him?

"Elise ...."

There was a knock at the door. She went to it. The black boy had come in answer to the ring.

"Coffee for two," she said and shut the door in the boy's face.

"Elise ...."

She thought: really, when it comes to a woman, men are much the same whether they are a prince or just an ordinary lonely Boer boy. And again - she couldn't remember for the how-manyth time - she felt the thrill of excitement that was the prelude to conquest and then surrender. This was the moment she could not help, even with the foolish fat men. And Uys was lean and young and earnest. Her eyes shone. She felt warm blood touching her cheeks. In moments like these, she felt that old Parisian hag had been right when she'd said: "If men weren't so foolish they'd see you would do for nothing because you love it." Yes, perhaps she'd been right about that. But she'd been wrong about all the other things she'd said.

"Yes Uys?"

"You are not angry with me, Elise?"

She turned her flushed face and shining eyes on him, and her body swayed a little. How long would he sit there? So cold for a young man.

"My dear ...." she murmured softly.

Ah! That was better. He was on his feet. Reaching for her. She would warm him and be warmed by his warmth.

UWI Libraries

Uys held her tight, and all her body pressed against him, hungrily. And all the world was warm with Uys. He held a woman in his arms and her arms were about his neck! And she was the most beautiful woman in all the world. The most tender, the most loving .... He steadied himself and looked into her shining eyes.

"I love you, Elise."

"Kiss me ...."

She kissed him till she could feel him mad with want .... It was usually the cold ones who lost control most completely when warmed. They had to be handled with care otherwise everything happened too quickly and there was no joy .... She pulled her head away. He pulled her toward him.

The black boy with the coffee knocked on the door.

"I must get it, Uys."

He let her go and stood trembling, a glazed look in his eyes. She opened the door, took the tray from the black boy and shut the door.

"Elise ...."

"Your coffee, Uys."

"I don't want it!"

"Uys ...."

"Sorry. I didn't mean to shout."

"Take your coffee .... And have a cigarette."

That was better. He was calming a little. His body still trembled. First time's always difficult. Could so easily spoil the joy and make it a mess.

They finished their coffee.

She smiled at him and he came to her. Yes, the ice had melted

UWI Libraries

all right! ... She felt light-headed as he lifted her off her feet .. Keep control or it'll be a mess, Elise ....

"That door," she murmured.

He went to sleep in her arms afterward, a tired, happy child who had let down all the barriers. It had nearly been a mess but she'd managed it, and he hadn't been bad for a beginner. In the end, he'd carried her along; and that hadn't happened in a long time.

.... Sleep little Uys; you are paying for it ....

Glowing with confort and satisfaction, she felt tender toward him. Before dozing off herself, she wondered how Kurt was doing with Woolf Joel .... Glory! For a small man, this Uys had a beautiful body, and strong ....

Toward sundown, he gave her tea at a quiet little place near the station. Across the little table, he said:

"You will marry me now."

It was so unexpected, andhe was so serious, she nearly laughed. And then, hard on the impulse to laugh, came a brief, fleeting memory of her girlhood and its dreams, and she was sad.

"Of course."

"We will tell Kurt. Do you think he'll object?"

"Object?"

"To our marrying."

"Of course not. Didn't Kurt tell you I'm a modern girl? ...But we won't tell him just yet."

"Why not?"

"Just a woman's secret."

UWI Libraries

"But he might mind."

"I know Kurt. He's my brother."

"All right .... But you will marry me?"

"I said so."

"I can't believe it."

"It's true."

"Elise .... You do love me?"

"I gave myself, Uys."

"And it's the first time?"

"I told you so."

"I'm sorry. It's just that .... I think I'm dreaming."

"Give me another piece of cake."

After tea they walked in the Kruger park. And Uys wanted all the world to see the beautiful woman on his arm. More beautiful than all the women they passed. It pleased him beyond measure when men turned to look at Elise. She was his! Let all the world look and know. His! Elise Jansen. Wife of Uys Jansen. Suddenly, he wished Mark Blumenfeld and Hettie Van As were there to see him. Hettie Van As would look ugly beside Elise.

For her part, Elise enjoyed the outing. Uys' possessiveness and joy at showing her off, touched her, and she played the game of young love with all her heart. This was more exciting and interesting than she had thought. And she was beginning to like Uys Jansen. She would miss him when it was all over.

He took her to dinner at Frascati's. Then they went to the Gaiety Theatre and he bought her a bunch of white roses.

They went back to the hotel afterwards. She saw the note she had left for Kurt was no longer on the little table. He'd been and

UWI Libraries

taken it. As he had left no note, it meant he would not return that night. Well, he'd be spending the night with some woman so why shouldn't she spend it with Uys ....?

The sun was up when Uys got back to Braamfontein. Katryn and the two boys were in the kitchen. Boshoff was already out on the search.

"I waited up all night," Katryn said.

"Why?"

"I wanted to say I'm sorry. We wouldn't know what to do if you left."

"That's all right."

He swayed with tiredness as he went into his room and shut the door. He tumbled into bed and was fast asleep in less than five minutes.

So the night of Tuesday and the morning of Wednesday passed.

He got up at sundown. And Elise was waiting for him.

So Wednesday passed.

And Thursday.

On Friday morning he didn't return to Braamfontein. The black boy brought up food and he spent the day in bed with her. Toward evening they walked in the Kruger Park, dined at the Moss Grill and returned to the hotel. As is natural with lovers, they shunned all company except their own.

Uys had seen Kurt briefly on the Wednesday evening. Elise, like a woman, had changed her mind and told Kurt:

"Uys and I are engaged, Kurt."

Kurt's joy had been boundless. He'd wanted to take them out to

UWI Libraries

dinner, but Elise had insisted they wanted to be alone and Kurt had understood. A wonderful man to have for a brother-in-law. He'd said to Uys:

"I feel better now that I know Elise has you to take care of her."

And they had spent the Wednesday and Thursday nights together. And on Friday morning Uys had not returned to Braamfontein.

They were at breakfast together when Kurt came in.

"Morning my love-birds!"

"Don't be vulgar, Kurt," Elise said.

"I may be mistaken but it seems Uys has spent the night here."

"We're engaged."

"Of course, dear sister. I'd forgotten that ... Don't blush so, young Uys. I was just pulling your leg."

"Don't take any notice of him, Uys," Elise said.

"He's going to be a wonderful brother-in-law," Uys said, looking at Elise.

"Don't praise him," she said. "Coffee, Kurt?"

"No. I'm not staying. I have to see a man at the Stock Exchange in five minutes. I may have a wonderful chance of buying up special stock through him. Something that will shoot up to twice its value in a month's time, so your ten thousand pounds would be worth double."

"Taking the money with you?"

"No. If everything is as I hope, I'll pay him in the morning and get the stocks. Those papers of mine you've got in your room, will you come and give them to me? Uys will excuse us for a few minutes."

They went into the bedroom.

"What is it?" Elise asked.

UWI Libraries

We may have to move fast after that."

"You expect trouble?"

"No. But there may be. These Jews are cunning."

"You sound like Uys."

"He may be right there .... Here's your ticket. Better wait for me in Cape Town. I'll move more freely if you're safe out of the way."

"When do I leave?"

"Eleven tomorrow."

"And Uys?"

"I'll suggest he puts his money with yours. He'll fall for it. Then I'll go. You get him to get it from his bank then you'd better keep him here till morning. I'll come in same time and collect it. Then you get rid of him and clear off to the station. All clear?"

"Now give me my gun."

She got a pistol from a drawer. He slipped it into his pocket.

"Now for friend Uys."

"I'll miss him."

Kurt laughed.

"In love with him?"

"Perhaps ...."

"You don't know the meaning of the word. You say that of anybody who satisfies you. Is he good?"

"He's improved wonderfully."

"All right, come on, teacher."

They went back to the sitting room. Uys had been thinking furiously. He got up as they came in.

"I say Kurt, about this investment ...." Perhaps they wouldn't like it. He hesitated.

UWI Libraries

"Yes?" Kurt said casually.

"It's only a little money, I know, but couldn't I put mine with Elise's .... After all, we are going to be married ...."

"Of course," Elise said.

"Excellent idea, my dear fellow," Kurt beamed. "Why didn't I think of it myself? What better start for a husband and wife than to make a little money together."

"It isn't much ...."

"That doesn't matter, my dear fellow .... How much is it?"

"I had just over a thousand pounds but I've spent some of it on living. So I think there's about eight or nine hundred pounds left. Supposing I gave you five hundred to invest and keep the rest for living ...."

"Why not invest the lot?" Kurt said.

"But for living ..."

"Don't worry about that, my dear chap. This is a rare chance. I'll advance you what you need. It's only for a month."

"I think Kurt is right," Elise said. "No reason why he or I shouldn't lend you a little now."

"All right," Uys said. "I'll go to my bank now and get it all."

"I can't wait now. Keep it and give it to me in the morning." He smiled wickedly. "Of course, you'll be here in the morning."

"Of course," Elise said coldly.

"Goodbye, love-birds," Kurt said, leaving.

Before lunch, Elise sent him to his bank. He returned with all his money and gave it to her. It was eight hundred and ninety-five pounds eleven and six. He kept the eleven and sixpence.

UWI Libraries

All that day, Elise was particularly tender toward Uys and his love for her knew no limits. Their private little lunch had a dreamlike quality. In the later afternoon, they walked in the park, close to each other, with intimacy of lovers. In the evening, they dined at the Continental. Uys suggested the theatre but Elise preferred to go home and to bed. He couldn't resist the promise and invitation of her eyes, so they went home.

And again, she was particularly tender ....

Before they went to sleep, she said:

"Uys...."

"Yes?"

"You are happy? I've satisfied you completely?"

How could he tell her how happy he was, how rich and complete these days had made his life? How could words explain that? He searched his mind to see if there were any words that could: there were none.

"I'm happy," he said.

"And completely satisfied?"

"Completely."

"Not only today and tonight. All the other days?"

"All the other days and all the other nights."

She turned out the light.

"I'm glad. I want you to remember I've given my best."

"We've got all our lives."

"I still want you to remember."

"And you, Elise? Completely satisfied?"

"Yes." Yes, more so than she had expected and hoped for. Yes. The others would be awfully boring after this.

"I'm glad too," he said.

UWI Libraries

"Then let's go to sleep."

And they went to sleep.

They had just finished breakfast when Kurt came in.

"How are the love-birds? I can't stay. Got your money, Uys?"

"Elise has it."

Elise gave it to Kurt. Kurt folded the wad of notes and pushed them into his note-case. He went into the bedroom and returned almost immediately.

"In a month's time this will be double, young fellow .... Oh, Elise, remember the message I gave you yesterday? Well, I've settled with the hotel, and don't forget the time is eleven o'clock."

"What time?" Uys said curiously.

"To collect a special letter," Kurt said.

"Shall I see you again today?" Elise asked.

"Don't think so, dear little sister .... But look! I've got a good idea. Why not let's have your engagement party tonight. What do you say, Uys? ...."

"No, Kurt," Elise said.

"I think it's a good idea," Uys said.

"Then it's settled! We'll drink champagne and have a first rate party. I'll invite a good crowd."

"Kurt!" Elise's voice shook with rage.

"Where's your sense of fun, my dear? Are you ashamed of the man you are going to marry?.... Well, I must be off. See you tonight, Uys. And bring along any friends you like."

"Oh Kurt, do you have to?" There were tears in her eyes.

"Goodbye, lovers." He went out.

Uys put his arm about her.

UWI Libraries

"There's nothing wrong with a party, Elise."

"It doesn't matter now," she said.

"Then cheer up, my dear. I like parties."

"Poor Uys ...."

"Why poor Uys?"

Having Kurt force a party on you."

"I tell you I like parties. Now cheer up or I'll be angry."

"All right!"

She kissed him and smiled. While he had another cup of coffee, she went into the bedroom. As she'd expected, Kurt's journey into the bedroom had been to leave something for her. There was a slip of paper and a little pile of banknotes. Some of Uys Jansen's notes. Money for the journey. The slip of paper said: "Take only your things. Will move mine out this afternoon. See you Monday. Bon Voyage." She took five one-pound notes from the little pile and went back to Uys.

"I think you'd better leave me now, Uys. If this party of yours is to be a success I'd better start doing things."

"What about lunch?"

"I won't have time."

"Not for lunch."

"Now don't get angry. You and Kurt wanted the party."

"It's going to be miserable not seeing you for lunch ... What about tea and our walk?"

"Do you know what it takes to prepare a party at short notice?"

His face fell.

"It'll be terrible not seeing you all day .... Never mind. There'll be all tonight and tomorrow and all the other days. May I come early?"

UWI Libraries

"Yes .... Now you must go, Uys."

"You want to get rid of me."

"Remember your party." Damn Kurt's twisted humour.

"All right. But I'm going to miss you."

"I'll miss you too."

She clung to him as he kissed her; she clung as if she did not want to let him go. Then she pushed him away.

"Take this." She gave him the five one-pound notes.

"What's that for?"

"Keep it for me."

"Why?"

"Just keep it for me."

"Till when?"

"Till I ask for it."

"You're a funny girl."

"Now go. I have things to do. Goodbye."

"See you tonight."

"Goodbye ...."

Her eyes misted as she watched him walk away. She would miss him. He'd been different from all the others. He'd made her feel young and clean again. Crazy feeling, of course, but he'd given it to her. He'd made her feel a fresh and wanted woman. A real woman .... She would miss him .... She lit a cigarette and went toward the window. She stared out and the softness went out of her mind and body .... The interlude was over. It had brought them eight hundred and ninety pounds. The train was leaving in less than an hour. She put out the cigarette, went into the bedroom, and began packing....

UWI Libraries

Uys got out of the cab and held the bunch of white roses away from his body, in the awkward manner of a man not used to carrying flowers. He moved quickly toward the door of the Grand National. He had not seen her all day and he was eager for a sight of her. She loved white roses. The black boy opened the door and he went in with long strides.

The clerk at the desk looked up and said:

"Excuse me, sir, but you are the gentleman whose been visiting the suite of the Count Von Veltheim regularly?"

"Yes."

"They've gone, sir. The lady asked me to tell you."

"Gone? "... Uys shook his head and smiled. "No, we're having a party tonight."

"But they've gone, sir."

Uys looked closely at the man. He was serious.

"No. I'll go up and see for myself."

"You can't sir. The suite's occupied by other people."

Uys began to feel angry and afraid.

"You're lying! I'm going up to see."

The clerk called and the manager and two men appeared.

"What is it?"

"This gentleman won't believe Count and Countess Von Veltheim have gone, sir."

"Well it's true," the manager said.

"But we are having a party tonight. Our engagement party."

"An engagement party, here?"

UWI Libraries

"Yes. The Countess and I are engaged to be married."

"The Countess and you? .... But that's impossible, my dear sir. The Countess is the wife of Count Von Veltheim."

Elise the wife of Kurt? What were they saying? Was he going mad?

"You are lying!" he shouted. "You are lying!"

"The man is mad," the manager said. "Hold him. He's liable to get violent. Jim! Get the police!"

The two men jumped on Uys and held him.

"Elise!" Uys shouted. "Elise!" He struggled with his captors.

Soon, a little crowd had gathered in the lobby of the Grand National. The manager said:

"That this should happen to the best hotel in town. It's a calamity! Where are the police?"

Presently, two burly policmen arrived. The manager told them what had happened and begged them to take Uys away. A policeman on each side, the bunch of white roses trodden underfoot, he was dragged away.

"Elise!" Uys cried. "Elise!"

But Elise did not answer. She was far, far away....

At the police station, Uys was sufficiently calm to remember Commandant Smit.

"Could I see Commandant Smit?" he said in Afrikaans.

The police were impressed. It wasn't every Uitlander who took the trouble to learn Afrikaans. And this man, if he knew Commandant Smit, might be an important man on the goldfields.

"What name, sir?" the sergeant asked.

"Uys Jansen."

"Are you a burgher?"

UWI Libraries

"Yes."

A policeman went away, and presently, Commandant Smit appeared.

"Jansen! ... What are you doing here .... Is he under arrest sergeant?"

"Yes, sir."

"What's the charge?"

"That's what I don't quite know yet, sir."

"Well, Jansen, you'd better come into my office and explain."

After Uys had finished his story, Commandant Smit said:

"Hmmmm, Von Veltheim .... Did you give them any money?"

He had forgotten all about the money.

"Yes."

"Much?"

"Eight hundred and ninety five pounds."

"That's a lot of money!"

"It was all I had."

"Sold your share of the farm?"

"Yes."

"Bad thing to have done, Jansen .... Might as well forget your money. Von Veltheim's an international swindler. He's no Count. He uses women in many of his schemes. There's not much hope of getting anything out of him now. There are no witnesses so it'll be your word against his in court. But I'll send out an order for his arrest Where do you live?"

Uys gave his address in Braamfontein.

"Need any help with money?"

He didn't like the way Commandant Smit looked at him.

"No."

"All right, then. We'll do our best ...."

UWI Libraries

"Mister Jansen is free to go, sergeant. Send out a general call for the arrest of Kurt Von Veltheim. He sometimes calls himself a Count. Goodnight, Jansen."

The Commandant turned without shaking Uys' hand.

In a daze Uys walked toward Braamfontein, He could not think or feel or react. He walked as a man drunk, or drugged. He bumped into people as though he had not seen them. People stopped and turned to watch him, but he was unaware of it. He felt no pain, no hurt; mind and body had ceased to function and he was numb. This was the period between the shock and the reaction; the dead, painless period. Feeling and thought would come later, when the shock had worn off from the mental and physical arteries .... Now, the empty husk of a lifeless man walked home.

Katryn stared in disbelief as he entered. It was less than an hour since he had gone. He stumbled into his room, flung himself on his bed and stared up at the dark ceiling with sightless eyes.

Something about the way he had moved, disturbed her. The two boys had just finished eating.

"Go out and play," she ordered.

She got up and went to his door. She stood just inside the doorway, leaning her body against the woodwork.

"Didn't expect you," she said.

Why wouldn't he answer, what was he seeing up there?

"Are you deaf?"

She got angry suddenly. She would hurt him.

"So she's got another man!" That would get him.

But it didn't. He still stared at the ceiling.

UWI Libraries

"Uys .... Uys Jansen ...."

She went to the side of the bed and stood over him. What was the matter with him? She bent nearer and looked into his eyes. She knew that look! Yes! That's what her father had looked like when he'd lost the money .... A sort of empty blindness in the eyes .... Yes! She knew it! He'd lost his money! He'd lost his money too! It had to be that. Nothing else. Just like the look her father had. He'd lost his money!

She went out of the room and closed the door behind her. She closed it gently, more gently than she had ever closed it before. He would want to be alone with himself. Perhaps for a day, perhaps for two days, perhaps for three. No way of telling how many days he would need.

She took up a bundle of her father's and the boy's shirts. It was becoming difficult to mend them. It needed one shirt to patch another; so that, in the end, two shirts became one. And there were not many.

"He's like me now," she said, and the comfort of the words were so strong, they brought a smile to her lips.

So the Saturday passed .... And the Sunday; with Uys staring at the dark ceiling.

On the Monday, the day was March 14 of the year 1898, Johannesbu was astir with the news that a man called Kurt Von Veltheim had shot and killed Woolf Joel, the young mining magnate. Von Veltheim, the news said, had tried to blackmail Joel but had been trapped and had tried to shoot his way out. All the same, he had been arrested.

UWI Libraries

On Tuesday morning a policeman knocked on the door in Braamfontein. Katryn opened it.

"Uys Jansen live here?"

"Yes." A sudden wave of alarm passed through her. "What's the matter? He's done nothing wrong ...."

"Please tell him Commandant Smit wants him."

"He's sick .... He's done nothing wrong, I tell you!"

"Please. There's nothing to worry about."

She went into the room where Uys lay staring at the dark ceiling.

"Uys! ... Uys! ..."

"Leave me alone."

"There's a policeman. He says Commandant Smit wants you."

"What for?"

She went to the door and beckoned to the policeman. He came.

"Mister Jansen?"

"What is it?"

"Commandant Smit wants to see you."

"What for?"

"We've arrested Von Veltheim."

Uys took a deep breath and sat up.

"Is that true?"

"Yes."

"And the woman?"

"I don't know about any woman. You must come with me."

Katryn came to the door and watched them walk away. She'd been right! It was his money .... But perhaps he would get it back now.

Commandant Smit stared at Uys Jansen. God how he'd changed

UWI Libraries

since Saturday. His face was haggard, thin and pinched; his dark eyes were swollen and bloodshot, bright with lack of sleep and some inner flame. Pity touched the Commandant and he thought; we should not have brought him here in the first place.

"We've got Von Veltheim," he said. "He murdered Woolf Joel yesterday. We'll go and see him."

"And the woman?" Uys asked.

The Commandant watched him closely.

"No .... Come."

They went to the cells of prisoners awaiting trial. Kurt Von Veltheim was in cell number six.

"Well, if it isn't my young friend Jansen," Von Veltheim said and laughed gaily.

Uys' teeth bared savagely, like a hound before its rush. He leapt at Von Veltheim, savage hatred in his eyes.

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Von Veltheim stepped back and struck out smartly. His blow caught Uys on the side of the face, sending him reeling back against the cell door. The skin, just below his left eyes, was split and blood trickled from it.

"You're a witness, Commandant," Von Veltheim said, smiling. "Self-defence - just as in the case of Woolf Joel."

"Shut up!" Commandant Smit snapped. "And you, Jansen; behave yourself .... Is this the man who took your money?"

"Yes." Uys stemmed the flow of blood with his handkerchief.

"How much was it?"

"I protest, Commandant!"

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"Nine hundred and ninety five pounds."

"And you gave it to this man, Kurt Von Veltheim?"

"Yes."

"Thats a lie, Commandant."

"You will find out just how well our law protect its burghers, Von Veltheim."

"I tell you it's a lie, Commandant. He gave it to Elise. Ask him."

The Commandant looked at Uys.

"True, Jansen?"

Uys stared at Von Veltheim.

"Where is Elise?"

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"Damn you!" Uys said bitterly.

"By all means, my dear fellow."

"No more of that!" the Commandant snapped. "Jansen, did you give the money to him or the woman?"

"The woman."

"There you are, Commandant!"

"She was working under your orders."

"How are you going to prove it, Commandant? .... Oh, and did Uys tell you the number of days he spent in bed with my wife?" Von Veltheim took out his cigarette case with a flourish.

The Commandant looked sharply at Uys.

"That true, Jansen?"

UWI Libraries

"No!"

And looking at him, Commandant Smit knew he was lying. What Von Veltheim had said was true. He looked away from Uys. Von Veltheim laughed softly.

"Come on," the Commandant said to Uys, without looking at him.

"Nothing else, Commandant?" Von Veltheim asked.

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"It was self-defence, Commandant. Every man has the right to defend his life."

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The sergeant got it. The Commandant opened it and took a thin sheaf of notes out.

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"Make a new list and when you come to money, change it to nothing. No one else has seen the list yet? Not his lawyer?"

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The Commandant turned abruptly ~~xxaxand~~ walked away. The sergeant looked curiously at Uys. Uys pushed the money into his pocket and went to the door. Before he reached it, the Commandant returned with a slip of paper. He pushed it into Uys' hand.

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"I greet you, fair one!"

She made a place for him but he nearly sat in her lap. Suddenly, a man pushed his head round the door. "Police!" And the room was in bedlam. The girl took Luke Dabula's arm.

"Come! This way!"

They went out through the window. And while most of the others were trapped by the police, she led him into the dark shadows of the Vrededorp night ....

UWI Libraries

Uys squinted at the setting sun and wiped his sweating brow with his sleeve. Boshoff, a few yards along the road they were making, leaned against his pick handle..

"About time to stop," Uys said.

"That foreman's late," Boshoff said.

All all along the stretch of road, the Republican roadmakers eased up and waited for the foremnn to call a halt. Christmas was near andthis was the last day of work. After today they would have a holiday till after the new year. And today they were getting a Christmas holiday bonus.

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UWI Libraries

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And the man went forward and collected his money.

"Hoffman!"

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And as he called out the long list of the names of the landless Boers, each stepped forward and collected his money. And their eyes lit up and they talked animatedly for a little while. Then they recalled they had been doing kaffir work, and each was shame-faced in the presence of the other. And they lapsed into silence.

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The cart unloaded them in Government Square. They split into

UWI Libraries

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"Must be an Uitlander," Uys said. "Well, what happened?"

UWI Libraries

Their friend, the one on the ground, had said something about the man - nothing terrible though - and the man had knocked him unconscious.

"He ought to be killed!" a roadmaker called Van Deal said.

Uys' eyes narrowed.

"What are we waiting for? These Uitlanders think they own the land! It's about time they were shown who does!"

"Jansen is right!"

"To hell with the Uitlanders!"

"They've robbed me of my land!"

"And mine!"

"Let's do something about this man!"

"Which is his house?"

"That one there."

"Come on!" Uys said.

"The police are coming!" a man cried.

A group of policemen arrived.

"Let the law deal with him!" one of the older men said.

"The law won't!" Uys cried bitterly.

"Now what is this all about?" the leading policeman demanded.

The unconsscious young man had revived and was sitting up.

"Tell him," Uys said.

The young men told their tale.

"Now do something," Uys said.

"Or we will!" one of the roadmakers cried. "These Uitlanders think they own the land!"

"This is our business," the police spokesman cried.

UWI Libraries

"Then do it!" Uys said.

"We'll watch you," Van Deal said.

The police spokesman went to the house while the others stayed with the roadmakers to stem any attempted rush. They allowed them to approach to within a short distance of the house, then formed themselves into a barrier.

"No further, men. This is a matter for the law."

Meanwhile, the spokesman had reached the door of the house. He knocked. There was a pause, then the door opened. Immediately, to the onlookers from the street, there was a confused scuffle. Then a shot rang. A woman in the house screamed.

For a time there was confusion. When it cleared, it was found the policeman had shot the man who had knocked the young Boer unconscious. Police reinforcements arrived quickly and the crowd was soon dispersed. Before the roadmakers left, a policeman asked for addresses as witnesses ~~may~~ might be needed. Nearly all the roadmakers volunteered to be witnesses. Then Uys turned to Boshoff.

"Let's go. One Uitlander less in the land."

Katryn had supper waiting for them. And Uys, for a change, was quite cheerful that night. Katryn had put on her new dress that hid some of the bulging of her stomach. She had combed her hair and tied it in a bun. She had done everything to look beautiful for Uys. And she was without that dead heaviness that had been on her in the past.

In bed that night, she asked Uys something that had been on her mind for a long time. She had never dared to ask it before because he had never before been as cheerful as he was tonight.

"Uys ...."

"Yes?"

UWI Libraries

"I want to ask you something ...."

"Well?"

"You won't be angry ...."

"Since we've been married, you - you - "

"Come on!"

"You've not thought of that woman? You've not longed for her?"

No. He'd not longed for her. But he'd thought of her. He'd thought of her often. Thought of her even more than of Hettie Van As Hettie Van As had only taken a kiss and a dream from him. Only a kis and a dream. But Elise had taken more, much more. Sometimes he felt she had taken more than he knew. More than he knew how to measure and express. One woman had taken his dream and gone to an Uitlander, and the other had taken something he couldn't even measure. How could he ever stop thinking of them? Hating them? How?

Katryn waited tensely.

"No," he said. "No."

"And you want our child, Uys?"

"Of course .... Now go to sleep."

"What made you so happy tonight?"

"Was I happy?"

"Yes. Very."

"Didn't know."

"Tell me about this police affair you and father talked of."

"Nothing really. We've got one damned Uitlander less and that is good."

"What happened?"

"He was shot resisting arrest."

"These Uitlanders!"

"Yes. Go to sleep."

UWI Libraries

"Uys .... Uys Jansen ...."

She went to the side of the bed and stood over him. What was the matter with him? She bent nearer and looked into his eyes. She knew that look! Yes! That's what her father had looked like when he'd lost the money .... A sort of empty blindness in the eyes .... Yes! She knew it! He'd lost his money! He'd lost his money too! It had to be that. Nothing else. Just like the look her father had. He'd lost his money!

She went out of the room and closed the door behind her. She closed it gently, more gently than she had ever closed it before. He would want to be alone with himself. Perhaps for a day, perhaps for two days, perhaps for three. No way of telling how many days he would need.

She took up a bundle of her father's and the boy's shirts. It was becoming difficult to mend them. It needed one shirt to patch another; so that, in the end, two shirts became one. And there were not many.

"He's like me now," she said, and the comfort of the words were so strong, they brought a smile to her lips.

So the Saturday passed .... And the Sunday; with Uys staring at the dark ceiling.

On the Monday, the day was March 14 of the year 1898, Johannesbu was astir with the news that a man called Kurt Von Veltheim had shot and killed Woolf Joel, the young mining magnate. Von Veltheim, the news said, had tried to blackmail Joel but had been trapped and had tried to shoot his way out. All the same, he had been arrested.

UWI Libraries

On Tuesday morning a policeman knocked on the door in Braamfontein. Katryn opened it.

"Uys Jansen live here?"

"Yes." A sudden wave of alarm passed through her. "What's the matter? He's done nothing wrong ...."

"Please tell him Commandant Smit wants him."

"He's sick .... He's done nothing wrong, I tell you!"

"Please. There's nothing to worry about."

She went into the room where Uys lay staring at the dark ceiling.

"Uys! ... Uys! ..."

"Leave me alone."

"There's a policeman. He says Commandant Smit wants you."

"What for?"

She went to the door and beckoned to the policeman. He came.

"Mister Jansen?"

"What is it?"

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"We've arrested Von Veltheim."

Uys took a deep breath and sat up.

"Is that true?"

"Yes."

"And the woman?"

"I don't know about any woman. You must come with me."

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They went to the cells of prisoners awaiting trial. Kurt Von Veltheim was in cell number six.

"Well, if it isn't my young friend Jansen," Von Veltheim said and laughed gaily.

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UWI Libraries

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"The police are coming!" a man cried.

A group of policemen arrived.

"Let the law deal with him!" one of the older men said.

"The law won't!" Uys cried bitterly.

"Now what is this all about?" the leading policeman demanded.

The unconsscious young man had revived and was sitting up.

"Tell him," Uys said.

The young men told their tale.

"Now do something," Uys said.

"Or we will!" one of the roadmakers cried. "These Uitlanders think they own the land!"

"This is our business," the police spokesman cried.

UWI Libraries

"Then do it!" Uys said.

"We'll watch you," Van Deal said.

The police spokesman went to the house while the others stayed with the roadmakers to stem any attempted rush. They allowed them to approach to within a short distance of the house, then formed themselves into a barrier.

"No further, men. This is a matter for the law."

Meanwhile, the spokesman had reached the door of the house. He knocked. There was a pause, then the door opened. Immediately, to the onlookers from the street, there was a confused scuffle. Then a shot rang. A woman in the house screamed.

For a time there was confusion. When it cleared, it was found the policeman had shot the man who had knocked the young Boer unconscious. Police reinforcements arrived quickly and the crowd was soon dispersed. Before the roadmakers left, a policeman asked for addresses as witnesses ~~may~~ might be needed. Nearly all the roadmakers volunteered to be witnesses. Then Uys turned to Boshoff.

"Let's go. One Uitlander less in the land."

Katryn had supper waiting for them. And Uys, for a change, was quite cheerful that night. Katryn had put on her new dress that hid some of the bulging of her stomach. She had combed her hair and tied it in a bun. She had done everything to look beautiful for Uys. And she was without that dead heaviness that had been on her in the past.

In bed that night, she asked Uys something that had been on her mind for a long time. She had never dared to ask it before because he had never before been as cheerful as he was tonight.

"Uys ...."

"Yes?"

UWI Libraries

"I want to ask you something ...."

"Well?"

"You won't be angry ...."

"Since we've been married, you - you - "

"Come on!"

"You've not thought of that woman? You've not longed for her?"

No. He'd not longed for her. But he'd thought of her. He'd thought of her often. Thought of her even more than of Hettie Van As Hettie Van As had only taken a kiss and a dream from him. Only a kis and a dream. But Elise had taken more, much more. Sometimes he felt she had taken more than he knew. More than he knew how to measure and express. One woman had taken his dream and gone to an Uitlander, and the other had taken something he couldn't even measure. How could he ever stop thinking of them? Hating them? How?

Katryn waited tensely.

"No," he said. "No."

"And you want our child, Uys?"

"Of course .... Now go to sleep."

"What made you so happy tonight?"

"Was I happy?"

"Yes. Very."

"Didn't know."

"Tell me about this police affair you and father talked of."

"Nothing really. We've got one damned Uitlander less and that is good."

"What happened?"

"He was shot resisting arrest."

"These Uitlanders!"

"Yes. Go to sleep."

UWI Libraries

Summer storms on the veld can be sudden, unexpected, and terribl in their devastation. Of a morning, the farmer arises, goes out and lifts his eyes to a distant, cobalt sky. There is no wind at all, and the young sun promises a good day for the precious crop. Perhaps very far away, smaller than a man's hand, there might be a dark speck in the clear sky. And the farmer goes out to work in his field, thanking whatever gods there be for such a perfect day. And the gold corn sings as it sways. And the farmer bends his body to the earth, for there is no need to look at the sky again. No need, that is, until some private corner of his mind whispers that something has changed. And he looks about. For a while he is unable to notice anything new. Then, quite suddenly, he realises the land is dark. He looks up. And up there, from nowhere, angry clouds are massing, driven by storm-winds. And the heavens are in violent turmoil. Then the storm breaks.

The shooting of the Uitlander, Thomas Jackson Edgar, by the Republican policeman a few days before the Christmas of 1898, was like a summer storm on the veld.

First, there was nothing; then there were protests from the Uitlanders; then the South African League raised its voice.

The policeman was put on trial. He was released. The judge said he had done no more than his duty.

The Uitlanders held a meeting in the Market Square. They wanted to present a petition of protest to the British Consul in Pretoria. The leaders of this meeting, Dodd and Webb, were arrested.

The South African League organised a meeting to protest against

UWI Libraries

the arrest of Dodd and Webb. Burgher labourers from the various road camps along the Reef, came into the town on the day of the meeting. They broke up the meeting as soon as it began, and there were clashes between Boer and Uitlander. There were riots. As a result, 21,000 Uitlanders sent a petition to England praying for the Queen's protection.

The long felt, long repressed, bitterness between Boer and Uitlander came to the surface. The Uitlanders remembered all their past injuries and added them up afresh. So did the Boers ....

Thus the year ended: thus the new year began ....

President Kruger had been re-elected on the slogan: Beware of Rhodes and keep your powder dry! Though he had feared the opposition of old Piet Joubert who was venerated throughout the land, Schalk Burger had split the progressive vote and the country had rallied for Krugerism and the fighting slogan ....

Since the Jameson Raid, the Republic had been importing modern arms from Europe. Germany had been the chief source.

In April of 1899, Sir Alfred Milner, Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner for South Africa, sent a cablegram to Chamberlain in Whitehall. In it, beginning with the shooting of Edgar, he detailed the substantial wrongs and injustices endured by the Uitlander. After the list of wrongs, he said:

"The true remedy is to strike at the root of all these injuries--the political impotence of the injured. What diplomatic protests will never accomplish, a fair measure of Uitlander representation would gradually but surely bring about. The case for intervention is overwhelming. The only attempted answer is that things will right

UWI Libraries

themselves if left alone. But, in fact, the policy of leaving things alone has been tried for years, and it has led to their going from bad to worse .... The spectacle of thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of helots, constantly chafing under undoubted grievances, and calling vainly to Her Majesty's Government for redress, does steadily undermine the influence and reputation of Great Britain, and the respect for the British Government within the Queen's dominions. A certain section of the Press, not in the Transvaal only, preaches openly and constantly the doctrine of a Republic embracing all South Africa, and supports it by menacing references to the armaments of the Transvaal, its alliance with the Orange Free State, and the active sympathy which, in the case of war, it would receive from a section of Her Majesty's subjects.

"I can see nothing which will put a stop to this mischievous propoganda but some striking proof of the intention of Her Majesty's Government not to be ousted from its position in South Africa. And the best proof alike of its power and its justice would be to obtain for the Uitlanders a fair share in the government of the country which owes everything to their exertions .... It is asking for nothing from others which we do not give ourselves. And it would certainly go to the root of the political unrest in South Africa, and, though temporarily it might aggravate, it would ultimately extinguish the f race feud which is the great bane of the country."

The cablegram heightened the tension. The British Government shipped troops to South Africa. Many were stationed near the borders of the South African and Free & State Republics.

F. W. Reitz, State Secretary of the South African Republic, sent a letter to Sir Henry De Villiers:

UWI Libraries

"You know I think that I myself have always been a Liberal (not to say Radical) in politics, and as regard the franchise, but I think you underestimate the difficulties the President has to contend with in having to deal with a people and legislature like ours.

"The President told us (Leyds, Smuts and myself) that he himself would favour a seven and even (later on) a five years' franchise, and the granting of burgher rights to people who have already been resident for some time past. But (as he expressed it) 'it was no use taking more hay upon his fork than he could carry',- and that he would have his work cut out to carry even the limited extension of the franchise that he had undertaken to propose. And the result has proved that he was right; for, in spite of all his argument in the Raad, that body has quietly shelved the matter for a year by referring it to the people.

"The fact of the matter is that the unwarranted interference of Mr. Chamberlain (at the instigation of our avowed enemy Rhodes) with matters of internal economy of this Republic, and the rascally conduct of Rhodes' reptile Press at Johannesburg, had just the result which Mr. Kruger had warned the people would follow if, instead of strengthening his hands with the burghers by friendly co-operation, they adopted the tricks which the Star, the Leader and the Jingo League have adopted.

"Argument is one thing, but treason within our borders and threats from without are quite a different thing. We (in which I include the President) might have hoped, in a comparatively short time, to have brought about a turn in the conservatism of our people as regards the new inhabitants; but if such changes are made 'at the point of the bayonet' by a bullying set of would be 'Paramounters'

UWI Libraries

(for we are not unmindful of the massing of troops around our borders) and by a lot of people who are the tools of that arch plotter, Rhodes, then I fear you will see some serious things happen in South Africa.

"If I have written strongly, excuse me, because I feel strongly the injustice which, in the name of a great nation, that can boast of better traditions and nobler aims, is being perpetrated against us."

In an attempt to ease the tension, a conference was held in Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State Republic, between the two Boer Republics and the British Government. President Kruger represented the South African Republic, President Steyn the Free State, and Sit Alfred Milner represented the British Government.

At the reception President Steyn gave before the conference started, Sit Alfred Milner snubbed the President of the South African Republic on a point of etiquette ....

The Bloemfontein Conference was a failure.

And the months of tension and race hate mounted.

In October the President sent a message to the British agent in Pretoria. It demanded the withdrawing of British troops from the borders of the South African Republic, and, further, that the troops now on the high seas, were not landed. And finally, it asked for a guarantee that Great Britain would not interfere in the affairs of the South African Republic. It stated that if a satisfactory reply had not been received by 5 o'clock on the afternoon of October 11,

UWI Libraries

the Republic would, with great regret, be compelled to regard the action of Her Majesty's Government as a formal declaration of war.

On the evening of October 11 the British agent replied. The conditions demanded by the South African Government were such that Her Majesty's Government could not possibly discuss them.

He packed his bags and left that night.

At last, the war so many had talked about for so long, had come.

And from the remote and isolated farms of the rolling land, burghers came in answer to their old President's call. They left their ploughs, their cattle, and the little labours of their days of peace. They took up their rifles, mounted their horses, and with a last look at the farmstead, rode out to war.

And each man who could carry a gun was a soldier. And some were fourteen and some were seventy. The Commandos gathered everywhere in the land and were led to war. And in all the land there were just under forty thousand fighting men.

Among them was Uys Jansen. And the song of the land was in his blood .... O Boer land, land of my birth! I love you above all else .... I'll live for you; I'll die for you my fatherland.

Katryn wept and held the baby high for him to kiss. The train was crowded. She tried to make him understand how she felt. But there was so much noise and he was too drunk with excitement to see or feel her misery. He was on his way to join Conje's Potchefstroom Commando.

They would show these Uitlanders! He would show them! He owed them much. Well, he'd pay them with interest!

The train moved.

"Come back, Uys!" Katryn cried. "Come back!"

UWI Libraries

v Uys got off the train at Krugersdorp. The station of the little dorp was crowded. The world seemed to be in Krugersdorp. The world in arms with a bandolier across its chest. Unless he could hire a horse in Krugersdorp, and he had little hope of that, he would have to tramp the long distance to the farm. He wouldn't get there till after dark, and perhaps the others would have gone. But the Commando law said a man had to bring his horse, his rifle, at least thirty rounds, and enough food to last eight days. So he would have to make the long tramp.

He pushed his way through the crowd toward the exit.

"Uys! Uys! Over here." The voice boomed above the noise.

Johan had come to meet him. Good old Johan. Never let you down. He stood on his toes, looking from left to right.

"Here!"

Yes, there he was. He hurried toward Johan. They shook hands with more feeling than was usual between them.

"God man!" Johan said. "I thought you'd never come. Six trains have passed."

"Here long?"

"Since morning."

"Couldn't come before."

"I knew you'd come. Niekerk said you may go straight to the fight. But I knew you'd come. We'd better hurry. We're leaving before sundown."

"Karel come?"

"Yes."

UWI Libraries

They went to the horses, mounted and rode out of the little dorp. They rode at a steady pace. Soon, the little dorp lay behind them.

"His wife?" Uys asked.

"Karel's?"

"No. She's in Pretoria .... I came every month ...." Johan turned his head and studied Uys closely.

"I didn't promise to write."

"You said you would."

"I didn't promise."

"You married?"

"Yes .... I've got a little son."

"How old?"

"Four months."

"Why didn't you bring them?"

"We own a house in Johannesburg. Must be looked after."

"Your wife, Uys, is she an Uitlander?"

"No." Uys felt Johan relax and added "She's the daughter of Jan Boshoff. They come from the border of the Free State. He's gone to join his own Commando."

"I'm glad she's not an Uitlander. Mother was afraid you'd marry an Uitlander .... Well now, we've got three children now. Two girls and a boy. Elli's kept her promise. The boy's called Uys. Your boy?

"Stefan."

"After Oom Stefan."

"Yes .... Everything ready?"

"Yes. You know Cronje's front is on the west?"

"I found that out before I came. That's why I'm late."

UWI Libraries

"Karel brought the news."

"Why didn't her join the Pretoria Commando?"

"Wants to be with the family Commando .... Be careful with Sara Uys."

"What's the matter?"

"Koos is fourteen and with both him and Niekerk going ...."

"Yes .... All right."

They rode in silence for a while, tilting their hats to shade their eyes from the late spring sun. And the land they traversed, hard and savage normally, was softened, made gentle and tender to look on, by the new life coming from the earth. Delicate new grass replaced the grey scrub underfoot; the trees softened their starkness with tender young leaves. This period, the period of birth, of a new beginning, is brief on the high veld, but while it lasts it has a singing beauty, enriched by the brevity of its moment. So that, in the end, spring on the veld is a brief moment of surpassing beauty.

"The house in Johannesburg yours?"

"Yes," Uys lied.

"I told Niekerk you'd beat the Uitlanders at their own game."

"What did he say?"

"Said all your money would be gone in a year ... You made a lot?

"Enough."

"Always knew you were a smart one. How long do you think this will be?"

"Not long. They'll try and take all if they can."

"Niekerk says they'll remember Majuba and give in as soon as they see we're serious. How many men have they got?"

"Don't know; papers say they are sending men from England

UWI Libraries

What does Karel say? He should know."

Johan slowed down so Uys did so too.

"I want to tell you about that, Uys. I think Karel is against us. He came yesterday and we talked about it last night. Know what he said?"

"No."

"He said the President was wrong not to give in on the Uitlander vote. He said the Uitlanders had a case."

"Oh ...."

"Yes. And I'll say something for Niekerk. I know you don't like him, and I don't much either, though Sara would die for him. Well, last night when Karel said that, Niekerk said to him 'To be saying that is treachery to your President, your people and your country, Karel Jansen.' I really like him when he said that."

"And what did Karel say?"

"He wasn't even angry. He just smiled and shook his head."

"That all?"

"No, he said something. He said Niekerk and most of us did not realise that the days of the trek were over. He says our future lies in co-operation with the Uitlanders. He says all the wealth of the nation comes from them .... I don't like that, Uys. I don't like it one bit. It sounds like hand-up talk .... What do you think of it?"

The horse had slowed down to a walk. Now they came to a standstill. The twins, one big and fair, the other small and dark, sat staring at each other.

Johan thought: Uys has lived with the Uitlanders, he's made money from the, some of them are his friends, but he's a patriot he loves his country, he will know. He will tell me.

UWI Libraries

Uys thought: if they leave, if they're all driven out of the land, out of Johannesburg, we would run the mines, we would live in the beautiful houses. My children would play under the tree where Blumenfeld had laid the soft grass. If they had never come, I would have been married to Hettie Van As. She would have been my wife. I, not Blumenfeld, would have ridden in a carriage with her. If they had never come, I would never have lost my money. Perhaps it could be the same after they have been driven out. Perhaps life can again be lived with pride .... Once, in one of their walks, Blumenfeld had said:

"The meaning of life, my dear Uys, is what we make of it. Apart from us, there is no special meaning to life. In nature, it is both beautiful and ugly, gentle and savage. The female spider loves her man then eats him. The bees keep the drones to fertilize their Queen, then drive them out to die in the winter. Gentle and savage. But we have brought a tradition into the meaningless life. It is this, and this only, that has lifted us above our fellow animals and made of us men with God in our hearts. The heart of our tradition is gentleness and love, Uys, and continuity. Your people were before you, your people will be after you. Men from all the lands in all the ages have made that tradition. We are more than just today. We are part of a long journey that began a long time ago, and the end of which is far beyond the sight of our eyes or minds. And the good ma lives today as fully and completely as he can, and with such love that tomorrow is better because the children of tomorrow, nurtured love, will have more of it. That is the meaning of life for me, Uys. I think it is the real source of all beauty, all poetry, a] music, all art."

A long time ago, that was. Almost a lifetime ago since

UWI Libraries

Blumenfeld said that. Those words had held a magic quality for hi They had promised something more than the farm had ever offered.

.... And Mark Blumenfeld had betrayed the Republic which had given him wealth ....

Another time, on another walk, Blumenfeld had said:

"Life should be more than a struggle for bread. It should be an adventure in understanding."

.... And they had turned him out of the Stock Exchange, out of the Rand Club. Why? Because his name was Uys Jansen and they remembered his part in the Jameson Raid. He had only served his country. And for that the Uitlanders had not allowed him to invest, so that, in the end, that Von Veltheim crook had got his money and he had to do kaffir work in order to get bread for himself and his wife and child. And they had robbed Jan Boshoff as well ....

And early in their meeting, Blumenfeld had said:

"The most sacred thing in the world is friendship. It is the most binding thing I know."

.... And he had stolen Hettie Van As ....

And Elise?

"What do you think of it?" Johan repeated.

"You must understand Karel has lived in a town for a long time he said slowly. "And the ways of the town are different. People speak differently and behave differently. Karel now has town ways. He's lived beside Uitlanders for so long that he cannot see the harm they do."

"But you can," Johan said.

"Yes," Uys said heavily. "I can."

UWI Libraries

And looking at Johan, he felt the moment was rare. Seeing Johan reminded him of Mark Blumenfeld. And he saw Mark Blumenfeld as he had seen him before the Raid and before everything else had happened. Mark had brought him close to seeing life and the world with seeing eyes. Almost, he had crossed over into that world of seeing. How vividly Johan brought it back. It had been dead till now .... And he knew suddenly that if they had accepted him the second time he returned to Johannesburg, if they had forgotten the Raid and let him in, he might have felt like Karel. He wanted the things the Uitlanders had, and Karel had those things .... Funny that Johan should bring Mark Blumenfeld back so vividly. Like a voice calling in the night. And he was afraid with a sudden, frightening fear.... Then all the other memories came, and the moment was gone.

"What shall we do?" Johan asked.

"He's going to fight, isn't he?"

"Yes. But I don't like fighting with a hands-upper even if he is my brother."

"I think we'd better just watch him and see."

"Shall we report what he said?"

"Don't think so. You know, he could have stayed in Pretoria without fighting; so really, that's in his favour."

"You're right," Johan said in surprise. "Didn't think of that.

"I think we'll leave it for now."

"You make things simple, Uys," Johan said with relief. "I wanted to kill him last night."

Uys felt afraid of his brother suddenly. And yet really, Johan was tender. He'd kill in anger, but his heart was tender

They rode the rest of the way in silence.

UWI Libraries

The sun was slanting far to the west when they rode into the farmyard and the family trooped out of the kitchen to meet them. For the white men, there had been no working that day. And without them, the kaffirs had, no doubt, just lazed in the sun. Kaffirs only work when you stand over them with a whip. But the women would see to that later. Sara and her mother, and little Elli, knew how to handle kaffirs. That was part of the training of the Boer women. For always, the men had in mind such a day as this: a day when they would have to leave home and the women would have to run the farm. Oh, the kaffirs would be all right. They had been shown their places so well that they would be all right even with a white child.

Again, as after that first journey to Johannesburg, Uys felt a stranger among his people. Something he could not give a name to was between him and them. He looked at them from a distance, seeing them with a coldness he did not want to feel.

There was not much to say. They looked at him heavily. And he knew they had not changed since he had gone. Mother was a little fatter and heavier. And that meant she was very fat, like all old Boer women. Sara was getting that way too. Fat and heavy. Only little Elli was still light; and two of her three children were hanging on to her dress. Niekerk's long, narrow face was narrower an browner; his eyes more sombre and piercing .... And the boy Koos. Yes. He had changed. He'd shot up like a young tree and came up t Uys' shoulder. Only Karel didn't belong. His country clothes and his rolled up sleeves could not hide that. He was a townsman all-right.

He kissed his mother's cheek and shook the others by the h When he came to Karel, he just nodded slightly. He remembered how h

UWI Libraries

had left their house. He turned away from Karel. He thought: full faced Karel, fat and comfortable, friend of the Uitlander, a man with money; an important man.

Karel said: "Yes," and held out his hand.

All the others watched. He felt it. He turned his head slightly and saw the concern on his mother's face. For her sake, he took Karel's hand. Karel's face told him how important this had been and he realized suddenly that Karel must be very lonely. He smiled and saw Karel had misunderstood it. Karel's responding smile was like a man saying thank you for a great service. He thought: I never thought I would pity him.

"We will talk," Karel said, and moved away from the group.

"Told you he'd come!" Johan said in triumph.

Niekerk appealed to Sara with his eyes.

"He hasn't got a family," Sara said bitterly.

"He has too," Johan said. "Wife and child and Boers."

"They'll come back, Sara," Uys said softly.

Sara blinked and stared at him in disbelief. He smiled and because for no known reason, Sara had brought the picture of Elise to his mind, the smile was sad and tender. Quickly, Sara moved toward him and took his arm.

"Remember how we used to play together, Uys? You were always on my side then. Such a long time ago. Remember?"

Yes .... He and Sara had been the closest of friends as children. They'd shared things. Funny to remember all that now. He would have sworn both of them had forgotten it. They'd share a horse on the journey to the little school in Krugersdorp and after that he'd become a boy and Sara a girl, and their friendship was over. Long time ago.

UWI Libraries

Johan laughed out loud suddenly.

"Remember the time we had a war and Karel and I pushed you two into the spruit? You nearly drowned. Then Karel and I fought and fell in. We all would have drowned if Nieklaas didn't come and pull us out. Remember?"

The memory came to life for the four who had shared it. Karel came near. And again they were four children, three brothers and a sister: back in childhood days.

"Klaas was my eldest son," their mother whispered to little Elli "He always got them out of their troubles. He died of fever. They say the good Lord always takes those who are too good for the world."

Karel said: "Remember the time the mad bull chased and caught up with Johan?"

The adventure with the mad bull was relived. And other adventures. And memories of childhood days brought harmony to the Jansens under the setting sun. There was joy in the heart of Tant Lennie Jansen. This was the way it should be with a family, with one's children ....

Niekerk said:

"Time for us to go ...."

They had almost forgotten that.

They went into the big kitchen and had their last meal together. Now there was not much to say. After the meal the men put on their jackets and strapped their bandoliers across their chests. The women brought them the rifles. Sara gave a rifle to young Koos. He was a man now. He was going out to defend his country, to fight for his people. He would never again be a boy. The horses were ready. The kaffirs had fed and watered and saddled them. The women took strips of dried meat, biltong, and Boer cakes and packed them into

UWI Libraries

each man's saddle-bag. This was all of each man's army supplies. When it was eaten they would have to fend for themselves, they would have to wrest food from the land or the enemy. They would have no money with which to buy food. For this was an army of patriots: and no man was paid.

Now, at last, all was ready, the sun was nearly down, and the moment of parting had come. The men whose wives were with them, Niekerk and Johan, drew away from the other two. Their last words to their wives and children were private. Uys and Karel, with their mother, waited by the horses.

Lennie Jansen looked at her two sons. If only she could find words for all the things she felt! But no: this was the way of their forebears. You brought up your children and you sent them out in the service of your land. This was the way. She was only one of many. But that did not make it any easier.

"You should have brought Sannie, Karel," she said.

"She must look after the house," Karel said.

"And I haven't even seen your wife and child, Uys. What does she look like? And the child?"

What did Katryn look like? As he thought of it, Uys realized, with surprise, that he did not know.

"Is she beautiful?" his mother asked.

He saw the face of Elise: green eyes in a lovely face with the smoothest skin he had ever touched - skin of milk and roses; lips that kissed to the depth of a man's heart; a smile that touched the world with radiance; the softest, fleeciest strands of gold for hair. Oh the body of Elise! Oh the voice of Elise!

"Very beautiful," he said.

UWL Libraries

"I'm sorry about that time you were with us," Karel said. "You know how it is with a woman."

Of course! Karel may be feeling about Sannie the same as he had felt about Elise. Not quite as deeply, but still ....

"I understand," he said.

The others came to them.

"Take care and come back," their mother said.

Sara's boy mounted beside Uys. Uys looked at him. The boy was tight, holding himself in. War was unknown to him and he would not relax till he had made contact with it. One always braces oneself for the unknown. He saw Uys looking at him and turned his head away quickly. Blumenfeld would make him relax, Uys thought.

"It'll be all right, Koos," he whispered.

He hadn't realized Niekerk was close enough to hear. He looked at him and the thanks in Niekerk's eyes made him turn away.

What were they waiting for? .... They were all looking at him. Everyone of them .... It dawned on him suddenly. They were waiting for him. He was to be the leader; he was to give the word ... But both Niekerk and Karel were older. Yes, but they were remembering his share in the Jameson Raid. All right.

"Orders given to the kaffirs?" He looked at Niekerk.

Niekerk nodded. He looked at his mother and felt lonely suddenly. And it seemed that only she could comfort him. If only he could be a child again and run to her ....

"Let's go," he said coldly, and prodded the horse on.

They stopped at the last ridge from which the house could be seen. They waved to their womenfolk: then they turned and rode west, into the darkening night.

UWI Libraries

The girl was called Deborah.

After she and Luke Dabula had fled into the night, they had seen much of each other. She had worked for some white people on the hill above the hospital.

After some months, she and Luke Dabula had set up house together and she had given up her work for the white people. There was no need for her to work, Luke had said. The business in stolen gold had brought much money to him and the old man.

"The mother of my children must not be the servant of white people," he had said with Matabele pride.

Now, they were sitting down to food in their own two rooms. The old man knocked and came in.

"You will eat with us," Luke said.

Deborah set food before him.

"You know of the white man's war?" the old man said.

"It does not interest me," Luke said. "Let the white men fight among themselves. I fought in the war of my people. They are not my people."

"It will harm our gold business," the old man said. "Watch your money."

"My great ancestor, the Wise One of the north, said with wisdom comes peece. The white man is wise, yet he fights and there is no peace. Why?" There was a deep question in Luke Dabula's voice.

Deborah and the old man exchanged smiles.

"Is he wise?" the old man said. "And what is wisdom?"

"Is it wisdom to treat us as he does?" Deborah asked.

UWI Libraries

To Pretoria, to the office of the Commandant-General, old Piet Joubert, came news from all the fronts. And all the news was good. The men of the South African and Free State Republics had swept forward everywhere. The Uitlanders may yet be driven into the sea.

On the western fron the men under General Cronje had laid seige to Mafeking on the Bechuanaland border.

Two days after the siege of Mafcking began, the Lichtenburg Commando had swept into Vryburg, destroyed British resistance in a whirlwind attack and taken the town.

The line was straight from north to south. It ran: Mafeking, Vryburg, Kimberley. The Republicans swept on toward Kimberley.

Meanwhile, other forces had swept forward in an attacking move into Natal to the east. They had seized Laing's Nek and crossed the Drakensburg into the Natal Colony. They had fought the battle of Elandslaagte, the battle of Talana Hill and the battle of Dundee. General Koch had lost one of his best men with the capture of Commandant Pretorius at Elandslaagte, but to make up for that the English General Penn Symons was reported fallen in the battle of Dundee. Then, in brilliant fighting, Republic forces had first isolated, then besieged Ladysmith.

The month of October was not out yet but they had swept deep into enemy territory and invested Ladysmith and Mafeking.

Had his heart been in this war, Old Piet Joubert would have been happy. But he had strange misgivings. Still ..He sent a message to Cronje to move down to Kimberley but to leave just

UWI Libraries

enough men to keep up the investment of Mafeking.

There was celebration in Pretoria and Bloemfontein. The war was going well for the two Boer Republics. And the enemy was the most powerful nation on earth. Thousands of British prisoners streamed into Pretoria.

UWI Libraries

"I don't call this fighting," Johan said in disgust. "You shoot at the redneck, he runs into the town and you make a ring around it. That's not fighting. Why don't we go into the town and get them?"

"You'll get your fill of fighting," Karel said impatiently and turned away.

Niekerk sat talking with a group of men. And the boy, Koos, sat alone nursing his rifle. It was a night of many stars. They were dazzlingly clear in a black sky.

Their camp was the north-eastern rest base of the circle about Mafeking. And though they were at rest, they were on the alert in case the English tried to get a train through to Bulawayo or in case an attempt at relief was made from there.

"I'm for fighting," Johan said stubbornly.

"You'll get enough .... Where's Uys?"

"Said he'd be back soon. That was over an hour ago."

In Niekerk's group, a man said: "Hear old Piet Joubert has sent word for Cronje to move."

"Where to?"

"Don't know."

"Are we letting these rednecks free?"

"Don't know."

"I say .... Did you hear we are beating the pants off the buggers in Natal?"

"Tell us ...."

UWI Libraries

"Cousin of mine by marriage brought in a message two days ago. Not for me," he laughed, "For old Cronje. Told me the rednecks advance upright, close together ...."

"God! .... No!"

"Yes."

"Are they mad?"

"They call it military drill and formations and so on ...."

"I was scouting close to the town here when I saw them doing it. They stand in line with nearly the whole kitchen and bedroom on their backs. And they do it in the hot sun. They march in line and turn about and move up and down .... Silly, like children playing."

"Well, that's what they did in Natal, and our men shot them down without even aiming. You could close your eyes and shoot them down. It's like shooting at a wall."

"And what happened?"

"I'll say this for them. They didn't break and run till over half their men lay dead. Guts, that's what they have."

"You call that guts, throwing away your life?"

"I hear they get paid for fighting. True?"

"Yes."

"I still wouldn't be an English soldier for all the cattle in the land."

"Hear those Johannesburg Uitlanders who ran to the coast have formed a company under the English. South African Light Horse they call themselves."

"I'd like to meet. We'll make their Horse Light!"

UWI Libraries

The laughter drew Karel to the group.

"My brother-in-law, Uys, knew many of the Uitlanders in Johannesburg."

"Bet he'd like to make their horse light too!"

"South African Light Horse!"

"Where'd they get it?"

"Some of those Jews know how to make jokes."

Further forward, near the English first line of defence thrown about the town, and due north of it lay the cemetery and the railway line to Bulawayo. The dark earth was still and bare. There was an occasional rustle that could have been made by some small creature moving in the parched shrub. There was a dark bump at a certain spot, then, on looking closer, there was no bump. Could have been just a shadow. No: the earth was flat and silent and there was no movement anywhere on it.

The English sentry stared across the dark land, then relaxed. There was nothing. Johnny Boer was quiet tonight. Perhaps his idea was to starve us out. Really not bad being out here, though it would be nicer to be in the town where Colonel Baden-Powell was having one of his concerts to cheer up the troops. "B.-P." was a grand man to be under. He took care of his men. They were not just bloody cogs or cannon fodder. A good man. The sentry looked at the outlines of the nearby parapets. Comforting to know those are so near and men are relaxing behind them. He turned to make the walk back. He was by now completely used to the strip of land over which he moved. Thirty-five paces east brought him to the railway line. About

UWI Libraries

face, and thirty-five paces east. The twenty-ninth pace east was where the dip in the land was. Yes. He knew it like the back of his hand; could make it blindfolded. Why not close his eyes and see if he could keep a steady course and find the dip? Good idea. Good idea, too, to bring the wife and kids out after this show's over. Land where a man can live, this. Enought of it, too.

He turned about, closed his eyes and started counting the pace. At seventeen he felt sure he had moved off his normal beat. He opened his eyes and sensed immediately that someone was beside him. As he turned his head, an arm tightened about his neck and, at the same time, a big hand covered his mouth. Other hands jerked the rifle from his hand. His body was lifted high in the air. Then, suddenly, he lay on his back and a voice whispered in English:

"Give us your parole and you'll be a prisoner, otherwise we kill you."

"All right," he whispered. He thought: but how did they approach?

They spoke softly in their language so he did not understand.

"All right, Jansen?"

"Yes," Uys whispered.

"We'll wait an hour for you. Good luck."

Uys walked boldly up to the parapet and slipped across. To the left of him was a camp and men moved about. Railway must be to the right, he thought. You're in enemy territory now, Uys. Be careful.

He walked round the cemetery till he reached the railway line. He followed the line south. That would take him to the town. Ahead. the dark shapes of buildings loomed. Don't forget to measure the

UWI Libraries

distance: that would give the guns a good idea of range for the railway works. But be careful, Uys, this is enemy land. He put his hand into his coat pocket. The feel of the pistol was comforting. He was near the dark buildings now. Once past them, everything should be easy. Ahead of him, there was a sudden move. Must be the guard, he thought. He tensed then relaxed. He moved forward casually.

"Who goes there?"

"Jones of the Rhodesian Police," Uys called out and stopped.

There was silence from the dark figure. Why? He pulled the pistol from his pocket. The guard took a few steps forward.

"Bill Jones?"

"Yes." Uys thought: his voice was suspicious that time.

"Stay where you are! If you move I'll fire!"

Uys fired once then turned and ran the way he had come. Perhaps he could still get away; perhaps he had got the fellow. There was a loud explosion. The bullet tore into the back of his right arm. The force sent him to his knees; but he was up in a flash and kept running.

Now voices were giving the alarm, trying to warn those near the parapet. Could he get there before they realized what it was? The firing would have alerted them. A sudden burst of fire from beyond the parapets cheered him as he ran. Gert Nel must have realized what the firing meant and was making a chance for him. God! His arm was beginning to hurt .... Could get a bullet in the back now. They didn't sound very far behind him. Just one bullet and it would be the end of everything for Uys Jansen. Just one. It seemed they were sure to fire that bullet. And the end? Would just be nothing. God no! He wanted to fling himself down to avoid the flight of that

UWI Libraries

bullet. One little bit of iron can mean the end of a man's life .... A shot sang by, just above his head. The urge to fling himself down grew overpowering. But the parapet was near now. A thousand pains spread from his shoulder to the rest of his body. He felt so tired, he wanted to give up .... No, Uys, no! Just a little distance more...

The men at the parapet to the right were busy returning the fire of Gert Nel and his men. Those behind Uys were nearing. He could now hear the sound of their feet .... But he was at the parapet. He flung himself across and landed on the other side with a jarring thud. He got up and ran forward to where he had left Nel. All about him bullets sang.

"Down, Jansen, down!"

Just as the words reached his senses, another bullet hit the same shoulder and flung him violently to the ground.

For a spell there was darkness. And it seemed an age since he had entered the darkness and drifted away on clouds of green. Then he was aware again, and the whine of bullets was all about him .... Must get to Nel, he thought. He pressed his right hand against the ground to raise himself; the pain of his left shoulder told him it was useless to try that one.

"Lie still!" a voice hissed from just in front of him. "All right?"

"My left arm," Uys murmured.

The whining bullets were everywhere now. The general lull had been broken and there was firing on all the fronts that encircled the town.

"Can you move on your stomach?"

"No."

"Then don't move."

UWI Libraries

He lay still and the throbbing pain seared through his body till every nerve protested .... And one of those bullets was sure to hit him; perhaps in a place that would end all pain, and life. And death was near and he was afraid, with an intensity more powerful than the pain of his shoulder .... Death is no more than the darkness that was before we are born. Just as there was nothing before we were born, so there is nothing after we are dead .... Why was Mark Blumenfeld always talking to him? Damn him .... Death is not the end. There is another life in heaven. There must be! There must be or it would be too terrible. But where is this heaven if it is not up there? Where is God if he's not up there? Oh Elise! Elise .... One of those bullets.

A man was beside him, taking his arm and dragging him across the scrubland; and his mouth and nose were filled with dusty earth. And about him were the bullets. He lost track of the slow journey back to the safety of their own lines. All he knew was the bullets had not hit him and he was still alive. And being alive was very desirable though life had not been a cup of joy.

While they prised the bullets out of his shoulder, he clenched his teeth and tears streamed down his face. The men about him were tender and comforting. They thought his tears were tears of physical hurt. But he, Uys, knew. He wanted to tell them how beautiful it was to be alive, not to be nothing. Someone gave him something to drink and made him lie down. He fell asleep immediately.

"Hear him give the range to the railway works?" Nel asked.

The man who had tended Uys said: "Yes."

"Better give it to the gunners though I expect they won't use it

UWL Libraries

if we are moving soon."

The quick flare up of firing tapered off. Silence settled on the battlefield. Only the bright stars glowed in the dark night. The moon, as though fearful of battle, did not show her face over the dark land. An hour went by. Karel, Johan, Niekerk, and young Koos, grouped themselves around Uys.

Uys woke suddenly. His head was clear and he remembered all that had happened. The hurt of his shoulder was not so terrible now. Whatever the medical orderly had put on it had helped, and, of course, the bullets were out now. Still, it hurt enough. He stared up at the black, star-studded sky. Karel and the others didn't know he was awake. He felt that; whatever they did too, was delicate and light, as when people do not want to wake a sleeping child. And from a little way off, came the low rumbling of men's voices. How black the night was! But for the stars, the whole world would be absolutely black; so black that a man would see nothing. Supposing the stars went out and the sun didn't rise tomorrow morning. God! Nothing would be done; there would be no food; people would not be able to see each other; there could be no warm even: nothing. Could people live in that kind of darkness? Could it go on for years with people alive? To live in darkness .... He saw himself alone in a dark world. He could not see where he went, what he did. He staggered from place to place in the dark world; he bumped into things and hurt himself; he met other people, felt them with his hands and spoke to them, yet, with his heart and mind he could not feel or understand them because he could not see them and they were just voices in the dark. It would be lonely thus. But he was lonely now: now, with the light and the stars, with morning bringing the sun and with him

UWI Libraries

seeing people. So that, really, he could just as well be in darkness .... We are in darkness and all the land is dark. The stars and sun are not real for us. The light is not real for us. All is so because the darkness is inside us .... What was he thinking? Think of something else ....

"Hello," he said. They would speak and he would stop thinking of darkness.

"You all right?" Karel asked.

Johan said: "Uys" and his voice was tender.

"We were talking of you when they brought you in," Niekerk said.

The boy, Koos, said: "Oom Uys" and awe and fear were equally mingled in his voice. This was his nearest personal contact with the possibility of death as a definite reality.

"I'm all right," Uys said and put out his hand to the boy.

The boy gripped his fingers and he realized suddenly just how afraid and shaken the boy must be. He was only a boy.

"Tell you one thing," he said. "I was afraid out there. But it isn't as easy as you think for a bullet to hit a man, you know."

The boy's fingers relaxed in his hand.

"What happened?" Johan asked. "Why didn't you take me?"

Gert Nel, their Commandant, came toward them.

"Well men, orders are Cronje is going down to Kimberley and we go with him. Be ready to move before dawn. Feeling all right, Jansen?"

"Yes .... Sorry I failed."

"You gave us the range for the railway works."

"Did I?" Had he really?

"He doesn't even know," Nel laughed. "The guns are going with us so your trip was for nothing. Sorry you can't come along."

UWI Libraries

"But I'm not sick. I'm all right." Uys sat up. "You can see."

"You can't shoot with one arm, kêrel."

"But ...."

"Shouldn't argue, Jansen. A fighting man's no good with one arm."

"We'll take care of him," Johan said.

"You understand, Mynheer Jansen," Nel said to Karel. He could never forget Karel was a member of the Raad and felt awkward at having to be the superior of such a man. "There may be stiff fighting in Kimberley."

"Commandant Nel is right," Karel said.

"What do I do?" Uys asked.

"There are prisoners to be taken to Pretoria," Nel said. "You join the escort taking them. When they are safely delivered, report to the hospital."

"And then?"

"When you are well you rejoin us. It won't be long, Jansen. A month or two ... Now you'd better go back to base and rest. You'll move at dawn with the prisoners. We have to learn to use a new gun. Believe it or not but you can fire five times without reloading!"

"Five times!"

"Like a miracle, isn't it?" Nel said. "But we are living in modern times now."

"Will everyone have them?"

"Not yet. There aren't enough yet. But we'll keep one for you, Jansen. Now go along."

"I'd better go with him to base," Johan said.

"Will you take a message to Sannie?" Karel asked.

"Yes."

UWI Libraries

"Only one of you can go with him to base," Nel said.

"I'd like to write a letter," Karel appealed to Johan.

"All right," Johan said.

"Take care," Uys said. "I'll be with you soon."

Uys turned to young Koos, but the boy had turned his back and was walking away along the trench.

"Come on."

Together, he and Karel walked along the narrow stretch of trenchline that connected the forward line with base. They passed men moving up. The order that half the forces were to move at dawn had created activity.

"Must have been close," Karel said.

"I thought it was the end," Uys said.

"How did you feel?"

Uys wished he could see Karel's face.

"More than anything, I wanted to go on living."

"Could you think?.... I mean did you have time to think?"

"All the time. While I was running away from that guard and while bullets fell about me as I lay in the open."

"I wondered about that."

"Why?"

"I don't know .... Uys."

"Yes?"

"You'll think me a coward but I'm afraid. To so many here it just doesn't seem to matter. No, that's not true. They just have not thought of the possibility of dying. I have, and I'm afraid."

"Afraid to die? I am too, you know."

"It isn't just that, Uys. It's hard to explain ...."

UWI Libraries

Uys waited, expecting Karel to say more. There was more in his mind and it had to come out. Funny thing that he should only now be learning to know Karel. Under his fat and confortable air of authority was a man of uncertainty, hesitant, anxious to please, and tender. Something about his tenderness reminded Uys of Blumenfeld. The difference was that while Blumenfeld had been casual about it, Karel was self-conscious. Uys thought: we never really knew each other.

"We should get to know each other, Karel," he said.

"We should have, Uys."

"We'll do it yet. The war won't last forever."

"About the time you were with us, Uys ...."

"Forget it."

"Women are difficult sometimes ...."

"It really is all right, Karel."

They were nearing the camp and lights flickered ahead. And faintly, drifting to them, came the sound of a guitar and the voices of men singing.

Karel said softly: "We are going to lose, you know that."

"Looks like we are winning."

"I wish I could make you understand. You've lived in a town, you've seen the Uitlanders."

"That's nothing to do with it."

"All right, it doesn't matter."

"We'll lose if we feel like you, Karel. We must have a stronger faith than the Uitlanders."

"Right or wrong?"

"To want to be free is always right, Karel."

"I don't think the kind of freedom you mean will last."

UWI Libraries

"The freedom to be one's own master ...."

"What about the blacks, Uys?"

"Well, what about them? Our forefathers fought and beat them."

"Think Uys. One day they'll learn ways of fighting with guns. They are many, we are few. In such a fight, wih their guns against ours, we won't have much chance. They are watching and learning. We will either have to fight them again or give up the land to them. When that day comes we will need help."

"We beat them without help before."

"They didn't have guns."

"See that they don't ever xx get any."

"We can try but we may fail."

"Then what?"

"Then one day, they will over-run the country, kill us and take the land. They are millions to our thousands."

"They don't know how to run a civilized country."

"Do you think that'll stop them?"

"We must just see that they never get arms."

"What about ideas?"

They had reached the main base and made for their tent. Because there were five of them from the same family, they had a little tent of their own.

Men squatted in groups about their tents, talking and cleaning their rifles. The music came from the eastern end of the camp. These men prepared for the night and for a long stay here. They would continue the siege. Those who were to leave were pulling down their tents and getting their horses ready. And because this was a big camp, kaffirs prepared food for them in an open communal kitchen.

UWI Libraries

Uys and Karel entered their tent. Karel lit the lamp. Uys threw himself on his corner of the ground and lay on his back.

"I'll get something to eat," Karel said and went out.

Uys thought: so that's what's on his mind. I'd forgotten all about the kaffirs. They were always around: they did the work. Never thought of them any other way. Not with guns in their hands, challenging our power. Could they do that? Could they really do that? Really, come to think of it, I don't know anything at all about the kaffirs. But Karel may have a point. Kaffirs with guns in their hands .... In that case it would be better for all the white people in the land to stick together, Uitlander or Afrikaner. The common thing is they are white andthey are few. They are many, we are few, Karel had said .... Wish I could roll a cigarette. Would be impossible with one hand. Kaffirs with guns. Something to think about that. But if the Uitlanders were out of the land, we would run everything; I may run a mine and live in a big house.

Karel came back with two mugs of coffee, strips of fried meat on a stick, and two freshly cooked fatcakes.

"You said something about ideas," Uys said.

"We may be able to keep guns from them; we cannot stop them learning our ways and perhaps, one day, making guns for themselves. Don't you see, Uys, because they work for us and come into our homes they are bound to learn to understand our ways. There are those who say if we make them believe in their own inferiority they will never question our power. But can we make them believe that forever? See? .... I think our only way is to make this a white man's country completely. That means there must be millions of white men here. There must be as many white men as blacks, if not more. That's our

UWI Libraries

only guarantee. But now, white man is fighting white man."

"You forget the English want to take away our freedom."

"Do they?"

"Without the franchise they control nearly all the money in the land. With it, they'll control the whole land. And you know their policy to black better than I do. What you fear will happen if they are here."

"That's where you're wrong, Uys. That's all talk whilethey're far from the blacks. But the Uitlanders here feel the same about the blacks as we do. They'd make England understand. Even Rhodes said the blacks were just like children. You ought to know that. Yo live among them in Johannesburg. But you're right about our freedom They will control all power. Though men like Smuts and old Piet Joubert seem to think we could make an arrangement with the English.. I must write that letter now. You rest."

Who would ever have thought him so unhappy, Uys thought. Even if you look at him now, you wouldn't believe it. He said:

"What would you do if you were Paul Kruger, Karel?"

Karel stared at him then shook his head.

"Don't know."

Karel sat cross-legged and wrote his letter. Uys closed his eyes and though about blacks with guns. No, he couldn't see it. Karel must be wrong. But why did he come to fight if he believed that?

For a long time there was only the noise of the pen scratching on paper, and from outside, the din that was without character because it was made by too many men. Uys opened his eyes and looked at Karel.

"My tobacco and paper is here, perhaps you'd make me a smoke."

UWI Libraries

Karel left his letter and moved over. He squatted beside Uys and rolled two cigarettes.

"Uys ...."

"Hmmm ?"

"Perhaps you'll keep an eye on Sannie while you're there ...."

Uys stared at him. He swung his head away quickly.

"Don't," Karel said. "Didn't mean to say that."

He went back to his spot and finished his letter. Uys thought: keep an eye on his wife. Funny thing to ask, unless .... Karel re-read the letter, folded it, put it in an envelope and sealed it carefully. He moved over again, kneeled above Uys and pushed it into his inside pocket.

"You won't forget it."

"No .... Anything you want me to tell her?"

"It's all in the letter. I must go back now. Just tell her I'm all right." He kneeled awkwardly above Uys, as though unwilling to go. "Bye, Uys. Take care. Wish I could have seen your wife and child. A family should keep together, you know. We're not so many."

"We'll get together when it's all over," Uys said.

"Would have been nice if we'd been friends. Families are funny things, Uys."

Uys thought: something is wrong with him. He felt sorry.

"We will be friends, Karel."

Karel looked oddly at him but said nothing.

"Karel," Uys said firmly. "Tell me. What's wrong? Something to do with Sannie?"

"No; me."

"What is it, man?"

UWI Libraries

Karel turned his head away so that Uys saw only the line along which his mose ran.

"What have you noticed about Sannie and me?"

"Nothing. What do you mean?"

"Nothing at all?"

"Things seemed all right when I was there ... Karel, she's not-" How does one say it when you're talking about a woman to her husband? "She's not - er - seeing other men?"

Karel made a sound that was a half-cough, half humourless laugh.

"If you mean is she a loose woman, no."

"Then what is it?"

Heavily and slowly, Karel said: "We've been married eight years and we have no children."

Uys thought: my God!

"I'd never thought of it ... Perhaps you didn't want any."

"Sannie wanted a big family." Karel laughed shortly. "Once, a long time ago, she said she wanted five boys and five girls. It was all in fun, of course."

"Well, why not? You're both still young enough."

"I can't, Uys."

"Can't?"

"We tried for years; then we saw doctors. They say it's my fault. I can't."

So that's what it is, Uys thought. One takes that sort of thing for granted till one comes across someone to whom it isn't natural.... Poor Karel.

"You sure?"

"We saw German and Uitlander doctors."

UWI Libraries

"And they all say you'll never have children?"

"Sannie can; it's only me. We were seeing doctors the time you were with us."

"I'm sorry, Karel." What else could one say? The having of children is so natural. One takes it for granted because it's so natural .... If it were me, it would be nothing. With Karel it's everything. Perhaps, if Elise instead of Katryn were my wife, it would have been everything too .... He put out his right hand and touched Karel's arm.

"I must go now," Karel said without looking at him. "Kiss her for me, will you, Uys?"

"I will. Take care of yourself and the others. Be seeing you.

Karel left the tent hurriedly.

Uys closed his eyes but his mind was wide awake .... Poor Karel Wanting children because you love your wife and she wants them. It must be hell then to be told you can't have any and that it's your fault. And all the world having children. Must be hell .... And Sannie? Bet she hopes he dies in the war. Then she would marry again. Women are like that. Only after their own interests. Look at Hettie Van As and Elise. Yes, they're selfish.

Karel pushed his head through the tent flap.

"Just wanted to tell you one thing, Uys. I asked Sannie to go to the church and ask them to end the marriage. She wouldn't."

"Can they do that?"

"I don't know.... But I wanted her to be free to have children.

"And she wouldn't?"

"No, Uys, she wouldn't. Goodbye."

Karel withdrew his head. Almost as if he knew what I was thinking, Uys mused. Perhaps people can follow throughts.

UWI Libraries

For a week Uys laid in a narrow bed in the Pretoria hospital. At eleven each morning, the same middle-aged nurse with a squint in her left eye, undid his bandage. And at exactly a quarter past eleven, the fat little German doctor stopped at his bed and said the same thing.

"Goodmorning. It is a beautiful day - no?"

For a week Uys had said: "Yes, doctor."

Each day the little doctor had probed at his wound, seemingly intent on making it hurt as much as possible; his pidgy fingers had pressed and squeezed till Uys had groaned. Then the doctor had said:

"Good!"

And the squint-eyed nurse had put on a burning liquid and fresh bandages. Uys had discovered that the sooner he groaned, the sooner the probing stopped. So, after the second day, he had groaned as soo as the doctor hurt.

For a week he had lain on his bed in the corner and seen men come or be brought in. Some, as himself, were slightly wounded; others were like the man who had died on Monday, the one whose chest seemed to have been shot away. Some screamed all through the night. Others, like himself, were quiet. But they were few. Then there was that boy who'd lost a leg and had half his face shot away. At first, Uys had found it impossible to sleep with so many men groaning and dying about him. Then he had grown used to it; then he had grown sick of it. Sick of the sight of blood, of damaged bodies; sick of the sounds of pain.

And now, on this bright morning, the man across the way was

UWI Libraries

screaming most horribly. He'd been at it since after breakfast when they had brought him back from the operating room. Uys looked at the squint-eyed nurse who was undoing the bandages.

"Can't you stop him?" he asked.

"He's had as much drug as he can take," she said. "Any more would kill him."

"I'd prefer to die," Uys said.

"That's what you think."

"I know."

"Wait till you're in pain. Some are worse." She worked deftly as she talked.

"Worse than him?"

"Yes."

"Doesn't it make you sick? I want to heave."

"We get used to it."

"Nurses and doctors are hard."

"How else do you think they can work?"

"You have no feelings, no nerves."

"That's what you think, ~~Mis~~ burgher Jansen. If we allowed our feeling to come into our work there would be no nurses. They'd all be sick or dead. But the human body and mind get used to things."

"Anything?"

"Almost anything .... Ah, here's the doctor."

The man across the way gave a particularly loud and tortured scream. The fat little doctor stopped dead in histracks and looked about the ward. The patients were quieter than usual, faces drawn, heads turned away. A bad sign, the little doctor thought. He beckoned to the nurse.

UWL Libraries

"How long?" He nodded toward the screaming man.

"All morning."

"Since the operation?"

"Yes, doctor."

"Is there nowhere else to keep him? These people here ...."

"Everywhere is full, doctor."

The doctor nodded slowly. He went to the bed of the screaming man. The nurse stood beside him as he looked at the face distorted into a mask of pain. He felt the man's pulse.

"Strong," he grunted.

"It always is with that injection."

The doctor put his hand to the man's temple. For a while the man was silent. Then the pain gripped him and he screamed again.

"Another injection, nurse."

"But doctor ...."

"An injection, nurse." His voice was sharp.

"Yes, doctor."

The nurse hurried away and returned with a hypodermic syringe. The doctor held out his hand for it. The nurse looked into his eyes.

"I'll do it if you like, doctor."

"Thank you."

The nurse bent over the arm of the screaming man and held the flesh so that a thick blue arterial vein stood out. She raised her eyes to the doctor's. He nodded slightly. She jabbed the needle into the blue vein, and slowly squeezed the liquid into the man's body.

The man's screams grew grew weaker; then faded into silence. The sudden silence felt unnatural in the large ward. The doct

UWI Libraries

kept his hand on the man's pulse.

"Shall I record the injection?" the nurse asked.

"That is the natural procedure - no?" The doctor's voice was cold.

"Sorry, doctor."

"Guard your work and your conscience, nurse. I will guard mine." As if feeling he had been unjust, his voice softened as he said: "A man's dignity is as important as his life.... He will be all right nurse. The pulse is not so strong.... Now for the others."

He stopped beside Uys.

"Goodmorning. It is a beautiful day - no?"

"Yes, doctor."

He probed the wound till Uys groaned.

"Good. You look miserable. Why?"

"Nothing doctor. Just the noise from over there. Thanks for stopping it."

"It is bad for the nerves, I know."

"You said I could get up today, doctor."

"So I did, Mynheer Jansen, so I did."

"And I can?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, doctor."

The doctor moved to the next bed.

Toward late afternoon Uys climbed slowly up Karel's stoep on the western outskirts of Pretoria. His left arm was in a neat white sling. He knocked on the door, and remembering the manner in which he had left this house the last time, he felt coldly aloof as he

UWI Libraries

waited. The door opened and Sannie looked at him. Her eyes, seemingly lifeless and ringed with darkness, glowed suddenly as she recognized him.

"Uys!"

"Hello Sannie," he said impersonally.

"What are you doing here? And your arm?"

"I brought you a letter from Karel."

"Karel?.... A letter?"

He could not understand her surprise. Why should word of a letter from Karel make her face turn ashen and turn out the glow of her eyes? Or had she already found another man?

"Come in," she said quietly.

"I could just give it to you here," he said.

"Please!"

He looked closely at her, then went past her into the house. He waited while she closed the door, watched her turn and look at him, then he followed her into the sitting room.

She turned to him. They stood looking at each other .... Why was she like this, he wondered. What was it all about? First she turns pale at the mention of Karel, then she begs him to come in with an almost hysterical note in her voice. What was it all about?

"The letter," he said. She would have to get it out herself.

"Karel is dead."

He looked curiously at her.

"What?"

"Karel is dead."

Karel dead.... He waited for the words to sink in. Karel dead. But it couldn't be. Just over a week ago he had talked to Karel. Karel had written a letter and the letter was in his pocket. How could he be dead?

UWI Libraries

"Did you say Karel is dead?"

"Yes, Uys."

"How do you know?"

"A man brought a message yesterday." She held it to him.

It was a note from Commandant Nel. It said Mynheer Karel Jansen, member of the Volksraad had fallen in battle on Nov. 3, 1899, near Kimberley, in the service of the Republic. It expressed the deep sympathy of Commandant Nel and all the members of his Commando for the wife of the fallen man. He was a good Boer; a great servant of the Republic and the Afrikaner people.

He returned the yellowish bit of grubby paper to her. Old Nel couldn't have had much schooling. The brief note was painfully laboured.... So that's why she'd been so strange.

"But I only spoke to him a week ago," Uys said.

"Oh Uys.... "

He stepped forward and put his right arm about her shoulders. She leaned against his chest. Her body shook with silent sobs. And the bond between them, for this brief moment in time, was strong beyond breaking. For Karel who was dead now, had once been his brother, and they had shared a common mother and father and childhood. And though, in the end, time had separated them, they had been brothers. And this woman had loved that Karel who had been his brother. So the bond was strong and he held her tight though it hurt his shoulder.

"He asked me to kiss you for him," he said.

She raised her head. Her eyes were closed, her lips parted. As he kissed her lips, she reached up with both arms and held his head, lengthening the kiss, fiercely passionate. He knew she was not

UWI Libraries

kissing him, not kissing a man called Uys. She was kissing the ghost of a dead man who for a moment, sat on his lips. How she strained! How much passion her body contained! A dead man's ghost that sat on his lips ....

He pushed her away gently.

"You're hurting my arm, Sannie."

For a while she resisted fiercely, clinging to him, then she let him go. The spell was over. He was Uys, not the means by which she might kiss the ghost of a dead man. She went to the window and stood with her back to him. When she turned to him, her eyes were dry.

"Coffee or tea, Uys?"

"Haven't had tea for a long time."

"Then we'll have taa." She went to the door and pressed the button that would call the kaffir maid. "The letter, Uys ...."

"You'll have to get it, my arm.... " He patted his right breast pocket.

"How did it happen?".... Oh do sit down." She pulled the letter from his pocket.

"Mafeking," he said, and noticed how her fingers trembled as she held the letter. "Read it if you want to."

"Later," she said softly.

The kaffir maid came in.

"Missus?"

"Tea and biscuits please."

The maid went away. Sannie sat by the window nursing the letter in her lap. Uys sat on the settee near the fireplace. And, suddenly, Uys envied his brother, Karel. Unlike him, Karel had

UWI Libraries

even in death, the complete love of the woman of his choice. Children or no, this Sannie had loved his brother with all her heart. You only had to see the way her fingers ran over that letter. What could one say to her?

"You at the hospital?" she asked.

"Yes."

"How long?"

"Don't know. Been there a week."

"That's why -- ."

"Yes."

"You should have let me know. I would have come to see you."

"Didn't think."

He thought: what a strong will she has not to open the letter.

She said: "How was he?"

"He was well."

"He used to get very lonely."

"We talked a lot."

"Did he tell you about us?"

"You mean about children?"

"Yes."

"Yes. He told me."

"I couldn't make him understand."

Uys remembered his last conversation with Karel. And recalling it, he was convinced Karel had known he was going to die.

"I think he tells about it in the letter," he said.

The kaffir maid came in with the tea. Sannie made him eat and drink a lot but took little herself. There was nothing to say, so they were silent. Her fingers kept running over the letter, feeling

UWI Libraries

it, feeling Karel through it. Best thing he could do was to go and leave her alone with her memories and her ghosts and her letters. Best thing he could do.

He got up.

"I must go now," he said.

She went with him to the door.

"Come back, Uys."

He thought: I don't belong to your kind of life. You were married to my brother who was a member of the Raad. I worked on a roadmakers' gang. Aloud, he said: "I will, Sannie. Goodbye."

As he walked away, he suddenly thought of Elise. What had happened to her? Where was she? What was she doing? Was she robbing other men of money? And what happened to Kurt Von Veltheim? He'd never found out whether Von Veltheim was shot for the killing of Joel. He looked at the sun. It was still fairly high. He had time to find out. He would go to the library and look at the papers.

The streets of wartime Pretoria were crowded, but people made way for him. They knew he'd been wounded on the front and they were anxious to help.

At the library, he told the girl he wanted papers that dealt with the Von Veltheim case.

"What year was that?"

"Nearly two years ago. 1898."

She helped him till they found the story. Von Veltheim had got off with his plea of self-defence. He had been acquitted and his friends gave a party to celebrate this. While this was going on, President Kruger ordered his rearrest and had him put over the border. Uys searched the papers carefully but nowhere was there any

UWL Libraries

mention of Elise.

He got up and went out. He was sure then that he would never again see Elise or hear about her. She had gone forever. Gone away. Like a small cloud blown to nithingness by a sharp wind. Gone away. Say that she is gone and think of her no more, Uys.... Easy to say, not so easy to believe. When you have touched beauty, you know it, your heart knows it. And a way has still to be found to stop a heart's yearning. Say that she is gone; gone far, far away.

He walked away from the heart of the town. Along the quiet, tree-lined streets where people were not jostling each other. Here, among these silent streets, seeing children at play in their yards and gardens, he could be quiet and peaceful. And, of late, he wanted to be quiet. To be away from people and just to relax. It was a new thing that had come recently.

So Karel was dead. As final as the word. Dead. Completely finished, Blumenfeld said. But surely, Blumenfeld was wrong. The heaven of his childhood still exists. It must. Perhaps he would die next. In a war, you could never tell. Yes, he might be next .... And never again would I see Karel's face; never again hear his voice never again touch him. So complete. The end of a man. So frightening.

The sun went down. He retraced his steps. It was time he was back in the hospital. On the way, he passed a church. On an impulse he turned and entered. It was empty. He was glad. He'd forgotten how to pray. Long time since he had prayed as a child. He took off his hat and knelt in the empty church. How does one pray? He remembered Our Father who art in heaven.... But he'd forgotten all the rest. Such a long time ago. Was there a heaven? And if not up there, then where?.... Death is so final. It had taken Karel.

UWI Libraries

The Commandant-General studied the reports from all the fronts. He was feeling rather tired these days. A little weary in spirit.

Yes, they were all right. There was cause for celebration. The victory list was impressive enough for it, and the citizens were right to celbrate. Yet there was always the great but in his mind. The President didn't have that doubt, and the people were with the President. And they had reason. A number of reasons. Victories are reasons enough.

In October there was the overrunning of Northern Natal; there was the investment of three great towns, Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley; there were victories at Stormberg, Vryburg and Elandslaagte; there was the victory of Colenso with the capture of ten big British guns. And now Cronje was preparing for Magerfontein.

Old Piet Joubert turned from the reports and tried to see what lay ahead. But the future was shrouded in a mist of darkness. It was this gold, this wealth that had brought this war to the land. And it was wrong, wrong for white men to fight each other with so many kaffirs about. The dark future was charged with the shadow of the kaffirs....

UWI Libraries

Uys got permission to go to Johannesburg to see his family. He wasn't really anxious to go, but Katryn was his wife andit would be nice to see the child. The comfort Katryn had given him after Elise, had long since worn off and the greater her love for him, the more he withdrew. Still, she was his wife.

He got off the train at Park Station and walked along the familiar streets of the town that had become his home. Unlike Pretoria, Johannesburg seemed empty, a deserted city, waiting for the return of its citizens. Would they ever come back? Would it ever again be an Uitlander town? Most of the people about were black. Only occasionally did he see a white person. This can be our town, he thought. We can run the mines and take the wealth and live in the fine houses. People like me, who have left the farms and become town-dwellers; we could run the town as well as the Uitlanders.

He opened the door into Braamfontein and went into the dark house.

"Katryn!" he called.

She came out of the room that had been his when he had first moved there. She had their son on her hip. When she saw him she nearly dropped the child.

"Uys! Oh Uys!"

She and the child pressed against him. She laughed, cried and talked at the same time. And, as always, her rush of emotion made him feel cold and detached.

"My arm," he murmured, though it did not hurt at all.

She moved away quickly.

UWI Libraries

"It's not bad, Uys?"

"Nearly well," he said.

"Come, I'll make you a cup of coffee."

He followed her into the kitchen.

"How long are you staying?"

"Till tomorrow morning." Really, he could stay for three days.

"Where are you? Here?"

"No; Pretoria hospital."

"Can't you come here? Then we can visit you every day."

"I tried," he lied. "It's full. Anyway, I'm going back soon. The arm's nearly well."

He sat in his old place and looked about. Nothing had changed. She put the child on the floor and busied herself over the stove. He watched her, and it was like looking at a stranger. So this is what she really looks like, he thought. Round face, heavy body, big hands and long black hair in a knot; the sort of woman you would pass in the street and not look at, because there was really nothing to look at. She was just a woman. Perhaps, if you were lonely, you might look at her heavy thighs and have thoughts. And she was his wife.

The child crawled toward him and played with his bootlace. He bent forward and touched its head. It turned serious grey eyes to him, studied him intently for a while, then smiled. Something tugged at his heart. This was his son.

"Hello, kêrel," he whispered.

The child gurgled. He felt quiet inside. This was his son. For all the other things that had gone wrong, this was his son. Suddenly, he kissed the child s cheek. The softness of its flesh made him feel more tender toward it. He looked up and Katryn stood smiling at him.

UWI Libraries

"He's grown," she said. "I always tell about his father."

He lifted the child to his knee.

"Yes. Eat well?"

"Like a horse."

Instantly, she was less of a stranger to him and he didn't look at her as coldly. She was the mother of his son. She brought the coffee and sat beside him. She touched his good arm lightly and her fingers trembled.

"It's good to have you home," she said. "I've missed you."

He pulled her to him and rubbed his cheek against hers.

"It's good to see you."

And Katryn wept, leaning her cheek against his.

He thought: really, she loves me as deeply as Sannie loved Karel. He put his arm about her and held her close till all her tears were gone.

"Where are the children?" he asked.

"They went to my aunt's farm."

"When?"

"When I heard.... Oh, Uys! I forgot you wouldn't know. Father was killed in one of the first battles in Natal."

So Jan Boshoff was dead too.... News of death was no longer shocking him so much. The cross-eyed nurse said one gets used to anything.

"I'm sorry," he said. How did she live? He and Boshoff hadn't left much when they went off to war. "What about money, Katryn?"

"Oh, we are rich now," she laughed.

"How's that?"

"I've let father's and the children's rooms to three boarders. It brings in quite a lot of money."

UWI Libraries

"You'll see them tonight. Two young men who are in the police. They're just from the farms, Uys."

"And the third?"

"I don't think you'll like him, Uys ...." She hesitated.

"Why?"

"He's an Uitlander."

"English?"

"No. Italian. He was the first. He's an old man. I took him because there was nothing to eat and the children were still with us. You aren't ~~kxxxgxy~~ angry, please. We had to have food."

"No. I'm not angry."

"He's really very nice..... How is the war? Are we winning?"

"Yes, we're winning."

"Then perhaps we will own the mines and live in the fine houses."

"How do you know about that?" His voice was sharp.

She smiled.

"You often spoke of that in your sleep."

"In my sleep ...."

"Yes, you dreamed a lot."

"Did ~~yxx~~ I say anything else?"

"You once said you wanted to go back to the farm.... Oh, Uys! It's so nice to have you back."

As he ran his hand over her straight black hair, Uys thought: perhaps if I'd met Katryn first and never known Hettie Van As and Elise .... Perhaps it would have been different. Perhaps I would have been able to love her in the way she loves me.

They were silent for a long time. The child rode its father's knee. And Uys was pleased to know that he was a source of comfort to Katryn.

UWI Libraries

At last she stirred and moved from his side.

"I must prepare food."

"Do we eat with the boarders?"

"Only if you want to, Uys."

"That's all right."

While Katryn busied herself with food, Uys played with his son. And slowly, the war faded from his mind and it was as though he had never been away, had never killed men who had tried to kill him. It was almost as though the country was not at war and his spying journey into Mafeking a bad dream. Only his bandaged arm was a declaration that it was real. But here, in this dark little kitchen, with his wife preparing food, and his son on his knee, theworld was at peace. A tired, unsatisfying peace, it's true, but peace for all that. And this was his home. This was the one place in the world where both his heart and head had found rest and were always assured of rest. He was sure of this place, of this woman, of this child. And home was that of which you were sure, that to which you could return and relax something inside you.

He thought: funny how you plan things: with your head you map a straight course; yet, in the living of it, life is never like that. Never a straight course; there are always conflicting currents that pull in all directions.

He pulled the bag of tobacco out of his pocket:

"Katryn."

She turned from the fire.

"Make me a cigarette."

Instead, she went out and came back with a packet.

"You left this when you went."

She lit it for him. That was home.....

UWI Libraries

"I love you, Katryn." As soon as he said it, he knew it wasn't true. At least, it didn't feel as though it were true.

She looked at him for a long time, and her eyes gleamed.

"First time you've said it," she said softly. Then she turned back to her pots.

Later, Uys went to lie down. He wasn't really tired but Katryn insisted. Said it would make her work easier and she would not burn the food. Nice to be home. Perhaps he would spend the whole three days. It would be nice to be with her and the child for all that time. Yes, it would be nice....

"Uys... Uys.... " Katryn stood by the bed and shook him.

He woke to find that it was night. The lamp was lit.

"Heh.... I've slept long." He sat up.

"Time for supper," she said.

"Didn't think I'd sleep so long," he said.

"You were tired," she said. "Come: I've brought you water. Wash your face."

She ran her thick fingers through his hair and went out. He got up and carried the lamp to the corner where the child'd cot was. He lifted it high so that the light fell on the child. The child was asleep on its stomach, its little fists above its head, its little lips slightly parted. He thought; a child asleep looks very peaceful.

As he washed his face and brushed his hair, he heard male voices from the kitchen. So the boarders were in. Well, he would see what they looked like. He leaned over the glass top of the lamp and lit a cigarette; then he went out.

He paused inside the kitchen door and the three men turned to him. He looked at the two young ones first. He recognized them

UWI Libraries

straightaway. It wasn't that he had met either of them before; but he had met so many like them at the front. Young farmers, big and strong and awkward, with the smell of the farms and the earth still about them, out of place in a war or in a town. No doubt he had been like that when he had first come toJohannesburg. He saw how the two young men jumped up and suppressed a smile. Anxious and eager; just as he had been at first. But that was such a long time ago. Then he looked at the old man. He was small and thin, his back humpe with age; a long thin face with a sharp nose and rather long, white hair. His lined face was pitted with pock-holes.

Katryn's eyes were proud as she said:

"I've always talked about him, now you can meet him. My husband, Mister Uys Jansen. This is Mister Perretti, Uys."

"It is an honour, Mister Jansen," the old mansaid in awkward Afrikaans. His voice was tender as that of a young woman.

"And this is Mister Van Schalk and Mister Du Toit."

Van Schalk and Du Toit said: "Mynheer," in turn, then did not seem to know what to do with themselves.

"Please sit down," Uys said.

"You too, Uys," Katryn said.

Uys took the old place at the head of the table. Katryn dished up. The two young men wanted to make conversation but did not know how to begin. It was old Perretti who broke the silence.

"When Missus Jansen said you had returned, I went out and got a bottle of wine. You will share it with me, Mister Jansen. In my country, that is the way we welcome the return of a friend. My two young friends," he indicated Van Schalk and Du Toit: "They do not drink, so it is only for us." He picked the bottle from the floor and held it up to the light.

"~~Mise~~

UWI Libraries

"Mister Perretti thinks it funny that we don't drink," Du Toit said.

"Most of our people do not drink," Uys said.

Katryn went to her place at the other end of the table. Perretti opened the bottle and filled two glasses. They began the meal.

"Your homes far from here?" Uys looked first at one then the other of the two young men.

"Potchefstroom district, Mynheer," Van Schalk said.

"Rustenberg, Mynheer," Du Toit said.

"And you like Johannesburg?"

"Yes, Mynheer," Du Toit said.

"Staying?"

"No," Du Toit said. "After the war I'm going back. You see, Mynheer Jansen, my father's old and all the others in our family are girls. There are seven girls and I'm the only man. I should have liked to stay. But you need a man to run the farm."

"I'm staying," Van Schalk said. "I'd like to work on the mines."

"And your farm?" Uys asked.

"There are thriteen of us," Van Schalk said. "It's too small to be divided thirteen times."

"It is the same in all the coutries," Perretti said. "Always, all the young people move from the country to the town. It is the changing of man.... Your health, Mister Jansen. And the health of your good wife who cares for us so well.... "

"Mister Perretti says men lose their freedom in towns," Katryn said.

"He's always at us," Van Schalk said.

At least, they seem to get on well, Uys thought.

"Why?" he asked.

UWI Libraries

"Why what, Mister Jansen?" Perretti asked.

"Why do you say men lose their freedom in towns?"

"Have a little more, Mister Van Schalk," Katryn said.

Van Schalk gave her his plate. Perretti xxixxslowly refilled the two glasses.

"It is like this, Mister Jansen," Perretti said slowly. "A long time ago, so long ago I cannot remember the date any more, I was a young man who set out in search of understanding and the meaning of life. Perhaps it will make you laugh, but there are people like that. While their friends build houses and become rich and famous, they wander about the world in search of answers to questions. They are stupid people, really, and in the end the world mocks them. Well, when I was young, I was one such a person: and now I am old, I am still that kind of a fool. So I walked about the world, looking.

"And I saw that the town always called the countryman away from his fields and his silence and his earth and made a slave of him."

"Why do you say a slave? He can always go back."

"Like all your people, you were a countryman, Mister Jansen: can you go back?"

"Yes."

"Can you forget the new wonders and the new miracles you have seen? After all you have seen and experienced in the town, can you really go back and be happy?"

"What is happiness?"

"That is something the countryman never asks. Did you when you were in the country?"

"No."

"That is it. You have changed so that you do not see with the same eyes any more. Your values have changed."

UWI Libraries

"That is not losing your freedom, though."

"Now it is my turn to ask a question, Mister Jansen. When you say freedom, what do you mean? What is your freedom?"

Uys thought carefully. This old man was getting close to things that were important. Something warned him to leave the subject, to turn the conversation, to talk about something else. And the sharp eyes of the old man challenged him.... What is freedom? He said slowly:

"We are fighting a war for freedom today. We are fighting to be masters in our own land; to run our homes in our own way; to live in our own way. We want to speak our own language."

"You do not understand me, Mister Jansen. I was talking about a man, not a nation. The freedom of a nation is easy to state. It is the freedom of a man we are talking about, your freedom."

"It is the same thing," Du Toit said.

"For you, Mister Du Toit.... Is it so for you too, Mister Jansen?"

Uys stared for a long time at the old man, then he looked away.

"I don't know," he said.

"We are getting away from the countryman," Van Schalk said.

"No, my young friends. For the countryman, things are clear. He is close to the earth and he lives with the seasons and his fight is against nature. Life is played out on a simple plane. He is a master, not a slave. And can we say that beauty has less meaning for him than for the town dweller? He decides something and he is certain of himself. Mister Jansen is not certain."

"Is that the difference between being free andnot being free?"

"I cannot answer you Mister Jansen. For a man, we are not speaking of nations, freedom and happiness are nearly always the same thing. When you were in the country you were sure, so you were

UWI Libraries

happy, so you were free."

"I didn't know.... " Uys said quickly, then stopped.

"What did you not know?"

"Many things."

"More food for you, Uys?" Katryn asked.

"No," Uys said.

She looked at the old Italian. He shook his head. She went to brew the coffee.

"You don't seem to get anywhere, Mister Perretti," Du Toit said.

The old man smiled and said gently:

"I am an old man and all my life I have been seeking to get somewhere."

"Is understanding so hard?" Uys saidsoftly.

The old man looked at Uys as though he knew what was going on inside him.

"So hard, my friend, if it is to be real."

Uys thought of Mark Blumenfeld and said:

"And the meaning of life?"

"That, at least, is in our hands. We can give it the most beautiful meaning we are capable of. That is the great thing."

"A man I knew once said that," Uys said.

"It is true," Perretti said.

"I don't follow a word of this," Van Schalk said.

You will one day, Uys thought. He felt tired suddenly, as though drained of all feeling and all inner strength. Where did this old man come from? And who was he?

Katryn served the coffee. Afterwards, Uys got up and said:

"You must excuse me, I'm tired."

UWI Libraries

The two young men suddenly remembered he was the head of the house and jumped up.

"We'd hoped to ask you about the war," Du Toit said.

"I'm sorry," Uys said.

"Mister Jansen must rest," Perretti said. "I'm sorry I've tired you. Rest well, Mister Jansen. I hope we will speak again."

"Where do you come from?" Uys asked with deep curiosity.

The old man smiled dreamily.

"Oh, a little village at the foot of a mountain. I do not think it is there any more. You see, when I left the river was drying, and people cannot live without water. Perhaps they have moved elsewhere and the place that I remember and carry in my heart is just a barren piece of land. It is so sometimes."

"Goodnight," Uys said and went to their room.

"I'll come soon," Katryn called.

When Katryn came into the room later, the light was out.

"Asleep, Uys?"

"No. Want the light?"

"No."

She undressed in the dark and climbed over him. The bed groaned under her weight. She settled close to him and her flesh was warm against his body.

"Bed's lonely without you," she said.

He thought: it would be awkward with my left arm. Strainingly, his right hand reached for her body. Such a long time since he'd been with her. And she was so warm. Her warmth flowed into him, and he was warm. Such a long time, it seemed.

UWI Libraries

His arm was out of the sling at last; and though the shoulder was a little stiff, he could move it freely. Katryn and the child had spent the best part of the day with him and he'd just seen them off on the Johannesburg bound train. In the morning, he was going back to the front.

He turned out of the station and walked along Church Street. News was that Paul Kruger was visiting the battlefields. Good man to have as President, Paul Kruger. He never forgot the ordinary men. He, they said, always called himself one. Time for coffee, Uys thought. He crossed the street and went toward the Boer coffee house he had visited on that very first visit to Pretoria in search of Hettie Van As. Katryn had given him five pounds. That would keep him in tobacco for a very long time. At the front they now supplied men with food and arms. This was a big war. The biggest they'd ever fought. He went into the coffee-house and paused in the doorway, looking for a quiet corner. The place was full.

"By all that's mighty! Uys Jansen!"

He knew that voice. He would know it anywhere. He turned his head slightly to the left and looked. Yes, it was Klaas De Jong. The days of the Jameson Raid came back in a rush. De Jong grabbed his hand and shook it vigorously.

"Well! Well! Good to see you, Jansen! What are you doing here, man? Come and sit with me and let's talk! I've often thought of you!

He pulled Uys along to his table.

"Another coffee," he said as the waitress passed. "Now tell me!"

"I've been at the hospital here," Uys said.

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"No! .... Wounded?"

"In the arm. It's better now."

De Jong bent forward and lit his pipe. Uys thought: he hasn't changed, Not a thing about him had changed in the years since they had first met.

"Glad I met you," De Jong said. "I'm off the the war tomorrow. I've finally talked them into putting someone else in the office and giving me a chance to fight. Nearly four years ago since I told you war would come. Remember? Well it's here now. Been in it?"

"At Mafeking," Uys said.

"Of course, you're in the Potchefstroom Commando. You know Cronje's at Kimberley now?"

"Yes: I'm to report at the station tomorrow morning."

"I think we're going together, Jansen. That'll be nice. I think they are sending to Cronje's force.... Oh, I've seen a friendof yours!

"Friend of mine?" Uys looked curiously at De Jong.

"Yes. Blumenfeld. He's at the prisoner of war camp at the Model School."

Because De Jong was watching him carefully, Uys forced himself not to think of Blumenfeld. He still recalled how De Jong had been able to pick up his thoughts.

"We were right, you know," De Jong said softly.

"What about?"

"The Raid. It gave us just the time we needed to build up our arms. If Jameson had succeeded the English would have come in from the Cape and we would have been a colony of the English now."

"We may still lose," Uys said.

De Jong put down his cup. Momentarily, a fierce fire burned in

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his eyes; he was a bundle of tightly pulled nerves. Then he relaxed.

"Your brother Karel was with you," he said.

"Yes," Uys said.

"That's where you heard we might lose."

"It's true, isn't it?"

"We are winningeverywhere," De Jong said firmly. "And even if we didn't win the fighting, we will not lose the war. We will never be an English colony. Even if we lost, we will resist. We will resist for ten years, twenty years, fifty or more, but in the end the Republic will be ours again!" He sighed as though ashamed of his feeling, then went on more softly: "The only thing we have to fear, Jansen, is betrayal from those who call themselves our leaders, those who talk about our defeat and make us believe. Are you and I going to forget what our forefathers sacrificed to win this land? Are we going to forget that? I say no! Your brother Karel has become soft with Uitlander living, and so have many others. Karel, and these others, are hands-uppers.... "

"Karel died in battle," Uys said sharply.

"I'm sorry.... But that does not alter what I said, Jansen. We will only be defeated if we give in. Even if they win the war, if we do not give in, we are not defeated and the Republic is not dead. That is the greatthing. We must believe that."

"I do believe that," Uys said.

"Of course you do. We will win. We are winning now."

They were silent after that. While De Jong filled his pipe, Uys sipped his coffee. So Blumenfeld's a prisoner here, Uys thought. He had often thought that any misfortune of Blumenfeld would please him. Instead, he was just interested, a little sad, and a little

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curious. If he, Blumenfeld, were a prisoner, where was Hettie Van As? De Jong raised his head.

"About Blumenfeld," Uys said. "Didn't he leave Johannesburg when war began?"

"Still interested in him."

"He took my girl," Uys said coldly.

"I see," De Jong said with sympathy.

"I'm married now," Uys said. "I'm just interested."

De Jong rubbed his beard and shook his head.

"I never could understand why an Afrikaner woman, and a beautiful one too, should marry an Uitlander who is a Jew. So she was your girl ...."

"How do you know her?"

"I see you've forgotten my work, Jansen."

"Of course."

"Anyway, she is here. She and her child stay in Pretoria.... Three times every day they go to a point from which they can look at the camp and wave to him."

Like a knife against his heart, pain touched Uys. No joy for him in the suffering of Blumenfeld - not with Hettie Van As to share it.

"But didn't he leave?" Uys asked.

"Oh he left all right. Have you heard of the South African Light Horse?"

"No."

"It's a regiment in the British forces made up of Johannesburg and Pretoria Uitlanders. Blumenfeld was an officer in that regiment and was captured in the Natal fighting. You were wrong about him

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Jansen. Everything that's happened has proved that."

"I've known it for a long time," Uys said quietly.

De Jong looked at him searchingly.

"You've changed, Jansen."

Uys smiled and relaxed a little. There was no need to be afraid De Jong would read his thoughts. Time had robbed De Jong of that power.

"How's Commandant Smit?" Uys asked.

"Haven't heard of him since the war started. He's fighting somewhere. All our good men are fighting somewhere."

"I must get along," Uys said.

"Come home with me and meet my family," De Jong said. "Have supper with us."

"Can't," Uys said. "I have things to do."

They shook hands.

"We'll meet tomorrow or at the front," De Jong said. "Till then."

"Goodbye." Never thought of him as a man with a family, Uys mused as he went out.

Now the Model Schools. They were on the outskirts of the town, in the valley. The sun was nearly down but old cross-eyed wouldn't be fussy about his temperature on the last night. He walked fast. He didn't expect to see anything, but somehow he wanted to see this place where Mark Blumenfeld was.... A man lives to the depth of his capabilities.... And what had the old Italian said? Perhaps the thir he was carrying in his heart wasn't there any more. Perhaps if he saw Mark Blumenfeld it would be different. Perhaps he would be able to forget him. Why can't a person say I want to forget, and forget?

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Things would be so much simpler then.... Here, in the quiet street, the world was very cool; and there was something strangely exciting about walking under the broad trees. Really, I need to laugh more, he decided. I'm a very gloomy sort of a chap, I suppose. Yet with Elise he had laughed very much. One needs a reason for laughter. Or could there be people who are naturally full of laughter?.... That was the schools ahead.

Guards from the Pretoria fort were posted. They, and the police, were the only men who wore uniforms. He slackened his pace and strolled more slowly. There would be nothing to see, of course. Silly to come all this way. But better than spending a lot more time with De Jong. He felt better for having been with Katryn. It is good to know there is a person who cares about you; who would suffer deeply if you were in pain or if you were dead. Yes, if you were dead. Never mind that now. It is good to know there is someone waiting. You get the feel of belonging somewhere.... What did that old man mean about the freedom of nations and the freedom of individuals? They are not different. You cannot be a free man if your country is not free. A man is as free as his country.... At least, the living of life is in our hands. We can give it the most beautiful meaning we are capable of.... But if you are not free?.... And then the old man asked what is freedom....

Yes, he would see nothing. There was a great stretch of no-mans-land between the outer barbed wire fence and the inner fence that confined the prisoners. They were too far away to make out faces. Might as well turn back. There was nothing to see. He was on the point of turning back when he saw, far ahead, the figure of a woman standing close to the outer fence. Could it be.... It had to be.

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His heart began to beat a little more violently. He pushed his hands deep into his pockets and walked on. As he drew near, he saw that she was not alone. The child beside her, holding on to her dress, was quite big. A little girl of about three or four. He couldn't see her face, but as he came abreast the child turned its head and he was looking at the face of Hettie Van As. The face stared coldly at him, with the cool detachment of a child, then turned away. And there was a mist before his eyes so that his vision was not clear. Not that he was weeping, or feeling like it, it was just that something had gone wrong with his eyes. The violent beat of his heart ceased. It became normal. The mist cleared from his eyes and he felt terribly cold. He clenched his fists. He was a long way past them now. He turned abruptly and walked back.

And as he went, he looked at where he thought she looked. Yes, there was the outline of a man there; dark outline of a man with a vast stretch of no-mans-land between him and them. He stopped beside her. The child noticed him, but she was staring so intently at that shadow, trying to be with it: or, for all we know, being with it. The child tugged at her dress. At last she turned impatient. The intended rebuke died on her lips as she saw him. Against his will, he felt a smile tugging at his mouth. It felt a funny kind of smile. Her face went a deathly white. His eyes turned briefly in the direction of the outlines of the man, then he looked at her. He wanted to laugh at the pain in her eyes. Clench your fists, woman! Lick your lips! And he knew suddenly that he hated them both; would hate them till the day he died. And he felt better, less gloomy; not such a gloomy chap after all.

He spat on the ground at her feet, turned on his heels and walked away. And the world was a lighter place to be in....

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The interpreter said:

"The charge is that you took stolen gold from the mine boy, Jim, knowing that it was stolen, and that you sold it to white men. How do you plead, Luke Dabula, guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty."

"And you still insist the old man was not in it with you?"

"I did it alone. That is the truth. I used the old man's house but he knew nothing of it. That is the truth."

"And you refuse to tell the mame or names of the white people to whom you sold the gold."

"I do not know their names. I do not know them. They came and went. They asked no questions and neither did I."

"You must know.... "

"I can tell you nothing about them."

In the part of the court reserved for blacks, the old man and Deborah sat. Even from where he was, Luke saw the tears in Deborah's and the old man's eyes. He tried to comfort them. A forced smile tried to tell them he would be all right. The old man was too old for jail. Better that he went alone. The old man would die. Better that the old man took care of Deborah and the child. Better that way for there was a second child on the way. Takecare of them.... From a long way off, he heard the judge's voice say:

" .... to ten years hard labour.... "

Deborah screamed as the policeman pushed him roughly to the door.

Ten years. A long time it must be... And the meaning of life was further away from him than it had ever been in those distant days of Bulawayo in the north. Ten years. A long time it must be.

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Magersfontein was a slaughter.

The battle of Magersfontein began on Sunday December 10. On Tuesday, December 12, the battle was over and the British forces, the army of the most powerful nation on earth, had suffered its worse defeat in living memory.

Magersfontein was a strip of land with a ridge of hills a few miles below Kimberley. Forces under Lord Methuen were marching toward Kimberley to lift the seige. Forces of the two Boer Republics, under General Piet Conje opposed them. They met at Magersfontein.

Throughout the Sunday, the British heavy guns bombarded the Magersfontein hills. But the Boers had built magnificent shelter trenches where they sat smoking and talking while British artillery spent itself about them. True some of them had been killed at their prayers, but that had been at the start of the bombardment. Toward evening, Cronje sent word along the lines that an attack was expected. The Boers were on the alert.

The night was heavy and overcast. The moon showed periodically through the low black clouds. Thunderstorms came and went rapidly.

Lord Methuen's orders were for the British forces to march half an hour after midnight. Their marching orders were that eight companies of each battalion were to be in eight lines, one behind the other and six paces apart. Behind them, came four battalions, one behind the other. Thus, it was all but a solid mass of men, a moving oblong of human flesh, that marched on the Boer lines.

To the right of the marching force, a light flashed. Immediately

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after it, the dark night was filled with the flash of lightning and the clap of thunder. Those among the British who had seen the first flash forgot it in the face of all the other flashes. The British forces were held up first by barbed-wire entanglements land on the ground, hard to move across in the dark; then a high wire fence obstructed them: then, finally, they walked into scrub bushes. In order to keep their formation in the dark, ropes were used. A sudden, drenching storm followed the thunder and lightning. The hot, overcast night, cleared suddenly and turned intensely cold. There was another downpour.

It was after three o'clock on the morning of Monday December 11, when the British forces neared the Boer lines. Though much of the darkness had gone, it was still too dark to see far ahead.

The British forces moved forward. All was quiet. There was no sign of the Boers. Intelligence had reported Boer retirements earlier. Perhaps they had gone up to the very hills of Magersfontein. Suddenly, no more than a hundred yards in frontof the moving oblong, a sheet of flame jumped from the night and steel poured into the wall of flesh.

The disorder was terrible. Those behind pushed forward, and those in front pushed back. And all manner of cries and orders were heard: "Extend!" "Fix bayonets!" "Lie down!" "Charge!" "Retire!" The confusion was complete. And a pitiless hail of fire poured into them from out of the night. The ranks broke and fled in the wildest disorder. And the pitiless sheet of flame poured into them....

There was fighting and shelling on the other day. But the battle of Magersfontein had been lost that night for the spirit of the soldiers had been broken.

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The fronts were quiet after Magersfontein.

The Boer Christmas was happy that year. God was delivering the enemy into the hands of his people. The two Presidents visited the farmer-fighters on all the fronts and prayed with them and exhorted them on. Manifestly, the Lord was with his people.

The battle of Magersfontein was won in December. Toward the end of January, Boer forces under the young general Louis Botha, gave the English another terrible beating at Spion Kop.

Surely the English would sue for peace now. They had been beaten on all fronts. Their men had been cut down like grass. Surely they would sue for peace now. The farmers were tired of war. They had never wanted war in the first place. They had fought because their land and freedom were threatened. They had won. Now the defeated enemy would sue for peace. So thought and hoped some Boers.

Others thought otherwise. They had beaten the redneck. They could drive him into the sea. He will have lost face in the eyes of the rest of the world. They could drive him right out of Africa and be the dominant force in the continent. Why not? They and their forebears had poured their blood into this land. They had more right to it than anybody else. They would drive the redneck out and all Africa would be theirs. They would be lords of the land and the blacks. So thought others. So thought Uys Jansen.

And all was quiet on the fronts.

But England, stung by the many defeats she had suffered at the hands of these farmer-fighters, raised a Grand Army and put Lord Roberts at its head. And over a hundred and thirty thousand men

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set out to crush these farmers whose fighting numbers were less than sixty-thousand men.

The Grand Army marched on Kimberley in February of the new year and the new century. When Cronje, who had at first been optimistic, saw its size, he retreated. And Kimberley, with Cecil Rhodes in it, was relieved.

This was the turn of the tide. Lord Roberts ordered the pursuit of General Cronje.

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General Cronje's force retreated north-eastward along the northern bank of the Modder river. His laager was composed of four thousand fighting men and four hundred wagons carrying supplies and housing the wives and families of some of the men. For some of the women, as in other wars, preferred to be near their men.

The retreat from Magersfontein began on February 15. On the next day, British forces were on the tail of the retreating laager and a running fight began. The Potchefstroomers, the old guard of Cronje's army, were ordered to cover the slow retreat that the ox-drawn wagons made necessary. Commandant Nel was in charge of this rearguard action.

The first day of the retreat passed without trouble. And the cloud of dust moved slowly in the wake of the Boer force along the northern bank of the river. Uys Jansen, his brother Johan, his brother-in-law, Niekerk, and Kiekerk's son Koos, rode in line on the right flank of the rearguard, near the river.

"Glad Elli isn't here," Johan said.

"Thank Oom Uys," Koos said. He had grown into a strapping young man with a stubbly beard on his chin. He had killed and the fear of war had gone from him. He was a man among men.

"Yes," Niekerk said. "We would have brought them if you hadn't stopped us, Uys."

"War's not the place for women," Uys said and spat to get some of the dust from his throat. His beard covered nearly all his face.

"God, to be retreating before them!" Johan said bitterly.

"Thought they would sue for peace," Niekerk said.

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Overhead, vultures circled. Where there was a mass of men in these days, there was nearly always carrion. And the vultures waited. This was a time of plenty for them.

"We should have fought," Johan said.

"I was out scouting," Koos said. "Their new army is more than twice as big as ours."

It was terrible to talk against the dust. Their spittle was black with it. So they stopped talking. Nel rode up.

"Alert, you men. The redneck's following us."

"Why don't we fight him?" Johan said.

"Cronje knows his business," Nel said.

"Where are we going?" Uys asked.

"Bloemfontein."

"Can he cut us off?"

"Don't think he'll try."

"Hope you are right," Uys said as Nel rode away.

The long day was scorching enough without the dust; with it, it was unbearable. The animals suffered greatly and the wagons were slow Toward nightfall the enemy was sighted and the running fight began.

That night the rearguard camped on a hill commanding the surrounding land. The main force camped further down the valley, near the river.

Before dawn on the 16th, British forces attacked the hill. They surprised the sentry, beyonetted him, and were nearly on top of the Boers before the alarm was given. The engagement was fierce and sharp. Nel's men had to keep the hill till the main laager was imspanned and on the move. Once the British were so close it became a hand-to-hand fight. Boers used their rifle-butts to beat off bayonet charges.

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With Johan on his left and young Koos on hisright, and Niekerk beyond Koos, Uys swung his rifle-butt at a moustached Englishman whose blade of steel was dangerously close. As the man went down, he saw another leaping at Niekerk.

"Niekerk!" he shouted.

Young Koos swung round and smashed the bayonetted rifle out of the man's hands. Niekerk leapt on the man, his pocket knife in his hand. Young Koos righted his rifle and fired into a face coming over a boulder. The face dissolved into blood. Johan clubbed away till three men lay dead at his feet.

"Comé on, redneck!" Johan cried, and moved forward toward the edge of the hill.

"Back, Johan!" Uys cried.

Presently, there was enough ground between them and the enemy for their rifles to be used in the ordinary fashion. The main body had inspanned and was far down the river.

"Disengaged the action," Nel ordered.

The word went round. Their guns were silent. They waited to see what the enemy would do. He was silent. Perhaps he too had decided to retire. They moved back cautiously, covering the rear of the laager.

All through the hot day a trail of dust marked the movement of Cronje's laager. All through the day there were skirmishing outbreaks while the Boer force kept its slow but steady course toward Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State Republic.

So passed the 16th of February: so passed the morning, midday and afternoon of the 17th. On the evening of the 17th advance scouts rode in to report that a British force had cut off the way ahead by occupying Koodoosrand Drift. The way to Bloemfontein was closed and

UWI Libraries

the enemy was all about: in front, behind and keeping pace with the Boer force on the south bank of the Modder.

Among those at General Cronje's headquarters, there were those who urged him to abandon the women and the wagons and cattle and lead his able-bodied men in a night march through the enemy lines. It could be done. The British would not harm the women and children; but the wagons, stores and big guns would have to be abandoned. Among those who urged this was Klaas De Jong. He said fighting men were more important than all the stores. Lose the stores but keep the fighting men free to fight again. Cronje rejected this advice and gave the order to dig in at Paardeberg where the laager had stopped for the night.

At daybreak on the 18th, the Boers had dug themselves in: their shelter trenches against enemy shelling were ready. They waited. A British mounted division came within range. The Boers opened a sharp rifle fire that drove the enemy back. The battle of Paardeberg was joined.

All through that Sunday of February 18, 1900, British shells burst over the Boer laager, burning wagons and supplies and destroying cattle. But the Boers had expected this and they themselves were in their well prepared, shell-proof shelter trenches.

Uys looked at Johan and saw that it was starting again. This always happened under shell fire. He always started trembling.

"Hold on Johan!" Uys said.

"Why can't we go out and fight them!" Johan said through his teeth.

"They'll do as they always do," young Koos said comfortingly. "They'll shell and shell and then they'll come and we'll kill them. You know how it is, Oom Johan."

UWI Libraries

Johan clenched his fist. The roar, whine and explosion of shells was unending. Suddenly Johan jumped up.

"Let's go out and get them!"

Niekerk and Uys pulled him down and held him while he fought.

"It will soon stop," young Koos said.

Nel came toward them. He looked at Johan and shook his head.

"Same trouble with some of the others," he said. "Spare a man. Some are going mad down the line."

Uys nodded to young Koos.

"You all right?" Nel looked closely at the boy.

"I want to mess my pants, but I'm all right." The boy laughed uneasily.

"Come along," Nel said and led the way along the trench.

"Take care," Niekerk called above the roar of a nearby shell.

"Always makes me want to sing when they make this noise," Niekerk shouted to Uys.

From somewhere down the line came a high pitched scream that broke on a sob. Johan's eyes glazed. Foam showed on his lips.

"Then sing," Uys shouted.

Niekerk opened his mouth and roared, trying to drown the noise and terror of the bursting whells. Men nearby caught the idea and joined in. It was no attempt to sing: just a mighty roar that released something in them, gave them, within themselves, a little more room for their spirits to move, pushed fear a little way from them.

One gets used to anything, Uys thought. This had less effect on him than the cries of pain from the one man in hospital. Yet, really this was much worse.... We've been lucky so far. As a family we've been very lucky. Only lost Karel. Most of the others had lost more

UWI Libraries

men in their families. Some had lost all the men of their families. He knew that his watching over them had had a lot to do with it. Johan would have been killed a number of times if he, Uys, had not been about. He always wanted to go forward. And he'd once saved Niekerk's life, and young Koos' life too.... Yes, one gets used to anything. Only, this was lasting so long. It felt like a lifetime. A lifetime of fighting; of killing or being killed.

"How many more of them must we kill before they give in?" he asked aloud; but all the other noises drowned his voice.

Whine and burst, whine and burst. Just listen to them. Perhaps the whole camp was on fire above their heads. Well, they wouldn't win. De Jong was right about that. They cannot win unless you give in. And no one w here was giving in. Better spend our lives fighting than live in unfreedom. Whine and burst, whine and burst.

The shelling stopped at sundown. The sudden silence was unearthly, as violently shocking as had been the beginning of the bombardment.

Niekerk and Uys relaxed their hold on Johan. Young Koos came back from helping to keep other men quiet.

"It is all over," Uys said, shaking the dazed Johan. "It is all over now."

"We must be ready for them, Oom Johan," Koos said.

Johan came slowly out of his stupor.

"We must be ready for them," the boy repeated.

"Wish it were finished," Niekerk said with sudden bitterness.

"We must remain strong," Uys said coldly.

Men passed biltong and small loaves along the trenches. They ate hurriedly. The enemy would follow the inevitable pattern of rushing the lines. These Uitlanders loaned nothing.

Imperceptibly, the quiet became more tense. Men finished their food quickly

UWI Libraries

food quickly and sat in silence, waiting. Waiting . Uys rolled a hurried cigarette and gave it to Johan.

"Better smoke this."

"I'd like one, Oom Uys." The boy's voice was tight.

Uys looked at Niekerk and made his first cigarette for the boy.

"Good for the nerves," he said.

Niekerk looked up quickly.

"Uys ---"

"When this is over you may be sorry you've said it," Uys said.

"We can't always escape," Niekerk said.

"We'll be all right," Johan said; he had recovered.

"All right," Uys said looking at Niekerk.

Niekerk looked at his son then looked away.

"It's nothing much.... Just tell Sara.... tell her I'm sorry about that New Year's night. She'll understand. And tell her I love her." He looked at his son. "Take care of your mother and the children."

"We'll be all right," Johan said.

The whisper came down the line:

"They are coming!"

This time they did not come in packed formation. But for all that, they were not adept at using the land for cover, and the Boers picked them off coolly. They were great marksmen and they knew the land.

The battle raged all through the night. They enemy seemed determined to overwhelm the laager in a great rush. Waves of men came on. The Boers picked them off with deadly accuracy.

Nel passed near Uys.

"If they come like this we'll kill the whole English nation."

UWI Libraries

"They don't seem to learn anything."

"War's a game for them, Jansen. It has rules."

"Rules to kill oneself?"

"You don't understand."

"I'm glad."

"So am I."

Nel moved on. Uys looked at the boy.

"'Right, Koos?"

"Fine."

Johan laughed beside him.

"Say, Uys.... "

Uys looked at Johan and saw that his head was above the trench line.

"Johan.... !"

But it was too late. Johan suddenly flung his mauser from him with a violent little jerk, took a backward step, turned sideways, and fell on his face. Uys and the two Nierkerks jumped to his side and turned him over. Johan was dead. Blood was beginning to ooze from the neat little hole in his left temple.

Pain jabbed at Uys' heart. This was his brother; no ordinary brother. They had come into the world at the same time. This was his twin brother. This was Johan who had loved life and living. He'd been full of plans about what he and Elli and the children were going to do afterwards. He had grappled with life impulsively: hating with passion; this was his brother and the Uitlanders had killed him.

"He's dead," Uys said.

Nel came up.

"He's dead," Uys said again. "We were twin, you know."

"We must move him," Nel said.

UWI Libraries

The smile with which he had turned to Uys in the last moment of life, was still on Johan's face in death. Young Koos suddenly sat down and covered his face with his hands. Niekerk put his hand on his son's head.

"We must bury him," Niekerk said.

"Of course," Nel said.

Uys grabbed Johan's mauser and turned abruptly to the parapet.

"Careful," Nel said.

"I'm all right," Uys said coldly.

"The gun barked onee.... twice.... three times.... four times. Then he turned back to them. His face was drawn. His eyes were bleak.

"Come on," Nel said gently.

Niekerk and Koos carried Johan on a rude stretcher to where he was to be buried. Nel left them and went back to the fighting. Already the stench of the dead cattle was filling the air and making it oppressive. An ammunition wagon nearby had blown up and set some of the others on fire. By the light of the fires, the three men dug a hole for their fallen relative. When the hole was ready, Niekerk went through Johan's pockets and tied his possessions in a big handkerchief. Then they lowered Johan into the hole.

"Will you pray?" Niekerk said to Uys.

"You pray," Uys said. He was not sure of God any more.

Niekerk prayed but the din of battle drowned his voice. Then they filled the hole and made a mound over it so that what had once been big, blonde, strong Johan Jansen, was just one mound of earth among many others on the African veld.

"I'll follow you," Uys said.

Niekerk and young Koos left him at the mound of his twin brother.

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(1 line space)

On the 19th the Boer forces attempted to break out of the enemy circle. The attempt failed and the circle was drawn closer. General Louis Botha marched on Paardeberg with a relieving force. The British intercepted him and he failed to relieve Cronje. The forces of the Grand Army were too great.

In the Boer camp near the Modder river, life was becoming impossible. The dead animals were decomposing, polluting the air. Cronje asked for an armistice to bury his dead and clear the carcasses of the dead beasts. It was refused. He was asked to surrender, He refused. He was asked to surender the women and children to the enemy with the assurance they would be well cared for. He refused.

The battle was resumed.

Days rolled by. And each day was more unendurable that the last. Food ran short and the reamining cattle had to be killed to feed the laager. To make matters worse, the enemy now waited for the Boers who came to the river to get water and picked them off. Many stubborn efforts were made to break out, but the enemy was everywhere.

On the 23rd of February a force of two thousand Boers under Generals De Wet and Botha made a last desperate effort to reach Cronje. They were broken against the superior numbers and arms of the Grand Army.

And the circle was drawn closer about Cronje. The shells now came over without let, night and day.

On the night of the 26th, Klaas De Jong came down the line from Cronje's quarters to where Uys and the two Niekerks were. He pulled Uys aside.

"Are you for surrender, Jansen?"

"No."

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"Good man. I thought you would say that.... Now listen. Cronje is surrendering in the morning."

"What!"

"Yes. There are some of us who are not surrendering. War is not a game ~~to~~ played to rules. It's a fight for life and our lives are at stake; our future and the freedom is at stake. Well, there is a handful of us who are not surrendering. We are breaking out tonight. Thought you and your brother would like to come along; and perhaps Niekerk and his son. We'll carry on the fight.... "

"My brother's dead."

"Johan dead? God, I'm sorry.... All the more reason for you to be with us, Uys. Are you going to surrender to those who've killed two of your brothers?.... I told you in Pretoria we would go on fighting even if we are defeated, even if it takes us fifty years. We're not beaten. Some of our leaders are too quick to put up their hand. We'll be free yet. Are you with us?"

"I'm with you," Uys said slowly.

There was Karel and Johan to avenge. There was Hettie Van As and there was Blumenfeld and they were both on the other side.... And he had grown used to fighting....

"What about Niekerk?"

"We'll ask them... Niekerk! Koos!"

They came.

"Cronje surrenders in the morning. De Jong and a few others are breaking out tonight."

"Or dying in the attempt," De Jong said.

"I'm going with them," Uys said. "I'm not going to be prisoner to any Englishman. I'm going on fighting. What about you?"

Koos looked at his father and said:

"I'm with you, Oom Uys."

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"Good lad," De Jong said.

"What happens if they take you prisoner?" Niekerk asked.

"They send you to an island called St. Helena," De Jong said.

"Far?"

"Far enough from your home."

"For how long?"

"As long as they like."

"I'm tired of fighting," Niekerk said heavily.

"Better stay then," De Jong said coldly.

"I'd like to break out with you and go home," Niekerk appealed to Uys.

"No," De Jong said.

"Why not?" Uys asked.

"There are many who'd like to do the same. We are breaking out to fight, not to run away. This is not an escape for hands-uppers."

"Please," Uys said.

"Can't be done."

Uys looked at Niekerk, then at Koos.

"All right.... We'll do it ourselves then. Tell me where Koos and I can meet you and we'll break out on our own. Then Niekerk can go home."

"You won't make it."

"That's our affair.... Where do we meet you?"

De Jong sighed.

"All right. He can come. We start now. The others are waiting. Follow me at a distance so that it doesn't look suspicious."

De Jong moved off. When he was some distance down the line, Uys touched Niekerk's arm.

"Now you. Don't forget your gun and ammunition."

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Niekerk moved away.

"Now you, Koos." He waited a while, then followed Koos.

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News of Cronje's surrender stunned the burghers of the two Republics. After a series of brilliant victories everywhere this hit them like a thunderbolt out of the night. The famous Cronje, hero of Majuba, hero of the Jameson, had surrendered. Kimberley was relieved. The arch-enemy, Rhodes, was free again.

Then, simultaneiously, came the news of the relief of Ladysmith. The unending series of victories was over. Though the Boers fought stubbornly, the enemy pushed them back, out of Natal. Now it was Boer guns that were abandoned, Boer supplies that were captured.

The forces of the Grand Army pressed hard everywhere. The venerable old Piet Joubert took the field himself. But there was no holding the British forces.

The Grand Army marched on Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State Republic. President Kruger of the South African Republic and President Steyn of the Free State, went to the front. Their presence inspired the Boers to stubborn resistance. But Bloemfontein fell on March 13. The British flag was hoisted over the capital of the Free State.

The Grand Army rested briefly then moved toward Mafeking and the South African Republic. Here and there the Boers won a hill, captured a column, embushed and destroyed enemy forces, but all this was like spit on the ocean. Nothing stemmed the sweep of Lord Roberts' Grand Army.

On March 27 the Boers sustained another major blow. For some it was the greatest blow of the war. The news swept the country, and it was heavy news. Old Piet Joubert was dead.

Had God turned against His people? Why did He deal so cruelly

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with His people in the hour of their need? My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

The burghers mourned: their wives and children mourned. All th land mourned. And it was hard to tell whether they mourned the death of Piet Joubert because they loved him or whether they mourned because his death was one more blow that showed the Lord had turned His face against His Chosen People. The Boers mourned....

And the enemy, strangely inexplicably to the Boers, also mourned the passing of Piet Joubert. The prisoners in the Pretoria Model Schools sent flowers. And one of the wreaths was of white roses. It had a little card that was signed: Mark Blumenfeld. The card said: Blessed are the pure in heart.

On April 16, Mafeking was relieved.

On May 31, the British Flag was hoisted in Johannesburg.

On May 29, President Kruger had left the capital and moved to the Portuguese border.

Louis Botha rode into Pretoria with a strong force and urged resistance to the end.

On June 5 the British forces entered Pretoria and the Union Jack was hoisted over the Government Buildings.

Shortly after that Paul Kruger crossed into Portuguese territory on his way to spend the rest of his life in exile. To the end, he would not surrender. And of his enemy Rhodes, he said:

"Cecil Rhodes is the man who bore by far the most important part of the disaster that struck the country. In spite of the high eulogiums passed on him by his friends, he was one of the most unscrupulous characters that have ever existed. The jesuitical maxim

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that the end justifies the means formed his own political creed. This man was the curse of Africa."

Born under the British flag, the old man swore he would not die under it. His dream was ended. The land was not free. The enemy, Rhodes, had, for the moment, won. But another generation would come back in another day. He sent his people a stern message to resist the enemy. Then he went to live out his days in sadness, far from the land he loved.

The South African and Free State Republics were annexed to the British Empire. The war was o ver, for by September of 1900 there was no Boer army to oppose the British forces.

But there were guerilla bands all over the land....

They came out of the night, fell on British outposts, killed and destroyed; then they vanished into the night. Groups of farmers on horseback. They attacked small convoys. They damaged railway lines. They blew up trains. They cut telegraph wires. They killed the enemy wherever they could. The war was over, but not the fight. They came out of the night and disappeared into the night. And the enemy never knew where they would strike.

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Uys Jansen leaned forward and held the papers close to the leaping flames. He read aloud:

"It is hereby notified for information that unless the men at present on Commando belonging to the families in the Town and District of Krugersdorp surrender themselves and hand in their arms to the Imperial Authorites, the whole of their property will be confiscated, and their families turned out destitute and homeless."

He looked up.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" De Jong said bitterly. "But read the Ventersburg one."

Again Uys leaned toward the leaping flames and read:

"The town of Ventersburg has been cleared of supplies and partly burnt, and the farms in the vicinity destroyed on acoount of the frequent attacks on the railway line in the neighbourhood. The Boer women and children who are left behind should apply to the Boer commandants for food, who will supply them unless they wish to see them starve. No supplies will be sent from the railway to the town."

Uys cursed softly and made to throw the papers on the fire.

"We want to keep them," De Jong said quickly.

The winter night was cold and the other men in the group all huddled close to the fire. The sky was very far away, and the stars were very remote. The winter of 1901 was a hard one.

The men rode out of the night and pulled up near the fire.

"All right, Koos?" Uys said.

"Yes."

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Koos and his companion dismounted and moved close to the fire, pushing the frozen hands almost into the flames to get the blood flowing again.

"What's news?" De Jong asked.

"De La Rey is giving the enemy a lot of trouble to the south," Koos' companion said. "They say Smuts is doing well near the Free State and Botha is still fighting."

"Lots of farms with white flags up," Koos said.

"Doesn't always mean a thing," Uys said.

"No, but I don't like it," De Jong said.

"And the family?" Uys asked.

"They buried grandma three months ago," Koos said. "The others are well. Elli said to greet you."

"No flag?"

Koos laughed harshly.

"At our farm.... Not on your life!"

"What about the train?" De Jong asked.

"Supply train coming through tonight," Koos' companion said. "They said to tell you armed scouts now travel with the trains."

"As long as they haven't got horses we've nothing to worry about," Uys said.

"If you ask me we'd better leave this district for now," a man said, carrying two mugs of coffee for Uys and his companion. "They know we are here and they'll lay a trap for us."

"They may send a mounted force to guard or follow a train," another said.

"I think they're right, Klaas," Uys said.

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"All right," De Jong said. "Tonight's our last train attack for the time being. After it we'll move east and join up with the Commandos between the Transvaal and Free State borders. Agreed?"

There were grunts of agreement.

"Why don't we just blow up this train instead of holding it up?" one of the others wanted to know.

"Supplies are running out," Uys said. "Besides, we need more ammunition."

De Jong got up and stretched himself.

"About time we started."

They put out the fire carefully. This was an ideal hiding place. From a distance it was just a low, jagged hill that could hide nothing. Only when a person was actually on its top could the level-bottomed, narrow valley be seen: a valley on top of a narrow hill. Just what they had wanted. Often, enemy troops hunting them, had circled the hill and gone away while they and their animals were in the valley on its top. An ideal place, and they might need it again. They stored away the tings they would not take with them. They had dug holes underneath rocks for this purpose. Often, they had captured large amounts of anemy money. All this they stored. When the hollow looked as though no man had ever walked there, they left it, rode down the hillside and on toward the railway line.

The cold dark night gave cover to the fifteen men. The distant stars were supremely indifferent. Not that the men cared about the stars; they had ridden out too often on nights like this to care. They knew their work and they knew the land. They did not even need the cold light of the stars or moon.

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They chose a sharp turning where the railway line cut through high rocks. A man rode down the line and took up his place where the turn began. Others rolled a huge boulder across the tracks. Two kept watch over the horses; they kept the animals in such a manner that there would be no confusion should there be need to get away quickly. Each man knew his task. Not an order had been given. When all was ready, they waited, relaxed, smoking pipes or handmade cigarettes, cupped so as to hide the glow.

Time moved.

"It's late tonight," De Jong said to Uys who was beside him.

"May have been held up along the line," Uys said and smiled.

De Jong laughed softly.

"Would be funny if some other group's already taken the supplies!

"Ought to have an arrangement by which certain trains belong to certain groups."

"Good idea.... Say, Uys, you don't think it may mean something else?"

"There's always the chance of a trap."

"You're right."

"They're coming," Uys said.

The man at the bend rode fast down the line.

"It's coming, but as slowly as hell."

"Ready men," De Jong said.

The train moved slowly round the bend, its powerful headlight cutting through the darkness. The light picked out the huge boulder on the tracks. The train whistled shrilly and sharply.

"That light!" Uys said sharply. "That whistle! It's a trap! Better get out of here!"

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"Let's go!" De Jong called.

At the same time, the man in charge of the horses shouted:

"Rednecks!"

The men scrambled up the rocks and dashed for their horses. To their right, a British mounted force bore down on them, was almost on top of them.

The silence of the dark night was torn by the rattle of rifles; the dark of the night was punctuated by the flashing glow from rifle barrels. Uys and his companions fired as they ran. Uys thought: they really caught us this time. And they seemed to be in force. Just ahead of him someone groaned and fell. He fired twice and kept on moving while the whining noise of bullets sang all about him.

Just before he reached his horse, what felt like two heavy weights tore into his stomach. Got it! The force of the bullets made him stagger. He righted himself and mounted. Those already mounted, kept the enemy back with a rain of fire while the rest mounted. Four to six men lay dead.

They rode across the dark night. And the enemy was close behind them. But they had the advantage. They knew the land. A man beside Uys suddenly threw up his hands and fell off his horse. Then they were out of range of the enemy's fore. Koos moved into position beside Uys.

"All right?"

"Got me in the guts."

"Bad?"

"Don't feel anything yet."

"I'll tell De Jong."

He urged his horse on till he rode beside De Jong.

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"Oom Uys is hit."

"Where?"

"Stomach."

"God! That's bad."

"Will he die?"

"If his stomach's torn, yes." After a while he said: "If we can gain enough ground we may stop for a while and see."

But the enemy kept close behind them all through the night. Nothing they did could shake him off. Every attempt had failed and now all they could do was to put space between him and them.

But Uys was in a bad state. The shock had worn off and the wound had come to life and he was doubled with pain. De Jong and Koos rode on either side and kept him in his saddle.

Toward dawn De Jong said:

"Can't go on like this much longer."

"Can't we leave him at a farm?"

"They're too close."

They moved on a few more miles while the first dawn streaks crept across the land. Uys had become a helpless deadweight now.

"Stop!" De Jong shouted.

They came to a halt. Koos and De Jong lifted Uys from his horse and propped him against a giant antheap.

"Can't go on like this," De Jong said. "With daylight our chances of getting caught will be worse. With Jansen on our hands we're all bound to be caught and killed."

He knelt, undid Uys's clothes and examined the wound.

"Well?" Koos asked.

"No use," De Jong said. "If there were a chance that he would

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live, I would have said, let's take our chances and keep him with us. He's one of us. But there's nothing anyone can do."

"Nothing.... " Koos said.

"Nothing at all. It's only a matter of time."

"Can't stay here," someone said.

Far behind, but not far enough to be safe, the enemy could be seen approaching.

"We must leave him," De Jong said with decision.

Here?" Koos asked.

"Don't think I like it."

Uys raised pain-racked eyes to De Jong's face.

"Don't leave me," he whispered hoarsely.

"We must, Uys. You understand that. The fight is the important thing. We must get away in roder to fight again. We won't if we take you with us."

"Don't leave me," Uys begged, but even as he did so he knew it was useless. For a moment, the pain eased up. He looked at De Jong with seeing eyes. So that was Klaas De Jong. I have been in a dream, he thought.

"We must go," someone said.

"They will take care of you," De Jong said! "Come, Koos. Goodbye, Uys. I'm sorry.... "

"My rifle," he whispered as the pains came back.

Koos put the rifle on his lap and he listened as they rode away. A lonely way to die. But somehow, he couldn't feel sorry for himself. Mark Blumenfeld was there to stop him feeling sorry for himself. He knew now how Blumenfeld had felt on that night he had caught him

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with the copy of the letter to Jameson; he knew now why Blumenfeld hadn't spoken to him at Pretoria prison. So easy to understand really once it happened to you. You knew then. Is there any other way of knowing? Can one understand and know without a thing happening to you?... God it hurt.... Perhaps that's where it all begins. Wish I could talk to Mark now. I wouldn't say much. Just three words and he would understand. Yes, he could understand without things happening to him. Great difference that.... God how it hurt....

The enemy was drawing near. They would soon be in range.

.... Didn't plan it to be like this. Why? Just wanted to have things and be happy.... Meaning of life.

Suddenly, startlingly, it hit him that much of what had happened was because of the kaffirs. Why? Why did he think and feel like that? Couldn't say. But he was sure he was right. All his lost dreams were tied up with them, with the kaffirs. He was sure of that. Dead sure. But how to explain it.... Didn't mean it to end like this.... Never been really fair on Katryn.... Mark Blumenfeld would know what he meant. The kaffirs.... The cold wind of morning chilled his face and hands.

He raised his rifle and took deliberate aim. There was a whining noise, then he toppled over and lay still.

And the words he had sought in the last moments of life, were all about him in the air.

<u>It is not possible to violate the humanity of another without, in the end, violating your own.</u>

The chilly dawn wind carries the words to the ends of the

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