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Dear Comrade Frikkie

by

Harold Kimmel

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DEAR COMRADE FRIKKIE
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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
by Harold Kimmel

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!
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!

(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.

(Guiltily) Hey?

ROUX
About the prisoners coming.

MAARTENS
Hell, how do you know that!

ROUX
I know what goes on in an ou’s head.

MAARTENS
I’m not going to think it then.

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

(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.

I must of forgotten.

MAARTENS

ROUX

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

Agh, Trudie!

MAARTENS

Ja. Her.

ROUX

What about her?

MAARTENS

She told me she wasn’t keen.

ROUX

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.

Trudie?

MAARTENS
Ja, Trudie.

So, where is she now?

ROUX
She went to work in Johannesburg.

Do you write?

MAARTENS
Write what?

ROUX
Letters, man! Do you write to her?

I have trouble with the...

MAARTENS
Commas?

Ja.

ROUX

MAARTENS
Full stops?
ROUX

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 smaak 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.

Like what?

MAARTENS

ROUX
Just everything.

Like what? That wall?

Ja.

MAARTENS
How?

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

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

The quarry.

The quarry?

Man, where the kaffirs work.

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

Agh, man, girls!

(Plaintively) Agh, man, Trudie!

You’re wasting your time, ou pal.

One day she’ll ring me on the telephone, ou 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.)

She is going to have a baby anytime.

Who?

Joan.

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 Kommandandt and ou 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!

ROUX
Who you talking to?

MAARTENS
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
(Criring) Fourteen times. Ja, Sergeant Venter. It’s the ‘High Noon’ Society. Every month we sit down and watch ‘High Noon’. Also, man, I smaak 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.

Everyone is so friendly there.

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

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.

Just like your driving-test!
In the end I got my membership in the ‘High Noon’ Society!

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

How do you know!

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

You’re a terrible teacher!

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

(SITS.)

Sit!

Man!

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

I must look in the mirror.

Well, do it for fuck’s sake! (Pause) What’s next? Well, come on! Come on!

I must signal right.

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.)
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.

(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.

It must not be comfortable.

MAARTENS
No, fuck it!

VENTER
Otherwise the Kommandandt 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.

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!

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 Kommandandt, 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?
I’m laughing.

MAARTENS

I don’t hear any laughter.

ROUX

I’m laughing quietly.

MAARTENS

Who you laughing at?

ROUX


MAARTENS

Me? Why?

ROUX

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

MAARTENS

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

ROUX

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

MAARTENS

What about him?

ROUX

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

MAARTENS

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

ROUX

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

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?
The things men get up to.

JOAN

You don’t mean……?

PAT

Ja.

JOAN

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

PAT

Man, he did. Years ago.

JOAN

But now he’s gone.

PAT

Where?

JOAN

I’m not quite sure. He’s dead.

PAT

Hell, hey! But you like it there?

JOAN

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

PAT

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

JOAN

He is.

PAT

That’s nice.

JOAN

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.

PAT

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

Sounds awful!

JOAN

Ja, and the Kommandandt, 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.

(Pfacetiously) 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.
Why do you say that?

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

(Laughing) Yes!

Just watch out for the other thing.

For what? What other thing?

They’re always trying, hey!

Trying what? Who?

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

I know what you mean.

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.

I think I’ve brought the wrong merchandise.

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

(Uncertainly) Which one? Who?

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

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

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

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

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.

What! Are you sure?

Go on.

(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.

That’s O.K.

Man, I got to get back.

Do you really have to?

I see to the tea and some of the cleaning.

Yes.

I got to drink tea separately.

I’m sorry.

But what do you expect!

1984 on Robben Island!

Ja.
What’s your boss like?

PAT

(Cautiously) Never mind!

JOAN

Yes. I can imagine.

PAT

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

JOAN

Litter?

PAT

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.
Dear Comrade Frikkie by Harold Kimmel  29

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.

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

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.

(Surprised) Hey?

ROUX

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.

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 Kommandandt.
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 Kommandant 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.
I can’t watch if I’m outside.

You know what you are, ou Roux?

What?

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

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

You want to know something, ou pal?

What?

You owe your job to me.

Hey?

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


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

I don’t believe it.

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

What?

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!
Dear Comrade Frikkie by Harold Kimmel 42

(Pathetically) It’s only her.

ROUX

She’s in Johannesburg, hey?

MAARTENS

When last I heard. Ja.

ROUX

What is she doing there?

MAARTENS

I don’t know.

ROUX

Where does she work?

MAARTENS

Why?

ROUX

Where does she work?

MAARTENS

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

ROUX

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

MAARTENS

What the hell are you doing!

ROUX

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

MAARTENS

Shit!

ROUX

*(Pause)* Ja. I’ll hang on.

MAARTENS

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.

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

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 Kommandandt 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.

Woman?

MAARTENS

Ja, man, ja!

ROUX

I don’t know anything about her.

MAARTENS

*Threateningly* Well, if the Kommandandt 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!
FRIKKIE
Ja, that Robinson Crusoe ou was on it.

ROUX
Who?

FRIKKIE
A famous political prisoner.

ROUX
Who told you that?

FRIKKIE
You told me.

ROUX
A prisoner must have told me.

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

ROUX
They know about things. Those prisoners.

FRIKKIE
I’ve never been to St Helena.

ROUX
Same here.

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

ROUX
(Stretching) Man, time to relax.

FRIKKIE
Ma is bringing the wine.

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

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

Hell, hey!

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

Man, no. But I heard you smaaked someone.

Agh, it’s a big joke. She didn’t smaak me back.

Man, I’m sorry.

That’s O.K.

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.

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

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?

Never, ou Frikkie. Never.

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

Hey?

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.

I don’t know what everyone on the island would do without your help.
Dear Comrade Frikkie by Harold Kimmel 48

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!

What’s that?

ROUX

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.

(Dismally) What an ou!

I know, ou Frikkie.

ROUX

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!
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.

I wonder if I can still do it.

FRIKKIE

Do what?

ROUX

That upside down sault thing.

FRIKKIE

(He makes a clumsy attempt at a somersault.)

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!
Dear Comrade Frikkie

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

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

Sorry, Ma

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

I think he means it, Joan.

(Woefully) I do, Ma!

What were you saying, ou Joan?

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

Ja.

Changing.

That’s very true. Very true.

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

What?

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.)

Ou Frikkie, sometimes I think that you must get petrol up there in the place where you think you think.
Agh, leave him alone, ou Joan.

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

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

Shhh, now!

(Roux) (Turning up volume of television set) Hell!

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.

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!”

Shut up now, ou Frikkie!

(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.

Well, shit-a-brick!

Shhh!

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

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!
DEAR COMRADE FRIKKIE

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.
Dear Comrade Frikkie by Harold Kimmel  55

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.

Ja.
Dear Comrade Frikkie by Harold Kimmel  56

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.

Of course it is.

LOVELY.

ROUX

MAARTENS
Never mind.

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.

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’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 Kommandandt, 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.
Ja, it was a hell of a row!

We all heard it.

I didn’t hear anything.

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

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

Ja.

That’s how I became sergeant, hey!

Let’s talk about something else.

Islands. I like islands.

What the fuck are you talking about!

St. Helena, Treasure Island.

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

It’s all old stuff. That story.

Perhaps. But tell them.

Tell them what?

You know what! What the Kommandandt 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.
She the one who got you to join that organization?

I never did!

(Laughing) There you see!

No.

You got to laugh!

You got an awful laugh, ou Maartens.

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

She never did!

(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.

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

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

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.

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

I should hope so!

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 Kommandandt, 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 bugger 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
Dear Comrade Frikkie by Harold Kimmel  71

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 Kommandandt 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.)

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!

(ROUX begins to sob. THEY stare at him.)

MAARTENS
(grabs his possessions and marches off. FRIKKIE starts to laugh.)

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.

(ROUX begins to sob. THEY stare at him.)

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 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 suit-case.

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.
Are you going to ask him?

Fancy you being here at all!

When?

Then.

I was selling stuff.

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

So did you.

I was only a driver.

The boss made me go.

(Bitterly) Sure!

You made me come today.

Well, this is different, isn’t it?

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

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

You’ve come to settle a score.

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

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.
Dear Comrade Frikkie by Harold Kimmel  78

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.
I went up once. The mountain.

Well, then.

Up the cable-way.

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

Donald the leftist, businessman and climber.

What do you mean?

I meant mountaineer.

It didn’t sound like it.

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

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

Shhh, now! Here they are!

(ROUX and FRIKKIE R saunter in.)

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

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

Oh, for heaven’s sake!

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!

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

Not here. No.

No, Donald was only a small-time agitator. He wouldn’t have been here. Though he came on a delivery.

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

Where did you say we had met?

Remember the ‘High Noon Society’?

‘High Noon’, ou Roux!

Man, that would have been a long time ago.

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.

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.

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

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

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.
Dear Comrade Frikkie by Harold Kimmel 82

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.
Dear Comrade Frikkie

DONALD

Fidelio, hey! (Hums a few bars)

PAT

That's "La Bohemé".

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”**

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