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Dear Comrade Frikkie

by

Harold Kimmel

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DEAR COMRADE FRIKKIE

By Harold Kimmel

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Note from Playwright: The Approximate age of each character is given based on his/her first appearance in the play. As the play spans several decades, the characters age respectively.

MAARTENS: *A white prison-warder approximately 19 years of age.*

ROUX: *Another white prison-warder of about the same age. Roux walks with a limp.*

VENTER: *A white prison-warder about 50 years of age.*

JOAN: *A tea-lady of mixed race; 26 years of age.*

PAT: *A white South African sales-woman about 25 years of age.*

DONALD: *A black South African and ex-political activist about 45 years old.*

FRIKKIE: *Also of mixed race; a 27 year old mechanic and son to Joan.*

GLOSSARY OF "SOUTH AFRICANISMS" AT END OF PLAY

Dear Comrade Frikkie
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SCENE 1

(AT RISE: 1964. Robben Island, South Africa. The Warders' room; one door, one window and a wash-basin along with a desk and chairs. On the wall is a picture of Verwoerd and a poster of the 1964 Springbok rugby team. MAARTENS, a 19-year-old prison-warder is pacing back and forth as he addresses ROUX, another warder of approximately the same age.)

MAARTENS

Look at my poster, hey! 1964 Springbok rugby team. But then you got a funny leg. It doesn't walk.

ROUX

I don't play rugby.

MAARTENS

No.

ROUX

Where did you get those boots?

(MAARTENS stops pacing.)

MAARTENS

Nowhere. The same place as you I suppose. What are you talking about?

ROUX

You walked so well.

MAARTENS

I walked like I always walked.

ROUX

You kind of marched.

MAARTENS

It must have been something I learnt at Junior Voortrekkers.

ROUX

Man, I wish I could of gone.

MAARTENS

(Incredulously) You never went!

ROUX

No.

MAARTENS

Well, you're too old now, ou Roux.

ROUX

I know.

MAARTENS

Why didn't you join?

ROUX

It was just my old man couldn't afford it. The shirt and the scarf and the hat and all that stuff.

MAARTENS

The uniform?

ROUX

Hell, but I got one now, hey! Look.

MAARTENS

You look like an idiot.

ROUX

I'm not an idiot.

MAARTENS

Shit! They taught you a lot of good stuff!

ROUX

(Confused) Where?

MAARTENS

At Junior Voortrekkers. All the right stuff to help you out there where things is rough.

ROUX

Hell, hey!

MAARTENS

That's why you go to the 'High Noon Society'.

ROUX

What do you mean?

MAARTENS

You go there because you could never go to Voortrekkers.

ROUX

You know what an ou thinks in his head, ou Maartens.

MAARTENS

I can hear you are going to think something else.

ROUX

(Guiltyly) Hey?

MAARTENS

About the prisoners coming.

ROUX

Hell, how do you know that!

MAARTENS

I know what goes on in an ou's head.

ROUX

I'm not going to think it then.

MAARTENS

Ja, the Serge and the Kommandandt won't like it. They won't.

ROUX

(Worried) O.K., O.K.

MAARTENS

They were an amazing lot. Think about them, ou pal.

ROUX

I will, ou Maartens, I will.

MAARTENS

All those things they taught you, you can still use.

ROUX

Ja?

MAARTENS

Ja. They teach you to be careful. That's how I'm going to be careful here on the island. When they come.

ROUX

You told me not even to think about them.

MAARTENS

Man, that's right. I'm allowed to think about them because I know what to think.

ROUX

What do you think?

MAARTENS

My training at home on the farm helps me. When the kaffir-girl left the kitchen with a potato, I knew. When the boy had a piece of bread under his shirt, I could tell. I know the kaffir's brain, ou pal. I will always know what they're thinking here on this island too. Make no mistake! That's the way you get on. Me? Don't worry about me, ou pal I'm going to be sergeant one day. You, now, you look like you want to be nothing.

ROUX

I'm studying, ou Maartens. History and Bible for my standard six; trekking from Egypt and how the people on the mountain were told to keep away from their neighbours' wives and cattle and so on. And the capitals of America and France and all that. In Africa they don't have capitals. Then there is copper sulphate and verbs and all that triangle stuff.

MAARTENS

You want to be boss of the Prison Service or something?

ROUX

No, man, I just want to get on a bit so my girl will smaak me more.

MAARTENS

Girl? What girl? Since when are you interested in girls?

ROUX

Man, I told you about her. A hundred times.

MAARTENS

I must of forgotten.

ROUX

Agh, Trudie, man! That one whose brother I met at the 'High Noon Society'.

MAARTENS

Agh, Trudie!

ROUX

Ja. Her.

MAARTENS

What about her?

ROUX

She told me she wasn't keen.

MAARTENS

Did you fuck her at all?

ROUX

She told me she couldn't go out with anyone who didn't have a standard six. All her brothers had a standard six and if she went out with an ou, he also had to have a standard six.

MAARTENS

(Nastily) If you become like a brother, you won't get what you're after, ou pal! But then you can do that thing with your hand every night.

ROUX

(Annoyed) Agh, shutup, ou Maartens!

MAARTENS

I can tell what you're like, ou pal.

ROUX

You don't understand something. I'm mad about this girl.

MAARTENS

Trudie?

ROUX

Ja, Trudie.

MAARTENS

So, where is she now?

ROUX

She went to work in Johannesburg.

MAARTENS

Do you write?

ROUX

Write what?

MAARTENS

Letters, man! Do you write to her?

ROUX

I have trouble with the...

MAARTENS

Commas?

ROUX

Ja.

MAARTENS

Full stops?

ROUX

That too. Ja.

MAARTENS

Spelling?

ROUX

(Squirming) Definitely!

MAARTENS

You got a long way to catch up, ou Roux. Just think there's a kaffir coming here tonight who's got a B.A.

ROUX

Hell, hey? I just wish I could spell and add up and remember long names. She might smaaak me more. When I pass I won't write to tell her. That would be like showing off. She'll get to hear about it. One of her brothers might read about it somewhere and tell her. She might even be here on holiday one day and might have nothing better to do and read the results in a place where they keep records on exam results and the weather and how much fruit and gold South Africa sends over the sea.

(There is a pause before MAARTENS responds.)

MAARTENS

(Viciously) Johannesburg, hey! What a place! There's ouens there with standard seven or even eight. Even more. They take a girl out there, and, shit, anything can happen! They got fast cars there. They go to a bioscope to see a cowboy picture then the bugger buys her a box of chocolates then they go parking and then the bugger climbs in. My advice, ou pal, forget all about her!

ROUX

I can't. Everything reminds me of her.

MAARTENS

Like what?

ROUX

Just everything.

MAARTENS

Like what? That wall?

ROUX

Ja.

MAARTENS

How?

ROUX

Back in Cape Town I got her picture hanging on the wall.

MAARTENS

That window.

ROUX

That's an easy one. I saw her through her window lots of times.

MAARTENS

The quarry.

ROUX

The quarry?

MAARTENS

Man, where the kaffirs work.

ROUX

Let's see. Ja, her brother threw a stone at me once.

MAARTENS

Agh, man, girls!

ROUX

(Plaintively) Agh, man, Trudie!

MAARTENS

You're wasting your time, ou pal.

ROUX

One day she'll ring me on the telephone, ou Maartens!

MAARTENS

Man, the day that happens, the Prime Minister will ring up and tell us to release all the prisoners. And that will never happen.

(Beat.)

ROUX

She is going to have a baby anytime.

MAARTENS

Who?

ROUX

Joan.

MAARTENS

Her? Everyone knows that. You see this gun? *(Re-arranging the furniture for "battle"; role playing)* Right, you're the kaffir this time! There's millions of them!

ROUX

(Apprehensively) Ja!

MAARTENS

That's the wagons and stuff around us, hey! *(Pretending to fire with his weapon)*
Bang! Bang!

ROUX

Bang! Bang!

MAARTENS

You keep on forgetting, you stupid cunt! You're a kaffir. They didn't have guns in those days. You're supposed to have an assegai! I'm supposed to shoot you between the laager wagons. You don't know how to use a gun. And keep it up. We want the Kommandant and our Venter to hear us. They must always know we think about all this business. Then an ou gets asked to join one of the clubs. And even promotion.

ROUX

What club?

MAARTENS

Man, one of the clubs. You do things to the prisoners and they give you points. The tougher you are the more points you get for your club.

ROUX

Hell, hey!

MAARTENS

Come on, you black bastards! Bang! Bang!

(ROUX stamps his foot)

ROUX

Fly my little friend as I stamp my foot!

MAARTENS

Who you talking to?

ROUX

My assegai.

(More of "bang! Bang and stamping. THEY stop as the door opens and VENTER enters.)

VENTER

Shit! Again! Every night, it's worse than a prison riot! You got to set an example to the prisoners. If they heard what goes on here, man, they're going to laugh. Once a kaffir laughs at you you're finished as a white man!

(THEY return their guns to their holsters.)

MAARTENS

I was just helping the ou with his standard six history, ou Serge. The way they used to fight. Man I could of joined them.

VENTER

I'd like to see you kill a kaffir, ou Maartens. You've got a lot to learn. It's not so easy.

MAARTENS

I might do it one day.

VENTER

Can't you pick a quieter subject for standard six! Sums or something stupid like that.

MAARTENS

You're right, ou Venter. I mean Serge.

VENTER

You got the night off, ou Roux? I been thinking about it.

ROUX

Agh, man, Serge!

MAARTENS

(Laughing) Ja, he goes to see his Gary Cooper flick, hey! It's about this ou who has to get married. There are these ouens with a grudge. Nobody wants to help the ou. They have a shoot-out with their cow-boy guns at the end to settle their quarrel.

(Demonstrating with his finger) Bang! Bang! Bang!

VENTER

How do you know it so well?

MAARTENS

Roux tells me about it every time he goes. He's seen it fourteen times.

VENTER

Shit, Roux! Is that true!

ROUX

(Cringing) Fourteen times. Ja, Sergeant Venter. It's the 'High Noon' Society. Every month we sit down and watch 'High Noon'. Also, man, I smaaak the way those cowboys dress.

MAARTENS

(Ingratiatingly) There's nothing wrong with the way a South African prison officer dresses. You just got to be smart. That's all. Tuck your shirt in. That kind of thing.

VENTER

But a young man must be able to relax with a bit of coffee and even other things.

ROUX

Then after coffee and popcorn we have a bit of pistol-practise.

VENTER

Ja. I hope you have drink before you shoot.

MAARTENS

But I could teach him better on the island. To be quick when you pull that gun. To shoot your bullet where it can go into a body nicely.

VENTER

Ja, but you got to be careful with that kind of thing. Shooting. You got to be careful who you shoot.

ROUX

Everyone is so friendly there.

VENTER

Just as well.

MAARTENS

You let everybody in there!

ROUX

Never, man, never!

MAARTENS

You let a coloured in!

ROUX

Agh, shutup, ou Maartens!

MAARTENS

You did!

VENTER

You always got to watch out. Who you mix with. Who you drink with. Who you shoot with. Who you go to school with. Who you go swimming with. Who you marry.

MAARTENS

To become a member of the 'High Noon' Society. To qualify, hey? They got to see you can kick a coloured out. A kaffir is even better. Your kicking wasn't so good.

ROUX

Ja, all right. I failed the first time.

MAARTENS

Just like your driving- test!

ROUX

In the end I got my membership in the 'High Noon' Society!

MAARTENS

Those black bastards in the cells. They've all got driving licences. Hey, Serge!

ROUX

How do you know!

MAARTENS

All those buggers have. They need it to carry round all those communist leaflets and bombs.

ROUX

You're a terrible teacher!

VENTER

Yirrah! Don't tell me you're teaching him to drive! I'm going to laugh!

(VENTER laughs.)

MAARTENS

Sit!

(ROUX sits.)

ROUX

Man!

MAARTENS

O.K. ou Roux, you're turning right, just what must you do?

ROUX

I must look in the mirror.

MAARTENS

Well, do it fuck- face. Don't just say it! *(Pause)* What's next? Well, come on! Come on!

ROUX

I must signal right.

MAARTENS

Well, do it, for fuck's sake! *(ROUX; as if turning)* Shit, man, that was too fast! You could of had a terrible accident! Do it again!

(ROUX shuffles about.)

VENTER

(Laughing) O.K., O.K., I understand. You'll make a good teacher one day, ou Maartens!

MAARTENS

(Grinning) Thanks, Serge.

VENTER

(Laughing) And you, ou Roux. Let us know when you get your driving-license, hey! The island might need someone like you one day! South Africa needs trained people!

ROUX

(Awkwardly) Right, Serge.

VENTER

(Looking at his watch) Hell, is that the time! Now when they come, they are not allowed to talk.

ROUX

Who, Serge?

MAARTENS

The new prisoners, you domkop!

VENTER

That's right! That's right! When they're working at the quarry they're not allowed to talk.

MAARTENS

Ja, you don't know what they're saying. They speak their languages with funny clicks and things.

VENTER

Too fucking true! They mustn't talk to their friends.

ROUX

But can they talk to us?

VENTER

Only when we talk to them.

MAARTENS

Who wants to talk to them?

VENTER

Agh, man, nobody. But sometimes you have to. Like when you say, "Lazy kaffir" or "Fuck off" or something.

MAARTENS

(Sycophantly) Ja, you got to say those things.

VENTER

Then watch out for writing. Messages. That kind of stuff. No books or letters or other shit. Nothing.

ROUX

Nothing?

MAARTENS

Of course, ou Roux. Think!

VENTER

It can be dangerous.

MAARTENS

Very.

VENTER

There is a communist threat about.

MAARTENS

Ja, that. It's a bugger.

VENTER

Robben Island is going to be a special place from tonight.

MAARTENS

Very special.

VENTER

As I said just watch out all the time.

MAARTENS

I been telling him, Serge.

VENTER

We can't have any slackness.

MAARTENS

You hear that, Roux!

VENTER

It's a pity they don't play rugby.

ROUX

Rugby? Who Serge?

VENTER

The prisoners.

MAARTENS

Ja.

VENTER

It makes you pick a side and stick to it, my old teacher used to say. If you play rugby you want to help everyone no matter what they're like, hey! Older or younger, weaker or stronger. Even males and females.

MAARTENS

Ja, ou Serge. It's better than seeing cowboy flicks in the bioscope. All the time.

VENTER

Ja, it teaches the young people to have clean thoughts and not get into bad habits that can then grow into major crimes.

MAARTENS

(Throwing cap) Catch this cap! O.K., Roux, you got the ball, hey! What you going to do with it!

ROUX

(Flustered but catching cap) Hey? *(MAARTENS tackles him and throws him to the floor.)* Maartens, you stupid bastard! You could of broken my back!

VENTER

(Jokingly) I got the feeling you want my job, ou Roux.

ROUX

Me?

VENTER

Why are you trying for your standard six?

ROUX

Serge? No, Serge. I just want to learn a few things for my brain.

VENTER

After I'm gone, ou Roux. After I'm gone. It won't be long now. Someone here will be sergeant. This is a big time for the Island. For the whole country even. We need ouens who can lead other ouens. To make them get to work on time. To make them look in buckets and other dark places. To make the prisoners walk in a line and chop stones faster.

ROUX

No statues.

VENTER

What?

ROUX

I read in Italy they chopped naked statues.

MAARTENS

(Chuckling spitefully) What a cunt, Serge! He's got this girl Trudie he's bedonnered about.

ROUX

Agh, shutup, ou Maartens!

MAARTENS

Only she doesn't worry about him. She thinks he's an idiot.

VENTER

(Sympathetically) I'm not worried about that. As long as an ou does his work I don't care. We all get interested in that kind of thing sometimes. That woman thing. I know about them, hey!

ROUX

Why? What happened, Serge?

VENTER

Shit! You got a dirty mind!

MAARTENS

He has. Hasn't he, Serge!

ROUX

Sorry.

VENTER

Agh, what! It don't matter too much. *(Jauntily)* I'm starting a little business in Cape Town, and man, it's going to work!

MAARTENS

Ja.

ROUX

Ja.

VENTER

Take off your boots!

ROUX

Hey?

MAARTENS

Me too?

VENTER

Both of you!

(MAARTENS and ROUX pull off their boots.)

VENTER, *Continued*

Just as I thought!

MAARTENS

What did you think, ou Serge?

VENTER

Your feet are disgusting!

MAARTENS

Man, ou Serge!

VENTER

How many pairs of socks you got, ou Maartens?

MAARTENS

This pair and my good pair.

VENTER

And you, ou Roux?

ROUX

I don't know, ou Serge. They're all mixed up.

VENTER

You're the one that is mixed up, ou!

(MAARTENS sniggers)

ROUX

I can always count them and divide the number by two.

(MAARTENS laughs.)

VENTER

Man, what I'm going to do when I leave here is sell socks and other things that men need in all the prisons and police stations and hospitals and schools.

(SFX: The telephone rings.)

VENTER, *Continued*

That must be it! That big thing is happening! *(Lifting receiver and talking)* Ja?

(Pause) Venter. *(Pause)* Man, that's a lot of news in one ear. *(Pause)* Ja, ten minutes, hey! *(Puts down receive; reflects for a moment)* Now listen, ouens.

MAARTENS

(Irritatingly) Listen, Roux!

VENTER

Ja, he's come. The big one. Prisoner super number one. Remember him. Just check the cell.

ROUX

Me too, ou Serge? Remember I was going into town. You asked me to buy you some gum and a magazine with a girl with almost nothing on.

VENTER

Sorry, ou. I been thinking about it. Everybody has got to be on duty. You can get a night next week and see another cowboy flick.

ROUX

(Miserably) I suppose so.

VENTER

Just check the cells. All of them. And he isn't the only one coming. A whole mad lot of them. Bastards.

MAARTENS

Ja.

VENTER

Only a mat, blanket and a bucket. Only one blanket. No water so far. Check that mat. Only an inch thick.

MAARTENS

(Demonstrating) Like that! Look at my fingers, ou Roux! That's an inch.

VENTER

It must not be comfortable.

MAARTENS

No, fuck it!

VENTER

Otherwise the Kommandant will go bedonnered. If you think anything looks too nice, check with me, hey! Pull finger out ouens!

MAARTENS

Hell, they should put me in charge of making those buggers uncomfortable!

VENTER

That's still my job, ou Maartens!

MAARTENS

I know, ou Serge!

VENTER

Hey, there was news about Joan on the phone!

MAARTENS

That baby or something?

VENTER

She sommer went back into Cape Town.

ROUX

Hell, hey ! Nine months it took, hey! My Ma says it took her that long.

VENTER

Ja, a baby!

ROUX

(Suddenly more animated) Man, if it's a boy I'll definitely buy a present. Perhaps a aeroplane or a gun or a car. Toys I mean. Hey, just wait until I get a day off. By then we'll know if it's a boy or a girl.

MAARTENS

I don't think you should get too friendly with that kind of human beings. *(Sycophantly)* Hey, Serge !

VENTER

(Dismissively) I got things to do. You two better get back to the job quick, quick!

MAARTENS

Right, Serge!

VENTER

Everyone has got to keep his eyes open now. My last big thing before I retire. This is a big day for Robben Island.

ROUX

Just think, hey, in a hundred years' time, in the standard six history exam, when they ask a question on history, they might ask about tonight. They might ask about you and the Kommandant, ou Serge.

VENTER

I'm going into a new little business in Cape Town, hey. That's what I'm going to do. There is always a chance these days to do well. If you got a good idea and you try, you can do well.

MAARTENS

Ja. Why should the Jew-boys make all the money all the time!

VENTER

(Leaving) Now hurry up and come!

ROUX

(Looking at MAARTENS) Why you looking like that on your face, ou Maartens ?

MAARTENS

I'm laughing.

ROUX

I don't hear any laughter.

MAARTENS

I'm laughing quietly.

ROUX

Who you laughing at?

MAARTENS

You, ou Roux. You.

ROUX

Me? Why?

MAARTENS

You thought you had the night off, you stupid cunt, and now you got to stay and help your country! (*Laughs loudly*)

ROUX

Man, what are you talking about! I didn't complain!

MAARTENS

Ja, that kaffir boss-boy who's coming.

ROUX

What about him?

MAARTENS

He made that cheeky speech in the trial in front of that white judge, and everybody looking on, and all you can think of is going into town and having a good time.

ROUX

Why you saying all this? I'm staying to help.

MAARTENS

Because I know you don't hate the kaffirs enough.

ROUX

What?

MAARTENS

(*Passionately*) When you think of a kaffir, ou pal, your teeth have got to bite together. Your fingers must get stiff and your feet must feel like they're pressing on the ground hard. Your eyes must close sort of half-way and you must be breathing with a lot of noise. And your mouth has got to be wet.

ROUX

Hell, ou Maartens, you must practise a lot !

MAARTENS

Ja, this is going to be a good place, a quiet place. No speeches here. There's nobody to listen. Only water and rocks and that sky, hey! A quiet place.

(VENTER renters.)

VENTER

(Shouting) What the shit are you doing! I told you to pull finger, hey ! The Kommandandt is calling everyone! Put on your fucking boots and come!

MAARTENS

(Ingratiatingly) I was just telling him, ou Serge. He never wants to listen.

(MAARTENS and ROUX pull on their boots and follow VENTER out. LIGHTS OUT.)

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: 1970; the warders' room again. Hanging on the wall, a poster depicting the 1970 Springbok team. JOAN, PAT and DONALD enter. DONALD is carrying a large suitcase full of goods that PAT offers for sale at the prison.)

PAT

OK Donald. Just put the case down there and I'll meet you back at the car.

(DONALD puts the case down on the floor.)

DONALD

(As exits) Right Miss.

JOAN

I'll put the case on the desk.

(JOAN places the case on the desk.)

PAT

(Looking around) You were right. It does smell in here. Horrible! *(Glancing)* Look at that! 1970 Springbok Rugby Team.

JOAN

This is where they should come to swear and drink; shouting, singing, fighting, sleeping, sweating, and have their competitions. Man what a place!

PAT

Competitions?

JOAN
The things men get up to.

PAT
You don't mean.....?

JOAN
Ja.

PAT
One of our bosses worked here once. Venter. Years ago.

JOAN
Man, he did. Years ago.

PAT
But now he's gone.

JOAN
Where?

PAT
I'm not quite sure. He's dead.

JOAN
Hell, hey! But you like it there?

PAT
Not really. I'm trying to make enough money to go overseas. That's what I'm doing. A boyfriend you know.

JOAN
A boyfriend, hey! I know about them. I hope he's nice.

PAT
He is.

JOAN
That's nice.

PAT
Prisons, schools places like that. That's where I sell the stuff. Saving all the time. I hope I'm saving, that is. It doesn't feel like it.

JOAN
Man, we get sales-people all the time. Hair-cream, tools, cigarettes, chewing-gum, magazines, crisps and biscuits.

PAT

Sounds awful!

JOAN

Ja, and the Kommandant, he gets his commission.

PAT

I must remember that.

JOAN

Just let me help you get that stuff out of the case. Then I got to get back. They want their tea.

PAT

Thanks. Nice of you to bring us here.

(PAT and JOAN unpack samples from case.)

PAT

(Holding up artificial flowers) I can't seem to sell these flowers.

JOAN

No, man, they're not interested in flowers.

PAT

They're not real.

JOAN

I know.

PAT

I don't suppose it would have made any difference. Real or not.

JOAN

(Confidentially) Watch out what you say here.

PAT

(Facetiously) I know but I can write and tell my parents about it. It will help to fill up a letter. I've seen some peculiar behaviour already.

JOAN

Just don't post it from here, hey!

PAT

(Uncertainly) I won't.

JOAN

Your parents are lucky, you know.

PAT

Why do you say that?

JOAN

My pik, my kid is too small to write letters. Sometimes I see him trying but it's just a scribble.

PAT

(Laughing) Yes!

JOAN

Just watch out for the other thing.

PAT

For what? What other thing?

JOAN

They're always trying, hey!

PAT

Trying what? Who?

JOAN

Man, they're trying that thing. You know what men like doing.

PAT

I know what you mean.

JOAN

Ja they will always try it. Otherwise they're talking about it. If a woman is around, they talk about it. When there are no women they still talk about it to each other. Always. They joke and shout. But it's worse when they talk about it in a soft voice.

PAT

I think I've brought the wrong merchandise.

JOAN

Sorry I can't stay but just come back to the office, hey, if he starts his nonsense.

PAT

(Uncertainly) Which one? Who?

JOAN

Agh, the mad one, you know. I'll watch from my window

PAT

(Worried) I'm sure it will be all right.

JOAN

(Holding up two comic books) These comic books, hey! How much are they?

These?

PAT

JOAN

I've got this kid, Frikkie. They look like they can make him educated one day. "Tosca", it says and "Nabucco".

PAT

Opera stories in comic form. One of the directors is a graduate musician who can't find a job. But take a few. You've been so nice.

JOAN

What! Are you sure?

PAT

Go on.

JOAN

(Collecting a few titles) Thanks, hey! I try to keep him busy when I see him. He's a lively kid. Very busy and noisy. Thanks a lot.

PAT

That's O.K.

JOAN

Man, I got to get back.

PAT

Do you really have to?

JOAN

I see to the tea and some of the cleaning.

PAT

Yes.

JOAN

I got to drink tea separately.

PAT

I'm sorry.

JOAN

But what do you expect!

PAT

1984 on Robben Island!

JOAN

Ja.

PAT

What's your boss like?

JOAN

(Cautiously) Never mind!

PAT

Yes. I can imagine.

JOAN

Mind you, he keeps the place nice and tidy. The Kommandant. He always sets an example. Man, did you notice there was no litter about?

PAT

Litter?

JOAN

Ja, that stuff on the ground. He won't pass a place without picking it up. You see the Minister once said "There's a lot of rubbish in South Africa and Robben Island is its rubbish-bin."

PAT

But a well-kept rubbish bin.

JOAN

Ja. But before I go, let me do something about your stuff here so that these ouens can see it properly.

(JOAN attempts to display the goods but the door opens and MAARTENS enters.)

JOAN, *Continued*

(Leaving) I reckon you'll find something to write about! Come say good-bye before you go, hey!

PAT

See you, Joan!

MAARTENS

(Grinning) A writer hey!

PAT

Not at all. I'm trying to sell a few comics and socks. With every pair of socks you get a free chocolate. Please have a look. Just have a look. And you're Mr...?

MAARTENS

Me? I'm Maartens.

PAT

(Nervously) I'm Pat.

MAARTENS

I hope there's nothing here on mixing.

PAT

(Startled) What?

MAARTENS

Ja, that's what some writers do. They write a book about men and women doing things to each other. You know what I mean.

PAT

(Nervously) You mean?

MAARTENS

Ja, that. They put in all that to make it interesting with absolutely everything going on. Then they sneak in something about mixing. They think they can catch you. Not me. I'm too clever.

PAT

Mixing?

MAARTENS

White and black. That kind of mixing. Like talking together and singing, dancing, even going to school together. *(Shrewdly)* Having tea together.

PAT

(Apprehensively) Why don't you look at these comic-books? Just look at the action in this one! And the drawing here! Such nice colour too! I can do a matching pair of socks.

MAARTENS

You're not a writer or something?

PAT

No.

MAARTENS

You're selling books?

PAT

They're only comic-books.

MAARTENS

Everyone wants to write something about the people on the island.

PAT

I don't know about that.

MAARTENS

About people like the Kommandandt.

PAT

Him?

MAARTENS

Don't you think he's important?

PAT

Oh, yes. He looks very important.

MAARTENS

So if you think he's important, why don't you want to write about him?

PAT

(Confused) I don't want to write about anybody. I prefer reading to writing.

MAARTENS

Why don't you write?

PAT

I don't have any talent.

MAARTENS

What's that?

PAT

Nobody knows.

MAARTENS

Perhaps you can draw then?

PAT

What?

MAARTENS

I just thought you're selling comic-books. So you would like to do drawings. Comics, I mean. If you want to draw a life-story of the Kommandandt, hell I got a picture of myself you can use as well. Here in this drawer. *(Opens the drawer of the desk and withdraws a photograph)* See here, hey.

PAT

And who are these?

MAARTENS

Some of us mob who work here.

PAT

You all look important.

MAARTENS

(Pointing) Not him nor him but, ja, the middle one is me. That's the Kommandandt.

PAT

Yes, I see. I think, you know, you should ask someone else. *(Packing items back in the case)* Someone who can draw. Someone who can write.

MAARTENS

Now you keep that picture, hey? In case you change your mind. My phone number is on the back, hey! I give it out.

PAT

(Tensely) I don't think so, really.

MAARTENS

Let's see some of your comic-books again.

PAT

Here's an interesting one.

MAARTENS

(Looking) What are they all doing?

PAT

They're singing.

MAARTENS

How do you know?

PAT

It's an opera story. They sing instead of speak.

MAARTENS

They look foreign.

PAT

(Changing subject) Don't you need socks?

MAARTENS

Hey?

PAT

I'm sure I've got your size. Now here's a nice pair with pictures of 'Mickey Mouse'.

MAARTENS

He sings.

PAT

I beg your pardon?

MAARTENS

Ja, I heard him in the bioscope.

PAT

Don't you need any? They're very warm, you know.

MAARTENS

If you had Superman or even Batman, I'd think again. Micky Mouse is not for me. He's silly.

PAT

Perhaps the prisoners?

MAARTENS

What about them?

PAT

Don't they need socks?

MAARTENS

Man, they're definitely not getting socks.

PAT

Why not?

MAARTENS

They don't wear shoes.

PAT

Well, I might as well go, then. I have a couple of schools to visit still.

(ROUX enters.)

ROUX

Hullo.

MAARTENS

Shit!

PAT

Hello. You need comics? I've got some good stuff. Plenty of action and fun.

ROUX

Comics?

MAARTENS

(Rudely) You don't need comics, ou Roux. Aren't you still learning for your Standard Six?

ROUX

I passed it, man. Years ago.

MAARTENS

Then there is the 'High Noon' Society', hey! It takes up a lot of your time.

PAT

I think I've heard of them. The 'High Noon Society.'

MAARTENS

Ja, he watches 'High Noon' all the time. Bang! Bang! He doesn't need chocolates either. His mother just sent him some. They're in the front office.

ROUX

(Surprised) Hey?

MAARTENS

Go have a look.

(PAT rummages in the case.)

PAT

Let me see what else I have in this case.

(MAARTENS clears his throat menacingly.)

ROUX

(Hesitantly) I'll go look in the office then.

PAT

(Unhappily) Perhaps I better go as well. It is getting late.

MAARTENS

He vomits, hey!

PAT

What!

(ROUX exits.)

MAARTENS

Every time he tried to write his Standard Six or do a driving- test, he got sick on the desk or on the wheel.

PAT

That's terrible! Let me pack.

MAARTENS

Ja, you know I'll have a word with the Kommandant.

PAT

You mean about an order?

MAARTENS

Maybe.

PAT

You mean for socks?

MAARTENS

No. For opera.

PAT

For opera?

MAARTENS

Can you get the tapes?

PAT

Tapes?

MAARTENS

Ja look what it says here at the back of this comic. "You have read the story now listen to the music."

PAT

Oh, of course!

MAARTENS

"Just fill in the coupon", it says.

PAT

O.K. then just fill it in, then and send it.

MAARTENS

"Send no money now", it says.

PAT

Right then. Don't send the money.

MAARTENS

I want lots of songs when the ou goes like this with his arms.

(He throws his arm open and shouts.)

PAT

I think I know what you mean.

MAARTENS

Ja, I'll speak to the Kommandandt about an order.

PAT

(Relaxing as she senses a sales contract) So tell me, Mr Maartens. Is that your name?

MAARTENS

Maartens. Ja, that's me. I'm him.

PAT

What do you do here? The sort of things?

MAARTENS

Man, I see to the prisoners. The political prisoners.

PAT

The political prisoners?

MAARTENS

Of course, man. They're bastards!

PAT

I beg your pardon?

MAARTENS

Man, they got things on their mind.

PAT

Like what?

MAARTENS

Man, they should play rugby.

PAT

(Puzzled) I thought they came here to be punished.

MAARTENS

I find it hard talking to a lady about it. But then you've studied things, hey? In books?

PAT

Why?

MAARTENS

I've got some special things in my head. I must tell someone about what is moving about in there.

PAT

What sort of movement?

MAARTENS

Man, my ideas.

PAT

I took a degree in something or other, that's all. I wouldn't know about ideas.

MAARTENS

I got ideas on rugby and young men.

PAT

I never understood either of them.

MAARTENS

I've been looking for someone to talk to about them, you know.

PAT

I've got to get back soon.

MAARTENS

Man, my old sergeant used to say all boys should play rugby. Those buggers who don't play rugby are the ones who go to the lavatory or somewhere and abuse themselves.

PAT

(Embarrassed) Well, I'm sure you've kept your eyes open.

MAARTENS

Christ! You know I got to keep a look out. Sometimes at night and when I look through the peep-hole, I see a quick movement under the blankets and, shit, then you know what these terrorists get up to!

PAT

(More embarrassed than ever) Goodness me, but they're hardly boys—

MAARTENS

A kaffir is definitely a boy. That is why we make them all wear short pants. Hell, they got to grow up before they can expect long pants *(Grinning)* with plenty of fly-buttons.

PAT

(Confused) Oh! You know I've never really thought about all this before. *(Adding a warning note)* I only came here because my boss knows your boss.

MAARTENS

They've got to grow up!

PAT

(Confused) Who?

MAARTENS

The prisoners. That's why they need all that music.

PAT

(Perking up) The music? That's right. Now what would you need? Which operas exactly?

MAARTENS

Ja. The music. You see if you play the prisoners that kind of thing, they'll do anything to make you stop. Man, it's a very useful punishment.

PAT

You want to use opera as a punishment?

MAARTENS

Ja, it's awful! The prisoners will do anything to make you stop. It's worse than a beating, electric shocks, anything.

(MAARTENS looks suddenly in the direction of the window.)

MAARTENS

Hell!

PAT

What?

MAARTENS

Shit! What the hell you doing there! Is there no privacy when an ou has got company when he's got a lady with him! Twenty years here and you know bugger all!

ROUX, *Off*

(Just outside window) Just waiting.

MAARTENS

Well, go wait somewhere else!

PAT

(Grabbing suitcase) Right then!

MAARTENS

Give me your phone number then and we'll do that contract thing!

PAT

I really have to go! *(Giving him a piece of paper)* Look here is a list. You can order the stuff. We'll send it. It's been nice talking to you.

(PAT takes her suitcase and exits.)

MAARTENS

(Shouting after her) Communist prick-teaser! Don't come back if I'm still here! And look at the mess!

ROUX, *Off*

(To PAT) You're going then? So long then.

(ROUX enters.)

MAARTENS

What the hell do you want!

ROUX

What's wrong!

MAARTENS

You're always interfering!

ROUX

Man, I was waiting outside. That's all. I saw her leave.

MAARTENS

That isn't all. You were listening! You bastard! You never seem to be on duty.

ROUX

All right. Joan was worried. She heard a terrible shout like someone calling for help.

MAARTENS

Hell!

ROUX

What happened, hey?

MAARTENS

You know, I was going to make it with that woman until she saw your photograph.

ROUX

What photograph?

MAARTENS

The one at the Christmas-braaivleis. Your fucking ugly face. Then you keep turning up here with that same face.

ROUX

Man, I told you. Joan reckoned I should check.

MAARTENS

What the fucking hell for! For the first time I meet a woman who is interested in my brains and not just that other thing down there (*Pointing to his crotch*) and you come and spoil it all!

ROUX

She heard a terrible shout!

MAARTENS

You take orders from someone with a mixed-up skin! And you don't want to learn. That's your trouble. If you want to make it with a woman, ou pal, you got to watch me.

ROUX

I can't watch if I'm outside.

MAARTENS

You know what you are, ou Roux?

ROUX

What?

MAARTENS

You're just a wet piece of nonsense. A little lump of I don't know what! That's what!

ROUX

You think you got to be rude just because you want to be sergeant.

MAARTENS

You want to know something, ou pal?

ROUX

What?

MAARTENS

You owe your job to me.

ROUX

Hey?

MAARTENS

Ja, you know at school how they asked you if you smaaked joining the prison service?

ROUX

I remember. Ja.

MAARTENS

Well, after I joined, hey, I got them to ask you.

ROUX

I don't believe it.

MAARTENS

The reason was I wanted someone to bully in the job here.

ROUX

What?

MAARTENS

At school, hey, I got bigger before you. I got my hair down there before you. And that other stuff. So I knew I could always bully you.

ROUX

I never looked down there at you at what you got.

MAARTENS

You're just jealous because you'll never make it, ou pal!

ROUX

I got my Standard Six.

MAARTENS

Look how low you sink down to get it! You got help from him. A prisoner!

ROUX

Man, he's a good teacher!

MAARTENS

He should have taught you to drive a car! Twenty years here and no license!

ROUX

You can learn a lot from him. People like him.

MAARTENS

Their day will never come, ou pal. Not in a million years. Never!

ROUX

(Reminiscing) An old boot tells its story.

MAARTENS

What?

ROUX

I think that's what made me pass English. Otherwise I would have dopped again. I had to write this essay in the exam. "An Old Boot Tells Its Story." Ja, I wrote about this boot. It was the same boot ou Moses used when he marched his mob out of Egypt. Then it was used in the Great Trek. Man, I thought that would not be enough when I suddenly remembered what the ou told me about China.

MAARTENS

About China? What's the boot doing in a place like that!

ROUX

They had a long march. Don't ask me where. So I made the boot walk in China. Just think he might wear it one day.

MAARTENS

Who?

ROUX

Him, the prisoner. He has walked a long way.

MAARTENS

Agh, shit, man! He doesn't even wear socks. If he ever puts the boot on, I hope he kicks your arse with it!

ROUX

Anyway, I passed the exam. Man, it felt good.

MAARTENS

Better than a brandy?

ROUX

Ja

MAARTENS

Better than a steak and chips?

ROUX

Ja. It was.

MAARTENS

I was going to say better than that thing you do with a woman but you wouldn't know what I was talking about.

ROUX

There's a lot you can do with a woman.

MAARTENS

Agh, you don't know a thing, man!

ROUX

I'm looking around all the time.

MAARTENS

The examiner must have been a kaffir-boetie communist or moffie like you! An ou who wants to do that business with another man. You talk like someone in-between.

ROUX

What! Who says so! I just talked about women to you!

MAARTENS

All you had on your mind, ou pal, was eating and watching a film. You don't talk about football and sport and a real girl-friend.

ROUX

A real girl-friend? I been talking about Trudie Meyer for twenty years!

MAARTENS

You want to keep your mind on your work, ou pal! Not think of women all the time!

ROUX

(Pathetically) It's only her.

MAARTENS

She's in Johannesburg, hey?

ROUX

When last I heard. Ja.

MAARTENS

What is she doing there?

ROUX

I don't know.

MAARTENS

Where does she work?

ROUX

Why?

MAARTENS

Where does she work?

ROUX

Agh, well, when I spoke to her brother last time he said she was in the office of Anglo Vaal.

MAARTENS

Anglo Vaal, hey? You know, ou Roux, I'm going to forget how you bugged up my meeting with that woman and do you a favour. *(Lifts the receiver and dials)*

ROUX

What the hell are you doing!

MAARTENS

(Speaking into phone) Hullo, man, can you get me the number of Anglo Vaal in Johannesburg?

ROUX

Shit!

MAARTENS

(Pause) Ja. I'll hang on.

ROUX

Yissus! Have you gone mad!

MAARTENS

(Covering mouthpiece) Shut up will you! I can't hear a thing! *(Pause)* Thanks. *(Writes down a number)* Thanks again. *(Puts down the receiver)* Well, here it is, ou Roux, you little standard six domkop.

ROUX

I don't want it.

MAARTENS

Then I'll use it.

ROUX

What for?

MAARTENS

You take these top kaffir boss-boys locked up here.

ROUX

(Puzzled) Hey?

MAARTENS

You know why they picked them for their leaders, ou pal? They all got size-twelve cocks.

ROUX

Agh, rubbish, man!

MAARTENS

They all want to phone their women but can't.

ROUX

So what?

MAARTENS

Well, you have a chance to phone this woman and you don't want to. So it must mean you have a very small cock.

ROUX

That's all crazy. I got nothing to say.

MAARTENS

Ja, that's just what I thought. *(Dialing)* I got to do all the work. *(Long pause)* Man, can you please tell me, have you got a Miss Trudie Meyer working there?

ROUX

Just stop it now, ou Maartens!

MAARTENS

(Beating him off) Ja, I'm hanging on. Thanks, hey. Agh, thanks, man. Have you got a Trudie there? Trudie Meyer. *(Pause)* What! Thanks. *(Ringing off)* Roux, you stupid cunt!

ROUX

What?

MAARTENS

You've been wasting my time!

ROUX

Why?

MAARTENS

She left ten years ago.

ROUX

(Relieved) Nobody told you to phone up.

MAARTENS

I was just trying to do you a favour, ou pal. It's the last time I'll try to do you a favour. Make no mistake!

ROUX

I don't want any favours. It's not Christmas.

(Footsteps and the door opens. JOAN enters.)

MAARTENS

What now!

JOAN

The phone!

MAARTENS

(Guiltily) What about it!

JOAN

The Kommandant wants to know what's going on here. He can't get through! He wants you to come over now, now!

MAARTENS

What's it about!

JOAN

(Exiting) Just come and talk to the ou!

MAARTENS

This is all your fault, Roux! I was just trying to fix you up!

ROUX

I don't want to be fixed up!

MAARTENS

(Reflecting) It must be about that woman who was here.

ROUX

Woman?

MAARTENS

Ja, man, ja!

ROUX

I don't know anything about her.

MAARTENS

(Threateningly) Well, if the Kommandant asks you if you heard me talking dirty stuff to that woman, you must say you didn't hear me say anything.

ROUX

But I didn't. I was outside.

MAARTENS

Man, you must say you *did* hear something but it was nothing!

ROUX

That's what I said.

MAARTENS

Hell, you're a real bleddy domkop! *(SFX: The telephone rings; MAARTENS rushes out.)* Shit!

ROUX

(Answering phone) It's me, Sir. Roux. *(Pause)* I'm the one in the Christmas picture with the cowboy hat. Second one in the front row, Sir.

(Pause as we hear someone shouting over the phone.)

ROUX, *Continued*

(Worried) He's just left, Sir.

SCENE 3

(AT RISE: 1991; afternoon in the warders' room. A poster on the back wall depicts the 1991 Springbok team. A television is turned on just so that listeners are aware. ROUX, now in his mid-forties and FRIKKIE, Joan's grown son, are sitting and chatting.)

FRIKKIE

Just like St Helena, hey!

What? ROUX

Ja, that Robinson Crusoe ou was on it. FRIKKIE

Who? ROUX

A famous political prisoner. FRIKKIE

Who told you that? ROUX

You told me. FRIKKIE

A prisoner must have told me. ROUX

That's what you said. Then you told me. FRIKKIE

They know about things. Those prisoners. ROUX

I've never been to St Helena. FRIKKIE

Same here. ROUX

I haven't seen much of Cape Town either. I haven't even been up the mountain. Table Mountain. FRIKKIE

(Stretching) Man, time to relax. ROUX

Ma is bringing the wine. FRIKKIE

Ja, ou Frikkie. I've been waiting a long time for this. It's 1991 hey! ROUX

I've heard so much about it all, ou Roux. FRIKKIE

ROUX

I know. I know.

FRIKKIE

Hell, hey!

ROUX

Do you have a girl yet, Frikkie? A bokkie?

FRIKKIE

Man, no. But I heard you smaaked someone.

ROUX

Agh, it's a big joke. She didn't smaaak me back.

FRIKKIE

Man, I'm sorry.

ROUX

That's O.K.

FRIKKIE

I go to hundreds of braaivleises and things and never catch anything. Sometimes I do but then they're either too clever or too stupid or something.

ROUX

You got to have patience, ou Frikkie. Plenty of patience.

FRIKKIE

It's a pity you couldn't have been my Pa but Ma says she never ever did that thing with you. You know, that thing?

ROUX

Never, ou Frikkie. Never.

FRIKKIE

(Earnestly) But it's a good thing there are cars, hey!

ROUX

Hey?

FRIKKIE

I just love cars. They are my life. I just wish I could meet a dame who smaaks cars. Someone you could talk to in the evening about the oil-filter or the battery.

ROUX

I don't know what everyone on the island would do without your help.

FRIKKIE

Ma says you gave me my first car, hey! Toy car. Man, I had it for years. It was smart. I can still remember how it raced. Brmm! Zmm! Vmm! Hell, I'm forgetting!

ROUX

What's that?

FRIKKIE

I got ou Maartens's change. I did his spark-plugs. Man, I don't know if I should even be here.

ROUX

Agh, forget it. Things are changing. He can't do anything anymore.

FRIKKIE

(Dismally) What an ou!

ROUX

I know, ou Frikkie.

FRIKKIE

How did he become sergeant, ou Roux?

ROUX

Man, it's some story!

FRIKKIE

Something about a woman coming here with comics and socks?

ROUX

Ja, that's right.

FRIKKIE

That's how I heard about opera.

ROUX

Opera?

FRIKKIE

Ja, man! The drawings in the comics. I traced the outlines of the dames on paper but left all their clothes off. I liked Carmen the most. She had the biggest tits. Ja, I like opera... It's just the music I don't like in my ears.

ROUX

Hey, you know something, ou? You sound like ou Maartens.

FRIKKIE

What!

ROUX

He also doesn't like opera.

FRIKKIE

Man, that's serious.

ROUX

Try that music. Start listening to it.

FRIKKIE

Agh, no, man, Roux!

ROUX

Ja.

FRIKKIE

At least I like cars. Ou Roux, it's a pity you didn't get your license. I could of helped you fix things.

ROUX

I know, ou Frikkie. I know. I just wasn't interested in their plans on the island.

FRIKKIE

Plans?

ROUX

I think I can hear someone coming.

(The Door opens and JOAN enters with a tray. She places a bottle of wine on the desk with a few cups.)

ROUX, *Continued*

It's nice to have you here, ou Joan!

JOAN

Is it time yet?

FRIKKIE

Fuck it, Ma, you're a real sport!

ROUX

Your ma doesn't like swearing, ou Frikkie.

JOAN

(Opening bottle with cork-screw) I do like swearing.

ROUX

Sorry?

JOAN

(Giving each a helping of wine) Here we are at last! Just watch out, ou Frikkie. You know what wine does to you!

FRIKKIE

(Giggling) Man, it's lovely in my mouth!

ROUX

And me. It does things to me too. But tonight I don't care.

JOAN

Things are changing, hey! Everything is turning upside down.

FRIKKIE

I wonder if I can still do it.

ROUX

Do what?

FRIKKIE

That upside down sault thing.

(He makes a clumsy attempt at a somersault.)

JOAN

The answer is no.

FRIKKIE

What do you mean "no"!

JOAN

You wanted to know if you could still do it. A somersault.

FRIKKIE

(Sadly) I'm getting older. Everything is changing.

ROUX

Cars even.

FRIKKIE

(Laughing) No lie, ou Roux. No lie!

JOAN

Ja, cars and people too. What they do. Where they go. How they sing and dance. And who they dance with!

FRIKKIE

(Dancing) Like this, hey!

JOAN

Agh, voetsek, man, Frikkie! You know what I mean!

ROUX

That's right. Frikkie stop trying to make your ma cross.

FRIKKIE

Sorry, Ma

JOAN

One day when your Ma is gone you'll be really sorry, ou Frikkie!

ROUX

I think he means it, Joan.

FRIKKIE

(Woefully) I do, Ma!

ROUX

What were you saying, ou Joan?

JOAN

On the beach and in the coffee-bars it's different.

ROUX

Ja.

JOAN

Changing.

ROUX

That's very true. Very true.

FRIKKIE

(Philosophically) One minute a bottle is full and the next it's empty.

ROUX

What?

FRIKKIE

I like it most when it's half-way. That way there's still plenty left and you're starting to get lively inside. You get that hot feeling inside and your arms and legs want to move.

(FRIKKIE taps his feet.)

JOAN

Ou Frikkie, sometimes I think that you must get petrol up there in the place where you think you think.

ROUX

Agh, leave him alone, ou Joan.

JOAN

There's something happening on the TV. Look! I came just in time, hey!

FRIKKIE

Hell, hey! Did you ever meet him, Ma?

JOAN

Shhh, now!

ROUX

(Turning up volume of television set) Hell!

VOICE OF COMMENTATOR

Yes, a very large crowd has gathered here at the Victor Verster prison to mark the release after twenty-seven years of someone described as the most important political prisoner in the world. We see leaders from all over. And correspondents from RAI, CNN, THE BBC, they are all here. The atmosphere is tremendous. History is about to lurch forward down here in this part of the continent. People are still arriving.

FRIKKIE

Man, I wish I had been here before. I could have said I'd met the ou. People would then say," Hell, you know what! Frikkie actually met the ou!"

JOAN

Shut up now, ou Frikkie!

VOICE OF COMMENTATOR

(Excitedly) There he is! The whole world has waited twenty-seven years for this! And here he is! His wife is at his side and the procession is walking up the road toward the crowd.

FRIKKIE

Well, shit-a-brick!

JOAN

Shhh!

VOICE OF COMMENTATOR

The sudden appearance of this figure has galvanized everyone. The cheering is becoming quite frenzied.

ROUX

Man, he hasn't changed. ! He's a little more stooped and he's slower but look how he raises that fist. Man, I wanted leave to go meet him but there were too many of the buggers were off. A match at Newlands or somewhere.

VOICE OF COMMENTATOR

They press forward but the police are forcing them back.

JOAN

You can see he's come a moer of a distance. You can see he is a leader. Make no mistake!

VOICE OF COMMENTATOR

The procession is moving on to the cars and the onlookers are waving, cheering and chanting!

FRIKKIE

All that mob want to talk to him like he's someone from Hollywood. Terrific! Like Charlton Heston, hey!

ROUX

Who?

FRIKKIE

He led his mob out of Egypt with his walking-stick and dirty white dressing- gown.

JOAN

Agh, you mean Moses!

FRIKKIE

Ja, him. *(Shouting)* Hell; hey!

JOAN

Shut up now, ou Frikkie!

VOICE OF COMMENTATOR

It looks as if he is going to address the crowd!

(SFX: The telephone rings.)

ROUX

Now who is that, hey! I'll get it. *(The volume of the TV is turned down as ROUX answers the phone.)* Hullo, who is this? Who? *(Pause)* Trudie! *(Pause)* Ja, ja, of course I remember you! *(Pause)* I don't know. The line is sort of funny. *(Pause)* No man I'm fine. And you, Trudie. How are you, then? *(Pause)* What made you phone after all these years? *(Pause)* It was only once. But that was years ago. *(Pause)* Hell, I'm sorry he died. Your husband. *(Pause)* I know. *(Pause)* Well, that would be wonderful, Trudie. Why don't you give me your number? *(Pause)* As soon as you arrive then, give me a call, hey? *(Pause)* Hullo? Hullo? *(Replaces the receiver)* Hell!

FRIKKIE

You missed something special, ou Roux! Make no mistake!

JOAN

(Turning off television-set) That was that Trudie you were always going crazy about, hey? You going to see her?

ROUX

(Excitedly) Hell, hey! After all these years! But then while I was talking, I wanted to see him come out of prison properly and I couldn't! You can't have so much going on in your head at once.

FRIKKIE

Man, he came out of the prison holding up his hands and shaking a fist. Like this, hey! *(Holds up a fist)* See!

JOAN

A funny time to make a telephone call, hey!

ROUX

Ja.

JOAN

Man, there's no place like an island for romance.

FRIKKIE

Hey, Ma, you ever go out with a prisoner?

JOAN

Only the criminals.

FRIKKIE

You must have some useful tips, Ma.

JOAN

Hey?

FRIKKIE

About going out and that kind of thing.

JOAN

What kind of thing?

FRIKKIE

You must know the rules.

JOAN

What rules?

FRIKKIE

What an ou does when he goes with a girl. What he does first, you know. You know what I'm talking about, Ma.

JOAN

Why don't you ask one of the men, hey?

FRIKKIE

Like who?

JOAN

There's one sitting here.

ROUX

(Shocked) Me?

JOAN

Ja, ou Roux, you must have picked up something at the 'University of Life.' That's what they call this place, hey!

ROUX

No, man, there was only this one girl for me.

(The door opens and MAARTENS enters. He is wearing civilian clothes. He looks older and more weary but there is a glint in his eye.)

MAARTENS

Man, I heard that!

ROUX

What did you hear?

MAARTENS

The University of Life? What shit!

ROUX

(Unhappily) Agh, man, ou Maartens! Why must you start like you want to fight? Why can't we just drink a few dops and laugh a bit!

MAARTENS

You were watching that programme, hey?

ROUX

Of course we were. We're not on duty.

MAARTENS

Ja, I'm choosing just the right time to retire.

ROUX

We know. Everybody knows you're retiring.

JOAN

Ja.

MAARTENS

Any other news? Apart from that junk on the television.

ROUX

What do you mean?

MAARTENS

It's just like you not to ask about the score at Newlands today. Well come on!

FRIKKIE

Tell him, ou Roux. Tell him.

MAARTENS

You look like you got some news.

ROUX

(Bashfully) Man, I had a phone call.

MAARTENS

Who from?

ROUX

Who do you think!

MAARTENS

I don't know, ou pal. I don't know.

FRIKKIE

Trudie.

MAARTENS

Trudie?

FRIKKIE

His goosie.

MAARTENS

You mean *that* Trudie!

ROUX

Ja, man!

MAARTENS

Is that why you got that mad look on your face? What for? What she want?

ROUX

She wants to see me again!

JOAN

Isn't that nice, hey!

MAARTENS

What she want?

ROUX

She wants to see me again. That's what!

MAARTENS

After all these years, hey! It must be hell of important.

ROUX

Of course it is.

JOAN

Lovely.

MAARTENS

What she say?

ROUX

Never mind.

MAARTENS

Come on!

JOAN

Tell him, ou Roux.

ROUX

Agh, no man!

MAARTENS

(In feminine voice) Ever since my husband died, I've been thinking of you.

ROUX

Hell! How did you guess!

JOAN

I know how he knows.

FRIKKIE

How, Ma, how?

ROUX

(Realizing) Man!

MAARTENS

(Laughing) Hell, you are a stupid cunt sometimes!

JOAN

That wasn't very nice! Doing a thing like that on the phone. You know how much he smaaked that dame!

FRIKKIE

Ja. He smaaked her.

JOAN

(Gloomily) There's no more wine.

MAARTENS

Don't worry about me. I gave up drink today.

FRIKKIE

How can you manage?

MAARTENS

I got all sorts of plans.

FRIKKIE

Ja?

MAARTENS

Giving lectures.

FRIKKIE

I don't like lectures in my ears.

MAARTENS

A young ou needs lectures.

JOAN

Let him be a young man just for another few hours, ou Maartens. Tomorrow he'll be a grown-up man. Everything is changing. None of us here will be the same tomorrow.

MAARTENS

Man, I forget what I'm doing here! Let me get my stuff. *(Taking down picture of Verwoerd)* This is mine. What a Prime Minister! Ja, Verwoerd! Remember when I put it up, ou Roux?

ROUX

(Sullenly) Ja.

MAARTENS

Whose picture you going to put there?

ROUX

Nobody's.

MAARTENS

Come on think. You must have some ideas!

FRIKKIE

I got a racing-driver.

JOAN

Frikkie, man! Stop being silly!

MAARTENS

Ja, someone should give you a talk.

FRIKKIE

About what?

MAARTENS

All sorts of things, man. All sorts of things.

FRIKKIE

I only like two things.

ROUX

Never mind, ou Frikkie. Things are working out.

JOAN

Man, they are!

MAARTENS

(To ROUX) You don't mind, hey!

ROUX

What?

MAARTENS

If they take over.

ROUX

Who?

FRIKKIE

Us?

JOAN

I think so, ou Frikkie.

FRIKKIE

Hell, hey!

MAARTENS

You're finished, ou Roux!

ROUX

Hey?

MAARTENS

You won't have a home.

ROUX

Why not?

MAARTENS

You've betrayed your people. You won't have a people. I still got a people. I'm going home now to my place in the country. I've got a place. My Ma is waiting there with all that fried steak and onions, potatoes and carrots. Ja, that farm! In a hundred years' time that kind of thing will still be there while everyone else will be making a rubbish. My Ma, she always looked after me. She always got someone to clean my shoes and give me a sandwich. Your Ma now, she never wanted you with the limping leg you got. I know that because you told me.

JOAN

(Indignantly) Man!

MAARTENS

You're not really a son.

ROUX

What!

MAARTENS

A proper son of South Africa. There's going to be a big mess because of people like you.

ROUX

You're lucky, then, ou Maartens.

MAARTENS

I'll still go around lecturing. For someone my age I still got good joints and muscles sometimes.

FRIKKIE

I don't listen to things.

JOAN

Frikkie never listens.

MAARTENS

On how rugby stops young people with their bad habits.

FRIKKIE

We never played rugby.

MAARTENS

Why not?

JOAN

Why do you think, hey!

MAARTENS

(Showing his annoyance at last at having FRIKKIE and JOAN in the room) Agh, man, it's no good talking to someone like you!

JOAN

(Insulted) Someone like him!

MAARTENS

Agh, I got to go!

ROUX

Ja, man, go.

MAARTENS

You never liked hearing about my career.

ROUX

No.

MAARTENS

There was that visitor. Remember? Her, ou Roux?

ROUX

(Unhappily) Maybe.

MAARTENS

She moaned about my filthy ideas. But the Kommandant, hey!

FRIKKIE

Who?

MAARTENS

He liked them. My ideas.

FRIKKIE

He liked them?

JOAN

It's not really for your ears, ou Frikkie. It's rude stuff.

FRIKKIE

That's why I asked, Ma. I don't know anything about that stuff.

MAARTENS

Ja, it was a hell of a row!

JOAN

We all heard it.

FRIKKIE

I didn't hear anything.

JOAN

You weren't even on the island, Frikkie. You domkop!

MAARTENS

But the Kommandant liked that stuff I was thinking, hey!

ROUX

Ja.

MAARTENS

That's how I became sergeant, hey!

ROUX

Let's talk about something else.

FRIKKIE

Islands. I like islands.

MAARTENS

What the fuck are you talking about!

FRIKKIE

St. Helena, Treasure Island.

MAARTENS

It's Robben Island, man! He thought I had found out something very important about rugby and young men. The Kommandant did.

ROUX

It's all old stuff. That story.

MAARTENS

Perhaps. But tell them.

ROUX

Tell them what?

MAARTENS

You know what! What the Kommandant did about her complaints.

ROUX

(Reluctantly) The Kommandant phoned his friend.

MAARTENS

Who?

ROUX

His pal in a Department.

MAARTENS

Which department?

ROUX

Agriculture?

MAARTENS

(Controlling his temper) Education! What did this ou in the Department of Education do?

ROUX

You know what.

MAARTENS

Tell them!

ROUX

Joan and Frikkie aren't interested.

MAARTENS

Tell them all the same.

ROUX

He got you to talk about dirty things.

MAARTENS

To the boys about their dirty habits. Boys need the advice. Girls are different.

FRIKKIE

That's what I like about girls.

MAARTENS

You know, ou Frikkie, a boy is like a tree. Every time you cut it, the juice runs out and soon it bleeds to death.

ROUX

It's not true, ou Frikkie.

JOAN

No.

MAARTENS

Even that bitch thought I was hot- hit.

ROUX

How could she have!

MAARTENS

That's a way a crazy randy woman behaves. She reported me to hide her randiness inside her body.

JOAN

I told her to report you.

MAARTENS

(Without anger) I know. I forgave you and when God saw that, he gave me a promotion. I'm glad. You see, when I showed the Kommandant the litter she left, he said she could bugger off. He took my side.

FRIKKIE

Man, I've never met a randy woman.

MAARTENS

I was telling you what a woman like that thinks in that part of her body.

FRIKKIE

You're going to tell us about her thinking parts?

MAARTENS

When she smaaks an ou, she gets funny.

FRIKKIE

Where?

JOAN

She was upset. I saw her!

MAARTENS

She smaaked me all right.

ROUX

How do you know?

MAARTENS

She couldn't keep her eyes off my feet.

ROUX

Man, she was selling socks!

JOAN

Ja.

MAARTENS

She the one who got you to join that organization?

JOAN

I never did!

MAARTENS

(Laughing) There you see!

JOAN

No.

MAARTENS

You got to laugh!

ROUX

You got an awful laugh, ou Maartens.

MAARTENS

(To ROUX) Then ou Joan, here, got you to join, hey!

ROUX

She never did!

MAARTENS

(Mawkishly sentimental) She came like a fly on a visit, hey! To the flower of Robben Island. And now the apple has got a worm.

FRIKKIE

I never understood any of this birds-and-bees stuff.

JOAN

(Irritated) That was your trouble at school, ou Frikkie. You never paid attention. You were always looking out of the window.

MAARTENS

That wouldn't happen in any of my classes, hey! They got to look me in the eyes all the time. Otherwise I go over and look at their hands.

FRIKKIE

I always wash mine. Especially if I'm going to eat.

JOAN

I should hope so!

FRIKKIE

But when I squeeze a pimple I only wash two fingers.

(FRIKKIE looks at his hands.)

ROUX

(To MAARTENS) You're just trying to frighten young boys to death.

FRIKKIE

I'm not frightened.

MAARTENS

Hey? Your type has got to know what is clean and what is wrong.

JOAN

(Annoyed by the implication) What do you mean 'your type'!

MAARTENS

Ask Roux. Or maybe not. He doesn't seem to mind these days.

ROUX

(Unhappy and bored) Man, this is an important day for everyone on the island. The whole country even. What do I see? I see a zig-zag all lit up. Burning and flashing. It gets bigger then smaller then bigger. Everything is burning.

FRIKKIE

It must have been the TV that buggered up your eyes, ou Roux.

MAARTENS

(Angrily to ROUX) The country? Ou remember that game we used to play about the laager and fighting to keep the kaffirs out? Well, it was always a big joke, ou pal, because ouens like you had already brought them in.

ROUX

Where?

MAARTENS

Just look around you.

FRIKKIE

Does he mean us, Ma?

JOAN

I think, so, ou Frikkie. I think so.

FRIKKIE

Man, I would have loved it!

(FRIKKIE stamps his feet and pretends to throw an assegai.)

JOAN

What you doing, ou Frikkie!

FRIKKIE

I'm throwing my assegai.

JOAN

Don't be so mad.

FRIKKIE

I feel mad!

MAARTENS

(Annoyed) Man, all that history stuff is finished. It's fuck-off time for everybody.

ROUX

Lights flashing.

MAARTENS

One day you're only going to hear about this crowd on this island. Especially him. When they make a bioscope film about him one day, make no mistake, ou pal, I'll never go see it. Not for all the popcorn in the building!

ROUX

(Weakly) Why don't you just go, ou Maartens! I thought you came to pack before you left the island.

MAARTENS

I'm glad to say I got stuck into the black bastards whenever I could. Sjambokking and beating and kicking. Pissing in their food and pinching their presents from home. 'University of Life' they called all their books and writing, hey! What kak! When they used to moan and cry, I would tell them to go to the 'Hospital of Life'.

ROUX

Ja, ou Maartens, they won't forget you.

(Pause.)

FRIKKIE

(Giving MAARTENS some money) There's your change.

(Pause.)

MAARTENS

Is this all!

FRIKKIE

I didn't charge for the work. Only the spark- plugs.

ROUX

I see sparks.

MAARTENS

It couldn't have been so expensive!

JOAN

(Annoyed) He's not a thief!

MAARTENS

What's it got to do with you!

JOAN

Plenty.

MAARTENS

Agh, fuck you!

ROUX

Man, we mustn't quarrel over pieces of motor-car.

JOAN

Fuck you back! Not you, ou Roux. Him.

FRIKKIE

Man, I don't like this party. There's no girls or dancing.

ROUX

Only fighting.

FRIKKIE

Ja, I didn't charge anything. They were collecting for your good-bye present, hey, so I thought I wouldn't charge for working on your car and that would be like a present.

MAARTENS

(Mocking ROUX) Cars, hey! You couldn't even get your license! You used to have a headache.

ROUX

I got one now. A headache.

JOAN

Agh, man, ou Roux, take a pill. Women know about these things.

MAARTENS

It was like you wanted to fail it on purpose. The driving-test.

ROUX

I did.

MAARTENS

(Laughing) Voetsek!

ROUX

Ja, I didn't want to be in the programme.

MAARTENS

What programme?

ROUX

Taking a prisoner out to the dentist for a special motor-car accident.

MAARTENS

Who told you about this? Programme?

JOAN

I did. When you make tea, you hear everything.

MAARTENS

You told him!

JOAN

Of course I did.

MAARTENS

No wonder then, ou Roux, you never got promotion.

ROUX

I don't care.

MAARTENS

But then you always let your side down. Your own kind.

JOAN

Never mind, ou Roux, our people like you.

FRIKKIE

Ja.

MAARTENS

Who cares about your people!

JOAN

(Exasperated) Let me just tell you something!

MAARTENS

Ja. Tell me. Go on. Tell me.

JOAN

You didn't piss in the prisoners' food at all.

MAARTENS

I know where I pissed! *(To ROUX)* Where did I piss, ou Roux?

ROUX

(Embarrassed) I don't know.

JOAN

It was all on the phone, hey! They wouldn't let you in their club.

MAARTENS

What club?

JOAN

Your cock was too small. Ja, it was all on the phone. That skin bit on the end was cut off. They all found it funny. Circum-something.

MAARTENS

(Controlling himself) On the phone?

JOAN

Ja, that woman who does the phones in the office, hey? She heard the ouens talking about you. Man, we laughed.

MAARTENS

Is this true, ou Roux?

ROUX

(Evasively) Man, they never joked with me.

JOAN

The Kommandant, hey, got her to listen to all the calls. He wanted to know what the staff was up to. Sometimes when she went to the toilet she asked me to listen in. To the phone, I mean.

MAARTENS

Interfering with government property!

JOAN

Sounds almost human. "Honorary white person."

MAARTENS

Your tea tasted like piss!

JOAN

Only yours.

MAARTENS

Christ! To think after all these years I got to listen to this! They should have hanged that buggger years ago. But now there's going to be trouble! This is the first day of a lot of trouble. You can hear it inside you. You can feel it in your fingers. Something is going to happen! I know it! Shit!

FRIKKIE

I don't like the way he tries to tell us about bad things, Ma. Like Aunt Lettie and the tea-leaves, hey! Things never got better so everyone believed her. When she said they

FRIKKIE, *Continued*

would take away the votes, they did. When she said they would grab our house and move us into a township, man, they did.

JOAN

Agh, ou Frikkie, until today, everything has always been bad for us. Everything that ever happened. Always, as far as I can remember and as far back as my ma could remember. What you ate, where you lived, where you worked. He said what he wanted to say and now he's leaving. Now he's going back to his place with the sheep on it and the cabbages and the wind- mill.

MAARTENS

(To Joan) Man, you're just lucky I haven't got my gun with me!

JOAN

So, why don't you just sommer strangle me with your bare hands! You got a small cock but you got big hands. And they're ugly and hairy and they want to hurt people. Anybody.

ROUX

Please! My head feels like a box that is getting fuller and tighter. Things are jumping and beating inside and burning. It's pumped full of pain. It's going to burst out of the side near my ear!

MAARTENS

(Callously) You're supposed to see funny lights first. And you did. Now you got your headache. I could see it was going to happen and I'm glad.

ROUX

Let me take a tablet.

(ROUX runs some water from the tap and swallows a tablet from a bottle. He opens the door. SFX: We hear chirping and insect noises.)

ROUX, *Continued*

It's nice out there. Quite cool. All you hear are the birds and the insects of Robben Island. They might be quarrelling even killing each other but they don't mean any harm to each other.

JOAN

Ja.

MAARTENS

Agh, bugger all of you! And you too, ou Roux! The Kommandant should know what sort of crowd he's got working on the island!

JOAN

Tell me, ou Maartens, did you never ask yourself how a coloured kid like Frikkie gets a job on the island?

MAARTENS

What?

JOAN

And how someone like me gets a job in the office? Didn't you hear the other warders joking about it?

MAARTENS

(Confused) I heard he was Venter's kid.

(ROUX resumes his seat.)

JOAN

Ja, your Kommandant. He was happy ou Venter took the blame. Don't you really know about it, ou Maartens?

(FRIKKIE smiles.)

MAARTENS

(Uncertainly) What does she mean, ou Roux! *(ROUX does not reply; MAARTENS is becoming more outraged.)* Hell, man, I'm going to remember all this. This room, all your faces, hey, and the sounds and the smells!

FRIKKIE

(Giggling) It's me. Red wine always makes me fart.

MAARTENS

(Ranting) This is a rotten day for South Africa! And the island too! All this rubbish I'm hearing here now, and everything else that is going on. They say the world is changing but every time it changes, there's more rubbish to pick up. Give me my jacket, my picture, my stuff!

(MAARTENS grabs his possessions and marches off. FRIKKIE starts to laugh. ROUX begins to sob. THEY stare at him.)

JOAN

(Sympathetically) What is the matter, skat? Is it that thing with Trudie? And he was a bastard saying that stuff about your leg.

FRIKKIE

Ja, a bad lousy thing to do.

(FRIKKIE shakes his head.)

JOAN

What is it then, ou Roux?

FRIKKIE

Hell, I've never seen a white man crying before.

ROUX

Man, I feel so ashamed.

JOAN

About what, hey?

ROUX

After all these years I never had the guts to talk to him the way you did. Just look how I kept quiet the whole evening, hey, and he was moaning at me. And all those years I never told him he was doing wrong things. All those years!

FRIKKIE

Agh, come on now, ou Roux!

JOAN

He's bedonnered! Forget him.

FRIKKIE

You know, Ma, when you dared him to do something to your neck, I would of cracked him if he tried. You get big muscles working on cars.

JOAN

Ja, ou Frikkie. I'm proud of you.

ROUX

Ja, ou Frikkie!

FRIKKIE

I can lend you those comics on the operas, ou Roux. There's a lot of action in them. They got some good fights.

ROUX

I don't read so much, man, Frikkie. But thanks.

FRIKKIE

You know, Ma, you made me laugh about telling him about who made me in your body.

JOAN

Ja, I liked telling him that.

FRIKKIE

(Laughing) Ma, you're such a liar!

ROUX

It's not so funny. You don't know what that ou can still do.

JOAN

(Excitedly) Man, I don't care! A lot of other things are happening. We'll watch the news again tonight. I feel sort of wild as if smart things are happening. Really happening.

FRIKKIE

(Chanting and stamping) Ja! Ja ! Ja!

JOAN

(Laughing) Hell, ou Frikkie, not again! You don't have to be a coon anymore.

ROUX

(Unsuccessfully trying to open the window) Hell! Let's go for a walk outside. What you reckon? You look hot and sweaty, ou Frikkie. Let's go out there and get some fresh air.

FRIKKIE

It would be nice one day if they sold ice-creams out there and we had a nice time and nobody chopped stones.

JOAN

(Kissing FRIKKIE) Ja, my Frikkie, you need some fresh air in your lungs instead of all those bad smells from the cars.

FRIKKIE

I know, Ma.

(THEY rise to exit as MAARTENS enters.)

MAARTENS

Ja!

JOAN

(Glaring) Agh! What is it now!

MAARTENS

(Taking gun from his pocket) What, you thought it was all over, hey! Nothing is over until somebody is dead.

ROUX

(Moving closer to MAARTENS) Come on now, ou Maartens!

MAARTENS

It's a long time since I shot anyone. And I like the feel of this gun.

FRIKKIE

Shit, ou Maartens, who you want to be dead then?

MAARTENS

(Pointing gun at FRIKKIE) Don't you use that language on me, hey! I can just see it now. Hundreds of years of cheek and filth and terrorism, you stupid little child of I don't know what!

JOAN

(Stepping in front of FRIKKIE) Man, leave him!

MAARTENS

(Pointing gun at JOAN) OK then, you hotnot bitch, if you want it, it's ladies first!

(MAARTENS shoots her. ROUX coughs and vomits over MAARTENS who stalls.)

FRIKKIE

(Shouting) Pull finger ou Roux!

(ROUX draws his own gun and fires at MAARTENS.)

SCENE 4

(AT RISE: Five years later; outside the prison. Table Mountain is seen across the bay. PAT and DONALD are looking out across a patch of land. At their feet is a large suitcase.)

PAT

So?

DONALD

I'm not sure.

PAT

This tour-guide?

DONALD

Maybe.

PAT

And the photograph?

DONALD

Maybe.

PAT

Didn't it help at all?

DONALD

He looks familiar.

PAT

Are you going to ask him?

DONALD

Fancy you being here at all!

PAT

When?

DONALD

Then.

PAT

I was selling stuff.

DONALD

(Indignantly) You supplied the island. A place like this!

PAT

So did you.

DONALD

I was only a driver.

PAT

The boss made me go.

DONALD

(Bitterly) Sure!

PAT

You made me come today.

DONALD

Well, this is different, isn't it?

PAT

Of course it's different. Now you're the boss.

DONALD

Yes I'm the boss. But that's not the point.

PAT

You've come to settle a score.

DONALD

Of course I've come to settle a score. There are a lot of scores.

PAT

What do you want people like me to do, Donald? Tell me.

DONALD

Shame. The first thing you should do is feel shame.

PAT

You want me to feel shame? O.K., I feel shame. What you really want is humiliation.

DONALD

You found it a lot of trouble coming today.

PAT

Of course I did.

DONALD

You know, with all the cutbacks, you will have to make a bigger effort. Make yourself indispensable, in fact.

PAT

(Reflects over this threat) I see.

DONALD

You were lucky you got your job back again. In this new social climate, I mean.

PAT

I came back because of the new social climate.

DONALD

You went overseas for social reasons only! Not because you were protesting!

PAT

O.K., O.K., so I went overseas for selfish reasons. I got married, got divorced, got married, got divorced. Quite a marital history!

DONALD

That's right

.

PAT

We're not all as lucky as you!

DONALD

Despite everything.

PAT

As for my visit, it was twelve years ago. But right now, you might get some business here. You seem to have got on well with the new Kommandant or whatever he's called. *(Looks at the suit-case and rubs her back)* Pretty heavy it is too!

DONALD

Remember, the more you sell, the lighter it gets.

PAT

A comforting thought.

DONALD

Enjoy it while you can.

PAT

Enjoy what?

DONALD

Your comforting thought.

PAT

(Pause) All right. I suppose I was a typical white but I tried not to be.

DONALD

Tapping a well-shod shoe to black music? That kind of thing? Joining a march on an overseas trip? Distributing leaflets to known sympathizers?

PAT

O.K.! O.K.! *(Pause)* Doesn't the mountain and the bay, look terrific, Donald?

DONALD

(Grumpily) It does. Sure.

PAT

I understand you're something of a climber. You still climb?

DONALD

Not so much as in the old days.

PAT

You must have had a good view of the island from up there. Did it make you feel you weren't doing enough?

DONALD

No. I left that feeling to white liberals.

PAT

(Ignoring this) I believe you once thought of taking up a group from work.

DONALD

I thought about it. Like I think about a lot of things.

PAT

You learned a few skills in your youth then.

DONALD

Yes, but you lot could always go to the beaches and picnic-spots and we couldn't.

PAT

I went up once. The mountain.

DONALD

Well, then.

PAT

Up the cable-way.

DONALD

(Bitterly) There you are, then. We weren't allowed to use the cable-car and we had to climb.

PAT

Donald the leftist, businessman and climber.

DONALD

What do you mean?

PAT

I meant mountaineer.

DONALD

It didn't sound like it.

PAT

What's happened to reconciliation, Donald? We've got to come to terms with the past.

DONALD

Whose past? Yours? I suppose you are going to tell me we have a common past. It's just that we remember it differently.

PAT

Shhh, now! Here they are!

(ROUX and FRIKKIE R saunter in.)

ROUX

Ja, we're here now. Frikkie, this is Pat and her friend. She is the lady who brought the comics to the island.

DONALD

Like the missionaries. They brought in Bibles along with the VD.

PAT

Oh, for heaven's sake!

FRIKKIE

Even today nobody takes precautions.

ROUX

(Embarrassed) Right then, ou Frikkie, this is the lady. And this is? Donald is it?

(Looking curiously at Donald) Your first time here, Donald?

(DONALD says nothing.)

FRIKKIE

Ja. Hullo. Thanks, then!

PAT

Hello.

ROUX

Sorry we were so long but there is a special place Frikkie likes visiting. Very sad.

FRIKKIE

You knew my Ma, Joan, hey?

PAT

I met her a couple of times. *(To ROUX)* And I remember your colleague, Maartens!

ROUX

So you said.

PAT

He's not around anymore?

ROUX

Definitely not.

FRIKKIE

(Interrupting) I got this letter I always read to visitors.

PAT

(Girlishly) Not a love-letter?

FRIKKIE

Hell, no.

ROUX

Definitely not!

DONALD

(To ROUX) You know, I've met you before!

ROUX

Really?

DONALD

Definitely!

ROUX

Were you a prisoner here? I was a warder here for years. I mean, it's quite possible, hey?

DONALD

Not here. No.

PAT

(*Teasing*) No, Donald was only a small-time agitator. He wouldn't have been here. Though he came on a delivery.

DONALD

(*Irritated*) You know, Pat, you really get on my nerves sometimes! I was still a victim, remember! I didn't say I had been here!

ROUX

Where did you say we had met?

DONALD

Remember the 'High Noon Society'?

FRIKKIE

'High Noon', ou Roux!

ROUX

Man, that would have been a long time ago.

DONALD

I think you were the one who threw me out. I tried to come to a meeting and you threw me out. I can remember it quite clearly.

ROUX

Probably. A long time ago. Man, I've changed. We've all changed. In those days to become a member you had to be seen to throw out a black person to qualify. I'm not really so tough.

FRIKKIE

Agh, come on, ou Roux! You don't look up too much but I've seen you in action.

DONALD

Mind you, I was thrown out of a lot of places. (*Full of self-pity*) Schools, clubs, parties; the lot.

FRIKKIE

So was I. Funny we never met. Man, there were some good parties where I could have got drunk. Clubs too. Motor-car clubs and tennis clubs. Trains and buses. And schools too, but that was for bad behaviour. If I had been born then, ou Roux you could of thrown me out of the 'High Noon Society'. And we could of become friends earlier.

PAT

(Impatiently) Now what about this letter? We've got to catch the ferry back. Who is it from actually?

ROUX

Ja, come on, ou Frikkie. In your best voice.

FRIKKIE

Right then. Let me see. Ja, here it is. It's getting crumpled. *(Clears his throat; reading)*

[This could be done as a voice-over by the author of the letter]

Dear Comrade Frikkie— (Explaining) That's me, hey! Thank you very much for your letter of the 14th. It seems that I had left the prison before you had started working there and I am sorry never to have met you.

PAT

(Interrupting) How fabulous—

DONALD

Shhh! Go on Frikkie.

FRIKKIE

Ja, right, man. *(Reading)*

It is extremely kind of you to offer to service my car free of charge when I am in Cape Town but you must appreciate my security requirements would render such an arrangement quite impossible. Of course I remember Comrade Roux very well. It was I who recruited him into the organization. I am delighted to hear that he helped you with the spelling and grammar in your letter. All in all, I have become quite proud of him.

PAT

(Interrupting) How incredible!

DONALD

Will you keep quiet, Pat! Carry on!

(FRIKKIE looks at ROUX who nods.)

FRIKKIE

Now where was I? Oh, yes.

Your idea of a production of "Fidelio" on Robben Island is most interesting. This particular opera is certainly one that all lovers of freedom have always found quite heartening. I shall look out for it but I am afraid I cannot use my influence to find you a position selling programmes. Of course, as you suggest, rather forthrightly perhaps, it might bring you more opportunities with the opposite sex. In this quest and, indeed, in all others, I do wish you luck.

DONALD
Fidelio, hey! (*Hums a few bars*)

PAT
That's "La Bohémé".

FRIKKIE
Since then I stopped.

PAT
Stopped what?

FRIKKIE
Looking for girls. Trying to find them.

ROUX
Most of the time.

DONALD
Why?

FRIKKIE
I got married.

PAT
A nice girl?

FRIKKIE
What do you think, ou Roux?

ROUX
(*Warmly*) She is.

PAT
Lovely!

DONALD
(*Bored*) Read the rest. The letter.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

GLOSSARY OF “SOUTH AFRICANISMS”

SOUTH AFRICANISM	MAINSTREAM ENGLISH EQUIVALENT.
Agh	Oh
Assegai	The spear of a Zulu Warrior
Bedonnered	Crazy
Bokkie	Sweetheart
Boss-boy	An African who has become a petty official
Braaivleis	Barbecue
Domkop	Idiot
Dop	An alcoholic drink
Dopped	Failed
Fuck	Fuck
Goosie	Sweetheart
Kaffir	“Nigger”
Kaffir-boetie	Someone who fraternises with “Niggers”
Kak	Shit
Laager	A ring of wagons that formed a defensive barrier
Moffie	Effeminate male
Moer	Mother
Ou	Generally a sloppy form of address.
Ouens	People
Smaak	To like/ love
Sommer	By the way
Voetsek	Get out of here- as if spoken to a dog
Yissus	Jesus