

A Chain of Voices

By

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From the novel by Andre Brink

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FADE IN:

EXT. COURT OF JUSTICE IN CAPE TOWN - DAY - MID MARCH, 1825

Against the backdrop of Table Mountain, a large crowd of slaves is milling around outside the court house, straining to see and hear what is going on inside, while a small group of mounted British soldiers in red coats maintains order.

DENYSSEN (V.O.)

In the criminal case of Daniel Denyessen, Esquire, His Majesty's Fiscal at the Cape of Good Hope, acting *ratione officii* by prevention, versus

INT. A COURT ROOM - DAY

As each name is read, we see the face of the accused.

DENYSSEN (O.S.)

Galant, age 26 years, born in the Cold Bokkeveld, formerly slave of the late Nicolaas van der Merwe;

Abel, age 28 years, born in the Cold Bokkeveld, slave of Barend van der Merwe;

Thys, age 18 years, born in Swartberg, Hottentot formerly in the service of the late Nicolaas van der Merwe;

Klaas, age 40 years, born in the Cold Bokkeveld, slave of Barend van der Merwe;

Ontong, age approximately 60 years, born in Batavia, Dutch East Indies, formerly slave of the late Nicolaas van der Merwe;

Pamela, age 25 years, born at Breede River, formerly slave of the late Nicolaas van der Merwe;

Joseph Campher, age 35 years, born in Brabant, Belgium, Christian of the Cape Colony;

(CONTINUED)

Denyssen, wearing a legal wig and gown, is standing in the center of the courtroom.

DENYSSEN

be it hereby known that it has appeared to His Majesty's Fiscal from a report dated the 8th February 1825 from the Landdrost of Worcester to the Government Secretary, and from further preparatory information obtained in this case:-

That the first prisoner Galant, who in one of the winter months of last year, 1824, had been guilty of deserting from his Master ...

EXT. BOKKEVELD - DAY

The vast, silent expanse of the Cold Bokkeveld 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.

(CONTINUED)

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.

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.

INT. THE KITCHEN AT LANGENVLEI - DAY

PIET van der Merwe, a robust, commanding man and the owner of Langenvlei, is moving restlessly around the room. His dispirited wife, ALIDA, is sitting at the kitchen table. HESTER, a fair girl of 9, stands gravely in front of her.

ALIDA

Hester, you must be brave. There
has been an accident at
Houd-den-Bek.

(she reaches out and takes
both of Hester's hands in
hers.)

Your father is dead.

HESTER

(she withdraws her hands and
looks towards Piet, speaking
without raising her voice)
That man killed him.

ALIDA

No, please. Your father went out
last night. To -- to hunt. The gun
went off by accident.

PIET

A waste of powder and lead. None of
this would have happened if he'd
just been a proper foreman, instead
of drinking himself into oblivion.

(CONTINUED)

HESTER

(continuing to speak quietly,
but clearly)

That man beat him. I saw him.

PIET

She needs to be taught a lesson. I
won't have this in my house.

ALIDA

(interposing herself between
the silent straight-backed
child and his rage)

You will not raise a hand against
this girl. I have never interfered
when you disciplined Barend or
Nicolaas, even when it was enough
to break a mother's heart. But this
one you won't touch. Not ever.
She's mine now. If you do this girl
any harm, I'll take her away with
me and you will never see us again.
I hope you understand that.

Piet utters a brief, harsh laugh like a bark, then turns on
his heel and goes out through the open door. Alida looks
after him as he stalks across the veld.

INT. MA-ROSE'S HUT - NIGHT

MA-ROSE, a Khoi woman of about 60, is in the service of Piet
van der Merwe, and she is generous with her remedies, her
advice, and her body. She tends a sore on Galant's foot.

GALANT

Ma-Rose, why do you and I always
walk barefoot?

MA-ROSE

That's how it is.

GALANT

I also want shoes, for the thorns.

MA-ROSE

Only masters wear shoes.

Galant yelps as Ma-Rose extracts the thorn.

GALANT

(rubbing his foot, not looking
at her)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GALANT (cont'd)

They don't want to teach me to write and read, Ma-Rose. Will you show me?

MA-ROSE

What do I know about writing? All my life I got on very well without. It's just looking for trouble. You keep your eyes open and you'll see: every time there's a newspaper from the Cape the Oubaas is out of sorts for days and days.

GALANT

The Cape must be a wonderful place. One day I'm going there to see for myself.

MA-ROSE

Says who?

GALANT

Says I.

MA-ROSE

It's not for you to say. It's the Oubaas.

GALANT

The day I go to the Cape, Ma-Rose, I won't ask anybody. I'll just go. And I'll take you with me.

MA-ROSE

I've seen the place before.

GALANT

Is it really like Nicolaas says it is?

Ma-Rose stares out through the open door of the hut.

MA-ROSE

(her voice low)

Yes. Yes, the Cape is truly a wonderful place.

(She comes out of her reverie and turns her attention back to Galant)

But it's not our place. It belongs to the Honkhoikwa, the White people.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

Why can't it be ours too, Ma-Rose?

MA-ROSE

That's not for you to ask.

EXT. PATHWAY TO THE DAM AT LANGENVLEI FARM - DAY

Barend, Nicolaas, and Galant are heading towards the dam. Some distance behind, Hester follows.

Barend and the boys stop. Hester stops too, a little way off.

BAREND

(turning back to her)

Go back Hester!

He and the boys walk on. Hester follows again.

Barend turns and throws a handful of pebbles at her. She puts up her arms and turns her face away, but holds her ground.

Barend and the other two walk on and, after a pause, Hester follows again.

Barend is ready to storm back towards Hester and Galant quickly intercedes.

GALANT

I'll carry her.

Barend shrugs and walks on. Galant goes back to take Hester on his back, and they trudge off to the dam.

Soon, the boys are cavorting in the water.

At first, Hester sits on the side. Then, gradually, timidly, she inches closer to the water and slowly lowers herself into the dam.

As her wet clothes cling to her thin, feminine body the boys are, by turns, embarrassed and transfixed.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE ON LANGENVLEI - DAY.

A group of baboons is sunning itself on a cliff. Suddenly they are interrupted by a loud chorus of young voices and they scamper off.

(CONTINUED)

Barend, Nicolaas and Galant are standing below, laughing after the baboons. Hester is with them.

Without warning, there's a crash of thunder and the heavens open up, sending the boys scuttling down the slope.

Galant sees that Hester is lagging behind and goes back for her.

HESTER

Let's stay here. I love
thunderstorms.

GALANT

It'll kill us. Hurry!

HESTER

(clutching his arm)
No. Stop. Please wait, Galant.
Look: lift up your face like this.
Feel the rain.

GALANT

(angrily tugging at her hand)
If the thunder doesn't kill us, the
Oubaas will.

HESTER

Look. Oh look. Did you see that
flash?

GALANT

If the Lightning Bird sees you
you're dead on the spot. Now come.

HESTER

Galant, stay with me!

Desperately, Galant picks Hester up to carry her down forcibly. She kicks and shouts, trying to break loose until they both fall.

GALANT

Now look at what you've done.

HESTER

Just listen to that, Galant!

Galant half-pulls and half-carries Hester down the slope until they come within sight of Ma-Rose's hut, all by itself on the low rise from where she can look out to all sides.

Galant kicks open the rickety door of the hut and he and Hester tumble inside.

INT. MA-ROSE'S HUT - DAY

MA-ROSE

Ai! Look at you!

In a quick, matter-if-fact way she strips the clothes from them and bundles them together into a large kaross of animal skins.

She spreads the clothes round the fire to dry and begins to brew some sweet bush-tea.

HESTER

(loosely holding the kaross
around her thin body)

Tell us a story, Ma-Rose.

MA-ROSE

What do you want with a story?

HESTER

Please. Tell about how the world
was made.

MA-ROSE

Tsui-Goab made the world - and the
sun and the wind and the fire. But
it's Gaunab who lives in the night
and rules over all that happens in
the dark.

HESTER

And the lightning?

MA-ROSE

Ah, that comes from the Lightning
Bird that scorches the grass where
it settles to lay its egg. Then the
egg burrows into the earth in
search of moisture. There it lies
abiding its time, swelling and
growing, until the clouds start
thundering overhead again: then a
new Lightning Bird is hatched. The
lightning is its spittle, and the
clouds its dark wings spread out
over the world.

EXT. MA ROSE'S HUT - SUNDOWN

The earth looks fresh and washed by the rain as the sun slips quickly below the horizon.

INT. MA-ROSE'S HUT - NIGHT

Ma-Rose's heavy breathing hovers on the edge of a snore. Hester and Galant lie huddled together under the kaross, their faces lit by the small, blue flames of the fire. Hester shifts her weight to rest her head on Galant's shoulder. She closes her eyes and the kaross moves as she slowly begins to run her hands over his body. He doesn't respond overtly; he turns his head and stares into the fire. Gradually her movements slow and then stop as she drifts to sleep. After a while, Galant carefully eases onto his side to study her sleeping face, then he gently begins to explore her girl-child body.

MONTAGE - THE SEASONS CHANGE AS GALANT WORKS THE FARM.

-- At harvesting time, in the hot summer month of January, Galant follows the reapers to pick up the stalks and ears that are dropped.

-- Ontong and Galant lead a group of milling horses round and round the threshing floor.

PIET
Take 'em away!

The horses thunder out.

PIET
Turn over!

-- A group of slaves, including Ontong and Galant, lifts and turns the chaff and grain with long wooden forks, over and over, as the wind winnows the harvest.

-- In autumn, the leaves are turning as Ontong, Galant and the other slaves walk up and down the rows of the vineyards in the frosty morning, harvesting the grapes.

-- Galant, his breath making small puffs of steam in the cold winter air, carries great stacks of dung and wood into the stables and drops them by an open fire, wiping the drop at the end of his cold nose with his sleeve. A young gray stallion pokes his head over the door of his stall. Galant goes up to him and rubs his neck, murmuring softly to him.

(CONTINUED)

-- In spring, Galant leads a mare pulling a plough as a group of slaves walks behind, sowing the field.

-- It's harvesting time again, and Galant bends and swings with his whole body as he strides ahead with every swish of the blade.

-- Galant hoists a full bag of wheat onto his shoulders and walks up the stone stairs to the loft.

END MONTAGE - IT IS FOUR YEARS LATER.

EXT. PATHWAY TO THE DAM AT LANGENVLEI - DAY

Hester, now 13, her budding womanhood evident, runs lightly towards the dam. Barend, 19, Nicolaas and Galant, 15, walk more slowly behind her.

BAREND

(stopping and looking sternly
at Galant)

Galant, we're going swimming with
Hester. You can't come with us.

GALANT

(taken aback)

Why not?

BAREND

Because she's a girl, of course.

GALANT

What about you then?

BAREND

(turning away towards the dam)

She's one of us. You're not.

Galant looks into Nicolaas's face for an explanation.

NICOLAAS

(looking down and drawing
circles on the ground with his
big toe)

Galant, I forgot to tell you. Pa
wanted you to go down to the horses
to look at the brown mare. She's
lame.

Nicolaas quickly follows his brother. Stunned, Galant
watches them as they trot up the rise to the dam.

(CONTINUED)

HESTER

(her voice carrying from the distance)

What's the matter with Galant?

BAREND

He doesn't feel like swimming.
Today it's just the three of us.

They disappear over the rise.

In a flush of anger Galant picks up a stone and hurls it after them.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE ON LANGENVLEI - CONTINUOUS

Galant slowly walks up the mountain on his own. High above the farmstead he sits down on a boulder and looks down at Langenvlei. He shifts his weight and the boulder rocks unsteadily under him. Propping his feet against another rock, Galant starts to work at loosening the boulder. He crouches and puts his full force behind the boulder as he pushes and heaves, panting heavily until it gives way and topples over, gathering speed as it bounds down the mountainside towards Langenvlei, sending sparks flying and tearing smaller rocks and stones in its wake with a thunderous sound.

EXT. THE DAM AT LANGENVLEI - DAY

Barend, Nicolaas and Hester emerge through the tangle of bushes at the edge of the dam. Hester drifts off to one side alone and examines an abandoned weaver-bird's nest, containing some pale blue half egg shells.

Barend chooses a flat stone and skims it across the surface of the dam. Nicolaas follows suit, but their hearts aren't in it; they are surreptitiously watching Hester.

On the pretext of looking at the bird's nest, Barend walks over to Hester, and Nicolaas follows.

BAREND

Well? Aren't you going to swim today, Hester?

HESTER

What's that to you?

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS

See who's in the water first!

No one moves.

BAREND

(abruptly to Hester)

Take off your clothes.

HESTER

Why?

BAREND

You can't swim with your clothes on, can you?

HESTER

What about you?

BAREND

Come on, you're not afraid, are you?

Hester glowers at Barend for a while then, holding his gaze, she calmly moves her hands to her back to undo the ribbon of her dress.

HESTER

(suddenly dropping her hands)

No, I don't feel like swimming today.

BAREND

(shouting, sounding remarkably like Piet)

Take off your clothes!

Hester's lips twitch obstinately, and she turns her back.

BAREND

(an uncharacteristically pleading tone)

If you take off your clothes I'll give you all the sugar lumps you want.

Hester turns back raising an eyebrow.

HESTER

And your new wagon?

(CONTINUED)

BAREND
Anything you want.

HESTER
Will you let me have a shot with
your gun when you go hunting again?

Barend wavers briefly, then nods.

BAREND
Please!

NICOLAAS
(suddenly flaring up at him)
Oh stop it, will you? Hester, don't
let him!

BAREND
Shut up, Nicolaas! Hester, I
promise you --

HESTER
(calmly)
No, I don't think I'll have a swim
after all.

She turns and walks away.

After a moment, Barend squats at the side of the dam and
fiercely begins to knead a lump of clay. Then he stands
abruptly and hurls the lump into the water, wiping his hands
on his trousers.

BAREND
You think I care about a stupid
girl?

He storms off over the rise of the dam and disappears from
view.

After a moment, Nicolaas tentatively approaches Hester.

NICOLAAS
I'll see to it that they never
bother you again if you want to
have a swim. (adding illogically)
Promise?

HESTER
(with the slightest of shrugs)
All right.

Nicolas goes to take up position out of sight among the lower trees, staring steadfastly out into the middle distance. He inclines his head slightly when he hears Hester splashing in the dam, but he keeps looking straight ahead.

INT. STABLE AT LANGENVLEI. DAY

The young gray stallion is lunging and straining against a halter. ONTONG and three other slaves hang onto him grimly.

PIET (O.S.)
Ontong! Come on man!

EXT. A KRAAL AT LANGENVLEI - DAY

Ontong and the slaves emerge from the stable holding onto the stallion for dear life as he almost effortlessly pulls them this way and that, like half-filled bags.

Piet, Barend and Nicolaas stand waiting for them in the morning sun. A group of slaves, including Galant, is standing a little apart.

PIET
You take him, Barend, he's yours.

A muscle jumps in Barend's jaw and he tenses himself for the ordeal.

With difficulty, Barend mounts the stallion but no sooner have the handlers let go than the stallion throws him off and drags him through the deep manure of the kraal.

PIET
Come on, Barend, up you get!

The four slaves capture the horse and try to hold him for longer this time, but he throws Barend again, who lands against a wooden gate, winded.

PIET
Come on, Barend, what's the matter with you?

Barend tries a third time but is thrown again. This time, he stays sitting on the ground, nursing a bloody knee.

PIET
You try, Nicolaas.

(CONTINUED)

Once more, the stallion is captured and steadied and Nicolaas mounts him with difficulty. Almost before he has started he is on the ground in a sorry bundle.

PIET

Come on, Ontong, you're an old hand
at breaking horses.

Ontong manages one gallop around the kraal before he too is thrown.

PIET

Your turn, Galant.

BAREND

(calling sullenly as he
continues to nurse his bloody
knee)

What does he know about riding?

PIET

Let him try!

ONTONG

(clearly upset)

It'll be the death of him.

PIET

No. Let him try!

Galant scrambles onto the back of the gray while the others hold him tight. He catches the rein around his wrist in a loop and draws up his knees in a firm grip.

GALANT

(his voice barely a croak)

All right, let him go.

Galant survives the first few bucking rounds in the kraal. The stallion makes a rush for the gate and in the nick of time Ontong flings it wide open, tumbling head over heels out of the way.

We stay with Galant as the horse bolts with him across the veld. The stallion stops, and rears and bucks again. Then he gallops madly towards the dam. They charge into the dam at full speed spraying mud and water. The horse suddenly comes to a halt, trembling. Horse and rider stay still in the dead silence, both breathing hard.

GALANT

(gently)

Come on.

(CONTINUED)

They reach the side of the dam.

GALANT
(patting him on the neck)
Hoho.

Galant slides from the horse's back with wobbly legs and plucks handfuls of grass to rub him dry. The horse submits to this meekly.

GALANT
(bitterly)
You shouldn't allow yourself to be
broken in so shamefully.

He slaps the stallion on the rump, and the horse shifts slightly, but then stands still again, looking trustingly at Galant.

GALANT
(throwing down the sodden
grass)
For God's sake, you should break
loose again and gallop away to
where no one will ever find you!

Dispirited, Galant takes the reins and slowly begins to lead the stallion back to the yard.

In the distance the men are running towards them from the kraal. As Galant reaches them they stand aside in silence to let him pass.

PIET
Well done, Galant, you've broken
him in properly. You can have him
now.

GALANT
No. It's Barend's horse.

He drops the reins, looks at the broken horse for a moment, then turns and walks back towards the dam.

EXT. HOUD-DEN-BEK FARM - DAY.

Hester is sitting on the ground next to a mound with a simple gravestone that reads "Lood Hugo, 1772 - 1810." She finishes a chain of wild flowers and lays it at the foot of the tombstone.

She stands up and looks down at the gravestone, then slowly turns and begins to walk away across the veld.

EXT. THE OPEN VELD BETWEEN HOUD-DEN-BEK AND LANGENVLEI - DAY

Hester sees Galant tending sheep in the distance and makes a detour towards him.

GALANT

You been to Houd-den-Bek?

HESTER

Yes.

He takes some bread from a skin bag strapped over his shoulder, tears a piece off and silently offers it to her. She takes it without comment and squats down beside him. They eat in companionable silence, the sheep bleating from time to time.

GALANT

How are things over at Houd-den-Bek?

HESTER

It all stands empty.

GALANT

Maybe you can live there again one day.

HESTER

Piet will never let me live there unless I marry one of his sons.

GALANT

Which one?

HESTER

I don't care. But it's the only way I'll ever get away from this place.

They fall silent again.

GALANT

It'll start getting dark soon.

HESTER

Yes, I must go on.

Galant watches Hester as she makes her way over the veld towards Langenvlei.

A puff adder is catching the last rays of sun by the side of the path. As Hester approaches she nearly steps on the snake before she sees it. It rears up and sinks its fangs into her thigh.

(CONTINUED)

HESTER

Ah! Get off me! No! Galant!

She crushes the puff adder's head with her shoe, but the body is still wriggling in the dust.

Galant reaches Hester and pushes her down onto the ground. He tears open her ruffled pantalette and exposes the neat double incision on her thigh, with bright blood oozing from it. He sucks the venom from her thigh and spits it out, sucking and spitting, sucking and spitting repeatedly.

With trembling fingers he opens his skin bag, applies some herbs and presses a smooth round black stone to the small angry wound. He holds her leg tightly against his chest, pressing the stone between them.

When he has treated the wound to his satisfaction, he sits back on his heels and stares at her contentedly. The intimate moment holds. Hester's mouth is half open and she is breathing hard.

HESTER

(struggling to meet his gaze
and looking away in confusion)

Thank you, Galant. (she straightens
her clothing) I'll never forget
this.

EXT. LANGENVLEI - DAY

Nicolaas, his head bowed, is working with deep concentration, shaping a fragile necklace out of pale blue weaver-bird egg shells. He looks up and sees Hester approaching from the direction of Houd-den-Bek. She walks with an uneven gait, favoring the leg with the snake bite. As she comes nearer, he stands up and waits for her. She stops a few feet from him.

NICOLAAS

(proffering the necklace)

I made this for you.

Hester accepts it silently, and puts it in a pocket without attempting to put it on.

NICOLAAS

Have you come from Houd-den-Bek?

Hester looks apprehensively towards the Lengenvlei house, and then gives a small nod.

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS

(speaking in a rush)

I'm going to ask Pa to let me farm
on Houd-den-Bek, then we can marry
and you can always be where you
most want to be.

She stares at him strangely for a long time.

HESTER

(she shrugs)

All right, on my fifteenth
birthday.

Nicolaas hunts around for a moment and then picks up a
spike-thorn.

NICOLAAS

We must seal our covenant.

He scratches the skin of his wrist to draw a small speck of
blood. Hester looks on in morbid fascination. He offers the
thorn to her and she makes a corresponding scratch on her
wrist. Nicolaas puts his wrist against hers to mingle their
blood. With no trace of eroticism, Hester presses a cool,
dry kiss on his mouth.

INT. BAREND AND NICOLAAS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nicolaas's bed creaks as he turns over.

BAREND

What's the matter with you? You've
been tossing and turning all night.

NICOLAAS

(whispering)

Barend - I'm going to get married.

BAREND

(stunned)

You mad? With whom?

NICOLAAS

With Hester, of course. We're going
to talk to Pa.

BAREND

Have you asked her?

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS

Of course.

(after a long silence)

Barend? Don't you say anything?

BAREND

I never expected that from you.

INT. THE DINING ROOM AT LANGENVLEI - DAY

Piet, Alida, Barend, Nicolaas and Hester sit at the table with bowed heads as Piet finishes the grace.

PIET

... in God's name. Amen.

Alida picks up a plate of bread.

PIET

It seems Hester is old enough to get married soon.

ALIDA

(putting down the plate with a clatter)

What's that?

Nicolaas shoots a surprised look at Hester. She is staring straight down at the table.

PIET

(beginning to carve a joint of meat)

Barend told me about their plans this morning.

Hester raises her head to look between Piet and Barend. Shock is written all over her face.

NICOLAAS

But that's impossible. It's Hester and I --

PIET

(sharply)

Barend is the elder. It's for him to choose. Although I must say I would have preferred my sons to marry tall, large women. I'd like to see the Van der Merwes breed a strong and durable race. But if that's what Barend wants --

(CONTINUED)

ALIDA

Has Hester no say in it?

PIET

I believe Barend has already spoken to her.

BAREND

(speaking quickly)

That's right. Not so, Hester?

NICOLAAS

(half rising from his chair)

But my God --!

PIET

In this house we do not take the name of the Lord in vain. In any case it has nothing to do with you, Nicolaas, so shut up. Well, what do you say, Hester?

Nicolaas falls back helplessly in his chair. Hester is looking ahead blankly. She moves her lips as if to say something, but then she drops her head again.

PIET

Well, that's settled then.

(he takes a hearty mouthful of food)

Now, tomorrow, you must come out with me, Barend. You too Nicolaas, and we'll take Galant also. The lion that's been stealing our sheep from the kraal dragged a slave child from its hut at Oom Louw's farm. The men are coming from all the farms in the Bokkeveld with their dogs and their slaves, and we're going to hunt it down.

INT. OUTSIDE THE DINING ROOM AT LANGENVLEI - DAY

The door to the dining room opens and Piet walks out, followed by Barend who lingers to one side. Nicolaas, visibly upset, brushes past him and walks quickly outside, banging the door behind him. Alida comes out next and, lastly, Hester. Barend catches Hester by the arm.

BAREND

(whispering)

Hester, do you mean you'll really marry me?

(CONTINUED)

HESTER
(in a low voice)
I didn't say anything.

BAREND
But you didn't protest either.

HESTER
You've already arranged everything
the way you want it.

BAREND
It's because I -- Hester, I want
you.

HESTER
You've always got what you wanted.

BAREND
But with you --

He takes her by both arms. She doesn't resist but looks at him with still, arrogant eyes. She slowly disengages her arms from his grip and turns to walk away.

As she passes the kitchen door, Galant, unseen by either of them, quietly steps into view. He follows her with his eyes as she walks, swiftly and lightly, down the hall.

EXT. THE YARD AT LANGENVLEI - DAY

An army of farmers and their slaves, carrying guns, assegais and sticks, has turned up for the hunt.

PIET
Now, watch out. This is a matter of
life and death. I've seen men
maimed and killed before.

The men fan out and Nicolaas, carrying a gun, follows a path into the foothills, accompanied by Galant and a handful of slaves and Khoi. They pass a meerkat on its hind legs, a small steenbuck and its ewe motionless in the dried grass, a secretary bird strutting along on stiff legs, and specks of vultures circling in the distance.

All of a sudden, about a hundred yards in front of them, there is something moving in a patch of dry protea shrubs. Nicolaas takes another step forward, and the lion gives a low, deep growl. The group of slaves and Khoi drop their sticks and assegais and flee for the nearest tree, hanging from its branches like bats. The sight of them is so absurd that Galant bursts out laughing.

(CONTINUED)

Suddenly the lion is charging, head down.

GALANT
(whispering urgently)
Shoot Nicolaas!

Nicolaas raises the gun against his shoulder and the barrel wavers towards the lion.

GALANT
(shouting)
Shoot, damn you!

Nicolaas throws down the gun, looks around wildly and starts running for the tree.

Galant grabs the gun, the barrel flailing all over the place until he finally steadies it and shoots. The force of the shot sends him staggering backwards into a thorn bush. Nicolaas and the lion tumble down in a cloud of dust.

Everything is dead quiet. Then Nicolaas sits up slowly and starts dusting himself very meticulously. The men scramble and fall down from the little tree, and Galant runs over to Nicolaas. Piet, Barend and the other hunters come running from all sides.

NICOLAAS
(calling out quickly)
It was a near thing. He almost got Galant. I was just in time.

PIET
(eyeing his son skeptically)
Well I never.

Galant stares at Nicolaas and then at their group, dumbstruck. Nobody says a word. Then the group shoulders past him to get a closer look at the lion.

Piet stays looking at his son dubiously for a moment before he, too, turns towards the lion.

PIET
On its last legs. Must have got desperate in this drought.

Nicolaas starts to stand up but Galant holds him back.

GALANT
(speaking very quietly)
Suppose I tell the Oubaas it wasn't you?

NICOLAAS

Why don't you? You think he'll take
a slave's word against mine?

INT. THE BEDROOM AT BAREND'S FARM, ELANDSFONTEIN - NIGHT.

Hester, wearing a wedding gown, comes swiftly and quietly into the room, closes the door and leans her back against it.

Outside there are drunken calls of farewell and good wishes, then carriages and horses move off into the distance. It is quiet.

Hester looks around quickly, picks up a simple, wooden chair and wedges it under the handle of the door. She moves to the furthest corner of the room.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE AT BAREND'S FARM - NIGHT

Barend, looking flushed with liquor and excitement, stands silhouetted against the front door. Piet envelops him in a bear hug and thumps him jovially on the back. Alida quietly kisses him on the cheek. Nicolaas, averting his face, shakes his brother's hand and walks away quickly to the horse drawn wagon, where Galant is waiting to drive the family back to Piet's farm.

We follow Galant's gaze to the lit window of the bedroom.

INT. THE FRONT ROOM AT ELANDSFONTEIN - NIGHT

Barend comes in from outside and bars the door. He looks around the room, which is a shambles of merrymaking. The slaves - KLAAS, the *mantoor*, ABEL, a fun-loving rascal and SARIE, his woman - are cleaning up.

Barend pours himself a brandy, drinks it in one gulp and then walks down the passageway towards the bedroom.

INT. OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM AT ELANDSFONTIEN - NIGHT

Barend turns the handle but the door doesn't open.

BAREND

Hester? (he tries the handle again)
Hester, open the door!

He stands back and throws his weight against the door. On the second try, it burst open and the chair clatters away. He kicks the door closed behind him.

INT. THE BEDROOM AT ELANDSFONTEIN - NIGHT

Barend approaches Hester warily, as if she were an unbroken mare. He stops in front of her and reaches for her. She thrusts his hand away. He grasps her head in both his hands and kisses her forcefully on the mouth.

He picks her up bodily and carries her over to the bed. She tries to scramble away but he pins her down with the weight of his body. He fumbles with their clothes and takes her by force.

She turns her head away and bites her lip to stop herself from crying out.

INT. THE KITCHEN AT JAN DU PLESSIS' FARM, BUFFELSHOEK. DAY

JAN, a gruff, God-fearing man, is seated at the table, finishing his lunch. He is being waited on by his daughter, CECILIA, a big-boned woman of 20, who has grown up trying to make amends to her widowed father for the fact that she was not the son he had wanted.

At the sound of a horse approaching in the yard outside, Jan looks towards the window.

JAN

Who's this coming now?

Cecilia, coffee pot in hand, looks out of the window.

CECILIA

(wonderingly)

It looks like Nicolaas van der Merwe.

JAN

(with a short, mirthless
laugh)

Perhaps we can persuade him to take you for a wife.

CECILIA

Pa! I won't be put up for auction.

(CONTINUED)

JAN

You can't stay unmarried forever.
Your mother's dead, Cecilia! What
will become of you when I'm no
longer there to look after you?

CECILIA

Then God will provide, if it's
necessary.

JAN

Cecilia, you're not too old for a
thrashing yet.

Nicolaas's tentative knock on the front door interrupts
them.

INT. THE FRONT ROOM AT BUFFELSHOEK. DAY

A clock ticks loudly in the awkward silence.

Nicolaas balances a cup of tea on his knees. Jan watches
Nicolaas expectantly. Cecilia is vigorously stirring her
tea.

CECILIA

Barend's wedding --

NICOLAAS

(abruptly, speaking over her)
Well, shall we get married?

CECILIA

I --

JAN

(interrupting her)
I thought she was never going to be
asked. It meets with my approval,
Nicolaas. I'll fetch the *sopies*.

After Jan leaves the room, there is a vacuum of silence
between Nicolaas and Cecilia as the clock continues to tick
loudly.

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

A gale blows as the day breaks.

(CONTINUED)

Galant is ringing the slave bell. Ontong emerges from the kitchen and starts to walk towards the stables. PAMELA comes out after him with a wooden bucket and goes over to the water pump.

With a crash of thunder, the heavens open up, sending Ontong scampering into the stables and Pamela and Galant running for cover into the house.

INT. THE FRONT ROOM AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - NIGHT

A fierce storm is raging outside. It is the wedding feast of Nicolaas and Cecilia.

PIET

(gesturing with a chunk of
meat in one hand and his
brandy in the other)

Cecilia is a daughter-in-law after
my own heart. I've always told my
sons to choose their women with
care. Tall ones, large ones. They
breed well. And we van der Merwes
will tame the land for our
descendants. It's not that I have
anything against Hester...

Hester is standing apart from the rest in the shadows. As Piet continues speaking, she turns quietly and makes her way towards the kitchen. She is evidently pregnant.

PIET (O.S.)

...but Cecilia is the sort of woman
I'd have chosen for my son myself.
Eat and drink up, my friends. The
blessing of the Lord is on us.

INT. THE KITCHEN AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - NIGHT

Galant is throwing logs on the fire when the kitchen door opens and Hester comes in.

GALANT

(standing up quickly)
You looking for something?

HESTER

I'm going.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT
Shall I bring your carriage?

HESTER
No, I'll ride.

GALANT
You can't go in this weather.

HESTER
I've always liked the rain. (adding suddenly) Don't you remember?

Galant looks at her, not giving anything away.

Hester goes to the back door and opens it. The force of the storm hits her and she takes an involuntary step backwards.

GALANT
I told you it was bad.

HESTER
I'm going.

GALANT
I can walk with you to show you the way.

HESTER
I'll find the way.

GALANT
You'll need a lantern.

HESTER
Don't be silly. In this rain?
(standing with her weight against the door and speaking urgently now)
Galant, you'll be living here now.
For God's sake, look after the place for me.

GALANT
I will, Miss Hester.

He has never called her this before and she is stung by the formal form of address. She looks at him for a moment, then turns and hurls herself into the storm.

Galant watches from the doorway as Hester staggers against the lashing rain and makes her way to the stables.

INT. THE STABLES AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - NIGHT

After the violence of the storm, the steaming darkness and the softly neighing horses are in sharp contrast.

Hester, already soaked to the skin, leans against the stolid body of a horse, whose ears twitch as she speaks softly to it.

She leads the horse out of the stall, stands on a ledge and scrambles onto its bare back. The horse carries Hester off into the night and rain.

INT. THE BEDROOM AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - NIGHT

The shadows of the candle are dancing on the walls and the rain drips through the leaking roof.

Nicolaas stands by the window looking out into the dark storm.

Cecilia, still in her wedding dress, comes up to him and stops three feet behind him.

CECILIA

I suppose we should go to bed now.

NICOLAAS

I -- well -- the roof is leaking.

CECILIA

We can fix it in the morning.

NICOLAAS

I'd better have a look at it right now.

CECILIA

It's raining so hard, Why don't you send the slave Galant?

Nicolaas is already on his way.

Slowly, Cecilia begins to take off her wedding gown.

EXT. THE PATH FROM HOUD-DEN-BEK TO ELANDSFONTEIN - NIGHT

The horse, with Hester lying forward along his neck, slowly picks his way over the rocky terrain in the lashing rain and wind.

INT. THE BEDROOM AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - NIGHT

Cecilia is sitting on the edge of the bed in her nightgown with her hands tightly gripped together in her lap.

The bedroom door opens and Nicolaas comes in, drenched, his hair plastered against his skull.

NICOLAAS
(almost reproachful)
I thought you'd be asleep by now.

CECILIA
I was waiting up for you. Come,
you're shivering. You must undress
now and come to bed.

Cecilia slides into the bed and turns away from him, her eyes wide in the candlelight.

There are the small sounds of Nicolaas getting undressed, then he crawls into the bed and blows out the candle. He remains rigid on his side of the bed as the storm continues to rage outside.

CECILIA
(turning onto her back and
staring up at the ceiling)
We're married now, Nicolaas. So now
you must take me as your wife.

NICOLAAS
I'm sure you're exhausted. It's
been a long day for you. Sleep now.

CECILIA
There's a right way and a wrong way
of doing things, Nicolaas. Do not
let us provoke the wrath of the
Lord.

NICOLAAS
(leaning over her)
Good-night, Cecilia.

He gives her a cold, damp kiss on the forehead and then turns away to sleep.

The rain beats down, and the leaking roof still drips.

EXT. THE YARD BEHIND ELANDSFONTEIN - DAY.

The rain has finally stopped, and a new gray day is dawning when Hester and the horse finally walk into the yard. She slips stiffly off the horse's back and stands leaning against the animal, exhausted.

Barend comes galloping frantically into the yard and throws himself from the horse even before it has stopped.

BAREND

(furious)

Where have you been? I've been
scouring the veld for you!

Hester steps away from the horse and looks at him silently.

With the back of his hand, Barend hits her across her face. She keeps her head turned away from the impact, and doesn't react.

Barend grabs her by the upper arms and shakes her. She offers no resistance.

BAREND

Hester!

Suddenly he releases her, grabs hold of the two horses and drags them into the stable.

Hester turns and walks slowly to the house. As she reaches the back door, she stops suddenly and catches hold of the doorpost. She crouches down with a low moan. She puts her hand between her legs and it comes away bloody.

INT. THE BEDROOM AT ELANDSFONTEIN - DAY

Hester is lying in the bed, her hands resting on the white sheet pulled taut over her flat stomach. She turns her head quickly as the door opens.

Barend comes to stand by the bed. A muscle jumps in his jaw. He makes a small, involuntary movement towards her, and withdraws his hand again.

She searches his face and they look at each other silently for a long moment. Then he turns and goes out, carefully closing the door behind him.

INT. THE LANDING OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM AT ELANDSFONTIEN - DAY

Barend leans back against the wall next to the bedroom door. He opens his mouth in a silent cry and wipes his eyes with the back of his hand.

INT. THE BEDROOM AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - NIGHT

In the moonlit room, Cecilia and Nicolaas lie side by side in the big bed. Her eyes are open but he is feigning sleep.

CECILIA

Nicolaas, if you don't do it now I shall have to speak to your mother.

NICOLAAS

There's a time for everything.

CECILIA

Our time was a week ago. Or do you have something against me?

NICOLAAS

(wretchedly)

I wanted to make it easy for you.

CECILIA

I'm your wife.

Nicolaas doesn't respond and they lie rigidly beside each other. Then, resolutely, Cecilia turns towards him and begins to caress him and soothe him the way one comforts a dog.

Nicolaas resists at first but then suddenly turns to her and crushes down on her in a frenzy.

INT. A SHED AT ELANDSFONTEIN - DAY

The slave, Klaas, is lying over a barrel, his wrists and ankles tied. Barend is flogging him with a sjambok. Abel and a knot of other slaves stand to one side.

The door of the shed opens, letting in a shaft of late afternoon sun. Hester comes inside and stands there, trembling.

HESTER

Will you stop this immediately?

(CONTINUED)

BAREND

Hester, you stay out of this. It's none of your business.

HESTER

I tell you it's going to stop.

Barend raises the sjambok and brings it down on Klaas's shoulders. Suddenly Hester is beside him, grabbing the frayed end of the sjambok.

BAREND

Don't you understand how this bastard insulted me? Cost me fifty rix dollars by going to complain in Tulbagh. I lost four days in the process, and it's sowing time. And when he came back he cheeked me again.

HESTER

As long as I'm on this farm you're going to behave yourself with the slaves.

BAREND

Hester, watch your tongue!

Hester is still trying to wrench the sjambok away from him. Barend suddenly throws the sjambok into a corner.

BAREND

Untie him! I hope he's learned his lesson.

The slaves untie Klaas and drag him out of the shed.

HESTER

Is this the only way you can be master to them?

BAREND

Hester, you're looking for trouble.

HESTER

Are you threatening to beat me too?

Barend grabs her by the arm. She stares back at him silently. Suddenly he lets go, turns on his heel and strides out of the shed.

INT. MA-ROSE'S HUT - NIGHT

Ma-Rose is brewing bush-tea on her smoky fire as she eyes Galant. He paces up and down her hut, picking up things, putting them down, sitting down and immediately standing up again.

MA-ROSE

What's gnawing at your heart like this?

GALANT

I'm fed up with myself, Ma-Rose.

MA-ROSE

What do you want of me?

GALANT

Tell me a story, Ma-Rose.

MA-ROSE

You mad? You're grown-up now. It's no time for stories any more.

GALANT

Pamela and them, they're telling stories about what they hear in the house.

MA-ROSE

What stories?

GALANT

There's been another meeting in Cape Town. They say there's a new law about slaves in the Cape. Man and wife can't be sold separately anymore. They want slave children to be set free at birth. They even saying maybe all slaves will be freed.

MA-ROSE

You mustn't listen to gossip, Galant. It won't do you any good.

GALANT

It's all in the newspapers that come to the house.

MA-ROSE

What do you know about newspapers? You can't read.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

I just know.

EXT. THE YARD BEHIND ELANDSFONTEIN - DAY

Barend is working with Abel, driving a fence post into the ground.

He looks up to see a man on horseback in the distance, riding towards the farm.

BAREND

Abel, quick, ride over to the farms
and tell the farmers to come! And
tell them to bring their guns.

Abel looks at Barend in the manner of someone weighing his options.

BAREND

Go man! Quick!

ABEL

Yes, baas.

As Abel goes inside the stable, Barend walks quickly over to one of the slave huts by the side of the yard.

He doesn't go inside the hut, but leans against the doorway as he speaks to Klaas, who is lying down on a makeshift bed inside.

BAREND

Listen, if you want to get out of
this alive then you better do as I
tell you.

EXT. THE VELD AROUND ELANDSFONTEIN - DAY

Abel, lying low over the horses neck, gallops away from the farm.

In the opposite direction, FRANS DU TOIT, a Field Cornet -- a local government official -- trots sedately but purposefully towards the farm.

EXT. THE YARD AT ELANDSFONTEIN - DAY

Barend stands waiting for Frans to arrive at the property.

BAREND
Good day, Frans!

FRANS
Good day to you!

BAREND
What can I do for you?

FRANS DU TOIT
(awkwardly, proffering a legal
document)
I have to inspect your slaves,
Barend.

BAREND
Is that so?

Frans dismounts, pulls the reins over his horse's head, and ties him up.

FRANS
(hesitantly)
Well ... I'll start with the the
closest one.

INT. KLAAS'S HUT - DAY

Klaas lies on the simple bed in the dim interior, bruised and clearly still in pain from the flogging.

FRANS
And what is your name?

BAREND
His name is Klaas.

FRANS DU TOIT
How are you today, Klaas?

KLAAS
Not so good, Baas.

Barend walks around behind Frans so that he is directly in Klaas's line of vision. He shoots his slave a penetrating look.

(CONTINUED)

FRANS

You don't look in very good shape.
What happened?

Klaas lies looking up at him, his eyes flickering between Barend and Frans.

FRANS

Come on, speak up. I haven't got all day.

KLAAS

I was thrown by a horse, Baas.

FRANS

You sure that's what happened?

KLAAS

Yes, Baas.

FRANS

Does your master treat you well?

KLAAS

I have no complaint, Baas, thank you very much.

Frans looks at him uncertainly for a moment, then he turns away and leaves the hut.

EXT. THE YARD AT ELANDSFONTEIN - DAY

As Frans emerges into the bright sunlight, he is evidently surprised to find the yard filled with farmers on horseback, guns slung over their shoulders.

The Field Cornet eyes the men apprehensively. He sidles over to his horse, unties it, and mounts. The farmers silently form two rows so that he can pass between them.

Barend disappears quickly inside the stable and emerges with a gun, which he sticks into one of the saddle bags on the horse Abel is still holding. He mounts and spurs forward to ride next to the visitor as the other farmers fall in behind.

FRANS

(obviously uneasy)
What's the matter, then, Barend?

(CONTINUED)

BAREND

Just riding with you to make sure
you don't get lost.

Abel watches as the men ride off. Then he walks over to
Klaas's hut and goes inside.

EXT. THE YARD AT ELANDSFONTEIN - LATER

Barend comes around the stable leading his horse. Abel comes
from Klaas's hut.

BAREND

Abel! Come take my horse.

Abel suddenly swings back towards Klaas's hut and picks up a
spade leaning against the wall. He turns to Barend, holding
the spade casually balanced on both hands.

There is a long silence between them and neither of them
moves.

BAREND

Abel?

Abel still stares at Barend silently, the heavy spade in his
hands.

Keeping his eyes fixed on Abel, Barend reaches behind him,
grips the muzzle of the gun in the saddle bag and slowly
pulls it out.

For a moment Abel still glares at Barend, then he drops one
end of the spade and comes towards him to take the horse,
casually swinging the spade in one hand.

EXT. A FIELD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

It is nearing sunset and Galant is sitting on top of a
broken plough. He watches Nicolaas approach from the
direction of the house.

NICOLAAS

What's this?

GALANT

Broken.

NICOLAAS

How did it get broken?

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

I broke it. (the tension hangs in the air between them) I told you this was no day for ploughing.

Nicolaas's eyes search Galant. Galant stares back and Nicolaas looks away.

NICOLAAS

(grinning nervously)
Oh well, anyone can have an accident.

GALANT

I pushed it over the stones.

NICOLAAS

These banks can be treacherous. One never sees them before it's too late.

Galant studies Nicolaas's averted face. Then he jumps down from the broken plough and saunters off through the unevenly ploughed lands, whistling.

EXT. HOUD-DEN-BEK FARM - DAY.

An axe crashes down onto a log of wood, splitting it in two.

At the sound of a wagon approaching, Galant rests his hand on the long-handled axe, and looks towards the house. Ontong goes to take care of the horses, and Barend and Hester, who is again pregnant, climb down from the wagon.

Nicolaas and Cecilia come out to greet them. The men exchange back slapping bear hugs, the women coldly exchange greetings, and Nicolaas tentatively kisses Hester on the cheek.

As the group moves inside, Hester hangs back to look around her old home. She catches sight of Galant, and their eyes hold for a moment. She turns and goes into the house.

Galant splits another log.

INT. MA-ROSE'S HUT - NIGHT

Ma-Rose takes a deep drink of bush tea. The fire flickers as the door opens and Nicolaas comes inside.

(CONTINUED)

MA-ROSE

Nicolaas? This is late for a visit.

NICOLAAS

Yes...

He comes and sits by the fire. Silently for once, Ma-Rose gives him a mug of tea, and she sits watching and waiting. Nicolaas drinks, staring into the fire.

NICOLAAS

Ma-Rose, you've got to help me.

MA-ROSE

What's the matter then, Nicolaas? I been watching you for a long time and I can see you got a deep thorn in your heart.

NICOLAAS

I'm married now, Ma-Rose. But I'm having problems with my wife.

MA-ROSE

She looks like a fine woman to me. She'll make a good mother. She's broad-hipped.

NICOLAAS

The fault doesn't lie with her, Ma-Rose. It's with me. I can't do it properly.

MA-ROSE

You know what to do, don't you?

NICOLAAS

I have no desire to do it.

MA-ROSE

Is it because of Hester?

NICOLAAS

(angrily)

Why do you ask that?

MA-ROSE

I know you set your heart of Hester long ago. But that's an egg you won't hatch just by brooding on it.

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS

(shakily)

But what can I *do*, Ma-Rose?

MA-ROSE

You got to be a proper husband to your wife.

NICOLAAS

I know. I've tried. But it doesn't work. Is there no medicine you could give me to cure it?

MA-ROSE

Pretend she's Hester.

NICOLAAS

I don't think such things about Hester!

MA-ROSE

You white people make unnecessary problems for yourselves. There's nothing wrong with you Nicolaas. I watched you and Galant often enough when you were small.

NICOLAAS

But what's gone wrong then?

MA-ROSE

It's a sort of blight some white men suffer from. A man's root needs the water a woman has inside her and some white women don't seem to have it.

NICOLAAS

What must I do then?

MA-ROSE

Soak your root in a black woman.

NICOLAAS

I won't! It's sinful.

MA-ROSE

(shrugging)

If you won't you won't. But don't keep on coming back to me then.

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS
It's against the Bible.

MA-ROSE
You want to tell me your own Pa did
what was against the Bible?

NICOLAAS
(staring at her as if a horse
has kicked him)
What's that?

MA-ROSE
Who do you think made your Pa the
man he is? I didn't always look the
way I look now. Today I'm an old
dried fig. But when I was young I
had a body. And your Pa knew me.

Nicolaas is aghast. He stands and backs away slowly. He puts
the mug down so forecfully that the tea slops over the brim.
Then he turns and quickly leaves the hut.

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Ontong is working on a wooden fence near to the stables.

Suddenly there is a wild whinnying from Nicolaas's stallion
and Ontong looks around to see Galant beating the horse with
a sjambok. The animal is bucking and running, and hurling
Galant this way and that.

Ontong throws down his tools and runs to Galant and the
horse.

ONTONG
(shouting)
What are you doing? You got mad or
something?

Galant stops beating the horse, breathing heavily, a
wildness in his eyes as if he doesn't quite recognize
Ontong. Then he hangs his head.

NICOLAAS (O.S.)
Galant!

Ontong takes the horse and leads it gently towards the
stables.

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS

What the hell are you doing?

Galant looks up to stare straight at Nicolaas, saying nothing.

NICOLAAS

How dare you beat my horse like that?

GALANT

He broke the gate.

NICOLAAS

He's never done a thing like that before. (a long pause. in a low angry voice) If I ever catch you doing that again--

GALANT

What will you do then?

NICOLAAS

Galant, I'm warning you. Your work is going from bad to worse. You're looking for trouble. Do you understand me?

GALANT

No, I don't understand you at all. If I don't do my work well I must be punished. You're the baas, or aren't you?

NICOLAAS

Galant. (his voice strained) We've always got along well.

GALANT

That's for you to say.

NICOLAAS

If it happens again, only one more time --

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Cecilia, now pregnant, is giving vociferous directions to Galant, Ontong, Pamela and some of the other slaves as they load up the wagon.

Galant steps quickly in front of Nicolaas as he comes out of the house.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

(in a low, urgent voice)
 Nicolaas, you *promised* this time
 you would take me to Cape Town.

NICOLAAS

(avoiding his eye and stepping
 around him)
 You have to stay behind to run the
 farm, Galant. That is what you are
mantoor for.

Nicolaas helps Cecilia onto the wagon, Pamela climbs up behind, and the wagons sets off, leaving Galant staring after them in the swirling dust from the wheels.

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Galant, Ontong, a young Khoi called THYS, who is in Nicolaas's service, Sarie, and several other slaves, are dancing, drinking, and joking as Abel plays his fiddle. They drink from barrels of brandy and clay pots filled with honey-beer. Amongst them is also JOSEPH CAMPHER, a 35 year old Belgian with revolutionary spirit.

CAMPHER

Hey, Abel! I've got a new song for you.

(begins singing "La
 Marseillaise" raucously and
 inexpertly)

*Allons enfants de la Patrie, Le
 jour de gloire est arrivé!*

ABEL

(laughing)

You can't dance to that man,
 Campher!

CAMPHER

You not supposed to dance - you
 supposed to march! It's what the
 revolutionaries sing in Paris.

THYS

What's the words mean?

CAMPHER

(singing the chorus)

To arms, citizens,
 Form your battalions,
 Let's march, let's march!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CAMPHER (cont'd)
Let an impure blood
Water our furrows!

Campher repeats the chorus and the others start joining in.

Galant is at the slaughtering stone, skinning and cutting up a sheep.

THYS
(pointing with a panic
stricken look on his face)
Look!

A wagon is approaching the farm.

GALANT
(calmly)
It's them. A week early.

Galant stands watching the wagon approach, the blood still on his hands. The other slaves quickly try to hide evidence of their carousing.

The wagon comes to a stop at the side of the house. The women carry some light belonging into the house as Nicolaas walks over the slaughtering stone.

NICOLAAS
(mildly surprised)
It's late in the week for
slaughtering. Did you skip Monday?

GALANT
We slaughtered on Monday too.

NICOLAAS
Oh?

Galant starts washing the blood from his hands in the barrel beside the stone, working very meticulously, rinsing each finger separately and cleaning the nails.

GALANT
(calmly)
We worked up an appetite for meat.

NICOLAAS
Didn't I leave you in charge to
keep an eye on everything?

Galant shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS
(coming a step closer)
Where are the sheep?

GALANT
In the kraal where they belong.

NICOLAAS
I want to count them. Come with me.
You too, Ontong.

Nicolaas and Galant move off in the direction of the kraal.
Ontong follows a little distance behind.

EXT. THE SHEEP KRAAL AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

When they reach the kraal, Nicolaas rests one foot on
the lower beam of the gate and silently counts the sheep.
Galant stares away into the distance.

NICOLAAS
(his eyes on Galant)
Ontong? Do you know anything about
the five missing sheep?

ONTONG
You think something caught them?

NICOLAAS
I'm not thinking anything. I'm
asking you.

ONTONG
It's difficult to say, Kleinbaas.

NICOLAAS
Are there any leopard tracks?

GALANT
(turning to Nicolaas)
It wasn't a leopard. It wasn't the
jackals either.

NICOLAAS
What happened then, Galant?

GALANT
I slaughtered them myself.

NICOLAAS
You had permission to slaughter one
a week. Wasn't that enough for you?

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

We wanted more.

NICOLAAS

The two of us had a lot of trouble before I left, Galant. I hoped to see an improvement when I came back. I warned you, didn't I?

GALANT

That's so.

NICOLAAS

Ontong, go and tie him up over the empty barrel in the stable.

ONTONG

Kleinbaas --

GALANT

Come on. Take me.

INT. THE STABLES AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Galant walks over to the barrel and holds out his wrists to be bound. He takes up position over the barrel and Ontong ties his feet.

Nicolaas comes in with a sjambok.

NICOLAAS

I've had enough from you, Galant.

He hands the sjambok to Ontong. Ontong holds the sjambok stiffly away from his body.

Come on Ontong! What are you waiting for?

GALANT

(straining to raise his head
and look round at Nicolaas)
Why you asking him to do it? You
scared to do it yourself?

NICOLAAS

Ontong!

Ontong brings the sjambok down on Galant's back. Dust comes swirling up from his jacket.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT
(to Nicolaas)
You scared?

Nicolaas grabs the sjambok from Ontong and starts laying into Galant, almost sobbing with rage at every blow.

Eventually, Ontong touches Nicolaas lightly on the arm.

ONTONG
I think that's enough, Kleinbaas.
You killing him.

Nicolaas swings savagely towards Ontong. Then he throws down the sjambok and strides out.

EXT. OUTSIDE GALANT'S HUT AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

In the first light of dawn, Galant emerges from his hut. His jacket is shredded from the whipping, and he is slow and stiff, moving with difficulty.

He begins to limp slowly past the slave bell as Pamela emerges from another slave hut.

PAMELA
(her voice still heavy with
sleep)
Where you going then, Galant?

GALANT
Over the mountains.

PAMELA
You going to complain?

GALANT
Yes. It's not about the beating.

PAMELA
Why then?

GALANT
Why you asking?

PAMELA
Because I care.

He glares at her. She looks back at him with clear eyes.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

What you looking at me like that?

PAMELA

I don't understand you.

GALANT

So?

PAMELA

You must come back, Galant.

GALANT

Of course I'll come back. Where else could I go? (he looks at her closely) If they ask you about me, will you tell them I've gone to Tulbagh to complain or will you be silent?

PAMELA

Do you want me to tell or do you want me to be silent?

GALANT

You can tell them.

PAMELA

Then I'll tell them.

EXT. A STREET IN TULBACH - DAY

Galant trudges along the road, his bare feet stirring up the dust.

He is suddenly thrust aside by another slave, running wildly. The slave darts down a side street, sees that he is trapped in a dead end, and begins scrabbling frantically at the walls to try to find an escape.

As Galant looks on, a group of voluble farmers whirls into the side street. They circle around the trapped slave. First one, than another begin to club him with their rifle butts.

Galant's face twists in helpless fury. He turns away and trudges on.

INT. A CELL IN THE DROSTDY - NIGHT

A guard roughly pushes Galant into the cell with two other prisoners. An old man whimpers by himself in a corner. The other, a giant of a man with a voice like a lion's roar, is chained and all but naked, badly beaten. The guard locks the cell. A single beam of moonlight falls in a shaft from a small, high window.

LION MAN

What you doing here?

GALANT

I came to complain. Now they keeping me here until the Baas comes.

LION MAN

You still bother to complain? You'll learn it's no use. I'm past complaining.

GALANT

What did you do?

There is a long silence. The old man whimpes. The chains of the Lion Man grate on the floor and he begins to speak, almost as if he's speaking to himself.

LION MAN

I'm trekking with my Baas and with a host of other masters and slaves, with sunrise on my right and sunset on the left, laying waste the land as we go on. Buffalo. Eland. Zebra. Rhino. Elephant. Whatever crosses our way ...

FLASHBACK - EXT. THE OPEN VELD - DAY

In the scorching sun, in the trail of the carcasses, packs of hyenas follow the trek, and jackals, and vultures. The circles of the vultures in the sky follow the progress from afar.

LION MAN (V.O.)

... until the wagons are groaning under the weight of the ivory and horns and hides. We trek like this for weeks on end, all the way to the Great River. And there we find people, a whole colony of them ...

(CONTINUED)

An orderly settlement, with men, women, and children living in harmony in mud huts along the banks of the river. Cattle graze, crops flourish.

LION MAN (V.O.)
... bastards, runaways, all sorts
of people who have escaped over the
years to settle there and be free.

INT. THE CELL IN THE DROSTDY - NIGHT

GALANT
I don't believe it.

LION MAN
(his chains grate)
Saw them with my own eyes. Spoke to
them myself. They used to be slaves
like you and me. Now they living
there in their own place.

The masters wanted to shoot them,
but the people brought us milk and
vegetales and all we needed.

FLASHBACK - EXT. THE FREE PEOPLE'S SETTLEMENT - DAY

Dawn breaks, and the pale light shows the settlement deserted. The Lion Man crawls out from under a wagon where he has been sleeping, and he looks about him, baffled. Then he smiles. Only the tracks of the people's cattle are left, and the empty huts.

LION MAN (V.O.)
In the night they all disappeared
as if they'd never been there.

GALANT (V.O.)
And then?

The masters set fire to the huts and lay waste the fields.

LION MAN (V.O.)
The masters burnt the huts and
destroyed the gardens. But the
people had all gone anyway. They're
free.

INT. THE CELL IN THE DROSTDY - NIGHT

GALANT
Slaves like you and me?

(CONTINUED)

LION MAN

Yes, like us.

(his chains grate again)

After we came back from the big hunt I would often go into the veld after the day's work was done, to sit and think about those people of the Great River. Couldn't ever get them out of my mind again. Free men, like real people. And that was when I first ran away.

GALANT

You said the masters burnt the huts and destroyed the gardens of those people. So what's the use?

LION MAN

Makes no difference. They're free.

GALANT

And what's going to happen to you now?

LION MAN

They finished with me here. Now it's off to the Cape, they said.

GALANT

What they going to do to you?

LION MAN

If I'm lucky I'll die on the road. Otherwise, again if I'm lucky, it's the gallows.

GALANT

And if you're not?

LION MAN

Then it's the island.

GALANT

The island?

LION MAN

Robben Island. With chains on your legs. Where you break stones till you die. And every day you can see the Mountain across the water. You chained up there, chained for life; and behind your eyes you still see those people of the Great River. The free people.

(CONTINUED)

The Lion Man falls silent. The old man whimpers.

GALANT

You better have some sleep.

LION MAN

Perhaps it's the last chance I'll ever have to talk to another man. You hear me? On that island you're not allowed to talk. Tonight I got to talk. Don't say anything. Don't fall asleep. I got to talk.

INT. A CELL IN THE DROSTDY - DAY

GUARD

Galant! Slave of Nicolaas van der Merwe.

GALANT

I'm here.

GUARD

Come on! Your master's here.

The guard unlocks the cell and leads the way up the stone steps to a room in the Drostdy.

INT. A ROOM AT THE DROSTDY - DAY

In a room with high, white walls and wooden beams across the ceiling, Galant stands before a long table, holding his stained, floppy hat in his hands. Nicolaas stands to one side.

LANDDROST

Will you go back with your master now and do as he says? If not, we'll have to put rings on your legs.

GALANT

I shall bear what I deserve from you and my master.

LANDDROST

All right. Then you can go. But if it happens again you won't get off so lightly.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

Thank you, Baas.

LANDDROST

Now, wait outside while I talk to your master.

INT. IN THE HALL OUTSIDE THE ROOM AT THE DROSTDY - DAY

Galant positions himself by the door so that he can hear what is being said.

LANDDROST (O.S.)

Mr Van der Merwe, in future you should be more careful when you flog your slaves. A thong or a strap or a cane is in order but a sjambok can cause trouble. If this should come to the notice of my superiors you may lose the slave. The Court in Cape Town is very strict on procedure nowadays.

EXT. THE ROUTE BETWEEN TULBAGH AND HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Nicolaas and Galant are leading their horses along a track up a steep slope on the Witzenberg.

As a silent, swirling mountain fog descends swiftly, their vision shrinks to a yard or two.

NICOLAAS

I think we'd better turn back while we still can. We can stay over in town and try again tomorrow.

GALANT

You scared?

NICOLAAS

Of course not. But it may get dark.

GALANT

So?

NICOLAAS

Galant, we're looking for trouble. This fog is not going to let up.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

If you insist. You're the master.

Nicolaas stares at Galant and then turns and goes on, dragging the unwilling horse behind him.

GALANT

Where are you going?

NICOLAAS

Up the wagon road, of course. Can't you see?

GALANT

(a dull smile on his face)

Oh.

They stumble on blindly through the wet fog, the horses balking and sending loose stone rattling down slopes and cliffs.

GALANT

You can't go up there.

NICOLAAS

I know the way. Just follow me.

He walks on a few more paces until Galant suddenly grabs him from behind.

NICOLAAS

(raising the sjambok to strike him)

What the hell are you doing?

GALANT

Look.

There is a momentary thinning of the mist as it swirls and folds in the wet wind. No more than a step or two ahead, there is a sheer drop to an invisible bottom, hundreds of feet below. Then the fog closes in again.

For a long time Nicolaas doesn't move, then he pushes the horse back so that he can get past Galant on the ledge.

It takes him some time to get over the shock.

NICOLAAS

What are we going to do now?

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

We can shelter under some rocks not far from here.

NICOLAAS

How do you know?

GALANT

It's near the wagon-road. To the left. I've sheltered there against the rain before.

NICOLAAS

But how in God's name -- ? Do you mean to tell me you knew where we were all the time? And you let me --

GALANT

I tried to tell you, but you wouldn't listen.

NICOLAAS

Stupid baboon!

Galant looks at Nicolaas impassively for a moment, then he turns and leads the way through the rocks to a small hollow. They tie up the horse.

GALANT

Light a fire. I'll go get something for bedding.

Nicolaas builds a fire from dried bracken and driftwood. Galant returns with armloads of heather and protea and he arranges them into two rough piles.

The hollow is small and they have to settle down in close proximity. They sit in strained silence for a while, the jumping flames lighting their faces.

NICOLAAS

You saved my life.

GALANT

I just stopped you. It was nothing.

NICOLAAS

You know, when I married Cecilia and my father gave you to me -- it was because I'd asked him to.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

Why?

NICOLAAS

I knew we'd get along on the farm.
I felt I -- well, I thought I
couldn't handle the farm without
you. I wouldn't know what to do.
And all I could think of was to ask
him to let me have you so you could
help me.

GALANT

You doing all right. (with a small
bitter touch in his voice) You're a
good master.

NICOLAAS

That's not what I meant. For God's
sake, try to understand. You've got
to understand.

GALANT

Why?

NICOLAAS

(after a long pause)

Galant, in spite of what happened I
want you to remain *mantoor* on the
farm.

GALANT

That's for you to say.

NICOLAAS

I want to give you another chance.
We'll make a new start.

INT. THE BEDROOM AT ELANDSFONTEIN - DAY

As the early morning light streams into the room, Hester,
still in her nightgown, is bending over the bed, arranging
the pillows and blankets securely around her baby, PIETER.

BAREND

(striding into the room)

Come on! Get ready quickly, we're
going over to Houd-den-Bek.

HESTER

(not looking at him)

I'm not going.

(CONTINUED)

BAREND

Hester, don't make trouble.

HESTER

I'm going to stay here with my children.

He takes her by the arm and jerks her around to face him.

BAREND

You'll do as I tell you!

HESTER

I tell you, I'm not going.

He strikes her. In fury she hits back but he catches her arms and holds her out of reach.

HESTER

I swear to God, if I were a man I'd break your neck.

BAREND

Well, you're not and you're going to do as I tell you.

HESTER

If my father had been alive - if your father hadn't killed him - you wouldn't have dared.

BAREND

Your father was a drunken good-for-nothing.

Hester cries out in rage, trying to wrench herself free, kicking him.

Pieter starts crying on the bed and, drawn by the noise, the older son, CAREL, three years old, comes into the room.

HESTER

Go on, show your children how bravely their father can fight a woman.

BAREND

(to Carel)

Get out!

Carel begins to scream. Barend suddenly lets Hester go and almost throws her away from him.

(CONTINUED)

HESTER

One day your sons will be strong
enough to avenge their mother.

BAREND

It's your own fault. You drive
me to it.

Hester picks up Pieter from the bed to comfort him. She shushes him and rocks him until he quietens. Then she looks at Barend over the baby's small head.

HESTER

All right, we can go to
Houd-den-Bek. I'd like to see my
father's grave again. Now go out. I
want to get dressed.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Cecilia ushers Barend and Hester into an oppressive room full of severe furniture arranged with stark symmetry. Her daughters, Helene and Hester, are perched on the edges of their chairs.

CECILIA

We haven't seen you for months.
Come inside. Shall I take the baby?

Pieter is crying and Cecilia swoops him up, offering a finger to his small fist.

BAREND

Where's Nicolaas?

CECILIA

He'll be here soon. He's correcting
a slave in the stable. There's been
some trouble again. These people
don't even leave you in peace on a
Sunday.

BAREND

I'll go to him. Perhaps I can give
him a hand.

HESTER

(angrily)

Why don't you stay out of it?

Barend ignores her and goes out.

(CONTINUED)

CECILIA

Shall we have some tea? Pamela!
Tea!

HESTER

I told Barend we shouldn't have
come today.

CECILIA

Nonsense. Sit down. Pamela! For
Heaven's sake, where are you?
(sighing) These people. You give
them everything and this is what
you get in return. Suppose they're
all sulking now because at last
Nicolaas has got round to teaching
one of them a lesson again. He's
too soft with them, that's what I
keep telling him. (turning to
Hester, without a pause or a change
in her voice) Bad time of the month
for you?

HESTER

No, it's a wonderful time. It keeps
Barend away from me.

CECILIA

Tsk. Tsk.

Nicolaas and Barend come in and the two girls rush with
excited little shrieks to welcome their father.

Nicolaas moves towards Hester to greet her.

HESTER

Don't touch me.

NICOLAAS

What's the matter then?

BAREND

She's in one of her moods again.

NICOLAAS

I didn't mean to keep you waiting.
I was just --

HESTER

You men make me sick.

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS

Really, Hester, if only you knew how much trouble he's already given me. And this morning I caught him--

HESTER

I'm really not interested, Nicolaas.

BAREND

It's the only way to keep them in check. They're all being poisoned by these rumours from the Cape. It's the bloody English.

NICOLAAS

At the moment it's just rumours. But one morning we'll wake up to find that they've all been freed overnight.

HESTER

You needn't be afraid of that.

BAREND

What do you mean?

HESTER

(standing)

It's obvious, isn't it? No one will think of liberating an ox or a horse. You can only bother about liberating a slave if you think of him as human. So how do you expect men to think of slaves in that way if they haven't even discovered that women are human yet?

BAREND

What you need is a proper lesson.

Hester crosses the room.

NICOLAAS

Where are you going?

HESTER

To my father's grave.

BAREND

Oh for God's sake, Hester--!

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Hester comes out of the kitchen door and walks quickly across the yard. As she passes by the stable, she stops suddenly and listens. There is a moaning sound, more sigh than sound. She goes around the stone building.

Ontong is squatting by the wide door of the stable.

HESTER
Good afternoon.

ONTONG
Good day, Nooi Hester.

HESTER
What are you doing here?

ONTONG
The Kleinbaas told me to stay here,
Nooi.

HESTER
Why?

Again, the sigh, the moan. Hester steps into the doorway and looks inside.

INT. THE STABLES AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

After the brightness of the day, the interior is very dim. A man is dangling from one of the crossbeams in the roof, his feet barely touching the ground, his arms stretched and tied above his head. He is naked. It is Galant.

HESTER
(turning back to Ontong)
What's he doing like this?

ONTONG
(staring straight ahead)
Baas Nicolaas said he must stay
there until tonight.

HESTER
Cut him loose, Ontong.

ONTONG
The Kleinbaas will kill me.

(CONTINUED)

HESTER

Ontong. Go home. I'll tell Nicolaas myself.

Ontong shakes his head slowly. But in the end he gets to his feet and shuffles off.

HESTER

(turning again into the stable)

Galant.

GALANT

Go away.

HESTER

Why did he do this to you?

GALANT

Go away.

HESTER

Let me help you.

GALANT

I don't want you here.

She looks around the stable and, with difficulty, pulls a heavy wooden box filled with straw towards him. Kneeling beside the box she shoves it under him so that he can take the weight off his arms. She stays kneeling and looks up at him for a long moment.

GALANT

I told you to go away.

She stands up and snatches a sickle from the wall. She climbs up on the box and, straining to reach the thongs holding his wrists, she saws at them. When the thongs give way, Galant's weight slumps against her, and they both fall, the sickle clattering onto the stone floor.

Hester picks herself up and fetches a wooden bucket half filled with water in the corner near the door. She tears a piece off the hem of her dress, soaks it, kneels next to Galant and starts washing his face.

GALANT

Go away.

Soaking the cloth at intervals, she continues washing him, cleaning his body.

A shadow crosses the doorway and Pamela comes in.

(CONTINUED)

Hester gets to her feet. She and Pamela stare silently at each other over Galant's prostrate body.

HESTER
(her voice trembling)
Take him. Look after him. Don't let
anyone ever do this to him again.

INT. GALANT'S HUT - NIGHT

A lantern hanging from a hook is burning steadily, turned very low.

Galant is lying on the simple bed shivering from cold fever. Pamela pulls a kaross closely around him, and wipes the perspiration from his face.

GALANT
I'm all right.

Ma-Rose is shuffling around in the background, pulling ointments and medicine from a skin bag. She applies a concoction to a poultice and applies it to his forehead.

Galant moans and thrashes, shivering violently.

Ma-Rose wafts a spring of herbs under his nose. It makes Galant retch.

MA-ROSE
(shaking her head)
Ai-ai-ai.

She heads for the door.

PAMELA
Where you going, Ma-Rose?

MA-ROSE
Got to get some brandy from
Nicolaas.

PAMELA
(standing quickly)
You're not going to ask them
anything. I won't have it.

MA-ROSE
(moving purposefully)
I need it for Galant.

Pamela watches her go, then sits down next to Galant again and wipes his face.

(CONTINUED)

PAMELA

Nooi Hester was kind to you.

GALANT

(struggling to sit up)

What's she to me?

PAMELA

Come. You must lie down.

She does her best to make him comfortable, but he is very feverish.

Ma-Rose returns with a bottle of brandy. She pours some into one of her containers, then holds Galant's head against her bosom as she helps him to drink.

MA-ROSE

(to Pamela)

This will make him sleep. Use these ointments on his wounds. They will cool the fire.

She gets up and goes to the door. Before she steps outside, she looks back at Galant and Pamela silhouetted against the light from the lantern.

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - NIGHT

Ma-Rose's shadow moves past the slave bell as she walks back to her hut.

The moon is high and the night is still and clear.

INT. GALANT'S HUT - NIGHT

Galant wakes and pushes himself up on his elbows, staring at Pamela with a lost, bewildered look.

PAMELA

Don't worry. It's only me. I'll look after you.

GALANT

I can look after myself.

PAMELA

One can't go on like this. You can't start all over every time.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

I'm not. I'm pushing it further.

PAMELA

That's what you think! (her voice choking) Every time you come out of it the loser.

GALANT

No. (he sits up, wincing in pain) Nicolaas comes out the loser. Don't you understand? In the past, when he wouldn't touch me, my hands were tied. Now that he beats me it gives me reason to fight back.

PAMELA

No one can fight back.

GALANT

Pamela. (when he says her name it becomes very quiet between them) I thought you would understand.

PAMELA

(bowing her head, leaning her forehead against him)

You must do what you know best. If you're really sure. I'll stand by you.

GALANT

You're right. I can't go on alone any longer. (taking her chin and raising it so that can look at her) But I got no right! Can't you see? I got no right to ask anyone to be with me. There may be a terrible thing coming.

PAMELA

Then it's better to face it together than alone.

GALANT

You must leave me while you still can.

PAMELA

I'm here. Let me stay with you. Take me if you want.

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Thys is ringing the slave bell in the chilly dawn.

As Nicolaas walks past Galant's hut on the way to the kraal, Pamela comes out.

NICOLAAS
(stopping, surprised)
What are you doing here?

PAMELA
I'm with Galant now.

Nicolaas runs his eyes over her body.

NICOLAAS
Tell him he mustn't get me wrong on
this thing. Tell him to pull
himself together. It's for his own
good.

PAMELA
Yes, Baas.

He watches her lithe body as she walks towards the house.

INT. THE FRONT ROOM AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - NIGHT

Nicolaas is paging through the Bible. Cecilia sits with her hands folded in her lap.

Pamela comes into the room with a tub of water. She kneels at Nicolaas's feet, unties the laces of his heavy boots and takes them off. First one foot, then the other she puts in the warm water, soaping and rinsing them. To dry them, she has to lift them on her knees. Her head is bent. Nicolaas rubs the sole of his foot along her thigh, watching her closely.

Pamela moves over to Cecilia and washes her feet, then she picks up the tub and moves towards the door.

NICOLAAS
Pamela.

She stops and looks round.

You've been late with the tea these
last few mornings. It will be much
easier for you to sleep in the
kitchen so that you can boil the
water as soon as you get up.

(CONTINUED)

CECILIA
(a sharp tone of suspicion in
her voice)
What's this, Nicolaas?

NICOLAAS
(without looking at Cecilia)
I'm master in my own house,
Cecilia.

Pamela turns around and goes to the door.
Where are you going now, Pamela?

PAMELA
I'm just going to the hut first,
Baas. Galant is waiting for me.

NICOLAAS
There's no need for you to go. I
told you to stay.

PAMELA
Yes, Baas.

Cecilia sits with her hand on the Bible, her head bowed.

INT. THE STABLES AT HOUD-DEN-BEK. DAY.

Nicolaas is working on a new girth for his horse.

Galant comes inside and stands silently looking at Nicolaas.
Nicolaas ignores him.

GALANT
You can't do this to me. Pamela is
my woman, I chose her, and we want
to get married. Now you expecting
me to sleep alone.

NICOLAAS
We need her in the house.

GALANT
You need her to clean up after
supper. And then you need her again
in the morning to make tea. In
between she's mine. It's the only
time we got to be together.

NICOLAAS
(sharply, turning his back to
Galant)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS (cont'd)

There's nothing more to discuss.

GALANT

Nicolaas! (trying to keep calm) I never bothered much about women. But Pamela I took because I want her to be mine. She's the only one. Do you hear me?

Pamela appears silently at the doorway. Neither of the men sees her.

NICOLAAS

Your work is waiting, Galant. Better get on with it before we have trouble again.

GALANT

If you don't let Pamela be you'll be the one looking for trouble.

Nicolaas comes towards Galant with the newly cut girth in his hands.

PAMELA

Please keep out of this, Galant. I don't want to see another bad thing on the farm.

GALANT

(turning to walk off)
You tell him that.

INT. THE KITCHEN AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Galant comes in with a bundle of wood.

Nicolaas is standing in front of the hearth where he has cornered Pamela.

NICOLAAS

Where were you last night? When I came to the kitchen you were gone.

Galant puts the wood down carefully, and the long-handled axe beside it.

GALANT

She was with me.

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS
(ignoring Galant, still
looking at Pamela)
Pamela, didn't I tell you I wanted
you to stay in the house at night?

GALANT
She was with me. She is my wife and
she comes to sleep with me.

PAMELA
Let me be, Galant. I'll have it out
with the Baas myself.

NICOLAAS
There's nothing to discuss. Pamela,
if you leave the house again at
night I'll put the sjambok to you.

GALANT
You not allowed to beat a slave
woman any more. Frans du Toit
brought the newspaper that said so.

NICOLAAS
What do you know about newspapers?

Galant slowly puts out his hand and picks up the long axe,
stroking the blade with his fingers.

GALANT
We've spoken enough about Pamela.
She's mine.

Nicolaas stares at Galant, then at the axe.

PAMELA
Galant --

NICOLAAS
(speaking in sudden haste)
Look here, if I ever catch you
coming in late in the morning
there'll be trouble.

Without another word, he leaves the kitchen.

EXT. OUTSIDE MA-ROSE'S HUT - DAY

Galant, on horseback, passes Ma-Rose's hut.

MA-ROSE
(from the doorway)
Where you going?

GALANT
That little bullock that broke its
hind leg got away.

MA-ROSE
(pointing)
I think I saw it grazing down there
early this morning. What about some
bush-tea before you go?

GALANT
No, I'm in a hurry.

He spurs the horse and rides off.

EXT. THE YARD AT ELANDSFONTEIN - DAY

Abel is sitting in the last patch of sun, holding his mug in both hands when Galant rides into the yard. Klaas is standing a little apart.

ABEL
You're early! Have a drink.

GALANT
I'm just looking for a bullock
that's run away, I'm not staying
over. I got to get back to Pamela.
There's a child coming. Now
everybody will know about Galant.

ABEL
(grinning)
Never let a woman tie you up too
fast -- especially when she's
pregnant.

KLAAS
(coming towards them)
I don't believe this bullock story.
Where's your pass?

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

Who are you to ask me for my pass?

ABEL

Don't listen to that old sour-puss.
Anyway, I haven't seen the bullock
anywhere around here.

Galant leads his horse to the water-barrel in the yard to drink.

HESTER (O.S.)

Good day, Galant.

Galant spins around to find her standing behind him.

HESTER

There's no need to look so nervous.
Barend has gone to Langenvlei.

GALANT

I didn't pass him on the way.

HESTER

He took the short cut through the
mountain.

GALANT

(watching the horse drink, not
looking at her)

I got to get back. I came to look
for a bullock but Abel says he
didn't come this way.

HESTER

You must be tired. Let me give you
something to eat in the kitchen
first.

GALANT

There's no need.

Hester has already begun to walk towards the kitchen. After hesitating for a moment, Galant follows her across the yard.

Klaas watches them go.

INT. THE KITCHEN AT ELANDSFONTIEN - DAY

HESTER

Here's some meat for you. And
bread.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

Thank you. I got to go now.

HESTER

There's some cold soup on the hearth. I'll warm it up for you.

GALANT

I'm not all that hungry.

HESTER

No, please stay. It's getting cold outside.

The muffled voices of Hester's sons drift through the closed door.

HESTER

(stirring the coals, adding more wood, hanging the black pot on it chain)

How are things are Houd-den-Bek?

GALANT

No complaints.

HESTER

I hope Nicolaas hasn't -- (she turns round to face him)

GALANT

He does things his own way.

HESTER

You mustn't let him get you down.

GALANT

No one can do that.

HESTER

You know, I've always thought, even when we were children -- I suppose it's silly of me.

Outside, the sun is down and the light is fading fast.

GALANT

What was it you were thinking?

HESTER

You were the only one who really understood me.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT
How can that be?

HESTER
We were the only two who never
belonged with them.

GALANT
The soup is burning.

She turns away hurriedly, stirs the soup and lades some out
in a bowl.

Still standing, Galant begins to gulp down the soup quickly.

HESTER
Isn't it too cold for you to ride
back now?

GALANT
What else can I do?

HESTER
(she is silent for a while)
That's true. I suppose there really
is nothing else you can do.

GALANT
Thank you for the soup. I got to go
now.

HESTER
Yes.

EXT. THE YARD AT ELANDSFONTEIN - NIGHT

Galant comes out from the kitchen and begins to walk away.
He hesitates and looks back. Hester is standing on the
threshold, her head leaned against the doorpost. Galant
turns and walks to his horse.

Klaas watches from the far side of the farmyard.

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Galant is chopping wood. He stops when he hears a galloping
horse approaching. It is Barend, riding so hard that the
animal is foaming at the mouth. Nicolaas goes out to meet
him and for a while the two brothers talk heatedly at the
gate.

(CONTINUED)

Leading the horse behind them, they come towards Galant. Nicolaas is trembling with anger.

NICOLAAS

(his voice shaking)

Barend tells me he heard from
Hester that you were interfering
with her last night.

GALANT

(staring at them in amazement)

Is that what Hester said?

BAREND

(shouting)

Are you accusing me of lying?

Barend and Nicolaas drag Galant to the stable. There is a pause, then the unmistakable sound of flogging.

INT. GALANT'S HUT - NIGHT

Pamela, heavily pregnant, is clinging to Galant's legs.

PAMELA

Please don't go, Galant. You know
it never works out to complain.

GALANT

I'm not going to complain. This
time I'm going away. They won't
ever find me again.

PAMELA

(sobbing)

You can't leave me behind like
this. The child's time is coming
close.

GALANT

I'm done with this place. This is
the end. You can take it for years.
But one day you just know it's
over.

EXT. THE MOUNTAINS OF THE KOUE BOKKEVELD - DAY

Galant is crouching in the small hollow where he and Nicolaas sheltered in the fog. There is a thin layer of snow on the ground and he is huddled in a kaross.

(CONTINUED)

He raises his head quickly as he hears voices and uneven footsteps. Swiftly and silently, Galant disappears behind a cliff.

The Field Cornet Frans, Nicolaas, Barend and a group of men, all armed, are awkwardly and laboriously making their way over the rocks and boulders.

FRANS

There's no hope. He knows the bokkeveld like the back of his hand.

BAREND

Well, I suppose that's that. Let's hope the bastard froze to death.

EXT. THE MOUNTAINS OF THE KOUE BOKKEVELD - DAY

The trickling streams and waterfalls suggest the thaw and the first early signs of spring.

Galant is walking purposefully down the mountainside and we stay with him as he nears Houd-den-Bek and walks past the slave bell.

Pamela is drawing water from the water pump. She looks up, her enormous belly silhouetted, and silently watches him approach.

He stops in front of her. With infinite gentleness he reaches out, and places his hand on her stomach.

INT. GALANT'S HUT - NIGHT

Pamela heaves and sobs and moans in childbirth. Ma-Rose is holding her and Galant looks on from the shadows in the corner of the hut.

MA-ROSE

Almost there. One last time.

Pamela gives a groaning cry, and it is followed by the cry of the infant.

The baby's small body is hidden behind Ma-Rose's bulk as she ties off the umbilical chord and carries the baby to Pamela's breast. Ma-Rose turns to Galant and gives him an inscrutable look. Then she leaves the hut.

Galant hesitantly approaches the bed, and looks down.

The child is white.

EXT. A STREET IN CAPE TOWN - DAY

Against the backdrop of Table Mountain, Nicolaas mounts the steps of a government building.

INT. A HALL INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT BUILDING - DAY

The hall is filled with men from Cape Town, wine farmers from the environs and, at the back, a number of slaves. Red-coated soldiers are stationed in all the doorways ready to prevent mischief. Nicolaas takes up a position in the middle of the hall.

CHAIRMAN

We've had enough confusion and postponements. What we need now is certainty.

The crowd receives this statement with great applause. Last week, a deputation went to see the Governor, and he has sent this officer to report back.

OFFICER

The government is aware of your worries and is conducting a thorough investigation of the whole situation.

The crowd responds raucously to begin with but, as it becomes clear that the officer means well, they begin to quieten down and listen.

A long report has already been sent to the King in England, and it shouldn't take too long to receive a reply. Should the British Government decide on emancipation of slaves - in which case there would be ample remuneration - you will be informed in good time. By the end of the year everything should be cleared up. If you haven't heard any news by then it means that you will be free to continue as before. Otherwise messengers will be sent throughout the Colony, round about Christmas or New Year, with full particulars.

(CONTINUED)

FARMER 1

So, now we have a new postponement!

CHAIRMAN

Well, you can't expect a decision overnight.

FARMER 2

We should just take the decision into our own hands and set our own slaves free immediately.

FARMER 1

But what about the slaves on neighbouring farms?

CHAIRMAN

The end of the year is close enough to wait for.

Nicolaas turns to leave and shoulders his way out of the hall.

EXT. HOUD-DEN-BEK FARM - DAY

Galant comes out of the kitchen carrying a bowl in his hands just as Barend, Hester, and their children draw up in their waggon. Ontang takes the reigns from Barend, and Hester stands, looking towards Galant. Their eyes meet. He turns abruptly on his heel and walks away towards Ma-Rose's hut. Hester's follows him with her eyes.

INT. MA-ROSE'S HUT - DAY

Ma-Rose is making bush-tea.

The door opens and Galant comes in.

GALANT

I brought you some soup. I asked Pamela to pinch it from the kitchen.

MA-ROSE

I'm just brewing bush-tea. Stay and have some with me.

Galant sits and watches her preparing the tea.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

(suddenly)

I'm not the man I used to be,
Ma-Rose.

MA-ROSE

Is it because of Pamela's white
daughter?

GALANT

It's got nothing to do with her!

MA-ROSE

Well, what is it then? They finally
broken you in?

GALANT

(very softly)

No. No. No one can do that.

(he sits quietly for a while)

When I left here it was to try and
find me a place where I could go to
live. In the Cape, or across the
Great River, anywhere. All my life
I been looking for that place. All
my life I been wanting to get away
from here. But there's one thing I
found out. You can't get away from
your own place. It's stuck to your
footsoles. My place is here. This
Bokkeveld. This Houd-den-Bek.
Before, I was here because I got no
other choice. Now I'm here because
I want it. I made up my mind and I
chose this place. It's mine.

MA-ROSE

So you satisfied at last?

GALANT

I didn't say that. How can I ever
be satisfied while I'm a slave? But
at least I got a place now that is
mine. All I got to do now is to get
out from under the masters. And I'm
just biding my time.

MA-ROSE

What time you biding?

GALANT

Ma-Rose, you heard the news that we
going to be free?

(CONTINUED)

MA-ROSE

There's been a lot of stories like that over the years, Galant. Don't put your heart on it. It gets you nowhere.

GALANT

(quietly)

Christmas or New Year.

MA-ROSE

Where did you hear it?

GALANT

Everybody heard it. It's Christmas, or it's New Year. Today I know my place. When that day comes, my place will know me too.

MA-ROSE

Christmas and New Year will come and go. Like every other year.

GALANT

Just you wait. I'm biding my time. And New Year is my time. No sooner, no later.

EXT. A WHEAT FIELD AT LANGENVLEI - DAY

The slaves from all three farms are taking a break from reaping, their sickles put to one side. They sit in the hot, midday sun, eating soft, juicy peaches.

ABEL

Just another day or two, then we'll be running free through the world, and take whatever we want. I can already see myself (he is laughing so much he can hardly speak) I can see myself sitting on the stoep at Elandsfontein, *sopie* in one hand, pipe in my mouth, and taking out the pipe to shout, "Hey, Barend! Move your arse, man. Bring on that wagon, I'm going on a trip."

A ripple of laughter goes through the slaves. Otherwise, I'll be calling Barend to tell him, "Hey, Barend, I want you to ride over to Houd-den-Bek and tell Baas Galant it's time he

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ABEL (cont'd)
gave that useless Nicolaas a proper
flogging again."

Unseen by them, Piet has walked up behind them. In a fury, he picks up a sickle and rushes towards Abel with a roar. In mid stride, he is felled by a stroke.

INT. THE BEDROOM AT LANGENVLEI - DAY

A single wasp is droning against a closed window.

Piet lies looking shrunken in the big bed, his breathing laborious, his hands lying uselessly at his side.

Ma-Rose sits on the floor beside the bed, humming softly. Alida sits at his bedside, her hands folded in her lap.

Hester comes to the threshold. She stands regarding him for a moment and then turns to leave. Piet's eyes open suddenly and he watches her go, acuity in his gaze.

EXT. THE DAM AT LANGENVLEI - DAY

The cicadas are throbbing in the shimmering heat.

Hester appears over the rise leading down to the dam.

Galant is sitting very still on one of the large boulders. He jumps up on her approach and starts to move quickly away.

HESTER
Galant! Why do you run away from
me?

GALANT
(he stops, half turned away
from her)
I'm not.

HESTER
I didn't mean to scare you.

GALANT
You didn't.

HESTER
I was just ... (she gestures
towards the dam) Every time I've
been to Houd-den-Bek these last
months you've kept out of my way.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT
Why shouldn't I?

HESTER
But surely --

He turns to go.

(crying out)
What have I done wrong?

GALANT
(turning to face her)
Nothing. You're a white woman. You
can't do wrong.

HESTER
Oh for God's sake, Galant!

GALANT
(suddenly blurting it out)
Did it really please you to have me
flogged?

HESTER
(she stares at him aghast)
I never had you flogged! When? Why
would I?

GALANT
It was you who told me to stay that
day I came after the bullock. You
gave me food. I didn't want
anything. You forced me to.

HESTER
(stunned)
What are you talking about?

GALANT
When Barend came back you told him
I'd interfered with you.

HESTER
(in a whisper)
That's not true. How could you
think that I --

GALANT
I no longer try to think what you
may do. It's not my business.
Whatever you do is right. Except
that it's Christmas today, and it's
only a week to New Year.

(CONTINUED)

Hester shakes her head numbly.

Why do you deny it now? (he takes a step towards her) There's no need to. If you did it, you had the right. Just don't lie to me. That's one thing you've never done.

HESTER

(hoarsely)

I'm not lying. I swear. I never said a word to Barend. How can you accuse me of such a thing?

GALANT

(at last, in a changed tone of voice)

Klaas was there.

HESTER

I'm sorry.

GALANT

Don't say that!

He bends over suddenly and picks up a stone, and hurls it into the water.

INT. THE KITCHEN AT ELANDSFONTIEN - DAY

Barend is at the kitchen table, tearing off a piece of bread and washing it down with a draft of beer.

Hester sits with her hands folded on the table in front of her.

HESTER

(her voice quiet and calm)

Klaas was cheeky with me today. And when I scolded him he talked back.

Barend stares at her, sucking the bread from between his teeth. Then he stands abruptly, the chair scraping on the floor, grabs the sjambok from the corner by the kitchen door and walks out, banging the door behind him.

Hester sits unmoving, her face expressionless.

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Nicolaas is handing out clothes, rations of tobacco and sugar to the slaves from a bag.

NICOLAAS

(folding up the empty bag)
Well, I hope it's going to be a good year. Enjoy your rest today. At the first sign of wind we'll have to start threshing.

GALANT

Is this all we getting?

NICOLAAS

Were you expecting something else then?

GALANT

What about shoes?

NICOLAAS

Since when do slaves wear shoes?

GALANT

(quietly)
It's New Year today. There are no more slaves.

NICOLAAS

Galant, I told you long ago not to listen to idle talk. Here at Houd-den-Bek we'll be going on just as before. And anyone looking for trouble will get it.

EXT. THE THRESHING FLOOR AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

A hot, windy January day.

All the slaves are working together, spreading out the wheat on the threshing floor as Galant leads the horses round and round to break down the bundles.

The horses are led off the floor and the men begin steadily throwing spade after spade of wheat into the air to separate the wheat from the chaff; the heavy yellow grain falling down and the chaff being carried away on the wind.

(CONTINUED)

CAMPHER

(leaning on his broad broom)
So, Galant, New Year has come and gone.

GALANT

So?

CAMPHER

Didn't you say that if they hadn't set you free by New Year's Day you'd take your freedom yourselves?

GALANT

That's right, and that's the way it's going to be.

CAMPHER

How are you planning to do it? Will you be going up to Nicolaas to tell him, "Now I'm free?"

Galant carries on working.

I'm asking you, Galant. One can't go on talking for ever, you know. Sooner or later you must do something about it. In America and France they didn't just talk about revolution, they did something about it.

ONTONG

(pausing with his pitchfork in the air)
You talking about dangerous things now.

CAMPHER

What you don't take with your own hands no one will give you.

ONTONG

Easy for you to talk. You a stranger here and as soon's there is trouble you can clear out.

ABEL

(playfully)
Just give it time. Perhaps the messenger is still on his way. It's a long way from Cape Town.

(CONTINUED)

CAMPHER

They said Christmas, and they said
New Year. The moon has almost grown
full again since then. Well,
Galant? Aren't you saying anything?

Galant stops walking, and the horse comes to a standstill,
hooves scraping on the ground. There is quiet.

GALANT

(staring across the veld
towards the mountains)
Campher is right. No use just to
talk about freedom unless you ready
to take it when the time comes. And
that can't be done with words.

THYS

How you going to do it?

Galant grabs one of the pitchforks and stabs its prongs into
the wind.

ONTONG

Watch out, Galant. What'll happen
if the Baas sees you?

GALANT

Let him! Or are you too scared? You
want to remain a slave?

ONTONG

I won't have anything to do with
blood.

Galant slowly walks across the threshing floor towards
Ontong and presses the prongs of the fork lightly against
his chest

GALANT

(softly, looking deep into the
old man's eyes)
We all together here. All these
years we been bearing it in
silence. Bad food. Harsh words.
Floggings. Cold. Heat. Hunger. He
took our women when he wanted them
and planted his white children
inside them. All that I suffered.
We all did. But in the end, like a
horse that rears up against the
whip, you got to refuse to take any
more. When that day comes you say,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GALANT (cont'd)
"Now I'm taking my life in my own
hands. Otherwise I'm a dog or a
snake or a worm, not a man."

ABEL
(planting himself beside
Galant)
Here I am!

With his raised fork Galant goes from one man to the other.

GALANT
Are you with me or not?

He touches each one with the points of the long fork.

EACH MAN
I'm with you.

INT. THE BEDROOM AT ELANDSFONTEIN - NIGHT

Barend lies turned away from Hester, sleeping and breathing
deeply.

She is wakeful, lying on her back, staring at the ceiling.

Suddenly the silence is shattered by dogs barking and sheep
breaking from the kraal.

Barend jumps up and runs over to the window, and leans out.

BAREND
What the hell's going on there,
Klaas? (muttering under his breath)
These bloody people!

Barend wrenches open the bedroom door and goes out in his
nightshirt.

EXT. THE YARD AT ELANDSFONTEIN - NIGHT

The kitchen door opens, sending a shaft of light across the
ground. As Barend walks across the yard, Galant and Abel,
like shadows, slip through the kitchen door.

BAREND
Klaas, you bloody bastard, why are
the dogs going on like that?

(CONTINUED)

KLAAS

I -- I got visitors, Baas.

Galant and Abel emerge from the kitchen, each with a gun. Both fire and Barend is shot in the heel. On all fours he scrambles towards Klaas.

BAREND

Help me, Klaas! For God's sake help me! Klaas, I'll give you anything you want. I've always been good to you. Please help me!

KLAAS

But Baas, I got no gun. How can I help you?

Seeing Galant and Abel bearing down on him, Barend jumps on one foot behind a shed and hobbles away back towards the house.

GALANT

Klaas, listen to me. If you help Barend tonight I'll kill you with my own gun.

The three run back to the house just as the door is slammed shut.

Thys appears with a spade and starts hammering on the door. It shudders under his blows.

INT. THE FRONT ROOM AT ELANDSFONTEIN - NIGHT

BAREND

(taking Hester by the hand and shouting over the noise of the hammering)

We can get out the front door.

Hester tears herself loose and holds her two sons close to her.

BAREND

Hurry up, for God's sake! They'll murder us all. Come with me!

HESTER

Let me be.

The door begins to splinter and Barend turns and flees.

EXT. THE YARD AT ELANDSFONTEIN - NIGHT

GALANT
Go on! Get inside!

Barend scurries away past the corner of the house.

THYS
There he goes!

They give chase up the hill. Abel aims a wild shot but misses. Galant tries to shoot but the cock of his gun sticks. The dogs are barking madly in the yard.

GALANT
(stopping, out of breath)
In this darkness it's useless to
look for a man.

They all trundle back to the house. The others go inside but Galant starts circling the house restlessly.

From inside the house come the sounds of the group up-ending tables, chairs, cupboards and shelves, smashing whatever is in their way.

Galant stops when he sees Sarie with Hester's two children. She is holding Carel by the hand, and Pieter is wrapped in a blanket on her hip.

GALANT
Where you going?

SARIE
They breaking everything inside.
It's not good for the children.
They're small. So the Nooi said --

GALANT
Yes, take them away from this
place.

Hester, still in her nightgown, comes round the corner after the children. She stops when she sees Galant, barely a yard away.

GALANT
I told Sarie to take the children
away.

HESTER
Thank you. I --

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

(to Sarie)

Go on. You can wait behind the shed. No one will find you there.

HESTER

Thank you. (in the moonlight her eyes are shadows) Galant.

They don't move, close enough to touch but not touching.

Then he raises his hand, hesitates, and with one finger lightly touches her breast through her nightgown.

TOGETHER

Come.

They walk around the house and up the broad stone steps to the loft above.

INT. THE LOFT AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - NIGHT

They tear and fiercely thrust aside their clothes, and Hester moulds Galant's body in her hands, the surface of his back gnarled and marked with welts and old scars. She is crushed by his full weight, her legs helpless and apart, kicking to find some hold.

INT. THE KITCHEN AT ELANDSFONTIEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is a shambles.

Abel finds a brandy jug and they pass it round from mouth to mouth.

Thys pulls a sabre from a hook on the wall and, after practicing with a few slashing movements, sticks it in his belt.

Klaas catches sight of Hester through the splintered door and he lunges towards her lecherously.

GALANT

(appearing the darkness behind Hester)

Let her be!

ABEL

That's right. Our war is against the masters. Let her go.

(CONTINUED)

GALANT

I need someone who can take her
away to safety. Over the mountain
to the grazing place of Oubaas
Piet.

KLAAS

(urgently)
I'll take her. I know the way.

GALANT

(staring at Klaas)
Where's Goliath?

One of Barend's slaves materializes out of the dark.
Goliath, you take her away over the
mountains. Make sure she's safe.
Look after her until we come back.
I'm holding you responsible.

KLAAS

Let me take the woman!

GALANT

I'm sending Goliath.

Galant watches as Hester goes off into the night with
Goliath, then he comes into the kitchen, kicking a broken
chair in his way.

Is this all you can think about? Is
this your freedom? -- breaking and
drinking and arguing? Klaas, saddle
Barend's horse and ride next to me!

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - NIGHT

Leading their horses, Galant, Abel, Thys, and Klaas walk
quietly past the slave bell into the yard.

Unseen by them, Campher emerges from the shadows and slips
away quietly in the opposite direction.

INT. GALANT'S HUT. NIGHT.

Ontong and a group of slaves are waiting by a low fire.

One by one Galant, Abel, Klaas, and Thys come quietly
inside.

(CONTINUED)

ONTONG

So ... ?

ABEL

Barend got away into the mountains.

ONTONG

Then it was bad work!

ABEL

Why don't we get the guns from Nicolaas's house right away? They all asleep now. Before they know what's hit them they'll all be dead.

ONTONG

Where's Campher? He started it all. He's the master of the whole plan.

GALANT

Maybe it's just as well. I never trusted him anyway.

THYS

What'll become of us in the end?

ABEL

What'll become of us if we stop here? What happened at Elandsfontein is done. All we can do is go on.

ONTONG

But it's no use going into something knowing you can only lose.

GALANT

I don't care about losing or winning any more. Now I got to think of my son looking back at me one day to see if his father chose to be a slave or not. It's not for myself I'm doing this. It's for him.

ONTONG

Now I know for sure you must be mad. Where's that son you suddenly going on about?

(CONTINUED)

GALANT
(looking at him across the
glare of the fire)
You won't understand, Ontong.

EXT. THE YARD AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

The shadows of the men flit silently past the slave bell through the first signs of dawn as they move out to take up their positions in the yard.

Just as the sun comes up, the kitchen door opens and Nicolaas comes out. He stretches his arms and legs and walks at a leisurely pace to one of the outhouses to urinate against the wall. He then strolls away in the direction of the kraal.

The men emerge from their hiding places and run swiftly to the back door. They take off their hats before they go inside.

INT. THE BEDROOM AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Galant and Abel burst into the room where Cecilia is alone in the bed. She immediately begins screaming as they reach for the guns on the rack above the bed. She grabs hold of the guns, one muzzle in each hand, and there ensues a grim tussle between the three.

ABEL
Shoot!

Galant shoots her in the groin and everything is suddenly still as they watch the blood start to seep through her nightgown.

EXT. THE SHEEP KRAAL AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Nicolaas jerks his head in the direction of the gunshot and starts running towards the house.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE - DAY

Galant and Abel burst through the kitchen door and run over to the outhouses, where the others are waiting. Galant hands the guns to Ontong and Klaas. Thys has his sabre.

(CONTINUED)

THYS
There he is!

Abel spins around and sees Nicolaas running across the yard. He fires wildly and Nicolaas falters momentarily, but makes it to the house, slamming the kitchen door behind him.

INT. THE KITCHEN AT HOUD-DEN-BEK - DAY

Nicolaas bolts the door and leans his back against it, his eyes closed and his hand gripping his upper arm. Blood oozes through his fingers. He slides his back down the door until he is sitting on the floor, leaving a smear of blood.

There's an assault on the door from the outside, banging and battering.

Then, silence.

Nicolaas crouches down and inches over to the window. Slowly, he raises his head to look out. A bullet shatters the window and grazes his head.

NICOLAAS
(clutching his head)
Ah!

CECILIA (O.S.)
(screaming from the bedroom)
Nicolaas!

Nicolaas stands up by the bolted door, leaning his forehead against it. There is scuffling and murmuring outside. Nicolaas opens the door a crack.

NICOLAAS
Galant, please --

GALANT
Shoot him, Abel!

Nicolaas jumps back, slamming and bolting the door.

There's a cacophony of banging and hammering on the outside of the door.

CECILIA (O.S.)
(screaming again)
Nicolaas! We're being killed in our
beds. Nicolaas! Come and pray to
the Lord.

(CONTINUED)

NICOLAAS
 (shouting over his shoulder)
 I must speak to Galant first.

CECILIA (O.S.)
 You cannot leave me here alone,
 Nicolaas. Your place is with your
 family!

The hammering at the door becomes so loud that it drowns out her voice.

Suddenly, the hammering stops.

Nicolaas stands perfectly still for a moment, then reaches out and slowly draws back the bolt that bars the door.

When Nicolaas opens the door, Galant is standing right there, waiting. The others are further away, indistinct.

Time is suspended as the two men look at each other.

Without taking his eyes off Nicolaas's, Galant slowly raises his gun and shoots Nicolaas in the head. The force of the shot spins Nicolaas body and he drops to the ground. The shot echoes.

THYS
 (pointing urgently)
 The commandos! The commandos!

The slaves start to run and scatter in all directions.

Galant stoops, pulls Nicolaas's shoes off his feet and stamps his own feet into them. He runs past the slave bell, past Ma-Rose's hut, where she stands silhouetted in the doorway, and he heads towards the mountains.

EXT. BOKKEVELD - DAY

The vast expanse of the Cold Bokkeveld Mountains. Everything is still. The only movement is the group of commandos riding towards Houd-den-Bek, but they are too far away to be heard.

INT. THE COURT ROOM IN CAPE TOWN - DAY

PRESIDING JUDGE
 After due investigation and having
 heard the claim of the R.O.
 Prosecutor together with the
 prisoners' defense, and having
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PRESIDING JUDGE (cont'd)
taken into consideration everything
which deserved attention or could
move the Court administering
Justice in the name and on behalf
of His Britannic Majesty in this
Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, I
declare as follows:

As the verdicts are read, we see each of the faces of the
prisoners.

I declare the 1st and 2nd prisoners
Galant and Abel guilty of
conspiring to commit and of
actually committing the crimes of
high treason, murder and armed
violence;
the prisoners Thys, Klaas and
Ontong of being accomplices in the
execution of the plan, aggravated
with respect to the prisoner Thys
by the particularly active part
which he took in all the acts of
violence that were committed;
and therefore condemn all the said
prisoners to be brought to the
usual place of execution and being
there delivered over to the
executioner;
the prisoners Galant and Abel to be
hanged by the necks till they are
dead;
the prisoners Thys and Klaas to be
exposed to public view made fast to
the gallows by ropes round their
necks, and together with the
prisoner Ontong, tied to a stake
and severely scourged, and
thereupon confined to labour in
irons on the public works - Thys
and Klaas for life and Ontong for
the term of fifteen years;
while the Court finds the prisoner
Joseph Campher not guilty, and
absolves the prisoner Pamela from
this instance.
Thus decreed in the Court of
Justice at the Cape of Good Hope on
this 21st day of March, 1825, and
pronounced on the same day.

(CONTINUED)

Galant sits impassively while the verdict is read. When the judge stops speaking, Galant turns his head to look towards the public seating area where Hester is sitting, alone. She holds his gaze.

A guard pulls Galant away, and the prisoners are escorted from the courtroom.

FADE OUT.