

Philida

written by

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based on the novel by André Brink

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Made in Highland

FADE IN

**EXT. DAY. THE ELEPHANT TRAIL.**

Saturday 17 November 1832.

Early morning. The mountains around Franschhoek in South Africa's Western Cape.

Near the farm Zandvliet in the Drakenstein, the slave woman PHILIDA (25) walks along the Elephant Trail, casting a long shadow. She is thin, with a narrow face, wide cheekbones, and large pitch-black eyes. She wears a simple blue dress, thin and faded from many washings. She carries a child, WILLEMPIE (six months old), in an *abbadoek* on her back.

Mid morning. The solitary figure of Philida, with the baby on her back, trudges on in the far distance.

Midday. Along a street in the small town of Stellenbosch, Philida's narrow, bare feet stir up the dust as she walks alongside her shadow.

**EXT. DAY. THE SQUARE IN FRONT OF THE STELLENBOSCH DROSTDY.**

Philida arrives at a planted square in front of the Stellenbosch Drostdy. She stoops at a water pump and drinks deeply. She rinses her dusty feet under the water, and sits on a low wall to rub them.

After resting briefly, she crosses a bridge over the small stream that runs past the front door of the Drostdy.

**INT. DAY. THE STELLENBOSCH DROSTDY.**

In the dim interior, Philida approaches a clerk.

PHILIDA  
I am here to see the slave  
protector.

OFFICIAL  
Why?

PHILIDA  
I want to make a complaint.

OFFICIAL  
What about?

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PHILIDA  
Are you the slave protector?

OFFICIAL  
No.

PHILIDA  
I want to talk to the slave  
protector.

OFFICIAL  
(jerking his head towards an  
open door)  
Mijnheer Lindenberg is through  
there.

Philida crosses to the door and knocks.

LINDENBERG (O.S.)  
Yes?

**INT. DAY. LINDENBERG'S OFFICE.**

Mijnheer LINDENBERG (50s) sits behind a large desk in a hand carved chair with armrests. He is tall, white, thin, and bony, with deep furrows in his forehead, like a ploughed wheat field, and a nose like a sweet potato that has grown past itself. He wears thick glasses. He remains seated, while Philida stands in front of him.

LINDENBERG  
(looking at her over his  
thick glasses)  
Yes?

PHILIDA  
I have come to make a complaint.

LINDENBERG  
(pulling a big book towards  
him)  
What is your name?

PHILIDA  
Philida.

Lindenberg writes her name down in the big book, along with each answer she gives. Every now and then, he dips the quill in the ink, or sprinkles fine sand on the thick paper.

LINDENBERG  
Where do you come from?

PHILIDA

Before, I was in the Cape, but  
then we had to come with the Baas  
to a farm here in the Drakenstein.

LINDENBERG

What is the name of your Baas?

PHILIDA

Oubaas Cornelis Brink.

LINDENBERG

What is the name of the farm?

PHILIDA

Zandvliet.

LINDENBERG

How long have you been working  
there?

PHILIDA

Since I was nine. Now, I'm twenty-  
five. I'm the knitter.

Lindenberg continues writing everything down meticulously.

LINDENBERG

(peering at her over the top  
of his glasses)

You're the knitter at Zandvliet,  
you say?

PHILIDA

Yes.

FLASHBACK

**INT. DAY. PETRONELLA'S ROOM AT ZANDVLIET.**

The room is dominated by a high bed, covered with a feather  
stuffed *bulsak*. In a corner is a hearth for cooking. One door  
opens to the exterior, and another door leads to the interior  
of the house. On the smooth dung floor is a small red carpet.

In this flashback, Philida is 10.

PETRONELLA (mid 40s in this flashback) was brought as a slave  
from Java, but is now a free woman. As such, she wears shoes.  
She comes quickly into the room from the interior door.

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PETRONELLA

(triumph tinged with relief)  
Philida - I just talked to Nooi  
Janna, and she says you can be the  
knitter. So, you not just a  
farmyard girl, you a knitting  
girl. That's *something*.

PHILIDA

What must a knitting girl do, Ouma  
Nella?

PETRONELLA

You knit the socks and jerseys and  
cardigans and scarves and  
everything for the whole  
household.

PHILIDA

But I don't know *how*.

PETRONELLA

Come, I show you.

From a basket next to a spindle in the corner of her room she  
takes a ball of wool and two ivory knitting needles. She seats  
herself on the side of the high bed.

PETRONELLA

(patting the place on the bed  
next to her)

Come sit by me.

Philida climbs up to sit beside her, her feet dangling.

The needles flash as Petronella casts on a short row.

PETRONELLA

Now watch closely.

(Philida leans up against  
Petronella to get a closer  
look)

In-over-through-and-off. In-over-  
through-and-off. You see?

Philida nods.

PETRONELLA

(handing the knitting to her)

Now you try.

(Philida fumbles with the  
unfamiliar procedure)

In. Over. Through. Off. Good girl!  
Try again. Good!

(MORE)

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PETRONELLA (CONT'D)  
Now you just go on and make the whole row like that. Then, when you get to the end, you turn it around and you go back the other way. This is called garter stitch.

END FLASHBACK

**INT. DAY. LINDENBERG'S OFFICE.**

LINDENBERG  
Did you get a pass for coming here?

PHILIDA  
No. I know I do not need a pass to complain.

LINDENBERG  
When did you leave, and how long did you walk?

PHILIDA  
I left when the sun came up, and I got here just now.

LINDENBERG  
(checks his fob watch)  
So, about seven hours.  
(making note of this)  
Where did you sleep last night?

PHILIDA  
On the farm.

LINDENBERG  
What do you think is going to happen to you when you get home again?

PHILIDA  
Maybe I will get a flogging.

LINDENBERG  
What is your complaint?

PHILIDA  
It is Baas Frans that I come to complain about.

LINDENBERG  
(an edge of impatience)  
What are you complaining about?

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PHILIDA  
He take me.

LINDENBERG  
(peering over the top of his  
glasses)  
How did he take you?

Philida hesitates.

LINDENBERG  
I have to know all the  
particulars. The law demands that  
I must find out everything that  
happened. So that it can all be  
written down very precisely in  
this book.

PHILIDA  
He naai me.

Lindenberg gives a dry cough, as if his spit has dried up, and runs a hand over his balding head. Then, he writes this fact down.

LINDENBERG  
Did you resist?

PHILIDA  
Grootbaas, in the beginning I try  
to ...

BEGIN FLASHBACK

**EXT. EARLY EVENING. BAMBOO COPSE.**

PHILIDA (V.O.)  
... but that is when Frans begin  
to talk to me very nicely ...

FRANS (16) is already tall, with blonde hair and blue eyes. He fumbles Philida (19) against his body, pushing her backwards and down until she loses her balance and topples awkwardly. He falls on top of her, pinning her there, pulling at her clothes.

PHILIDA  
No, man Frans, no! Stop it!

FRANS  
(with frantic urgency)  
You mustn't be scared, I won't  
hurt you, I just want to make you  
happy.

(MORE)

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FRANS (CONT'D)

If you let me push into you, then  
I shall buy you free. Then you can  
walk everywhere you want to. With  
shoes on your feet.

He pushes into her, and she cries out.

PHILIDA (V.O.)

And I remember thinking, how can  
it be that a thing like freedom  
can hurt one so bad? Because it  
was my first time and he didn't  
act very gentle with me, he was  
too hasty. I think it was his  
first time too.

FRANS

I promise and I promise and I  
promise, from now on you are mine,  
for ever and ever, for us there  
will never be a slave and a baas  
any more, just me and you, I  
promise and promise and promise  
from now on we shall both wear  
shoes, forever and ever, amen.

END FLASHBACK

**INT. DAY. LINDENBERG'S OFFICE.**

LINDENBERG

(looking up from his writing)  
And then what happened?

PHILIDA

When he finish, he get up again  
and tie the *riem* of his breeches.

LINDENBERG

I want to know what happened  
*afterwards*. This thing you did  
together ... did it *lead* to  
anything?

Philida just looks at him, trying to grasp his meaning.

LINDENBERG

(getting very red in the  
face)  
Did anything happen inside you –  
to your body?

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PHILIDA

Not right away, Grootbaas. Only  
after he lie with me a few times,  
I start to swell.

LINDENBERG

How many times?

PHILIDA

Many times, Grootbaas.

LINDENBERG

Two times? Three times? Ten?  
Twenty?

PHILIDA

(folding her hands around her  
shoulders)

Many times, Grootbaas.

LINDENBERG

Did he hurt you?

PHILIDA

It was a bit difficult, but I  
can't say it hurt me too bad,  
Grootbaas. I had badder things  
happen to me.

LINDENBERG

Then what are you complaining  
about?

PHILIDA

Because he take me and he promise  
me he will buy me freedom from the  
Landdrost, from the government,  
and I can wear shoes because I  
will no longer be a slave, but now  
instead of buying my freedom he  
want to marry a white woman. Not a  
slave or a Khoi but one of his own  
kind. So now he want to sell me  
upcountry.

LINDENBERG

How do you know that?

BEGIN FLASHBACK

**INT. DAY. OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN AT ZANDVLIET.**

Philida peers through the crack between the door and the doorjamb at Frans (22) and his mother, JANNA BRINK (around 50), who is a large woman, both physically and temperamentally. She has the aggrieved attitude of someone who has airs above her station and believes that she has been forced to come down in the world by marrying into this family.

**INT. DAY. THE KITCHEN AT ZANDVLIET.**

JANNA  
Philida can't stay here.

FRANS  
But she's got nowhere else to live.

JANNA  
We'll sell her upcountry.

FRANS  
(dismayed)  
You mean put her up on auction?

JANNA  
That is exactly what I mean, Francois. You are a Brink, like your father, and all you have is money. Not class. Which is why I decided right from the beginning that my children should marry well one day. And you can't marry well with that *meid* underfoot. She and her children must be away from the farm before your new wife comes to live here.

END FLASHBACK

**INT. DAY. LINDENBERG'S OFFICE.**

LINDENBERG  
What can you tell me about your children?

PHILIDA  
That's *mos* why I'm here, Grootbaas.

LINDENBERG  
How many children have you got?

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PHILIDA  
There's two left. There was four  
altogether.

LINDENBERG  
What happened to the other two?

PHILIDA  
They die when they are very small.  
The first one didn't have a name  
yet and the second one was Mamie.

LINDENBERG  
Who is their father?

PHILIDA  
Frans and I made them.

LINDENBERG  
*Baas* Frans.

PHILIDA  
Baas Frans.

LINDENBERG  
And the two who are still alive?  
Where are they?

PHILIDA  
One is at Zandvliet where we made  
her. She's Lena. My Ouma Nella  
look after her. The last one is  
this one I bring on my back with  
me.

Philida turns sideways so that Lindenberg can see the sleeping  
baby in the *abbadoek* on her back.

PHILIDA  
He is my youngest. He was born  
only six months ago. His name is  
Willempie.

LINDENBERG  
When did the other two die?

PHILIDA  
(looking up into the corner  
of the room above  
Lindenberg's head with an  
inscrutable look on her  
face)  
The second one was only three  
months old.

LINDENBERG  
And the other one?

PHILIDA  
I have nothing to say about the  
first one.

LINDENBERG  
Why not?

PHILIDA  
He die too soon.

Lindenberg gives her a hard look.

LINDENBERG  
(sighing)  
All right. And you say they are  
all your Baas Frans's children?

PHILIDA  
Yes, that is the truth, before the  
LordGod.

Lindenberg moves his books and papers aside, puts his quill on  
top, and stands.

PHILIDA  
Is that all now?

LINDENBERG  
What makes you think it's all? We  
haven't even started. All you have  
done is to lay your complaint. We  
still have to investigate. Now we  
must wait for your Baas to come  
and make his reply.

PHILIDA  
So what do I do now?

LINDENBERG  
You don't do anything. You just  
wait until your Baas comes. You  
can wait here in the jail behind  
the Drostdy until he comes. The  
Protector will send a message to  
your farm.

**EXT. DAY. THE BACK STOEP OF THE DROSTDY.**

The Drostdy official leads Philida to a jail cell at the  
Drostdy.

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He unlocks the door and jerks his head for her to go inside. The door clangs shut behind her.

**INT. DAY. A CELL AT THE STELLENBOSCH DROSTDY.**

Philida stands just inside the door as her eyes become accustomed to the dim light. There are TWO OTHER WOMEN in the cell. Philida holds back, uncertain.

FIRST WOMAN

I bet you had nothing to eat today.

PHILIDA

Not since before the sun come up.

SECOND WOMAN

Come. We share with you all the little bit we got.

The women spread out a grubby kerchief on the floor of the cell, and lay out dried fruit, aniseed bread, two apricots, and a piece of dried fish.

Willempie is fretful. Philida takes him from her back, sits down, and offers him her breast. Once he is suckling, she reaches for some food and starts to eat.

**EXT. DAY. ZANDVLIET FARM.**

A Drostdy MESSENGER on horseback rides into the backyard of the longhouse, and comes to standstill, his horse stamping and sweating.

MESSENGER

(without dismounting, calling to a slave)

Where's your Kleinbaas?

The slave points to where Frans is supervising a small group of slaves in the vineyard just beyond the yard, and the messenger walks the horse over to him.

FRANS

You must take off these shoots from the roots of the vine here, but not these side shoots that are growing from the main stem.

MESSENGER

(still astride the horse)

You Francois Gerhard Jacob Brink?

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FRANS  
(straightening and squinting  
up at him in the sunlight)  
Yes?

MESSENGER  
(handing him a document)  
I've got a summons from Mijnheer  
Lindenberg at the Stellenbosch  
Drostdy.

FRANS  
What about?

MESSENGER  
You've got to go and answer a  
complaint brought against you by  
your slave woman, Philida.

The slaves shift and murmur, and Frans quells them with a look.  
He reads the summons. He looks up, and stares out over the  
vineyard. He reads the document again.

FRANS  
(squinting up at the  
messenger)  
This is a bad time for me to go.  
The fruit are getting ripe, the  
early apricots, and the plums, and  
the grapes are beginning to  
cluster, they need attention all  
the time.

MESSENGER  
You've got to obey the summons  
now. It's right there. In English.

**INT. DAY. THE VOORHUIS AT ZANDVLIET.**

CORNELIS (around 50) is small, with a strut like a bantam cock.  
He wears gold-framed spectacles, and he walks with a limp. His  
tanned face looks like a thunderstorm as he glowers at Frans,  
who is half a head taller than he.

CORNELIS  
You have to listen very closely,  
because I am a notable man, and I  
don't want my name to be dragged  
through *kak* just because you're  
too hopeless to deny something a  
damn slave girl did with you.

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FRANS

Easy for Pa to talk. There was a time when you yourself had a lot of good things to say about Philida, even when everybody could see that she had her first child inside her and they knew it came from what she and I had done. It's the sort of thing most of the men at the Cape do, so you can't pretend you don't know.

CORNELIS

(breathing heavily in anger)  
I've never had anything to do with a slave *meid*.

Frans regards his father silently, skeptically, for two beats.

FRANS

What if the man at the Drostdy starts asking me questions? What do I say then?

CORNELIS

Then you just tell him about those two slaves of Izak Marais who *naaied* Philida. That's where her last baby came from, not so? And her previous ones too, as far as we know.

FRANS

How can Pa say a thing like that?

CORNELIS

All I can say is that if you going to drag the Brinks' name through the mud you got to take responsibility for what you tell the Protector.

FRANS

I will.

CORNELIS

You'll just mess everything up. Like you always do.

FRANS

I won't, Pa.

Cornelis looks up at Frans, measuring him. Up and down. Then up again.

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FRANS

This is for me to handle the way I see fit.

CORNELIS

I'll go with you.

FRANS

This is not your *kak*. It is mine. So I'm going to the Protector on my own. You stay right here at home.

CORNELIS

(firmly, but very quietly)  
I'm still your Pa, Francois.

Frans says nothing; he just keeps looking at his father.

CORNELIS

(looking away)  
When will you be going?

FRANS

Tomorrow morning.

**INT. DAY. A CELL AT THE STELLENBOSCH DROSTDY.**

A key turns in the door of the cell. When the door opens, it lets in a shaft of light.

The two women who were in the cell with Philida are no longer there. Three other women have taken their places.

OFFICIAL

Philida! Hurry up now. Your Baas Francois is come to see you, move your backside!

Philida scrambles up and ties Willempie onto her back in the *abbadoek*.

The women watch Philida with knowing resignation as she turns and leaves the cell.

**INT. DAY. LINDENBERG'S OFFICE.**

A fly buzzes at the window pane. Mijnheer Lindenberg sits writing at his desk.

The door opens, and the Drostdy official shoves Philida into the room.

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Willimpie's white curls stick out from the *abbadoek* on her back. He whimpers, and Philida jogs him up and down to soothe him.

LINDENBERG  
(without acknowledging  
Philida, speaking to the  
official)  
You can show him in.

Lindenberg continues writing; the fly buzzes.

Frans walks into the room. Philida keeps her look averted.

FRANS  
(without looking at her)  
Good day, Philida.

Lindenberg finishes what he is writing, and looks up at Frans over his glasses. He indicates for Frans to sit in a chair opposite his desk. Philida remains standing.

LINDENBERG  
This slave woman has laid a  
complaint that you forced her to  
lie with you on the promise that  
you would set her free.

FRANS  
There is nothing I know about this  
slave woman, Mijnheer.

Philida's gaze jerks towards Frans, then she looks away again.

FRANS  
How could I have ever promised to  
set her free if she would lie with  
me? She is not my slave. She  
belongs to my father. It is not  
for me to say what must happen to  
her.

A sounds of resistance escapes from Philida, but she doesn't speak.

Lindbenberg writes down all of Frans's answers in his book, his quill scratching out the words.

LINDENBERG  
And what about this child? Are you  
not the father?

FRANS  
How can I be the father?  
(MORE)

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FRANS (CONT'D)

Mijnheer Lindenberg, I have never had anything to do with her. My mother would never have allowed anything like that to happen in her house.

LINDENBERG

Then where do these children come from?

FRANS

(staring straight ahead, not looking at either Lindenberg or Philida)

That I cannot tell you, Mijnheer. All I know is that she lay with two of our neighbour's slaves. Philida whored with any man who came along.

Philida bites her lips to stop them from trembling.

LINDENBERG

To be clear: she says that you promised her from the beginning that if you lay with her and a child was born you would go to the the Landdrost and the government and buy her freedom and her child's.

FRANS

What the *meid* is saying is just as true as it is false.

LINDENBERG

(looking at him with a hint of asperity)

What is that supposed to mean?

FRANS

It doesn't mean anything. It's a slave's word, and mine is a white man's word.

LINDENBERG

I want to know what it means if you say that her complaint is just as true as it is false.

FRANS

It means exactly what I said, Mihnheer.

(MORE)

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FRANS (CONT'D)

Her word means nothing against mine because I already told you she is a slave and not even mine. She belongs to my father. I have no say over her, my father is the only one who can decide about setting her free or not. So there is no way I could ever have promised her such a thing. There is nothing, good or bad, I can do for her.

A fly buzzes around Philida, and she brushes it away.

FRANS

The *meid* has already brought enough shame on me and our family. If I try to do anything more for her, it'll be finished and *klaar* with me. I'm sorry to have to say this, *Mijnheer*, but you can see for yourself that she can no longer stay in our family after all her cheekiness and lies and the way she behaved to my mother and the rest of us.

Silently, Lindenberg writes and writes in his book. Then he looks up at Philida over his glasses.

LINDENBERG

If all this is true, how can you still expect your Baas to set you free? After all the lies you told?

PHILIDA

I'm not asking to be set free any more, Grootbaas. I been lied to too many times by too many people. All I'm asking you today is not to make them sell me and the children inland. Please, Grootbaas. They're too small and the inland is too far away.

LINDENBERG

There's nothing I can do about what happens inland.

(MORE)

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LINDENBERG (CONT'D)  
 (taking off his glasses,  
 pulling a handkerchief from  
 his pocket to polish them,  
 not looking at her)  
 After all the lies you told  
 there's nothing I can do for you  
 anyway.

PHILIDA  
 Then the Grootbaas must *maar* do  
 what he want.

Philida leans forward and unties the knot of the *abbadoek*. With a deft movement of her body she shifts the child round to her front and opens her arms to make him sit up in her embrace. Willempie stares at Lindenberg out of two bright blue eyes. The child coos and gurgles.

PHILIDA  
 Here is the lie I told, Grootbaas.

Lindenberg replaces his glasses and slowly stands as he peers at the child. He shoots a look towards Frans, and motions with his head towards the door.

Frans stands, glancing towards Philida and the child. She keeps her gaze fixed on Lindenberg. A cock crows outside. Frans turns on his heel, and leaves the office.

Silence hangs in the room. The fly buzzes. Lindenberg sits down again.

LINDENBERG  
 You made your Baas come all this  
 way just to listen to a heap of  
 lies.

PHILIDA  
 How can it be lies? Didn't the  
 Grootbaas see the child for  
 himself?

LINDENBERG  
 (steadfastly, not meeting her  
 eyes)  
 Shut up! You're a slave and you've  
 done a wicked thing to tell all  
 those lies.  
 (shouting through the open  
 door)  
 Come!

The Drostdy official comes into the room.

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LINDENBERG

This *meid* lied to me, and thereby  
the court –

PHILIDA

(quickly, to intercept him)  
They say the law in the  
Government's books and the Lord God  
stand together.

LINDENBERG

What on earth are you talking  
about?

PHILIDA

I just talking about the ...  
(she gropes for the term)  
the Council of Justice and the  
Governor and that England place  
where the laws come from. Because  
I hear the law is now there to  
protect us slaves.

Silence hangs in the room. The fly buzzes on the desk.  
Lindenberg lifts the heavy book and smashes it down on the  
desk, killing the fly. Willempie starts to wail in fright.

LINDENBERG

(speaking very softly through  
his teeth)  
Just take the *meid* and let her go.  
Give her and her white child some  
food for the road and let them get  
out of my sight, otherwise I won't  
be responsible for what happens  
here any more.

**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE ELEPHANT TRAIL.**

In the middle distance, Philida, with Willempie in the *abbadoek*  
on her back, casts a long shadow as she walks back the way she  
came.

She reaches a fork in the trail, hesitates, and then heads off  
towards the Dark Blue Mountain.

She walks downhill along a narrow footpath, and then up the  
opposite slope.

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**EXT. DAY. THE BACK YARD AT ZANDFLIET.**

The black stallion, with Frans astride, clops haltingly into the yard, exhausted, his breath rattling and wheezing in his throat.

Cornelis, who has been on the lookout, struts from the stoep.

CORNELIS

This horse looks as if he's going to collapse. If you ever do that again I'll kill you with my own two hands, you little shit. You mustn't think that because you're twenty-two you are too old for a thrashing.

An outside slave comes to takes the reins of the horse.

FRANS

(sliding himself down the side of the horse, and standing on wobbly legs)  
I'm dead tired too, Pa. I'm going straight to bed and sleep it off.

CORNELIS

That's what you think. You will come to the *voorhuis* so you can tell me everything that happened in Stellenbosch. I'm your father, I am the Baas of Zandvliet, I got to know.

**INT. EVENING. THE VOORHUIS AT ZANDVLIET.**

The flickering candlelight casts dancing shadows on the walls. The family Bible lies on a pedestal in pride of place. The whole family is gathered (with the exception of the eldest son, Johannes Jacobs, who is in Amsterdam). Cornelis is in the high-backed chair. Frans sits on his father's left and, in descending order of age, KleinCornelis (21), who his father's favorite, Daniel (18), and Lodewyk (12). Janna sits on the couch, and next to her, in descending order of age, sit Maria Elisabet (14), Fransien (11), and Alida (9).

CORNELIS

(holding forth)  
Frans has told me everything that happened in Stellenbosch.  
(MORE)

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CORNELIS (CONT'D)

He told the Protector, a man called Lindenberg, that two slave youths had been with Philida and that, Frans said, was how the man recorded it. This is all that matters in the end: that it was recorded. One day in the future, when no one of us is still around, that is all the world will know and all that needs to be known.

JANNA

(in a low, trembling voice)  
The shame. The shame of it. This is what comes of marrying a Brink. This I will never be able to wash from my hands, this taste of gall and vinegar I will never get rinsed from my mouth.

(her trembling voice begins to rise to a crescendo)  
That I, a de Wet, have to see a day like this. It will be the death of me. My heart cannot stand this. The shame. And I, born a de Wet —

CORNELIS

(lashing out)  
You've been a Brink for years. You can thank the Lord that I gave you an honorable name and a roof over your head and a broad couch for your backside. When I married you, you were like a precious piece of porcelain on a high shelf. But look at you now!

Janna gasps for breath and starts crying like a biblical deluge in the wintertime.

#### **INT. EVENING. THE KITCHEN AT ZANDVLIET.**

Twelve Zandvliet slaves and their children — except Petronella, Philida, Lena, and Willempie — are gathered in the kitchen, waiting to be called into the *voorhuis* for the evening Bible reading. As they peer through cracks in doors and overhear the tumult in *voorhuis*, they exchange looks that range from alarm to suppressed levity.

**INT. EVENING. THE VOORHUIS AT ZANDVLIET.**

Janna's eyes alight on Frans.

JANNA  
(screaming)  
And what about you? It's all your fault. It's you who started consorting with that *meid* Philida. If it hadn't been for you, we would all have been living together happily and like good Christians. Aren't you ashamed, Frans? Do you have no respect left in your sinful body? God damn, don't you have any shame?

Her weeping starts whirling upwards out of her chest like a hadeda.

JANNA  
(a shuddering wail)  
Francooooooooooooois!

It is deathly quiet in the *voorhuis*.

CORNELIS  
(with the air of someone bringing a meeting to order)  
From what Frans told me about what happened in Stellenbosch, one thing is very clear: this slave girl has become a threat to us. We Brinks are a boat that has always hugged the coast, no matter what storms have come ...  
(he eyes Janna, who is trying to pull herself together)  
but Philida has now cut a hole into it and we may sink if we don't watch out. And that I'll damn well not allow. Over my dead body. This is how I have come to my final decision. What used to be a possibility in the past has now been sealed. It won't be enough to punish Philida. She has to be removed from among us.

JANNA  
(gathering the shreds of her dignity)  
The easiest, I'm sure, would be an accident on the farm.  
(MORE)

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JANNA (CONT'D)  
A dead person won't talk and a  
dead slave even less.

**INT. EVENING. THE KITCHEN AT ZANDVLIET.**

The slaves' eyes seek out each others' at Janna's suggestion.

**INT. EVENING. THE VOORHUIS AT ZANDVLIET.**

KLEINCORNELIS  
But Philida is a grown woman in  
her twenties, her name has been  
written in the government's book,  
she can't just be here one day and  
gone the next.

CORNELIS  
You are correct, my son. Which  
means she must be sold, as deep  
into the interior as possible, so  
no one can pick up a trace of her  
again. Frans, bring the Bible.

Frans stands to fetch the Bible from its pedestal. Cornelis  
places the Bible on his knees and rests his right hand on top  
of it as Frans takes his seat again.

CORNELIS  
(his eyes closed)  
And on this blessed day, it is our  
will, in the presence of God and  
all his angels, that the  
maidservant that is within our  
gates, Philida of the Cape, should  
be cast out from our company, to  
the everlasting glory of God the  
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the  
highest heaven.  
(opening his eyes)  
Is there anyone here present who  
wishes to rise up against the will  
of Our Lord?

FRANS  
Pa, shouldn't we wait until  
Philida is back to tell us herself  
what happened?

CORNELIS  
You were there, Frans, were you  
not?

(MORE)

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CORNELIS (CONT'D)  
 You heard everything that was  
 spoken, so we know exactly what  
 happened in that unholy place.

Silence. No-one dares to move. Maria Elisabet coughs, and Cornelis's head jerks in her direction, his glasses glinting in the candlelight. Maria Elisabet tries to smother her cough.

CORNELIS  
 (to Frans)  
 Is that so, or isn't it?

Frans remains sitting without moving, staring at the floor in front of him. KleinCornelis's eyes swivel right to his older brother, his lips set into a slightly smug smile. Janna clears her throat.

CORNELIS  
 (chillingly menacing)  
 Frans, what I said: was that true,  
 or wasn't it?

FRANS  
 (almost inaudible)  
 It's like Pa said.

CORNELIS  
 In that case we are united before  
 the Lord. Call in the slaves,  
 KleinCornelis.

KleinCornelis stands and walks to the door of the voorhuis.

KLEINCORNELIS  
 (shouting peremptorily)  
 Come!

The slaves shuffle in, and take up their places standing with their backs to the walls.

Cornelis opens the heavy Bible and pages to Genesis, Chapter 22. As the cadence of Cornelis's sing-song reading rises and falls like a drone in the background, Janna, gleaming with perspiration, sits with her face tilted up to the ceiling, her eyes squeezed shut. The exhausted Frans smothers a yawn. The smaller children fidget. The slaves stand, perfectly still, with their heads bowed.

CORNELIS

*And they came to the place which  
God had told him of; and Abraham  
built an altar there, and laid the  
wood in order, and bound Isaac his  
son, and laid him on the altar  
upon the wood. And Abraham  
stretched forth his hand, and took  
the knife to slay his son.*

**EXT. EVENING. THE ELEPHANT TRAIL.**

The shadows are long when Philida reaches an overhang of red rocks. She crouches, peering under the overhang, where she can make out a long line of rock paintings in the fading light.

She takes the abbadoek from her back, and sits down next to the overhang. Willempie starts fussing, and she gives him her breast. He stares up at her with his two big blue eyes.

PHILIDA

(singing to lull Willempie to  
sleep)

*If the sun is long down,  
if the young moon has set,  
the star mother will come,  
come out of the mountain,  
will still lead her star child —  
even if, as you see,  
he runs away for a while,  
runs now, for a little, into a  
cloud.*

**INT. EVENING. THE VOORHUIS AT ZANDVLIET.**

CORNELIS

*And the angel of the Lord called  
unto him out of heaven, and said,  
Abraham, Abraham: and he said,  
Here am I. And he said, Lay not  
thine hand upon the lad, neither  
do thou any thing unto him: for  
now I know that thou fearest God,  
seeing thou hast not withheld thy  
son from me.*

Cornelis reverently closes the Bible.

CORNELIS

You may go.

All the members of the household begin shuffling towards the door.

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CORNELIS  
Not you, Frans.

Frans stops, half turning towards his father.

CORNELIS  
Do you understand now why I obey  
the Lord? He always sees to it  
that the right things happen. You  
see what a God-fearing father  
Abraham was.

FRANS  
Who would want a father like that?

CORNELIS  
(his temper flaring)  
That is exactly the kind of father  
you've got. And if that isn't good  
enough for you, I'll give you what  
you bladdy well deserve!

**EXT. EARLY MORNING. THE ELEPHANT TRAIL.**

Sun slants in under the overhang of red rocks. Willempie, lying in the crook of Philida's arm, begins to fret and fidget, gradually working up to a full throated wail. Philida wakes, sits quickly, bangs her head on the overhang, and curses.

She wriggles out from under the overhang, and puts Willempie to her breast. With her other hand, she bunches up her skirt and squats to relieve herself. She pulls a dried branch of fynbos from a shrub, and uses it to sweep over the wet patch to leave no trace.

She sits, her back against the rock next to the overhang, and pulls from the pocket of her dress some of the left over food from the Drostdy. Chewing thoughtfully, she gazes out over the blue mountains.

**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE ELEPHANT TRAIL.**

Philida, her shadow long, walks along the dust road that descends from the Great Drakenstein. She comes to the aardvark hole, where she turns off to Zandvliet, and passes through the gates.

**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. ZANDVLIET FARM.**

The thick white walls of the farm reflect the evening light among the many greens of the vineyards, the fruit trees, and the shrubs.

Philida skirts the farm, and takes the dusty white path along the vineyards.

**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE BACK STOEP AT ZANDVLIET.**

Cornelis sits on the stoep, waiting. He catches sight of Philida walking along the vineyard path. He stands up, and pulls a heavy studded belt from his breeches.

**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE DWARS RIVER.**

Philida takes Willimpie and the *abbadoek* from her back, and makes a little hollow for him on the grassy bank. He kicks his feet, gurgling in the freedom from the *abbadoek*. She pulls her thin dress over her head and folds it neatly before placing it next to Willempie.

She walks into the cool water to rinse off the day – washing and splashing in the shallow water.

CORNELIS

Philida!

She turns to face him, the water streaming from her body, not attempting to cover herself.

CORNELIS

(calling out to her)

Why are you so bladdy late? We've been waiting for God knows how long.

PHILIDA

(unflinching)

What is it you been waiting for, Ouman?

CORNELIS

(running his eyes over her body)

It's you I'm waiting for, you hoer.

(he flicks the belt in his hand)

Today you're looking for a proper thrashing.

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PHILIDA

What for? I don't need a thrashing  
from an old man.

CORNELIS

You ran away.

PHILIDA

I did not. I tell Ouma Nella I go  
to lay a charge in Stellenbosch,  
and she tell Nooi Janna. I walk  
there and now I am back. No one  
try to stop me.

CORNELIS

Who gave you a pass to leave the  
farm? I certainly didn't.

PHILIDA

I do not need a pass to complain.

CORNELIS

I am the Baas and you know that  
bladdy well, and you need my  
permission to go to Stellenbosch –  
or anywhere else for that matter.

PHILIDA

My business is with Frans, not  
with the Ouman.

CORNELIS

Come out of the river.

PHILIDA

I do not come out if you want to  
beat me.

CORNELIS

(shouting)

Meid! You've got to listen to me.

PHILIDA

My name is not Meid, Ouman. I am  
Philida.

CORNELIS

Come here!

(when she doesn't obey, he  
speaks very quietly)

Philida, come out of that river.

There is a frozen moment. Then Cornelis bends, picks up  
Willempie, turns, and limps off in the direction of the bamboo  
copse, his heavy studded belt swinging with the motion.

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Willempie starts to wail, his cries jerked out of him with Cornelis's uneven steps.

PHILIDA  
(wading through the shallow  
water)  
You can't do that!

CORNELIS  
(over his shoulder)  
You just come with me, or else  
you'll see what's going to happen  
to this bladdy monkey.

PHILIDA  
(screaming)  
No, no! Give me my child!

CORNELIS  
Come on now, Philida. Just stay  
with me. Stay with me.

PHILIDA  
(panting)  
I'm coming!

**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE BAMBOO COPSE.**

Cornelis pushes his way through the bamboos into the copse. He stops, and Philida stops a few paces behind him.

The baby's crying falters and stops in the stillness.

PHILIDA  
Give him back to me.

CORNELIS  
(turning to her)  
You'll have to come and get him  
first.

PHILIDA  
(her voice wavering)  
I won't let the Ouman beat me.

CORNELIS  
All right then. I won't beat you  
with my belt today. Get down on  
your knees.

PHILIDA  
I won't.

CORNELIS  
On your knees, Philida!

PHILIDA  
The Ouman must put down that belt.

CORNELIS  
I won't.  
(sudden shout)  
Get on your knees, *meid!*

The baby starts to cry again.

PHILIDA  
(her lips trembling, her  
breath coming in sharp and  
shallow gasps)  
I won't.

Cornelis raises his free arm with the belt, but then he lowers it again.

CORNELIS  
(projecting over the baby's  
cries)  
On your knees, Philida.

PHILIDA  
Why Ouman?

CORNELIS  
Because you are going to leave us.  
After today I never want to see  
you again. This is the last time.

PHILIDA  
This is Frans's place.

CORNELIS  
What do you know about Frans's  
place?

PHILIDA  
I just know.

CORNELIS  
Today you're with *me*.

PHILIDA  
The Oubaas cannot do this. I lie  
with Frans now.

CORNELIS  
(jerks the baby towards her)  
You want your child back?



The volume of the child's cries increases.

PHILIDA  
(desperate)  
I will tell Ouvrou Janna.

Cornelis stares her, as if winded.

Willempie is screaming now.

PHILIDA  
(speaking quickly,  
frantically)  
Frans lie with me. I am his woman  
now. It's a bad thing the Ouman  
want to do in the bamboo place  
today.

CORNELIS  
Bend over, Philida!

Willempie is crying so hard that he is gasping and gulping for breath.

Philida looks from Willempie to Cornelis. She has run out of options. She turns from Cornelis and gets down on her hands and knees.

Willempie sobs and screams.

Cornelis stares at Philida. He takes a stumbling step towards her. He stops. He just stands there, wilted and empty. He reaches his free hand down to his groin. To no avail.

After several moments, Philida stands up again and turns towards her screaming child, keeping her face averted from Cornelis.

PHILIDA  
And now I want my child.

He hands her the sobbing Willempie, and she clutches him against her breast, soothing him.

Philida turns, still without looking at Cornelis, and walks away, the bamboos swaying in her wake, then closing behind her, Willempie's cries lessening in urgency and with distance.

Cornelis stands in the bamboo copse, his face screwed up into helpless tears of rage. He takes off his glasses. Roughly, he wipes his face on his sleeve. He puts his glasses back on.

After some moments, he slowly starts to walk out of the copse, the belt hanging limply in his hand.

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**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. ZANDVLIET FARM.**

Far ahead, on the riverbank, Cornelis sees Philida, with Willempie still in her arms, wading into the shallow water of the river, her wet body glistening in the sun. She scoops the water over her body again and again, as if there isn't enough to wash herself clean. As if she wants to scrub the very skin off her body.

Cornelis continues walking up the hill. He comes to a small green gate in the ring wall around the graveyard. He turns the rusty handle, and goes inside.

**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE GRAVEYARD AT ZANDVLIET FARM.**

Cornelis stops at a gravestone that reads: *Woudrien Andries Brink – Son of Cornelis and Janna Brink – Died 1822*

As he ties the belt around his breeches again, he moves on to study the gravestones of unknown strangers: Du Toit, Van Niekerk, Joubert, Hugo, several de Villiers. Some of the mounds are marked only by a stone.

A shadow moves in between the afternoon sun and Cornelis, and he looks up. It is Petronella (late 60s).

PETRONELLA

What are you doing here?

CORNELIS

Nothing. Just standing.

PETRONELLA

Where you been?

CORNELIS

That's none of your business.

PETRONELLA

It is precisely my business, Cornelis. What were you looking for down there among the bamboos?

CORNELIS

I wasn't looking for anything.

PETRONELLA

Perhaps you weren't looking, but maybe you found something.

(MORE)

PETRONELLA (CONT'D)

(for a moment she stands and  
stares at him with a look  
that seems to see right  
through him)

What are you doing here among the  
graves?

CORNELIS

I'm just looking at the place  
where I will come to rest one day.  
I and my children and my  
children's children.

PETRONELLA

I don't think you'll come to rest  
here. There are many names here  
you don't know anything about and  
will never know.

CORNELIS

There will be enough time later to  
get to know them.

PETRONELLA

And here's lots of stones that are  
not even marked and still they're  
graves. There are people buried  
here — in this corner, in that one  
over there, everywhere — that go  
back hundreds and thousand of  
years.

CORNELIS

What people?

PETRONELLA

My people. Khoi people. San  
people. Lots of them. More than  
you can even count.

CORNELIS

Your people perhaps. Certainly not  
mine.

PETRONELLA

People is people, and when they  
die they belong to everybody.  
They're part of our blood, mine  
and Philida's.

CORNELIS

That doesn't count and you know  
it.

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PETRONELLA

It counts, Cornelis, and I know that too. And one day they'll stand up and come to ask from us what belongs to them.

CORNELIS

There's nothing here that belongs to them.

PETRONELLA

What you think is theirs and what they know is theirs are two different things.

CORNELIS

You talk too much, Petronella. You always come when I need you least.

PETRONELLA

No, Cornelis. I come when you most need me. Only you don't want to hear it. And what I say is what you got to hear.

CORNELIS

There's nothing I got to hear.

His eyes wander involuntarily to the river, and Petronella sees.

PETRONELLA

What have you done with Philida among the bamboos?

CORNELIS

Nothing.

He tries to walk away, but she steps in front of him.

PETRONELLA

I know what you wanted to do, Cornelis.

CORNELIS

I didn't do anything, and that's the truth, I tell you. Now leave me alone, Ma!

PETRONELLA

I know about everything.

She takes a small, sharp peeling knife from her pocket, and gently strokes the blade on the palm of her hand.

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He shifts to try and get past her, but she blocks his way again.

CORNELIS

What's the matter with you today?  
I tell you I didn't do anything to  
that slave girl.

PETRONELLA

If you didn't do anything, it can  
only be because you cannot do  
anything any more and it won't be  
for lack of trying.

(taking a step closer,  
speaking almost affably)

Now you listen to me. You try to  
touch Philida again, and I will  
get you by the balls with this  
little peeling knife you gave me  
years ago. I'm not joking.

CORNELIS

(snarling)

You're out of sorts today, Ma  
Petronella.

PETRONELLA

(very quietly, her voice  
pulling in the way a cat  
draws in its nails)

I'm just telling you so you can be  
warned. I'm your mother. Do we two  
understand each other?

CORNELIS

(very quietly, after a long  
pause)

I understand, Ma Petronella.

**EXT. EVENING. ZANDVLIET FARM.**

Philida, carrying Willempie in the crook of her arm, walks from  
the Dwars River towards Petronella's room. Her faded blue dress  
shows dark patches where it clings to her wet body.

**INT. EVENING. PETRONELLA'S ROOM.**

LENA (3) squats on the floor with a skein of wool in her hand,  
playing with a small tabby cat.

The outer door opens quietly, and Philida slips in.

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LENA  
(the game is instantly  
forgotten as she runs to her  
mother)  
Mama!

Philida crouches to encircle Lena with her free arm. The small tabby cat twines herself around the small group.

PHILIDA  
Hullo Kleinkat. Did you also miss  
your ma?

The cat purrs, rubbing herself against Philida.

FLASHBACK

**EXT. DAY. OUTSIDE PETRONELLA'S ROOM.**

Philida (10) is sitting on the ground underneath the window, bent in deep concentration over her knitting.

JANNA (O.S.)  
Frans! Frans! Come here! Langkat  
has had six kittens.

Philida looks up from her work, her movements arrested.

JANNA (O.S.)  
They must all be drowned.

FRANS (O.S.)  
Ma!

Philida puts her knitting to one side and stands. She creeps to the corner of the house and peers around it to where Janna stands, holding a bushel basket of mewling kittens, berating Frans (7).

**EXT. DAY. THE BACKYARD AT ZANDVLIET.**

JANNA  
We already got too many of these  
damn cats on the farm.

FRANS  
But it's usually only in eight  
weeks that they're drowned.

JANNA

Not in eight weeks' time, not tomorrow, or the day after, but right now, today. Take them in this bushel basket and go drown them in the Dwars River!

Janna thrusts the basket at Frans, gives him a shove, and turns on her heel to walk back into the house.

Frans stumbles off in the direction of the Dwars River. Philida darts out from her hiding place and runs after him.

PHILIDA

(speaking fast, out of breath)

You can't do it, not to Langkat's babies, because Langkat is my cat, the Ounooi say so herself the day I knitted her the pretty red-and-blue cardigan with the double moss-stitching, she say I can keep Langkat for myself, and so the kittens is mine also.

FRANS

(keeping on walking)

She told me to drown them in the Dwars River and all I can do is follow orders.

Philida runs around in front of him, and stands before him.

PHILIDA

Do you always do what your ma say?

FRANS

(forced to stop)

What else?

PHILIDA

(urgent)

Must you always do what you ma tell you, can't you just say no?

FRANS

She is my ma.

PHILIDA

Those kittens also want to live, don't they?

FRANS

How can I say no to her?

(MORE)

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FRANS (CONT'D)  
If I don't listen to her she will  
tell my pa.

PHILIDA  
Are you a slave then who must do  
everything she say?

FRANS  
Her word is her word.

He tries to walk around her. The kittens are mewling. Philida  
grabs the basket.

FRANS  
Give me the basket!

They pull the basket this way and that way, and it falls. The  
lid begins to slip off. Frans dives to grab the basket and push  
the kittens back inside. One of them, a little grey-striped  
tabby, jumps out. Philida picks it up and puts it in the pocket  
of her apron, holding it tight.

FRANS  
(close to tears)  
Philida! Give it back! I'm going  
to get into bad trouble.

PHILIDA  
Then it's your problem. I'm  
keeping this one. I'll make sure  
the Ounooi won't get her.

FRANS  
Philida, give it back!

He tries to catch her, but she darts away.

FRANS  
I'm going to tell my ma!

PHILIDA  
Let me be, dammit!  
(changing her tactic)  
Look, I won't tell anybody. Nobody  
will ever find out.

FRANS  
You promise before the LordGod you  
won't tell anybody?

PHILIDA  
I promise before the LordGod.

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FRANS  
Then it's all right. You can have  
the little one.

Immediately, Philida turns and runs off with the kitten in her pocket.

END FLASHBACK

**EXT. DAY. THE BACK STOEP AT ZANDELIET.**

Philida sits knitting, Kleincat curled up on the bench next to her. From inside the house comes the indistinct inflection of Cornelis's voice, interspersed with Janna's. Philida keeps glancing towards the back door, as if expecting it to open at any minute.

When the back door opens and Cornelis emerges, she keeps her eyes on her knitting. Ignoring her, he strides across the stoep towards the yard.

PHILIDA  
(not looking up)  
Ouman!

He stops. Waits. Not looking at her.

PHILIDA  
(still knitting)  
It's now time for me to get  
moving. I must get away from here.  
Zandvliet got nothing for me any  
more. And I won't be sold like an  
ox or a goat inland and upcountry.  
So if that is what it got to be, I  
rather find myself a new baas in  
the Cape.

Cornelis stares out over the yard, weighing his options.

PHILIDA  
(staring at his back)  
Ouman?

CORNELIS  
I don't care where you go, just as  
long as you go. You can ride in  
the back of the wagon with the  
leaguers of new wine when I go to  
the Cape tomorrow.

**EXT. DAY. THE BACKYARD OF ZANDVLIET.**

Philida, Petronella, Lena, and Willempie are in the back of the ox wagon with the leaguers of new wine. [1 leaguer = about 128 imperial gallons, or 154 U.S. gallons] Cornelis sits up front with the herdsman.

The whole household, with the exception of Janna, is in the Zandvliet backyard to see them off. Philida picks out Frans, tall and thin, with his light hair.

Cornelis throws the length of the whip back in the air and brings it down hard over the backs of the oxen. With bellows and creaking, the oxen and the wagon slowly get into motion and lumber out of the yard.

**EXT. DAY. A TRACK IN THE CAPE WINELANDS.**

The plodding oxen and the wagon come into view.

LENA  
(her piping voice growing  
more present with the  
approach of the wagon)  
I miss Kleinkat, Mama, I wish she  
was coming with us.

PHILIDA  
(busily knitting)  
I wish so too, but we got nowhere  
to keep her.

PETRONELLA  
(her voice fading as the  
wagon moves past into the  
distance)  
Don't you worry, Lenatjie, I will  
take good care of her. Kleinkat  
and me are old friends.

**EXT. EARLY MORNING. THE PARADE IN CAPE TOWN.**

Against the backdrop of Table Mountain, everything is in commotion as farmers and merchants sell their wares – fruit, vegetables, bread, sugar, rice, coffee, spices, *karosses*, wools, cloths, *doeks*, muslin, cotton, cans and jugs of foodstuffs, preserved and dried gingers, citrons and oranges, dates, litchis, and tamarinds.

Philida, with Willempie on her back in the *abbadoek*, walks alongside Petronella, who carries a brightly coloured Javanese cotton shoulder bag.

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Lena walks between them, holding onto their hands. Philida is enthralled and wants to stop and touch and taste, but Petronella chivvies her along. They have a long day ahead of them.

**EXT. MORNING. STRAND STREET, CAPE TOWN.**

On the corner of Heerengracht [*present day Adderley Street*] and Strand Street, they pass a shop selling chairs and tables and cupboards, and they continue walking up Strand Street until they come to a row of residential homes. They walk around to the back door of the first house, and Petronella knocks.

PETRONELLA

Now, you just let me do the talking, Philida, and you keep quiet, Lenatjie, see?

Lena nods, wide eyed. The door opens.

PETRONELLA

(starting to speak  
as soon as the door is  
opened)

Good morning! This is Philida, and here is a letter from her Baas.

(she produces it from her  
Javanese cotton bag)

Do you want to buy a knitting girl? Or a slave woman for household work? She is very diligent and neat, and as bright as a button –

CAPE WOMAN 1

(closing the door)

No, there's no work.

Philida and Petronella look at each other.

PHILIDA

Oh well, I can't expect to get something the first try.

They walk to the next house, and knock on the door.

PETRONELLA

Do you have have work for a knitting girl or slave woman for the house? This is Philida. She does wonderful work, and she's very clever too.

CAPE WOMAN 2

What makes you think we need any more slaves? It's just trouble and problems and money in the water.  
(slams the door)

They move on, and knock on the door of the next house.

PETRONELLA

This is Philida. She's a very good knitting girl. She can also do work in the house or even yard work if it got to be. I have a letter from her Baas.

CAPE WOMAN 3

Can she knit blankets and doilies?

PETRONELLA

She can knit anything.

CAPE WOMAN 3

Does she know cable stitch?

PETRONELLA

She know cable stitch, garter, plain, purl, moss stitch, cross stitch, blanket stitch. She know everything.

CAPE WOMAN 3

I have a place for her.  
(she eyes Lena and Willempie)  
One thing, I don't want a lot of children running around in my yard. You'll have to leave them at home when you come to work here.

PHILIDA

My home will be where I work, Nooi. If my children can't come with me I can't come either.

CAPE WOMAN 3

(immediately angry)

You people always want all you can get, as if you're the baas and we are the slaves. We give you a little finger and you grab us all the way to the armpit. I need a knitting girl, not a crowd of good-for-nothings that eat us out of hearth and home. You can go to hell.

(MORE)

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CAPE WOMAN 3 (CONT'D)  
(slams the door)

PHILIDA  
(bewildered)  
But I can't just leave my  
children, Ouma Nella.

PETRONELLA  
Of course you can't. Come on,  
we'll keep trying.

They walk on to the next house, and the door is slammed even before Petronella can start speaking.

At the next house, the dogs are set on them. Philida scoops up Lena, and they flee. They come to rest under the shade of a tree.

LENA  
(tearful)  
Why are all the people so cross  
with us, Mama?

PETRONELLA  
(breathing heavily)  
It's the time that's wrong for us.  
And if the time is wrong, then  
everything will be wrong all the  
way to hell.

PHILIDA  
How can it be wrong for us, Ouma  
Nella?

PETRONELLA  
It's because of all this talk  
about freeing the slaves. Now  
nobody can pay for a slave and  
then be stuck with him, and all  
your money gone. Nowadays it's  
enough money for a whole farm.

Willempie is crying and Petronella takes him from the *abbadoek* on Philida's back to hold him on her wide hip, jogging him.

PETRONELLA  
We just got to keep on trying.

**EXT. EARLY MORNING. BOERE PLEIN.**  
[PRESENT DAY HERITAGE SQUARE]

CORNELIS

Look, this has now gone on for long enough, Petronella. It's time we get back to Zandvliet. I'm not a man that can just sit round waiting for things to happen and you know it.

PETRONELLA

Just give us one more day, Cornelis. That's all we asking.

CORNELIS

"Asking" my arse.

PETRONELLA

Nobody's arse. If you want to get rid of the child, then you do it properly, otherwise you got me to deal with.

**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. ORANGE STREET, CAPE TOWN.**

Philida and Petronella trudge up Orange Street, defeat, disappointment, and exhaustion evident in every step. Both children are asleep – Lena against Philida's shoulder, and Willempie on Petronella's wide hip.

They approach a huge house, where there have evidently been additions to the original structure over the years.

PHILIDA

(a spark of excitement)

This is where we must ask. These people must have lots of family, just look at all the rooms. Surely they need a knitting girl.

PETRONELLA

(purposefully walking past the house)

No, they're not our kind of people, Philida. They breed like mice.

PHILIDA

(holding her ground)

But they must be rich to have a house like that, Ouma. And look there, at the side, that must be the slave quarters. I'm sure people like that will have place for me too. I don't take up much space.

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PETRONELLA

(turning back and facing her  
squarely)

I don't want you to work in a  
house like that. They don't have  
proper manners.

PHILIDA

How can Ouma say that? Do you know  
them then?

PETRONELLA

I know them.

PHILIDA

But we can't be picking and  
choosing! We've looked and looked,  
and asked and asked, and nobody  
want me. We must at least ask.

PETRONELLA

Philida, I know what I'm saying.  
And it's not something I want you  
to hear.

PHILIDA

(taking a moment to register  
this)

Why mustn't I know?

PETRONELLA

Because I say so.

PHILIDA

That's not good enough for me,  
Ouma Nella. I'm the one who got to  
find work. This is *my* life.

PETRONELLA

(a flash of exasperation)

What make you think it isn't my  
life too?

(she heaves a deep sigh and  
shakes her head, as if to  
clear it, then she speaks  
through tight lips)

All right. I shall tell you what I  
know. But not now. Later. This is  
not the right time.

PHILIDA

How will I know when it is the  
right time?

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PETRONELLA

I will know. I'll tell you.

(turning)

Now come! Let's ask at these last houses on the street.

PHILIDA

(still staring at the big house, disconsolately)

I just feel as if I been walking a long uphill road, a road longer than the one that goes over the mountains to Stellenbosch, and it feel as if I have now come to the last bend. But all the way there has been nothing. Just nothing. All the time, nothing. And now still nothing.

**EXT. EARLY MORNING. THE ROAD LEADING INLAND.**

The wagon, now packed with the remaining leaguers of wine that weren't sold, creaks and sways on the road away from Cape Town as Table Mountain recedes into the background. Willempie is asleep in Philida's lap, and Lena sleeps with her head in Petronella's lap. Philida just sits. With the stillness of a stone. And Petronella sits watching her.

PHILIDA

(in a low, flat voice)

There is no more hope for me. They going to take me upcountry and sell me inland. Me and my children. A place we don't know, in a land we don't know and don't want to know.

(she sits, silent, lost in her hopeless thoughts)

Why is it like this, Ouma Nella? There must be something more. Something that is not like this.

(she folds her hands around her shoulders with with a piercing, imploring look at Petronella)

Ouma Nella, where am I not?

PETRONELLA

You right here with me, Philida, so there's many places you are not.

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PHILIDA

Tell me where those places are.  
Tell me where I come from. Please,  
Ouma Nella, you got to tell me  
what you know. Now is the right  
time.

PETRONELLA

(evasive)

For a long time I never told you,  
not because I did not know, but  
because you or I can do nothing  
about it. It just is what it is,  
and that's all.

PHILIDA

So tell me.

For a while, Petronella just sits, doing nothing, saying  
nothing.

PHILIDA

Do I also come from a far place  
like you?

PETRONELLA

No, you come from the Cape. You  
were made right here.

PHILIDA

I got to know, Ouma Nella.

PETRONELLA

(after another pause)

That house we came past yesterday,  
in the Orange Street, the one with  
the many rooms, that is where the  
Berrangés live. That is where you  
come from.

PHILIDA

(after a stunned silence as  
she processes this  
information)

Is that where the white woman  
lives who Frans want to marry?

PETRONELLA

It's not that he wants to marry  
her, but his family is telling him  
so. And that is why I don't want  
you to work there.

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PHILIDA

Now I got to know everything, Ouma Nella. I can't go on without knowing.

Petronalla breathes a deep sigh. She glances up at Cornelis's back, as if to make sure that he is out of earshot, and, as the wagon plods steadily away from Cape Town, she tells her story.

PETRONELLA

From very far back, more than twenty-five years back, I got to know the young girl Farieda that used to work for those people. A girl-woman, not quite woman yet. Just getting ripe, like a quince. Her mother came from Malabar, the people said, came out on the ship, like I did from Java. It's not something I like to talk about.

(she gathers her thoughts, as if weighing her words)

So, somebody bought Farieda, then somebody else bought her, then somebody else again — and that somebody else was called Daniel Fredrik. He was from the Berrangé family, and it's Maria Magdalena, one of his big brood of daughters, that they say Frans will now have to marry.

PHILIDA

Is — ?

PETRONELLA

(cutting her off and doggedly continuing with her story)

Now, Daniel Fredrik Berrangé's brother was a dominee — that is a man of the spirit. But all that was needed was one look, and you could see he was a man of the flesh. Such big, sweaty hands and a face that said only one thing: Come here, little sister, and lie down, and let your bridegroom enter you with singing psalms and lots of prayers. It didn't take long before Farieda was swollen with child, even though our man of God was already a father of five children by that time, three of them from slave women.

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Willempie whimpers in his sleep, and Philida settles him again.

PETRONELLA

Farieda was still a child, like I  
said, and she just wanted to –  
(her eyes flicker towards  
Philida)  
she wanted to drown the baby.

Philida looks keenly into Petronella's face, and their eyes  
meet.

PETRONELLA

It was I who stopped her and took  
the little thing away from that  
house and gave her to a slave  
woman in the Bo-Kaap whose little  
boy had just died.  
(she stops, lost in memory)

PHILIDA

And then, Ouma Nella?

PETRONELLA

(reaching to take Philida's  
hand)  
That baby was you, Philida.

PHILIDA

(an inarticulate sound – part  
shock, part bewilderment)

PETRONELLA

I helped to bring you up and later  
I took you in with me.  
(patting Philida's hand to  
punctuate the end of her  
story)  
So that is where you come from,  
and how and why.

PHILIDA

(urgent)  
But what about my mother, Ouma  
Nella? What about Farieda?

PETRONELLA

Why go on asking, my child? All  
those things have been buried away  
far and deep and long ago.

PHILIDA

I still got to know about my ma.

PETRONELLA  
Ai, man. Is it really necessary?

PHILIDA  
I want to know.  
(pleading)  
I got to know.

A long silence.

PHILIDA  
So tell me, Ouma Nella.

PETRONELLA  
She didn't live much longer, my child. She tried to run away, *sommer* up into the mountain, and the Berrangés sent a commando after her. They were already rich and important people and they could pay anybody to do what they asked. So Farieda was brought back. All I can tell you is that they didn't handle her softly. So to those rich people she wasn't worth anything any more. They just let her bleed, and so she died.

Philida stares at Petronella, her black eyes wide, but dry.

PETRONELLA  
I think it was better like that for her. So you moved in with me and I brought you up. Later, when Cornelis bought me my freedom, you came with me, and here we are still together.

Philida is silent. She sits staring out in front of her.  
Petronella too.

The long whip cracks over their heads and Cornelis drives the oxen on until their breath whistles in their throats.

**INT. JUST AFTER SUNSET. CELLAR AT ZANDVLIET.**

Frans is rinsing out a few half-aum wine barrels. [*an aum is between 30 and 32 gallons*] He lifts his head at a footstep as Cornelis limps into the dim interior.

CORNELIS  
Frans, you and I still have a chicken to pluck.

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FRANS  
And what would that be, Pa?

CORNELIS  
I'm off to Worcester tomorrow.  
There's an auction.

FRANS  
(still rinsing)  
What kind of auction?

CORNELIS  
Slaves, of course. What else?

FRANS  
(stopping his work, and  
looking sharply at Cornelis)  
Is it about Philida?

CORNELIS  
Of course it's about Philida.

FRANS  
But it's too soon. The child is  
still too small.

CORNELIS  
Who's child?

FRANS  
Philida's child.

CORNELIS  
Why should a slave woman's child  
concern you?

Frans is silent.

CORNELIS  
You mean *your* child too?

Frans still doesn't answer.

CORNELIS  
Anyway, when I was in the Cape,  
the people were talking about this  
auction in Worcester. They even  
put it in the Gazette.

FRANS  
This is no time to buy or sell  
slaves. The market is gone down a  
big hole.

CORNELIS

(angry)

What choice do I have? If Philida stays here there'll be no end to the *kak*. And it's all because of you. Because you can't control yourself.

FRANS

I'm just following your own example.

Frans quickly steps behind the wine barrel, out of his father's range. Cornelis eyes him, but doesn't attempt to reach him.

CORNELIS

(self pitying)

We're always on the losing side, Frans. Whether it's the government or God, no difference. God gets the Devil or somebody else to do his dirty work for him so nobody knows who to blame for it.

FRANS

And who's to blame for selling Philida now?

CORNELIS

It's her own bladdy fault. After all the lies she told that man in Stellenbosch! All her doing. And yours. That is why she's got to be sold upcountry now. You heard all the things she said about us. Your ma cannot stand it any longer. And how do you think you'll ever get that Berrangé girl to marry you with Philida always underfoot?

FRANS

Who says I still want to marry anybody?

CORNELIS

(glaring at him)

What utter *kak* are you talking now, Frans?

FRANS

Everything we discussed and talked about tells me I got no chance with Maria Magdalena.

CORNELIS

You should have thought about all of that long ago. Now it's time to get it arranged. The Berrangés are important people, we can't play the fool with them. And today we damn well need them, otherwise we've had it.

FRANS

What makes the difference this time?

CORNELIS

(in a torrent of aggrieved bitterness)

It was only I went to the Cape this time that it really hit me how bad it's going with us. You know what I got for my wine in the Cape? Thirty-six rix-dollars a leaguer. A bloody shame. Just more than half, I tell you, of what I got almost ten years ago when I started farming at Zandvliet. How are we supposed to keep up?

(he gives a deep sigh that seems to draw from between his backbone and his gut)

And this whole slave business — nobody can say for sure yet what will happen next year when the bladdy English let the whole damn lot of them loose on us. They say that each will remain indentured with her or his baas for for four more years, but who says it's going to work out like that? I lie awake at night and behind my closed eyes I can see strangers trampling the house and the farmyard of Zandvliet to dust. Everybody coming here for our bankruptcy auction.

FRANS

If that's how bad it is, how can you stop it?

CORNELIS

First of all we've got to get rid of Philida. She's making the water murky for all of us.

(MORE)

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CORNELIS (CONT'D)

That's why I've got to get on the road before sunrise tomorrow so that we can get to Worcester in time. I hear that the prices in that part of the world are still better than in the Cape, but not for long.

FRANS

Can't we wait a little bit longer?

CORNELIS

Who is your we?

FRANS

(startled)

Pa?

CORNELIS

Don't look at me like that. You're not going with me. I won't allow you to bring even more shame on the family. It's not games we're playing. I tell you it's life or death.

FRANS

But, Pa!

CORNELIS

That's all I got to say. You have caused us enough trouble. Tomorrow when I take Philida to Worcester you will stay right here. And as soon as I get back, you better see to it that you get married to Maria Berrangé. I hope that's clear.

Without waiting for an answer, he stalks out of the cellar as fast as his limp will allow him.

Frans stands still in the growing dark, looking as if a bucket full of cold water has been thrown in his face.

Then, he turns and runs from the cellar.

FLASHBACK



**EXT. DAY. BAMBOO COPSE.**

Philida (10) stands on a wood stump, while Frans (7) parades around her.

FRANS  
(in a sing-song, play-acting voice)  
*Mijne heeren*, here we have a young slave girl. Take a look.

Philida has to open her mouth to show off her tongue and teeth. And her hands, and her feet. Then back to her hands to show the gentlemen all her fingers, one by one.

FRANS  
(still in the sing-song voice)  
This slave girl can do clever things with these thin fingers. She can knit and sew. A girl like her is worth more than money or corals to a farmer's wife.

PHILIDA  
(climbing off the stump)  
That's now enough. Now it's your turn to be the slave and I'll be the Baas.  
(assuming a play-acting voice)  
Off with your shirt, and move your arse, the Baas don't have time to waste.

FRANS  
No, man, you can't be the Baas.

She whacks him on the buttocks and unceremoniously lifts him on to the stump.

PHILIDA  
(in her own version of the sing-song voice)  
*Mijne heeren*, take a look at this fine young boy. His eyes. Those two eyes are so good, they can see a duiker three days away and they shine in the dark. He can see round a corner if there's any game coming.

Frans can't help laughing.

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PHILIDA

Now look at his ears. Let me tell you, *Mijne heeren*, he can hear from a hundred paces away when a chameleon turn its left eye to you. Look at this mouthful of teeth. Those teeth can chew stones. It's a bargain, *mijne heeren*, and you won't get a better buy in this Cape of ours. Cape of Storms, Cape of Good Hope, Cape of Anything You Wish For in the wide world. His name is Francois Gerhard Jacob Brink, they call him Frans for short. Who will make me a bid?

END FLASHBACK

**INT. DUSK. PETRONELLA'S ROOM.**

Petronella is cooking at the hearth in the corner. Philida sits on a small red carpet on the smoothly polished dung floor, with Willempie on her breast and Kleinkat on her lap. On the big bed, Lena plays with a little green elephant carved from a block of camphor wood.

The door leading to the interior of the house crashes open, and Frans stands there.

PETRONELLA

(she positions herself in front of him, with her hands on her wide hips, blocking his way)

What are you doing here? There's nothing here that belongs to you.

FRANS

I've got to speak to Philida.

PETRONELLA

You got nothing to do with Philida. Let her be.

FRANS

This is important business, Petronella.

PHILIDA

(from the floor)

You and I got nothing to talk about any more, Frans.

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FRANS

But you don't know what is going  
to happen tomorrow, Philida!

PHILIDA

I don't want to know nothing. You  
just get out of here.

CORNELIS

(standing right behind Frans)  
What are you doing here, Frans?  
(he brandishes a long *kierie*)  
Get out!

Frans ducks under the *kierie* and runs back into the longhouse.

Petronella looks long and hard at Cornelis before closing the door.

**INT. DUSK. KITCHEN AT ZANDVLIET.**

Frans runs in, and stops as if trying to clear his head. He snatches up a lantern from the shelf above the hearth, and goes out quickly through the back door.

**INT. DUSK. THE BRIDLE ROOM IN THE BACKYARD OF ZANDVLIET.**

Frans crashes the door open, scans the shelves with his eyes, and grabs a small hatchet. He leaves as quickly as he came.

**EXT. DUSK. ZANDVLIET FARM.**

In the East, the moon is already out, a deep orange yellow, and huge.

Hugging close to the buildings so that he can remain unseen from the longhouse, Frans makes his way down to the bamboo copse. The moon casts Frans's shadow deep and black, keeping pace with him as he runs.

**EXT. DUSK. THE BAMBOO COPSE.**

Frans enters the copse, and the bamboos close up behind him. His shadow disappears in the sudden darkness. The bamboos shift in the evening breeze, making a ghostly whispering, groaning, grinding sound.

Frans strikes a small flame from his tinderbox and lights the lantern.

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The wan circle of light around him barely touches the black trunks and stems. He places the lantern on the ground, and starts hacking down bamboos, seeking out thin, straight ones. From time to time, he stops to make calculations and to measure. He hacks, and hacks some more, wiping away the sweat from his forehead.

At last, he has a bundle large enough, and he hoists it onto his shoulder. In his haste, he is careless and he kicks over the oil lamp. All of a sudden, in a whoosh of flame, everything around him turns into hissing and dancing arms and fingers of bright, blazing, burning fire.

**EXT. NIGHT. ZANDVLIET FARM.**

Frans tumbles out of the bamboo copse with the heavy load of bamboos on his shoulder. From outside, he stands staring at the flames in front of his eyes.

FRANS  
(muttering to himself)  
May the whole bloody Zandvliet  
burn to soot and ashes, let the  
Devil himself come down from  
heaven to take the lot of us away  
from here.

He turns and walks quickly along the narrow white moon-road back to the bridge room, churning up dust with his shoes.

**INT. JUST BEFORE DAWN. PETRONELLA'S ROOM.**

Lena sleeps with the abandon of childhood on her palliasse in the corner, while Philida and Petronella, with Willempie between them, are asleep on the high bed.

Suddenly, there is indistinct yelling in the far distance from Cornelis, the cock crows, and the slave bell clangs.

Philida sits up in bed, looking down at Willempie and over at Lena to check on them. Petronella turns over with a small grunt and settles deeper into the bed.

A banging on the inner door startles Petronella upright.

CORNELIS (O.S.)  
Petronella! Philida! Open up!

Willempie jerks awake and starts to wail. Philida pulls him into her arms to soothe him. Lena sits up, tousled with sleep, on her palliasse. Petronella pulls a shawl around her and pads to the door to open it.

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CORNELIS  
(looking into the room past  
Petronella at Philida)  
Get your things together, Philida.  
We leave for upcountry in fifteen  
minutes.

PETRONELLA  
We won't be ready in fifteen  
minutes.

CORNELIS  
You're not coming, Petronella.  
It's just Philida and her  
children.

PETRONELLA  
I'm coming too, otherwise Philida  
stays right here.

CORNELIS  
(suddenly furious)  
You can't come, Petronella, man!  
It's just Philida and her  
children.

PETRONELLA  
No, Cornelis.

JANNA  
(waddling up behind Cornelis  
and joining the fray in a  
voice that sounds like a  
cackling goose)  
Why must you always be making  
trouble, Petronella? You've got to  
stay here. Only Philida and her  
children go.

PETRONELLA  
No. No stay no.

CORNELIS  
(irate)  
Ag, come then! We leave in half an  
hour.

JANNA  
You can't just—

Cornelis slams the inner door, cutting off the rest of Janna's  
speech.

Petronella turns to look at Philida, sitting in the bed, nursing Willempie. Lena climbs up onto the bed to be near her mother.

LENA  
Where we going, Ouma Nella?

PETRONELLA  
Upcountry, my child.

PHILIDA  
Upcountry? What the hell of a place is that? How far is this upcountry, Ouma Nella, how many days' travelling?

PETRONELLA  
It will take as long as it takes.

PHILIDA  
I want to know how we going to get there.

PETRONELLA  
Man, if you don't know where you are going, any road will bring you there.

LENA  
But will we ever come back?

PETRONELLA  
It don't matter how far a river run, Lenatjie. It never forget where it come from. That is all that is important.

PHILIDA  
I heard it's a dry place, Ouma, this upcountry.

PETRONELLA  
No matter if it's wet or dry. As long as you keep a green branch in your heart, there will always be a bird that come to sing in it.

**EXT. EARLY MORNING. BACKYARD OF ZANDVLIET FARM.**

Frans emerges from the bridle room, carrying a bamboo cage in one hand. He keeps close to the outside wall of the homestead, and creeps up to Petronella's room.

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**EXT. EARLY MORNING. OUTSIDE PETRONELLA'S ROOM.**

Frans peers inside the window. Philida sits on the edge of the neatly made bed with Willempie at her breast. She is wearing the cast-off chintz dress that she was given for New Year. Next to her is Lena, quiet and frightened, staring as if she's seen a ghost. Pressed up against Philida Kleinkat lies stretched out as if there is nothing at all wrong in the world. The door to the interior is open.

Frans knocks on the outside door. Petronella opens it.

PETRONELLA

Well? What good-for-nothing  
business brings you here now?

FRANS

I brought something to give  
Philida for the road.

PETRONELLA

(flying at him in anger)  
What road? You mean to tell me  
that you knew it all along?

FRANS

I came to tell you last night but  
then we were interrupted by Pa.  
Honest to God, I did try to warn  
you, but it wasn't possible.  
(speaking past Petronella to  
Philida)  
I brought you something I made for  
you. It's for Kleinkat. So you can  
take her with you on the wagon if  
you want to.

PHILIDA

(biting back tears)  
There's nothing I want from you.

As if sensing his mother's distress, Willempie starts to cry.

FRANS

I worked right through the night,  
Philida.

**INT. EARLY MORNING. PETRONELLA'S ROOM.**

He steps deftly past Petronella and puts the cage on the floor next to the bed, then stands back again.

Made in Highland

Philida is holding the crying Willempie up to her shoulder. She says something, but it isn't possible to hear her words over the Willempie's wails.

Janna appears in the interior doorway, holding a mug of tea in one hand and a rusk in the other.

JANNA  
(stepping into the room)  
What are you doing here, Frans?

FRANS  
I just wanted – I just brought  
Philida something, Ma. It's a long  
road.

JANNA  
You have a bloody cheek, Frans.

FRANS  
Just leave us alone, Ma. It's bad  
enough as it is.

CORNELIS (O.S.)  
Philida!

Frans gives a panicked look towards the open outside door.

FRANS  
(as he turns to run)  
I think I burned down our bamboo  
wood, Philida.

He flees through the interior door.

JANNA  
What?!  
(waddling after him)  
What did you say, Frans?

FRANS (O.S.)  
Just leave me alone!

A door slams shut, and there is quiet in the house.

CORNELIS (O.S.)  
Philida!

Willempie has stopped crying. Philida lies him down on the bed, and tidies the front of her dress. She stands up from the bed and a shiver runs through her. She cradles Willempie in one arm, takes Lena's hand to help her down from the bed, then she turns and walks from Petronella's room, via the inner door.



CORNELIS (O.S.)  
 Philida! I'm not calling for you  
 again. Get your arse out here!

Petronella picks up her brightly coloured Javanese cotton bag,  
 and pulls it over her shoulder.

PETRONELLA  
 (calling through the open  
 outside door)  
 Wait, Cornelis! She will come.

**INT. DAY. THE VOORHUIS AT ZANDVLIET.**

Janna is sitting on the couch dunking her rusk into the tea.

Philida walks in, cradling Willempie in one arm, and holding  
 Lena by the hand.

Janna half rises, but sinks back onto the couch as Philida  
 speaks.

PHILIDA  
 (very quietly)  
 Ounooi, I just brought the  
 children so they can say goodbye  
 to their grandma. Because I don't  
 suppose we'll see each other again  
 very soon.

Janna opens her mouth, but no sound comes out. She drops the  
 rusk into her tea, and puts her big soft hand on her chest.

JANNA  
 (aghast, outraged)  
 Huh - Huh ...

Janna reaches out to support herself against the couch.

JANNA  
 (words fail her)  
 Huh ...

PHILIDA  
 (looking at the children)  
 We also got to go and say goodbye  
 to their father, Ounooi, before we  
 get on the cart. We wish the  
 Ounooi all the blessings of the  
 LordGod.

At the door, Philida turns to look back for one last time.

Janna is still sitting on the couch shaping with her small round mouth the sound: Huh.

There is the faintest trace of a smile at the corner of Philida's mouth.

**EXT. MORNING. ON THE ROAD NORTHEAST FROM ZANDVLIET TO WORCESTER.**

Cornelis is driving the mule cart. Philida, Petronella, the children, and Klienkat are in the back.

It is raining. Not hard but consistently. Philida takes her shawl and drapes it over the bamboo cage that Frans made for Kleinkat, who is curled up inside.

**EXT. DAY. OPEN SQUARE IN FRONT OF THE WORCESTER DROSTDY.**

Friday 22 February 1833.

The day is clear and unbearably hot. Cicadas shrill with piercing loudness. Townsfolk are gathered together with a number of farmers from the district, and even from as far as the Bokkeveld and Tulbagh.

A red carpet is spread open in the dust in front of the Drostdy, with a long sturdy table set upon it. Two bulky chairs are occupied by the COMMISSIONER and his pale, grumpy ASSISTANT. The Commissioner, a middle-aged Englishman of indeterminate years, is deeply tanned and wears a starched uniform.

In front of the Commissioner is a pile of heavy, leather-bound books and a stoneware jug around which a swarm of gnats swirls.

In the crowd, bottles and jugs and pitchers are passed from hand to hand, and the throng is rowdy. Cornelis, holding a flagon of brandy, is seated on the mule cart. Petronella remains in the back of the cart to watch the proceedings. Philida and her children are standing to one side and slightly apart.

On top of the table stands a family of slaves – the father from Macassar, the mother from Java, two daughters aged 14 and 11, and a son aged 8.

COMMISSIONER

I will start the bidding at one thousand rix-dollars. Who will advance me on one thousand?

Made in Highland

BIDDER 1  
One thousand one hundred.

BIDDER 2  
One thousand two hundred.

COMMISSIONER  
Come, gentleman, we can do better  
than that.

There is a raucous outburst near the back, and STEPHANUS  
GOTLIEB MAREE calls out.

STEPHANUS  
Two thousand.

BIDDER 1  
Two thousand five hundred.

STEPHANUS  
Three thousand.

BIDDER 2  
Three thousand five hundred

STEPHANUS  
(starting to get strident)  
Four thousand.

BIDDER 1  
Four thousand one hundred.

STEPHANUS  
Four thousand two hundred.

There is a pause in the bidding. The cicadas shrill.

COMMISSIONER  
Any advance on four thousand two  
hundred?

STEPHANUS  
Wait, wait!

He pushes through the crowd from the back, and presses himself  
right up against the table.

STEPHANUS  
(to the 14 year old girl)  
Open your mouth so I can study  
your teeth!

The girl shakes her head, keeping her mouth firmly shut.

The seller, a skinny sunburned farmer by the name of PETRUS JACOBUS CONRADIE, lurches forward and waves a sjambok in front of her.

The girl opens her mouth.

STEPHANUS

Now lower the top of your dress so  
I can see more of you.

COMMISSIONER

Is this strictly necessary?

STEPHANUS

Of course it is. I want to use her  
for breeding purpose, so it's  
obvious that I must make very sure  
she is properly equipped for the  
task.

He reaches up and, together, Stephanus and Petrus manhandle the girl, pulling at her until she loses her balance and lands on her bottom on top of the table. They rip the dress, exposing young breasts before the girl scrambles up again, covering herself. She is openly crying by this time. The members of her family stare straight ahead.

COMMISSIONER

That's enough!

A few women in the crowd mumble sullenly, but the men grow more vociferous.

STEPHANUS

I'll take them.

COMMISSIONER

Sold to Stephanus Gotlieb Maree.

ASSISTANT

Sold for four thousand two hundred  
rix-dollars.

(makes a calculation)

That's three hundred pounds.

COMMISSIONER

(indicating Philida)

Next!

Philida, with Willempie in the *abbadoek* on her back, places the cage with Kleinkat on the table, climbs up onto the table, and reaches down to pull Lena up next to her. She gives Lena a small wooden horse to play with.

Made in Highland

As she stands with Kleinkat's cage at her feet, Philida fixes her eyes on a spot in the distance as she stares up towards the distant blue mountains. There seems to be something remote and untouchable about her.

ASSISTANT  
(reading from a list of  
slaves for sale)

A woman from the Cape, age 26, a knitter, and her two children; the boy aged six months, the girl aged three years.

COMMISSIONER  
I'll start the bid at one hundred pounds. Do I hear anybody say a hundred and ten?

ASSISTANT  
That's one thousand four hundred rix-dollars.

MAGIEL CHRISTOFFEL BOTMA (Emcee) pushes through the crowd to the front, up against the solid table, with a long *kierie* in his hand. He is evidently inebriated. He puts the *kierie* in between Philida's ankles and starts pushing up the hem of her long dress.

Without shifting her eyes from the mountains in the distance, Philida takes a step back.

Emcee leans forward to stay close to her and proceeds to inspect her with *kierie* once again, now between her knees.

The men in the crowd start to laugh and jeer.

COMMISSIONER  
(shouting suddenly)  
Silence! Stop this commotion!

Emcee starts violently at the Commissioner's outburst and drops his *kierie*. He bends over to pick it up, and, as he begins to straighten up unsteadily, he slams the back of his small bullet head against the edge of the table. Lena recoils a little. Philida keeps her eyes fixed on the distant mountains.

COMMISSIONER  
(putting out a hand to steady  
his pile of books)  
What are you doing, you clumsy  
lout?

## BIDDER 2

He just wanted to make sure the  
*meid's* legs meet somewhere. A  
man's got to make sure before he  
buys.

Ribald laughter from the crowd.

## COMMISSIONER

(in a stentorian voice)  
Stand back!

Emcee takes one step back.

Lena looks anxiously up at her mother.

## COMMISSIONER

Now, again: one hundred pounds. Do  
I hear anybody say a hundred and  
ten?

## ASSISTANT

And hurry up, His Worship does not  
have all day.

Emcee returns to the table and clasps the edge in his two  
hands, craning up at Philida. Lena edges away. The table begins  
to wobble. Philida stomps on Emcee's fingers.

This is the moment when Petronella slides from the mule cart  
and moves in closer, behind Emcee.

## PETRONELLA

Leave her alone, you!

Emcee looks round, staggering and unsteady.

## EMCEE

(raising his long *kierie*)  
Shut up, blarry *meid*!

Now it is Cornelis's turn to slide from the mule cart and join  
in the fray, bottle in hand, swaying on his legs.

## CORNELIS

She is not your *meid*, you turd!

Cornelis grabs Emcee by a shoulder and angrily shoves him  
aside. Emcee staggers, and starts to walk away.

EMCEE  
 (whining and suddenly  
 tearful)  
 Why are you getting so worked up  
 over a damn *meid*?

Cornelis pulls him back so fast that Emcee gasps for breath.

CORNELIS  
 (sounding for all the world  
 like a growling dog)  
 She's nobody's *meid*, you hear me?  
 (enunciating every word  
 through the blur of alcohol)  
 She ... is ... my ... mother.

It is dead quiet on the dusty square in front of the Drostdy.

PETRONELLA  
 I am a free woman.  
 (she pulls from her Javanese  
 cotton shoulder bag a sheet  
 of paper with an embossed  
 red seal on it)  
 I can say what I want. Now you  
 shut your mouth or I'll do it for  
 you.

The crowd hums and rumbles like a bees' nest. Emcee slithers out of the way, enraged and sorry for himself. Cornelis returns heavily to his seat on the mule cart.

COMMISSIONER  
 (like a command to a firing  
 squad)  
 Let us proceed! The bidding will  
 start at one hundred pounds. Any  
 advance on one hundred pounds?

DOCTOR ATHERSTONE, a haughty doctor with a well trimmed beard, who comes from Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, raises his hand.

ATHERSTONE  
 One hundred and five.

BERNABÉ JAN GERHARD DE LA BAT (around 40) rushes up, flustered, and joins the gathering. He is tall and thin, with a pronounced Adam's apple, and he has a stiff walk reminiscent of a secretary bird. His hair is combed flat on his scalp, and he wears thick glasses, behind which his eyes look rather worried as if unsure whether someone is going to scold him or find him ridiculous.

DE LA BAT  
(out of breath)  
One hundred and ten.

ATHERSTONE  
One hundred and fifteen.  
(speaking to his neighbor)  
Have you seen that one's eyes?  
Pure obsidian.

NEIGHBOUR  
What is obsidian?

ATHERSTONE  
Don't you know?  
(stroking his beard)  
It's a very special gemstone.  
Pitch black.

Philida's black eyes flick briefly to Atherstone, and then fix again on the the distant blue mountains.

COMMISSIONER  
Any advance on one hundred and fifteen?

DE LA BAT  
One hundred and eighteen.

COMMISSIONER  
Any advance on one hundred and eighteen?

ATHERSTONE  
One hundred and twenty.

DE LA BAT  
One hundred and twenty-one.

ATHERSTONE  
One hundred and twenty-two.

de la Bat searches through his pockets and counts out his change.

COMMISSIONER  
Do I hear one hundred and twenty three?

DE LA BAT  
One hundred and twenty three pounds, two shillings and sixpence.

Made in Highland



The Commissioner looks at Doctor Atherstone, who shakes his head.

COMMISSIONER

Any advance on one hundred and twenty three pounds, two shillings and sixpence?

There are no takers.

COMMISSIONER

Sold to Bernabé Jan Gerhard de la Bat for one hundred and twenty three pounds, two shillings and sixpence.

ASSISTANT

(making another calculation)  
That equals one thousand seven hundred and twenty-five rix-dollars.

Philida climbs down from the table, lifts Lena to the ground, and picks up Kleinkat in her cage.

de la Bat approaches her with his stiff walk.

DE LA BAT

My house is on Church Street. It is not far. You can follow me.

PHILIDA

Please, Meester, I must just say goodbye to my Ouma.

DE LA BAT

I will wait here.

Philida turns towards Petronella, who envelopes Philida and her children in a hug.

PHILIDA

(whispering)  
You better hurry back home now, Ouma Nella. I can see the Ouman is on fire.

PETRONELLA

You must watch out and take care of yourself.

(suddenly tearful)  
How will you ever manage on your own?

PHILIDA  
 (quietly)  
 You teach me *mos*, Ouma Nella.  
 (with a small, crooked smile)  
 Remember one thing, I now learn to  
 say No.

Petronella presses Philida against her once again, then turns to walk to the cart as Philida turns to her new owner.

**EXT. DAY. CHURCH STREET, WORCESTER.**

de la Bat leads the way, with his stiff gait, along Church Street, Philida and her small entourage following. They stop at a modest house with no gable, and Philida follows de la Bat inside.

**INT. DAY. HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

The house consists of a *voorhuis* on the right, and two smallish bedrooms on the left, with a kitchen and pantry at the back.

**INT. DAY. THE VOORHUIS ON CHURCH STREET.**

ANNA CATHERINA HUGO (around 30), de le Bat's wife, sits on a couch with her two small pale boys, GERARD (3) and JOSEF (1). Anna is pallid and quiet, like a duck that has been pushed out from her nest too quickly. She is evidently expecting another baby.

DE LA BAT  
 This is my wife, Anna Catherina  
 Hugo de la Bat, and my two sons,  
 Gerard and Josef.

PHILIDA  
 Good afternoon, Nooi Anna.

Anna inclines her head without speaking, as if not quite certain what to do about this new slave.

**EXT. DAY. THE BACK STOEP OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

de la Bat and Philida's little group emerge from the kitchen door onto the *stoep*. The back yard consists of a carpentry shed, a dairy, a wine cellar, and a row of three rooms for servants. de la Bat gestures to the third, slightly bigger room, and turns to walk back into the house.

**INT. DAY. DELPHINA'S ROOM.**

DELPHINA (30s) stands in the room, as if she has been waiting. Her small tight body warns at first glance *let me be*. She is a Khoikhoi woman, small, quick, and bright as a mouse.

Philida ventures into the room, ill at ease.

DELPHINA  
I'm Delphina. I'm the housemaid.  
You will sleep in here with me.

PHILIDA  
My name is Philida. This is Lena  
and Willempie and Kleinkat.

Philida looks around the room. The straw palliasse away from the window is the one intended for her. She walks over to it, takes Willempie from the *abbadoek* on her back, and lies him down on the straw mattress.

PHILIDA  
Come sit next to Willempie, Lena.

Lena sits down next to her brother on the palliasse, and looks around the unfamiliar room with a mixture of timidity and curiosity. Willempie plays with his toes, contented enough for the moment.

PHILIDA  
(kneeling to let Kleinkat out  
of her cage)  
What kind of person is Meester de  
la Bat?

DELPHINA  
He's an important man. He's the  
first lawyer this town has ever  
known, they say.

Kleinkat explores her new surroundings, sniffing everything she comes across.

PHILIDA  
(standing to face Delphina)  
A lawyer?

DELPHINA  
That means a man who knows the  
law, who you can go to if you have  
problems. The Meester is not a man  
for jokes or games.

PHILIDA  
And she?

Made in Highland

DELPHINA

Nooi Anna is a member of one of  
the top families in the Cape.

PHILIDA

Who else work here?

DELPHINA

Only Labyn, from Batavia. He does  
carpentry and sometimes works for  
other people too.

(after a slight pause)

I must go back in the house now.

**INT. DAY. THE VOORHUIS ON CHURCH STREET.**

Anna sits on the couch with her hands resting on her pregnant belly, gazing out of the window, while one-year-old Josef totters from one piece of furniture to another as he babbles, and three-year-old Gerard sits astride the arm of the couch boisterously pretending that he is riding a horse.

Philida comes to the door and both children stop their activities, observing the intruder.

PHILIDA

Does Nooi Anna have anything she  
want me to knit?

ANNA

Oh!

(waving her hand  
ineffectually in front of  
her face)

It's so hot. I don't want to think  
about knitting.

The children resume their noisy play.

PHILIDA

(speaking above the noise)

I can make some small things for  
your new baby.

ANNA

Oh ... yes.

Philida waits to see if there are any further instructions. When none are forthcoming, she turns to leave.

ANNA

I ...

Philida turns back again and waits as Anna regards her indecisively.

PHILIDA  
Yes, Nooi?

ANNA  
I want you also to be the  
*minnemoer* of the family.

PHILIDA  
*Minnemoer*, Nooi?

ANNA  
You must look after the children –  
change their clothes, bathe them,  
take care of them. I am too tired.

PHILIDA  
Yes, Nooi.

Philida crouches down next to the arm of the couch so that her eyes are on the same level as Gerard's. He stops his noisy pretend horse riding and gazes back at her in silence.

PHILIDA  
Come!

There is something about her manner that brooks no argument, and he slides off the couch. Philida takes Gerard's hand, scoops Josef up, and leaves the room with the two boys.

In the restored quietude of the room, Anna rests her head back on the couch and covers her eyes with her hand.

**EXT. DAY. THE BACK YARD OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

LABYN (50s) sits on the step of his room carving the delicately curved handle of a yellowwood serving spoon. He is a peaceful man who takes his time with everything, and is always to be found with his calabash pipe in his mouth.

Lena leans up against Labyn's leg, watching closely as he works. Kleinkat is making up her own game with the wood shavings. Labyn is telling a story in his deep and resonant voice.

LABYN  
With wood it is like talking to  
family: do you by chance know this  
one or that one? Isn't he an uncle  
or a cousin or a grandchild of so-  
and-so?

Made in Highland

Lena giggles.

LABYN

It's like this yellowwood: when it is a child it is creamy white, when it is in middle age, like this, you see it's deep yellow like butter, and when it's an old man it's like burnt sugar.

Philida, with Willempie asleep in the *abbadoek* on her back, comes out of the kitchen door and stops to take in the scene for a moment before she approaches.

PHILIDA

You must be like the father of Jesus, Labyn.

Labyn looks up at her, a question on his face.

PHILIDA

That's the only other carpenter I have heard of.

LABYN

(matter of fact)

All the *kak* we got in the Colony comes from the Christian people.

He holds up the carving to the light to check the curve.

LABYN

You and me here working and working all the time, while the white people are sitting on their backsides in the sun or in the shade as the case may be, it all comes from that Jesus of theirs. It is his fault. So I think it's time for you to come over to the Slams like me.

Philida takes her knitting work from the pocket of her apron and comes to sit on the step next to Labyn. He shifts to accommodate her, and Lena moves off to play with Kleinkat.

PHILIDA

What's the Slams?

LABYN

With us there is no baas or slave. We're all just people.

(MORE)

Made in Highland

LABYN (CONT'D)

They always say to us that the LordGod looks after us, but that is not what happens. The LordGod looks after the white people, not us. Muhammad is our man, he's our Lord, and almost the first thing Muhammad did after the Lord Al-lah spoke to him, was to free his slave Zaid. For him there wasn't a place for slaves in the world any more.

PHILIDA

(her fingers busy with her knitting)

But here at the Cape they also talking about freeing us. And then we shall wear shoes for ever and ever.

LABYN

This thing I must first see with my own eyes before I believe it. Even if they free us, it will only come little bit by little bit, and we must still stay booked in with the Meester for four more years, for six more years – so we will still be like slaves, though maybe we are called free. All Muhammad said to Zaid was: Now you're free. You can go where you want to. And that is what he wants for all of us. Now that is why I'm saying: He's the man I stand with.

Kleinkat is now basking in a patch of sun, and Lena comes to lean up against Labyn again to watch him work.

PHILIDA

And where do all this come from? Does Muhammad also speak in a thick book like the Ouman's LordGod?

LABYN

Yes, he speaks in a thick book just like that. Only, it isn't called Bible, its name is Koran.

PHILIDA

Korhaan is a funny name. Isn't that the name of a bird?

(MORE)

Made in Highland

PHILIDA (CONT'D)  
Why would the Lord Al-lah want to  
have a book like that?

LABYN  
Maybe because you can say it flies  
in its own way. It puts wings in  
your head. Once you read what it  
says you won't think it's funny  
any more.

PHILIDA  
(teasing)  
And how and where did you ever  
read, if I may ask?

LABYN  
I'll show you how.

PHILIDA  
You? Where did you ever learn?

LABYN  
I learned, I tell you. I even went  
to school, before they sold me.  
I'll teach you.

She remains silent for a long time, her knitting needles still.

PHILIDA  
Will you really teach me to read,  
Labyn?

LABYN  
My word is the word of a Slams. If  
I promise something it is  
promised.

He is finished with the spoon, and he hands it to Lena, who  
explores its smooth surfaces with her small fingers.

**INT. EARLY EVENING. THE KITCHEN OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH  
STREET.**

Sitting in a zinc bath by the flickering fire of the hearth,  
are Lena, Gerard, and Josef. Philida kneels at the side of the  
bath, supporting Willempie in the water as she bathes him.

Delphina takes a kettle of hot water from the hearth.



DELPHINA  
 (to the children)  
 Be careful while I pour in more  
 hot water.

The three bigger children make space, and Delphina pours the hot water from the kettle into the bath.

DELPHINA  
 Bathing the boys used to be my  
 job.

PHILIDA  
 The easiest way is to bring them  
 up with my own.

DELPHINA  
 It looks to me when Anna de la Bat  
 sees how easily you handle it, she  
 more and more often leaves her  
 children with yours.

PHILIDA  
 Feeding or bathing or putting to  
 bed four children is not much more  
 trouble than two.

**INT. DAY. THE CARPENTRY SHED.**

Philida sits beside Labyn at a long wooden workbench with massive legs. Its surface, which is six feet long and as wide as a man's shoulders, is stained with dark patches.

Labyn has a copy of the Koran open in front of him, and Willempie is in an *abbadoek* on his back. Lena stacks small pieces of wood one on top of the other on a *kaross* on the floor. Kleinkat is asleep on the workbench.

LABYN  
 (pointing out the words to  
 Philida as he reads)  
*And indeed We have created man,  
 and We know whatever thoughts his  
 inner self develops, and We are  
 closer to him than the vein of his  
 neck.*

PHILIDA  
 (with a small smile)  
 I'll knit you a jersey for the  
 winter, then you'll find out what  
 is closest to you.

Labyn sucks on his pipe with a deep, rumbling laugh.

Made in Highland

LABYN

Now you try.  
 (holding his finger under  
 each letter of the word)  
 This is "And." That's "A," "N,"  
 and "D." Say each one, then join  
 the sounds together.

PHILIDA

Æ. Nn. Duh. And.

LABYN

Good! Now, let's try the next  
 word ...

**INT. DAY. THE HALLWAY OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

Philida comes out of the smaller room with an armful of dirty boys' clothes.

Delphina beckons to her from the doorway of the *voorhuis*.

DELPHINA

(whispering)  
 Philida! Come look.

**INT. DAY. THE VOORHUIS IN THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

Philida slips into the room and Delphina points to de la Bat's writing desk in the corner. Kleinkat has found a nest among the papers.

DELPHINA

I find her there often when I come  
 in to dust.

They stand and look at her for a moment as Kleinkat sleeps on oblivious.

**INT. DAY. THE CARPENTRY SHED.**

Philida and Labyn are seated side by side at the long workbench once again, a slate in front of them. This time, they are alone.

LABYN

Today, I will show you how to  
 write your name.

He traces out a capital P, followed in exquisite copperplate by each letter of her name. He pushes the slate towards her.

Made in Highland

LABYN  
You try and write it below.

He guides her hand to make the P.

LABYN  
Now, never lift your hand when you  
make the letters for the rest of  
your name. Soft up, hard down.  
Good!

She looks up at him, her face alight with accomplishment. She  
looks down again at her name on the slate.

PHILIDA  
Can you show me how to write Frans  
Brink's name?

LABYN  
(uneasy)  
Why do you want to know? From what  
you've told me that man is a  
*skelm*.

PHILIDA  
Just show me.

LABYN  
That's not a name you need to  
worry about, Philida. Forget about  
him. Shake him off.

PHILIDA  
No, I got to learn. If I can write  
his name, I can send him to hell.  
Otherwise he'll keep haunting me.

Labyn sighs and shakes his head, but pulls the slate towards  
him to wipe it clean.

He writes the name in his beautiful script, and pushes the  
slate to Philida.

**INT. NIGHT. DELPHINA'S ROOM.**

Candlelight. Delphina is asleep on her palliasse, and the  
children sleep next to Philida, where she sits up on her straw  
mattress, the slate on her lap, shaping her letters and  
building words.

**EXT. EARLY MORNING. THE BACKYARD OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

Labyn is sitting on the step of his room, carving a small wooden cat. Lena leans against his leg in rapt attention.

Philida emerges from Delphina's room.

LENA

Look, Mama! Oupa Labyn is making  
me my own Kleinkat!

Philida walks over to them, and Labyn holds up his half carved creation for her to see.

PHILIDA

Kleinkat looked just like that  
when she was still a kitten.

LABYN

(returning to his carving)  
What's become of the little cat?

PHILIDA

She's probably just hidden  
somewhere in the house or in the  
yard. There's so many hiding  
places or spots to play in.

LABYN

I haven't seen her for a while.

PHILIDA

I'll look.

**INT. EARLY MORNING. THE KITCHEN OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

Delphina is washing up plates in a basin.

PHILIDA

Have you seen Kleinkat?

DELPHINA

No. Maybe she's in her nest on the  
Meester's desk.

**INT. EARLY MORNING. THE VOORHUIS OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

de la Bat sits writing at his desk.

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Philida knocks on the door.

DE LA BAT  
Yes?

PHILIDA  
Excuse me, Meester. Has Meester  
seen Kleinkat?

DE LE BAT  
No. Sometimes she sleeps among my  
papers here, but I haven't seen  
her recently.

PHILIDA  
Thank you, Meester.

**INT. EARLY MORNING. THE MAIN BEDROOM OF THE HOUSE ON  
CHURCH STREET.**

Anna is still in bed, propped up against the pillows, her hands  
resting on her pregnant belly.

Philida knocks on the door.

ANNA  
(turning her head listlessly  
towards the door)  
What is it?

Philida comes to stand just inside the door.

PHILIDA  
Excuse me, Nooi. Has Nooi seen  
Kleinkat?

ANNA  
No.

PHILIDA  
I can't find her. I'm thinking  
maybe she is walking back to  
Zandvliet. Will Nooi give me  
permission to walk back along the  
road to look for her?

ANNA  
(a deep sigh)  
You are too busy for that. With  
the children and the knitting.  
Even though it is still summer,  
you must start the knitting for  
the winter early.  
(MORE)

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ANNA (CONT'D)

In these parts the cold comes with  
a vengeance, and it comes early.

PHILIDA

Yes, Nooi. I understand, Nooi.

ANNA

Tell Delphina I need a cup of tea.

PHILIDA

Yes, Nooi, I will tell her.

**EXT. DAY. BRIGHT SUNLIGHT. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN WORCESTER  
AND ZANDVLIET.**

A small grey tabby cat – Kleinkat – trots across the open veld.

**EXT. DAY. ZANDVLIET FARM.**

Janna sits on the back stoep, fanning herself with her hat.

Cornelis and Frans are supervising the grape harvest, Frans  
closer to the house.

CORNELIS

(shouting at the slaves  
working the vineyard)

Come on, man! The grapes will rot  
on the vine if you keep on picking  
them so slowly!

KLEINKAT

Meow!

Frans looks quickly in the direction of the sound.

FRANS

Kleinkat!

The one word galvanizes Janna and she sits bolt upright to the  
extent that her cumbersome form will allow.

JANNA

(ranting)

That cat, that cat is going to  
infect all of us with diseases. It  
is all you can expect with  
something that *meid* brought here  
to the farm.

Kleinkat's fur is matted and filthy.

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FRANS

(shouting across the yard to  
his mother)  
Philida didn't bring her here. I  
gave her to Philida. You should be  
sorry for the poor little thing.

JANNA

If it puts its feet in this house  
I shall personally get rid of it.

FRANS

You get rid of her, you get rid of  
me. And then who will marry that  
Berrangé girl?

The slaves go on harvesting, as if oblivious to the shouted conversation, but Cornelis is drawn to the yelling, and immediately joins in, coming closer.

CORNELIS

You will marry her. I tell you,  
she's our salvation.

FRANS

(turning to his father and  
lowering his voice a notch)  
It's unfair the way you and Ma are  
trying to force me. It's the rest  
of my life that is at stake and  
all you care for is the money.

CORNELIS

(exploding)  
For God's sake, man, don't you  
understand anything? If you and  
Maria Berrangé don't get married,  
we'll be bankrupt.

FRANS

(shouting again)  
And whose fault will that be? Not  
mine.

JANNA

Don't talk to your father like  
that, Frans!

FRANS

Don't try to force me, Ma. I want  
to help you if it comes to the  
worst. But then you mustn't make  
it impossible for me. And don't  
you dare lay a finger on this cat.  
She is mine.

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JANNA

She belongs to Philida, not to you. Used to belong. And that's bad enough.

FRANS

What is Philida's is mine.

CORNELIS

(storming at him)

Why do you keep on about Philida all the time? She's a slave. She's a slave and she's long gone. For us she doesn't exist any more.

FRANS

(so quietly that only  
Cornelis can hear)

For me she does.

CORNELIS

(staring at him  
disbelievingly)

What's the matter with you, Frans?  
What do you still want with  
Philida?

FRANS

(a steely, faraway voice)

What I want from a woman who is my  
wife.

CORNELIS

(appalled)

You can't mean what you're saying!

FRANS

I just wanted her to be with me.  
Not because of the children or  
because of the law or because of  
needing her to help out on the  
farm or because of anything else.  
But because of *her*. To me, Philida  
is not like just any other woman.  
I knew her ever since she looked  
after me when I was a baby. I know  
her and she knows me. Can't you  
understand that? I need her. And  
now it may be too late. Because I  
betrayed her.

JANNA

(shouting from the stoep)

What are you talking about?

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Both men ignore her.

CORNELIS

It is *definitely* too late. Too late for you, too late for all of us.

FRANS

(pleading from deep inside)  
That is something I cannot accept, Pa. I got to try again. I just got to. And you must give me that chance.

CORNELIS

We can't undo what's already been done, man!

FRANS

I won't accept that, Pa.

CORNELIS

(suddenly losing his temper)  
I said what I got to say and that is now the end of it! That is that. Finished and *klaar*.

FRANS

(urgently)  
For me it isn't, Pa, and it never will be.

CORNELIS

Frans, you're not too old to get properly thrashed.

FRANS

(squaring up to him)  
Just you try!

Cornelis pulls back his shoulders, his nostrils flaring.

CORNELIS

(turning and walking away, muttering)  
Let me get out of this place before I strangle somebody.

Frans crouches and puts out his hand towards Klienkat.

**INT. AFTERNOON. PETRONELLA'S ROOM.**

Petronella is brewing tea at the hearth in the corner.

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There's a knock on the outside door. Petronella goes to open it.

Frans slips in, carrying a bamboo cage, similar to the first one he gave to Philida, but bigger, more sturdy.

PETRONELLA

So *this* is what you been up to at the bamboo copse again?

FRANS

Yes, I'm going to take Klienkat back to Philida.

PETRONELLA

You sure you doing the right thing?

FRANS

Of course it's the right thing. What else can I do? It's for Philida. It's for my children. I realize what I've done only now that she is gone, and all I know is that it must be put right.

Petronella eyes him skeptically.

FRANS

(going on quickly)

I'm leaving tomorrow morning very early. In case anybody asks you, just say I went off, you're not sure where, but most likely to the Cape, presumably to visit Maria Magdalena Berrangé.

He places the cat cage in the corner by the outside door.

FRANS

Can I leave this here till tomorrow morning so nobody will see it?

Petronella shrugs noncommittally, continuing to look at him dubiously.

**EXT. DAY. THE OPEN SQUARE IN FRONT OF THE WORCESTER DROSTDY.**

A small cluster of slaves, all barefoot, watch as Frans reins in his horse. Large white saltpeter stains are visible on the animal's trembling, shiny flanks.

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The bamboo cage, with Klienkat in it, is tied to the saddle.

FRANS  
(shouting at the group)  
I'm looking for Meester de la  
Bat's house.

They all point in the same direction. Frans turns the horse and trots towards Church Street.

SLAVE  
Jesus! That man must be mad in his  
head. Did you see he got a cat  
with him?

**EXT. DAY. OUTSIDE THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

As Frans approaches the house, he looks down the side towards the backyard, and sees Labyn sitting on the step of his room with the calabash pipe in his mouth.

FRANS  
(calling)  
Is Meester de la Bat here?

LABYN  
(standing, and calling back)  
He's at work now, but if the Baas  
waits for a while he'll be back.

FRANS  
I'm really looking for Philida.  
She works here.

LABYN  
(after a beat)  
I'll go find out if she can come.

Frans dismounts and ties the reins of the horse to a fence post. He unties the bamboo cage and sets it on the ground.

Philida approaches from the backyard and stands before him. She wears an old bluish dress that hangs down to her feet — her dusty bare feet. Frans is against the sun, and she screws up her black eyes in the bright light.

FRANS  
(hesitantly)  
Philida?

PHILIDA  
My JesusGod!

She moves forward very suddenly, but it is not to come to Frans; she has seen the bamboo cage on the ground.

PHILIDA  
My *Kleinkat*!

She squats down on her haunches, tugging at the gate that keeps the cage shut.

FRANS  
Watch out! If she gets out she'll  
be gone for ever.

But it is already too late. The little gate is wide open. *Kleinkat* darts out. But this time she isn't trying to get away. She crawls deep into Philida's arms, purring and chirping like a small nightbird. Philida presses the cat against her, and turns her over to push her face into the grey-and-white belly.

PHILIDA  
(cooing)  
Has my *Kleinkat* come back to its  
Ounooi?

FRANS  
I knew she wanted to be back with  
you. I *had* to bring her.

Philida glances up, quickly and almost furtively, towards Frans, once more looking into the sun.

PHILIDA  
Why did you do it? What you doing  
here?

FRANS  
I came to find you. Both of us  
missed you.

PHILIDA  
(tonelessly)  
We got nothing for you here.

FRANS  
But, Philida –

PHILIDA  
You want to buy me back with the  
cat. We don't want you here.

FRANS  
But I had to bring *Kleinkat* back  
to you.

PHILIDA

Kleinkat is one thing. You are something else.

FRANS

Philida, please understand!

PHILIDA

I understand blarry well. If you tell me *Come*, you want me to come. If you tell me you want me gone, I got to go. How many more times do you want me to do that?

FRANS

(wretchedly)

That's not what I came for.

PHILIDA

(standing, the cat still pressed against her)

What is it then? You want to push your thing into me? Or is it your old pa that needs me again?

FRANS

Philida, no, please!

Without warning Philida bends over to push the little cat back into the cage, and she ties up the thong again. Kleinkat sets up a pitiful mewing.

PHILIDA

Take the cat. Go back to Zandvliet where you come from. You not wanted here.

FRANS

(pleading)

But you're the one I want!

PHILIDA

You had time enough to say that. Now that time is past. Go home.

Lena's squeal of delight carries from the back yard. Frans stares down the side of the house as Lena, holding Willempie by the hands, steps backwards, and he takes a few staggering steps towards her before collapsing onto his bottom.

FRANS

(hoarsely)

Our children have grown -

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PHILIDA

(jumping in to interrupt him)  
No, they're *mine*. They don't know  
nothing about you and they don't  
want to know.

FRANS

I've come all this way from  
Zandvliet! It was all I could do.

PHILIDA

(closed, resentful)  
For what?

FRANS

I told you: I had to come and see  
you. We didn't have time to talk  
properly when my father took you.

PHILIDA

(turning away)  
We got nothing more to talk about.

FRANS

(desperately trying to detain  
her)  
Philida! It's time for you to come  
back. Back to us. I am the  
children's father.

PHILIDA

(rounding on him)  
Now you expect me to come back?  
After everything you done? After  
everything you made *me* do?

FRANS

We can forget about that and start  
again.

PHILIDA

How does a person start again  
after a thing like that?  
(holding her fist against her  
stomach)  
Until the end of my days I'll  
carry this thing with me like a  
half-chewed lump of meat in my  
guts.

FRANS

(almost tripping over his  
words to try and explain)  
I'll help you. We can start again.  
(MORE)

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FRANS (CONT'D)

Like my pa is starting again. He had to sell out. He went bankrupt and there was an auction and he was stripped as bare as the day he was born. It was terrible. He lost everything. Everything. But he made an agreement with Daniel Fredrik Berrangé to pay off the debt and buy himself out. He is starting again, and going on as before.

(taking a step towards her)  
If he can do that, so can we.

PHILIDA

I'm not talking about selling and throwing away, Frans. That is bad enough, but in a way I can still understand it, because you are white. But the thing you made *me* do I shall never understand and never forget.

FRANS

I didn't make you do anything you didn't want to do, and you know that bladdy well. We had good times together.

PHILIDA

It was good to *naai*. So good I could see your eyes turn up. But when you saw I had a child in me, what then?

FRANS

What else could we do? Pa ... and Ma —

PHILIDA

To hell with your pa and ma, man. What you made me do was more than anyone got a right to do.

FRANS

You chose to do it.

PHILIDA

*Chose!?* To choose something you got to be free to choose or not to choose. What did I have? I was a slave. Your blarry slave.

(MORE)

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PHILIDA (CONT'D)

It was you who wanted to drown the baby the way you used to do with the kittens. What I did I *had* to do, and that is the most terrible day of my life.

(her voice is so low that it's as if she is speaking to herself)

I remember the look in his baby eyes. He was so small. Like a little kitten. He half lift his head to look into my face. The small frown between his eyes. He know what is coming. There is just a feeble struggle. A smothered sound. Then nothing. He go limp in my hands. He put out one of his tiny hands and touch my cheek, so softly one can barely feel it, like a leaf stirring. In that one moment he know who I am. He know I am his mother. And I am doing what nobody on the LordGod's earth got the right to do.

(looking at Frans)

And there is only one reason why I got to do it, and that is to stop you from doing it.

Silence hangs between them. Kleinkat continues to mew.

FRANS

Do you think you were the only one who found it difficult? What about me?

PHILIDA

You!?

(she gives an ugly laugh)

Nothing can ever make up for what you did to me. Life is not long enough for that. So just please let me be. And never come back here.

She turns away and walks down the side of the house towards the backyard without looking back.

Frans remains staring after her. Then he leans forward and slowly picks up the bamboo cage again, with Kleinkat mewing inside it, and goes to his horse. With his free hand he unties the reins and loops them over the horse's neck. He grabs onto the saddle, and swings himself astride.

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He whirls around and rides off so fast that he almost knocks down de la Bat in his dark suit and tall hat returning from work.

**EXT. DAY. THE OUTSKIRTS OF WORCESTER.**

With the Drostdy receding into the background behind him, without reining in his horse or even slowing down, Frans hurls away the cage with Kleinkat inside into the bushes next to the road.

**INT. DAY. THE CARPENTRY SHED.**

At the workbench, Labyn is making a coffin with smooth pale panels and fine stinkwood struts in between. Too beautiful, really, to be buried in the earth.

He glances up as Philida comes in, then goes on with his work.

Philida just stands, saying nothing.

LABYN  
Who was that man?

PHILIDA  
Frans Brink.

Labyn looks up at her and nods, as if he had guessed at her answer. He returns to his work without speaking.

PHILIDA  
He want me to go back.

LABYN  
And?

PHILIDA  
I'm staying right here. This is my place now.

Labyn goes on smoothing one of the darker struts between the pale panels.

Philida comes to sit at the bench with him.

PHILIDA  
I want to know more about this Islam of yours. I want to know what I'm doing here with you.

LABYN

(smiling, his eyes shining)  
I shall teach you everything I  
know.

(he smooths and rubs the  
wood)

If you wish, we can start with  
your lessons again tonight.

DREAM

The Dwars River is in full spate, swirling around Philida's billowing skirt, forming eddies. Emerging from one of the eddies is a face, the face of a baby. It disappears, and then reappears, its mouth wide in a silent scream. Philida reaches out a hand towards the face, and she pushes it – slowly but inexorably – down into the water. But it re-emerges. She lunges to push it down again, and the face dissolves into the face of a cat.

END OF DREAM

**INT. NIGHT. DELPHINA'S ROOM.**

LENA

(shaking Philida on the  
palliasse)

Mama! Mama, wake up! You dreaming  
again.

Philida wakes with a start, her black eyes wide and unfocused.

PHILIDA

(pulling Lena to her and  
burying her face in her  
neck)

Ah, thank you. Thank you for  
waking me.

A pitiful mewing makes Philida turn her head sharply to listen. It comes again. She scrambles up off the palliasse, and runs to the door to open it, letting in a shaft of light as Kleinkat darts inside.

LENA

Kleinkat!

Both Delphina and Willempie are now also awake, and they all gather around Kleinkat.

In the light of the moon, Kleinkat's face around her mouth is chafed and bloody.

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PHILIDA

JesusGod! Look at your face! What  
you been up to?

DELPHINA

It looks like she chewed through  
the slats of her bamboo cage.

Philida caresses Kleinkat behind the ears, smells her feet, and strokes along her spine. Kleinkat chirrups like a bird, revelling in the caresses as if her whole small life is concentrated on this moment of warmth and safely and pure bliss.

PHILIDA

You must have struggled very hard  
to get out, Kleinkat.  
(she rocks the purring cat on  
her lap)  
I'm just glad you decided to take  
the short cut to Worcester instead  
of going all the way to Zandvliet  
like the last time.

**INT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE KITCHEN AT THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

Delphina is staring absentmindedly out of the window as she rinses dishes: Kleinkat is dozing in a patch of sun, Lena is playing with her wooden Kleinkat on the step of the carpentry shed.

Delphina's attention focuses sharply when she sees FLORIS (around 40) walk into the backyard. He wears a cap of Dassie skins with a sprig of rosemary on top, and a long buttonless shirt. He is covered by what seems like weeks of dust, and he is clearly exhausted and grey with hunger, yet there is an irrepressible spring in the way he walks.

Delphina quickly pours fresh water into a bowl and carries it outside.

**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE BACKYARD AT THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

Wordlessly, Delphina offers the bowl of water to Floris, and he gulps it down like a horse. He hands the bowl back, and then he dunks his whole head into a water barrel by the back door, shaking off the excess water like a frisky dog.

FLORIS

(an exuberant shout)  
Yooo-hooo!

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Kleinkat is startled awake and Lena jumps up clutching the wooden cat to her chest. Labyn and Philida, with Willempie on her hip, appear at the door of carpentry shed.

LABYN

(a broad grin spreading over  
his face, like a rising sun)

You back!

(to Philida)

This is Floris, who can make the  
most beautiful shoe in the whole  
world.

de la Bat emerges on the threshold of the kitchen door like a large bat with folded wings.

DE LA BAT

Floris ...?

FLORIS

Meester, here I am. I been walking  
all over the place and now I got  
home again. You can go and fetch  
the *riem* and give me a proper  
hiding because I got a lot to talk  
about. But we can only talk after  
you beat the *kak* out of me.

DE LA BAT

We can talk about it tomorrow.

FLORIS

(meek but adamant)

If it's all the same to Meester,  
I'd rather get it over and done  
with straight away. In the past  
this used to be completely in the  
hands of the Baas, but ever since  
the English took over there is a  
rule and a regulation for every  
damn thing.

DE LA BAT

(with a sigh)

All right, then come with me. I  
don't like it but the law is the  
law.

FLORIS

Is what I also say.

de la Bat, Floris, and Labyn disappear into the carpentry shed.

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**INT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE CARPENTRY SHED.**

Labyn removes his work – a delicate table standing like a small steenbok on tall thin legs – from the workbench. He and Floris bend to grip the massive legs and carry the bench outside. de la Bat selects four thongs from those hanging on a nail on the wall.

**EXT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE BACKYARD AT THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

In the late afternoon sunlight, it is evident that Labyn's workbench is also the flogging bench, and that the dark stains on the surface are old blood. Low down on each the massive legs are rusty iron rings.

DE LA BAT  
(to Floris)  
Lie down!

Delphina helps Floris to take off his long loose shirt. Then the breeches that reach down to his knees. His lean back bears the dark criss-cross marks of old floggings. Philida folds his clothes, and indicates to Lena to place them on the step of the carpentry shed, which the child does with wide-eyed solemnity.

Floris lies down on his stomach and tries to find a comfortable position on the flogging bench, letting his arms hang down the sides.

de la Bat goes down on his heels to attach Floris's wrists to the rings on the side with the thongs. As he struggles laboriously, his pale face flushes a deep red from the effort.

When he gets to the ankles, he passes one of the thongs to Labyn.

DE LA BAT  
(to Labyn)  
Help me.

Labyn makes no move to take the thong, and de la Bat looks at him with a frown.

DE LA BAT  
(irritably)  
What's up with you now?

LABYN  
I am sorry, Meester. But I cannot help you with this thing. Floris and I come a long way together. He is my friend and I am his.

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DE LA BAT  
And if I order you to beat him?

LABYN  
(shaking his head)  
Then I shall have to say no to the  
Meester. That is not my work.

DE LA BAT  
You are a slave, Labyn. You will  
do what I tell you to do.

LABYN  
Not if Meester asks me to beat  
him.

DE LA BAT  
*Labyn!?*

LABYN  
(quietly)  
I think it is against the law  
nowadays.

DE LA BAT  
In this place I am the law. And  
you are a slave like Floris.

LABYN  
In a month, a few months, we shall  
both be free.

DE LA BAT  
Until that time you will do what I  
say.

LABYN  
(very calmly)  
I am sorry, Meester. Not if you  
ask me to beat him.

DE LA BAT  
(in his lawerly tone)  
Floris ran away. A year ago he  
absconded from Worcester. The law  
is very strict about desertion.

LABYN  
He came back of his own free will.

DE LA BAT  
He stayed away for a full year.

LABYN  
That doesn't make a difference.  
Now he is here.

DE LA BAT  
Do as I tell you, Labyn!

LABYN  
(calmly and politely, more to  
himself than to de la Bat)  
Al-lah will hear about this.

DE LA BAT  
What do you say?

LABYN  
I'm just saying about Al-lah,  
Meester. He sees everything and he  
knows everything and he will not  
like this.

DE LA BAT  
(shouting, more furious than  
anyone has ever heard him)  
I have the LordGod on my side!

Lena start to cry, and Philida shushes and comforts her  
quietly. Willempie is watching proceedings from his perch on  
Philida's hip.

LABYN  
(in his quiet way)  
Then bring your LordGod, Meester.  
I shall call Al-lah. They can  
fight it out. Al-lah is the God of  
all the slaves and all the  
oppressed people in this land, so  
I already know who will win.

DE LA BAT  
(snarling)  
Now you are looking for trouble!

LABYN  
Conceived and born in sin,  
Meester. Made like that and left  
like that. All of us, baas and  
slave.

The two men take the measure of each other. Delphina and  
Philida look on in still tension, and Lena holds tightly to her  
mother's hand.

de la Bat squats and ties the thongs to Floris's ankles, then he stalks to the house with his secretary bird gait. On the threshold of the kitchen door, he turns.

DE LA BAT

(to Floris)

You can lie and wait here. I shall come back when it suits me.

He firmly closes the door behind him.

For some time no one says a word. It is as if they're all waiting for him to come back, but the door remains closed.

DELPHINA

I think we got a long night ahead.

LABYN

Then why don't we just sit and make ourselves comfortable? Now it is in Al-lah's hands.

PHILIDA

(to Floris)

Can I bring you some water? I can see you brought a big tiredness with you.

FLORIS

Yes, thank you. That will help.

She settles Lena and Willempie next to one of the massive legs of the flogging bench, and goes to fill the bowl from the water barrel by the back door. She helps Floris to drink. Then they all make themselves comfortable around the bench.

The sun goes down in a big show of red, and the huge moon appears in the east. The first stars appear. The night spreads itself in all directions.

LABYN

You must tell us about the Gariep, Floris.

FLORIS

(with a small, bleak chuckle)

That Gariep is a different kind of place. You won't think there can be so many people living on an open plain. And of all sorts too, from the preachers and baptizers of Al-lah and the LordGod to runaways and murderers and robbers, everybody.

(MORE)

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## FLORIS (CONT'D)

There are deserters and free people among them, black and brown and yellow and white, all the colours under the sun and moon and stars, and in a way they all live happily together. As long as they keep the Gariep between themselves and the Colony, everybody is satisfied.

## LABYN

If it goes so well, then why did you come back? It sounds like a good place to stay for the rest of your life.

## FLORIS

To stay, yes. And that was what I also wanted to do. Even took myself a wife. She was a good woman, and good to look at too.

(he gives a soft groan and turns his head the other way, trying to get comfortable)

But then she got sick and she died, and the Gariep is a place without mercy for a man on his own. That's why I thought I must rather go back to where I come from.

The sky goes on wheeling overhead with its stars, big and small, like a slow dust-devil that refuses to be hurried on its way.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

**EXT. EARLY MORNING. THE BACKYARD OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

A red smudge stains the underside of the sky. Here and there, cocks start to crow, a dog barks in the distance, and a new day begins.

Floris groans, and tries to ease his aching body. His companions sit and lie in various stages of half sleep.

The kitchen door opens, and de la Bat appears on the threshold. He has a vicious-looking long sjambok in his hand.

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He slaps it briefly against the black legs of his breeches, sending small puffs of dust up around him.

DE LA BAT  
(a half-grunt)  
Morning, Floris.

FLORIS  
(a half-groan)  
Morning, Meester.

DE LA BAT  
Slept well?

FLORIS  
Not really, Meester.

DE LA BAT  
Are you ready for me?

FLORIS  
Ready for Meester.

DE LA BAT  
(hands on his hips)  
Where is Labyn?

Labyn stands up from the other side of the flogging bench.

LABYN  
Meester, I am here.

DE LA BAT  
(with a small nervous grin  
towards Labyn)  
You can untie him now. I think  
he's had enough of a scare.

de la Bat turns and goes back inside.

Labyn and Delphina immediately begin to untie Floris, who sits up stiffly, easing his aching muscles.

LENA  
Mama, I'm thirsty.

PHILIDA  
I'll go make coffee for everyone.

**INT. EARLY MORNING. THE KITCHEN OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

Philida grinds coffee beans in the manual coffee grinder, tips the contents into the coffee pot, adds water, and sets the pot on the hearth.

She stands, lost in thought, gazing out of the kitchen window.

DE LA BAT (O.S.)  
(contentedly)  
The point is this, Anna: It's important for a slave to be reminded regularly of who is the Baas.

ANNA (O.S.)  
(meekly)  
Yes, Bernabé. As you wish.

DE LA BAT (O.S.)  
(calling)  
Bring me my coffee!

PHILIDA  
Yes, Meester. It's coming, Meester.

**EXT. EARLY MORNING. THE BACK GARDEN AT THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

Monday 1 December 1834.

Philida sits on a low wall that runs along the vegetable garden behind the house. While her nimble fingers keep busy with her knitting, she stares across to Hoog Straat and the open square in front of the Drostdy.

Slowly the square comes to life in the early morning sun. A number of revellers dance and run to and fro. They make bonfires and cavort around them. From all sides more and more slaves come running towards the Drostdy square. Some have brought their own music – fiddles, ramkies, a few accordions, the odd trumpet – and they all let go in an accelerating explosion of celebration.

Philida stands and lifts her face up to the blue sky. She just stands there, with her throat exposed, looking and looking, as if she is trying to prise something loose up there.

FLORIS (O.S.)  
 (an exuberant call like a  
 fish bugle)  
 I say, I say! Aren't we also going  
 to churn up a bit of dust? Labyn!  
 Delphina! Philida! Come on, man!

Philida stuffs her knitting into the pocket of her apron and follows Floris's voice.

**EXT. MORNING. THE BACKYARD OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

FLORIS  
 Look what I got here!

He takes an old folded jacket from under his arm, places it on the ground, and unfolds it with a flourish.

It is shoes.

He hands a pair to Delphina, a pair to Philida, a pair to Labyn, and he has made a pair for himself. He has even made shoes for Lena and Willempie.

Immediately they all sit down and start trying on their shoes. Lena puts hers on the wrong feet, and Delphina helps her while Philida wriggles Willempie's little feet into his shoes. Labyn and Floris jump to their feet and start dancing a reel. Floris then scoops up Delphina and Philida, and the dust gets churned up as if a few dust-devils have come to life.

The kitchen door opens suddenly, and de la Bat, in top hat and black suit, stands on the back stoep.

DE LA BAT  
 (raising his voice sternly  
 over their exuberance)  
 What is going on here today?

For a moment they all stop in their tracks.

PHILIDA  
 (out of breath)  
 Doesn't Meester know then? We're  
*mos* free today.

FLORIS  
 Free and happy, Meester!

DE LA BAT  
 We shall talk again later.

de la Bat walks stiffly back into the house, and closes the door.

Everyone in the backyard looks at one another in suspended silence. Then they burst out laughing, and go back to churning up the dust. Philida throws her head back to look up into the blue, blue sky as she spins. Specks of birds soar overhead.

**INT. AFTERNOON. THE CARPENTRY SHED.**

In the light of his oil lamp, with his calabash pipe in his mouth, Labyn sits at his workbench — reverted from the flogging bench once again — making a coffin. It is stifling hot, and his face glistens with sweat.

Philida sits knitting.

PHILIDA

From now on everything will be different.

LABYN

(laughing)

Say who?

PHILIDA

Say I, Philida.

LABYN

And how will you make that happen? You know each and every one still got to stay booked in with a baas for four more years — that is, forty-eight months, one thousand four hundred and sixty-one days, including the leap year.

PHILIDA

That may be so. But to be a slave will now be something else.

LABYN

Just try, and see what happen.

PHILIDA

I will try, and you will see what happen.

She puts puts down her knitting, and fans her face with her apron.

PHILIDA

There's one specially good thing  
about being free, you know.

LABYN

And what would that be?

PHILIDA

That no baas can ever be a baas  
again.

LABYN

How do you get that?

PHILIDA

Because a baas without a slave  
cannot be a baas, which is what  
Ouma Nella say to me long ago. But  
today I know it for the first  
time.

LABYN

I don't think *they* know it.

PHILIDA

It don't matter if they do. You  
and I know it, all of us that were  
slaves until yesterday.

She picks up her knitting again.

LABYN

Floris says we must make life so  
difficult for them that they'll be  
happy to let us go, for then they  
will be rid of us.

PHILIDA

No, Labyn. If you ask me, it will  
be harder for the white people  
than for us. We can still manage,  
one way or another. But what will  
become of them? We are like the  
foundation of their house. Their  
lives and everything is built on  
us. This whole land is built on  
our sweat and our blood.

LABYN

They just got to learn to get on  
without us. We all of us still got  
a lot to learn. A man can only  
step as far as his legs are long.

(MORE)

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LABYN (CONT'D)

And they still keeping our legs  
short.

PHILIDA

You forget one thing. We can *jump*.  
And I'm not going to step  
carefully if I know I can jump.  
Remember, I wearing shoes now.

She sticks out her feet, and Labyn in turn looks down at his  
shod feet.

LABYN

This Floris knows about making  
good shoes, that's for sure.

PHILIDA

(eyeing him)

And you, you know about making a  
good coffin.

LABYN

(grinning around his pipe)

This is for a baas. Don't forget,  
when we die they just roll us in  
an old blanket.

PHILIDA

When I die one day, I want you to  
make my coffin.

LABYN

*Inshallah*. If Al-lah wills it.

Philida puts down her knitting again, flaps her apron, and runs  
her hand under her hair at the back of her neck.

PHILIDA

This heat push you down against  
the ground to burn all the wetness  
out of you!

LABYN

If we stay here we all going to  
burn to death.

Philida sits perfectly still. Labyn continues working.

PHILIDA

Well, then it must be time for us  
to go away from here.

LABYN

Where can we go to?

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PHILIDA

You hear what Floris say: if you go far enough in this direction, you come to the river they call Gariep. From there, the land is open and everything is free.

LABYN

And how do we get there?

PHILIDA

With our feet.

LABYN

You got two small children with you, Philida.

PHILIDA

Nothing is pushing us. We got time. We got all the time in the world.

LABYN

Meester de la Bat will never let us go.

PHILIDA

Nothing stop us asking.

LABYN

He paid a lot of money for us. Not so long ago either, for you. To white people money is important.

PHILIDA

I'll go to the Meester and ask him to let us go, and then we go.

LABYN

So easy!?

PHILIDA

I'm not saying it will be easy. But we got to see what that Gariep look like. We got to find out for ourselves. Unless we make sure in time, we'll still be here when we die.

LABYN

And you think you can go and speak to the Meester?



PHILIDA

Yes, I do. I will tell him we need  
a pass to go to the Gariep.

**INT. LATE AFTERNOON. THE VOORHUIS AT THE HOUSE ON  
CHURCH STREET.**

de la Bat sits at his desk, where Klienkat sometimes likes to  
nest amongst his papers. He is swivelled slightly in the chair  
to look at Philida, who stands to one side.

Anna sits on the sofa, and her baby daughter lies on her back  
beside her. Anna languidly dangles a knitted toy on a ribbon  
over the child, who tries to grab at it.

DE LA BAT

And what if I say no?

PHILIDA

Then we shall just have to go  
without a pass.

DE LA BAT

Philida!

PHILIDA

(shrugging)

This is not how we want to go,  
Meester. We want to stay with the  
law. But we got to go and that is  
how it is.

ANNA

How do we know that you'll ever  
come back?

PHILIDA

I shall give the Nooi and the  
Meester my word.

ANNA

And you want us just to believe  
you?

PHILIDA

Yes, Nooi. Why not? Did I ever lie  
to the Nooi or the Meester?

DE LA BAT

Do you know what I paid for you  
and your two children?

PHILIDA

Yes, Meester. One hundred and twenty-three pounds two shillings and sixpence. That is my price.

DE LA BAT

(blinking his eyes)

Yes, that is so. I see you kept your ears open at the auction.

Philida does not answer.

ANNA

And suppose you go away and stay away?

DE LA BAT

Yes — how will I ever get my money again, Philida?

PHILIDA

I told you *mos* I will come back, Meester de la Bat.

DE LA BAT

(turning back to his desk)

We will talk again.

**EXT. AFTERNOON. THE BACKYARD AT THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

Philida sits on the step of Delphina's room, swearing under her breath as she tries to unravel a knot in her wool. She struggles and struggles. She gets hold of a loose end and pulls at it, and suddenly everything unwinds and her thread is untangled all the way — just as Anna opens the kitchen window and calls.

ANNA

Philida! You are needed in the *voorhuis*!

Anna closes the window without waiting for a response.

**INT. AFTERNOON. THE VOORHUIUS AT THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

When Philida enters the *voorhuis*, there are three white people standing there: de la Bat, Anna, and JAN FREDRIK BERRANGÉ, a sickly-looking young man in a black broadcloth suit and a top hat. He is awkwardly holding Petronella's brightly coloured Javanese cotton shoulder bag.

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ANNA  
 (quite animated in the  
 company of this visitor)  
 And where are you headed Meester  
 Berrangé?

JAN FREDRIK  
 To a village far inland called  
 Driefontien. I want to talk to  
 some people there before I go and  
 study theology overseas.

ANNA  
 (catching sight of Philida)  
 Oh, here she is. Philida, this is  
 Meester Jan Fredrik Berrangé. He  
 has brought something for you from  
 Zandvliet.

JAN FREDRIK  
 (handing Petronella's bag to  
 Philida)  
 Francois Brink asked me to bring  
 you this bag from your grandmother  
 when he heard I was on my way  
 inland. I think you know he is  
 engaged to my sister, Maria  
 Magdalena.

PHILIDA  
 (taking Petronella's bag, and  
 hugging it to her)  
 Are they still to be married?

JAN FREDRIK  
 Yes, still. But the Good Lord  
 alone knows when. She keeps  
 putting it off, and nobody has any  
 idea for how long.

Philida holds back a smile tugging at her mouth.

PHILIDA  
 And how are things at Zandvliet?

JAN FREDRIK  
 (shrugging uneasily)  
 Well, I suppose. I prefer not to  
 ask too many questions. Tant Janna  
 grows heavier by the day and I  
 hear that Oom Cornelis has got a  
 bad pain in his fundament.  
 (MORE)

JAN FREDRIK (CONT'D)  
He says it is his old man's gland,  
and there is no longer anyone  
around to help now that your  
grandmother has died.

On the word "died" Philida takes a step backwards as if she has been hit by an overpowering gust of wind. The three white people in the room are oblivious.

DE LA BAT  
Well, they are all still alive by  
the grace of God.

PHILIDA  
(though stiff lips, her voice  
strained)  
Thank you for bringing me Ouma  
Nella's bag, Meester.

She starts to back away.

ANNA  
Very well, you can go now,  
Philida.

Philida turns and turns and runs from the room.

**EXT. AFTERNOON. DELPHINA'S ROOM.**

Philida sits on her palliasse, her back against the wall with her legs stretched out in front of her, holding Petronella's bag on her lap. She stares, dry eyed, straight ahead.

Delphina picks up Willempie and takes Lena by the hand.

DELPHINA  
Come. Come with with me to where I  
am ironing.

Once they have left the room, Philida continues to sit, motionless. Kleinkat comes to settle next to her, as if sensing her distress.

PHILIDA  
(rocking back and forth,  
murmuring softly to herself)  
My poor old Ouma. Poor, poor me.

At last, she opens Petronella's bag and begins to inspect its contents: a beautiful pale blue and yellow cardigan; the pair of ivory knitting needles with which Petronella taught Philida to knit; a snuffbox with a fine inlaid wooden lid; a heavy soup spoon; a bolt of heavy red-and-white cloth; a bamboo box half filled with coins – several handfuls of rix-dollars and seven gold pounds; and a heavy golden ring. She stares at the array of items for a while, turning them over, inspecting them. Then she slowly returns them to the bag again, and rests her hand on top of it.

**EXT. MORNING. THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH STREET.**

de la Bat comes out of the front door, lets it fall shut behind him, and starts his secretary bird strut in the direction of the Drostdy.

Philida runs from the side of the house and catches up to him.

PHILIDA

Meester!

He stops, looking slightly startled by her precipitous arrival.

PHILIDA

Meester, that bag that was brought  
for me yesterday from my Ouma  
Nella, there was some rix-dollars  
in it and seven gold pounds. I can  
leave the money with Meester until  
I come back, to show that I am  
serious. I don't think Meester can  
object now.

DE LA BAT

Well, possibly, yes.  
(he looks at her with  
narrowed eyes)  
But what about the children?

PHILIDA

What about the children?

DE LA BAT

If you leave the children with us  
we may think about letting you go.

PHILIDA

(she looks at him for a  
moment in blank amazement)  
And will Meester give them a teat  
to drink? Or clean their bums when  
they kak themselves?

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DE LA BAT  
 (he stares at her as if  
 winded)  
 Philida! How on God's earth can  
 you - ?

PHILIDA  
 I just asking, Meester.

de la Bat pulls himself together like a rooster getting ready  
 to crow.

DE LA BAT  
 (very quickly)  
 I'll think about it.

He strides on.

**EXT. MORNING. THE BACKYARD OF THE HOUSE ON CHURCH  
 STREET.**

Floris sits on the middle step of the three rooms for servants,  
 making *velskoene*.

Philida and Labyn shoulder their small bundles of the most  
 necessary stuff to take with them. Lena (now 4) is holding her  
 wooden Kleinkat, and Willempie (now two-and-a-half) holds a  
 carved wooden tortoise.

Delphina comes out of the kitchen.

PHILIDA  
 (to Delphina)  
 It's still not too late. We can  
 wait, and you can still come if  
 you want.

DELPHINA  
 (shaking her head)  
 I'm too scared. I know I may be  
 sorry afterwards, but for now I  
 don't want to risk it. This land  
 is too big and too wild for me.

Philida nods. Kleinkat appears out of nowhere and lays a small  
 yellow flower at Philida's feet.

PHILIDA  
 (crouching and stroking the  
 cat)  
 Now I know everything will go well  
 for us.

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PHILIDA  
 (tilting her face up to  
 Delphina)  
 Thank you for looking after her.

DELPHINA  
 We already know and trust each  
 other.

Philida stands and holds out her hand for Lena. Labyn picks up Willempie, and the small group walks from the yard to begin their journey.

Floris stands up with a half made shoe in his hand as he and Delphina watch them go.

**EXT. MORNING. THE OUTSKIRTS OF WORCESTER.**

A mule cart trundles along the road and slowly draws abreast of Philida, Labyn, and the children.

Philida steps out into the road to wave the mule cart down.

PHILIDA  
 I am Philida of the Cape and this  
 is Labyn from Batavia. We are on  
 our way to the Gariep.

DRIVER  
 The Gariep is far from here.

PHILIDA  
 We know it is far, but we are on  
 our way. Can we ride some of the  
 way with you?

DRIVER  
 Climb in! I'm riding to the  
 Bokkeveld to fetch some wheat.

**EXT. DAY. THE ROUTE FROM WORCESTER TO THE GARIEP.**

**MONTAGE OF THE LONG JOURNEY**

Early morning. Philida and Labyn's shoes slip and grip over rocky mountain outcrops.

Midday. In the middle distance, Philida carries Willempie and Labyn carries Lena as they trudge through the scrubby Karoo vegetation.

Late afternoon. Casting long shadows, Philida, Labyn, and the children toil through a vast, arid landscape.

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Early evening. Up ahead, they can see the dark green of the bushes and trees that mark the course of the Gariep. After all the silence around them, the voices on the other side of the river are eerie, almost jarring.

END MONTAGE

**EXT. NIGHT. JUST SOUTH OF THE GARIEP.**

The voices across the river have died down. Philida, Labyn, and the children are lying still in the endlessness of the night.

Out of the stillness comes a sound like a cat mewing in the dark.

PHILIDA  
(very softly so as not to  
wake the children)  
Labyn?

LABYN  
Yes, Philida?

PHILIDA  
I think I hear a cat calling.

LABYN  
Yes, I hear it too.

PHILIDA  
You think it was Kleinkat?

LABYN  
I don't think she could have come  
so far. But if that is what Al-lah  
wish, then Kleinkat will be here.

PHILIDA  
Do you know what that mean?

LABYN  
What do you think it mean?

PHILIDA  
If you ask me, I think Kleinkat  
want us to go back.

LABYN  
Back where?

PHILIDA  
Back to Worcester. Perhaps that is  
now our place.

(MORE)

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PHILIDA (CONT'D)

We only know that now because we come all this way, to the Gariep, to hell and gone. It is only because we come all this way that we know where we must go to, where you and I and the children belong.

LABYN

You know how far that is?

PHILIDA

I know every blarry step of the way.

LABYN

And you say we must go back?

PHILIDA

We must go back, because now we shall know the place for the first time. Our place. I once ask my Ouma Nella: where am I not? And tonight, in this night under the stars, I know at last: In this place I am not. The only place where I am is back where I come from.

They are silent for a time.

PHILIDA

And you know what, Labyn?

LABYN

No, I don't know, Philida. But you tell me and then we shall both know.

PHILIDA

We *had* to come here. It was the only way to know.

LABYN

If you say so.

PHILIDA

I say so because that is what I know.

(MORE)

PHILIDA (CONT'D)

I can tell you something about knitting: In the past I hate correcting a dropped stitch, or two knitted together, or a purl too soon, but now I know that one of the best things that can happen to you is to find a mistake in the knitting. When you find it you feel so happy because you can make it right. You unravel and you unravel until you get to the right place, and then you pick up the wrong stitches and you knit them right. Every stitch is just where it must be. And now you can sleep in the night.

LABYN

Mm.

PHILIDA

I know this Gariep show us where we go wrong. So we can undo the wrong rows and go back and knit it right. Now we can be really happy, Labyn. To find what is wrong and then to make it right. This is what I know inside myself: In the brown waters of the Gariep I shall wash myself clean. This Great Gariep. My Gariep. To drink it into me so that it can for ever be part of me and I of it.

Willempie murmurs in a dream. Lena, half-asleep, turns to put her arm across him, and he quietens.

PHILIDA

We coming closer, Labyn. I don't really know to what, but I know we coming closer.

(she is starting to get drowsy)

Old Labyn is here. And Lena is here. And Willempie is here. I am here. I, Philida of the Cape. That I is free. The I who was a slave and who now is free, who is a woman, and who is everything.  
I

FADE OUT

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Philida of the Cape worked as a knitting girl on the wine farm farm Zandvliet – present day Solms-Delta – from 1824 to 1832. Following the emancipation of the slaves throughout the British Empire in 1834, Philida lived out the rest of her days upcountry in Worcester.