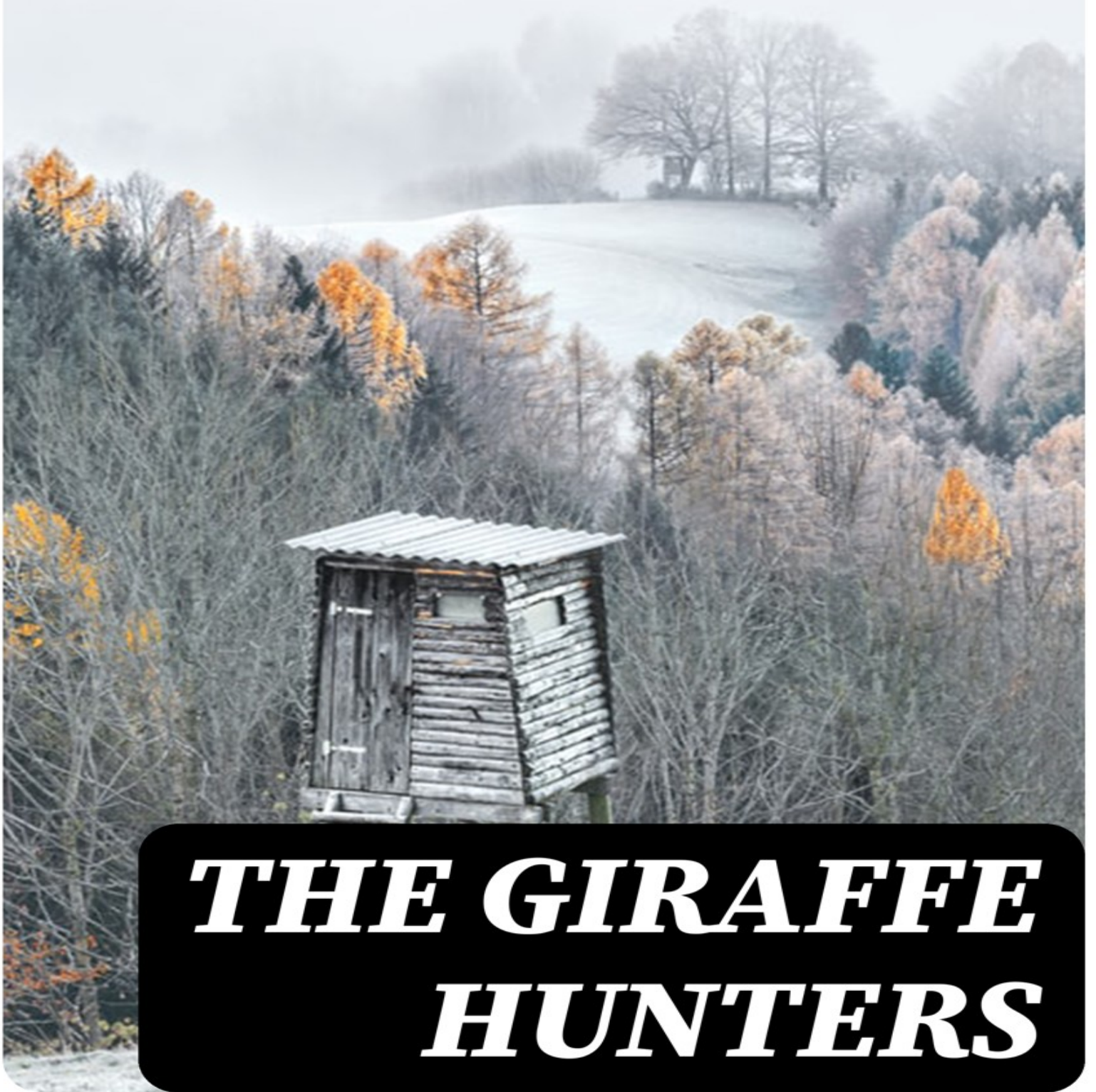


***MAYNE  
REID***



***THE GIRAFFE  
HUNTERS***

**Mayne Reid**

# **The Giraffe Hunters**

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# Chapter One.

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## Arrival at the Promised Land.

In that land of which we have so many records of early and high civilisation, and also such strong evidences of present barbarism,—the land of which we know so much and so little,—the land where Nature exhibits some of her most wonderful creations and greatest contrasts, and where she is also prolific in the great forms of animal and vegetable life,—there, my young reader, let us wander once more. Let us return to Africa, and encounter new scenes in company with old friends.

On the banks of the Limpopo brightly blazes a hunter's fire, around which the reader may behold three distinct circles of animated beings. The largest is composed of horses, the second of dogs, and the lesser or inner one, of young men, whom many of my readers will recognise as old acquaintances.

I have but to mention the names of Hans and Hendrik Von Bloom, Groot Willem and Arend Van Wyk, to make known that *The Young Yägers* are again on a hunting expedition. In the one in which we now encounter them, not all the parties are inspired by the same hopes and desires.

The quiet and learned Hans Von Bloom, like many colonial youths, is affected with the desire of visiting the home of his forefathers. He wishes to go to Europe for the purpose of making some practical use of the knowledge

acquired, and the floral collections made, while a *Bush-Boy* and a *Young Yäger*. But before doing so, he wishes to enlarge his knowledge of natural history by making one more expedition to a part of Southern Africa he has not yet visited.

He knows that extensive regions of his native land, containing large rivers and immense forests, and abounding in a vast variety of rare plants, lie between the rivers Limpopo and Zambezi, and before visiting Europe he wishes to extend his botanic researches in that direction. His desire to make his new excursion amid the African wilds is no stronger than that of "Groot Willem" Van Wyk, who ever since his return from the last expedition, six months before, has been anxious to undertake another in quest of game such as he has not yet encountered.

Our readers will search in vain around the camp-fire for little Jan and Klaas. Their parents would not consent to their going so far from home, on an excursion promising so many hardships and so much danger. Besides, it was necessary that they should become something better than mere *Bush-Boys*, by spending a few years at school.

The two young cornets, Hendrik Von Bloom and Arend Van Wyk, each endeavouring to wear the appearance of old warriors, are present in the camp. Although both are passionately fond of a sportsman's life, each, for certain reasons, had refrained from urging the necessity or advantage of the present expedition.

They would have preferred remaining at home and trying to find amusement during the day with the inferior game to be found near Graaf Reinet,—not that they fear danger or

were in any way entitled to the appellation of “cockney sportsmen”; but home has an attraction for them that the love of adventure cannot wholly eradicate.

Hendrik Von Bloom could have stayed very happily at home. The excitement of the chase, which on former occasions he had so much enjoyed, now no longer attracts him half so much as the smiles of Wilhelmina Van Wyk, the only sister of his friends Groot Willem and Arend.

The latter young gentleman would not have travelled far from the daily society of little Trüey Von Bloom, had he been left to his own inclinations. But Willem and Hans had determined upon seeking adventures farther to the north than any place they had yet visited; and hence the present expedition.

The promise of sport and rare adventures, added to the fear of ridicule should they remain at home, influenced Hendrik and Arend to accompany the great hunter and the naturalist to the banks of the Limpopo.

Seated near the fire are two other individuals, whom the readers of *The Young Yägers* will recognise as old acquaintances. One is the short, stout, heavy-headed Bushman, Swartboy, who could not have been coaxed to remain behind while his young masters Hans and Hendrik were out in search of adventures.

The other personage not mentioned by name is Congo, the Kaffir.

The Limpopo River was too far from Graaf Reinet for the young hunters to think of reaching it with wagons and oxen. The journey might be made, but it would take up too much



time; and they were impatient to reach what Groot Willem had long called "The Promised Land."

In order, therefore, to do their travelling in as little time as possible, they had taken no oxen; but, mounted on good horses, had hastened by the nearest route to the banks of the Limpopo, avoiding in place of seeking adventures by the way. Besides their own saddle-horses, six others were furnished with pack-saddles, and lightly laden with ammunition, clothing, and such other articles as might be required. The camp where we now encounter them is a temporary halting-place on the Limpopo. They have succeeded in crossing the river, and are now on the borders of that land so long represented to them as being a hunter's paradise. A toilsome journey is no longer before them; but only amusement, of a kind so much appreciated that they have travelled several hundred miles to enjoy it.

We have stated that, in undertaking this expedition, the youths were influenced by different motives. This was to a great extent true; and yet they had a common purpose beside that of mere amusement. The consul for the Netherlands had been instructed by his government to procure a young male and female giraffe, to be forwarded to Europe. Five hundred pounds had been offered for the pair safely delivered either at Cape Town or Port Natal; and several parties of hunters that had tried to procure these had failed. They had shot and otherwise killed camelopards by the score, but had not succeeded in capturing any young ones alive.

Our hunters had left home with the determination to take back a pair of young giraffes, and to pay all expenses of

their expedition by this, as also by the sale of hippopotamus teeth. The hope was not an unreasonable one. They knew that fortunes had been made in procuring elephants' tusks, and also that the teeth of the hippopotamus were the finest of ivory, and commanded a price four times greater than any other sent to the European market.

But the capturing of the young camelopards was the principal object of their expedition. The love of glory was stronger than the desire of gain, especially in Groot Willem, who as a hunter eagerly longed to accomplish a feat which had been attempted by so many others without success. In his mind, the fame of fetching back the two young giraffes far outweighed the five hundred pound prize to be obtained, though the latter was a consideration not to be despised, and no doubt formed with him, as with the others, an additional incentive.

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## **Chapter Two.**

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### **On the Limpopo.**

During the first night spent upon the Limpopo our adventurers had good reason for believing that they were in the neighbourhood of several kinds of game they were anxious to fall in with.

Their repose was disturbed by a combination of sounds, in which they could distinguish the roar of the lion, the trumpet-like notes of the elephant, mingled with the voices

of some creature they could not remember having previously heard.

Several hours of that day had been passed in searching for a place to cross the river,—one where the banks were low on each side, and the stream not too deep. This had not been found until the sun was low down upon the horizon.

By the time they had got safely over, twilight was fast thickening into darkness, and all but Congo were unwilling to proceed farther that night. The Kaffir suggested that they should go at least half a mile up or down the river and Groot Willem seconded the proposal, although he had no other reason for doing so than a blind belief in the opinions of his attendant, whether they were based upon wisdom or instinct. In the end Congo's suggestion had been adopted, and the sounds that disturbed the slumbers of the camp were heard at some distance, proceeding from the place where they had crossed the river.

“Now, can you understand why Congo advised us to come here?” asked Groot Willem, as they listened to the hideous noises that were depriving them of sleep.

“No,” was the reply of his companions.

“Well, it was because the place where we crossed is the watering-place for all the animals in the neighbourhood.”

“That is so, Baas Willem,” said Congo, confirming the statement of his master.

“But we have not come a thousand miles for the sake of keeping out of the way of those animals, have we?” asked the hunter Hendrik.

“No,” answered Willem, “we came here to seek them, not to have them seek us. Our horses want rest, whether we do

or not.”

Here ended further conversation for the night, for the hunters becoming accustomed to the chorus of the wild creatures, took no further notice of it, and one after another fell asleep.

Morning dawned upon a scene of surpassing beauty. They were in a broad valley, covered with magnificent trees, among which were many gigantic baobabs (*Adansonia digitata*). Wild date-trees were growing in little clumps; while the floral carpet, spread in brilliant pattern over the valley, was observed by Hans with an air of peculiar satisfaction.

He had reached a new field for the pursuit of his studies, and bright dreams were passing gently through his mind,—dreams that anticipated new discoveries in the botanical world, which might make his name known among the savants of Europe.

Before any of his companions were moving, Groot Willem, accompanied by Congo, stole forth to take a look at the surrounding country.

They directed their course down the river. On reaching the place where they had crossed it, they chanced upon a tableau that even a hunter, who is supposed to take delight in the destruction of animals, could not look upon without unpleasant emotions.

Within the space of a hundred yards were lying five dead antelopes, of a species Willem had never seen before. Feeding on the carcasses were several hyenas. On the approach of the hunters, they slowly moved away, each laughing like a madman who has just committed some horrible atrocity.

By the “spoor” seen upon the river-banks, it was evident that both elephants and lions had visited the place during the night. While making these and other reconnoissances, Groot Willem was joined by Hans, who had already commenced his favourite study by making an examination of the floral treasures in his immediate locality. Arriving up with Groot Willem, the attention of Hans was at once directed to an examination of the antelopes, which he pronounced to be elands, but believed them to be of a new and undescribed variety of this animal. They were elands; but each was marked with small white stripes across the body, in this respect resembling “koodoos.”

After a short examination of the spoor, Congo asserted that a troop of elands had first visited the watering-place, and that while they were there four bull elephants, also in search of water, had charged with great speed upon the antelopes. Three or four lions had also joined in the strife, in which the only victims had been the unfortunate elands.

“I think we are in a place where we had better make a regular enclosure, and stop for a few days,” suggested Groot Willem, on his return to the camp. “There is plenty of feed for the horses, and we have proof that the ‘drift’ where we crossed is a great resort for all kinds of game.”

“I’m of the same opinion,” assented Hendrik; “but I don’t wish to encamp quite so close to the crossing as this is. We had better move some distance off. Then we shall not prevent game from seeking the drift, or be ourselves hindered from getting sleep. Don’t you think we’d better move little farther up the river?”

“Yes, yes,” was the unanimous answer.

It was therefore decided that search should be made for a better camping-ground, where they could build themselves a proper enclosure, or "kraal."

After partaking of their first breakfast upon the Limpopo, Groot Willem, Hans, and Hendrik mounted their horses and rode off up the river, accompanied by the full pack of dogs, leaving Arend, with Swartboy and Congo, to take care of the camp.

For nearly three miles, the young hunters rode along the bank of the river, without finding any spot where access to the water could be readily obtained. The banks were high and steep, and therefore but little visited by such animals as they wished to hunt. At this point the features of the landscape began to change, presenting an appearance more to their satisfaction. Light timber, such as would be required for the construction of a stockade, was growing near the river, which was no longer inaccessible, though its banks appeared but little frequented by game.

"I think this place will suit admirably," said Groot Willem. "We are only half an hour's ride from the drift, and probably we may find good hunting-ground farther up stream."

"Very likely," rejoined Hendrik; "but before taking too much trouble to build ourselves a big kraal, we had better be sure about what sort of game is to be got here."

"You are right about that," answered Willem; "we must take care to find out whether there are hippopotami and giraffes. We cannot go home without a pair of the latter. Our friends would be disappointed, and some I know would have a laugh at us."

“And you for one would deserve it,” said Hans. “Remember how you ridiculed the other hunters who returned unsuccessful.”

Having selected a place for the kraal, should they decide on staying awhile in the neighbourhood, the young hunters proceeded farther up the river, for the purpose of learning something more of the hunting-ground before finally determining to construct the enclosure.

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### A Twin Trap.

Not long after the departure of Groot Willem and his companions, Arend, looking towards a thicket about half a mile from the river, perceived a small herd of antelopes quietly browsing upon the plain. Mounting his horse, he rode off, with the intention of bagging one or more of them for the day's dinner.

Having ridden to the leeward of the herd, and getting near them, he saw that they were of the species known as “Duyker,” or Divers (*Antelope grimmia*). Near them was a small “motte” of the *Nerium oleander*, a shrub about twelve feet high, loaded with beautiful blossoms. Under the cover of these bushes, he rode up close enough to the antelopes to insure a good shot, and, picking out one of the largest of the herd, he fired.

All the antelopes but one rushed to the edge of the thicket, made a grand leap, and dived out of sight over the

tops of the bushes,—thus affording a beautiful illustration of that peculiarity to which they are indebted for their name of Divers. Riding up to the one that had remained behind, and which was that at which he had fired, the young hunter made sure that it was dead; he then trotted back to the camp, and despatched Congo and the Bushman to bring it in. They soon returned with the carcass, which they proceeded to skin and make ready for the spit.

While thus engaged, Swartboy appeared to notice something out upon the plain.

“Look yonner, Baas Arend,” said he.

“Well, what is it, Swart?”

“You see da pack-horse dare? He gone too much off from de camp.”

Arend turned and looked in the direction the Bushman was pointing. One of the horses, which had strayed from its companions, was now more than half a mile off, and was wandering onwards.

“All right, Swart. You go on with your cooking. I’ll ride after it myself, and drive it in.”

Arend, again mounting his horse, trotted off in the direction of the animal that had strayed.

For cooking the antelope, Congo and Swartboy saw the necessity of providing themselves with some water; and taking a vessel for that purpose, they set out for the drift,—that being the nearest place where they could obtain it.

They kept along the bank of the river, and just before reaching a place where they would descend to the water, Congo, who was in the advance, suddenly disappeared! He



had walked on to a carefully concealed pit, dug for the purpose of catching hippopotami or elephants.

The hole was about nine feet deep; and after being astonished by dropping into it, the Kaffir was nearly blinded by the sand, dust, and other materials that had formed the covering of the pit.

Congo was too well acquainted with this South African device for killing large game to be anyways disconcerted by what had happened; and after becoming convinced that he was uninjured by the fall, he turned his glance upward, expecting assistance from his companion.

But Swartboy's aid could not just then be given. The Bushman, amused by the ludicrous incident that had befallen his rival, was determined to enjoy the fun for a little longer. Uttering a wild shout of laughter that was a tolerable imitation of an enraged hyena, Swartboy seemed transported into a heaven of unadulterated joy. Earth appeared hardly able to hold him as he leaped and danced around the edge of the pit.

Never had his peculiar little mind been so intensely delighted; but the manifestations of that delight were more suddenly terminated than commenced; for in the midst of his eccentric capers he, too, suddenly disappeared into the earth as if swallowed up by an earthquake! His misfortune was similar to that which had befallen his companion. Two pitfalls had been constructed close together, and Swartboy now occupied the second.

It is a common practice among the natives of South Africa to trap the elephant in these twin pitfalls; as the

animals, too hastily avoiding the one, run the risk of dropping into the other.

Swartboy and the Kaffir had unexpectedly found a place where this plan had been adopted; and, much to their discomfiture, without the success anticipated by those who had taken the trouble to contrive it.

The cavity into which Congo had fallen contained about two feet of mud on the bottom. The sides were perpendicular, and of a soapy sort of clay, so that his attempts at climbing out proved altogether unsuccessful, thus greatly increasing the chagrin of his unphilosophic mind. He had heard the Bushman's screams of delight, and the sounds had contributed nothing to reconcile him to the mischance that had befallen him. Several minutes passed and he heard nothing of Swartboy.

He was not surprised at the Bushman's having been amused as well as gratified by his misfortune. Still, he expected that in time he would lend assistance and pull him out of the pit. But as this assistance was not given, and as Swartboy, not satisfied with laughing at his misfortune appeared also to have gone off and left him to his fate, the Kaffir became frantic with rage.

Several more minutes passed, which to Congo seemed hours, and still nothing was seen or heard of his companion. Had Swartboy returned to the camp? If so, why had not Arend, on ascertaining what was wrong, hastened to the relief of his faithful servant? As some addition to the discomforts of the place, the pit contained many reptiles and insects that had in some manner obtained admittance, and, like himself, could not escape. There were toads, frogs,

large ants called “soldiers,” and other creatures whose company he had no relish to keep.

In vain he called, “Swartboy!” and “Baas Arend!” No one came to his call. The strong, vindictive spirit of his race was soon roused to the pitch of fury, and liberty became only desired for one object. That was revenge,—revenge on the man who, instead of releasing him from his imprisonment, only exulted in its continuance.

The Bushman had not been injured in falling into the pit, as may be supposed. After fully comprehending the manner in which his amusement had been so suddenly brought to a termination, his first thought was to extricate himself, without asking assistance from the man who had furnished him with the fun. His pride would be greatly mortified should the Kaffir get out of his pit, and find him in the other. That would be a humiliating rencontre.

In silence, therefore, he listened to Congo’s cries for assistance, while at the same time doing all in his power to extricate himself. He tried to pull up a sharp-pointed stake that stood in the bottom of the pit. This piece of timber had been placed there for the purpose of impaling and killing the hippopotamus or elephant that should drop down upon it; and had the Bushman succeeded in taking it from the place where it had been planted, he might have used it in working his own way to the surface of the earth. This object, however, he was unable to accomplish, and his mind became diverted to another idea.

Swartboy had a system of logic, not wholly peculiar to himself, by which he was enabled to discover that there must be some first cause for his being in a place from which

he could not escape. That cause was no other than Congo. Had the Kaffir not fallen into a pit, Swartboy was quite certain that he would have escaped the similar calamity.

He would have liberated Congo from his confinement, and perhaps sympathised with his misfortune, after the first ebullitions of his mirth had been exhausted; but now, on being entrapped himself, he was only conscious that some one was to blame for the disagreeable incident, and was unable to admit that this some one was himself. The mishap had befallen him in company with the Kaffir. It was that individual's misfortune that had conducted to his own, and this was another reason why he now submitted to his captivity in profound silence.

Unlike Congo, he did not experience the soul-harrowing thought of being neglected, and could therefore endure his confinement with some degree of patience not possible to his companion. Moreover, he had the hope of speedy deliverance, which to Congo was denied.

He knew that Arend would soon return to the camp with the stray horse, and miss them. The water-vessel would also be missed, and a search would be made for it in the right direction. No doubt Arend, seeing that the bucket was taken away from the camp, and finding that they did not return, would come toward the drift,—the only place where water could be dipped up. In doing so he must pass within sight of the pits. With this calculation, therefore, Swartboy could reconcile himself to patience and silence, whereas the Kaffir had no such consolatory data to reflect upon.

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# Chapter Four.

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### In the Pits.

As time passed on, however, and Swartboy saw that the sun was descending, and that the shades of night would soon be gathering over the river, his hopes began to sink within him. He could not understand why the young hunter had not long ago come to release them. Groot Willem, Hendrik, and Hans should have returned by that time; and the four should have made an effectual search for their missing servants. He had remained silent for a long time, under very peculiar circumstances. But silence now became unbearable, and he was seized with a sudden desire to express his dissatisfaction at the manner Fate had been dealing out events,—a desire no longer to be resisted. The silence was at last broken by his calling out—

“Congo, you ole fool, where are you? What for don’t you go home?”

On the Kaffir’s ear the voice fell dull and distant; and yet he immediately understood whence it came. Like himself, the Bushman was in a living grave! That explained his neglect to render the long-desired assistance.

“Lor’, Swart! why I waiting for you,” answered Congo, for the first time since his imprisonment attempting a smile; “I don’t want to go to the camp and leave you behind me.”

“You think a big sight too much of yourself,” rejoined the Bushman. “Who wants to be near such a black ole fool as you? You may go back to the camp, and when you get there

jus' tell Baas Hendrik that Swartboy wants to see him. I've got something particular to tell him."

"Very well," answered the Kaffir, becoming more reconciled to his position; "what for you want see Baas Hendrik? I'll tell him what you want without making him come here. What shall I say?"

In answer to this question, Swartboy made a long speech, in which the Kaffir was requested to report himself as a fool for having fallen into a pit,—that he had shown himself more stupid than the sea-cows, that had apparently shunned the trap for years.

On being requested to explain how one was more stupid than the other,—both having met with the same mischance,—Swartboy went on to prove that his misfortune was wholly owing to the fault of Congo, by the Kaffir having committed the first folly of allowing himself to be entrapped.

Nothing, to the Bushman's mind, could be more clear than that Congo's stupidity in falling into the first pit had led to his own downfall into the second.

This was now a source of much consolation to him, and the verbal expression of his wrongs enabled him for a while to feel rather happy at the fine opportunity afforded for reviling his rival. The amusement, however, could not prevent his thoughts from returning to the positive facts that he was imprisoned; that in place of passing the day in cooking and eating *duyker*, he had been fasting and fretting in a dark, dirty pit, in the companionship of loathsome reptiles.

His mind now expanding under the exercise of a startled imagination, he became apprehensive. What if some

accident should have occurred to Arend, and prevented his return to the camp? What if Groot Willem and the others should have strayed, and not find their way back to the place for two or three days? He had heard of such events happening to other stupid white men, and why not to them? What if they had met a tribe of the savage inhabitants of the country, and been killed or taken prisoners?

These conjectures, and a thousand others, flitted through the brain of the Bushman, all guiding to the conclusion that, should either of them prove correct, he would first have to eat the reptiles in the pit, and then starve.

It was no consolation to him to think that his rival in the other pit would have to submit to a similar fate.

His unpleasant reveries were interrupted by a short, angry bark; and, looking up to the opening through which he had descended, he beheld the countenance of a wild dog,—the “wilde honden” of the Dutch Boers.

Uttering another and a different cry, the animal started back; and from the sounds now heard overhead, the Bushman was certain that it was accompanied by many others of its kind.

An instinctive fear of man led them to retreat for a short distance; but they soon found out that “the wicked flee when no man pursueth,” and they returned.

They were hungry, and had the sense to know that the enemy they had discovered was, for some reason, unable to molest them.

Approaching nearer, and more near, they again gathered around the pits, and saw that food was waiting for them at the bottom of both. They could contemplate their victims

unharméd, and this made them courageous enough to think of an attack. The human voice and the gaze of human eyes had lost their power, and the pack of wild hounds, counting several score, began to think of taking some steps towards satisfying their hunger.

They commenced scratching and tearing away the covering of the pits, sending down a shower of dust, sand, and grass that nearly suffocated the two men imprisoned beneath.

The poles supporting the screen of earth were rotten with age, and the whole scaffolding threatened to come down as the wild dogs scampered over it.

“If there should be a shower of dogs,” thought Swartboy, “I hope that fool Congo will have his share of it.”

This hope was immediately realised, for the next instant he heard the howling of one of the animals evidently down in the adjoining pit. It had fallen through, but, fortunately for Congo, not without injuring itself in a way that he had but narrowly escaped. The dog had got transfixed on the sharp-pointed stake, planted firmly in the centre of the pit, and was now hanging on it in horrible agony, unable to get clear.

Without lying down in the mud, the Kaffir was unable to keep his face more than twelve inches from the open jaws of the dog, that in its struggles spun round as on a pivot; and Congo had to press close against the side of the pit, to keep out of the reach of the creature yelping in his ears.

Swartboy could distinguish the utterances of this dog from those of its companions above, and the interpretation he gave to them was, that a fierce combat was taking place between it and the Kaffir.



The jealousy and petty ill-will so often exhibited by the Bushman was not so strong as he had himself believed. His intense anxiety to know which was getting the best of the fight, added to the fear that Congo was being torn to pieces, told him that his friendship for the Kaffir far outweighed the animosity he fancied himself to have felt.

The fiendish yells of the dogs, the unpleasant situation in which he was placed, and the uncertainty of the time he was to endure it, were well-nigh driving him distracted; when just then the wild honden appeared to be beating a retreat,—the only one remaining being that in the pit with Congo. What was driving them away? Could assistance be at hand?

Breathlessly the Bushman stood listening.

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### **Arend Lost.**

In the afternoon, when Groot Willem, Hans, and Hendrik returned to the camp, they found it deserted.

Several jackals reluctantly skulked off as they drew near and on riding up to the spot from which those creatures had retired, they saw the clean-picked bones of an antelope. The camp must have been deserted for several hours.

“What does this mean?” exclaimed Groot Willem. “What has become of Arend?”

“I don’t know,” answered Hendrik. “It is strange Swart and Cong are not here to tell us.”

Something unusual had certainly happened; yet, as each glanced anxiously around the place, there appeared nothing to explain the mystery.

“What shall we do?” asked Willem, in a tone that expressed much concern.

“Wait,” answered Hans; “we can do nothing more.”

Two or three objects were at this moment observed which fixed their attention. They were out on the plain, nearly a mile off. They appeared to be horses,—their own pack animals,—and Hendrik and Groot Willem started off towards them to drive them back to the camp.

They were absent nearly an hour before they succeeded in turning the horses and driving them towards the camp. As they passed near the drift on their return, they rode towards the river to water the animals they were riding.

On approaching the bank, several native dogs, that had been yelling in a clump, were seen to scatter and retreat across the plain. The horsemen thought little of this, but rode on into the river, and permitted their horses to drink.

While quietly seated in their saddles, Hendrik fancied he heard some strange sounds. “Listen!” said he. “I hear something queer. What is it?”

“One of the honden,” answered Willem.

“Where?”

This question neither for a moment could answer, until Groot Willem observed one of the pits from the edge of which the dogs appeared to have retreated.

“Yonder’s a pit-trap!” he exclaimed, “and I believe there’s a dog has got into it. Well, I shall give it a shot, and put the creature out of its misery.”

“Do so,” replied Hendrik. “I hate the creatures as much as any other noxious vermin, but it would be cruel to let one starve to death in that way. Kill it.”

Willem rode up to the pit and dismounted. Neither of them, as yet, spoke loud enough to be heard in the pits, and the two men down below were at this time silent, the dog alone continuing its cries of agony.

The only thing Willem saw on gazing down the hole was the wild hound still hanging on the stake; and taking aim at one of its eyes he fired.

The last spark of life was knocked out of the suffering animal; but the report of the great gun was instantly followed by two yells more hideous than were ever uttered by “wild honden.”

They were the screams of two frightened Africans,—each frightened to think that the next bullet would be for him.

“Arend!” exclaimed Willem, anxious about his brother, and thinking only of him. “Arend! is it you?”

“No, Baas Willem,” answered the Kaffir. “It is Congo.”

Through the opening, Willem reached down the butt-end of his long roer, while firmly clasping it by the barrel.

The Kaffir took hold with both hands, and, by the strong arms of Groot Willem, was instantly extricated from his subterranean prison.

Swartboy was next hauled out, and the two mud-bedaubed individuals stood gazing at one another, each highly delighted at the rueful appearance presented by his rival.

Slowly the fire of anger, that seemed to have all the while been burning in the Kaffir’s eyes, became

extinguished, and broad smile broke like the light of day over his stoical countenance.

He had been released at length, and was now convinced that no one was to blame for his protracted imprisonment.

Swartboy had been punished for his ill-timed mirth, and Congo was willing to forget and forgive.

“But where is Arend?” asked Willem, who could not forget, even while amused by the ludicrous aspect of the two Africans, that his brother was missing.

“Don’t know, Baas Willem,” answered Congo. “I been long time here.”

“But when did you see him last?” inquired Hendrik.

Congo was unable to tell, for he seemed under the impression that he had been several days in the bosom of the earth.

From Swartboy they learnt that soon after their own departure Arend had started in pursuit of one of the horses seen straying over the plain. That was the last Swart had seen of him.

The sun was now low down, and, without wasting time in idle speech, Hendrik and Groot Willem again mounted their horses, and rode off towards the place where Arend was last seen.

They reached the edge of the timber nearly a mile from the camp, and then, not knowing which way to turn, or what else to do, Willem fired a shot.

The loud crack of the roer seemed to echo far-away through the forest, and anxiously they listened for some response to the sound. It came, but not in the report of a rifle, or in the voice of the missing man, but in the language

of the forest denizens. The screaming of vultures, the chattering of baboons, and the roaring of lions were the responses which the signal received.

“What shall we do, Willem?” asked Hendrik.

“Go back to the halting-place and bring Congo and Spoor’em,” answered Willem, as he turned towards the camp, and rode off, followed by his cousin.

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## **Chapter Six.**

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### **Spoor’em.**

The last ray of daylight had fled from the valley of the Limpopo, when Willem and Hendrik, provided with a torch and accompanied by the Kaffir and the dog Spoor’em, again set forth to seek for their lost companion.

The animal answering to the name Spoor’em was a large Spanish bloodhound, now led forth to perform the first duty required of him in the expedition.

The dog, when quite young, had been brought from one of the Portuguese settlements at the north,—purchased by Groot Willem and christened Spoor’em by Congo.

In the long journey from Graaf Reinet, this brute had been the cause of more trouble than all the other dogs of the pack. It had shown a strong disinclination to endure hunger, thirst, or the fatigues of the journey; and had often exhibited a desire to leave its new masters.

Spoor’em was now led out, in hopes that he would do some service to compensate for the trouble he had caused.

Taking a course along the edge of the forest, that would bring them across the track made by Arend in reaching the place where the horse had strayed, the spoor of Arend's horse as well as the other's was discovered.

The tracks of both were followed into the forest, along well-beaten path, evidently made by buffaloes and other animals passing to and from the river. This path was hedged in by a thick thorny scrub, which being impenetrable rendered it unnecessary for some time to avail themselves of the instincts of the hound. Congo led the way.

"Are you sure that the two horses have passed along here?" asked Willem, addressing himself to the Kaffir.

"Yaas, Baas Willem," answered Congo. "Sure dey both go here."

Willem, turning to Hendrik, added, "I wish Arend had let the horse go to the deuce. It was not worth following into a place like this."

After continuing through the thicket for nearly half a mile, they reached a stretch of open ground, where there was no longer a beaten trail, but tracks diverging in several directions. The hoof-marks of Arend's horse were again found, and the bloodhound was unleashed and set upon them.

Unlike most hounds, Spoor'em did not dash onward, leaving his followers far behind. He appeared to think that it would be for the mutual advantage of himself and his masters that they should remain near each other. The latter, therefore, had no difficulty in keeping up with the dog.

Believing that they should soon learn something of the fate of their lost companion, they proceeded onward, with