

if it was the chief wage-earner who became ill. Then one family helped another, and only in this way did they manage to survive. The women went to work, or else they took in washing, even the children must work to try and bring in more money. If the children were lucky enough to go to school, how the families scraped and saved every halfpenny to buy books for them. And everyone was in debt, deeply in debt, so that for the rest of their lives they would never be clear of debt with enough money in their pockets.

It's a long way to town, Elias told her, but why do we live such a long way from our place of work? You know why, because we are not allowed to live anywhere else. Can we build a house in Berea, or Yeoville, in Orange Grove, or Parktown? Will they give us a piece of land close to the factories and offices and houses? No. We, the black people, must be separated, must go and live far away, so that the fares make a heavy drain on our wages.

Look, he said. This is what I earn. This is what I pay in rent. This is ~~want~~ what I must pay for taxes. These things come first, because if they don't, I shall be in jail. Then I must get to town to work. This is what I pay in bus fares. I must pay this fare, because I must get to town. This is ~~what~~ what I have ~~left~~ left. Now this extra ~~ld~~ each way, 2d a day, one shilling a week, four shillings every month - this is taking food out of the mouths of children. We will not pay it. We will not pay one penny more. And every single person has decided that. Now, if one gets on the bus, why should another one not do the same? This man is ill, this woman is old and too fat to walk. So let them ride. Now I am tired, so I will ride too. And then we shall all be on the buses and all paying the higher fare. That's what gives us the strength to walk. And you too, Elizabeth, must walk with us.

Then Elizabeth was silent. The laughter and fun had gone out of her. Not only because she was tired, and her feet moved one in front of the other mechanically, but because Elias had made her thoughtful. When they parted ways near town, she had arranged to meet him again the following week, so that he could report on his progress in finding Sampson.

And they did find Sampson. But now Elizabeth's life had taken a new turn, and become entangled with new people. It seemed later as though <sup>her</sup> life and fate were linked in some way with the people of Alexandra and their struggle against high bus fares. From that struggle and her links with it, Elizabeth's future evolved in a particular way, and her discovery of the past as well.

But that was later on, after another year had gone by, and the Alexandra bus struggle had ~~broken~~ broken out again.

CHAPTER SLA.

One day Ruth was spending her lunch hour looking for a small shop where she had been told it was still possible to get artists' materials that she needed. They were very scarce because of the war. The shop was somewhere in Newtown, a place where there are many factories.

A man passed her, and she glanced at him, without noticing him properly. A coloured workman in dark blue overalls, and an old cap. Just for a moment his eyes met hers, and then he looked away and walked on.

As soon as he had passed her, she realised with some surprise that he was the violinist, Anderson, and on an impulse she turned and walked quickly after him. She thought that she did not want him to believe she had deliberately refused to recognise him in the street.

She caught him up and said, "Hello! I didn't recognise you at first when I passed you just now."

He looked at her.

She said, "Don't you remember me? I was at that concert a couple of months ago - Thelma Penn introduced us afterwards."

"I do remember you," he said. "I'm sorry. I wasn't really sure whether to greet you or not."

"Why not?"

"It's embarrassing for people sometimes," he replied.

"I don't know why it should be. What are you doing in this part of town?"

"I work near here. Over there - Scribnow's Hides and Skins."

"You work there - at that factory?"

"Yes. Why do you find that so surprising?"

"I thought you earned your living with your violin."

Andy laughed. "I'd soon starge that way," he said. "Who'd want to listen to a coloured violinist except at a non-European charity concert?"

"I'd like an opportunity of hearing you again - anywhere. I'm sure anybody who has heard you play would want to hear you again."

"Well, that's nice of you to say so, but unfortunately it's very difficult for non-European artists to earn a living with their talents. I know a woman singer - an African - who has a voice with the most remarkable range I've ever heard. She's a garment worker. I don't think more than a couple of hundred people have ever heard her sing - outside her church ~~and~~ choir."

At that moment a hotter began to blow.

"I'm sorry," Andy said. "You'll have to excuse me. I must get back to work, or else I'll be late."

Ruth was not teaching at the school that night, but she had been doing a portrait of one of the pupils, an older man with greying hair, and she was going to the school to finish the painting. Stanley was teaching, and she sat behind him while the pupils began settling down, waiting for her model to arrive.

Stanley sat at a small wooden table, his tie pulled loose, and enrolled a new pupil to the class.

"Have you been to school?" he asked.

"Yes, Baas. I was up to Standard 2."

"You mustn't call me 'Baas'" Stanley said, "I'm not your boss. You can call me Stanley."

"Yes, sir."

"What is your name?"

"Johannes Mogomatsi."

"How do you spell it, Johannes?"

The man fumbled in his coat pocket, and took out a batch of papers. He laid them on the table and took his pass from among them. He handed the pass to Stanley.

Among the papers on the table was the photograph of a girl. Ruth looked at it. "Is that your wife?" she asked.

"I am not married," said Johannes.

Stanley said, "That's a good-looking girl. Is she your ~~mother's~~ girl?"

Johannes said, "This is a woman I do not know. Not my wife, not my friend, not my sister." He picked the photograph up and handed it to Stanley, and then gave it to Ruth. The girl in the picture stood with hands clasped in front of her, a little smile on her face. The picture was taken against a backdrop with a chair and table painted on it, and a vase of flowers on the table. Johannes waited while they looked at the picture. When Ruth handed it back to him, he said:

"If you should ever meet this girl, then you must bring her to me. I have a message for her, but I do not know her. All I know is her name - Elizabeth. I do not know where to find her."

He put the picture and his papers back in his pocket, and the class began.

When school was over that night Ruth went to the house with Stanley. She particularly wanted to see Thelma.

She told Thelma about her encounter with Andy, and then she said:

"He has a most interesting face. You know, I'd like to paint him."

"Why, I think that's a wonderful idea," said Thelma. "He's not only a good subject for painting, he's an important one, too. Why don't you do it?"

Ruth said, "Well, I thought perhaps you could advise me. I don't know where to get hold of him, and I'm not sure that I'd like to ask him. He might not want to be painted."

"Oh, I don't see why not. And as for contacting him - I'll do that for you. I'll tell you what, I'll arrange for him to come here one night, and you can discuss it with him."

Two or three weeks later, Ruth met Anderson in Thelma's house. "I've told Andy you want to paint him," Thelma said. "Now you two go ahead and make the arrangements."

Ruth said, "I suppose you think this is a bit of a cheek on my part."

"I don't think so at all," Andy replied. "I'm flattered you should think I'm interesting enough to paint. And Thelma tells me you've been doing some very fine work!"

"If you don't mind sitting for me ... I'd be awfully glad. And it shouldn't

take very long. Where can you sit for me? Could you come to my room?"

Andy looked at her for a moment without replying. Then he said, "Do you live by yourself?"

"Yes."

"Then if you don't mind my saying so, I think it would be better for me not to come to your room. It might make it unpleasant for you - people are bound to see me going there." He had blushed, and was obviously embarrassed. "Don't be offended," he went on. "After all, you're a European, and I'm coloured."

"I'm sorry," Ruth said, "I hadn't thought of it that way."

Thelma said, "Couldn't Ruth go to your house, Andy?"

"If it's not too much trouble for her," he replied. "I live with my mother," he added for Ruth's benefit.

It was arranged that Ruth would go to Andy's house on the following Monday evening.

The house was one of a row joined together for the length of the block. Two stone steps and a narrow verandah separated the front door from the street. As Ruth approached the house, she heard the sound of his violin. Andy was practising. She waited for a little while before knocking on the door.

He took her into a small front room crowded with furniture. His music stand was there, the music open on it.

"I'm sorry if I've interrupted your practising," she said.

"That's all right." He laid the violin down. "How do you want me to sit?"

"I'd like to paint you with the violin tucked under your chin - playing."

He took the instrument up again. "Like this?"

"Just like that. You can go on practising if you like while I start sketching."

"I will," Andy said. "In a minute. I'll try and forget you're here at all."

"That would be best. Do you practice every night?"

"Every single night. I've been doing it for years."

"How did it start?" Ruth asked him. "How did you first get a violin?"

He replied, "There was an old violin here, in this house. This is where I was born. It was my grandmother's, and it had belonged to her father. She didn't play. Not this one. It wasn't a very good one."

"Who taught you?"

"I started playing myself, when I was very young. Five or six, I don't remember exactly when. I taught myself at first."

"That must have been very difficult. I shouldn't think a violin is an easy instrument to learn by yourself."

"There was an old man who lived just down the road, on the corner. He couldn't really play much, but he showed me how to hold the instrument properly, what fingers to use on the strings. Then I used to try and try, until I was producing tunes - of a sort."

As he paused, Ruth said, "And then?"

"And then," he said gravely, reliving the past, "I played in a school concert. I was none. There was a school inspector there who heard me. He took me along to a friend of his, a music teacher ~~xxxxxx~~. She gave me lessons free for several years. After a while she said she had taken me as far as she could. She introduced me to Felix Rademeyer - the musician. He has been teaching me ever since then." He paused again.

"It's amazing in a way," Ruth said. "I've always been told that Coloured people have no musical talents. I don't mean to be offensive - but you know how it is. We're brought up with certain ideas about things ... I always thought real musical genius

such as yours ran in families."

My grandmother told me that her father was very musical. She was a European. Her husband, my grandfather, was an African. Then I think this business of musical talent - it's like other talents - it's so much a matter of opportunity. You don't know how many potential musical geniuses there are among the non-European people. They have no chance of developing. Except singing, in which Africans excel. Their voices may be untrained, from a professional point of view, but each one of them is born with the instrument in his throat, as it were, ready for use. Not like pianos - and violins, which they don't have in their homes, of course."

Ruth said, "Have you ever thought of going overseas?"

"I have," he replied, "Felix Rademeyer wants me to go. He feels he has done all he can for me. I hope I will be able to go after the war. I'd like to study in Europe for a few years. I'm saving for it now. Then I'd come back again."

"Come back? What for?"

"With overseas tuition and experience, I think I'd be really good. You see, I'm not modest about myself. I cherish the hope I'd be good enough to be appreciated and listened to here in South Africa, even though I am Coloured."

"But what would be the point of that? You'd be accepted overseas, on the value of your playing, not the colour of your skin. If I were you I wouldn't want to return."

"Perhaps it's hard for someone like you to understand. Don't think I'm being patronising." He smiled. "You know, you and I, ever since we met, have been apologising to each other. But this is our country. For all of us who aren't white, it's our land, we have to find a way of living in it. There's no escape for millions of non-whites. Those of us who have special talents, and special education, we feel it's our duty to stay among our own people, not to run away; and to try and change things so that it becomes worthwhile for all of us who live here."

They were quiet for a little while. Then Ruth said, "You're right, of course. But what amazes me about all the non-Europeans I've met since I've been teaching at the school, the ones I've had an opportunity of speaking to, is that their so un-bitter, if you understand what I mean. I think if I were a non-European, I'd loathe and despise all whites so much that I couldn't even bear to be polite to them. And I'd resent them, and everything about them. And want to see them destroyed."

"Yet you - Professor Motsuenyane - the others - you visualise a better country, in which we - the whites - would have our part in the scheme of things, too."

Andy said, "Don't think that there isn't a tremendous amount of bitterness among the non-European people. How could it be otherwise? But you see - take my own case, for instance. I owe everything to the Europeans who helped me - the school inspector, the music teacher - she wasn't a radical by any means, just anxious to encourage real talent, and all those years she didn't take a penny from me. And Felix Rademeyer. They're isolated examples, of course, but the very fact of their existence helps us non-Europeans to understand that the real solution to our problems is not simply hatred of the whites, destruction of the whites, but hatred and destruction of a system built on colour privilege. It's a different thing. I explain things badly. But today I see non-Europeans as victims of this state of affairs too. Imprisoned by the prejudices they're taught to believe in from the time they're babies."

"It's hard to break from them," Ruth said. "All the people I've met who have a more enlightened attitude on the colour question have special circumstances and backgrounds that made them that way - a teacher who opened up a path; a family with liberal traditions, like Thelma and Charles'. Or they weren't born here. In my case it was my father."

I didn't realise it - I don't think he even did himself. It wasn't that he preached racial equality. It was just that he had a certain attitude towards all humanity, he planted seeds in me that made it easy for me to understand what the colour bar really is, once I came in contact with people who were largely free of these race prejudices."

When she laid her pencil down and said "I think that's enough for tonight," Andy said shyly, "Do you mind if I look?"

"Please do. But you're not allowed to make any comments at this stage."

"How long is it going to take you?"

"Oh, I don't know. Four or five sittings should be enough - if you don't mind, that is. I can finish it off myself, in my room."

She came the following Monday, and the one after that. Andy practised sometimes while she was painting, and afterward he made tea, and they sat and talked for a while. Then he walked down with her as far as the tram.

"It's taking longer than I thought," she said after the third week. "I hope you don't mind."

He did not reply. She was wiping her brushes and putting them away. He stood close to her, looking at the painting. "If it's a nuisance for you, I'll finish it at home." In turning to look up at him, her shoulder brushed against him lightly. He did not move. After a few moments he said, "I'd rather you finished it here."

Because she felt herself blushing for no reason at all, she looked down again and went on putting her things away.

The weeks revolved around Monday evenings. All the rest of the week was waiting for Mondays. Each time when she had finished painting, and they were having tea, they would speak of a tremendous number of different things - music, art, and inevitably the colour question. Usually when they discussed this topic it was fairly impersonal, but one night Andy began to tell her about a friend of his, a Coloured man, who had married a white girl.

"He's very light," he explained, "so he can pass as a European if he wants to. That means they can go around together to all sorts of places - cinemas, and so on. But now she's expecting a baby - I can't help thinking what a terrible thing it is for her."

"Why terrible?"

"Well - for the children. Her children could have had all the opportunities - but now to bring children into the world - this portion of the world - who'll be marked from birth, denied opportunities, go to second-rate schools, over-crowded Coloured schools, always be second-class citizens ..."

"She must be ~~prepared~~ prepared for that."

"In theory, yes. But it's not so easy when you actually have to face it. And for him - it must be torture for him."

"If they love each other -" she began.

"There's no doubt about that. But can love survive always under such circumstances?"

Ruth said, "What you're saying now is against everything you've always said in the past. You don't believe in the colour-bar. You want to see it broken down. Yet you speak against two individuals who have risen above it."

"I've never said inter-marriage is the solution. I think one day, when the colour bar is done away with, it won't be important who gets married to who. But today it is important. It's most tremendously difficult."

She had an almost unbearable desire to touch him, to put her hand over his, to move close to him, to break down the barrier between them. She said at last, in a low voice,

"I can understand your friend. The white girl. If she loves him - what does it matter? I'd be prepared to do the same."

"Would you, Ruth?" he said. "Would you?"

They were sitting opposite each other, at a table. The silence grew between them. He rose at last. "I'll see you down to the tram," he said.

He picked up her coat which lay over a chair, and held it out for her.

"Just to the corner," Ruth said. "I don't think you should come right down to the main road."

"It's not really a good district for you to go walking around by yourself," said Andy.

"But it's all right from the corner. It's lighter along there, and there are always plenty of people a round. You know it's not because I don't want to be seen with you. I'd go anywhere with you. But a few nights ago when you walked up to the tram with me, there was a crowd of European youths hanging around at the shops. They were talking about us. I didn't like the way they looked at you, after you left me. I'm afraid you'll get assaulted one of these nights."

"I can look after myself," he said.

"Anyway, I should be finished by next week. Then I won't come round to worry you any more."

He did not look at her. "Will you be pleased, then?" he said eventually.

"Pleased? I've stretched this out as long as I could, because I liked coming so much. You know that, don't you?"

"I think I do," he replied. "Perhaps when the painting is finished we can still meet - sometimes."

They walked to the corner of the dark, narrow street.

"Goodbye," she said, when they reached the corner, "I'll be all right from here."

"You're sure? I'll see you next Monday, then."

"Yes, Monday." Then she added quickly, "Take care of yourself, Andy, please do. I don't mean it just for myself."

"Don't worry about me, Ruth," said Andy.

She walked away, a feeling of tremendous happiness like a warm, living thing within her.

When the tram came, she went upstairs. She wanted to sit alone, high above the street, looking out on the dark, on the lights flashing by.

The tram rattled and swayed towards town. She became aware of two people who were sitting across the aisle, a little behind her, talking in such loud voices that they intruded on her thoughts. They spoke Afrikaans, but not pure Afrikaans. It was indiscriminately ~~mixed~~ sprinkled with English words and phrases, with slang in both languages - a harsh and unpleasing bastardisation of two languages, spoken with a coarse, Cape accent.

Coloureds. She could see them if she turned her face slightly. ~~There~~ A woman with sallow, colourless skin, thick lips, crinkly hair. A man with even, European features, but dark-skinned, pock-marked. Both of them small, slightly built; shabbily dressed; loud-voiced; Coloureds.

They were all like that. Somehow the Coloureds seem to inherit the least pleasant characteristics of both races; They were nearly all so unprepossessing in appearance. The children were ugly. African babies were beautiful, with finely-shaped heads, satin-brown skins, big eyes, round cheeks; but Coloured babies were pale and sallow, their faces a distorted copy of black and white.

Andy was an exception, ~~of~~ of course. Different in appearance to most of them, taller, better looking, with finer bearing; different in education and cultural development. He stood out among his neighbours. How he could bear to live there, in that crowded, dirty slum, in that mean, unpleasant street, that ugly, ~~cramped~~ cramped house. He did not seem to mind. Of course, he'd been born there, and lived there all his life. But his nature was so much finer, surely it revolted against his surroundings ....

And if it did? Where ~~xxx~~ else could he live? Not in the spacious white suburbs to which she was going now. Not in a flat in one of the modern blocks in town. Not in Hillbrow, Berea, Parktown, Houghton, Observatory, Yeoville, Forest Town, Orange Grove ... He didn't have much choice, did he? No matter how great his talent, how fine his education, how advanced his outlook, it would always be Vrededorp for him. ~~and~~

And for his wife. And for his children.

Theirs, also, to share with him, the insults and humiliations that were the daily lot of Coloured people. Not only the segregation of the colour bar - not only the physical limits set upon where they could live, - but all the other things the colour bar brought. Their position on trams and buses; the rudeness and swearing of bus conductors, the filthy words and assaults of the young white hoodligans; ~~on the buses and trams~~; the compartments they had to travel in if they ever went anywhere by train; being barred from all hotels, from decent cinemas, from theatres; taking second place when waiting to be served in shops, waiting until all the white passengers had travelled before using lifts in buildings; not being able to go into cafes or restaurants. Second class citizens, with second-class schools for their children.

The tram arrived at the terminus in town, and Ruth alighted from it. She began to walk in the direction of her room. She did not want to take another tram there. It was across the centre of town, then out passed the Park ... it was a pleasant walk, not too far. And she needed time to think. Her mind was whirling.

She stopped at a street waiting for the traffic lights to change from red to green. And suddenly there fell upon the city one of those strange pauses that come sometimes in the busiest time of any busy city. A moment when all at once the streets were free of traffic, no cars moving past, no hooting, no rattle of trams; a sudden and almost complete quiet, when even the people seemed to have become immobilised, as though under a spell, as though someone had cried 'Stop!' and at once everything stayed where it was, but stayed still, still.

In that moment she heard the beating of her heart, heavily, steadily, pounding



through her whole body. And while she stood there, listening to the drum, drum, drum of her own heart, she seemed to be poised over a great dark pit, almost stepping into that void. And holding back.

And down the street, in the distance, she heard a new sound, the soft ting-tong-tang of a guitar, lightly struck by someone strolling along, strolling and humming to his own music, 'Xxxxxxxx Daar Kom die Alabama, Die Alabama die kom oor die see...' The heart-beats grew until they seemed about to burst; Cape Town, the dead baby, the Coons. The room beside the factory wall, the flies, the sordid house. Chris ... and Andy. The spell broke. A tram came rattling round the corner. The street was once more full of traffic. The city awoke from its moment of dreaming, its brief solitude and quiet. And Ruth woke too, as though she also had been in a dream. The heart-beats subsided. The sound of the guitar was lost in street noises. She began to move again, to breathe easily.

She knew what she had been doing. She knew what she had to do now. This would be the last night she spent alone with Andy. It was not right to play around with such things. It was not that she had made up her mind. It was that there had never really been any choice. Not the way things were. Not the way things are in South Africa today. There was no end to a relationship such as ~~theirs~~ theirs except misery and degradation for both of them. Two people could make the adjustments necessary for successful marriage - any two people, almost anywhere - but not under the conditions that South Africa would impose on them. Better to part now, with regret, than later, after having harmed each other beyond healing.

106

CHAPTER SEVEN.

Andy had stood at the corner for a ~~xxxxxx~~ moment watching Ruth go, seeing her walk over to the main road where she would catch her tram.

Two others were watching her as well, as they had watched the week before, seeing them come out of the house together, following them in the shadows, watching them part. Two young men, white men, watching with cigarettes drooping from the corners of their mouths, shoulders slouched, hands in pockets.

They saw Ruth and Andy standing talking for a minute on the corner. They saw Ruth turn and walk swiftly away. And they thought: a girl like that - a white girl - how can she walk with him talk with him, a dirty, filthy coon; seeing her long, slim, ~~legs~~ legs, her trim waist above rounded hips, the sway of those hips as she walked, the flow of dark hair on her shoulders; thinking: a girl like that, with lovely legs, a white ~~skin~~ skin, beautiful white flesh; picturing the other, that other, touching her body, feeling her soft breasts with his black hand, her hips, her legs; seeing in their minds' eye the two of them ~~pressed~~ together - what they must have been doing in that house; his dark body pressed ~~over~~ over her white one, violating her - a great dark ~~ape~~ ape, a dirty kaffir baboon defiling her ... feeling the blood surge in their bodies, sharp desire tearing at them, angry desire; that she could lie there with him, with that black bastard - (would you like your sister to ~~xxx~~ marry a kaffir?) - all their frustrations, their unfulfilled needs, ~~pressing~~ <sup>mounting</sup> up in their bodies as they pictured them ... their ~~breasts~~ <sup>chests</sup> heaving as the breath swelled in their lungs, rising and falling, swiftly, faster, faster as their passion rose in them, their bitter, twisted, thwarted passion, their secret, smouldering, unfulfilled passion ....

They followed Andy back along the street. Too light here. Just over that road, round that corner ...

They caught up with Andy, passed him on either side, looking into his face as they passed. This is him, they said, this is the kaffir who walks the streets with white women. They glanced up and down the empty street, they ~~sized~~ <sup>held</sup> hold of Andy, they pinned his arms to his sides, one holding him like that while the other one drew back and hit Andy, hit him full in the face, hit with hard-clenched fist, with bitter hate, hit his mouth, feeling the teeth strike and give before grazed knuckles, hit his nose, hit his eyes, violating him as he violated that white girl, striking blow, striking again, again (would you like your sister to marry a kaffir - would you like your sister to marry a kaffir?)

And when he fell ~~to~~ to the ground, breathing as though their lungs would burst, a red haze before their eyes, kicking and kicking at that beastly form, that putrid, rotten

muck of a creature, that foul, filthy black baboon, that black ape who dared to desecrate a white girl, the purity of white women.

Someone came up, screaming shrilly and pushing in front of them. They turned and struck her, pushing her out of the way, and went back to finish their work, kicking the creature lying on the ground, kicking it between the legs, kicking with strong sure kicks so that never again would he have desire for a white girl ....

And the spasm passed, the blood receded from their heads, the world swam into focus again, passion spent, nothing left now but disgust, so that they turned only to spit in the face of the man lying there before they hurried away.

EIGHT  
CHAPTER ~~SIX~~.

Every year when the fruit was ripe, Thelma told the houseboy to take the ladder and strip the trees. She selected the best fruit for bottling and making jam, and the children ate a lot. But there was always more than she could possibly use.

The apricot and plum trees, in particular, were amazingly prolific. The ripe fruit fell from the trees and rotted in the grass. The birds squabbled noisily in the fig trees and pecked the yellow-green figs at the tops of the trees until all the sweet red ripeness was exposed. And enormous black and yellow beetles with whirring wings sounding like miniature aeroplanes attacked the peaches. So the surplus fruit was loaded into baskets and Thelma took it to a children's home in one of the native townships.

It was better than letting the fruit go to waste. And it was appreciated tremendously by the children, and by the staff of the home who expected her each year with her load of fruit. Why, then, should she feel that it was an unpleasant task?

This year there seemed to be more fruit than ever before. She walked around the garden thinking how beautiful the trees looked with their load of golden apricots and dark red plums. Later on the grapes would be ripe, the little sweet black grapes that grew best in the Transvaal, that tasted as though they were perfumed and were called

Catawbas. They made wonderful grape jelly.

And now it was as if, with the ripening of the fruit, came her time of decision. The fruit harvest, its picking, taking it to the children's homes - they were part of a life cycle, her life with Phillip. They symbolised acceptance - not contentment, but resignation. Marriage to Phillip. A pattern of living. Not change of the seasons, for here on the highveld there really was no Spring or Autumn, only Summer and Winter. The turning of the years, the years' slow revolutions from long bright summer to short bright winter. Her night school, her war work and the clinic had carried her over these four years of war. Now the war was well on its way to being won.

It seemed to Thelma that if she picked the fruit and took it away, that would be the sign of her acceptance of her life, her resignation to her husband. Either that - or she would tell Phillip that she wanted a divorce.

She was not the kind of person who can hold things within her, silently, and never talk them over with others. She had kept this bottled up too long; once her older brother had been her confidant. He was now thousands of miles away, a prisoner of war somewhere in Germany. So she turned to her younger brother, Charles.

Charles came to dinner, and after dinner Phillip hurried out to a Council meeting.

Thelma said, "Phillip's in love with his municipal affairs the way you were once in love with the theatre - remember?"

"Yes," said Charles, "but it grew stale on me. The theatre was my escape from my job. After war came, it didn't seem important any more - at least, not as important as other things." He laughed. "Such as the important things I'm doing now," he went on, "Parading round the streets at night with the Civic Guard whose sole function seems to be to catch as many Africans without passes as they can."

Thelma said abruptly, "Charles, I want to divorce Phillip."

He did not show surprise. He just said, "Have you told him?"

"Not yet. I think I only really made up my mind today. But I've been thinking of it for months and months. Ever since a day last March ..."

When she did not go on, Charles said, "What happened last March?"

Then she began to tell him.

"I've changed - or he has changed - or both of us. Both of us, that's it. But he's not the man I married, Charles. I don't love him any more. I feel strange to him, antagonistic towards him, almost contemptuous of him. I used to idolise him so much, I thought he was so wonderful in everything he said and did. Now it's different. Maybe I never really fell in love with Phillip, only with the ideas he represented to me. I suppose you can't separate those things. But his ideas have changed. In a way I almost hate him."

Charles asked again, "What happened last March?"

"It was the day I took the children to that War Fête. Remember that tremendous affair - Freedom Week? I promised the kids I'd take them to the fun fair.

"It was a very hot day, exhausting. The kids went on just about everything, and then they wanted to see an exhibition of model planes and trains. I waited for them outside - it was so hot and crowded in the place where they had the models."

It was an intensely hot day at the end of summer. There was no shade, except a small patch of grass outside the hut where the children were looking at the models. The bare earth was hard and dusty; just in this one place there was a patch of grass. Thelma sat on it with a sigh of relief.

Next to her, also sitting on the grass, was a young woman with her baby. Thelma noticed that they were both excessively overdressed in spite of the heat; the baby in a silk knitted dress, petticoats, a bonnet with ribbons, booties; the young mother wearing high-heeled shoes, a long-sleeved dress, a hat of fussy straw. And as they sat

there, two Indian women approached. One was old, a little grey-haired woman wearing a beautifully embroidered sari. The other was young, tall, good-looking, and her draped sari did not conceal the fact that she was pregnant. The exhaustion of the heat and crowds was clearly marked on her face. She moved slowly towards them and lowered her heavy body on to the patch of grass in the ~~sax~~ shade.

The girl with the baby turned swiftly to her. "Get up! Get up!" she cried. "How dare you sit down next to a white woman!"

Slowly the Indian girl pulled herself to her feet. Without a word the two of them walked away in the hot sun.

The girl turned to Thelma. "The nerve of it!" she said. "Did you see that - those Coolie Marys were going to sit here next to us!"

Thelma stopped speaking and lit a cigarette. Then she said "I was going to answer her. Charles, for weeks, for all these weeks and months since that day last March I've been telling myself that I was going to speak, I would have spoken. But just then the children came running up. The Indian women had gone.

"I would have spoken. Do you know what held me back? It was Phillip. It was the habits Phillip has imposed on me. All his teachings - all these years - and then that vital moment had passed. Then I thought - What's the use of making a scene? I knew I'd never convince that girl with the baby how stupid and cruel and ignorant she had been; there at the Freedom Fair, to help the war for democracy, for making all people free. If I'd spoken quickly, while the Indian women were still there ... but I didn't say a word. Not a word."

She was silent for a while.

"I went to bed early that night," she said after a little. "I couldn't sleep. I lay awake and thought of what I was going to do. That was when I first began to think of divorcing Phillip. I hated him that night, Charles. I thought I couldn't bear to live with him any longer. I hated everything about him - the way he is always so quiet and restrained, the way he ~~sucks~~ at his pipe all evening long, the way he dampens my enthusiasm about everything, his capacity to pour cold water on everything. I even hated his appearance - his eyes - they're so often puffed and red-rimmed - I know, he works hard, he overstrains them - but that doesn't matter. The way his hair is thinning across the top of his head. His little laugh. The way he clears his throat before speaking, as though he's going to make some tremendous, world-shaking announcement. His patience. I hate his patience most of all. He's always good-humoured and tolerant, and terribly reasonable. I wish he wasn't so reasonable. He never loses his temper. Why can't he get ~~hate~~ heated or angry or upset? Why can't he shout at me sometimes? He's always so calm and fair. I wish he would get furious with me sometimes, and yell and swear. I wish he would get terribly excited and say things he didn't mean to say and be sorry for them afterwards. He always makes me seem in the wrong ..."

"But the Indian women?" Charles asked. "Why was it Phillip's fault you didn't speak?"

"Because he's made me like that. I always used to throw myself into anything - any argument, anything I saw which I thought was wrong. Then Phillip used to make me keep quiet. He said I didn't do any good that way - I only antagonised people. He's always hated scenes so much, any public quarrel. I began to get like him, I could see things and keep quiet. It became a habit with me not to speak out, except in our own home."

"And the funny thing is I always thought he was right. I always thought I was wrong for wanting to shout at people. He said all the time, 'Fight the evil at the root.' But

Charles - what's wrong with all of us here that we keep so quiet instead of speaking out? We don't want to be singled out, to seem different, peculiar. We don't mind having liberal views aired within four walls. But we're dead scared of shouting them from the rooftops."

Charles said, "But Thelma, both you and Phillip did quite a lot of roof-top shouting, in your own way. The League - all the pamphlets and stuff you issued, the discussions you organised. Phillip wasn't afraid to air his views."

"He wasn't - once. He is - now. He was always prepared to speak on paper. Now he's so tied up with his beastly Council, he's so matey with van Niekerk and Klopper and Fuller and Ernie Frye and all the rest of them, he's so concerned with bye-laws and regulations .... He's glad the League's finished. It would be embarrassing to him now. He's glad to have so much work at University as an excuse for not doing other things.

"But it isn't only that. This keeping quiet in the face of prejudice and injustice. ...it must have been the war that made me realise it so strongly. The Germans, I mean. I began to think how millions of them could have become acquiescent to the Nazis' crimes. And I thought of millions of people like Phillip, afraid to make a scene in public, letting small wrongs slide by without a word, until they grew bigger and bigger. Millions saying - 'My job, my family, I must consider them.'

"Anyone who keeps quiet when they see something wrong, no matter what, - anyone - they're helping that wrong. That's what I've learned. I helped that girl to send the pregnant Indian woman away in the heat. I helped her with my silence."

After another pause, Charles said, "So you want to divorce him. But what about the children?"

"I've thought of that," Thelma said. "I know they'll suffer - children always do when a home breaks up. But is it better for them to be brought up in a home where there's conflict? They're very sensitive to atmosphere. I'm sure they must have felt it already, all these months, that there's animosity between us. Even if Phillip himself isn't properly aware of it. They'll miss him, of course. Stay with him sometimes if he wants it."

"Thelma," Charles said, "I wasn't thinking about that. What makes you think Phillip will give the children up?"

She was taken aback. "Give them up? Why shouldn't he? It's usual for a mother to have custody of the children, unless she's committed adultery or something like that -"

"Thelma, you're not ignorant of South African law. You know you're a minor in the eyes of the law when you're married. The father is the legal guardian of the children. He has first claim on them. You won't be entitled to them at all."

"But surely he wouldn't - " she began. Then she stopped. That is exactly what he would do. He would be righteous about it, and firm and unyielding. She could picture him, and herself, the home-breaker, the one in the wrong. She would always appear to be in the wrong.

Charles went over to the radio and began turning the knobs, trying to get London so he could hear the news. Thelma sat and watched him for a long time, and then she said, "What should I do?"

"Darling," Charles said, "That's something I can't really tell you. No one can tell you, only yourself. About things like this you have to make your own decision. In any case, it will be your decision in the end, in spite of any advice I might give you, anything I might say. This is all I can offer you: think it over for a while longer. You've nothing to lose by waiting, and maybe everything to gain lose by making a decision now. You can't just throw away all those years you've had together - and

107 III

most of them good years - you've admitted that yourself. Phillip may have his irritating little ways - ~~were~~ we all have, haven't we? But he's reasonable. Can't you discuss things with him any more? Won't that help?"

"Maybe," she whispered. "Maybe that is what I ought to do."

NINE  
CHAPTER NINE.

From the Johannesburg "Star" February 18th, 1943.

DEATH OF MAN  
WOMAN GIVES EVIDENCE OF KICKING.

Two Europeans, Andries Theodore de Vos and Daniel Johannes Cilliers, aged 23 and 25, appeared again before Mr. G.N.A. van Kraayenberg yesterday in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court at a preparatory examination into an allegation of murder arising out of the death of a coloured man, Andrew Anderson, on August 8 last year.

Continuing her evidence from the previous hearing, Selina Goss, a Coloured woman of 5th Street, Vrededorp, stated that shortly before eleven on August 8 she heard the sound of blows outside her house, and looking out of the window, she saw two men striking and kicking another man who was on the ground.

She ran outside and tried to intervene, but one of the men who she identified as de Vos sized her by the arm and flung her against a wall. She then ran up the road to get help.

John Mabile, a native, stated that he was walking towards de la Rey Street in Vrededorp at about quarter to eleven on August 8 when he saw two Europeans following another man. At the corner of 5th Street and 1st Avenue, they caught up with him and passed him on either side. Witness said he heard one of the Europeans say 'This is him. This is the kaffir who walks the streets with white women.' Mabile said he was afraid, and crossed over the street. He stood in the doorway of a house opposite and he saw one of the men seize the man who he recognised later as Andrews. The other European, who Mabile identified as Cilliers, struck Andrews several times in the face. Both de Vos and Cilliers beat Andrews until he fell to the ground, when they started kicking him. A woman came out of a house and shouted at them, but they hit her, and then Cilliers returned to Andrews and kicked him a number of times in the lower portion of the body with great force.

Stephen Sibebelele said that on August 8 at 11 o'clock a woman ran up to him and shouted that a man was being killed. He went with her, and he saw Andrews lying on the ground. He was moaning and trying to get up, but one of the Europeans kicked him several times on the head. The other one jumped on Andrew's arm, and dug his heel into Andrew's hand. Goss then went to a house and banged on the door to wake someone up. The Europeans then left Andrews, one of them spitting in his face. He and Goss and another man picked Andrews up and carried him into a house. He thought Andrews was still alive when they took him in. When the doctor came, he said he was dead.

Dr. L. Harris, assistant district surgeon, who conducted the post mortem examination on Andrews, said that the bladder was ruptured. This could have been caused by a direct blow. The skull was fractured and the body was severely bruised. The bruises were the result of a fairly strong degree of force. A number of ribs were fractured, and the right arm was broken and bones in the right hand were smashed.

Both men were committed for trial. Bail was fixed at £50 each.

TEN  
CHAPTER ~~NINE~~.

Now there was this man, Elias ~~Matham~~ Ntisane. Elizabeth was troubled about him and confused as well. For the first time in years she did not know how to handle a man, and the reason for it was because for the first time in years a man had the power to stir her emotions.

It was because of Elsie that she had met him. He was the brother of Sampson, who was the man who had stolen Elsie's money, and her sister's, and left Elsie with child. It was strange how easily they had found S<sub>a</sub>mpson. Elizabeth wondered if she would have found Bennet so easily, if she had known how to try, years ago. If she had spoken to people, asked about him. She and M<sub>a</sub>ri~~e~~ had gone to the place where he had worked, but they had not spoken to the one man who would have known where Bennet would have gone - his employer, who had his work contract. Then she thought, but would she have wanted to trace him, to bring him to court, as Sampson was being brought to court, to sue him for maintenance of the child? Not that. She would rather not see him again, except for one thing. Except just to ask him why, that was all, just to ask him. To say 'Of what were you afraid? Did you not know me well enough? Could you not have said it's better for us to go our own ways?' To say to him, 'Why, why, why? How could you have been so kind, and then so cruel?'

Sampson was to appear before the Native Commissioner, and undoubtedly Elsie would get some money from him for her child. Probably not the money back that he had stolen, but at least something to help her with the baby while he was still so small.

They had found S<sub>a</sub>mpson with Elias's help. He did not know where Sampson was, but he went from one place to another, asking this one and that one, until he found where Sampson was working. Elias had been on their side all along. He was so different from Sampson, who now denied that the child was his. He admitted, yes, that he had been with Elsie, but he said that there were other men, it was not his child. He denied everything Elsie said.

How different was Elias to this S<sub>a</sub>mpson, who was so hard and full of bravado. Elias was not that type of man, he was a kind man, quiet and strong, - like Bennet. Then he would be like Bennet in other things as well. She would not trust him, like Bennet, and then have him leave her, like Bennet.

Elias said, "But Elizabeth, we will be betrothed, we will be married. I have the money for lobola. I have been saving all my life for a wife. But only now I have met the one I want to marry."

"Now, what a pity!" said Elizabeth, "Because all my life I have been telling myself I will not marry any man, and to this day I do not see any reason why I should change my mind."

Yet Elizabeth did not refuse to see Elias, and strangely, she was happier when she was with him. He took her to meet his relatives. She went to the house of his aunt, Mrs. Dhlamani, the sister of his mother, who lived in Alexandra Township. They were all good to Elizabeth, and greeted her warmly, because they knew she was the one Elias wanted to marry.

They took her in like one of their own. One week when Elizabeth's employers had gone away on holiday, and she had little to do, she stayed in the house of Elias' aunt, and helped her with the washing that she did to earn money for her family, for who could live on the man's wages alone? She went with Mrs. Dhlamani when the washing was delivered and helped her take the big bundles to the blocks of flats in Hillbrow. She was with Elias often, and never once was there anything in his words or manner that she could criticise. He did not try to take her, as so many others had tried. He merely said he



would wait, for he was sure she would marry him one day.

But Elizabeth did not change her mind, not for more than twelve months, when the big thing happened that entered all their loves, and left them all different in one way or another. The big event, that shook all Alexandra Township, and all Johannesburg, and also was the indirect cause of Elizabeth's marriage.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

If Thelma had not been so absorbed in her own problems at that time, she would have seen that something was wrong with Sophie. Sophie moved around the house quietly, hardly speaking at all. Only when she actually snapped at one of the children did Thelma realise that something was wrong. Sophie was never cross with the children. She had infinite patience, infinite love, for all little ones.

Sophie had recently been back to her home in the country. Her father was very old, and frequently thought he was dying, and her brother was very ill, and actually was dying.

Sophie's ~~brother~~<sup>brother</sup> had worked on a farm all his life. He never got paid. He and his family were squatters, who worked for the farmer for six months of the year in ~~return~~ return for the small piece of land on which he lived, the right to the produce of that land. He was a big, strong man, but one day he feel sick. Finally he became so sick that he had to go back to his mother's kraal. He went, and took his wife and three daughters - five, eight, and twelve years old - with him.

When he was lying in his mother's kraal, the farmer came to the kraal and told him that his wife and his eldest daughter must go back to work on the farm for another six months - to make up the balance of the time that he had been unable to work. So they had to go, and left this ~~strong~~ man dying of T.B. with his two little daughters. But the farmer was well within his rights. There was nothing that could be done.

Sophie told Thelma about this, and went home to see what she could do. She arranged for her two little nieces to be cared for by some other relatives, who lived in another part of Natal. She came back to town again, to ~~work~~ Thelma's house.

Every time that Sophie went away, it seemed to Thelma that the whole routine of the household was completely out of gear. When she thought of the millions of women who brought up their families in other countries without any servants or help, she was ashamed of herself, but she had come to rely on Sophie tremendously. Whatever she did or said to the children to try and make them do things around the house for themselves, made not a scrap of difference. They were not used to doing anything - picking up their own toys, keeping their rooms tidy. They were just typical spoiled South African children, Thelma thought.

But when Sophie lost her patience with one of them, Thelma was shaken out of her own absorption with her troubles, and asked Sophie what was the matter.

"Is anything wrong?" she asked.

"It's nothing," Sophie replied.

Thelma said, "Are you still worrying about your brother, Sophie?"

"It's not that."

"What is it, ~~Sophie~~ Sophie?" Thelma asked. ~~"Is it news from home? Are the children all right?"~~ "Is it news from home? Are the children all right?"

"They're all right, Madam."

"Sophie," Thelma said, "Don't speak about it if you don't want to, but sometimes when there's something troubling you, it feels better when you've told someone about it"

**Collection Number: A3299**

**Collection Name: Hilda and Rusty BERNSTEIN Papers, 1931-2006**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* **Historical Papers Research Archive**

*Collection Funder:* **Bernstein family**

*Location:* **Johannesburg**

**©2015**

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of the *Hilda and Rusty Bernstein Papers*, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.