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Dina's story: a visual intervention in fathoming history

Donna Corns

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Donna Corns

September 2015

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Any errors are my own.

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PREFACE: A map of the journey

I decided to submit a full length historical feature film script as a work of creative non-fiction to revivify a story (imprisoned in a case in a now defunct language) through visual media to make it speak to the present.

The primary sources from which this story is derived are transcripts of VOC (Dutch East India Company) records from the criminal court of the Council of Justice in the eighteenth century Cape, particularly those trials connected to a certain Dina, an enslaved woman who escaped to join a band of runaways.

I recognised the dramatic potential in the testimonies and made it my project to give voice to that which might not otherwise be heard. I would visually narrativise the archive, and make a marginal figure, Dina, the centre of my story.

Though historical feature film is considered a genre of fiction and the history documentary is viewed as ‘non-fiction,’ the categorisation itself rests on a false dichotomy (Davis, 2000:5). Not only do all documentaries contain fictive elements to construct their argument about the past, but feature films can in their own capacity offer “cogent observations on historical events, relations and processes” (5). Each of these (reconstructions or interpretations of the past) enter into a contract with the viewer with varying levels of reflexivity. While documentary often allows one to imagine oneself outside of the story – the place where interpretation, critique and analysis happen, fiction immerses one in the story. But what if it were possible to wake up inside the story? Because, we are still in it, and it hasn’t ended.

Do narrative and analysis still need to be regarded as competitive modalities?

My project employs historical research methods of reading the archive *across the grain* and *along the grain* (Stoler, 2009), whereby a negative sketch of the past emerges. In deference to Toni Morrison (1998), I rework these findings by way of injecting imaginative empathy back into the cracks of the past, restoring something of what was lost in the many layers of linguistic transactions, translations and erasures. The archive treated this way, is more than data. It becomes humanised, relevant.

Documentary film still tends to appeal to a more specialised viewership, whereas feature films attract a mixed audience. I intend to do with my feature what a good documentary does – to offer a critical and reflexive interpretation of the subject matter. One that is an intervention in how we fathom history, and are turned onto it.

Ultimately, I wanted a story that could speak to an audience beyond academia. A feature film would thus be the most powerful means of delivering impact to the broadest possible audience. And the most appropriate vehicle for the immersive, unsettling journey the contemporary viewer needs to make.

INTRODUCTION

I first encountered the archival material that would later become the groundwork for my script (tracking down, transcribing and translating the primary sources) in a study on the Hanglip runaways in 2010. Part of this was investigating possible social connections between runaway slaves and the motivations these particular slaves might have had, by subjecting their owners to a social analysis.

The study also compared the runaways to the rest of the slave population (based on origin, gender, age) via statistical analyses. It included a prosopography of the slave owners – about whom there was ample data – their marital status, number of

children, where they lived, their livelihoods, what they owned (down to the sheaves of wheat, leggers of wine and number of slaves - man, woman, boy, girl) as well as any cases against them, whom they owed debts to and whether they had a license to sell alcohol. From this data emerged a sketch of the world they were running away from. So many details survived in the electronic databases – the now defunct *Changing Hands*, initiatives such as TANAP (Toward a New Age of Partnership), TEPC (Transcription of Estate Papers at the Cape of Good Hope), inventories and census data and every time, and each piece of evidence needed to be referenced and footnoted.

One of the most compelling part of my research encounter was with the transcripts housed in the National Archives. The tactile ritual of reading from an ancient, disintegrating artifact the heavily antiquated formal register of Proto-Dutch legalese interspersed with derogatory colloquialisms, created both a distance and an uncanny proximity between myself and this other historical reality. I was reading them for a specific purpose at the time, but they seemed to have a lot more to say.

I needed to translate them into my language, but also into images that would speak to the present.

While the VOC records are a rich source of information with detailed, even graphic descriptions, certain factors need be kept in mind. The records were naturally one-sided. There was no authentic slave voice. The only way a slave entered into the records at all was through transgression. They were in effect, “criminalised by history” (Rijsdijk, 2015). The archive only records what certain “people once thought worth recording and what other people once thought worth holding onto or suppressing, forgetting or passing on” (Appiah, 2011: 99). In light of this it is thus necessary to read the records *across* the grain – by “extracting from archival traces

material that was not intended by its creators but is nonetheless evident ‘between the lines’ ...[and] outside the archive for what has been forgotten or suppressed (Worden, 2014:23).

Even when a slave was given the space to speak (or confess), this was in answer to questions the court had concerns about. But what then, about “that which did not concern the court?” (Worden 2001:91). The records were the official version of the trials “written to secure convictions” (Worden, 2014:33). This reading “*along the archival grain,*’ enables a view of “how the form and structure of the documents both reflected and shaped power structures and decision processes” (23). These methods for interpreting archival evidence enrich the material by foregrounding the gaps and undercurrents informing the record. This then leaves the space for storytelling in the visual medium, space to make the silences speak. My task was thus cut out for me – to frame Dina’s narrative as (a reflexive) struggle for ownership of the story.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perhaps the most famous novel making slavery its heart, is Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), also adapted into a film (Jonathan Demme, 1998). Morrison takes as her source material the published slave narratives, a collection of literature (including memoirs and autobiographies) in circulation in the United States since long before Abolition.

The existence of these narratives, written by slaves as accounts of (and appeals at the time to end) slavery meant that descendants of slaves and those of slave-owners had access to representations and interpretations of this past. However, even while these are first-person accounts, Morrison reminds us, they are far from neutral (1998).

In these publications, though the slave authors have the freedom to speak, they do so under various constraints. The works are thus governed by certain narrative strategies. The slave authors self-censor traumatic experiences so to appear objective and not to offend the sensibilities of readers, emotionality is downplayed in order for them to be regarded as objective accounts by rational human beings (Morrison, 1998: 187-191). In effect, “in shaping the experience to make it palatable to those who were in a position to alleviate it, they were silent about many other things” (191). Morrison’s work is a reworking of sources to find an interior to them, an interiority that was historically denied and repressed. Her project is thus an empathetic restoral, she describes as her responsibility, “to rip that veil drawn over proceedings too terrible to relate” (1998:191).

In *Playing in the Dark* (1992), Morrison relates how in the accumulated ‘master narrative,’ of literature, the canon operating within the dominant ideology, slaves (and black people in general) have been denied subjectivity and agency. They have been used as decorative props, as “surrogates or enablers” of white subjects who ‘make’ history, “appropriated for their associative value as a signal of modernity,” used as a meditation on one’s own [white] humanity” (1992:51-52). This is true of the historic representation of black people in film too. If literature taps into the spirit (or undercurrents) of the times, so must motion picture. Visual depictions impact the real world in which they are received, often changing the direction of public discussion and consensus, or reiterating it.

The overt racist portrayal of black people in *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915) had a visible impact on race relations and the film was met by large scale protests in Boston. The negative effect it had was arguably made all the more permanent when the film was deemed “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant by the

Library of Congress and selected for preservation in the National Film Registry of the United States.

Another film that easily slipped into the master narrative, *Gone with the Wind* (1939), rather romanticised slavery as part of a backdrop. 'Classics' such as these form part of the master narrative or cinematic repertoire.

Within the master narrative of Hollywood, even in features 'about slavery,' slaves are still not the protagonists. Big budget productions such as *Amistad* (1997), and later, *Lincoln* (2012), both by Steven Spielberg, might be anti-slavery in intent, but each were criticised for the way they minimised slaves' agency to focus more on the benevolence of their white supporters (being the Abolitionists in *Amistad*, and Abraham Lincoln himself in the latter). The films foreground white subjects as makers of history.

Robert A. Rosenstone (1998) talks about the need in historical film to compress and simplify both events and characters to fit into two hours. The tendency in conventional Hollywood historical features is to set historic events as an epic backdrop for a drama between individuals. These films follow a formulaic template based on Aristotelean narrative principles - linear stories incorporating conflict, resolution and closure. This kind of conventional film has its generic roots in literary Realism, a mode of representation founded on a teleological view of history. In contrast, the innovative film, or anti-Hollywood history feature applies Modernist techniques and challenges the normative assumptions underlying 'realistic' portrayals of the past. Rosenstone's distinctions are lucid, but very sharply defined.

In fact, in Terence Malick's film, *New World* (2005), the heart of which is the 'alleged' love between John Smith and Princess Pocahontas, there is compression but

also a suspension of time. The film pictures the founding of Jamestown, and though it recreates the ‘look and feel’ of the time, it is also symbolic of first contact, the myths brought over, and myths made over, and how these cross over time (Rijsdijk, 1997). Malick subverts the traditional historical film by framing history as a layered and ambiguous process rather than a series of discreet events (Rijsdijk: 2015). There is also an attempt to show the complex, conflicted characters and the various affiliations that influence their relationships.

Another film dealing with the colonial appropriation and the process of enslavement is Phillip Noyce’s *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002). Set in 1930s Australia, *Rabbit Proof Fence* speaks about the ‘stolen generation’ – mixed race children, who were forcibly separated from their families to be trained at a boarding house to become domestic servants. The film uses non-actors and very little dialogue, making liberal use of symbolic imagery, visual and verbal metaphors. Its sensitive camera work and realistic approach create an immersive intimacy. The main characters, three girls who run away are victims, but even without much dialogue, they are humanised, conflicted, they have agency. The biggest criticism of *Rabbit Proof Fence* was that it concluded with a happy ending, reuniting the girls with their families, suggesting this chapter of history resolved.

In reaction to the damage done by mainstream depictions of slavery and black culture, Julie Dash’s *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) and Hailie Gerima’s *San Kofa* stand strong as politically committed and innovative alternatives.

Daughters of the Dust (1991) is an independent film suggestive of the tensions between belonging to a kind of spiritual lineage versus the desire for individual identity. That the narrator is an unborn child links the film to *Beloved* (1998), also featuring the ghost of (this time, dead) baby. The unconventional narrator is evocative

of both the pre-existing baggage and treasures of the past inherited, a shared black experience. The film is poetic and contains magical elements citing an ecstatic truth - one that can be found in community, rather than equating 'facts' as truth. Julie Dash succeeded in making her mark, as the film was declared "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" by The Library of Congress and preserved for posterity in the National Film Registry of the United States.

In *San Kofa* (1993), Haile Gerima also uses magic to carry memory across. In this case, magic transports a contemporary American fashion model visiting Ghana back to a plantation in Georgia where she experiences an alternate life as an enslaved woman. Gerima's film is innovative by way of its circular narrative and the complexity of its characters. The film shows racial hierarchies and power dynamics perverting human connections in an unsettling way. Characters are entrapped and revealed through relationships to one another. The matriarch Nunu is pained by her mixed-race son (promoted to the status of overseer) who despises her and all of her 'kind' (darker skinned slaves). We later find out that this same son was a product of rape. The film manages to elicit a conflicted response from audiences, who in sympathy for Nunu, also want to hate her son. But how can we? Sankofa represents a metaphorical journey to claim back and own one's history, and it does not deny the losses accrued.

The year 2012 saw the release of two massively successful, award winning films with slavery as their subject. Steve McQueen's *Twelve Years a Slave* and Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (both 2012) share in common only their subject and release date. They differ from each other in every other aspect.

Twelve Years a Slave is solemn in tone, realist in style and so sensitively filmed that it is hard to watch some of the scenes of humiliation and violence. A lot of

Solomon's time in bondage he spends with the enslaved woman Patsy, who is raped by her master, and hated by his wife. The film ends happily with the free man, Solomon, who after having been tricked into slavery that lasts for twelve years, is reunited with his family. In the end he realises that in the interim (while he was away, working for his "freedom") his daughter had married and already had a child. He is now a grandfather. He had missed her growing up. Parallel to one man's restoration are the countless missed opportunities, the Patsy's perpetually left behind.

Django Unchained is intentionally implausible as an alternate history - where Django the slave becomes a bounty hunter, exacts his revenge and saves his love interest. The film, risky as a stylized, over-the-top almost upbeat comedy about slavery disrupts the quasi religious hush that has come to characterise movies about slavery.

While there were no slave narratives published in South Africa, the transcriptions of the criminal trials are as close as we can get to a slave voice (Worden, 2014).

If slavery has been cinematically rendered often in the U.S., this is not yet the case in South Africa. While historians of Cape slave history, especially Nigel Worden, Nigel Penn and Robert Shell have all worked tirelessly to bring the subject of slavery into public awareness, it not yet considered priority history. It is often treated as a phase rather than acknowledged as a process lasting over one hundred and fifty years and setting the conditions for what would become legislated segregation. South Africa, still reeling from its recent history (Apartheid and its consequences), has devoted much of the last twenty years to figuring an identity as one nation. Slavery doesn't seem to slot in with the 'national heritage' industry very comfortably. Since recent history is still a fresh wound, it is as though South Africa never had the space or time to work through prior traumas.

Slavery's peripheral status in South African historical consciousness is perhaps exactly why artists and creative writers often revisit that specific corridor of history. In an interview with the poet and scholar Gabeba Baderoon I conducted in 2013, she related that

Just as history has been foundational in ensuring that we attend to slavery at all, and give it the necessary attention it deserves, its very methodology and its concentration in a narrow audience has also limited the broader public debate on slavery and this is where the work of the imagination is really crucial.

There can however, if one knows where to look, be found a small collection of South African writings dedicated to the enslaved. These include Andre Brink's *A Chain of Voices* (1982) and *Phildia* (2012), Rayda Jacobs' *Slave Book* (1998) and *Unconfessed* (2007) by Yvette Christianse, and Dan Sleigh's *Islands* (1995). Each of these writers consult with primary sources at some point, and have something to add to our appreciation of the past, even though their form and explicit imaginative treatment mean that they belong to the realm of fiction. This has been called the 'archival turn in creative writing' (Worden, 2014).

History the discipline is distinguished from literature by its long held association with objective truth. But since the linguistic turn, there has been the tendency in Historical Studies to reflect on the textual nature of history - the processes of selection, ellision and emphases - the "linguistic transactions" the archive itself is subject to (Worden 2006:86).

One of the features of the turn in historical studies was to invert the top down process of serving history in favour of a people's history, or "a history from

below.” These new histories included a social and cultural history perspective, paying tribute to historical actors, no longer merely shaped by historical forces but who had interior lives, cultures and worlds of their own. A great example of this includes Thompson’s *The Making of an English Working Class* (1963).

Among these imaginative histories, is the micronarrative. Diverse examples include Ginzburg’s *The Cheese and the Worms* (1980), Jon Edwin Mason’s *Hendrik Albertus and his Ex-slave Mey* (1990), and *The Return of Martin Guerre* by Natalie Zemon Davis (1993).

Each of these stories take a marginal case (rather than centering on influential historical figures, the people involved are ordinary) and use the minute details supplied by the records to reveal something larger about the norms and assumptions of the time. It is one way of reading across the grain of the archive – using historical records in ways that they were not intended by the original makers or keepers of the records. This subverts and democratizes traditional historical narratives by making so-called ‘peripheral figures’ central historical actors.

While micronarratives take as their subject matter documented events from the past, their treatment both highlights the constructed nature of history and allows for an interpretation that involves the reader more than an authoritative, top down version would. And they use techniques found in fiction in order to do so.

History still has value as a practice. Perhaps it is more the general view on what constitutes history and especially how this relates to the kind of historical thinking represented on film that needs expanding. There may have been a revolution in methods within Historical Studies but this does not translate

effortlessly into the popular perception of what history really is. Perhaps the greatest problem compounding the aftermath of accumulated trauma and censorship is historical illiteracy. Historians have tried to compensate by making historical data more accessible.

Collections of translated criminal cases by historians such as Nigel Worden (2005) exist, and are available for public consumption should the public have the inclination. The resources on slavery in South Africa have since the 1990s, proliferated. Primary texts have been digitised in Robert Shell's *Diaspora to Diorama* (2013), an electronic compendium (in full colour) of sources on the subject across time and supplemented by Shell's own commentary and analyses.

Within academic discourse, slavery has been the subject of arguments about the extent to which it contributed to apartheid's implementation of racial hierarchies. Points of difference include the way slavery itself was enforced and maintained (through whip and chain, but also through more insidious cycles of dependency). Related to this, is to what degree enslaved people resisted their status as opposed to forming strategies of accommodation. Recent forays have been into the realms of identity and consciousness (Worden 2004, Jappie 2013, Young 2012) as well as heritage through written culture, religion and cuisine (Jappie 2013, Baderoon 2014). Certainly, the historiography of slavery has become more democratized. Perhaps what resistance remains comes from a South African fatigue of institutional narratives that would be found in museums.

The multiplicity of South African history makes for a trove of stories with film potential. Thus far, films on slavery in South Africa are few and not well publicised. There are only two features, - Jack Lewis' *Proteus* (2003) and John Badenhorst's

Slavery of Love (1990), and two documentaries, - *Slaveship Mutiny* (Nic Young & Joe Kennedy 2010) and *Krotoa* (Kaye Ann Williams, 2013) to my knowledge.

Proteus is an innovative feature film set on Robben Island in the 1700s. The use of deliberate anachronisms call into question the idea that the past is the past, and indeed a straight reading of history. Based on a criminal court trial of 1735, the film depicts an inter-racial homosexual relationship between a Khoi slave, Claas and Dutch convict, Rijkhart. The prison-island setting is obviously suggestive of Apartheid era incarceration practices, a sustained motif in the film. Thus by interposing a story about slaves with recent history a connection is made between slavery as a system and the system of apartheid. But another connection is that the outdated notion of sodomy as a sin comes from the era of slavery. Thus deliberately linking the struggle for gay rights to the struggle against apartheid (Worden, 2006: 88).

The film also highlights the colonial expropriation of the Khoi subverting the roles momentarily by making Claas the hero, giving him the power to name plants (and powers to withhold his story) to the botanist. These anachronisms and playing with the record are techniques to highlight the constructed nature of historical records. But as Worden, maintains, this film went much further than the trial did. The trial only wanted to establish the physical fact of their union. But what the filmmakers are asking is “whether they recognise themselves as having a same-sex identity” (93) just as the participants are asking of themselves when Rijkhart asks Claas, “What are we?”

Slavery of Love (1990) is the one other slavery-centred feature film, and made for television. Described as a look at “love across a not-yet-finalised colour line,” (Spector, J.B., 2014), it was also released at a moment of political uncertainty (before South Africa became a democracy).

The documentary, *Slaveship Mutiny* (Nic Young & Joe Kennedy 2010), is an expository documentary reconstructing the characters and events on the Meermin ship through the eyes of an historian, a heritage activist and a marine archeologist. It uses dramatisations reminiscent of a fiction film along with footage of a day in the life of the three anchors. The slaves are depicted as active agents, whose consciousness of themselves differ from that imposed on them from 'above'. Significantly, the film can be seen as an act of restoration. The leader of the mutiny, Massavana (previously marked in records as a criminal) can be regarded as he saw himself, a freedom fighter. The approach, however, is institutional in tone, and the film comes across as an illustrated (and CGI enhanced) lecture.

The made for television documentary, *Krotoa* (Kaye Ann Williams, 2013) offers different perspectives and myths on the Khoi girl, Krotoa (renamed Eva) who was 'taken into the van Riebeeck household.' Interviews with various academics narrate the different interpretations of Krotoa's role. This story also finds its way into Dan Sleigh's historical epic, *Islands*. The ambiguities in the story of Krotoa and how myth and political identity gather around her, make it interesting to view in light of Malick's Pocahontas in *The New World* (2005). In William's *Krotoa*, she is described as "the Mother of the Afrikaners," while Pocahontas is the 'mother of America' (Rijdsdijk, 2007). Both of these female historical figures come to embody conflicting historical forces, cross a threshold into the mythical and become invested with redemptive attributes. Thus Krotoa's appropriation becomes almost more interesting than the facts about her.

The slave narrative in South Africa is gathering, thickening and becoming more textured. The subject matter is widely available and film is the medium to

bring this into public consciousness and engage imaginative responses, discussions, debates, and new kinds of thinking about the past.

What my script brings

Dina the Runaway is a story centering on a marginal figure, Dina van Rio de la Goa, who through transgression insinuates herself into history. It is not only about Dina, but the people she becomes connected to (and estranged from), and the greater story about slavery and the damages inherited from history. It draws attention to its sources and the apertures in the archives by showing Dina at the trial, speaking her story – that “ended before it started”.

Dina the Runaway thus offers a characteristically South African story with themes that transcend geographical boundaries. The protagonist is a complex black woman negotiating her way through a world set up against her.

Finally, the story does not provide closure, but an uncomfortable possibility. What becomes of the child? By holding the space for imaginative engagement, it asks the audience to participate in the making of history.

ARCHIVE

Research: Against the Grain

The nature of the archive and what was deemed noteworthy, meant that the bits of evidence on Dina came from divergent sources. I remain indebted to Professor Rob Shell, who supervised my research on the Hangklip Runaways. He first mentioned Dina’s name in relation to an entry in the diary of Jan Smiesing, the self-described

Lodge Schoolmaster (and slave) (Dick, 2013:1305). I remember the glow in his eyes when he told me this, as if he had discovered a delicious scandal.

Shell made the connection that this same Dina was one of the runaways at Hangklip. Her name was among those recorded by Robert Ross in his *Cape of Torments* (1983). I followed up and inspected census records, and finally tracked down the Criminal Court trials, where this was confirmed. “Dina, belonging to the Widow Smiesing” (CJ 341. 69-71).

I checked inventories, and found it so chilling that Dina and her child (who was likely Smiesing’s) were inherited by his wife after his death. I can only imagine the tension in the house. From both sides (MOOC 8/5.69).

I kept on reading because the trials and testimonies of the runaways were so absorbing. I ended up transcribing about 90 pages, some of them loose, torn or ink-smudged from the massive leatherbound books written almost 300 years ago by an official of the Dutch East India Company.

The actual translation was a separate process I attempted afterwards with the help of a Dutch/English dictionary. I even paid to have one section of the *proces stukken* checked against my own translation. Due to the nature of this early form of Dutch, and my ‘translator’s’ poor English grammar, the ‘translated’ translation was worse than my own attempt, and I chose not to include it as an appendix to my thesis. Ironically, this turned out to be the most important document, as it contained the reference to blaming the women, Dina van Rio de la Goa and Anna van Madagascar for their husbands’ crimes, and “moreover for sexual services (CJ 341.268: 37).

Perhaps this omission was the reason it felt that my work was incomplete. The story had taken root in my mind and I let it brew for some time, but it felt like Dina’s story needed to be a film. An intriguing finding that gnawed at me was that census

records showed that when Dina escaped, she left her own child, a girl, behind. Instead she took April van Rio de la Goa, a little boy, with her. I wanted to get to the bottom of this, but there was no bottom.

The only mention of Rachel (Dina's daughter) by name is in a *requesten* submitted more than twenty years later. The entry, (written in the third person) was submitted by the Widow Anna Smiesing requesting that the slave Rachel van de Kaap only be manumitted upon the death of her mistress (Anna Smiesing herself).

Along the Grain: What were the motivations of the court officials?

Nigel Worden (2014) relates that compounding the paucity of material detailing slave experience, the trial records were structured by narrators (VOC fiscals) who “ordered events to create the impression of logic, causation and motivation” to convince their audience” (33). The slaves in the trials then acted as “involuntary storytellers.”

There must have been too, a curiosity on behalf of the court, who surely wanted to know the particulars – how was it possible to live outside of the system? Who supported these ‘rogues’? There must have been fears, such as being outnumbered. Naming the slaves, servants and others inside the system holding them up, how these alliances and networks were formed and how news travelled – almost impenetrable knowledge, must have been of particular interest to the authorities.

It is also worth noting that the convictions toward which these trials were leading were used as a gruesome fright technique and to justify the need for the ‘rule of law.’

The Record

As Worden (2014) reminds us, there is no ‘slave voice’ recorded, only traces of slaves and even then not by them but rather of them. Enslaved people were denied

importance, their subjectivities invalidated, their persons incriminated. This is extremely pertinent to how disempowered people (most often people of colour) throughout history, and even today, are criminalised, their (largely unheard and unaddressed) grievances used against them in the media, as in every day life.

I saw that it would be problematic not to highlight this, and so I looked for a way to show that what was written in the records was not necessarily the whole truth, but the officially sanctioned version. I considered ways of showing this, tried a couple of different techniques and finally came to agree with my supervisor, that the simplest and most honest way was to place the tension in the telling of the story (Rijsijk, 2015). The struggle between Dina in the court relating her experience – and the officials, dismissing her reality, concerned only with the ‘facts.’

THEORIES OF ADAPTATION

Natalie Zemon Davis

In 1982, the historian Natalie Zemon Davis, worked as a script consultant on the screenplay for the historical feature, *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*. The story centres on a peasant man (Martin Guerre) in sixteenth century France, who after having disappeared for seven years, returns home. Everyone in the village welcomes him back and things are even better than the old days... until a man with a wooden leg walks into town claiming that this ‘Martin Guerre’ is an imposter called Pansette, and that he, the wooden-legged, is the real Martin Guerre.

The film meditates on the performance (and importance) of identity in sixteenth century rural France. How could such an isolated community accept a total stranger

into their midst? And more interesting, how could a woman not know her husband? Could there be something else at play? Something left out of the record?

As a counterpoint to the film, Davis published her own book on the story, entitled *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983) further exploring the psychological, social and economic motivations of the villagers, especially those of the fake Martin and Bertrande, the woman who may have willingly “helped him become her husband.

Her works caused a controversy among historians, since they included an element of conscious speculation.

In the *American Historical Review* debate in 1988, historian Robert Finlay criticized her interpretation as veering from the ‘universally regarded’ version, that her interpretation of sources was in fact an opinion that “turned upside down the moral judgement informing the traditional version of the story”. An excess of invention that undermined the “historical integrity” of the sources (559-571).

Davis responded that her work was a reflexive meditation on the “problem of truth and doubt” and was in fact only “engaging in the historian’s common practice of conjecturing from evidence” (1988: 597). The question should not be limited to whether an event happened exactly as described, but rather whether a scenario is within the realm of possibility given what we know to be true to the time.

Davis’ approach opened possibilities for “new ways of making sense of evidence” instead of maintaining a blind devotion of sources. In contrast to the conventional kind of history Finlay defends, Davis’s does not limit meaning to something fixed and certain” (600).

It was Davis’ work in film that presented her with a new appreciation of the historian’s role. In the preface to *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983), Davis relates

that “writing for actors rather than readers raised new questions about the motivations of people” she was studying (viii).

Though the filmic dimension offered her a sort of “historical laboratory, generating not proofs but historical possibilities,” Davis at the same time regrets that film seemed a less malleable medium. That it left out the possibilities that “the historian has recourse to when the evidence is inadequate or perplexing” (1983:viii). The film by making decisions about characters, denies the interpretative space.

For Davis, “film’s potential as a medium to speak meaningfully and accurately about the past” (2000:4) was thus not fulfilled in the film, *Le Retour*. Vigne’s cinematic depiction did not explore these ambiguities in enough depth. Reflexivity in film is much more difficult, and indeed Davis wonders if it is as necessary in film, since audiences “do not believe automatically what they see in a historical film: rather they ask about it, argue about it, and write letters of protest about it” (2000:15). In her view, passivity is not the default viewing mode.

However, reflexivity in film is not necessarily looking down on one’s audience. It is a kind of transparency, an honesty. Even if historical film is a genre of fiction, there is still a kind of intimidating gravity attributed to capitalised History. As if written history were truth and all other forms were bastardized, diluted and inferior versions thereof. It is this idea that needs disrupting.

Robert A Rosenstone (1995) shows that history films are not necessarily limited to one interpretation, nor, if they are honest, should they pretend to offer an unmediated, comprehensive account of history. An academic historian, crossed over to visual history, Rosenstone recognises that history on film “cannot satisfy the basic demands for truth and verifiability used by historians” (21). Every film is necessarily

a fabrication. A historical film necessarily contains invention, it is a ‘staging of the past.’ This is true of even those deemed accurate by the strictest codes (2006:38).

But invention in itself is not problematic, according to Rosenstone. What distorts our notion of history is when a film “compresses the past into a closed world with a singular linear story that denies historical alternatives and complexities of motivation and causation” (22). And this is generally what historical films do.

The debate about whether history can be translated into film, Rosenstone outlines in two arguments. The first, put forth by R.J. Raack posits that film is the only medium able to provide an empathetic reconstruction to convey how historical people witnessed, understood and lived their lives.” For Raack, only a filmic history “can recover all the past’s liveliness” (26).

The opposing side of the debate, and the one most historians would likely support, is Ian Jarvie’s. He attacks the “poor information load and “discursive weakness” of the visual medium.” For Jarvie, history is not about narratives, but debates between historians (1995:26). Filmic history overwhelms the senses, and does not allow “time or space for reflection, verification, or debate” (27).

Conventional Drama

Rosenstone observes these generic tendencies of the Hollywood historical drama, the kind of formulaic film characterised by celebrated actors, elaborate costumes and sets, as comprising a “historical romance” (1995:30). He does not blame historians for eschewing such fluff.

Many of the same historians who look askance at dramatisations would likely tolerate a documentary film as a more accurate depiction of the past. But Rosenstone reminds us that the documentary film, far from being unmediated, is as much

manipulated into shape to present a particular argument (34). He thus draws the parallel, linking what historians and filmmakers do:

Historians can easily see how such film conventions of both the dramatic feature and the documentary shape or distort the past in part because we have written work by which the [film] is judged. What we too easily ignore, however, is the extent to which written history, and especially narrative history is also shaped by conventions of genre and language (1995:35).

Rosenstone dismisses the idea that text and image need compete for supremacy.

“Without denigrating the power of the written word, one can claim for each medium unique powers of representation” (1995:31). It makes sense that “if written history is shaped by the conventions of genre and language, the same will obviously be true of visual history, though in this case the conventions will be those of visual genres and visual language”(35).

Visual strategies

This does not mean, as Rosenstone reminds us, that history is the same as fiction, but rather that “it is impossible to judge history on film solely by the standards of written history, for each medium has its own kind of necessarily fictive elements” (36). An example of a responsible fiction is thus, in the absence of information, to invent if it “somehow carries forth the larger meaning” (1995:36).

Film already communicates through language that is more than exclusively literal, to generate what Rosenstone calls “a series of proximate or possible realities rather than a reality that is literally true” (2006:48).

In summary, Rosenstone observes that Hollywood dramas are subject to the following: *condensation* and *compression* of historical figures and time.

Displacements of time – already a selection of moments are deemed cinematic, the dull parts left out. *Alterations* where a character is attributed behaviour or attitudes not their own. In addition, most of the *dialogue* which is either invented or necessarily truncated or embellished depending on the the needs of the story frame. All historical *characters* too are interpretations of personages to whom we have little actual recourse (2006:39).

These features combine in different ways in a *drama* in order to create interfaces that “involve us, through the unique, embodied quality of the film experience, in the possible and proximate realities of past events and situations” (2006:39).

Innovative Film

Whereas the Hollywood film presents a single narrative, innovative film presents multiple interpretive possibilities by “rendering the world as multiple, complex, and indeterminate, rather than a series of self-enclosed, neat, linear stories” (Rosenstone: 1995:37).

These films have more in common with Brecht’s epic theatre that are supposed to make the audience think about rather than feel, social problems and human relationships (1995:39). Rather than matching our notions of the past, they disrupt this through overtly theatrical costume, highly stylized performances, in short resisting all the usual commonsense notions of “realism” (1995:40).

Rosenstone invites us to engage more experimentally with material of the past, to dig deeper, and rework it. “Imagine the possibility” he dares us, “of historical representation, both filmic and written – about history as a self-reflexive enquiry, as

self-conscious theatre, as a mixed form of drama and analysis.” (1995:42). The visual can thus serve as a means for interrogating the verbal:

“History does not exist until it is created. And we create it in terms of our underlying values. Our kind of rigorous, “scientific” history is in fact a product of history, our special history which includes a particular relationship to the written word” (1995:43).

So if the codes of Hollywood strive towards verisimilitude of a complete picture, hide their artifice, limitations and processes, the innovative drama is in direct confrontation to this approach.

If Hollywood codes validate the status quo, patriarchal, individualist, capitalist values, innovative films attack this normativity, innovative films find new strategies of interrogating our conceptions of history (2006:50).

Innovative or experimental dramas can even influence how history is written by adding to/questioning the discourse rather than staying safely within what is held to be true fact. Rosenstone cites as exemplary, the don of all innovative filmmakers, Sergei Eisenstein and his film, *October* (1928).

October can only make arguments about the past the way a film can make arguments: through visual, dramatic, symbolic, metaphoric and fictional forms (2006:52, 53). As Rosenstone reminds us, “Any filmmaker knows that facts never speak for themselves. We have to speak for them” (2006:54).

Rosenstone goes as far as to recommend viewing innovative film (in this case, *October*) in light of its fictionality. “Cinema is an illusion, after all” (2006:63). *October* was never meant to be read one dimensionally – Rosenstone cites a scene in the film where the masses pull down a statue of the tsar, which is anachronistic to

how the revolution unfolded. The image stood instead (and fell) for the collective effort of ousting the tsar (2006:65). Rosenstone illustrates how the visual can have meaning beyond itself.

Rosenstone quips that ‘Eisenstein knows his truth is not referential but metaphorical’ (2006:69). He is considered innovative and before his time exactly because of the way he plays with chronology through the juxtaposition of image and editing techniques. A kind of visual poetry revealing the plasticity of history. The film’s constructedness is celebrated rather than hidden. ‘To accept *October* as history’, says Rosenstone, ‘is to accept emotion as part of reading history’ (2006:69).

It is thus possible to engage both emotion and critical faculties without one entirely shutting down the other. These films then function similarly to poetry – they defamiliarise so that we might question previously held sacred beliefs. It is perhaps telling that most films about South African history fall into the conventional historical genre. One of the few exceptions, is in fact a film about Cape slavery, mentioned before, called *Proteus*. Based on an actual case from the trials, the film focuses on a relationship between a homosexual interracial relationship between prisoners on Robben Island.

The film’s treatment of history is original and refreshing. It starts off solemn in tone but soon the viewer becomes aware of a parodic register. Anachronistic scenes impose, such as women in beehive hairdos hammering out the court transcripts on electric typewriters, poking fun at the language used in the trials. Other scenes in the film mock the process of collection and appropriation of ‘facts.’ A memorable scene shows Claas, the Khoi man giving rude names to plants he is called on to name for the botanist Niven, who wants to appropriate more than his knowledge. *Proteus* does not shy from the horrific, as when Niven

returns to Claas a memento, a tobacco pouch made from his mother's breast. And yet, even horror and torture is hallucinatory, as when Rijkhart tells Claas the drowning cell and dark room were imagined. Words, language, stories are seen to escape their meaning and certainty, as when Rijkhart says, "It was just a story," and Niven later, "It's just names on a page."

It is certainly a reflexive film, as numerous irreverent references are made to the construction of historical accounts. The play with chronology or intentional anachronisms highlight outmoded thinking that persists to the present day and draw parallels to historic and present struggles. Its antirealism a parody of unreflexive representation practices.

Given the complexity of South African history in particular, the innovative film (or innovative slants) offers compelling ways to unpack the past.

Hayden White

If the nineteenth century western ideals were rationality, certainty and a teleological view of the world (with Realism as the literary mode), the creative response to twentieth century events that surpassed this certainty was Modernism.

According to Hayden White, the portrayal of traumatic episodes presents the problem of 'aestheticisation of trauma' and dangers of 'narrative fetishization' (1996:31). In offering a traumatic past as a closed chapter, we are "rendering whole that which was denied". In showing this past without quotation marks (untreated), it is represented as being unproblematic. By imitating, rather than interpreting, we are "undoing in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating a condition of intactness, by situating the origin of loss elsewhere" (31).

This could be exploitative, says White, if it is nothing more than “turning these events into a subject matter of a narrative” (32), without commentary.

White sees “the anti-narrative non-stories of literary modernism – the psychopathologies, blockage of narrative, deformation and formal compensation, dissonance or splitting of narrative frame” (32) as ways to cast into doubt, call into question events that escape comprehension. This is in opposition to taking such events for granted, which would be akin to deeming them acceptable.

These techniques “offer the possibility of representing traumatic events in a less fetishist manner than traditional Realism” (32). They offer a treatment for the wound of historically induced trauma: “the possibility of de-fetishizing both events and the fantasy accounts of them which deny the threats they pose in the very process of pretending to represent them realistically”. This treatment of traumatic historical subject matter, White calls “de-fetishization, clears the way for mourning” (33). Concerning the traumatic content of South African history, then, nothing can be taken for granted.

According to Rosenstone, only an innovative film can truly offer a critical engagement with the past. But I wanted an historical drama, and without falling prey to the formulaic Hollywood tendencies Rosenstone outlines.

I had set out to write an historical feature, similarly tightly spun to the world depicted in *Twelve Years a Slave*. I wanted to portray something with as much sensitivity as does McQueen, something that immerses the viewer and yet is hard to watch. I wanted complicated characters that had interior worlds. I also wanted an emotional engagement from the viewer that might make them question their responses. Something Realist with Modernist tendencies.

There are some points to consider when comparing what I am attempting in my story to what Steve McQueen accomplished in *Twelve Years a Slave* (2012). Though sharing the subject of enslavement, after all, a transnational phenomena, the contexts of production (first as a primary text and then as a screenplay, later as a film) and reception are entirely different.

Firstly, Solomon Northrup's story was an autobiography, whereas Dina's testimony was everything but. It was forced out of her in a language not her own, in circumstances not conducive to reflection but rather fear and intimidation. Thus the conditions that brought the primary source material into being were fundamentally dissimilar to begin with.

Perhaps an important point of difference is that the story of Solomon Northrup is already deemed critical (or perhaps more authentic) in that it is a first person account of the experiences had by a person formerly enslaved. Further, it was adapted by a black screenwriter (John Ridley) and then visually interpreted by a director (McQueen) who is also black. This does seem to give it a kind of authentic lineage, even though there are wholly invented scenes in the film. Toni Morrison explains this as a 'shared heritage of black experience' (1998).

Django Unchained can by virtue of its many stylistic choices be called innovative. The overt adoption of the (Spaghetti Western) genre and disregard, even over the top irreverence, for 'realistic' or proximate renderings, (in dialogue, costume, non-diegetic music, etc). Further, the use of anachronistic moments in the film (along with aforementioned properties) qualifies it as reflexive. That Django, the heroic character, also chooses his outfit, highlights the performative dimension of historical re-enactment.

All of these choices combine to disrupt the sense of history as a sterile and static, closed chapter so oft taken for granted. Perhaps it is tempting to say that ‘a Tarantino’ can easily descend into entertainment for its own sake. But, the fact that it celebrates its own fictionality as an historical film is itself a reflexive critical stance.

“Entertainment value draws an audience, but as to whether historical feature can be used as a history lesson – historical films are a genre of fiction filmmaking” (Francis: 44). Thus if we are to look at *Twelve Years* and *Django* in terms of Rosenstone’s criteria, though it could be said that *Twelve Years* is by far the more accurate in terms of costume, detail etc, *Django* is the more critical in that it does not attempt to appear as history untampered with but celebrates its status as a stylized interpretation. It is more honest about what it offers.

The concerns we have in South Africa are of another nature. Firstly, there is not an established culture of slave narrative. It is only recently that people are rediscovering (or indeed discovering) the fact of their slave roots and thinking about what that means to them. Few of the primary sources were written by slaves. Except perhaps for a most interesting anomaly - the Notebook of Jan Smiesing. This story might never had held the attraction it did were it not for Smiesing’s notebook and its mention of Dina and her child.

The story as I have shaped it, though, does not centre so much on Smiesing as it does Dina. She essentially goes from being an entry in a diary to a character in her own right. Lastly, the person who has taken it upon herself to write this script is a white woman who grew up on the other side of history. Toni Morrison reflects that “even memories and recollections won’t give... total access to the unwritten interior

life of these people. Only the act of the imagination can.” What I bring the the script is thus imagined empathy, outside of my own realm of experience.

APPLICATION

A subject extremely pertinent to contemporary South African reality (this is true on a global scale as well) is the prevalence of sexual (and other) violence towards women, (and non-hegemonic males) within an aggressively hyper masculine patriarchal system. I hope to engage with these questions as well as problematise them. But most of all, I'd like to bring them into public view.

Process of adaptation

Since I had done the groundwork, had the records at my disposal, had written a thesis and made a short documentary (dealing with of the absense of a slave narrative and the problem of agency), I felt myself quite familiar with the subject matter. I'd spent nights up letting scenes run amok in my head. I was under the impression that the screenplay would just about write itself.

To my imagination, I had stumbled upon and uncovered a great secret that was my duty to present to the world. There was, after all, a wealth of testimonies, however incomplete, one-sided and bizarre, almost Shakespearean in dramatic detail. All that was required of myself was to dust off the records and write them up for public consumption. This was not quite how it happened. I had never written a screenplay before.

I soon learned with great disappointment, that when writing for the screen, the first restriction is that one can write only “that which can be seen and heard” by the camera or microphone (Kalil: 2013).

Then, there were massive gaps I had to face when writing the scenes. When writing prose, one simply directs attention to what one knows, or thinks or would like to focus on. But here, an entire material world needed to spring to life and I realised I really had limited knowledge of its intricacies.

Instead of the usual expansive flourish prose allows, the new thrust was on stark scenes, narrowly focussed on characters’ drives and desires. Objects were not there for their own sake but to transmit or obstruct forces between characters. The freedom of prose to traverse time, space, memory and sensory experience cannot be transplanted directly into writing for the screen. Flashbacks are to be kept to a minimum. The character’s interior world or “character” had to be revealed through actions and interactions (Kalil, 2014).

This was particularly challenging, since Dina, the protagonist (remember, the one that moves the story) is not a free agent, but one whose very enslaved status denies her the agency to move in ways she might have wished. But it was also this very unique set of constraints that made Dina’s actions that much more forceful. That Dina’s decision and her resolve to act on it was that much more profound, given exactly all the obstacles closing in on her from all sides.

The next challenge was to arrange the story in order for it to have emotional depths and peaks. The court transcripts provided the bulk of the material for the ‘outside scenes’ - the rogues on their raids. But I still had to invent the dialogue and connect the scenes somehow in a compelling way. The pronouncements and sentencing at the end are also entirely condensed from the records. My initial draft

included the entire sentence, but I later took the advice offered by my supervisor to “select the language most evocative of the themes” in the story (Rijsijk, 2015).

He also recommended books on narrative structure and beats, which offered structures for mapping the story. Among works consulted were McKee (1999), Stam (2005) and Snyder’s *Save the Cat* series. I was astonished at the myriad ways in which my story could be told, and the pinboard was an excellent tool and reflective device.

The formula that ends in a resolution didn’t seem congruous with my story. My supervisor thought Dina had to have the last word. But, nothing is known of what becomes of Dina’s unborn child – is it ever born? Is she executed after she ‘recovers’ as in the pronouncement? Does she perhaps find a way to escape again or do they die together? Is the child given back to the lodge? The last words we hear her speak in the story reflect her possible emotional state at the pronouncement – anything but starting the cycle again. To end it before it starts. Again.

Certain of the “facts” needed further elaboration to make them integral to the story. April van Rio de la Goa, for example, was a mystery. Aside from the name of his owner, Jan Meijn. How he came to meet Dina and his entire backstory needed to be invented. And thus, Maria was created. Perhaps this is where the conventional historian would protest – as this is pure fabrication. My justification here would be that her presence adds substance, connecting Dina to April, and also drawing Dina out of herself. She is a mirror for other characters, and perhaps can be seen as a composite of the many mothers who were separated from their children.

Criticality in film (especially in terms of South African history) would very much extend to question the making of history, given the circumstances under which the

relevant primary sources were first created and the weight under which they were for so long buried. And then, how they are interpreted afresh for the visual medium.

CONCLUSION

As a first-time writer of an historical screenplay, I am in favour of a dramatic historical feature film that has a few elements of innovation. I hope to articulate with these small acts of rebellion against the grand narrative, that the truth is never singular, the official record never comprehensive, and that this is an imaginative and audacious attempt to give a voice to the voiceless.

It is audacious because of my position in history as a descendant of both slave owners and slaves. That due to blind circumstance, I ended up on the other divide of history. The side of privilege. I do not wish to be blind to this or be blinded by it, nor assist in maintaining blindness that seems to prevail to this day.

Drawing on the ideal of verisimilitude from traditional narrative to immerse the audience in a story world of the past, I included emotional drama to call a response in the viewer. I attempted characters complicated enough for the viewer to have to think about what motivates the various historical actors at different points. I also hoped the viewer would be conflicted in their own response, rather than telling them what to feel.

While I endeavoured to create believably realistic setting, and the story could be called “proximate” to the era, it is not, nor does it pretend to offer the complete and closed chapter. The various strands of the story are fragments intersecting at points. The story thus resembles Dina’s mirror shard, it is broken off, but able to reflect - a visual metaphor for the schizoid nature of South African history.

There is the blending or co-existence of literal and metaphoric truths, which could be construed as post-modern, but I am not entirely comfortable with this term as it often applies to works that are so distorted that they (intentionally) stop making sense altogether. This is not my aim. I hope that something of meaning (even if it is mourning) will come from this script.

The problem of agency that has long been a question. How to represent ‘a history from below’ – one in which marginalised historical actors have agency when in fact as noted previously, that is the exact thing that was taken from them? This is where the competing narratives come into play. The site of struggle for meaning, of the story’s telling has always been in the present.

Thus I have shown how I used techniques from non-positivist history to write a semi-realistic film with innovative twists to offer an imaginative treatment of historical reality that is self reflexive by means of a fragmentary storyline, enacted through competing narratives that admit their own limitations (and by extension, my own). In this way the telling of Dina’s story offers an intervention in fathoming history.

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DINA THE RUNAWAY

Written by

Donna Corns

Supervised by Dr Ian-Malcolm Rijsdijk

CRNDON001

University of Cape Town

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ACT 1

PROLOGUE

EXT. LONG BEACH - DUSK

Sound of the wind as it whistles in a slow rising pitch. Over it, the steady sound of a blade slicing cleanly. A rocky mountainside above a long beach on the Cape peninsula. The slicing sound stops. A fallen blade glinting in a field of arum lilies.

EXT. IN FRONT OF CASTLEGROUNDS - DAY - 1737

Well-dressed families walk on the square in the sun. A LITTLE BOY splashes in a puddle. His MOTHER grabs him by the pants and lifts him up to deliver a smack on his bottom. Another family of THREE WOMEN stop an ELDERLY SLAVE MAN who has a basket balanced on his shoulders. The younger woman helps herself to an apple, bites into one.

WOMAN 1

Tell your baas, I'll bring him some
eggs on Friday.

The elderly slave man nods and scampers off towards other families who stroll leisurely. He lights a little pipe of tobacco.

In the background, on full public display are THREE NAKED MALE CORPSES stretched out on crosses and decomposing. A cloud of black flies hovers around.

The reactions of free people is mostly that of vague interest. This is not an unusual sight. Some clutch their handkerchiefs over their noses or make exaggerated motions of waving the stench away as they pass.

Slaves avoid looking up. Except for an OLD SLAVE WOMAN selling flowers. Wrapped in cloth, she walks slowly and stops when coming to the spectacle. As she approaches each of the corpses, she takes out a long flower. Before laying it down at their feet, she presses the flower first to her forehead and then to her heart.

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY

The castle stands out against a blue summer sky. A moat and drawbridge lead to a stone path towards the gate. The sound of chains dragging on stone.

DINA (25) walks heavily along the stone path and through the castle gate. She is dark-skinned, slender, but seems weighed down. TWO GUARDS lead the way.

INT. CASTLE - DAY

Dina enters a brightly lit room, sparse with only a few benches. Seated in front, are THREE OFFICIALS (men, in their 50s) dressed in black from head to toe wearing hats, coats and shiny shoes. They sweat.

Also in the room are SIX SLAVES. They are barefoot, in chains and dressed in rags. They are kept standing and the chains clink when they shift their weight from one foot to the other.

Dina stands alone facing all parties. She is, like the others, in rags and has chains around her feet, which she looks down at.

Dina does make eye contact, but concentrates on their feet. When she looks up briefly, hardened faces stare down at her.

OFFICIAL 1

Since we have present the fourth prisoner, Dina van Rio de la Goa, 25 years at a guess, let us hear her testimony.

Dina looks at the massive crucifix hanging on his breast. And clears her throat.

The men look at her.

She does not speak.

OFFICIAL 1 (cont'd)

Yes. Dina van Rio de la Goa.

Dina shrugs. The iron rattles....

OFFICIAL 1 (cont'd)

You may start, Dina.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dina looks up at the bible on the table before her. She is careful not to look at the faces of the other slaves. She tries to swallow a lump in her throat but her mouth is dry.

DINA

I...

The officials look at each other, impatient.

OFFICIAL 1

How did you come to end up here?

Dina looks at the men, disbelieving.

DINA

I...was captured.

The questioner sighs aloud. He looks at his fellow officials.

OFFICIAL 1

It would be wise to cooperate, Dina.

DINA

I am telling you the way it happened.

OFFICIAL 2

Why did you leave in the first place?
This now is your chance to speak.

EXT. DUNES - DUSK - 1735

A long desolate beach. Nothing but rocks rising out of the water and fields of reeds further inland. THREE RIO DE LA GOAN WOMEN gather shellfish. They are sun-blackened and sinewy. Tough like pirates.

They appear emaciated and somewhat deranged from hunger as they pull up the snails and gather them in their skirts.

DINA (O.S.)

During the summer we slept on the beach. And in the wet season we lived in the wreck.... We stayed for a while....

EXT. DUNES/SHIP-HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The three women return to their home, the skeletal remains of a shipwreck higher up on the embankment, hidden among some dunes. It is quite a distance and dark by the time they return. A woman watches them approach...

INT. SHIP-HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

It is Dina. She and the boy APRIL, 6, are inside. A fire is lit and shows a tidy interior hung with scraps of fabric and a seasand floor. The two repair the threadbare walls of the ship-house with bits of canvas. Dina wears a long man's coat and April has a cape. The three Rio de la Goan women enter.

RIO DE LA GOAN WOMAN 1
Look, look what we got us for
tonight!

RIO DE LA GOAN WOMAN 2
Tonight, we'll dine like queens!

She lifts her skirt higher showing off her sinewy legs coquettishly. She throws a snail at Dina, and the others descend on her to salvage the precious piece of protein.

The women empty their skirts into an iron pot and cook a broth of sea creatures. One of them hums, while the others talk and laugh. Dina and the child shiver around the fire, looking relieved, exhausted.

EXT. WILD NIGHT SURROUNDING SHIP-HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

From outside the wreck glows faintly from within, like a ghost ship. The moon is covered in a creeping mist, insects hum and things rustle in the dry reeds not far off. Dina stands in the doorway, looks out into the menacing night.

DINA (O.S.)
Protection, you see? I stayed for the
warmth.

EXT. DUNES - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Sound of whirring wind over sand. Dina and the women wander listlessly in the dunes and tear their way through dry bushes with kirries. Sun beats down on them and wind stings their skin. Their mouths are dry and faces gaunt. They desperately search for food.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One of the women beats something with a rock, while another screams. It is a snake that she kills. She skins it with precision, using a short machete. The three women share the flesh with the boy. Dina is beside herself and retches.

DINA (O.S.)

And then I left.... because they
wanted me to eat snakes!

INT. CASTLE - DAY - 1737

The room is silent. The slaves look at Dina. She keeps her eyes down. The officials exchange glances.

OFFICIAL 1

Ja. Start at the beginning.

Dina looks at the crucifix hanging on his neck.

DINA

I would not eat the snake, though I
was hungry. It's written in your book
there, snake is bad.

Dina points to the massive bible on the table.

OFFICIAL 1

That is of no consequence. Will you
stick to the story now.

OFFICIAL 2

Dina. Start at the beginning now.
Where did it start?

EXT. CAPE TOWN DOCK - NIGHT - 1727

A turbulent sea. A ship unloads at the port. About 100 black slaves (men, women and children) are prodded off and loaded onto numerous wagons by armed white men and their helpers. Many sob, families cling onto one other but they are cleanly divided by sex. Children and babies are roughly plucked from their mothers and tossed to guards to redistribute.

DINA (O.S.)

It ended before it started.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. SLAVE LODGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Doors are unbolted from the inside and lantern carrying guards lead the slaves through a dark passage. The outline of several hammocks line the corridors. Some of the hammock dwellers are woken by this and lean out to see the commotion. The new arrivals are taken further down a stairway where they are locked in a basement.

INT. BLACKNESS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Sound of silence. Then panic - voices - children whine, people call out for their friends, mothers, children, brothers.

VOICES

Rosa? Batsane? April? Meffinko?
Where are we? Is that you?
I can't see anything! Where is my
child? Rosa! My God. Ludawang? Flora?
Rosa! It's so dark. I can't see.
Mama, I'm hungry. Where is this
place? My baby, where is my baby boy?

INT. LODGE WOMEN'S QUARTERS - DAY 1727

Early morning. The interior of the lodge. Hammocks strung up side by side. The trumpet sounds and women and girls flip out of their hammocks, dazed, to tidy up for morning prayer. A FEW MEN also emerge from here and hurry off. One YOUNG WOMAN tries to breastfeed a baby.

The women and girls cover their wild hair with doeks and perform morning ablutions (some surreptitiously do Muslim prayers behind a screen). Another hums a song from home.

Dina and the Rio de la Goans emerge from underground where they are kept.

One woman, MARIA VAN RIO DE LA GOA (20) is weeping. She holds a small grey blanket to her breast.

It is obvious that these women are kept in even worse conditions - their clothes are filthy and tattered, and they are stooped even though most are young. It is clear from the reaction of the others, that they smell bad. Hostile glances are shot at them.

Footsteps and whistles. The women immediately line up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TWO GUARDS come down and survey the scene. They are dressed in coats with copper buttons and carry muskets.

One of the guards presses his weapon to Maria van Rio de la Goa's breasts. She drops her blanket.

Dina bends down to pick it up.

The guard gives her a whack in the face with the tip of his gun. She falls over.

The head mistress, ANNA VAN DAPOER (35) enters the scene. She is dressed impeccably with a high collar and coiffed hair. She walks over to the altercation and without speaking knocks the guard off his feet. He jumps back up, cowers apologetic.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

How dare you cause trouble with my girls? You are here... your purpose is to see that they become accustomed to their new home!

DINA

(still on all fours,
sniffling)

New home? No, this is not our home. We have a home, Madame. We would like to return, Madame, we have a home. And they took this woman's child. Maria, tell Madame!

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Quiet, child. Get up and clean yourself.

Dina gets up with some difficulty and gives a half-hearted curtsy.

The guards have been put into their place and stand aside for Anna van Dapoer.

Some women are holding back giggles. Anna shoots them an icy look.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Girls, you may proceed into the schoolroom.

The women file into the long room, walking with exaggerated straight backs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dina is last to enter, but Anna van Dapoer stops her. Dina flinches. Anna runs her finger over the swell on Dina's temple. It looks bad and her eye is puffed up. Anna clucks and speaks in a lowered tone.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
Keep your head down, girl. That's the
only way you'll survive.

Dina nods and smiles despite the mess of her face. She goes into the schoolroom and Anna van Dapoer follows. The CLICK CLICK of her heels. When her footsteps stop, the morning hymn begins promptly.

INT. SMIESING'S BEDROOM - DAY - 1727

A small, warm looking room furnished with a bed, desk and shelf. There is a portrait of an austere looking woman (It is MANDA GRAZIA, Smiesing's mother) hanging above the bed. A coat with silver buttons hangs over a chair.

Anna and JAN SMIESING (40) share fresh bread with the kids, TWO TODDLERS (aged 2 and 3). Smiesing is a small, soft man with wavy hair and light skin. He has a mole under his nose. He is well-dressed but barefoot.

He busily compares papers from a stack to a page in the heavy bible. Anna seems to want to talk to him, but he is intent on reading.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
I'll see you later tonight then?

He grunts a non-answer.

Anna straightens his collar and brushes his cheek with the back of her hand. She tries to connect his gaze but he avoids it. Then she turns to go. As she is leaving, he calls out

JAN SMIESING
Bring more lamp oil and make sure
that Groenewald pays his dues
tonight. He's used up all his
chances. If he wants a good time, he
must show us more of his pretty shiny
coins.

Standing in the doorway, she turns to look at him over her shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Don't you worry about that. Not a thing happens in this place without my knowing.

Anna van Dapoer looks at the painting above him.

The face in the portrait melts into a memory that follows.

FLASHBACK

INT. GIRL'S SCHOOLROOM - DAY - 1705

MANDA GRAZIA (35) the school mistress, stands in front of the room. She is haughty looking, dressed formally.

A clock hangs on the wall behind her. Women and young girl students sit on the floor.

While most of the girls and women have formed groups, one girl sits by herself. It is a YOUNGER ANNA VAN DAPOER (13).

She is a shade darker and looks Asian compared to others who are of mixed race.

Manda calls Anna van Dapoer to the front.

She is shy and looks at the ground as she approaches the front of the room.

All the girls in the class laugh.

When she turns around, it is obvious that she is bleeding menstrual blood all the way down the back of her dress.

She only discovers this when she gets to the front.

Manda gives her the cloak she has on and Anna runs out the room.

INT. SMIESING'S BEDROOM - DAY - 1727

Anna looks from the painting into her reflection in the mirror. She leaves without saying more.

Upon her exit, the toddlers get up onto the bed and start jumping.

Jan Smiesing slams his bible shut.

INT. SLAVE LODGE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Smiesing, wearing a knapsack and carrying some books, walks past the women slaves who get ready to go out to work the garden. They have their bonnets on and carry implements.

He catches sight of Dina, calls her to him.

SMIESING

Here, girl. Carry this for Meester Jan.

DINA

Yes, Meester.

Smiesing gives Dina his load of books to carry. He does not notice her injury.

Smiesing whistles as he swaggers past the boys waiting to enter the schoolroom. Dina walks behind him looking at the ground.

SEVERAL BOY SLAVES AND MEN STUDENTS chat rowdily while waiting for Smiesing to lead them inside.

They (about 30 of them) are a motley bunch - young boys and men of varying ages and origins.

BOY SLAVE STUDENT 1

Meester, Meester! They measured us!
I'm taller than my brother!

BOY SLAVE STUDENT 2

You're not taller! Your neck is long!
From spying on girls!

SMIESING

Let's go.

INT. BOY'S SCHOOLROOM - CONTINUOUS

They walk in to a long room with tables. A desk in front, with a pile of papers, and quills. Two slaves tend to a fire.

Smiesing sits on his chair in front of the schoolroom, while another hands out the quills.

SMIESING

Morning, boys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOY'S CLASS
(in unison)
Morning, Meester Jan!

Dina puts the load down and nods.

SMIESING
Here, child. Take this.

Smiesing gives her an orange from his knapsack. She takes it and retreats from the room.

The students have noticed Dina's face and whisper to one another.

Smiesing seems to come alive when he is teaching. He has a stately demeanor and commands respect from the students. He hands back their papers.

The two boy slave students come up to show him their work. He squints, unimpressed and sends them back.

An OLD ORIENTAL MAN comes to dictate to Smiesing. He sits on the ground, recites from memory while Smiesing leans in and makes notes in the red book.

Meanwhile, the two boy slave students take advantage of the distraction and draw obscene pictures on the shirt of the chubby boy sitting in front of them. Sniggers from all sides.

Smiesing comes around to see. The boys stop laughing.

Smiesing circles the chubby boy, looks at the brothers' handiwork, amused.

Smiesing gives each of the boys a tweak of the ear and everyone laughs. Except for chubby boy, who doesn't understand.

INT. GIRL'S SCHOOLROOM - CONTINUOUS

A rectangular room with windows on one side. A clock hangs on the wall. The students (about 40 WOMEN AND GIRLS, all ages) are seated on the floor sewing and chatting in groups.

Anna van Dapoer is in a chair up front, getting a young girl to thread a needle.

A number of the women and young girls (about 7 of them) are pregnant and another 3 have babies swaddled on their backs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dina walks in late and nods an apology upon entry. Anna looks at the clock and purses her lips.

DINA

Madame, this is for you..

Dina takes the orange out of her pocket, looks at it as if it were a nugget of gold and hands it to Anna van Dapoer.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Why, thank you, girl.

Anna smiles warmly and receives it. She is delighted to have a makeshift pin-cushion. She sticks a pin through the skin of the orange and beams at the class.

Dina looks away, flinching.

The room is silent now. Dina makes her way to the Rio de la Goan group and sits next to Maria, who is pulling out all the stitching she has done. The two of them look like hell.

MARIA

(in a daze)

How could you give her that orange?
Do you remember the sweetness of an
orange? How it makes your mouth numb
to suck on an orange?

Maria looks far gone. Dina grabs her by the shoulders and gives her a shake, trying to reach her.

DINA

Maria, listen to me. We are going to
get out of here. I heard something--

MARIA

You could have given it to me if you
didn't want it.

DINA

Maria! I heard this in the Gardens.
They say your child, your boy, April,
he is alive! They say he is with a
man, Jan Meijn, a man with a red
beard. Did you hear me?

MARIA

You stupid woman. For giving her that
orange.

EXT. COMPANY GARDENS - DAY 1732

The Gardens - a plot of land with sections devoted to vegetables, herbs, fruit trees and decorative plants.

Slave women and girls work in the vegetable section. Some carry water, others pull out weeds, while the harder work of digging is reserved for the Rio de la Goans. Dina is among them.

It is systematic, exerting labour, and most are sweating. But it is also an opportunity to be outside, where they might get wind of some news.

A group of women are harvesting vegetables which they pass to slave men with baskets to sell in town. There is some flirtatious banter between them. Messages surreptitiously exchanged between the lodge women and outside.

Anna van Dapoer watches over the scene, giving instructions.

A WHITE OFFICIAL (25) arrives and a girl slave points him to Anna van Dapoer. When she sees him, Anna approaches warily. The man hands her a letter.

WHITE OFFICIAL

Here, meijd, something you've been waiting for? Send me a little girl treat to take home with me.

Anna snatches it from him and waits for him to leave.

She walks hurriedly away from the garden scene to open and read the letter. Almost all the women pause to watch. She quickly folds it up again and tucks it into her apron.

Some young girls run toward her.

YOUNG GIRLS

(all at once)

You get a letter, Miss? Who is it from? What does it say, Miss? Is it from my mama?

By now there is a half circle gathered around. Anna van Dapoer paces a little. Then announces

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Girls. Today I got the news I have been praying, waiting and working for all my life. I have my free papers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLAVE WOMAN 1

And what does that mean, exactly,
Miss?

YOUNG GIRLS

What is free?

Anna van Dapoer looks at the girls. Shakes her head.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Away from here.

Silence. Then wailing. Girls hold onto Anna's skirts and cry hysterically.

Some of the older women don't betray emotions but perhaps they are pleased at the news that Anna van Dapoer is leaving.

INT. SLAVE LODGE KITCHEN - NIGHT (SAME DAY)

Preparations are underway for dinner. There is general chatter as men and women see each other after a day of labour.

Anna van Dapoer excitedly weaves through the kitchen towards over-crowded hall.

INT. SLAVE LODGE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ignoring the chatter and slaves who try to engage her, Anna purposefully strides through the hallway towards the door of Smiesing's room.

She is about to open it and hesitates.

There are noises coming from inside.

She leaves her hand suspended between opening the door and knocking.

Anna leans close to the door to listen.

The sound of Smiesing in the throes of sexual ecstasy.

Anna's hand drops.

She hesitates a beat then turns to leave.

INT. GIRL'S SCHOOLROOM - CONTINUOUS

It is time for pre-dinner prayers. The room is filled with hungry, waiting, docile girls and women.

Anna van Dapoer looks at the clock. The place where Dina usually sits is empty.

It hits her.

Anna inhales. She says the prayer in a quiet voice. The women and girls look at each other and back at the empty space.

Anna leaves the room. Not to eat, but to pack her bags.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT (SAME DAY)

A single room. TWENTY RIO DE LA GOAN SLAVES. Men on the one side and women on the other, but some couples sit together on the floor on mattresses made of flour sacks. A few oil lamps are on the floor.

Dina limps down the stairs, sniffing and wiping her face.

There are choking sobbing noises.

Several women hold each other and weep. Everyone in the basement looks morbid.

Dina does not see. She takes off her doek, collapses on a sack and pulls the cover over her head.

LISBETH (50), an older, stout woman in mid-prayer, opens her eyes to look at Dina.

LISBETH

And where were you, huh? Out
gallivanting?

She stands up and starts kicking the cocoon that Dina has formed.

One of the women starts crying harder.

RIO DE LA GOAN WOMAN 5

No, Lisbeth, I beg you, stop it! We
don't need another corpse.

RIO DE LA GOAN WOMAN 4

I said, where were you when Maria
died of a broken heart?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RIO DE LA GOAN WOMAN 4 (cont'd)
 Fucking the schoolmaster? Was it
 good? What did he pay you? Whore!

Dina stays lying still. There is a spasm but she doesn't or cannot get up. She starts sobbing silently. The sack that is Dina twitches and starts howling.

DINA
 Mariiiiiiiiiiiiiiaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
 MaaaaariiiiiiiiiiiiiiaaaaaaaaaaaaaMaaaaaar
 iaaaaaMaammmmmaaaaaa

The sack lies silent.

FADE TO BLACK

OFFICIAL 1 (O.S)
 A broken heart? What nonsense. Will
 you stick to the story, meijd.

DINA (O.S.)
 This is the story.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE SMIESINGS'S BEDROOM - DAY - 1732

Anna van Dapoer is all dressed up and has her suitcases at her feet. She knocks on Smiesing's door.

Smiesing opens the door and his face cracks into a smile. He pulls her into his room.

INT. SMIESING'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

SMIESING
 I heard this morning! What news, my
 woman!

He embraces her and she lets him. Then she straightens up and pulls away.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
 Yes, finally. I must go now.
 Everything is ready. Take care of
 yourself, man.

SMIESING
 How do I address you now, Madam?
 You're not just a meijd, anymore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Take care of the boys. Tell them I will come for them soon.

SMIESING

And you wait for me, I am coming for you. Hey, go see Blanckenberg - he owes us 200 rixdollars and the Chinaman, he can help you too. And be on your guard when you take in poor white sailors, they will try their luck with a woman like you.

Anna turns to leave and looks at the portrait one more time. She stands in the doorway to see if he will help offer to carry the luggage. He closes the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Anna van Dapoer walks out alone with her two suitcases. A slave woman follows, carrying the trunk on her head.

EXT. TOWN - CONTINUOUS

Anna van Dapoer strides through the town, still barefoot. She looks around her, breathing deeply.

Then she leaves her baggage with the slave woman who walks behind her. Anna van Dapoer goes into a leather workshop and emerges wearing shoes. She walks on. It is a sunny day. She walks on, head held high.

INT. JAN SMIESING'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 1733

Dina, dressed in nicer clothes than before, sweeps Smiesing's bedroom floor. She cries silently and hums while she hangs up the washing. When she turns, it is obvious she is heavily pregnant.

Smiesing enters whistling, with a package under his arm. Dina stops her weeping song and straightens up.

He takes off his coat, and hangs it over his chair. Dina flinches, steps back.

SMIESING

Dina, the Madam needs a new dress and the children also need new shirts.

Smiesing reaches out for a little knife to open his package.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMIESING (cont'd)
Here, use this. And bring me the
rest.

He hands Dina some starched white fabric.

She takes it, folds it over her arm.

SMIESING (cont'd)
And this is for you.

Smiesing sends Dina off with a piece of dried fish.

She nods and tucks it into her apron.

EXT. PORCH OF COTTAGE - MONTHS LATER

A tiny beach COTTAGE in De Waterkant facing the sea. There is a garden in front, overgrown with weeds. (All the little houses nearby are similarly unadorned with steps leading onto a small porch).

Many Free Blacks live in the neighbourhood, especially women. Some of them have slaves of their own, even if they are otherwise poor. Several of these women take in lodgers to supplement income.

Children are sent to sell baked goods for their mothers, or go fishing.

Anna van Dapoer stands on her porch, hanging up strips of salted fish to dry. Incidentally, she listens to 3 NEIGHBOUR WOMEN (in their 40s) who sit and chat on the steps next door.

The neighbour women look haggard, clothing in bad shape. Anna, on the contrary is well-dressed, even if her surroundings speak of poverty.

They chat, unaware of Anna's presence.

NEIGHBOUR 1
Magdalena says it took her five years
to earn enough to free her boy child.
But I -

NEIGHBOUR 2
Five years? That's longer than my
Wolfie has been alive! Five years and
I wouldn't even know him! Julius
would be growing a beard already!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEIGHBOUR 1

Ya, but she had that idiot boyfriend, that, that thin soldier of hers lying around gambling all her money away. I say, take it from me. I did it in three. Room rentals, if you don't mind the odd party in the backroom.

NEIGHBOUR 2

Like this uppity bitch next door? Her man doesn't even come home from the Lodge. Every night she's got another visitor out of town. Wouldn't be surprised --

ANNA VAN DAPOER

(loudly)

Oh, I've seen every kind of party you can imagine. Nothing in this world surprises me.

Embarrassed laughter from the neighbours.

NEIGHBOUR 1

(whispers)

She's listening!

NEIGHBOUR 3

Hai, shame.

Anna walks down to the garden in front and starts to pull out weeds with great vigour.

The neighbour women leave. Anna van Dapoer rips out the last weed in the entire front garden and dusts herself off. She stands alone for a while on the porch and stares out at the sea.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT - MONTHS LATER

Dina descends down the stairs to her fellow Rio de la Goans with some difficulty. Some do each other's hair and chatter. When Dina enters they fall silent.

They look at her with derision - she is dressed crisply while they are in tatters.

LISBETH

Monkey in silk has come to where the caged beasts lie. What new tricks has the master taught you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dina looks at Lisbeth. There is laughter and rude sounds. One of the men spits.

DINA

Lisbeth. I brought this for you

She takes out the piece of fish and holds it out as a peace offering towards Lisbeth.

It is hungrily snatched and passed around. One of the older women reaches out to embrace her. Dina holds on tight.

The sound of church bells.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHAPEL/CHURCH SQUARE - DAY - MONTHS LATER

Anna van Dapoer and Jan Smiesing walk out of the chapel. Anna is in a traditional white dress and Smiesing has cleaned himself up for the occasion. His hair is pomaded and he is in a tailored suit. Both wear new shoes.

The Smiesing children (now aged 4 and 5) are dressed in white and have shoes. They race out from behind and spin around the square, chase each other.

Anna calls to them and they come rushing at her.

She sweeps up the youngest while the older child hugs her around the belly.

INT. SLAVE LODGE HOSPITAL - NIGHT - MONTHS LATER

A crowded room with about 100 wooden benches, all of them occupied by diseased human beings. An open lantern hangs, from which doctors and patients can light their pipes. It is the only distraction from a grim scene.

Some of the casualties have spilled over to the floor. The hospital is understaffed by TWO SURGEONS, clearly overwhelmed by the enormity of the task.

SIX HOSPITAL SLAVES patrol the aisles, carrying dry medicine, tinctures and alcohol to sedate.

A WHITE SAILOR (40), shirtless with blood stained bandages over his eye, lies unconscious. He has tattoos and fresh unattended wounds on his arms and chest.

A WHITE BOY (19) convulses on a bed. He is tied up and drools while he lets out suffocating gasps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Two hospital slaves carry in AN ASIAN MAN on a wooden plank stretcher. He is squealing. A third hospital slave removes an old sleeping woman to the floor and replace her with the Asian man.

The Asian patient switches in and out of consciousness. Blood runs from the sides of his mouth. His tongue has been cut out. He is in turns hysterical and then passes out.

Surgeon 1 and Hospital Slave 1 stand over him.

SURGEON 1

Give him some brandy! Here, give this to me.

He douses a piece of cotton in brandy and hands it back to the slave.

Surgeon 2 attends to A MIXED RACE WOMAN who bleeds from below.

There are SEVERAL DECEASED covered in sheets on the ground waiting to be carried away. Some of the patients are next to them. Flies start to gather.

Dina lies next to some corpses on the ground. She is breathing heavily and her legs are up.

A WHITE MAN WITH BOILS ALL OVER HIS FACE AND MOUTH and A BLACK MAN WITH DEEP LACERATIONS ON HIS BACK sit on the ground and watch Dina without expression. They pass a pipe between them and spit at intervals.

Dina looks around around her at the horror. Tries to blow the flies away. Breathes. Blows. Breathes.

FLASHBACK

EXT. RURAL HUT, RIO DE LA GOA - DAY

A bright scene on the coast with palm trees and colourful markets. Stalls with fabrics, coconuts, fruit and flowers, shell necklaces. People chatting and haggling.

A younger Dina (15) with HER SISTERS (5 and 7), walking hand in hand, swinging their arms. They are at a market near the port, surrounded by palm trees.

The atmosphere is warm and open, in contrast to the dark, filthy and claustrophobic hell where she lies spread-eagled.

INT. SLAVE LODGE HOSPITAL - 1730S

When Dina comes to, the two men look at her without expression.

DINA

Don't look at me! Ugly!

She heaves and moans and squeezes out a baby without much fanfare. It screams as the hospital slave 4 reaches down to cut the umbilical.

He wipes the child with a grubby cloth and hands it back to Dina who lies on her back now.

HOSPITAL SLAVE 4

Hey, look at the little yellow meijd you produced, there.

DINA

No. Not a girl. No.

Dina looks away. Puts her hand over her eyes. Then she looks up and sees it is indeed a girl. She holds up the baby.

DINA (cont'd)

I'm sorry this is the first thing you must see. I'm sorry you fell into this life. Why a girl? Why a girl?

The white man with boils and the black man with lacerations look at the new child.

FADE TO BLACK

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT 2 A

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY (1736)

Bright sun reflects off the jagged mountainside that overlooks a choppy sea. Waves pummel the boulders below. It is a long way down.

Dina walks alone along the mountain in a ragged, bloodstained dress. Her hair has sand in it and she looks wary. She clutches a bundle to her chest. Her steps are controlled, careful.

Ahead of her are the runaways, ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (40) and ADAM (35), whom she follows at a distance. There is also dried blood on Adam's shirt sleeves.

ADAM

This way. You are not going to believe this...

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

I still can't believe you killed him, Adam. Did that really happen? It feels like a dream. I thought the man would never die. Oh god. Am I still alive?

Adam spits at the ground and shrugs.

ADAM

I did what I had to do, Anna.

Adam quickens his pace.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

Adam, wait for me! You just keep going on and on.

He leads the way up a twisty path and rounds a corner. He seems to know his way.

They stop at a rocky cavern with a stream. Anna catches her breath.

She looks around and laughs with glee

They walk a little higher.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Anna gets down on hands and knees and drinks. She washes her face. Drinks again. Makes appreciative noises.

Adam strips down his clothes and seems to disappear into the mountain.

Dina rounds the corner and crouches behind a bush to watch through some leaves. The sound of running water.

In a hollow of the mountain, a waterfall culminates in a pool of moving water.

Adam stands naked facing the mountain about knee deep in the pool under the curtain of water falling on him.

He tilts his head back and drinks. Lets out a sigh of contentment.

Dina watches, waits.

Adam turns around.

Dina gasps, ducks.

She feels around in the bundle and pulls out something sharp. It is a piece of mirror glass.

She looks into it and sees her face reflected, bit by bit.

Dina rises, clutching the sharp glass as if to defend herself. She peers over the bush again, transfixed.

Adam seems to look her in the eye. He lets out an exuberant yell.

Dina starts and ducks down.

When she looks again, Adam is sitting naked in the sun. Anna sits clothed in the shade with her feet in the water and unwraps her bundle.

She takes a root out, washes it.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (cont'd)
We could live here, Adam. Next to the
water.

She breaks the root and gives a segment to Adam. They chew for a while.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

What and you'd bring fish from the sea? Woman, we need a community. We need protection. We need -

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

We can protect each other. You have your sword. I have, well, I know things.

Adam leaps up and dresses himself.

ADAM

Let's leave while your ideas are still in your head. Leander will kill me.

Anna fills two calabash skins with water. She follows him.

Dina watches them leave. Waits and listens.

She scrambles to the stream and drinks deeply. She finds the rock where the root was crushed and eats the last crumbs.

EXT. DUNES - DAY (1736)

Dunes and fynbos bushes. Some mountains in the distance. Dina is still tailing the rogues.

A struggle. Anna and Adam corner a guinea fowl. Adam draws his sword.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

Bird, don't fight this. We are all after the same thing, after all.

The bird flaps and makes to chase Adam who is caught off guard and backs away. Anna charges from behind and grabs it as it claws up his legs.

She holds it as he severs the neck and catches the blood in a small iron cup.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (cont'd)

Thank you bird for giving us your blood.

Adam laughs as he puts the carcass in the cloth bag over his shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Anna bends down to pick up the eggs, which she carefully wraps with cloth and stuffs into her woven sling bag.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (cont'd)
Thank you, mama.

ADAM
Why do you talk to dead things?

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
Adam, because nothing is worth having
except life.

They keep walking til they find a suitable hollow, protected from sight and the wind.

EXT. A SUITABLE HOLLOW - CONTINUOUS

A patch of land lying lower and surrounded by long soft grass.

Anna spreads out a thin cloth for them to sit on and builds a fire.

Dina sinks to sit behind a bush to keep watch.

The rogues put the fowl and blood soup on the fire. Adam lights a little pipe.

Adam gets up and walks off into the grassy field.

Dina starts, rolls over and lies down flat.

While he is gone Anna sprinkles a tiny amount of blood on the fire as an offering.

Adam returns with a handful of pebbles and gives them to Anna.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
So how it begins is, the baby Ibonia
while in the womb of his mother,
Beautiful-Rich, lets it be known that
he will marry Joy-Giving Girl.

She counts out nine pebbles and lays them in three rows. They start a game of fanoron.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (cont'd)
 So in life Ibonia and Joy-Giving
 Girl, they meet and one thing leads
 to another and they will marry. But
 of course, just before -

ADAM
 Trouble-Stone-Man steals Joy-Giving
 Girl away.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
 Yes. Trouble-Stone-Man steals
 Joy-Giving Girl away.
 And before Ibonia can save Joy-Giving
 Girl -

ADAM
 Before he can save her, he must win a
 verbal duel against the Great Echo.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
 He must win a verbal duel against the
 Great Echo.

Anna has a swig of from the iron cup and passes the rest to
 Adam. They eat some of the roasted flesh.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (cont'd)
 Now, that's enough. The rest is for
 padkos.

Anna puts the eggs close to the coals. She places some
 stones around the glowing coals as a barrier.

Dina watches intently as the rogues settle for the night.

Anna and Adam huddle up close to each other.

Dina waits, then pads over and reaches down to steal an egg.

Anna opens her eye and grabs Dina by the ankle.

EXT. COTTAGE PORCH - DAWN (1730S)

The garden has grown wild around the cottage. Cornstalks
 bend in the breeze. A fishing net and a single dress hang on
 the line, as well as two child-sized shirts.

A lantern decorates the porch.

The door opens and a man leaves with his baggage.

INT. COTTAGE VOORKAMER (CONTINUOUS)

A sparsely furnished room with a wooden table and some chairs. There is a clock on the wall. ANNA sits at the table counting some money.

Her two sons, KLEIJN JAN and FRANS (now aged 8 and 9) come out from the bedroom, only dressed in trousers and sandals.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
Come back with some big ones, boys.

They give their mother a kiss on the cheek before leaving.

EXT. COTTAGE PORCH - CONTINUOUS

The boys take the net from the line and leave the house, towards the sea.

EXT. COURTYARD OF SLAVE LODGE - DAY (1733)

Dina and her child, RACHEL (5) sit with the Rio de la Goan women in the courtyard. They weave baskets from straw. Some women sew. Dina teaches Rachel to plait the straw.

DINA
Look here, Rachel. It's one and two and three. Look, once they get going, you can dream while the rhythm does the work.

Rachel tries and gets it and then stops

RACHEL
Mama? Like one and two and three and then?

Smiesing walks out of the boy's schoolroom with his books under his arm. Lisbeth elbows Dina.

The other women whisper and look at Dina, wait for a reaction. Dina makes a rude gesture and the other women laugh.

Smiesing approaches. Dina straightens up.

DINA
Rachel, wait here with Ma Lisbeth. She'll show you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

But I got it already!

Dina gets up and follows Smiesing. They walk across the courtyard into his room.

Rachel watches her mother disappear, shrugs.

EXT. SIGNAL HILL - DUSK - 1736

A SENTRY GUARD oversees four slaves, BARKAT, BATJOE, ARON and TITUS who are shackled together at the feet as they collect firewood.

He is dressed in a blue shirt and coat and shoes while the slaves are barefoot in dirty rags.

The sentry sits down to smoke a pipe in the shade. He takes out a bottle of liquor and has a swig.

The slaves, laden with dry kindle, walk to where the sentry is sitting and lay it at his feet. He does not respond.

BARKAT

(whispering)

Now!

The four men leap upon the sentry and pin him to the ground.

BARKAT

Hold the bastard! Here, in my pants, grab the rope.

SENTRY

Oh, don't kill me! Have mercy on your baas. Here, have some wine!

BARKAT

Shut the fuck up.

Barkat takes the wine and has a sip.

BATJOE

Bend your arse, I can't reach.

They manage to tie the sentry's hands with the rope and fasten a bush around his neck.

They then tie his feet to the other end of the bush, so that he has to bend over with his head to his knees.

The sentry squirms uncomfortably.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TITUS

Here baas, here's wood for you. You want some more?

The slaves laugh as they try to get the sentry's clothes off his body while synchronising their movements.

ARON

Uh, no, no. There's no way to get his clothes off like this.

BARKAT

Untie him then, but quick!

The slaves undo the knot again and divest him of his clothes.

Barkat empties his pockets. There are four silver coins, some copper and silver buttons.

He takes off the sentry's hat and replaces it with his old one, winks at him.

They tie him up once more, naked but for an old hat.

Carry him off.

ARON

This is the place.

They swing and drop the sentry into a hole and he screams.

The four men head to the tool shed under the battery.

TITUS

Aha! Look what we have.

Barkat picks up an axe and destroys the chains binding their feet together.

The men stamp around and kick in the air.

Barkat tosses the axe to Batjoe who dodges it, letting it fall before he picks it up.

Barkat then grabs the musket and cartidge case. He quickly takes off his shirt and swops it for the sentry's new one.

Titus picks up the flacon of wine before they skulk off along the bushes flanking the footpath.

OFFICIAL 1 (O.S)

And you weren't there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DINA (O.S.)
Yes

OFFICIAL 1
Yes what?

DINA
Yes sir. I was not there.

OFFICIAL 1 (O.S.)
So how would you know?

DINA (O.S.)
By listening when people talk.

EXT. DUNES - DAWN

Just before sunrise in the dunes. Nothing stirs. Batjoe opens his eye and sits up, checks to see his weapon is there and looks around.

BATJOE
Men, wake up, wake up! Let's get up there, quick!

He elbows the other three, who sit up with a start. All four get up from where they slept in the dunes and make towards a hill.

They trundle up the slope keeping bent below the bushes.

From the vantage point of the hilltop they can see the farm of Jan Kuyperman and the kraal where the slaves and animals are kept.

There is a fire in the compound and one can see the outline of three men, JAN CUYPERMAN'S SLAVES sitting around it.

BARKAT
Okay, Titus. You go down and set the scene for us. Find out where the master is and if the jongens are in with us.

Titus looks unconvinced.

BATJOE
Ja, and bring a little something to eat.

They pat him on the back and watch as Titus descends the hill alone, uncertain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He approaches the kraal. Three men around the fire with a cooking pot.

Suddenly, he becomes aware of A YOUNG KHOI SHEPHERD on the path who watches him.

TITUS

Morning, brother. Whose farm is this then? You have a piece of bread you can break off for a hungry man?

YOUNG KHOI SHEPHERD

This farm belongs to my baas, Jan Kuyperman. The jongens over there are in charge of the food.

TITUS

Thank you brother, And how are these jongens of Master Kuyperman? Is there a chance someone will share his tobacco with me?

YOUNG KHOI SHEPHERD

They are fine. If you want a share in the tobacco, I suggest coming to the kraal at the day's end.

TITUS

Brother, I thank you.

Titus heads back up the hill to tell his mates.

ARON

Did you bring us something to eat?

The men look at Titus, who grins weakly.

EXT. KRAAL OF JAN KUYPERMAN - NIGHT

The men hide their weapons under their clothing.

They wait outside the kraal gate, where the shepherd opens for them and leads them to the slave quarters.

They walk past a sheep enclosure and chicken coop.

They enter a room lit up by two lanterns on opposite sides on the earthen floor. There is a communal bed made of straw. A chest stands next to the foot of the bed.

The four greet KUYPERMAN'S SLAVES. There are two older men and one youngster, sitting on the bed, cross-legged.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They look around and walk straight to seat themselves on the chest.

Kuyperman's slaves leap from the bed and attack them with kirries.

Barkat takes out his pistol and points it at Kuyperman's men.

But the younger of his slaves knocks the pistol out of his grip with his kirry.

There is a scuffle, Barkat grabs the kirry, a shot goes off and Barkat escapes alone.

EXT. DUNES - NIGHT

Barkat runs out of the enclosure, startling the chickens and makes off into the dunes.

Sprints, tearing through bushes with the kirry ahead of him, breathing hard.

Stops to catch his breath and look behind him.

He keeps going in the opposite direction of the farm.

BARKAT

Bloody fuck!

He hears a reply. Ducks.

A footfall through the veld. A man, ALEXANDER (30) approaches.

ALEXANDER

(quietly)

Brother? Come out I saw you already.

Barkat stays where he is.

BARKAT

Who is that?

ALEXANDER

I come from Leander's. I heard his brother Aron broke free from Lion's Head. Did you see him?

Barkat stands up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARKAT

Jesus, fuck. I was then with him an hour ago. We were chained together a day ago. They all three got captured by Kuyperman's jongens. It's not safe to go there now.

ALEXANDER

And you? You come with anything?

BARKAT

They got my musket. One bullet was spent. I've nothing but a fucking kirry.

ALEXANDER

Come, that's good. I got this assegai. Let's go pay Juffrouw Tendamme's a little visit.

EXT. JAN GITSENS KRAAL - DAWN

A large farmstead with a main house and further back a kraal where animals are kept and the slaves sleep.

ALEXANDER

So, you ready? We'll get food after this. Make as much noise as you can to confuse him.

BARKAT

Don't say that word. My belly is hard from hunger.

They split, running.

EXT. JAN GITSENS KRAAL CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

A small enclosure outside the kraal with about 20 chickens.

Barkat sneaks into the coop and the chickens flap around. He starts to beat at them with his kirry. The chickens screech and flap.

EXT. OUTSIDE JAN GITSENS KRAAL SLAVE QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Within the kraal, a room is set aside for the slaves. Alexander hides behind the corner and waits with his assegai ready.

EXT. JAN GITSENS KRAAL CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

Barkat continues beating on and on while the volume of chickens in distress increases. Blood and feathers. A cock crows. He begins to laugh from the nerves.

EXT. OUTSIDE JAN GITSENS KRAAL SLAVE QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

The door opens from inside and an old slave peers out. He curses at the chickens.

OLD SLAVE MAN

Jesus, an old man can't even get the last bit of precious little rest owed to him! What devilish howling!

As he winds the corner to the coop, Alexander lunges and sticks him in the neck with the assegai. The man clutches at his throat and falls forward. The cock continues crowing.

Alexander ties a rope around the neck of the old slave. Signals for Barkat to join him.

Barkat stops the beating. He follows Alexander. Forgets his kirry behind.

They drag the old man and leave him tied up behind his house. He continues to moan and scream. Barkat and Alexander enter the room.

INT. JAN GITSENS KRAAL SLAVE QUARTERS

A room lit by one candle. A straw bed and a chest next to the bed with a bible on it.

They knock off the bible and open the chest. They take 2 blankets, a shirt, a bag of gunpowder, 2 coats and leave.

On the way out, Alexander strangles the old man to extinguish him.

They run for it, laden with their stolen goods.

Coming to a stop to catch their breath, Barkat slaps himself on the forehead.

BARKAT

Goddam! Shit! Fuck! Fool!

ALEXANDER

What is it now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARKAT

My kirry! I forgot my kirry!

ALEXANDER

Forget the kirry. You could have brought us a chicken for the pot tonight.

BARKAT

Aaaaaaaaaaargh! Damn fuck fool!

EXT. SCHUYLHOEK

Off the curved bay of Hangklip, that looks over the edges of the land, one cannot see the end as much as the dramatic folds and drops into the sea.

Away from the coast, further up, many spiky rocky mountains rise out of smoother ones.

One such massive formation protrudes from the ground, at about a 70 degree angle. It could easily be 300m high.

About two-thirds of the way up, there is an opening. From here, a rope system is attached.

Dina is suspended and pulls herself up by rope. She concentrates hard not to look down, even as she loses footing and bits of rock crumble and fall. Ahead of her is Anna, behind her is Adam.

INT. SCHUYLHOEK

A large crescent shaped cave with the entrance opening to an overhang. In the middle is a circular stone fire pit with wooden logs to sit on.

Further back, the cave is protected from the elements. The back end of the walls are lined with canvas and various nooks and corners are used as sleeping quarters.

A warped and discoloured painting is placed in one of the natural alcoves. It is a still life of fruit.

Dina enters into the overhang and looks around, amazed. There are SIX RUNAWAYS busy pottering around with wood who stop and look up at Dina when she enters.

The old slave, JOSEPH (60) is feeding the weak fire. He wears a tunic over loose cotton trousers and has a scraggly beard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEANDER (45) is holding Anna and lets her go when he sees Dina. He is shirtless under his coat and wears loose-fitting trousers and a bandana. Scars and tattoos decorate his chest. He has a scar around the throat and a mark on his cheek where he was branded.

Leander assumes his demeanour as the leader of the gang and saunters over to Dina, looking her up and down. He circles her.

The rope pulls taut. DIANA VAN RIO DE LA GOA (25) runs to the entrance to look down. She wears a grey dress.

LEANDER
Who is that?

DIANA VAN RIO DE LA GOA
It looks like Aron!

Leander rushes to the entrance to look down. He spits.

LEANDER
That's not Aron!

Alexander appears in the entrance with Barkat behind him.

ALEXANDER
My captain, good morning everyone.
It's good to be back, Diana, what you
got going in the pot?

DIANA VAN RIO DE LA GOA
You have a new hat! What did you
bring? Did you bring me a blanket?

Anna van Madagascar shoots her a stare.

LEANDER
What news is there of Aron? I thought
you were bringing him back. Who is
this man with you?

Alexander takes out the coins and shot and shows them to Leander. He nods.

ALEXANDER
This is Barkat.

Barkat makes an extravagant bow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Barkat and Aron broke free from the battery at Lion's head. They caught Aron again.

Barkat hands over the stolen goods and puts the blankets and clothes down. Leander grabs them and looks at the quality.

He calls Anna and gives her the bigger one. The smaller blanket he throws to Diana. They immediately wrap themselves in their new gift blankets, twirl around.

Leander pulls his shotgun out of his trousers.

He holds out his hand and Alexander gives him the shot. He loads the gun and speaks decisively.

LEANDER

Get ready, we're going to the Cape.
Diana, give the men some soup.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PATH - NEXT DAY

It is a sunny day. Birds are out. Above the coast along the mountain. The slaves, Leander, Barkat, Adam, Alexander and Joseph walk, careful to stay out of sight. Leander carries his musket. Barkat holds his assegai.

Joseph lags behind.

LEANDER

Come on old man, we want to get there
before night fall.

Joseph grunts, out of breath.

The terrain curves and slopes upward. The gap between the younger slaves and Joseph widens.

Half way up, they stop to wait for him.

When he finally reaches them, Leander is holding a rope.

He ties the rope around Joseph's neck, while Joseph protests. The other slaves laugh.

LEANDER (cont'd)

If you don't keep up, you will be
choked. Now move it.

They set off again, Joseph red in the face, desperately scrambling.

EXT. VICTOR'S CATTLE POST - DUSK

A large fenced off area spanning several kilometres. A river runs nearby. A kraal is set up on a slope with a hut, and parked outside the kraal, a wagon loaded with some wood and ropes.

Further back, a long farmhouse.

On the rocks along the river are some faded Bushman paintings. The same four rogues sit and plot behind this rocky outcrop.

LEANDER

Ready? Ya?

EXT. VICTOR'S POST ENCLOSURE/HUT

Barkat calls out and lets himself into the kraal. A TALL SLAVE emerges from the hut at the sound of the gate opening. He wears leather pants and a waistcoat. Barkat tugs at his hat in greeting.

BARKAT

Good evening. My baas sent me from the other side. Our cow has wandered off and we wanted to know if you have perhaps seen any strange ones?

TALL SLAVE

Strange ones? No, there are no strange cows here. Only Councillor Eksteen's who wanders over from time to time. I didn't see any other cows that don't belong to my baas.

Barkat lunges at him, points the assegai at his throat. Leander and Adam suddenly storm into the hut.

INT. VICTOR'S POST HUT - CONTINUOUS

Two straw beds line the walls. A chest stands between them and a lantern on top of the chest.

Leander and Adam surprise the THREE HUT SLAVES. They are dressed in leather pants and waistcoats.

One stands and holds a cooling pot, the other two sit on the bed with half a bottle of wine between them.

Leander points his gun at them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEANDER

Get down! All of you! Down on the floor!

They do as he says. Adam removes their clothes and ties them up. They shiver, cower.

Leander put his foot on one of them. Adam tries to open the chest, which is locked.

Barkat marches in the tall slave, pointing the assegai into his back and throws him onto the floor.

ADAM

The key? Where is the key?

The tall slave points to his pocket. Adam squats down to take it out. He gives it to Barkat.

Adam undresses the tall slave. Joseph walks in with a huge canvas bag.

Barkat throws the contents of the chest onto the floor. There are two jackets, a pair of silver buckles, a pair of silver buttons and two pistols.

Leander picks up the jackets and gives the older one to Barkat.

Joseph folds the leather clothes and puts them into the bag.

Leander watches this and claps his hands.

LEANDER

Oh for fuck's sake, let's get out of here.

Joseph sprints to take 4 blankets from the beds. He also bags the teapot on the windowsill and the iron pot.

Leander pockets the silver items from the floor.

He takes the two pistols and spins them on his forefingers. He loads them. Takes out his old one, unloads it and chucks it in the bag.

LEANDER (cont'd)

Joseph, Adam, take this and start walking back to the schuyelhoek, already. Go!

EXT. ROAD TO CAPE - DAWN

A misty Table Mountain seen from the beach. Leander and Barkat walk towards Cape Town dressed in their newly acquired jackets.

Seaweed and jellyfish are washed up on the sand.

Barkat stops when he sees a dead pufferfish. He picks up a stick and prods it. Then he picks up the pufferfish and puts it in his bag.

LEANDER

And that? Fucking thing is going to stink.

Barkat ignores him and they walk on.

LEANDER (cont'd)

What the fuck do you want that for?

Barkat grins and looks Leander in the eye.

BARKAT

Poison.

LEANDER

I have enough stink on my trail. That is your mischief. I want no part in it, you hear me?

EXT. LION'S HEAD - LATER THAT DAY

Leander talks to TWO WOOD SELLERS. They are slaves dressed in old clothes with a cart full of firewood in bundles tied together with twine.

WOOD SELLER 1

Ya, I'll take them. I can give you four of these.

He scratches in the cart and comes up with a little box of flint.

Leander shines Barkat's silver buttons on the sleeve of his jacket and lets the sun reflect off them.

LEANDER

Five!

EXT. MOUNTAIN STREAM - LATER THAT DAY

A waterfall runs down the mountainside, feeds a stream that leads to the block where the slaves do the laundry and into the canals.

The wind blows. Barkat stands at the waterfall and urinates into the stream. He hums and takes the festering pufferfish out.

He hits it against a rock and it splits open. He pulls out the bladder and throws the disembowelled mess into the stream. It floats down.

EXT. DE WATERKANT - CONTINUOUS

The street where Anna van Dapoer lives. The wind blows hard.

A YOUNG GIRL (10) walks around with a basket selling pastries. She is in a yellow dress, with long hair, covered with a blue scarf, which the wind blows apart.

Leander struts by and whistles at her.

She walks toward him uncertainly, holding the basket.

Leander reaches into his jacket pocket.

She hands him a loaf of bread which he puts in his bag.

Leander puts a coin on her palm.

EXT. CENTRAL CAPE TOWN - DUSK

The wind blows hard. A narrow street with lots of wooden houses next to one another and red lanterns. TWO DRUNKEN MEN holding each other round the shoulders waddle down the road.

Barkat and Leander stand outside a closed tavern door. Music leaks from inside. Leander holds a bottle of wine.

Leander hands over two flintstones to Barkat. They walk to the end of the street where Barkat crouches.

He sets fire to a piece of wood and throws it up onto the roof of a house. The wooden beams catch fire and they walk off nonchalantly in the other direction.

Flames devour the whole house and spread rapidly. People scream and rush out of the buildings.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - NIGHT

Leander and Barkat stand in silhouette while the town burns below. They eat some bread and wash it down with long swigs of wine. The wind continues to blow.

INT. SCHUYLHOEK - DUSK

Rain. The runaways all sit crowded together round a dying fire.

Anna tries to feed it but the wood won't take.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
Will you burn a little longer? Lend
us your warmth. Please...

DIANA VAN RIO DE LA GOA
Looks like a cold soup day.

The rope pulls taut and everyone rushes to see.

The excitement dies down when Adam and Joseph emerge in the entrance.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
Yes, my boy. Where's Leander? What
did you bring?

Joseph unburdens himself of his canvas bag. Adam reaches in and holds up the teapot and iron pot.

Anna laughs. She looks into the bag and sighs.

JOSEPH
Leander sent us ahead. He went to the
Cape without us.

A gust of wind blows rain into the schuyelhoek. The empty teapot rattles.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY - 1734

The house is overgrown with weeds. The two shirts on the line are a size bigger, and have holes in them.

A small store room has been set up next to the house.

A little wooden boat lies upturned among among the weeds in the yard.

INT. VOORKAMER OF COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Afternoon light falls onto the same wooden table and chairs. A bowl of fruit decorates the table. Anna and her sons sit at the table. She wears a green dress. Her hair is loose and hangs over her shoulders. Some grey flecks show. She sews sheets of paper together to make a book. The older son, Frans has his right arm in a bandage.

Kleijn Jan writes on a loose leaf of paper while Frans dictates.

FRANS

The pumpkin flowers are so big,
bigger than your face.
Yesterday Frans broke his arm.

He writes.

KLEIJN JAN

Bigger than your face. Yesterday...

FRANS

Mama says bring us more books please.

KLEIJN JAN

Wait... Broke his arm. Mama says...

ANNA VAN DAPOER

And when are you coming home?

FRANS

And Mama asks when are you coming home.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

No, not 'Mama says'. Just...

KLEIJN JAN

When are you -

There is a knock on the door.

The three look at each other.

Anna gets up. The kids look expectant, abandon the writing task.

Anna ties her hair and opens the door narrow to peep through.

EXT. COTTAGE PORCH - CONTINUOUS

An OFFICIAL stands on the porch dressed in black with coat and hat.

Anna comes out and closes the door behind her. A man clears his throat.

DEATH NOTICE OFFICIAL
Anna Smiesing?

She nods and he hands her a notice, which she reads aloud.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
Thus it is noted that the former
company slave and schoolmaster, now
deceased Free Black, Johannes
Smiesing...

She stops to draw a long breath. She reads the rest in a slow monotone.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
Now deceased Free Black, Johannes
Smiesing has left the following items
to his housewife, hereto the Free
Black Widow Anna Smiesing:
1 shelf with 5 porcelain soup bowls
4 iron pots
1 legger of vinegar
2 wine casks
3 footstools with old cushions
1 writing desk
3 iron trunks
3 bibles
1 bookshelf
3 bird cages

She stops reading and screws up her eyes. She reads the last part louder.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
1 adult slave woman and 1 girl slave,
both from Rio de la Goa.

She excuses herself and turns to go back inside. The official grabs her arm. She shrugs him off.

DEATH NOTICE OFFICIAL
Will you sign this?

Anna takes the quill, paces up and down and watches the procession arrive.

EXT. OUTSIDE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

A wagon stops in front of the cottage.

Three empty birdcages hang from the back.

EXT. COTTAGE PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Anna walks to the porch railing and leans forward.

Her sons come out from the house at the sound of the wagon.

EXT. OUTSIDE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

TWO SLAVE MEN jump out the back. They are dressed in cotton. They unload the contents of the wagon at the bottom of the porch. Desk, chairs, footstools, trunks.

EXT. COTTAGE PORCH/OUTSIDE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Anna's sons look at their mother. She whispers and embraces them. The boys shake their heads, sob.

Dina and Rachel (7) slowly climb out of the wagon. They both wear long dirty skirts. Dina lifts a cage from the back and gives it to Rachel. She carries the other two.

Anna's older son breaks free from her embrace and runs down the porch, past Dina and Rachel and away from the scene towards the sea.

Anna's younger son goes down to bring the furniture up.

EXT. COTTAGE PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Anna stands on the porch and looks down at Dina and the child who look at the ground.

Anna signs the page and hands it to the official without looking at him.

EXT. DUNES - DUSK - 1737

Above the ship-house, further inland up on some rocky hill, the vague light of a fire can be seen. It looks like a mirage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DINA
Come, April, this way.

Dina and April sneak away from the ship-house. Dina has her bundle and a kirry.

She tries to figure out where the light comes from. They wind their way through bushes and rocks.

They climb the hill and arrive near a clearing in front of a cave, where the light from the fire casts shadows against the rock walls.

Dina and April close in and crouch in the bushes, some five metres from the scene.

INT./EXT. JOUMAT'S HIDEOUT - CONTINUOUS

The runaways, JOUMAT (40), MARS (40), Adam and Anna sit around a fire. Joumat has a coat with silver buttons. Mars is in rags, has a bust-up face and no teeth.

Unbeknownst to them, the Rio de la Goan women have followed Dina and watch a little way behind them. The first one has a kirry with her.

The runaways sit around the fire and pass a bottle around. There are fishbones lying in the ashes of the fire.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
My heart feels light on the road.
It's good to be away from the fear...

JOUMAT
Aye, our friend Leander. That's man
can be scarey as fuck. But that's
just his style. He likes his guns.
But...

Joumat lights a pipe.

JOUMAT (cont'd)
In my fort, I like to keep things in
order.

Rio de la Goan woman 1 motions for the others to stay behind and crawls very slowly into the cave.

ADAM
Ya, Joumat. It's really good to lie
low a while, ne.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARS
(toothlessly)
You like to keep things in order,
Joumat? Don't you mean you like us to
keep it in order for you?

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
Oh Mars. Why you always want to
argue, old Mars?

Rio de la Goan Woman 2 scuttles past them and into the cave.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (cont'd)
What? Did you see that?

ADAM
Bats.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
No, I know what a bat looks like!

Joumat jumps up and heads for the cave.

The two women run out with blankets. The first one swings
her kirry at Joumat.

He grabs it from her. They scream.

Joumat starts beating at the women with the kirry. On the
shoulders, and on the butt. He grabs the blanket from the
first and chases them down.

Anna stands up, alarmed.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (cont'd)
Joumat, what you doing! Please!
They're just women alone!

JOUMAT
Thieves, they are! In this fort we
share! Don't we, Mars?

Joumat grabs the blanket from the second women and they run
off.

He watches them go.

As he turns back he catches sight of April, who sees him and
starts running. Dina tries to grab him. Joumat sees her. She
runs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Act 2 B

INT. COTTAGE VOORKAMER - DAY - 1734

The voorkamer is crowded with furniture.

Anna van Dapoer sits on a chair with her feet up on a footstool and her head on her knees.

Dina, Rachel and Anna's youngest boy carry in the last of the stuff.

The boy goes to touch Anna on the shoulder. She looks up, disheveled. Takes her feet down from the stool.

YOUNGER SON

I'm gonna look for my brother.

Anna nods and he runs off. She looks around her.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Dina van Rio de la Goa. Is this your child?

Dina stays where she is. Rachel gives a curtsy. Dina looks at the ground. Shakes her head.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Dina?

DINA

This is my child, Rachel, yes. Rachel van de Kaap.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Dina, will you take the chairs and stack them on the porch? We have a lodger arriving tonight, he needs to be able to walk to the back room without tripping.

Dina leaves.

Anna motions for Rachel to come to her. The child trots over and waits further command.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Sit here.

Rachel sits down on the footstool.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Anna looks at her closely. She touches the child's hair.
Rachel looks up and smiles.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
Rachel. How old are you?

RACHEL
Seven years old, Madame.

Anna is silent for a while.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
And can you read and write?

RACHEL
Yes, and I know counting. And
weaving. And I know songs and I can
cook.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
Go away. Go help your mother.

Rachel runs off at the same moment Dina comes back in.

Dina walks towards the chests. Sweat beads on her face show
exhaustion from carrying heavy furniture up and down. She
wipes her brow with her sleeve and bends over to take hold
of a chest.

DINA
And these, Madame?

ANNA VAN DAPOER
No! Don't touch those!

Dina withdraws.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
Ya. Actually, drag those to my room
and shut the door. Then you can
prepare some soup for tonight.
Rachel, go next door, tell them I
sent you. There, take that basket
over there. And then Dina, when
you're done you can clean the floor.

Rachel runs off with the basket. Dina leans back and
stretches her back and then she bends down and lifts the
trunk up onto her head.

She swivels and looks at Anna as if she might hurl the iron
chest at her, then she turns to carry out the task.

INT. ANNA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The curtains are drawn and a lantern burns. A bed with white embroidered linen.

Anna sits on the edge of the bed. She is dressed entirely in black with a lace shawl over her head. She applies kohl to her eyes. Dina stands in front of her holding a mirror for her.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Dina, open that trunk

Dina hands back the mirror and lifts the lid.

At the top of a pile the portrait of Manda Grazia stares back at them.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Go away now.

The door closes and Anna sighs. She looks down into the trunk and lifts out the picture.

FLASHBACK

INT. GIRL'S SCHOOLROOM - AFTER HOURS - 1695

A girl sweeps the schoolroom. Another hangs fabric partitions. A distinctive bell sounds.

INT./EXT. LODGE HALLWAY - AFTER HOURS - CONTINUOUS

There is a collective sigh. The boys and men in the lodge line up like clockwork to carry out the slop buckets.

INT. GIRL'S SCHOOLROOM - AFTER HOURS - CONTINUOUS

Incense is lit. Some women weep and hold each other, while others sing over the weeping, make themselves pretty, rub oil on their hair, and kohl around their eyes. Some women have dark bruises on their bodies, revealed while they undress.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE LODGE GATES - AFTER HOURS - CONTINUOUS

A noisy horde of free men hustle to get into the lodge, as the slave men and boys file out looking utterly hollowed out.

Among those entering are sailors, Free Blacks, governors, dodgy, diseased looking types as well as 'regular inoffensive' looking men.

Some are refused admission at the door and argue, others turn on their heel, spit curses. Squabbling and rude jostling.

INT. LODGE DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

At the door, packages are exchanged for admission. The mandoor stands guard and MANDA GRAZIA leads customers to their spot in the schoolroom.

After they are shown to their corners, the men have free reign.

INT. GIRL'S SCHOOLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Some corners are more expensive than others and draped with colourful silk and flowers. The most expensive are behind closed doors.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The cheapest corners are downstairs in the basement. Open-plan style half-heartedly covered with sackcloth.

Women have different reactions, some play the part, most curl up and try to resist but it is futile.

The noises are horrifying. Groans, sighs, weeping, screaming. Overlaid with grunts of gratification.

INT. MANDA GRAZIA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MANDA GRAZIA receives a visitor to her room. He is a well-dressed European and looks healthy. She seems happy to see him. He brings her gifts of necklaces and perfume.

The man walks out, leaving his coat behind. She looks after him, wistfully.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIMELAPSE:

MANDA GRATIA holding a baby notably whiter than herself.

INT. ANNA'S BEDROOM - 1734

Anna lifts the portrait out and leans it against the bed. She reaches into the trunk and pulls out Smiesing's jacket. She holds it for a while and then lays it on the bed as if it were a person.

She reaches into the chest again and takes out the red notebook.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN - SOME TIME LATER

A steaming pot is on the fire. Dina stands over the stove and Rachel is on hands and knees on the floor.

RACHEL
How long will we stay here, ma?

Dina is silent. She takes the knife and cuts an onion, unblinking.

There is a knock on the door.

Anna van Dapoer comes out of her room dressed in black.

Rachel stands up.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
Dina, why is the table not set?

Anna walks to the door to open it.

She stands in the doorway to greet the VISITOR (40), a man dressed in a cape with a hood.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
(about Dina)
Honestly, they never learn!

VISITOR (O.S.)
Mmm. Nice little place you have here.
That food smells like paradise.

She turns to Dina.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Dina, did you hear me? Go and get Mr Reyneveld's baggage at once.

She opens the door wide to let Dina out. Dina shrinks through the door.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

(in a sweet voice)

Rachel, would you set the table for us? This poor man has been travelling all day.

The man enters.

VISITOR

All my life. But you are right. Exhausted.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

This way, please Mr Ryneveld. If you'll excuse the chaos.

She leads the man in to the back room.

Dina comes in with the baggage. Rachel drops a plate and it breaks. Dina quickly bends down and tries to pick up the pieces.

Anna comes rushing in. She sees Dina who looks flustered.

DINA

Sorry Madame.

Anna stands over her, shakes her head.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

For that you'll go hungry tonight.

Rachel finishes setting the table. And curtsies.

Anna takes a seat at the table. She pours a cup of wine and drains it.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Thank you, Rachel. Now go call the mister and tell him dinner is ready.

The front door opens and Anna's sons appear.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Dina, fix two more places. Rachel, you can sit here on the end.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The boys look dazed and sit down at the table immediately. They look at their mother. She reaches out to touch their hands.

The visitor joins them at the table.

Rachel hovers, looks at Dina.

Dina nods and sits herself out of sight on the kitchen floor.

Rachel sit down on a chair at the end of the table. The man smiles at her. She looks down.

EXT. PORCH OF BEACH COTTAGE - DAY

The chairs have been polished and stand on the porch.

Dina sits on the floor of the porch with a knife, cuts open a pumpkin. She hacks at the peel with a blunt knife.

Rachel sits with her and collects the seeds. Dina takes some into her mouth.

Anna van Dapoer comes out and surveys the chairs. She takes a seat in one of them.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Very nice, girls. We can auction these chairs off now for a handsome price. Dina when you're done, go over to Mrs Mouton. Her mother needs to be bathed and changed. It's no good being idle. Also I want that storeroom cleared out before you go anywhere.

Dina nods.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Did you hear me?

DINA

I heard you Madame.

Anna's sons come out with their fishing net. They wear shorts, long shirts and sandals.

OLDER SON

Ma, we not taking the boat today. The tide is out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Anna looks at the little overturned boat among the weeds. She looks at the sea, which is indeed rough.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Ya. We might as well take that little wreck to the auction while we're at it.

YOUNGER SON

No, ma. It's only today!

OLDER SON

Ma, we can't change the tide.

YOUNGER SON

Ya, ma. We can't exactly change the tide! We would if we could, but that's impossible!

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Don't cry boys. Rachel, be a rock and go out with your brothers.

The boys look at each other. Rachel looks at Dina.

Anna, flustered, realises what she just said, gets up and disappears back into the house.

The three children leave together. Rachel looks back at Dina as she walks away.

They look like brothers and sister except for the fact that Rachel is barefoot.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN - DUSK

Anna sits at the table in the voorkamer looking over a book. There is a cup and an open bottle of wine on the table.

She looks at the clock. Drinks the contents of the cup.

EXT. STREET LEADING TO COTTAGE

Dina walks fast up the street on her way back to the house. A slave wood seller passes her by and tries to talk to her. She turns to look at him while walking away.

She breaks into a trot until she reaches the house.

INT. COTTAGE VOORKAMER

The interior is dark. Anna has a candle lit. The bottle stands empty.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
Afternoon Dina.

DINA
Madame

ANNA VAN DAPOER
A little late? And how is old Mrs Mouton? Did the Madam give you kosgeld?

Dina looks at her, taken aback.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
Hand it over here. I'll see that the money goes to getting Rachel some new clothes. The poor thing looks so neglected.

Dina reaches into her pocket and takes out a single coin. Hands it to Anna.

The boys and Rachel come in, each carrying two fish.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
Ah! You didn't get rained on?

OLDER SON
We did but we dry already

They march to the kitchen and dump their catch into the wash basin for Dina to clean.

They go back out to hang up the net.

Dina starts scaling the fish with a knife.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
Dina, you've been away all day. We have a lodger coming. Have you even changed the sheets this morning?

DINA
Yes madame, I changed the sheets

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Don't get clever with me. Finish up there so that we can feed the household tonight. And try not to make an unpleasant scene. You realise you are living here at my expense.

She guts the fish and pulls out the intestines.

DINA

Yes, madame

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Good, so I won't have you dragging your feet. Show a bit of gratitude. You expect to live like a free person? Do you know what that takes? Hard work, my girl.

Dina finishes up with the fish and lights the stove fire.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Sometimes I wonder to myself why I took pity on you. Maybe I should have just left you on the street to fulfil your natural instincts.

The younger son enters the kitchen.

YOUNGER SON

Dina, didn't you clean the boat? We are supposed to take it out tomorrow!

Anna smiles as if vindicated.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

That's it. I wasn't even going to mention it, because it is such a simple matter. But what is obvious to a person of basic intelligence, seems to entirely escape you.

Dina fills up the pot with water. She puts the fish to soak in vinegar. Peels some garlic.

The older son and Rachel enter the voorkamer.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Children, you can thank our Dina. The boat is now so unworthy of attention that we have to sell it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOTH BOYS

Ma! No!

They look at Dina and storm out. Rachel looks at her sadly and follows them.

Anna and Dina are alone in the kitchen

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Come on Dina, you have got to try a little. You can't just expect the world to provide for you. You need to have something to offer?

DINA

Madame?

Anna sighs and walks out.

Dina lays the table, hums softly to herself.

There is a knock on the door.

The older son comes to answer the door. He lets in MR GREY (24), a youngish soldier dressed in uniform. They greet.

OLDER SON

Dina, luggage!

She douses the flame and makes her way toward the door.

Anna van Dapoer has entered and stands watching.

MR GREY

Yes, I also have a horse that needs refreshing.

Dina nods and exits.

Mr Grey eyes her from behind.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Welcome Mr Grey. Come let me show you your room. Dinner is just about ready.

He nods in approval and follows her.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (O.S.)

There you go. If there's anything else your heart desires, don't be shy to ask.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He clears his throat.

Dina enters with the luggage and takes it through.

INT. TABLE IN THE VOORKAMER

The end of the meal. Anna and her sons and Mr Grey at the table. Rachel sits at the end. Dina takes the plates away.

MR GREY

(to Anna)

Hot food at the end of a day. Few things come close.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Boys, Rachel, you may be excused.

They get up and leave.

Anna smiles, pours more wine for herself and the man, but he puts his hand over his glass.

MR GREY

Thank you. That'll do. Now about that offer you made earlier, I think I could settle for something like that.

He takes out five silver coins.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Certainly. You may use the store room if you please.

She stands up and almost falls over.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Just a moment. Let me... Dina! Dina, the store room key.

Dina walks to the clock and reaches to the top where the key is kept. Anna approaches her, takes the key and whispers.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Go to my room and put on my green dress then come to the store room.

Dina looks at Anna, taken aback.

Mr Grey remains seated. Decides to pour a glass of wine and waits.

Dina disappears in the direction of Anna's room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Anna, tipsy, paces up and down in search of something. She picks up a lantern and tries to light it.

Dina comes back dressed in green. She looks ashamed and stares at the ground.

Anna succeeds in lighting the lamp. She takes Dina by the crook of her arm, holds the lantern in her other hand.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
Mr Grey, follow me.

Anna van Dapoer leads Dina out the front door, holding up the lantern.

EXT. YARD BEHIND COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

They stand before the door of the storehouse. Anna hands the key to Dina.

She shines the light on her as Dina turns the key.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
Dina, go inside

Dina hesitates. Anna nudges her inside and shuts the door.

She leans against it smiling at Mr Grey.

Dina bangs on it from the inside.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
She's a feisty one, Mr Grey. You
might have to tame her with the belt.

She shines the lamp on his waist to reveal a silver buckle.

MR GREY
Only if it's necessary.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
You have one hour. You'll find your
way to the house, I trust.

He thanks her as Anna passes him the lamp and key.

Mr Grey lets himself in and locks the door.

EXT. YARD/COTTAGE PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Anna walks back to the house, stumbling over the net that lies sprawled over the porch railing. Curses. Laughs.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Under the wash up area, Rachel lies under a blanket in a bed made on the floor. The space next to her is empty.

At the sound of Anna tripping, Rachel sits up.

RACHEL
(in a small voice)
Ma?

INT. COTTAGE VOORKAMER - CONTINUOUS

Anna enters, tottering. Rachel crawls back under the covers, hiding her face.

Anna drinks the last of the wine straight from the bottle.

She looks at the clock. It is eleven at night. She leaves the table lamp burning, goes to her room.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Silence. Rachel pulls the blanket down. Listens.

The clock ticks. And ticks. And ticks. She pulls the blanket over her head.

EXT. OUTSIDE COTTAGE - DAY - SOME TIME LATER

Dina carries the chairs from the porch to where a wagon waits. She moves as if her back can't bend.

TWO WAGON SLAVES, dressed in grey cotton help load the items onto the platform. Anna van Dapoer sits in front. She is no longer in mourning garb. She wears Smiesing's coat.

Dina walks slowly to the upturned little boat and tries to lower herself to get a grip on the edges.

WAGON SLAVE 1 trots over to her. He squats down and picks up a stick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He draws a sketch on the ground with the stick. It looks like a map.

Then reaches to pick up the light boat, and carry it off.

Dina traces and erases the sand drawing with her foot. Looks up.

Anna's sons are on the porch with Rachel and watch the wagon pull away with their beloved boat.

INT. VOORKAMER - NIGHT - SOME TIME LATER

The table is set. There is a bowl of fruit. Wine. And butter.

Anna sits at the table writing columns of numbers down in a book. She has on new bright clothes. Smiesing's coat hangs over the chair.

Rachel stands behind her plaiting her hair. When she is finished, she hands a mirror to Anna.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Not bad. Tomorrow we will get you a new dress made.

Rachel squeals with delight and dances on the spot. She looks at Dina, who is busy at the stove. Rachel waves her hands as if she has wings.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dina takes a pot off the fire. She turns it upside down.

Rachel swoops in on her, jumps on the spot. Dina pauses as if in question.

RACHEL

Mama, mama! Madame said I'll get a new dress!

Dina smiles. Lifts the pot to reveal a round loaf of bread, slightly burnt on the bottom. Rachel gazes at it hungrily.

DINA

You'll look very pretty. Did you say thank you?

There is a knock at the door. Dina wipes her hands on the apron.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Anna rises to let in the lodger.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
Mr Meijn. Welcome.

Dina reacts at the sound of the name.

JAN MEIJN (55) enters the room, takes off his hat. He is dressed in old brown rags and looks down and out. His face is tanned and he has a big red scraggly beard. An old leather sack hangs over his shoulder.

JAN MEIJN
Is that bread I smell?

Dina walks past him, bows slightly and turns to look at him before going out to bring in his belongings.

JAN MEIJN (cont'd)
Listen, meijd. I don't have more luggage. But I left my little jongen in the wagon. Will you take him a bit to eat tonight? Just enough to keep him alive.

Dina nods, turns back to stand at attention in the kitchen.

ANNA VAN DAPOER
Oh, let the poor thing sleep in the kitchen with my slaves.

JAN MEIJN
Oh, out of the question. This little scamp tries to run away at every turn. That what happens when they mingle. Ideas in the head.

Anna leads him to his room in the back.

While they are gone, Dina runs out the door.

EXT. PORCH OF COTTAGE

Dina leans over the railing to peek at the wagon.

There is a box on the back covered with a piece of canvas.

She goes back inside quickly.

INT. COTTAGE VOORKAMER

The table disheveled by the time Jan Meijn finishes eating. Anna, her sons and Rachel sit watching him. Anna's food is almost untouched and her glass is half empty.

Jan Meijn sits licking his fingers. There is butter in his beard. Anna looks at him disapprovingly. Anna's sons and Rachel stifle laughter.

Anna wipes her mouth with a napkin. She calls Dina.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Take away the mess and share the scraps between you and the little jongen.

She rises from the table and pushes her chair back in.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Good night everyone, I am quite depleted of good humour. Mr Meijn, you can take breakfast with the boys tomorrow. My eldest son Frans is in charge of the books from tomorrow.

Frans looks surprised. Proud.

FRANS

Really, ma? I'm in charge?

The other children look at him with raised eyebrows.

Anna nods and briskly walks towards her room. On the way, she takes a wine bottle off the shelf with her.

Dina takes the plates away.

JAN MEIJN

Hey boys, what do you say we play a little game?

FRANS

Ah, thanks but we have numbers to learn.

The children leave all at once.

Jan Meijn drains the last of the wine on the table. Burps. He drinks Anna's glass that she left half. Takes a small bottle from his jacket. Has a swig. Talks to himself, half slur half nonsense song.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dina divides the leftovers and puts them into two small wooden bowls, to the sound of the drunken ramble:

JAN MEIJN (O.S.)

You think these women are beautiful, wait til you see the boys. The boys of the Cape do numbers too. Numbers too. A man has to sit all alone because he can't do numbers? Tell me what do numbers mean when you got no friends...

EXT. OUTSIDE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Dina exits with a lantern in one hand and bowl and cup in the other. She tiptoes to the wagon. Look under it. Nothing.

She lifts the canvas hanging over the box and gasps.

It is a wicker cage. A boy is inside, up against the edges, He can hardly move.

APRIL VAN RIO DE LA GOA

Food?

Dina tries to pass it to him, but the bowl won't fit through the space between the bars.

She looks at the cage door, which is secured with three knots of twine. Tries to jerk it open. It is fastened tight.

DINA

Child, who is this baas of yours?

April has his eyes on the bowl of food.

APRIL VAN RIO DE LA GOA

Hungry...

Dina take a piece of bread of passes it to him. He eats it straight from her hand. She pulls away.

She pushes more through the cage and it falls onto him. April weakly picks up the chunks. Almost chokes, starts coughing.

DINA

Wait. Hold still.

Dina tries to get some water. to him but it won't fit through.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She pours some into her hand so he can slurp it from her cupped palm.

DINA (cont'd)
Listen to me, child. What is your name?

April looks up, eyes searching for more food.

DINA (cont'd)
Is your baas, Jan Meijn?

He nods.

DINA (cont'd)
(urgently)
And you? What do they call you?

APRIL VAN RIO DE LA GOA
April

Dina inhales. Sobs.

DINA
April, baby. I knew your mother. I made a promise to her. Give me your hand.

He stretches out his hand. She takes the rest of the food, scrunches it into a ball and plops it into his hand.

He eats it, more slowly.

Dina runs back to the house.

INT. COTTAGE VOORKAMER - CONTINUOUS

Jan Meijn is passed out at the table. Drools. Snores.

Dina tiptoes behind him. Tries to reach the leather bag around his shoulder but his arm is tucked over it.

She tries from the front and he snorts loud and she takes fright.

Dina takes a knife. Looks at Jan Meijn. She grabs a clean folded tablecloth and makes a bundle. Grabs some oranges, dried fish, bread, hand mirror, the coat over Anna's chair and the dirty cape of Jan Meijn that lies discarded at his feet. She puts on the coat, ties the bundle.

EXT. OUTSIDE COTTAGE

Dina runs to the exposed cage on the wagon.

DINA
(screamed whisper)
April, be very quiet!

She clutches the bundle with one arm and tries to slice the twine knots with the knife edge.

The knots are tough and the knife blunt. She applies more force, saws hard and fast. The first knot begins to show signs of loosening.

There is a noise from inside, as if something fell. Dina looks toward the house and keeps sawing, harder and faster.

Another noise, Dina continues to saw. She sweats.

The second knot is done. The door is looser but still cant open. She jerks and tries to force it. Wont budge.

Suddenly Dina picks up the cage and lifts it above her head. She walks to a nearby wall.

DINA (cont'd)
Hold tight to the back, April. Don't
make any sound.

She smashes the front of the cage against the wall and the door breaks open. She lowers it, gasping from the exertion.

April is curled up into a tight little ball.

She pulls him out, dropping the knife in the long grass.

Ivory tusks tumble out of the bottom of the cage.

DINA (cont'd)
Quickly, the knife!

She runs to grab the bundle, picks up the canvas cloth and joins April. They scan the grass with their arms spread.

DINA (cont'd)
No, we don't have time, come!

She grabs his hand and pulls him into a tip toed trot. They make their way through the dark streets.

INT. COTTAGE VOORKAMER - DAWN

The lamp still burns on the kitchen table. Jan Meijn lies slumped on the floor with his head resting against a chair.

Frans walks into the room holding a lantern. He looks annoyed. He snuffs out the other lamp.

FRANS

Dina! Why is the fire not lit? And didn't you have the sense to nip the lantern? Oil is expensive! Wake up!

He rounds the corner to find Rachel on her floor bed in the kitchen sobbing.

FRANS (cont'd)

What's the matter? Where is your mother? Where is Dina?

Rachel is racked with sobs and can't stop.

Frans walks out the door. Calls Dina.

EXT. PORCH OF COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

He walks out the porch, looks to where the boat used to be.

See the busted cage lying on its back near the wall. He calls for his mother.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

Jan Meijn is conscious and seated on a chair.

Anna and her sons stand over Rachel who sits at her end of the table, shaking.

JAN MEIJN

Seven years. I fed that scoundrel for seven years.

Rachel is still crying. The younger son tries to comfort her.

KLEIJN JAN

Come on Rachel, don't cry. This is important. We need to find out who took your mother.

Frans laughs at his brother.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANS

You fool. Nobody took Dina! She ran away and she stole a little jongen!

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Frans, go report this to the officers! Time is fleeting!

JAN MEIJN

And my cape. That I've worn since I was married. Thank god she didn't get my pistol.

He takes it out of his bag.

FRANS

(on way out)

Yeah, I wish she had and shot you in the face! ... Wait, someone actually married you?

KLEIJN JAN

... I don't understand...Why would Dina want to run away?

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Quiet down, I'm trying to get some sense out of this child.

Anna wipes Rachel's face.

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)

Rachel, if you keep crying we can't get your new dress. Now speak up. When did you last see your mama?

RACHEL

When we got back from numbers class, mama wasn't here.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

And why didn't you call me at once?

RACHEL

I thought she....I thought...(sobbing) she would come back later like the other times. And I... was scared.

ANNA VAN DAPOER

Okay good. Now Rachel, think carefully. Did your mama say anything about where she would go? Ever?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN DAPOER (cont'd)
Did she talk about a place she wanted
to go?

Rachel sniffs. Looks Anna dead in the eye.

RACHEL
She always wanted to go home.

YOUNGER SON
Ma, why did Dina want to go back to
the Lodge?

EXT. CAPE TOWN - CONTINUOUS

The streets below the Smiesing house. There is an ARMED
GUARD smoking a pipe.

Frans runs to him waving his arms.

FRANS
Two slaves escaped during the night!
A woman and a child! We need to send
a commando! Immediately!

The guard nods. Blows a horn.

EXT. DUNES - NIGHT

The rocky grassy terrain near Joumat's hideout.

Dina runs after April. Tries to hide from Joumat, who is on
her trail.

She trips over an anthill and looks up to see that Joumat is
standing ahead of her.

She pulls herself up, bolts in the opposite direction and
straight into Mars.

MARS
Look here, what pretty meijd is this?

He grabs Dina and holds her against him. She freezes.

Joumat shakes his head.

JOUMAT
Hands off, Mars. I found her, and
she's on my territory.

Mars laughs and spits on the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARS

Oh, I don't think so. She ran right into me. She chose me!

He laughs. Dina struggles hard, tries to get out of his grip.

Mars unbuttons his pants and throws her to the ground.

Dina manouevres onto all fours.

Mars pins her down and lifts her skirt.

Dina lets out a blood-curdling shriek, lashes out scratching and punching.

Anna and Adam come running. Shouting.

ADAM

What's going on? Who's screaming like that?

They look on in horror.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

Joumat! No! No!

She rushes toward him but cannot stop him.

Joumat pierces Mars though the back with his sword. In and out repeatedly. Mars cries out and then makes a low gurgling noise from the punctured lung.

Dina's screams become sobs as he collapses on her.

Joumat continues digging into his back with the sword. Blood streams from various punctures in the skin. Drip onto Dina.

When Joumat takes a break to change hands, Dina gives Mars a powerful kick with both legs, rolls onto her side and runs.

JOUMAT

See you later, meid. I know this land intimately.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

Joumat! Joumat! Have you gone crazy? What is this? How can you do this to a brother?

She kneels down, takes her blanket to try to staunch the blood pooling out of Mars's back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOUMAT

He asked for it. Blatant disregard
for the order of things.

INT. CASTLE - DAY - 1737

The officials look at Dina.

She shakes her head.

OFFICIAL 1

Disgusting. You were clearly the
reason for this man's suffering.

Dina looks at him in disbelief.

EXT. DUNES - NIGHT - 1736

Mars jerks his arms and continues to moan and rasp.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

Oh Mars, just lie still. Order,
Joumat? The order of killing a
brother to make a point? Claim the
body of a sister? Respect? In whose
eyes? Adam, hold here I need to find
some string to sew him up.

Adam takes over pressing the wounds of Mars.

Joumat swings his sword at Anna.

JOUMAT

Stop. You're not stitching him up.
If you try, I will kill you. Both.

Joumat draws a rectangle 2m x 1m in the sand with his sword.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

What are you doing, you animal? I
don't want a part of this!

Joumat laughs.

JOUMAT

Right here. Adam, start digging. This
is my kill, Anna. You get to help
clean up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

Joumat! The man's not dead But he
soon will be if we don't cover the
wound. Now let me pass.

Joumat points the sword at her throat.

JOUMAT

Dig, bitch

Anna is wooden. She starts scratching the sand with her
hands.

Adam joins her. They don't talk.

EXT. CENTRAL CAPE TOWN - DAY - 1737

A commando of TEN ARMED MEN on horses are gathered in a
semi-circle.

The leader addresses the men.

COMMANDO LEADER

This time, we get those rogues. They
are making the rest of them very
tame. They've become legends, now
everyone thinks they can run away.

Two of the men are white, and ride in front, three men are
Khoi and the five others, officer slaves. Among them, is
Alexander.

COMMANDO LEADER (cont'd)

Alexander, come, you said you could
show us where these low lives hide,
now prove yourself boy.

Alexander trots to the front to join the masters. They all
set off, up the path.

EXT. DUNES

The wind blows. Joumat holds a lantern while Anna and Adam
keep digging.

Mars lies bleeding. He tries to speak but only noises escape
from him.

The grave is ready and Joumat shines the light on Mars, who
lies still.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOUMAT

Put him in there, Adam.

Adam picks up the torso and Mars jerks, his eyes roll back and blood runs down the sides of his mouth. Adam drops him.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

Just kill him, already. Why are you doing this, Joumat?

JOUMAT

He will die the way I say he will die. Now get him in there or join him.

Anna goes to Mars. She tries to close his eyes with her hands. They spring back open involuntarily. Mars tries to speak but strings of blood pour out of his mouth.

EXT. DUNES - DUSK

A wind blows. The commandoes gallop over terrain familiar. They stop to water the horses.

EXT. DUNES - NIGHT

Dina crawls through the long grass. She shouts for April in whispers. She hears a woman scream. She runs toward the sound of the scream.

EXT. DUNES - NIGHT

The bushes are blown in all direction and sand blasts over Adam and Anna who are on hands and knees, and push armfuls of sand over the grave where Mars is buried half-alive. Anna weeps silently. Sand sticks to her cheeks.

When they are done, Joumat walks over it and pisses on the grave.

JOUMAT

Now, you can come and have a pipe with me, or you can go back to Leander and tell him how a man keeps things tidy.

Adam and Anna look at each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

Joumat I wish my eyes never saw what
they did tonight. I wish my hands
were clean. We'll be going then.

Joumat shrugs and turns back to returns to his hide out.
Over his shoulder he mumbles.

JOUMAT

Give my regards to Leander. Tell him
to come visit sometime.

Anna and Adam stand there, stunned. The wind picks up again.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

Mars, restless old man, may you find
release in death.

They turn away and walk over the bloodstained sand. Anna
stops to vomit.

They sit a while on some rocks.

There is a noise that sounds like a wild animal. Anna
screams, they jump, turn to look.

It is Mars, he is sitting up in the grave and tries to drag
himself out.

Anna and Adam laugh in horrified relief.

Adam walks over to Mars, take his sword out and pierces him
through the chest.

Mars falls forward, dead.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (cont'd)

Can we leave now? This has been too
much for one night.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAWN 1736

Anna and Adam walk towards the sun rising. Adam has dried
blood on his sleeves.

Dina follows, in a bloodstained dress. Sand sticks to where
the blood has dripped on her arms, neck and in her hair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICIAL 1 (O.S.)

And so you chose to join that
gallowish company.

DINA (O.S.)

Well, of the many choices I had, they
seemed to be going where I wanted to
be.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Act 3

INT. CASTLE - DAY 1737

Anna van Madagascar's turn to speak. The guards, officials and slaves focus on her. All except Dina, who keeps her gaze to the floor.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

It is like my sister says, your honour. Though she doesn't know you are not interested in the way we lived, what we saw, why we left. So my words are not for you but for her and for us who stand here chained. Words that will never be recorded, that no-one will ever see written in your book. Something that can barely be imagined.

EXT. FARMHOUSE OF VERWEIJ - DUSK 1727

The only farmstead visible surrounded by some mountains. A small house on a piece of land with a kraal and wandering cows.

THREE SLAVES (two men, one woman) at work outside. All are in their twenties and dressed in grey cotton.

SLAVE 1 fixes a wooden fence, SLAVE 2 carries rough logs to the kraal, where the third, A YOUNGER ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (25) chops the wood into bundles and packs them.

Their master, VERWEIJ (50) oversees and smokes a pipe. He is fat, wears a hat, shoes. He points his kirry when he gives orders.

It starts to get dark and the slaves repair to the kraal. They carry the tools in. The master comes with a bottle and they hold out their cups.

Verweij gives them each a tot of wine.

Then he leaves with the rest of the bottle and asks Anna to bring in the bundles of wood.

INT. VERWEIJ'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Verweij lights a lamp and Anna brings the wood to the kitchen through the back entrance, where she lights a stove fire.

Verweij hangs his kirry on the back of a chair and sits at the table, drinks from the bottle.

VERWEIJ
You worked well today. Harder than
the boys.

She ignores him, puts a pot to boil.

VERWEIJ (cont'd)
Here, meid. Have some more wine.

He remains seated, holds the bottle up.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
No thanks, baas.

VERWEIJ
What did you say?

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
I said no thank you.

He takes another swig, stands up agitated.

VERWEIJ
You think you're too good?

Verweij reaches for his kirry and swings it at her face.

EXT. OUTSIDE VERWEIJ'S HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Verweij comes out of the front door and calls for the slave men, who come running from the kraal.

He asks them to enter the house. They hesitate, look at each other as if the idea is suspicious.

They go inside and return a moment later, one on either side holding Anna, unconscious, who they carry out, with her feet dragging.

She is badly battered. Her eyes are swollen shut, her lip split and her head hangs to one side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They carry her to the kraal where they lay her down on some straw.

INT. CASTLE - DAY 1737

Anna stands tall while she speaks. The others look at her, taken aback.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

I waited a week before I knew who I was again. This time for the first time.

EXT. VERWEIJ'S FARM - DUSK 1727

Light glows from the farmhouse.

The three slaves sit around a fire in the kraal. Anna still has bruises around her temple and between her eyes.

She leaves to go into the main house through the back.

She comes back out carrying a bundle on a stick over her shoulder.

The men stand up when she gets back.

The three stand close to the fire as if absorbing its energy and then they walk off together, leave the fire burning.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY 1727

Grey clouds and wind. Looks like it might rain.

The three of them walk along the mountain. Anna carries the stick (it is the kirry she was beaten with).

It starts raining and she holds the kirry up like a sword, while the men run for cover under some trees.

She joins them and they cower under a tree, shiver.

INT./EXT. SCHUYLHOEK - SOME DAYS LATER 1727

Anna and the two slave men arrive at Leander's, weather-beaten and dirty.

The runaways check them out, size them up. There are about TEN other slaves (two of them are women).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Among these are YOUNG LEANDER, YOUNG MARS and YOUNG JOUMAT.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR 1737 (O.S.)
 And so my companions and I, as
 newcomers were put to work.

INT./EXT. SCHUYLHOEK - A FEW DAYS LATER 1727

Anna alone in the schuyelhoek. The wind blows outside and kicks up dust in the entrance.

Anna takes the blankets out to shake them.

She tries to sweep the floor but it is made from sand and as she keeps sweeping, more of it appears.

She comes across some bigger chunks of rock, and dislodges them to smooth out the floor.

Upon closer inspection, she finds that they are bones. One of them appears to be part of a hand. Then she finds the rest. Three human skeletons.

Anna walks back, horrified. She goes to the entrance.

A gust of wind hits her in the face. She looks down.

Leander is on his way back up the ropes. Anna arms herself with the broom handle.

Leander lands in the entrance smiling.

LEANDER
 What a good wife you make.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
 What is this?

She points to the bones lying exposed on the floor.

LEANDER
 Oh that. Now look here, you'll soon learn how things work here. Those were just some boys who wouldn't cooperate.

Anna shakes her head, brandishes the broom handle.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR 1737 (O.S.)
 And thus I became his wife. Because that is how it worked.
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR 1737 (O.S.) (cont'd)
I needed protection. And no-one had
more power than the Captain.

MONTAGE

EXT. BEACH - SOME YEARS LATER

Anna van Madagascar and the runaways on the beach.

She shows them how to make a net for fishing by untwining a rope and knotting the threads to make a net.

The men go into the water with the nets.

They bring her the fish.

Anna cleans the fish they catch.

The men make the fire. Divide the flesh. Eat first.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE/OUTSIDE SCHUYLHOEK - SOME YEARS LATER

Anna walks behind the runaways on a faint mountain footpath. They diverge to pick edible leaves.

Anna shows them different plants they did not know about.

She shows them how to prepare these plants for consumption.

They soak roots in water. Boil them.

Dry the leaves in the sun. Crush them into a powder. Mix the powder with water. Spread the paste out flat out to dry in the sun. Cut the wafer into rectangles.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT - SOME YEARS LATER

Anna with small lantern following massive turtles who have dragged themselves out to lay their eggs.

The runaways follow her.

She waits until the eggs are laid, takes care not to disturb them.

When the turtles turn back to the sea, she intercepts one.

It takes four people to help carry it back to the schuyelhoek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (O.S.)
All this time for ten years, we lived
off nothing but fish and turtles.

OFFICIAL 1 (O.S.)
You mean to say that you did not
engage in any supernatural
transactions?

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (O.S.)
I did not use any means but my
knowledge of the preparation of
certain plants and herbs. That were
of this natural earth. Where we tried
to make a home.

INT. SCHUYLHOEK - DAY

Anna, DECEMBER (19) and Diana are inside the schuyhoek. The women wear their usual dresses. December wears brown leather trousers and waistcoat and a red hat.

December carves an ornamental table out of wood.

Anna lifts the blankets and canvas mats to shake them out. The canvases are torn, filthy and threadbare.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
Young ones, why don't you go down and
try to find more canvas so we can
sleep easier.

DIANA VAN RIO DE LA GOA
December, you go. I'm not in the mood
for the wind.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR
Come on, Diana. Make yourself useful!

December stops carving. Runs his fingers over the last grooves he made. He looks at Diana, who rolls her eyes.

They go out.

EXT. DUNES - CONTINUOUS

It is windy, clouds overhead. Diana and December walk through the dunes and pick up shreds of canvas.

December has two medium sized sheets, frayed at the end but in good enough condition.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Diana picks up smaller bits caught in the bushes.

He looks at her efforts and shakes his head.

DIANA VAN RIO DE LA GOA
What? She can make pillows from
these!

In the distance, Leander and Adam approach.

LEANDER
Find anything precious?

December shrugs.

ADAM
December, why did you go out with
this meijd without us?

December does not respond.

Leander takes Adam's sword from him.

Adam watches helpless as Leander impales December through
the stomach.

Diana runs off screaming, scattering bits of canvas in the
dust.

OFFICIAL 1 (O.S.) 1737
And you say you did not see this?

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (O.S.) 1737
Not with my eyes. But, you see, the
details got to me. What happens to
one, affects us all.

INT. SCHUYLHOEK

Anna with her back to the entrance. There is soup on the
fire.

The rope pulls taut and she turns around, smiling,
expectant.

Adam and Leander land in the entrance.

Leander is wearing the leather clothes of December.

Adam has on his red hat.

Anna's smile freezes as she comprehends.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR (O.S.)
There were times where nowhere felt
safe. Where the fear crept inside and
clawed at one's insides.

EXT. BEACH - DAY 1733

It is a cloudy day. Anna and some of the runaways catch fish on the beach.

They haul out a heavy net and excitedly pile the catch into a basket that is too small. Some fish jump out. They throw the surplus back into the sea.

Above the beach, five horses are parked.

Leander notices them, starts running, alerts the others by a sharp whistle.

LEANDER
Scatter! Fast! We got company!

A commando of FIVE MEN (Two white and three Khoi, in their twenties) run onto the beach, open fire.

The runaways disperse. Run outwards in haphazard zig-zag fashion. Shots hit the sand next to them.

January receives a shot in the arm. Howls, bleeding but keeps running.

They run for cover through the bushes behind the beach and into a rocky hole.

Leander above them in another hideout, opens fire at the commando and they turn away.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR 1737 (O.S.)
The only protection we really had was
knowing the landscape better than
they did. For the time being. And so
we went from one to the other. Hoping
for the least damage.

EXT. DUNES - DAY - SOME TIME LATER 1736

Anna, Adam and Mars approaching Joumat's hideout. They greet Joumat, embrace.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. DUNES - NEXT DAY 1736

Adam and Anna walk towards the shiphouse. They look haggard.

Blood on sleeves. Sand on dried blood.

The Rio de la Goan women peer, then welcome them.

April is there. Dina is not.

They give Anna an edible root to take on the road.

Dina watches from a little distance, hovers, unsure.

INT. CASTLE 1737 - DAY

Dina van Rio de la Goa shifts her weight and speaks.

DINA

The truth. That is what it was.
Always calculating the safest bet,
the least endangering course of
action. Or non-action.

OFFICIAL 1

So you were with them then?

DINA

I was with them. I just didn't know
it yet. And neither did they.

OFFICIAL 1

So then you had a chance, when you
could have made the right decision.

DINA

The right decision?

OFFICIAL 1

Hand yourself over to the
authorities.

Dina laughs.

The other slaves look at her. Shift about heavily.

Dina continues laughing.

DINA

Have my words not reached you?

INT. SCHUYLHOEK - DAWN 1736 AROUND CHRISTMAS

Shafts of light fall into the schuyelhoek.

Anna, Joseph, Diana, Adam and Diana are all huddled asleep together under the blankets that barely cover them.

Dina and Adam look particularly cosy.

Dina untangles herself as the others start to wake up.

She goes to her corner and retrieves her bundle. It is smaller and quite filthy by now.

She whispers to Adam.

DINA
Come down with me, I want to try
something.

Adam crawls back into the blanket and pulls her back down.

She tugs at him and gets out, he follows.

Down the ropes the two of them go.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Blue sky, birds. Exuberance. Dina and Adam run down the slopes of the hill. They look like lovestruck youngsters.

Dina picks up armfuls of dried grasses and twigs. Adam follows suit.

They come to a clearing near the beach. Protected from view by some rocks.

DINA
Just here. This is the place!

The sun is out and shines bright.

Dina builds a cone shaped structure with twigs and takes some from Adam's hands, sprinkles the dry bits of grass on top.

She unwraps her dirty bundle and takes out her piece of mirror.

She holds the glass so that it reflects a spot of light onto the dry grass. It wavers, jumps around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Adam tilts his head in doubt, but humours her.

DINA (cont'd)
Be quiet and watch.

ADAM
But... I didn't say anything!

She concentrates, holding her arm stiff. The beam is still.

She frowns, he smiles.

The spot of light is still for a while.

Smoke forms and the grass smoulders.

Adam is amazed. Dina triumphant.

In the distance two figures approaching.

Dina quickly throws sand over the fledgling fire just as a flame starts to form.

Leander and Barkat have returned from their Cape spree and walk upwards toward the schuylhoek.

They do not see the two on the beach.

ADAM (cont'd)
Dina, this is..

She looks at him.

ADAM (cont'd)
I mean, this is between us. If
Leander hears of this power of
yours...

Dina laughs while she tucks her bundle back into her clothes.

Adam makes a throat slitting gesture with his finger.

INT. SCHUYLHOEK - LATER THAT DAY

Dina and Adam appear in the entrance of the schuylhoek.

There is a fire going and the runaways are eating already.

Anna fusses and tends to Leander's scratches while he eats.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Leander looks pleased with himself. Everyone basks in the glow of the fire. There is bread too, which is passed around and broken off in chunks.

When he sees them enter, Leander stops eating.

He goes to a canvas bag in the corner.

He comes back and hands Adam a jacket from the booty.

Adam puts it on. There is whistling.

DINA (O.S.)

Let it be noted that I never got any clothes from that spree. Adam never gave me a dress.

ANNA VAN MADAGASCAR

Dina, it's not that he didn't want to. But he had to respect Leander.

EXT. OUTSIDE SCHUYLHOEK - DAY - SOME DAYS LATER

A sunny day. The runaways descend the ropes. Leander first, he carries his musket, Barkat has a short sword, Anna has the net and then the rest carry baskets or bags over the shoulder. Dina and Adam last. They look in good spirits.

DINA (O.S.)

Yes, there were moments that it felt like we had a common purpose, something like a family.

Reaching the bottom of the hill, the group splits. Half go around the lower rocky side of the mountain above the beach while the others go down to the sea.

Dina and Adam press their hands together before they split.

DINA (O.S.) (cont'd)

So Adam went with Leander and them to pick arum lily roots and Anna and I went with the others to catch fish.

EXT. LONG BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Dina walks down with the others to the sea, looking back at Adam who follows up the mountainside.

Dina, Diana and Anna lift their skirts as they enter the water. Joseph arranges the baskets, tries to look useful.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNTAINSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Barkat is brutal with his blade, slicing off the flowers before uprooting them and bagging the roots.

Leander is more careful. He touches the stem, inspects the insides.

He pauses. Looks around. Between the lilies he is holding lies a piece of fresh horse dung. He turns his head.

Ahead of them above some rocks, the outline of two hats.

The men on horses are waiting for them.

He starts off and then whistles to alert the other.

LEANDER

Men, scatter! They're here!

Five horses bolt out and shots skirt the men as they disappear fast in opposite directions.

Leander shoots back.

The commando deserts the lily pickers and this time gallop down the well trod path to the beach.

Anna, Dina and Diana (on an intake of breath) duck down, into the water.

The approaching commando opens fire. Shoot at the waves.

Silence.

The old slave Joseph holds his hands up and falls forward.

The women surface one by one.

Raise their hands in defeat.

The horsemen round them up, bind them together and lead them off the beach.

INT. CASTLE 1737 - DAY

Everyone looks at Dina.

OFFICIAL 2

And then?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DINA

Nothing

OFFICIAL 1

And where is Adam?

Dina is silent. She breathes.

OFFICIAL 2

He was your so-called husband.

DINA

Yes, he was my husband.

OFFICIAL 1

So do you know where he is?

DINA

I know that he's alive. That is enough for me.

OFFICIAL 2

Very well. As we have seen, you are not one to co-operate. Your honour, let us proceed.

OFFICIAL 1

Thus as we have heard today in full, these atrocious deeds through which the general peace of these lands are greatly disturbed, and the good inhabitants kept in a state of fear should not be left unpunished but instead, as an example and deterrent to similar scoundrels, be punished most rigourously.

DINA

Why are you talking like that?

OFFICIAL 2

Your turn to speak is over.

OFFICIAL 1

Anna van Magascar, the fifth defendant.

As the wife of Captain Leander, she herself is the principal cause and commander of all gruesome crimes, including murder, robbery, arson, poisoning and theft.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICIAL 1 (cont'd)

She claims to have been abused by her master. But then left to join the runaways, even after finding human bones...

Thus she herself is a godless murderess by having knowledge of these subjects and by not making them known - this alone is punishable by death.

As designated wife to Leander, she must be classified as the chief instigator. This woman was the origin and commander of all evil.

Applause from the slaves, who whistle and cheer.

SLAVES

Commander of evil! You hear that, Anna!

The officials look on sternly. Official 2 clears his throat emphatically.

OFFICIAL 1

Proceeding to the sixth prisoner, Dina van Rio de la Goa.

More whistling.

OFFICIAL 2

Silence!

OFFICIAL 1

The sixth prisoner, Dina van Rio de la Goa.

Who absconded from her house, with another slave of her nation to the edge of the sea...

Going west to the Cape, she said her intention was to turn back but didn't meet anyone who could show her the way... Surely this is subterfuge and she was better off seeking company of her own kind and fortune.

Because traversing some undefined land she met four vagabonding thieves who became her sustained company.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICIAL 1 (cont'd)

She is worthy of punishment by death, even though she did not undertake to murder or plunder by her own hand, she is indirectly guilty of both.

Firstly, the gruesome death of Mars was in her honour. Consider that she found herself in this case by means of illegitimate escape and squatting. If she had been a decent woman, she would not have left the service of her house as she wilfully did, to follow this criminal gang. And then the slaves would not have fought over and murdered each other over her.

Furthermore, she became the wife of Adam who committed more murders. One can imagine that Adam was a better catch than Mars, so she would have influenced Adam by screaming furiously as those in her murderous nation do.

One must realise that none of these criminals could have stayed in their hiding place for long if there weren't any girls holding up with them to fulfil their sexual needs.

Being the wife of the master criminal, Adam, she was declared an outlaw belonging to the godless gang of Leander. There was a bounty on her head, so to serve as an example and to preserve the colony from the well-grounded fear that weighs on it, the death sentence should be her punishment.

Still, this prisoner, according to the midwife, and to herself, is in an advanced state of pregnancy via Adam and the silly fruit of her womb could have no part in the godless deeds committed by its mother. Thus the claimant formally requests that the execution to be postponed and resume after the birth and recovery.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DINA

Never! No. Kill me. Let us die together!

OFFICIAL 1

Having judged all prisoners and sentencing them to this: to be taken to the place where criminal sentences are usually carried out, and to be handed over to the executioner.

The first prisoner, Jamboe van Madagascar, to be bound to a cross and broken alive from the bottom without the coup de grace and thus to stay on the cross until he gives up the ghost.

Joseph van Malabar, to be tied around the neck and punished with a rope on the gallows in such a way that death follows.

The second prisoner Anna van Madagascar, to be tied to a pole and strangled, along with Dina and Diana van Rio de la Goa. Thereafter the corpses of the prisoners to be dragged on a cross and along with that of Joseph and January, hung up again and remain in that place as prey for the air and birds of heaven.

EXT. DUNES/LONG BEACH - DAY 1737

Wind blows over a field of arum lilies.

Below on the long beach, the sands shift to erase the impressions left by foot and hoof.

Something lies half obscured, glinting in the sun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICIAL 1 (O.S.)

All their possessions to be
confiscated to pay for the costs of
the process, except the prisoner Dina
van Rio de la Goa, whose sentence is
postponed while she is delivered of
her fruits.

Thus it is done and sentenced in the
Castle of Good Hope on 31 January
1737. Let the execution be done.

DINA (O.S.)

Let me die with this fruit inside me!

FADE TO BLACK

(CONTINUED)