

Father would flay me alive if he caught me fobbing my chores onto our domestics. It would sure come in handy though. I had no intention of going to live in a land that hacks people's heads off with giant weighted triangle razor blades or of living 'Down South' where the Afrikaners still swore revenge against the 'Rooinekke' after losing the Boer war.

I started this war of attrition slowly, achieving sixth from bottom of the class and a result of 29% in my first end of term exam. Beatings were restricted to two cuts of the cane three times a week. I definitely needed to put in some extra effort to enter the bottom five.

I improved my tactics by looking out the window while the mad cow screeched Afrikaans at the front of the class. Six months later I managed fifth from bottom, with 21%.

Meanwhile I took to wearing extra underpants and also allowed my delighted Father to have my hair sheared till not even a koeksister (a sickly sweet delicacy designed to give Afrikaner women large behinds, judging from Mrs. Smuts), would have stuck to it. That would eliminate one of her favourite hair pulling tortures.

Not to be outdone, the Marquis de Sade's Boer counterpart switched tactics too. Beatings were increased to every lesson. I was no longer asked if I had learnt my woordeskate, I simply presented myself and complied with the only word that she had managed to beat into me: the word buig (which means bend)!

'Buig! Buig! Buig!' the mal (mad) thing would scream, then she let rip with the cane. And now, as an added treat, she twisted my ear every time she passed my table and saw me gazing at a blank piece of paper.

I fought back hard. I filled my exercise book with alien emblems, and scattered here and there a few real Afrikaner words I had somehow retained, like pen, which meant pen, or bobbejaan, which meant Mrs Smuts in her hairy wool skirt and jumper. Even she was f*cking shell-shocked when I finally cracked it. Bottom of the class, with 8%! A triumph of gentle mind over violent body.

That was the sign of her uselessness. I was only 10% lower than the class average of 18% and it was then that her crazed mind snapped. When the results came out, she decided on revenge. She couldn't beat me to death in front of the class on my own, so she thought up a very ingenious way to murder me.

"I have decided to call each one of you out to the front of the class in order of your exam results. Each boy's mistakes will be read out, and for every mistake you made you will receive one cut with my cane."

At that point an image leapt into my brain: one of her sporting a small black toothbrush moustache instead of the thin grey one she had cultivated above her sneering mouth. For a few seconds the Afrikaans class became the maths room. I wasn't that good at maths, but I soon added up my total, and I wasn't sure if I could survive 92 cuts.

This was it! The end was nigh. Would they take my dismembered corpse and parade it around on the end of a teacher's cane like pieces of drying biltong down Oom Paul Kruger Street in Bloemfontein to the chorus of 'We are marching to Pretoria'?

She started with her favourites, giving them a light smack on the arse. Full of bullshit this bit, but by the time she had reached those with less than 60% she was in full flow. Norman, my mate, and a big bloke, was wilting after 13 cuts. Then she went on to Johnson, a tough, wiry, farmer's kid. He was a school border and had won the under 14s arm-wrestling competition. At 20 lashes he was crying; she stopped at 26 lashes, when the bell went.

"I'll deal with jou liefde tomorrow," the red-faced, sweating cow hissed at me as I filed out with the rest of my physically and mentally tortured classmates. I wasn't sure what she meant, but I had the feeling there was scant love towards me.

Being of logical nature, I knew it wouldn't actually beat me the next day. There was still half the class to abuse, and even if she speeded up the beatings to 30 a minute she wasn't going to fit me in. Just as a precaution, I wore three pairs of underpants the next day. Afriks was first on the class agenda; if my time had really come, at least I would be shot at dawn under a glorious fresh morning Rhodesian sky, my last breath filling my nostrils with her perspiring odour.

I decided I would refuse to be blindfolded, and I would have my last cigarette. Forget the fact I didn't smoke. Stiff upper lip and squeezed buttocks. Don't fart. Remember the school was named after the leader of the brave pioneer members of the slaughtered Shangani Patrol. They were 'Men of Men'; we were 'Men of Men', and we had the remaining bits of them after the massacre in glass cabinets to prove it!

Actually, I was full of shit, and was about to have it beaten out of me. Sure beats laxative.

What followed was a total anti-climax!

Mrs Smuts stood meekly at the front of class and, as we took our places, and told us to open our textbooks. I wasn't even sure I had one!

"What's going on here?" I thought. "Have I been reprieved?"

Thoughts of switching from a phoney Jew to a phoney Christian entered my head.

Apparently the deranged woman had gone too far in her attempt to kill me. Not even Bruce Lee could systematically beat up half of our class without eventually meeting some serious resistance.

It was the borders that told us day boys what had happened. Johnson was too proud to say anything. It turned out he had phoned his folks at the end of lessons the previous day. In doing this, he broke the golden unspoken rule. 'You don't go crying to Mummy and Daddy', but this time he had the backing of the other boys.

His folks didn't mess around; they drove over 200 kilometres to the school, and threatened the Headmaster with a law suit if that lunatic Boer woman's head wasn't served on a plate and given to a pack of Rhodesian ridgebacks to eat.

Rhodesian Memories

from Many Contributors

Some nosy borders, with nothing else to do but hang around the Head's office, eavesdropping, reported that the meeting later between the head and Ouma Smuts must have been a really dramatic session and as she stormed out the Head's office an angry voice followed her,

“Touch another pupil again, Mrs. Smuts, I will fire you.”

And she knew he meant it.

Game over.

I won! With a little help from my friends.

One day, Johnson, I'll find you and buy you a beer.

REMEMBER by Sylvia Lee

The country we knew is finished
And how we all regret
The loss of our land by the flick of a hand
For the new route now is set
We had our share of the fighting
There were many we knew who died
But our troops had fame and they knew the name
Would be carried on with pride
We never lost sight of our reason
There was always the courage and will
To live day by day, keeping terrorists at bay
On the river, the plain and the hill
But we knew we couldn't continue
Suspected the end must be near
We wondered and guessed, talked with much jest
But the voices were all tinged with fear
The men were called up for elections
They came in, young and old
The results came out and beyond all doubt
We knew we had been sold
In the end, the death of an era
The new way had made it's start
They can change the names, play political games
But **RHODESIA** lives on in the heart.

AN INTRODUCTORY VOCABULARY IN ZIMLISH

(Being the beginning of Simbabwean and the end of English)

AGENNEST	: Against, as in aggenest the wall
ARIAS	: Regions or districts as in ebon arias (see ebon)
BED	: A feathered flying animal
BUCK	: Noise of a dog: or as in "Buck to the Future" with Michael James Fox
BUTTER	: To Bargain, to trade in commodities
CUT	: A small donkey-drawn vehicle of Scottish Origin
CUM	: Peaceful, untroubled - all is cum in the roo-rull arias
DENSE	: To move rhythmically to music
DOE	: A hinged device, often wooden, for closing a hole in the wall
EBON	: Pertaining to built-up arias, not roo-rull
EHTYL	: Earth will, as in this ethyl grow plenty millies
EWER PEONS	: People of light complexion
FEATHER	: A greater distance, as in "Swedden is feather noth than Spen"
FLOW	: A base, an aria for densing, hence a dense flow (see dense)
FOCUS	: A prediction, as in the "Weather Focus"
GET	: A Hinged device for closing a hole in a fence or a hatch
GADDING	: A place of flowers, lawns, bushes
HED	: Having Heard
HEST	: Impulsively, without due thought as in "Merry in hest"
ITCH	: Every, separately, as in "to itch his own"
JOCK	: A jest or funny story
KENNEL	: A high ranking army officer
KIPPER	: A warden or custodian, as in house-kipper
KETTLE	: A bull, cow or ox in the mess (see mess)
LO	: Legislation, rules of Govmint, as in "Police kip Lo and odour"
LOAD	: British Nobleman, as in Load Herring Tonne, Forrin Seki Tee
MERRY	: To join in matrimony
MICK	: Humble, as in "the mick shall inherit the eth"
MESS	: With quantity, e.g. in the mess..... more than ten of
MESSES	: All those who dont pay income tax as in the toiling messes
A NAARTJIE	: A state of chaos when lo and odour breaks down
ODOUR	: The proper state of things - the police will kip odour, also commend or instruction - the Kennel gave me an odour
PARROT	: Free booter or Buccaneer - unlawful as in Parrot Taxi

Rhodesian Memories

from Many Contributors

PENTING	: Applying oils to canvas, redecorating a house as in “Merry in hest, repent at lescha” “Have quickie wedding and you can pent the kia later”
PHLEGM	: Fire - the burning tip of kandle
PISS	: State of Lo and odour
PLESS	: Place
QUINS	: Two or more, female monarchs
RIP	: To harvest a crop
STACK	: Wholly, or completely stack nekkid in PlayboysCentrefold
SEKI TREE	: A stenographer - a girl who types
SHIT	: As in “A shit of pepper”
SIMBABWE	: Yes tiddy the Simbabwe ruins were just a little aria near Fot Victoria, but under Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe we are expanding the ruins to cover the hol country
STUV	: To Starve
SUTTON	: Definite - sure, as in: “I am sutton that you cannot tek money”
SO THEN	: Pertaining to the South
TEX	: As in “tex keb”
TOCK	: To communicate by speech
VEST	: Knowledgeable: learned as “well vest in the ut of penting”
WASH	: Device for telling the time, often worn on the wrist
WED	: An item of vocabulary, as in “My wed, the kennel is kipping lo and odour in the ebon arias very well seence a few extry mists lent their lesson”
WELD	: Our Planet, the eth
WHIP	: To Cry
YES TIDDY	: The day before today

Extract from KK dictionary 1953

DYNAMITE, n.—makina **K.K.** ‘**dammit**’. Very useful when the bait has been forgotten. “Get out of the well. I have just set the dynamite.” “Puma lapa mugodi. Mena fagili dammit, dammit!”

Drifting by Mike Beresford

Let the wind blow my thoughts where it will,
Let them drift on the clouds in the sky.
Let me close my eyes and find calm in this world,
Serene as a river that quietly flows by.
Bring back to good times, the joy and the laughter,
When we sang for no reason but singing,
When tomorrow was just a new day coming after'
The good day in which we were living.
Give me the mountains I climbed in the sun,
And the rivers I rambled through forested glades,
The strength that was mine at the time I was young,
When promises given were promises made.
Let me sail once again on Kariba's blue waters,
With the honk of the hippo and fish eagle calls.
Let God find a place for His sons and his daughters,
Where they will find peace when the cloak of night falls.
Give me time with a loved one with whom I can share,
All hopes and the depths of my dreams.
And we shed our concerns with the ghost of despair
And discover what life really means.
I welcome my memories of those good times past,
For they tell me that life's not a lie,
That I'm here for a reason and as long as I last,
There's a promise as great as the African sky.

RHODESIAN SCHOOLDAYS

Umpteen years ago, before such things as television, CD players, computers and microwave ovens, two eleven year old girls, Denise and Lynda, shared a desk at school.

Denise had coppery brown hair that rested on her shoulders and eyes like melted chocolate. Freckles dusted her pixie nose, one front tooth crossed over the other. Denise's best friend was Lynda.

Lynda was awfully pretty. Her long, almost white hair was pushed back from her forehead by an Alice band, showing off her dazzling blue eyes. Everyday she wore a different Alice band and everyday she chose a different best friend. Lynda had an air about her, as if she knew something of colossal importance. She kept fascinating

things, like baby mice or white rats, spinning silkworms or chameleons. Sometimes she'd sell them, using the money to buy a one shilling sized tin of condensed milk from the tuck shop. Whoever had been chosen as best friend that particular day would be allowed to have a suck of sticky, sweet liquid.

It was on a very boring day during school holidays, that Lynda arrived at Denise's house. She had been on her way to town that morning she said, and had passed the market place. (People gathered here to trade goats, chickens, ground nuts, and witchdoctor remedies.) A man was leading a donkey by a piece of rope.

"Are you selling that donkey?" Lynda had asked.

"Do you want to buy this donkey?" he replied.

"Depends how much you want"

"How much will you give me?"

"How much do you want?"

"Fifty dollars"

"No way!"

"Well how much have you got?"

It went like this for some time until they agreed on a price of ten dollars.

"I'll be back tomorrow with the money." she assured him.

"So you see, if give me five dollars, I'll let you ride my donkey whenever you want," Lynda offered generously.

Denise had dreamt of owning a horse ever since she saw the film *Black Beauty*. Her mom had laughed at her when she said she'd like one for her birthday.

"Not in a million years could we afford it."

Gosh! Denise could just picture her moms surprise when she arrived home from work to find a donkey in the back yard. She saw herself galloping down the road on her beautiful grey donkey, hair billowing out behind her, laughing with happiness. At night she would curl up against his soft white belly, while God kept watch from behind the stars.

She was truly honoured that Lynda had invited her, of all people, to be a part of this wonderful plan. Not wanting to seem ungrateful or anything and feeling somewhat nervous at losing Lynda's friendship, she took a deep breath, counted to five and blurted out,

"If I pay half, then half of him must belong to me."

"Don't be stupid! We can't cut him in half."

"What I mean is, I own him one week and you own him the next."

"Well... alright, but I get first week and I choose his name!"

Now that it was all settled, it occurred to Denise that she didn't actually have five dollars.

"I know what we'll do. We'll sell our old clothes." Lynda said.

"Who would buy old clothes?"

“Nannies dummy! Nannies buy second hand stuff because they don’t earn much money.”

Denise rummaged through her wardrobe excitedly, throwing out things that did not fit her any more. She couldn’t see how the small pile would fetch five dollars. Holding up her best dress she asked herself, “yes?.. no?” Her mom had made it, spending hours embroidering bright red cherries on the pockets. Right before her very eyes, the dress turned into a beautiful donkey. Mom will be mad but it’ll get lots of money she argued with herself. Perhaps enough to buy two donkeys! Onto the pile it went, along with the striped jersey her grandmother had knitted. Stuffing the heap of clothes into her dad’s big leather suitcase, she sat on it, lay on it, jumped up and down on it, before it would close and then, because it was so heavy, she had to drag it all the way to Lyn’s house. The lid kept bursting open, scattering the colourful garments across the tar. A few times she thought of giving up, but that donkey just kept appearing right in front of her. At last, there was Lynda, waiting at the gate.

They went into the lane behind the row of big houses. It was lunch time. Servants sat outside their quarters dipping thick crusts of white bread into steaming mugs of sweet tea. ‘Off’ time was precious, they were annoyed at being disturbed. “Humba” they shouted. From one house to the next it was the same. Lynda could not understand it.

“Why don’t you want to buy these clothes? They are good quality. Look. No holes.”

“Aiee! You two! You are trouble. Your mothers will come here and blame us. Go now!”

“I know who will buy these clothes Den. People from out of town. Let’s go to the bus rank”

Between the two of them they lugged the suitcase all the way to town. There was a lot of activity at the rank, people everywhere, some coming, others going. One bus had so much stuff tied to the roof that it looked as though it may topple over.

“We are selling old clothes.” Lynda shouted.

A woman offered to take the clothes and come back with the money next week, but they could not wait that long. People rummaged through the case dumping clothes on the ground, but none of them had money. A man, who had been leaning against a tree watching, came towards them. He wore a black and white checked jacket, the brim of his hat rested on a pair of huge round pink rimmed sunglasses. Denise couldn’t take her eyes off his feet. They were shaped like a ducks, the toes spread out wide - six toes on each foot. He handed Lynda a ten dollar note, shoved everything back into the case, put a distorted foot on the lid, snapped the locks and stepped onto the bus.

“You can’t have the suitcase it’s my dad’s!!” Denise cried as he disappeared.

“You know Den, everything in town is more expensive. If we go into the bush we will get a donkey for one dollar.”

“Where can we buy a donkey?” she asked a very fat mango seller. As if to advertise how juicy her mangoes were, she sat on her haunches sucking at the stringy flesh. Bright yellow juice ran down her chin, along her arm, dripping off her elbow into the golden sand beside the enamel dish of merchandise.

Wiping her lips and nose with the back of her hand, she lifted her shoulders in reply.

“Where is the place with munigy donkies?”

“The location near industrial.”

Her eyebrows moved in the direction of Bulawayo.

Lynda knew exactly how to get there, she had past it with her dad on the way to Loretta Mission she remembered.

“Do you think we should ride there on our bikes?” Denise suggested.

“Ah dumb!” Lynda said, pulling a face. “How will we get the donkey home?”

“Well who is going to ride the donkey home?” asked Denise.

“Me! Of course!”

“That’s not fair.”

“Well the donkey was my idea after all.”

“Well then I am going to take my bike.”

“You can’t.”

“Why not?”

“I’m not going to walk all the way there while you ride your bike!”

“But I have to walk while you ride our donkey.”

“MY donkey not OUR donkey.”

“Give me back my money then!” Denise folded her arms across her chest.

“Fine! I will.”

“Right now!”

Suddenly Lynda had a bright idea. “I know! Let’s both walk and then we can take turns riding him home.”

“Promise Lyn?”

“Promise.”

It took forever to get to the outskirts of town and the dirt road that would lead them to the location. The tar bubbles had slowed them down (the heat caused the tar to blister). Hoppity hop, pop, pop. You had jump as hard as you could if you wanted a really good explosion. Their shoes were splattered with sticky black goo.

There were no houses now, only thorny bushes adorned with spider webs. Long brown pods dangled from the monkey bread trees and snake apple vines crept through the undergrowth. (Not to be confused with monkey apple trees) A shimmering haze rose off the surface in front of them. Denise’s older brother called it a mirage. They screwed their eyes up against the harsh glare of the sun and the sweat that dripped from their foreheads. Dry dusty mouths, a reminder of the forgotten water bottle.

Dung beetles and blue headed lizards were of no interest today. The shrill song of crickets went unheard.

A large Camel Thorn cast dark pools of shade across the road. This was a good place to rest. Playing noughts and crosses in the sand, a flash of colour captured their attention. Snake! Longer than Denise's dad's station-wagon, yellowish brown in colour. For a moment all they could do was stare, paralysed.

"Cobra?!" Denise hissed.

"Python?!" Lynda hissed back.

"PYTHON!!!" They screamed in unison, clinging to each other.

"RUN! RUN!!

Denise expected to be swallowed whole, like Jonah and the whale. She could feel the snake's breath on her neck, ready to pounce.

She couldn't run any further. She would just have to spend the rest of her life in darkness – living in a stomach. Clutching at the stitch in her side, she screamed at Lynda to stop. The two girls glanced back fearfully. There was nothing. No snake. It had disappeared into the bushes. They got the giggles. Giggles turned to hysterical laughter. They laughed so much that tears ran down their dusty cheeks, leaving long white streaks, and they had to cross their legs so as not to wet their brooks.

At last, the village. No one seemed to notice them standing at the entrance. The air smelt the way clothes smell when you have been standing too long next to a fire. The huts were all the same. Round, red, mud huts with straw roofs. As far as Denise could tell, the only way to know which your hut was would be by the colour of the cloth hanging over the doorway. Chubby little piccinins' with naked bottoms, protruding belly buttons and snot covered lips played happily without toys. Nannies stirred large black cooking pots with long wooden spoons. Scrawny dogs lay about looking dead, while chickens pecked at the ground around their heads. Next to a stone well in the centre of the village, a group of men were gambling with bottle tops. There were donkeys! Lots of them! Black ones, grey ones, brown ones.

Denise felt as though she were in the flicks. One of those flicks where people get into a strange machine and land up in a foreign country. Lynda walked up to the men.

"I am looking for the man who owns these donkeys."

It sounded rude. Denise wished Lynda would be more polite.

"These donkeys belong to lots of people" one of the men replied without looking at her.

"Well I want to buy one."

The man said something in his own language, causing the others to snort.

"Have you got money?" he asked.

"Yes." said Lynda.

"OK. Take this one. Only five hundred dollars."

"FIVE HUNDRED! You penga!"

She flicked at her temple with an index finger, "I can get one in town for ten."

Rhodesian Memories

from Many Contributors

“Do you have ten dollars?”

“Yes.”

“Give me ten dollars now. I keep this one for you till you bring the rest of the money.”

“Eikona! A man in town is selling donkeys for only ten dollars”

“Then why are you here?”

“I am looking for him.”

“Do you see him?”

“No.”

“Tsk tsk, no one will sell a donkey for ten dollars.”

“Come on Lyn, let’s go!” Denise begged, feeling terribly ashamed.

She could see Lynda was not about to give up the fight. People had started to gather around them. She was afraid.

“I am going. With or without you,” she warned, forcing herself to walk away slowly even though her feet wanted to run.

Suddenly Lynda was beside her.

“Five hundred! I can’t believe it. He is a crook.”

“If you think how much horses cost, ten is really very cheap for a donkey.”

“Nonsense. They get the donkeys out the bush for free. We look like rich kids. That’s why he wants to charge us so much. We’ll come back tomorrow wearing our old clothes. What’s a bet we’ll get one for ten dollars”

“We don’t have any old clothes Lyn. We sold them all”

