
Opening Extract from...

The Complete Short Stories

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THE GO-AWAY BIRD

1

All over the Colony it was possible to hear the subtle voice of the grey-crested lourie, commonly known as the go-away bird by its call, "go'way, go'way". It was possible to hear the bird, but very few did, for it was part of the background to everything, a choir of birds and beasts, the crackle of vegetation in the great prevalent sunlight, and the soft rhythmic pad of natives, as they went barefoot and in single-file, from kraal to kraal.

Out shooting with her uncle and her young friends, happy under her wide-brimmed hat, Daphne du Toit would sometimes hear the go-away bird. Sometimes, during the school holidays, her aunt and uncle would have the young neighbours over from farms thirty miles distant. They would scrounge a lift into the nearest township – "the dorp" they called it, for it was no more than a sandy main street in a valley, frequently cut off in the rainy season, when the rivers would swell above the bridges.

As they rumbled down the hill in the Ford V8 the uneven line of corrugated iron roofs would rise to meet them, and

presently the car would stop outside the post office which was also the headquarters of the Native Commissioner. They would spill out to receive calls and glances of recognition from the white population. Natives would appear from nowhere to group themselves a few yards from the car, grinning with a kind of interest. They would amble past the general European store, two or three native stores and a dozen haphazard houses with voices of women scolding their servants rising from behind the torn mosquito-wire around the dark stoeps. Though it was a British colony, most of the people who lived in the dorp and its vicinity were Afrikaners, or Dutch as they were simply called. Daphne's father had been Dutch, but her mother had been a Patterson from England, and since their death she had lived with her mother's relations, the Chakata Pattersons, who understood, but preferred not to speak Afrikaans. Chakata was sixty, he had been very much older than Daphne's mother, and his own children were married, were farming in other colonies. Chakata nourished a passionate love for the natives. No one had called him James for thirty-odd years; he went by the natives' name for him, Chakata. He loved the natives as much as he hated the Dutch.

Daphne had come into his household when she was six, both parents then being dead. That year Chakata was awarded an OBE for his model native villages. Daphne remembered the great creaky motor-vans and horse-drawn, sometimes ox-drawn, covered wagons pouring into the farm from far distances, thirty miles or five hundred miles away, neighbours come to congratulate Chakata. The empty bottles piled up in the yard. The native boys ran about all day to attend to the guests, some of whom slept in the house, most of whom bedded

down in their wagons. Some were Dutch, and these, when they dismounted from their wagons, would kneel to thank God for a safe arrival. They would then shout their orders to their servants and go to greet Old Tuys who had come out to welcome them. Chakata always fell back a little behind Old Tuys when Dutch visitors came to the farm. This was out of courtesy and tact for Old Tuys, the tobacco manager on Chakata's farm who was Dutch, and Chakata felt that these Afrikaners would want to linger first with him, and exchange something sociable in Afrikaans. As for Chakata, although he spoke at least twenty native dialects, he would no more think of speaking Afrikaans than he would think of speaking French. The Dutch visitors would have to congratulate Chakata on his OBE in the English tongue, however poorly managed, if they really wished to show they meant him well. Everyone knew that Old Tuys was a constant irritant to Chakata, addressing him usually in Dutch, to which Chakata invariably replied in English.

During those weeks following Chakata's return from Government House with the Order, when he kept open house, Daphne would loiter around the farmhouse, waiting for the arrival of the cars and wagons, in the hope that they might bring a child for her to play with. Her only playmate was the cook's piccanin, Moses, a year older than Daphne, but frequently he was called away to draw water, sweep the yard, or fetch wood. He would trot across the yard with a pile of wood pressed against his chest and rising up to his eyes, clutching it officiously in his black arms which themselves resembled the faggots he bore. When Daphne scampered after Moses to the well or the wood-pile one of the older natives

would interfere. "No, Missy Daphne, you do no piccanin's work. You go make play." She would wander off barefoot to the paddock beyond the guava bushes, or to the verging plantation of oranges, anywhere except the tobacco sheds, for there she might bump into Old Tuys who would then stop what he was doing, stand straight and, folding his arms, look at her with his blue eyes and sandy face. She would stare at him for a frightened moment and then run for it.

Once when she had been following a dry river-bed which cut through Chakata's land she nearly trod on a snake, and screaming, ran blindly to the nearest farm buildings, the tobacco sheds. Round the corner of one of the sheds came Old Tuys, and in her panic and relief at seeing a human face, Daphne ran up to him. "A snake! There's a snake down the river-bed!" He straightened up, folded his arms, and looked at her until she turned and ran from him, too.

Old Tuys was not yet sixty. He had been called Young Tuys until his wife was known definitely to have committed adultery, not once, but a number of times. After her death it was at first a matter of some surprise among the farmers that Old Tuys did not leave Chakata's, for with his sound health and experience of tobacco, he could have been anyone's manager in or beyond the Colony. But word got round why Tuys remained with Chakata, and the subject was no more mentioned, save as passed on from fathers to sons, mothers to daughters, like the local genealogies, the infallible methods of shooting to kill, and the facts of life.

Daphne was only half conscious of the go-away bird, even while she heard it, during the first twelve years of her life. In fact she learnt about it at school during Natural History,

and immediately recognized the fact that she had been hearing this bird calling all her life. She began to go out specially to hear it, and staring into the dry river-bed, or brushing round the orange trees, she would strain for its call; and sometimes at sundowner time, drinking her lemonade between Chakata and his wife on the stoep, she would say, "Listen to the go-away bird."

"No," said Chakata one evening, "it's too late. They aren't about as late as this."

"It *was* the Bird," she said, for it had assumed for her sufficient importance to be called simply this, like the biblical Dove, or the zodiacal Ram.

"Look yere, Daphne, ma girl," said Mrs Chakata, between two loud sucks of whisky and water, "chuck up this conversation about the blerry bird. If that's all they teach you at the blerry boarding-school –"

"It's Natural History," Chakata put in. "It's a very good thing that she's interested in the wild life around us."

Mrs Chakata had been born in the Colony. She spoke English with the African Dutch accent, although her extraction was English. Some said, however, that there was a touch of colour, but this was not sufficiently proved by her crinkled brown skin: many women in the Colony were shrivelled in complexion, though they were never hatless, nor for long in the sun. It was partly the dry atmosphere of the long hot season and partly the continual whisky drinking that dried most of them up. Mrs Chakata spent nearly all day in her kimono dressing-gown lying on the bed, smoking to ease the pains in her limbs the nature of which no doctor had yet been able to diagnose over a period of six years.

Since ever Daphne could remember, when Mrs Chakata lay on her bed in the daytime she had a revolver on a table by her side. And sometimes, when Chakata had to spend days and nights away from the farm, Daphne had slept in Mrs Chakata's room, while outside the bedroom door, on a makeshift pallet, lay Ticky Talbot, the freckled Englishman who trained Chakata's racers. He lay with a gun by his side, treating it all as rather a joke.

From time to time Daphne had inquired the reasons for these precautions. "You can't trust the munts," said Mrs Chakata, using the local word for the natives. Daphne never understood this, for Chakata's men were the finest in the Colony, that was an axiom. She vaguely thought it must be a surviving custom of general practice, dating from the Pioneer days, when white men and women were frequently murdered in their beds. This was within living history, and tales of these past massacres and retributions were part of daily life in the great rural districts of the Colony. But the old warrior chiefs were long since dead, and the warriors disbanded, all differences now being settled by the Native Commissioners. As she grew older Daphne thought Mrs Chakata and her kind very foolish to take such elaborate precautions against something so remote as a native rising on the farm. But it was not until the Coates family moved in to the neighbouring farm thirty-five miles away that Daphne discovered Mrs Chakata's precautionary habits were not generally shared by the grown-up females of the Colony. Daphne was twelve when the Coates family, which included two younger girls and two older boys, came to the district. During the first school holidays after their arrival she was invited over to stay with them. Mr Coates had

gone on safari, leaving his wife and children on the farm. The only other European there was a young married student of agriculture who lived on their land two miles from the farmhouse.

Daphne was put up on a camp bed in Mrs Coates's bedroom. She noticed that her hostess had no revolver by her side, nor was anyone on sentry duty outside the door.

"Aren't you afraid of the munts?" said Daphne.

"Good gracious, why? Our boys are marvellous."

"Auntie Chakata always sleeps with a pistol by her side."

"Is she afraid of rape, then?" said Mrs Coates. All the children in the Colony understood the term; rape was a capital offence, and on very remote occasions the Colony would be astir about a case of rape, whether the accused was a white man or a black.

It was a new thought to Daphne that Mrs Chakata might fear rape, not murder as she had supposed. She looked at Mrs Coates with wonder. "There isn't anyone, is there, would rape Auntie Chakata?" Mrs Coates was smiling to herself.

Often, when she was out with the Coates children, Daphne would hear the go-away bird. One day when the children were walking through a field of maize, the older Coates boy, John, said to Daphne,

"Why do you suddenly stop still like that?"

"I'm listening to the go-away bird," she said.

Her face was shaded under the wide brim of her hat, and the maize rose all round her, taller than herself. John Coates, who was sixteen, folded his arms and looked at her, for it was an odd thing for a little girl to notice the go-away bird.

"What are you looking at?" she said.

He didn't answer. The maize reached to his shoulder. He was put into a dither, and so he continued to look at her, arms folded, as if he felt confident.

"Don't stand like that," Daphne said. "You remind me of Old Tuys."

John immediately laughed. He took his opportunity to gain a point, to alleviate his awkwardness and support his pose. "You got a handful there with Old Tuys," he said.

"Old Tuys is the best tobacco baas in the country," she said defiantly. "Uncle Chakata likes Old Tuys."

"No, he does not like him," said John.

"Yes, he does so, or he wouldn't keep him on."

"My girl," said John, "I know why Chakata keeps on Old Tuys. *You* know. Everyone knows. It isn't because he likes him."

They moved on to join the other children. Daphne wondered why Chakata kept on Old Tuys.

They scrounged a lift to the dorp. The Coates family were uninhibited about speaking Afrikaans, chatting in rapid gutturals to people they met while Daphne stood by, shyly following what she could of the conversation.

They were to return to the car at five ôclock, and it was now only half-past three. Daphne took her chance and slipped away from the group through the post office and out at the back yard where the natives were squatting round their mealie-pot. They watched her with their childish interest as she made her way past the native huts and the privies and out on the sanitary lane at the foot of the yard.

Daphne nipped across a field and up the steep track of Donald Cloete's kopje. It bore this name, because Donald

Cloete was the only person who lived on the hill, although there were several empty shacks surrounding his.

Donald Cloete had been to Cambridge. Indoors, he had two photographs on the wall. One was Donald in the cricket team, not easily recognizable behind his wide, curly moustache and among the other young men who looked so like him and stood in the same stiff, self-assured manner that Daphne had observed in pictures of the Pioneer heroes. The picture was dated 1898. Another group showed Donald in uniform among his comrades of the Royal Flying Corps. It was dated 1918, but Donald behind his moustache did not look much older than he appeared in the Cambridge picture.

Daphne looked round the open door and saw Donald seated in his dilapidated cane chair. His white shirt was stained with beetroot.

"Are you drunk, Donald," she inquired politely, "or are you sober?"

Donald always told the truth. "I'm sober," he said. "Come in."

At fifty-six his appearance now had very little in common with the young Cambridge cricketer or the RFC pilot. He had been in hundreds of jobs, had married and lost his wife to a younger and more energetic man. The past eight years had been the most settled in his life, for he was Town Clerk of the dorp, a job which made few demands on punctuality, industry, smartness of appearance, and concentration, which qualities Donald lacked. Sometimes when the Council held its monthly meeting, and Donald happened to stagger in late and drunk, the Chairman would ask Donald to leave the meeting, and in his absence propose his dismissal. Sometimes

they unanimously dismissed him and after the meeting he was informed of the decision. However, next day Donald would dress himself cleanly and call in to see the butcher with a yarn about the RFC; he would call on the headmaster who had been to Cambridge some years later than Donald; and after doing a round of the Council members he would busy himself in the district, would ride for miles on his bicycle seeing that fences were up where they should be, and sign-posts which had fallen in the rains set upright and prominent. Within a week, Donald's dismissal would be ignored by everyone. He would relax then, and if he entered up a birth or a death during the week, it was a good week's work.

"Who brought you from the farm?" said Donald.

"Ticky Talbot," said Daphne.

"Nice to see you," said Donald. And he called to his servant for tea.

"Five more years and then I go to England," said Daphne, for this was the usual subject between them, and she did not feel it right to come to the real purpose of her visit so soon.

"That will be the time," said Donald. "When you go to England, that will be the time." And he told her all over again about the water meadows at Cambridge, the country pubs, the hedging and ditching, the pink-coated riders.

Donald's ragged native brought in tea in two big cups, holding one in each hand. One he gave to Daphne and the other to Donald.

How small, Donald said, were the English streams which never dried up. How small the fields, little bits of acreage, and none of the cottage women bitchy for they did their own housework and had no time to bitch. And then, of course, the better

classes taking tea in their long galleries throughout the land, in springtime, with the pale sunlight dripping through the mullioned windows on to the mellow Old Windsor chairs, and the smell of hyacinths . . .

"Oh, I see. Now tell me about London, Donald. Tell me about the theatres and bioscopes."

"They don't say 'bioscope' there, they say 'cinema' or 'the pictures'."

"I say, Donald," she said, for she noticed it was twenty-past four, "I want you to tell me something straight."

"Fire ahead," said Donald.

"Why does Uncle Chakata keep on Old Tuys?"

"I don't want to lose my job," he said.

"Upon my honour," she said, "if you tell me about Old Tuys I shan't betray you."

"The whole Colony knows the story," said Donald, "but the first one to tell it to you is bound to come up against Chakata."

"May I drop dead on this floor," she said, "if I tell my Uncle Chakata on you."

"How old are you, now?" Donald said.

"Nearly thirteen."

"It was two years before you were born – that would make it fifteen years ago, when Old Tuys . . ."

Old Tuys had already been married for some time to a Dutch girl from Pretoria. Long before he took the job at Chakata's he knew of her infidelities. They had one peculiarity: her taste was exclusively for Englishmen. The young English settlers whom she met in the various establishments where Tuys was employed were, guilty or not, invariably

accosted by Tuys: "You committed adultery with my wife, you swine." There might be a fight, or Tuys would threaten his gun. However it might be, and whether or not these young men were his wife's lovers, Tuys was usually turned off the job.

It was said he was going to shoot his wife and arrange it to look like an accident. Simply because this intention was widely reported, he could not have carried out the plan successfully, even if he did, in fact, contemplate the deed. Certainly he beat her up from time to time.

Tuys hoped eventually to get a farm of his own. Chakata, who knew of his troubles, took Tuys on to learn the tobacco sheds. Tuys and his wife moved into a small house on Chakata's land. "Any trouble with the lady, Tuys," said Chakata, "come to me, for in a young country like this, with four white men to every one white woman, there is bound to be trouble."

There was trouble the first week with a trooper.

"Look here, Tuys," said Chakata, "I'll talk to her." He had frequently in his life had the painful duty of giving his servants a talking-to on sex. At the Pattersons' home in England it had been a routine affair.

Hatty Tuys was not beautiful: in fact she was dark and scraggy. However, Chakata not only failed to reform her, he succumbed to her. She wept. She said she hated Tuys.

Donald paused in his story to remark to Daphne, "Mind you, this sort of thing doesn't happen in England."

"Doesn't it?" said Daphne.

"Oh well, there are love affairs but they take time. You have to sort of build them up with a woman. In England, a man of Chakata's importance might feel sorry for a slut if she

started to cry, but he wouldn't just make love to her on the spot. The climate's cooler there, you see, and there are a lot more girls."

"Oh, I see," said Daphne. "What did Uncle Chakata do next?"

"Well, as soon as he had played the fool with Mrs Tuys he felt sorry. He told her it was a moment of weakness and it would never occur again. But it did."

"Did Tuys find out?"

"Tuys found out. He went to Mrs Chakata and tried to rape her."

"Didn't it come off?"

"No, it didn't come off."

"It must have been the whisky in her breath. It must have put him off," said Daphne.

"In England," said Donald, "girls your age don't know very much about these things."

"Oh, I see," said Daphne.

"It's all different there. Well, Mrs Chakata complained to Chakata, and wanted him to shoot Tuys. He refused, of course, and he gave Tuys a rise and made him manager. And from that day he wouldn't look at Mrs Tuys, wouldn't even look at her. Whenever he caught sight of her about the farm, he looked the other way. In the end she wrote to Chakata to say she was mad in love with him and if she couldn't have him she would shoot herself. The note was written in block letters, in Afrikaans."

"Chakata would never answer it, then," Daphne said.

"You are right," said Donald. "And Mrs Tuys shot herself. Old Tuys has sworn to be revenged on Chakata some day.

That's why Mrs Chakata has a gun at her bedside. She has implored Chakata to get rid of Old Tuys. So he should, of course."

"He can't, very well, when you think of it," said Daphne.

"It's only his remorse," said Donald, "and his English honour. If Old Tuys was an Englishman, Daphne, he would have cleared off the farm long ago. But no, he remains, he has sworn on the Bible to be revenged."

"It must be our climate," said Daphne. "I have never liked the way Old Tuys looks at me."

"The Colony is a savage place," he said. He rose and poured himself a whisky. "I grant you," he said, "we have the natives under control. I grant you we have the leopards under control –"

"Oh, remember Moses," said Daphne. Her former playmate, Moses, had been got by a leopard two years ago.

"That was exceptional. We are getting control over malaria. But we haven't got the *savage in ourselves* under control. This place brings out *the savage in ourselves*." He finished his drink and poured another. "If you go to England," he said, "don't come back."

"Oh, I see," said Daphne.

She was ten minutes late when she arrived at the car. The party had been anxious about her.

"Where did you get to? You slipped away . . . we asked everywhere . . ."

John Coates said in a mock-girlish tone, "Oh, she's been listening to the go-away bird out on the lone wide veldt."

"Five more years and then I go to England. Four years . . . three . . ."

Meanwhile, life in the Colony seemed to become more exciting every year. In fact, it went on as usual, but Daphne's capacity for excitement developed as she grew into her teens.

She had a trip to Kenya to stay with a married cousin, another trip to Johannesburg with Mrs Coates to buy clothes.

"Typical English beauty Daphne's turning out to be," said Chakata. In reality she was too blonde to be typically English; she took after her father's family, the Cape du Toits, who were a mixture of Dutch and Huguenot stock.

At sixteen she passed her matric and her name was entered for a teachers' training college in the Capital. During the holidays she flirted with John Coates, who would drive her round the countryside in the little German Volkswagen which his father had obtained for him. They would go on Sunday afternoons to the Williams Hotel on the great main road for tea and a swim in the bathing-pool with all the district who converged there weekly from farms and towns.

"In England," Daphne would tell him, "you can bathe in the rivers. No bilharzia there, no crocs."

"There's going to be a war in Europe," said John.

Daphne would sit on the hotel stoep in her smart new linen slacks, sipping her gin and lime, delighted and amazed to be grown-up, to be greeted by her farming neighbours.

"'Lo, Daphne, how are your mealies?"

"Not too bad, how are yours?"

"Hallo, Daphne, how's the tobacco?"

"Rotten, Old Tuys says."

"I hear Chakata's sold La Flèche."

"Well, he's had an offer, actually."

She had been twice to a dance at Williams Hotel. Young

Billy Williams, who was studying medicine at Cape Town, proposed marriage to her, but as everyone knew, she was to go to college in the Capital and then to England to stay with the English Pattersons for a couple of years before she could decide about marriage.

War broke out at the beginning of her first term at the training college. All her old young men, as well as her new, became important and interesting in their uniforms and brief appearances on leave.

She took up golf. Sometimes, after a hole, when she was following her companions to the next tee, she would lag behind or even stop in her tracks.

"Feeling all right, Daphne?"

"Oh, I was only listening to the go-away bird."

"Interested in ornithology?"

"Oh yes, fairly, you know."

When she returned to the farm after her first term at the college Chakata gave her a revolver.

"Keep it beside your bed," he said.

She took it without comment.

Next day, he said, "Where did you go yesterday afternoon?"

"Oh, for a trek across the veldt, you know."

"Anywhere special?"

"Only to Makata's kraal. He's quite determined to hang on to that land the Beresfords are after. He's got a wife for his son, he paid five head." Makata was the local chief. Daphne enjoyed squatting in the shade of his great mud hut drinking the tea specially prepared for her, and though the rest of the Colony looked with disfavour on such visits, it was something

which Chakata and his children had always done, and no one felt inclined to take up the question with Chakata. Chakata wasn't just anyone.

"I suppose," said Chakata to Daphne, "you always carry a gun?"

"Well, yesterday," said Daphne, "I didn't actually."

"*Always*," said Chakata, "take a gun when you go out on the veldt. It's a golden rule. There's nothing more exasperating than to see a buck dancing about in the bush and to find yourself standing like a fool without a gun."

Since she was eight and had first learnt to shoot, this had been a golden rule of Chakata's. Many a time she had been out on her own, weighed down with the gun, and had seen dozens of buck and simply had not bothered to shoot. She hated venison, in any case. Tinned salmon was her favourite dish.

He seemed to know her thoughts. "We're always short of buck for the dogs. Remember there's a war on. Remember *always*," said Chakata, "to take a gun. I hear on the wireless," he added, "that there's a leopard over in the Temwe valley. The mate has young. It's got two men, so far."

"Uncle Chakata, that's a long way off," Daphne said explosively.

"Leopards can travel," said Chakata. He looked horribly put out.

"Oh, I see," said Daphne.

"And you ought to ride more," he said, "it's far better exercise than walking."

She saw that he was not really afraid of her meeting the leopard, nor did he need meat for the dogs; and she thought

of how, yesterday afternoon, she had been followed all the way to the kraal by Old Tuys. He had kept to the bush, and seemed not to know he had been observed. She had been glad that several parties of natives had passed her on the way. Afterwards, when she was taking leave of Makata, he had offered to send his nephew to accompany her home. This was a customary offer: she usually declined it. This time, however, she had accepted the escort, who plodded along behind her until she dismissed him at the edge of the farm. Daphne did not mention this incident to Chakata.

That afternoon when she set off for tea at the Mission, she was armed.

Next day Chakata gave her the old Mercedes for herself. "You walk too much," he said.

It was no use now, checking off the years before she should go to England. She climbed Donald Cloete's kopje: "Are you sober, Donald, or –?"

"I'm drunk, go away."

Towards the end of her course at the training college, when she was home for the Christmas holidays, she rode her horse along the main wide road to the dorp. She did some shopping; she stopped to talk to the Cypriot tailor who supplied the district with drill shorts, and to the Sephardic Jew who kept the largest Kaffir store.

"Live and let live," said Chakata. But these people were never at the farm, and this was Daphne's only chance of telling them of her college life.

She called in at the Indian laundry to leave a bottle of hair oil which, for some unfathomable reason, Chakata had promised to give to the Indian.

She had tea with the chemist's wife, then returned to the police station where she had left the horse. Here she stopped for about an hour chatting with two troopers whom she had known since her childhood. It was late when she set off up the steep main road, keeping well to the side of the tarmac strips on which an occasional car would pass, or a native on a bicycle. She knew all the occupants of the cars and as they slowed down to pass her they would call a greeting. She had gone about five miles when she came to a winding section of the road with dense bush on either side. This part was notorious for accidents. The light was failing rapidly, and as she heard a car approaching round the bend ahead of her she reined in to the side. Immediately the car appeared its lights were switched on, but before they dazzled her she had recognized Old Tuys at the wheel of the shooting-brake. As he approached he gave no sign of slowing down. Not only did Old Tuys keep up his speed, he brought the car off the strips and passed within a few inches of the animal.

Daphne had once heard a trooper say that for a human being to fall in the bush at sundown or after was like a naked man appearing in class at a girl's school. As she landed in the dark thicket every living thing screeched, rustled, fled, and flapped in a feminine sort of panic. The horse was away along the road, its hooves beating frantic diminishing signals in the dusk. Daphne's right shin was giving her intense pain. She was fairly sure Old Tuys had stopped the car. She rose and limped a few steps, pushing her way through the vegetation and branches, to the verge of the road. Here she stopped, for she heard footsteps on the road a few feet away. Old Tuys was waiting for her. She looked round her and quickly saw there

was no chance of penetrating further into the bush with safety. The sky was nearly dark now, and the pain in her leg was threatening to overcome her. Daphne had never fainted, even when, once, she had wanted to, during an emergency operation for a snake-bite, the sharp blade cutting into her unanaesthetized flesh. Now, it seemed that she would faint, and this alarmed her, for she could hear Old Tuys among the crackling branches at the side of the road, and presently could discern his outline. The sound of a native shouting farther up the road intruded upon her desire to faint, and, to resist closing her eyes in oblivion she opened them wide, wider, staring into the darkness.

Old Tuys got hold of her. He did not speak, but he gripped her arm and dragged her out of the bush and threw her on the ground at the side of the road out of the glare of the headlamps. Daphne screamed and kicked out with her good leg. Old Tuys stood up, listening. A horse was approaching. Suddenly round the bend came a native leading Daphne's horse. It shied at the sight of the van's headlights, but the native held it firmly while Old Tuys went to take it.

"Clear off," said Tuys to the boy in kitchen Kaffir.

"Don't go," shouted Daphne. The native stood where he was.

"I'll get you home in the van," said Old Tuys. He bent to lift Daphne. She screamed. The native came and stood a little closer.

Daphne lifted herself to her feet. She was hysterical. "Knock him down," she ordered the native. He did not move. She realized he would not touch Old Tuys. The Europeans had a name of sticking together, and, whatever

the circumstances, to hit a white man would probably lead to prison. However, the native was evidently prepared to wait, and when Old Tuys swore at him and ordered him off, he merely moved a few feet away.

"Get into the van," shouted Tuys to Daphne. "You been hurt in an accident. I got to take you home."

A car came round the bend, and seeing the group by the standing car, stopped. It was Mr Parker the headmaster.

Old Tuys started the tale about the accident, but Mr Parker was listening to Daphne who limped across to him.

"Take me back to the farm, Mr Parker, for God's sake."

He helped her in and drove off. The native followed with the horse. Old Tuys got into the van and made off in the opposite direction.

"I won't go into details," said Chakata to Daphne next day, "but I can't dismiss Tuys. It goes back to an incident which occurred before you were born. I owe him a debt of honour. Something between men."

"Oh, I see," said Daphne.

Old Tuys had returned to the farm in the early hours of the morning. Daphne knew that Chakata had waited up for him. She had heard the indeterminate barking of a row between them.

She sat up in bed with her leg in splints.

"We could be raped and murdered," said Mrs Chakata, "but Chakata still won't get rid of the bastard. Chakata would kick his backside out of it if he was a proper man."

"He says it's because of a debt of honour," said Daphne.

"That's all you get from Chakata. Whatever you do," said Mrs Chakata, "don't marry a blerry Englishman. They got no

thought for their wives and kids, they only got thought for their blerry honour."

It had always been understood that she was to go to England in 1940, when she was eighteen. But now there was no question of going overseas till the war should end. Daphne had been to see a Colonel, a Judge and a Bishop: she wanted to go to England to join one of the women's services. They told her there was no hope of an exit permit for England being granted to a civilian. Besides, she was under age: would Chakata give his permission?

At twenty she took a teaching job in the Capital rather than join any of the women's services in the Colony, for these seemed to her feeble organizations compared with the real thing.

She was attracted by the vast new RAF training camps which were being set up. One of them lay just outside the Capital, and most of her free time was spent at sundowners and dances in the mess, or week-end tennis parties at outlying farms where she met dozens of young fighter pilots with their Battle of Britain DFCs. She was in love with them collectively. They were England. Her childhood neighbour, John Coates, was a pilot. He was drafted to England, but his ship and convoy were mined outside the Cape. News of his death reached Daphne just after her twenty-first birthday.

She drove out to the camp with one of her new English friends to attend a memorial service for John at the RAF chapel. On the way the tyre burst. The car came to a dangerous screeching stop five yards off the road. The young man set about changing the tyre. Daphne stood by.