

EXT. BOKKEVELD - DAY

The vast, silent expanse of the Koue Bokkeveld Mountains (the cold buckland mountains) in the Western Cape of South Africa, north of the city of Cape Town; the shrubland, the rocks, the boulders and the surrounding escarpment.

EXT. EARTHEN DAM AT LANGENVLEI FARM - DAY - 1810

Gradually, shouts and laughter break the silence as three boys dive and play like sleek otters in the dam.

NICOLAAS, a fair boy of 11, and GALANT, who is the same age and has dark hair and a tawny skin, heave themselves out of the dam, the water streaming off their pubescent bodies. BAREND, Nicolaas's older brother, aged 15, rolls over on his back and floats away lazily to the other side of the dam.

NICOLAAS
(squatting down)
Look here!

He flattens a patch of the clay, and smooths it with his palm, then with a twig draws a series of marks.
What's this?

GALANT
How must I know? Looks like the
spoor of a chameleon.

NICOLAAS
(standing and pointing)
It's my name. See? It spells
Nicolaas.

GALANT
How come that you can be standing
over there and your name is lying
on the clay here?

NICOLAAS
(laughing)
I tell you it's my name.
Ni-co-laas.

He squats again, wipes the name out out and draws a new row of marks.
This is Barend's name.

GALANT
Can you put down my name too?

NICOLAAS
Of course.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

Show me.

Nicolaas smooths a new square and draws new signs in the wet clay.

GALANT

Is that my name?

NICOLAAS

Yes. It says Galant.

GALANT

Leave it just like that.

Barend starts splashing them from the dam and Galant quickly covers up his name with leaves and twigs.

Barend pulls himself out of the dam and saunters over to them.

Galant uncovers his name and quickly points.

GALANT

What's that?

BAREND

It's your name. Galant.

GALANT

(to Nicolaas)

I want you to teach me to make those marks and to read them.

NICOLAAS

All right.

BAREND

Why bother? He's only a slave boy. What use is writing to him? It won't help him to bring in the cattle or to cut wheat or chop wood.

GALANT

Will you teach me, Nicolaas?

Nicolaas evades Galant's pleading eyes and throws a pebble at a frog. Then he turns abruptly and runs off towards the dam. Barend follows him and they boisterously splash each other in the water.

Galant stays where he is, staring down at his name in the clay.