car, one on top of the other, until Ruth cried impatiently, "That's enough, that's enough. I can't possibly drive with so many of you. One or two of you will have to get out." It was true that it was difficult to drive with bodies pressed up against her so that she could barely change gear, and sitting one on top of the other at the back so that she could not see out of the back window, but that did not save her from a pang of remorse when two women climbed silently out of the car and went back to the queue. So that she was feeling in a thoroughly bad temper by the time she drove out on the way to Alexandra.

She passed hundreds of people walking, hundreds on bicycles. Every person who lived in Alexandra and who had a friend who had a bicycle had borrowed it, so that the road was thick with them every evening. Many employers, too, had provided bicycles for their workers.

Right at the Highlands North bus terminus, some miles out of town, she saw a line of cars pulled up along the side of the road. As she drew abreast of them, a traffic officer stepped out into the road and motioned her to stop.

She drew in to the side of the road. Two men, one in the uniform of a traffic officer, and one in an ordinary suit, came up to her. The traffic officer opened a notebook.

"This your car?" he asked.

"No, it belongs to a friend of mine."

"Got your driver's license on you?"

"No. It's at home, I can let you have it. What's the trouble?"

"What's the idea ," the other man asked, "in carrying a carful of natives like this?"

Ruth felt her annoyance and bad temper being directed into a new channel.

"What do you mean, what's the idea?" she asked. "You know these people aren't using the buses. I'm just helping them to get home. You wouldn't like to walk so far, would you?"

"No need to get uncivil," said the plainsclothes man. "It just happens you got no right to take passengers unless you got a license to carry passengers. You can be prosecuted for this."

Ruth said indignantly, "Wha t are you talking about? I'm not taking passengers. I'm not getting paid for this. I've a right to take anyone I want to in this car."

The traffic officer said, "Oh no you haven't, miss. You might think so, but it's not so. What do you want to carry these natives for? You helping them boycott the buses? Why can't they use the buses? They're running all right, aren't they?"

He jerked his head significantly in the direction of one of the Alexandra buses, that was cruising past, empty except for a ticket collector.

Up to that moment, Ruth had hated the task of driving these women home. There were too many of them packed in the car, and they smelled - yes, they gave off an awful smell of stale sweat, unwashed bodies, dirty clothes. The whole car was stinking with it. She had been revolted by them, these black, smelly native women, jabbering away to each other in vernacular.

Now suddenly all her anger and antagonism switched towards these two burly men standing and questioning her right to take the women home. The women were silent, waiting to see what would happen, relying on her to see they didn't get into trouble.

She said impatiently, "I would have thought that even you would know that the fares have gone up, and these people can't afford to pay the new fares."

"Now miss," said the traffic officer, "there's no reason to get rude."

The man in plain clothes said, "They've got no right to take the law into their own hands. Now you people, giving them lifts, you're helping them break the law."

"I can't see," she said, almost weeping with annoyance, "how it's breaking the law

not to get on a bus if you don't want to. And I can't see what law I'm breaking by driving a car with anyone I choose to have in it."

"Have to take your name and address," the man said. "It's breaking the law all right. You'll hear more about this."

After they had taken her name and address, the car number and the name of the owner of the car, they let her go on. By this time she was so furious with them for stopping her and questioning her right to give people lifts to Alexandra, that she went straight back to the bus terminus in town and loaded up again, this time without protest as the women jammed the car to the doors. She went down a side road before getting to Highlands North, in case the men were still there, and she delivered her passengers at Alexandra and went back again to town for yet another car full.

Hours later, tired and hungry, she drove to Thelma's house, where she had arranged to meet Charles so that he could drive her home and take his car.

Thelma said, "It's grand to see you again, Ruth. You must have made several trips. I've just come in myself."

Ruth told her about the men who had stopped her and taken her name and address.

"I know," Thelma said, "Same thing happened to all of us. They're officials of the Road Transportation Board."

"And what are they trying to do?"

" Oh, they just want to intimidate people so that they won't help the strikers. I wouldn't worry about it. I don't think there's anything they can really do to you."

"But what are they doing it for?"

"Just making themselves unpleasant generally. I'm sure they were put up to it by the Government. They actually accused me of being 'disployal to the Europeans' for helping natives. Stupid great oxen."

They had dinner, and Charles came in, bringing the evening paper with him.

"Nobody using the buses, I see," he said. "And people are getting really worried about the whole thing. Look at this: 'The natives are sacrificing their health to establish a principle, said a doctor, and the consequences of their action may be grave. Immediate action of some sort should be taken .. Many of the natives are suffering from heart disease, lung trouble, and other ailments; the women are the chief sufferers.' I wonder when the Council or the Government are going to do something."

Ruth said, "If you're working late tomorrow night, I'll take the car for you again."

"I thought you couldn't make it tomorrow."

"I had something on," Ruth said, "but it's not important. After what happened tonight, I'd rather give people lifts to Alexandra.

CHAPTER THREE.

Mrs. Dhlamani had been walking with thousands of other Alexandra people. She walked four times a week, twice to fetch bundles of dirty washing from Johannesburg, twice to deliver the clean washing back again to its owners. Mondays and Tuesdays she fetched the washing, beginning the wash each day after she had reached her home. Wendesdays and Thursdays she finished the washing and ironed. Fridays and Saturdays she delivered it back to town, and collectdd her money.

The washing was hard work. She had to fetch tins of water from a stream which was some distance from her house, and then heat the water over an open fire in paraffin tins. Then she scrubbed and rubbed over her washtub. In the bright, sharp, sunny air, the

washing dried quickly, but ironing was tiring, a burden that continued late into the night by candlelight. The heavy irons were heated over a fire, and as she ironed in the drab dimness of her room the snow-white sheets, the brightly coloured towels, the shirts and women's fragile and dainty underwear, lace-trimmed and pastel coloured, piled up before her on the table. So many beautiful clothes. When Mrs. Dhlamani had been younger, she had longed to have a nightdress, a frilly, silky garment to wear at night, only for wearing at night. But she had washed and ironed other people's nighgowns thousands of times, and she had never owned one for herself. Now she did not care about that, but she liked to make the clothes look sleek and beautiful under the pressure of her hot, heavy iron.

The bus boycott began on a Wednesday, so for the first two days Mrs. Dhlamani did not have to join the march. But she was up very early on that Wednesday morning, as were thousands of people in Alexandra, those who had to get up early to walk to work, and those who wanted to see what was going on.

It was three o'clock in the morning when the first people started their march to town. Into the dark, open square at Alexandra thundered huge lorries, bumping over the rough roads, their gears grinding, their yellow lights turning into the peoples' homes, waking them up. The lorries were filled with police, and not only that, for the police had even brought armoured cars that waited round the edge of the square, and overhead as it grew light, a military plane turned and flew low over the streets of Alexandra, and swooped forward and up and turned once more.

It might be said that hardly anyone was left sleeping by 3. a.m. Those who had to start walking to town were awake, and the women had been busy making fires to heat water, so that the men could drink a mug of hot water before they left. The men had pushed aside their thin cotton blankets, and were fumbling with their feet for their shoes, those who had shoes, the worn and old shoes, the shoes with cardboard to cover the holes, the shoes split at the sides, cracked along the fronts. At that hour of the morning it is quite cool on the high veld even in midsummer, the high mountain air bearing a slight chill.

The buses were all lined up at the end of the square, row upon row of them, empty buses with drivers and conductors waiting, but no passengers. The police stood in groups near the buses, so that the people laughed and joked as they walked passed them, but kept their distance. The police said they wanted to make sure that no passenger was prevented from boarding a bus if he wished to do so. But that was the strange thing in Alexandra Township that morning, that of all the thousands and thousands of people who went to work in Johannesburg, men and women, young and old, some of whom were ill, some of whom were lame, and most of whom were hungry and malnourished, not one wanted to get on a bus to ride the ten long miles into the city.

After a while a bus did pull out, and it appeared to have passengers in it, and for a moment the people looked at each other with a feeling of anger, until it was seen that the 'passengers' were drivers and conductors from the other buses, sitting scattered among the seats to make the people think that the boycott had already been broken. Then the people began to laugh and to jeer. It needed something more effective than that to sow disunity among them and to weaken their spirit.

There were a few donkey carts that took women passengers, and the native taxies did a roaring trade among the few élite who could have afforded the extra fare, but were not prepared to go against the wishes of the majority of the people, but most of the people walked. Among them were many wash-women with their heavy burdens, plodding along with bowed shoulders, and thousands of people walked with bare feet. It was a

long way to go before starting a days work. The walkers straggled out for miles along the roadside; they could not march together as they had done for nine days a year ago. The night before police officials had come to the meeting which thousands of people attended, and had read a notice banning all processions and gatherings of more than twenty people, as from that day. So they walked singly, or in twos and threes, or in small groups, and all on one side of the road, so that the traffic could pass.

When the walkers began the streets were dark and empty, but the people kept on walking, new people started, so that there was a continuous procession from before dawn until long after the city had awakened. The streets began to fill with normal every day life, as the sun came up and Johannesburg woke to another clear, bright, summer's day. The first of the marchers had reached the city by the time it was light, and the mass of people stretchedthe full ten miles all the way back to Alexandra. When the sun was up, and it became warm, the walkers carried their jackets over their arms, and the empty buses passed by slowly, hopefully. The walkers looked at them and shouted rude things to them.

In the afternoon, the procession started home early with a few walkers here and there, but as it grew later and the homes and shops and offices and factories emptied their workers out onto thestreets, the long march stretched out as it had done in the morning, over the full ten miles, and the marchers continued to tramp home long after it was dark.

The next day, Thursday, the people of Alexandra walked again, and on the third day, Friday, Mrs. Dhlamani took her washing, the beautifully ironed bundles of sheets and towels and tableclothes, and tied them all together in one big bundle, and set off for Johannesburg with the bundle on her head.

She left Alexandra at about eight o'clock in the morning, and she reached the first place she had to go to after eleven. She was exhausted from the long walk, for she was not a young woman, and she was heavy. It was a very hot day, and the washing was a burden for her.

She delivered her washing, but because she had come late, she could not collect her money from one of the places, and she had to wait until after four in the afternoon before she was paid and could start back to Alexandra gain.

After an hour of walking, the black clouds began to gather in the sky. Soon the usual Johannesburg summer storm was on its way. Thunder rumbled in the distance and lightning flashed almost continuously. After a while the storm broke, swiftly and violently. The rain came down with force and power, smashing onto the city, building into raging torrents of water in gutters, sweeping down onto the pavements in walls of water. The rain thundered down, and then it changed to hail, and the hailstones bounded and bounced on the streets. The hail caught large numbers of walkers when they were on the long stretches of road where there was no shelter, between Highlands North and Bramley. Further back there were houses, and many of the Europeans allowed the African walkers to huddle on their porches until the storm was over; and further back still there were shops, with verandahs over the streets. But where Mrs. Dhlamani was walking with many others here were no houses, no shops, no trees. So they went on walking in the sharp, heavy hail, the hailstones drumming down on their bowed heads and huddles shoulders. They were all completely soaked through, cold, beaten and bruised by the heavy hail, but although the Alexandra buses cruised slowly by, pausing near groups of warkers, not one of them hesitated or even glanced at them, but they simply went on walking.

A number of cars driven by Europeans in the rain and hail stopped to take as many passengers as they could, and gave them lifts all the way home to Alexandra. Some cars even went back again, and picked up more people, and took them out to their homes. But Mrs. Dhlamani was not one of the lucky ones that night, and when she finally reached

home she was desperately tired, tired to the point of exhaustion, drenched through, cold and shivering, her bones aching in her body.

She lay in bed all Saturday. The chill of the hail seemed to have seeped into her bones, and with that cold there was a fever that burned her. Her son went up the road and bought her medicine, but it did not seem to help.

On Sunday afternoon Elias brought Elizabeth to visit her. By then the cold and fever had gathered on her chest, and she could barely talk. Elizabeth sat by the bed, bathed her forehead, brought her water, and then found a few vegetables to make some soup.

"What I am troubled about," Mrs. Dhlamani whispered to her hoarsely, "is that I shall not have enough strength to walk tomorrow. If I could arrange to go on a cart ..."

Elizabeth said, "You must not get up tomorrow. You will not be able to walk. Even if you could go on a cart, you are not well enough to do the washing."

"I must go," said Mrs. Dhlamani. "I must get the washing. What will I do without money? Who will buy food for the child?" The child was her daughter's son, a baby of two years, that Mrs. Dhlamani looked after.

Elizabeth said, "Lie quietly, mother, be still. I will get the washing for you. You must not worry."

"How can you go? You are working."

"It's all right. I can be sick for a few days. Or I can say my mother is sick. My madam is young and strong. She can do the work herself for a day or two."

On Sunday night Elizabeth slept at Alexandra, and on Monday morning she was up early. She made tea for Mrs. Dhlamani, and left her some bread. Then she joined the people on the long walk into Johannesburg.

Mrs. Dhlamani stayed in bed a whole week. Elizabeth did the washing and ironing, and on Friday she walked back to town with the clean washing and delivered it. Over the week-end Mrs. Dhlamani seemed better, but she was not well enough to face the long walk again. So Elizabeth stayed on, seeing to the little boy and caring for the sick woman, and cooking for Elias and for Mrs. Dhlamani's son.

By the third week Elizabeth had become accustomed to the long walk, as thousands of other people had. It was not too exhausting for her, because she was young, and once she was used to the walk her muscles became hard and served her well. She quite liked it when she did not have to carry the washing.

By this time the daily procession had changed in character. Thousands of people still walked, but thousands more travelled on bicycles, on carts, on lorries. Shoes had been worn completely through, and blisters had formed and stung and burst, and then hardened on thousands of feet. And the Minister of Transport informed a committee of prominent citizens that no useful purpose would be served in their sending a deputation to him, since the Government was investigating the matter.

Car and lorry-drivers appeared before the Road Transportation Board to answer allegations of having contravened the Motor Carrier Transportation Act by conveying natives to and from Alexandra. Many organisations appealed to the Board not to proceed with these summonses, but a member of the Board said they were not interested in humanitarian arguments, only with the strict interpretation of the law.

When Mrs. Dhlamani was well enough to get up, Elizabeth went back to her work, but since she had Thursday afternoons off she arranged to go to Alexandra on those days to fetch the washing and bring it back to town. Then on Sunday afternoons she took the dirty washing out to Alexandra again. This saved Mrs. Dhlamani from four long walks, which she could not face, although she was able to get through the washing during the week.

So the fourth week of walking came and went, and Christmas approached. The days were hot, for it was high summer, only the swift, sharp, intense summer rain still came down in the late afternoon and evening on many days, and caught thousands of people out on unprotected stretches of road. There were illnesses, and even deaths, though it could be said that in those cases the long walk was only one contributory factor in a body already weakened by malnutrition or disease. There were so many who found it hard to get through their day's work, who would nod with sleep while sweeping an office or polishing a floor, who were slow, who were clumsy. Out on the pavements during the lunch hour men stretched on the hard stone in the hot sun, and slept. And many employers let their Alexandra workers off earlier in the evenings.

What kept them going? What made a whole town of people walk and walk and walk, day after day, week after week? What force held them together so that not one wavered, not the bright young ones, the sober old ones, not the strong ones, nor the weak ones? So that the whole city which had begun by watching with indifference, with disinterest, with ignorance, with sympathy or with indignation, now watched with awe and marvelled. They would be walking past early, early in the cool summer mornings, while the rest of the city slept , past the gardens fragrant and quiet, the windows opened before the burglar barring, the softly blowing curtains, the sky pale and faintly misty, the air fresh and sweet. They would be walking back late at night, when suppers were finished and children were in bed, when the doors were opened on to stoeps, and people relaxed into chairs and talked and smoked, enjoying the comfort of night after the long hot day. They would be walking and walking, feet shuffling and painful, shoes broken and distorted, legs stiff and aching; walking with the sweat trickling down from tired faces, grey faces, breathing with faulty lungs, blood pumping with damaged hearts. The lowliest, the poorest, the most wretched, shabby and beaten people of the city, walking undefeated, with a strength that astounded everyone, a solidarity that confounded the authorities.

The shops were filled and brimming with Christmas gifts, the counters gleaming and shining, decked with tinsel and artifical holly and cardboard reindeers. Father Christmas paraded outside some of the big stores, in his red flannel and cotton wool, sweating profusely in the heat, dressed as that legendary figure who came from the land of snow and ice had dressed, and suffering in Southern Africa's midsummer. Shop windows were gay with paper streamers and imitation holly and blobs of cottonwool snow. The crowds jostled and struggled along the packed streets, pushed and nudged themselves around counters to choose Christmas cards with snow scenes, with traditional pictures of roaring fires in winter rooms and robins on ice-laden window sills, and tried to feel the spirit of Christmas in a country where Christmas came in the wrong season. And the trams and buses were packed and crammed, the children going on their promised treat to see the shops, the adults parcel-laden, cross and tired after struggling through the crowds.

Except the Alexandra people, who went on walking. And the city was aware of them. Not only the people who lived in the northern suburbs and daily witnessed part of the tired trail, but all Johannesburg, were watching that patient, unfaltering march of fifteen thousand people every day. Not one person had yet travelled on the buses.

Then it was the fifth week of the march. The City Council yielded under the pressure of so many different groups of eminently respectable citizens, and offered to subsidise the buses until some more satisfactory arrangement could be reached. The Government refused the offer, saying they were not prepared to depart from their original scheme. There was a feeling of frustration, for it was plain now that the Government was determined to

make the people of Alexandra give in. At the beginning of the sixth week, lorries that had been carrying large numbers of the strikers to and from work were withdrawn from the roads, because of the intervention of the Transportation Board. The people of Alexandra were angry at this, for the lorries had made it easier for hundreds of women and older people who had been physically exhausted by the long, daily trek. In their anger they threw a cordon round Alexandra to prevent the buses from entering the township, as a protest against the withdrawal of the lorries. Then the bus owners said that the people of Alexandra were ready to use the buses, but that they were intimidated and prevented from doing so. After that a police escort was sent to Alexandra and the buses were brought into the square escorted and protected by the police. The police stood by to see that if passengers wanted to board the buses they would not be prevented.

But nobody came forward. Nobody wanted to go on the buses. The police left, and the buses stood empty and unmolested, and there was no need for anyone even to picket them to prevent a single person from trying to get on them.

Then the City Council, pushed and harried from all sides, surrendered again and discussed the possibility of running buses to the city boundary at Bramley. They applied to the Transportation Board for permission to start a temporary bus service. The Transportation Board turned down the application.

The Witwatersrand Church Council sent a memorandum to the Government appealing to them to make immediate provision for transport to Alexandra at the old fare. "We believe the Christian conscience of Johannesburg demands such action," the said, "and that public opinion will lay at the door of the Government the blame for any unfortunate incidents that may develop out of the long delay to deal fairly with these people."

Christmas was only a few days off. But the people of Alexandra Township went on walking.

On the Thursday before Christmas Elizabeth delivered the clean washing as usual to the flats in town. Then, since her employers had gone away for Christmas and had given her a few days off, she began the walk back to Alexandra again, for she was staying with Mrs. Dhlamani over the Christmas week-end.

She joined a group of three other women with whom she had walked before. They had just begun the first long stretch towards Orange Grove when a car drew up and the driver oppned the doors for them to get in.

The driver was a young woman. She asked Elizabeth her name, and wanted to know where she came from. She took them nearly all the way home, dropping them on the Pretoria Road just next to the Township. They started to walk across the veld, and it was getting dik now, when Elizabeth heard someone shouting, and turned to see the woman who had driven them home running across the veld after them. She was calling, "Elizabeth, Elizabeth! Wait a minute! Elizabeth!" and while her companions stopped and waited to see what was happening, Elizabeth went back to meet the white woman who was calling her.

CHAPTER FOUR.

In those weeks before Christmas Ruth made the journey to and from Alexandra so many times that she lost count of them. Charles was working late nearly every evening, so she took his car and went to pick up passengers. She became familiar with the road from end to end, the first, crowded section in East Avenue where tall blocks of flats lined the road; the long straight stretch towards Orange Grove; the bottle-neck of narrow, traffic-laden streets, lined with shops, before the shops thinned out and the houses spun alongside the road towards Sydenham; then more houses, then the black stretch from Highlands North, where open veld bordered the road, the place where there was

no hope of shelter for the walkers when it rained or hailed; Bramley, where the houses and shops began again, and those who had walked so far thought 'Only another three or four miles.' The Tower Garage, the border of Johannesburg Municipal area; the first part of the Pretoria Road, the part where she saw the walkers dragging their feet, the last long bit before the crush of hovels and smoke rising to the sky marked Alexandra Township.

Sometimes she went all the way back to town and picked up passengers at the bus terminus; more often she would go half-way back, see a group of women, turn the car, fill it up, and take her passengers back to Alex.

It was the Thursday before Christmas that she picked up this particular group. Four women walking together, and two more a little further on. As they entered the car, she did not even glance at them. But after they had been driving for a little way, she could not help seeing the face of one of her passengers in the rear view mirror, a young, handsome girl, and the face looked vaguely familiar.

She said, speaking to this one, "Haven't I seen you before somewhere?"

The girl replied, "I don't know, Madam."

"Perhaps you worked somewhere that I've been. Your face looks familiar."

She drove on further, and then her mind worried with the problem of where she had seen the girl before.

"Have I given you a lift before?" she asked.

"No, Madam."

"What's your name?"

"Elizabeth."

Ruth shook her head. The name, like the face, had some vague association in her mind. All the way out to Alexandra, the back of her mind worried over the problem of where she had seen Elizabeth before. It was silly, really, because she might have seen her anywhere, in the street, in someone's house, perhaps just noticed her without realising it, so that her mind again registered the face, so that a strange chord of unknown recognition was struck. But it worried her. Then, just before she reached Alexandra, she thought perhaps Elizabeth might have been a pupil at the night school, so she asked her if she had ever attended night school.

The girl replied, "No, Madam."

They reached the road near Alexandra. She stopped the car and the passengers thanked her and climbed out. They walked away across the veld. Ruth watched the go in the half-light. Seeing the girl retreating into the evening like that, she thought she had just imagined that she knew her, for she could not recall any time now that she had seen her before. She turned the car around and began to go back to Johannesburg.

And as she slipped into top gear, a thought flashed through her mind that caused her to bring the car swiftly to a standstill. The night school! That was it! In a flash she saw Elizabeth's face, the face of the young, shy girl in the photograph. She heard the words of Johannes: 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. She remembered how she had been impressed - Stanley too - with the serious way in which he spoke, the intent look on his face as he handled the photograph, the careful way he wrapped it up and put it in his pocket.

She flung open the car door and began to run across the veld. Because it was now nearly dark, the women were hardly discernable in the distance. As she ran she called to them to stop. "Elizabeth!" she cried. "Elizabeth! Wait a minute! Elizabeth!"

She saw a figure detach itself from the group ahead, and Elizabeth came back across the veld to meet her.

"Elizabeth," Ruth said, "I met a man once who had your photograph, and he said he had a message for you. Do you know anything about it?"

Elizabeth said, "My photo?" and there was such a look of pain and suspense in her face, that Ruth thought she had never in her life seen anyone look that way before.

Elizabeth stood before her in the swiftly-growing dark. The other women were waiting a little distance away, and the two of them seemed to be standing on an island, a little place of grass, with the night wrapping round them, and bright stars beginning to shine overhead. It was strangely quiet, all the sounds of people and voices, the cars racing past on the Pretoria Road, falling round them through the rapidly failing twilight in a hushed way, as though just for those few minutes they were separated from the rest of the world.

Ruth said, "Yes, your photo. A man named Johannes Mogamotsi showed it to me. Do you know him?"

Then Elizabeth's eyes that had been gazing at Ruth fell, and a look of great sorrow came into her face. She half turned away. She said in a whisper, "That is not the one. I do not know him."

"But he had your picture," Ruth said, "and he said he didn't know you, but he had a message for you from someone."

Elizabeth said, "Where can I see this man?"

"I don't know where he is. But I know where I might be able to find him. Give me your address and I'll send him to you if I can find him."

"Please," said Elizabeth. "It is important. I would like to see him. Do you think, Madam, you might find him tomorrow?"

"Well, I don't know," Ruth said doubtfully. "It might take a little while to get hold of him."

Elizabeth spoke with intensity: "I would like to see this person. Perhaps I could come to your home, if you would not mind? I ask the Madam not to forget about it, please."

Ruth phoned Stanley that evening. As soon as she said who was speaking, Stanley said, "The schools closed down for Christmas. We start again the second week of Januxxy. This is a fine time to phone me. All these months I've been needing you to teach, and you wouldn't come near the place. Now we're closed, you want to know about it."

Ruth said, "Have you any way of getting in touch with the pupils?"

"I've a record of their names and addresses, and where they work."

"I want to get in touch with one of them. Do you remember Johannes Mogamotsi? Does he still come to the school?"

"I don't think he's been along for quite a while," Stanley replied. "But I've probably got his address. What do you want him for?"

"Look, Stanley, do you remember that photo Johannes had - of a girl, the one he said he had a message for? Well, I've come across the girl, and I want to get hold of Johannes."

"I'll bring my record book around to you if you like."

Ruth said, "I'll be at Thelma's house tonight after I've finished taking people to Alex. Could you come along and bring your book?"

Thelma, Phillip, Charles and Stanley all heard the story that night of how Ruth met Elizabeth, and of Johannes and the photo. Then Sydney opened the ledger he was holding.

"Here it is," he said after turning over the pages. "Johannes Mogamotsi. Garden boy. 31, Primula Drive, Forest Town. That's not far from here."

"Do you think we could go there now?" Ruth asked.

"It's nearly ten o'clock," said Charles, "It's much too late to start calling on people and asking to see their servants. We'll go tomorrow."

"You sound most anxious about this girl of yours," Thelma said. "It's probably something very trivial that everyone will go to an awful lot of bother to get to the bottom of - if you know what I mean."

Ruth said, "It's not trivial. I know it. I know it really is desparately important to Elizabeth. If you'd spoken to her, you'd know it as well. I want to help her."

"Well, then," Thelma said, "Tomorrow's Sunday. Charles can take you to this house to find Johannes in the morning."

The house they went to the next morning was a big one, set in a beautiful garden. On the front porch a middleaged man was sitting reading the Sunday Times.

Charles turned on all his charm, and apologised for disturbing the man. "We're looking for a native named Johannes," he explained. "I understand that he works for you as a garden boy."

"Use to," the man replied. "Left here some time ago."

"Do you know where he went?"

The man said, " Haven't the faintest idea. You know how it is with these natives. Here today and gone tomorrow. Come for a few months, then they push off into the country, or take a fancy to go and work somewhere else. Like children."

Ruth said, "Perhaps your wife would know what became of him?"

"Doubt it," said the man. "I'll ask her if you like."

They waited on the verandah while he shuffled into the house. They heard him call, "Edna! Remember that boy Johannes who worked for us. Where'd he go to?"

A high, peevish voice answered, "How on earth should I know. What do you want to know for?"

"Some people here looking for him."

"Who's it - the police?"

"No, just some people want to see him."

The woman's voice went on, "Well, he left me at a very awkward time, I must say, right at the beginning of summer, just when all the seedlings were ready for planting out. My garden was ruined this year because of him. If they find him they can tell him to come back here."

Charles knew that Ruth was bitterly disappointed. When they reached the car he said, "Look, we might still be able to find out where Johannes has gone. I'd like to ask one of the servants in the house here."

"Well let's go back," Ruth said, "and ask them."

"Leave it now," said Charles. "They were getting a bit annoyed with us in any case. And the servants mightn't want to say anything to us. Let's go back to Thelma's and we'll pick up Sophie, bring her to the corner, and let her go and make some discreet enquiries from the servants. It's much better that way."

Sophie went into the house through a back entrance, and when she came out she said "There was a girl there who said she knew this Johannes, she was working there with him. She says he left to go and work in a factory."

"Does she know the factory?" Ruth asked.

"She says she's not sure," said Sophie, "but she thinks it was a place where they make beds."

"Didn't she know the name?"

"She did not know the name. She said a place where they make the beds - you know, the wire that goes under the beds, and the mattresses."

"Must be a mattress factory," said Charles. "Can't be many of them in Johannesburg. We could try doing the rounds of them if you liked, but the trouble is they'll all be

closed now for the holidays. We'd better just leave it over."

Ruth was silent with disappointment.

In the evening she phoned Stanley, who had asked her to let him know if they found Johannes. She told him what had happened.

"Well, that shouldn't be too difficult," Stanley said. "There are only three places that I know of. There's Katzenellenbogen's Mattress Works; African Steel Spring and Mattress Company; and the Sleeptite Manufacturers. They're all closed, of course, but we can look through the list of employees at one of the places if you like."

"How's that?"

"Well, I wouldn't admit it in the ordinary course of events, but Katzenellenbogen's my cousin."

"Could we go there tonight?"

"We could, I suppose," said Stanley, "but it won't be much good. It's Christmas Eve, and I don't think for a moment he'd be prepared to open his factory to show us the books tonight. It's not exactly a good time to ask him."

"Oh, do try to speak to him soon," Ruth said.

"It can wait a couple of days. It's more than a year since Johannes showed you that photo. It's not going to make any difference whether he delivers his message ~~tex~~Ex to this Elizabeth now or in a few days time."

On the following Tuesday, which was Boxing Day, however, Stanley went to see his cousin who told him he would be going to do some work at the factory the next morning, and Stanley could have a look at his employees' records if he wished.

Ruth went to the factory with Stanley and his cousin. Charles came too. They were all of them by now caught up in the fascination of the chase, interested in tracking Johannes down. They looked through all the records, but they couldn't find the name Johannes Mogamotsi.

"Well, these are all the people working here," Stanley's cousin said.

"What about those that have left?" Stanley asked.

They began looking through back records. They looked up all the employees that had worked at the factory in the past two years. They did not find Johannes among them.

"What's so important about this native?" Stanley's cousin asked.

"Why," said Stanley with a look of innocence on his face, "his wife works for Ruth and he's deserted her, so we promised to help trace him."

"Why not wait until the factories open?"

"Because we're afraid he might find we're on his trail and do a bunk. We want to get hold of him just when he doesn't suspect anyone could find him."

Stanley's cousin thought for a moment. "If you like," he said, "you can have a look through the recxords at Sleeptite. They're actually an associate company of ours."

"When can we go there?"

"Tomorrow, if you want to. I have the keys of the place."

Early on Thursday evening Mr. Katzenellenbogen took them to the Sleeptite factory. They began looking through the records. Sunddenly Stanley said, "Here it is: Johannes Mogamatsi, 5073c, Orlando West."

On Saturday afternoon they drove out to Orlando. It took some time to find the hous among the endless streets of similar houses, but when they found it, Johannes was out.

"Yes, he lives here," said the African who opened the door. "He has a room in this house."

He asked them into the house, which like all the houses built by the City Council, had no ceilings and no doors between the rooms.

There were three tiny rooms, one of which was the litchen, and the room where the

man who rented the house slept, also his wife; in the second rook slept their five children; and the third room was sub-let to Johannes to help them pay the rent.

They came back the following morning, Sunday. And this time Johannes was there. He was pleased to see Stanley.

"I wanted to keep on with the classes," he told him, " but when I started work in the factory and came to live here, it was too far."

They spoke a bit about the school. Then Stanley said, "Johannes, you remember you showed me a photograph of a girl once. You said you wanted to see her. Well, Ruth here has met this girl, and she wants to take you to her."

Johannes went to his coat, which was hanging on the wall, and took out an envelope. From the envelope he took the photograph, which he handed to Ruth with a questioning look.

Ruth gazed at it. "Yes, that's the one, " she said. "I'm positive about it. That's Elizabeth."

"Where is she?" Johannes asked.

"We can take you to her," Ruth said. "She lives in Alexandra Township. We can go there now."

The journey from Orlando to Alexandra took them from the far south of Johannesburg to the far north. It was a long journey, but when they arrived they found Mrs. Dhlamani's house without any difficulty. The old lady was sitting outside the front door, on a chair. When the car pulled up at her house, and three white people alighted from it, she rose in confusion and called her nephew Elias who was inside. He came to the front door and greeted the visitors.

Ruth said, "We're looking for a girl called Elizabeth. Is she here?"

"She is here," Elias said.

He led them into a small room, almost completely filled with a big table that stood in the middle. He gave them chairs to sit on. Then Elizabeth came into the room.

Johannes took the photograph from his pocket. He took it out of the envelope and placed it on the table. They sat silently while Elizabeth put her hand in the pocket of the dress she was wearing. She brought a photograph out of her pocket and put it on the table next to the first one. They lay there, side by side, and they were identical. Elizabeth stood opposite Johannes and gazed at him, and the younger, shyer, sweeter Elizabeth looked at them from the two pictures on the table.

Still no one spoke, until at last Johannes gave a long sigh. "Yes," he said, "that is the one. That is the picture that belonged to my friend, Bennet."

Elizabeth said sharply, "You know Bennet?"

"I knew him," Johannes replied.

"Where is he now?"

He looked at her steadily. "He is dead," he said quietly.

Elizabeth drew in her breath. Then she sat down opposite Johannes. Still they looked only at each other, as though they had forgotten the other people in the room. Elias stood behind Elizabeth's chair, and the three white people waited, sitting round the table.

At last Elizabeth said in a low voice, "You are sure he is dead?"

Johannes replied, "Of that I am sure. There is no doubt. For I saw this man die with my own eyes. I saw it myself."

Again there was a pause. Quietly Elizabeth asked, "When did he die?"

"This was two - no, I think three years ago."

"Can you tell me about it?"

"I can tell you," replied Johannes. Now he took his eyes from Elizabeth's face

and looked at the others round the table. He began to speak, including them all ih his story.

"I knew this man Bennet, I knew him well," said Johannes, "for he and I, we suffered together. We were friends in our suffering, and I have never forgotten him.

"I met him at the Pass Office. He was waiting for a permit to seek work, and so was I. We were both from jail. I had a good job in a house, then the lady was ill, they send me away. So I go to get a permit to look for work. After a week when I have been walking round and round, I do not find work. My permit is finished. I think I will go and ask for a new permit. Before I get to the Pass Office, the pick-up van comes, and then I am put in jail for ten days, and when I come out I go to the Pass Office again."

Stanley said, "What did they arrest you for?"

" What do they call it?" said Johannes. "Yes - vagrancy. I did not have a job, my permit, it was finished."

CHAPTER FIVE.

Waiting in the queue to try and get a new permit, Johannes began talking to the man standing next to him. This was Bennet. Bennet had also just come out of jail, and was trying to get a permit to seek work.

Bennet told him that he came to be arrested this way:

He had gone back to the block of flats where he worked one Sunday evening after being out. The flatboys' rooms in Johannesburg are always put on top of the building, on the roof. Since the flat boys were not permitted to use the lifts, Bennet climbed up the back stairs - the iron fire escape stairs, that rang loudly at each step.

He had just past the seventh floor of the building when the door of a flat near the fire escape opened and a man came out and called to him. He stopped. The man shouted, "Come here - you - Jim! Come here!" Bennet came down a few steps and waited.

The man said, "You - get into that flat and clean the floors. They're filthy."

Bennet said, "Master, this is my day off."

The man shouted, "What the hell do you mean - your day off? If you can't do the work properly when you're supposed to, you can fuckin' well come and do it now."

Bennet saw that the man had been drinking. H e said, "I'm sorry, Master. I'll clean it in the morning."

The man took a few steps towards the fire escape. "If you don't get into that flat and down on your hands and knees in two seconds, you dirty kaffir, I'll wring your bloody neck!" H e siezed hold of Bennet, who stood above him, and began to pull him down by his coat.

Bennet's reaction was purely defensive. He had no intention of striking or pushing the man. He ~~simply~~ simply wanted to release himself. But he was standing two steps above the man. As Bennet tried to twist himself free, he stumbled and fell forward, knocking the man down before he himself managed to regain his balance.

The white man seemed stunned with surprise for a moment. Then he began to shout. All the time he shouted, he was rising to his feet, slowly, as thought with difficulty, and coming towards Bennet. The doors of surrounding flats began to open, and people came out to see what was the ma tter.

The white man siezed Bennet and began to rain blows with clenched fists on his face, his head. Bennet put his two arms up in front of his face to protect himself, and as he did so another white man came up and caught hold ofhim. The first man shouted, "You see? He was going to strike me, the dirty nig. You see? He put his fists up. He struck

~~xxxfx~~ me once already. He tripped me and I fell down."

The crowd closed in around Bennet, and someone went to phone the police.

Bennet was taken to jail, and the next morning brought up on a charge of assaultlt. He had no witness es to bear out his statement that he had not struck the white man, he had merely been trying to protect himself from attack. On the other hand, his assailant brought witnesses to say that they had seen Bennet put up his arms and try to strike the white man.

Bennet was sent to jail for six weeks.

When he came out of jail, he went back to the flats to see if he could get his old job back. The caretaker told him that he didn't heed him, his job was filled, and he gave him his pass, and his clothes tied up in a bundle.

Bennet was anxious to see Elizabeth, but first he had to obtain a permit to seek work, ortherwise he would be in trouble again. While he was standing in the queue he began talking to Johannes.

"That was just the beginning of our troubles," said Johannes.

While they were standing there in the queue a little African man, wearing a smart suit, a collar and tie, and a soft hat on his head, camé up to them and said he knew where they could get work. What kind of work? they wanted to know. The little man gave them a sort of leering look, as though to say, you are then, in a position to pick and choose? Then he whispered to them confidentially that it was very good work, and very well paid work. It was work in a dairy in Springs. He told them to go to a certain place where they would find the white man who would give them the jobs. He wrote the address on a scrap of paper. They would not even have to wait for their permits. The white man would fix it all up for them.

Now Bennet was worried about seeing Elizabeth, for he had not had a chance to see her since he came out of jail, nor to send her a message as to what had happened to him. He told the little man he would rather go there the next day. The African shook his head doubtfully. There were a lot of people anxious to get these jobs, he told them, and Bennet would miss his chance. "When you have the job," he said, "you can go and see your girl before you start work."

So Bennet and Johannes wandered through the streets, with their scrap of paper, and eventually they found the address. There was a white man there, as they had been told, and he said he was sorry, but all the jobs in the dairy were now taken. However, he could offer them a job on a farm in Springs. Since Springs is not far from Johannesburg, Bennet and Johannes thought they would take the jobs. Bennet would be able to come in to Johannesburg over the week-ends to see Elizabeth.

They were sent straight away to a yard behind the office, where they found aight other men. Five of these were from Nyasaland, and three were Basothos.

They were all virtually prisoners in that yard. They were there for three days. There was a hut, and in it all ten men slept. They were brought food to eat, but they were not allowed to leave the yard. There was a high wall all round, with glass on top of it, and the only door out - the one through the office - was kept locked.

On the fourth day they were taken to the office of the Native Commissioner. Here they were lined up with many others, and something was read out to them. They understood that this was their work contract. When the man had finished reading - he read fast, and he read in English - they all filed passed the table and touched a pencil with their hands that the man held out to them.

Then they were told they had signed a contract to work on a farm in Bethal. The contract was for six months, and they would be paid £2 for every 30 working days. The man told them they would get 5/- for pocket money, ten shillings for food on the journey,

and 14/5 for their train fare. This money was being advanced to them from their wages, and would be deducted from their first month's pay.

At this point in the story, Johannes paused. It was quiet in the little room, but outside there were the noises of a fine Sunday morning in Alexandra Township: children playing and shouting in the streets, people calling to each other. The room was hot, and flies settled on the listeners, who brushed them away, hardly noticing them.

Johannes looked round the table. "It was a trick," he said bitterly. "They got us by a trick. They knew we would never have signed to work on a farm in Bethal. First they tell us it is to be a dairy, then a farm in Springs. Then in the office the man reads something so quickly we do not even hear what it is, then we touch the pencil - then we are caught."

"Why didn't you protest?" asked Stanley.

Johannes said "Protest?"

"Yes, kick up a row, make a fuss, demand to be let off."

Johannes gave a little laugh. "Oh, yes, we made a fuss, Bennet and myself, and the Basothos. We asked that our contract should be torn up, for we did not know what it was about. The baas laughed. He said we could tear up the contract with money only. With money our names would be rubbed off.

"We had no money, so we went outside and climbed into the van."

The Nyasas had also been tricked into coming, although they did not have much choice. They had been picked up at Messina where the Africans from Nyasaland and Rhodesia cross the border into the Union of South Africa illegally, on their way down south to look for work. There the touts for a labour agency lay in wait for them, in hiding, and as soon as a man crossed the border they pounced on him and threatened him with arrest if he did not accept the offer of a contract to work in South Africa - in a factory, they were told, or as a waiter. Not many were told they were going to work on farms. That is not what they had risked the journey for - the low pay and poor conditions was not what they had come for. In this way the illegal immigrants were rounded up and sent to the farm district that was notorious among Africans everywhere, a name that had become associated with fear - Bethal.

When they arrived in Bethal - and they were guarded all the way so that they could not escape on the journey - their clothes were taken away from them. They were given sacks, with holes cut in them for their heads and arms, and these sacks were their clothes. They slept on sacks, too, and sacks were their blankets, and because they had no eating utensils of any kind and were too poor to buy them they ate off sacks as well.

Bethal is an area that is farmed intensively. The year that Hohannes and Bennet were taken to work on a farm was the beginning of a long period of unbroken years in which the potato and mealie crops were very good. The earth in the long, flat sweeps of land was brown and rich. The men who worked in the fields were miserably, desparately, poor, slaves held by false contracts, tricked by their ignorance and illiteracy.

They were taken to work in the mealie-lands. They were herded out of the compounds by men on horseback - white and black men - carrying the long, strong, powerful hide whips - sjamboks - and guns. The black foreman were their guards in the fields, to see they worked without flagging, and that no one tried to run away. The guards told them "Le jele nama ea Kalajane, kajeno le tla e patela." The guards thrashed them at the least excuse. The great long leather whips whined through the air and bit deeply into the black, sack-covered backs.

Work began early in the morning, soon after 3 o'clock, and continued until after sunset, which was after 6 at night. On moonlight nights at the height of the season they

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