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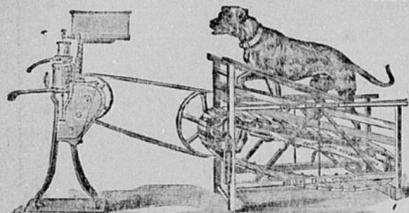
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(CONTINUED.)

"Awake, my sister!" he cried; "here is the dog you sought. Ah! he bites now, but he will soon grow tame." Nada awoke and, rising, cried out with joy at the sight of the cub, but for a moment stood astonished.

"Fool!" I cried at last, "let the cub go before the lions come to rend us." "I will not let it go, my father," he answered sullenly. "Are there not five of us with spears, and can we not fight two cats? I was not afraid to go alone into their den. Are you all afraid to meet them in the open?"

"You are mad," I said; "let the cub go!" and I rushed at Umslopogaa to take it from him. But he sprang aside and avoided me. "I will never let that go of which I have got hold," he said, "at least, not living!" and suddenly he seized the head of the cub and twisted its neck, then threw it onto the ground and added, "See, now I have done your bidding, my father!"

As he spoke there came a great sound of roaring from the cave in the cliff. The lions had returned and found one cub dead and the other gone.

"Into the fence!—back into the fence!" I cried, and we sprang over the thorn bushes where those with us were making ready their spears. Down the side of the cliff came the lions, bounding on the scent of him who had robbed them of their young. The lion came first; then followed the lioness, and in her mouth was the cub that Umslopogaa had assailed. They drew near, mad with fury.

They came to the body of the second cub that lay outside the fence of thorns. The lion stopped and sniffed it. Then he roared till the earth shook. The lioness dropped the dead cub she was carrying and took the other in her mouth.

"Get behind me, Nada," cried Umslopogaa, brandishing his spear, "the lion is going to spring."

As the words left his mouth the great brute sprang through the air toward us. "Catch him on the spears!" cried Umslopogaa, and huddling ourselves together we held out the assegais so that the lion fell upon them. But the weight of his charge carried us to the ground, and he fell onto us, striking at us and biting at the spears in his breast. Then Umslopogaa, who alone had stepped aside, drove his assegai into the lion behind the shoulder, so that the brute rolled over dead.

Meanwhile the lioness had stood without the fence, the second dead cub in her mouth, for she could not bring herself to leave either of them. But when she heard her mate's last groan she dropped the cub and gathered herself together to spring. Umslopogaa alone had withdrawn his assegai from the carcass of the lion. On she swept toward the dead; she met his spear, it sunk in; it snapped and down fell Umslopogaa beneath the mass of the lioness. She sprang up, the broken spear standing in her breast, sniffed at Umslopogaa; then, as though she knew that it was he who had robbed her, she seized him by the loins and moccua and sprang with him over the fence.

"Oh, save him!" cried the girl Nada in bitter woe; and we rushed after the lioness, shouting. For a moment she stood over her dead cubs, Umslopogaa hanging from her mouth, and looking at them as though she wondered; and we hoped that she might let him fall. Then, hearing our cries, she turned and bounded away toward the bush, bearing Umslopogaa in her mouth. We seized our spears and followed; but soon the ground grew stony, and search as we would we could find no trace of Umslopogaa or the lioness.

"Where is my brother?" cried Nada when we came back. "Lost!" I answered. "Lost, never to be found again!" Then the girl gave a great and bitter cry, and fell to the earth, saying, "I would that I were dead with my brother!"

"Let us be going," said Macropha, my wife. "Have you then no tears to weep for your son?" asked a man of our company. "What is the use of weeping over the dead? Does it, then, bring them back?" she answered. "Let us be going!"

The man thought these words strange, but he did not know that Umslopogaa was not born of Macropha. And so the time went on till we reached the kraal where I and my wife should part.

On the morning after we came to the kraal, having kissed in secret, though outwardly we looked sullenly on one another, we parted as those who meet no more. And I drew Nada aside and spoke to her thus: "We part, my daughter, nor do I know when we shall meet again, for the times are troubled, and it is for your safety and that of your mother that I rob my eyes of the sight of you. Nada, you will soon be a woman and you will be fairer than any woman among our people, and it will come about that many great men will seek you in marriage, and perhaps that I, your father, shall not be there to choose for you whom you shall wed, according to the custom of our land. But this I charge you: So far as may be possible for you to do so, take only a man whom you can love, and be faithful to him alone, for so shall a woman find happi-

ness."

Here I stopped, for the girl took hold of my hand and looked into my face. "Peace, my father," she said; "do not speak to me of marriage, for I will wed no man, now that Umslopogaa is dead because of my foolishness. I will live and die alone, and, oh, may I die quickly, that I may go to seek him whom alone I love!"

"Nay, Nada, Umslopogaa was your brother, and it is not fitting that you should speak of him thus, even though he is dead."

"Of such matters I know nothing, my father," she said. "I speak what my heart tells me, and it tells me that I loved Umslopogaa only living, and though he is dead I shall love him only to the end."

Now, I upbraided the girl no more, because I knew that Umslopogaa was not her brother. Only I marveled that the voice of nature should speak so truly in her, telling her that which was lawful, even when it seemed to be most unlawful.

"Speak no more of Umslopogaa," I said, "for surely he is dead, and though you may not forget him yet speak of him no more, and I pray this of you, my daughter, that if we do not meet again yet you should keep me in your mind, and the love I bear you, and the words that from time to time I have said to you."

Then we kissed and parted.

CHAPTER VIII. THE TRIAL OF MOPO.

Now I sat four days in the huts of the tribe whither I had been sent and did the king's business. And on the fifth morning I rose up, together with those with me, and we turned our faces toward the king's kraal.

But when we had journeyed a little way we met a party of soldiers, who commanded us to stand.

"What is it, king's men?" I asked boldly.

"This, son of Makedama," answered their spokesman; "give over to us your wife Macropha, and your children Umslopogaa and Nada, that we may do with them as the king commands."

"For Umslopogaa," I answered, "he has gone where the king's arm cannot stretch, for he is dead; and for my wife Macropha and my daughter Nada, they are by now in the caves of the Swazis, and thither the king must seek them with an army if he will find them. To Macropha he is welcome, for I hate her, and have divorced her; and as for the girl, well, there are many girls and it is no great matter if she lives or dies, yet I pray him to spare her."

"You do well to ask the girl's life," said the soldier, laughing, "for all those born to you are dead by order of the king."

"Is it indeed so?" I answered calmly, though my knees shook. "The will of the king be done. A cut stick puts out new leaves; I can have more children."

"Aye, Mopo; but you must first get new wives, for yours are dead also, all five of them."

"Is it indeed so?" I answered. "The king's will be done! I wearied of those brawling women."

"So, Mopo," said the soldier; "but to get other wives and have more children born unto you, you yourself must live, for no children are born to the dead, and I think that Chaka has an assegai which you shall kiss."

"Is it so?" I answered. "The king's will be done!"

Thus I spoke, and indeed I desired to die. Macropha and Nada were gone, Umslopogaa was dead, and dead were my other wives and children.

The soldiers asked of those with me if that tale was true which I told of the death of Umslopogaa and of the going of Macropha and Nada into Swaziland. They said, "Yes, it was true." Then the soldiers said that they would lead me back to the king. So we went on, and piece by piece I learned what had happened at the king's kraal.

On the day after I left, it came to the ears of Chaka, by the mouth of his spies, that my second wife—Anadi—was sick and spoke strange words in her sickness. Then, taking three soldiers with him, he went to my kraal at the death of the day. At the gates of the kraal he left the three soldiers, bidding them to suffer none to come in or go out, but he himself entered the large hut where Anadi lay sick, having his toy assegai, with the shaft of the royal redwood, in his hand. Now, as it chanced, in the hut were Unandi, the mother of Chaka, and Baleka, my sister, the wife of Chaka, for not knowing that I had taken away Umslopogaa, the son of Baleka, according to their custom these two foolish ones had come to kiss and fondle the lad. But when they entered the hut they found it full of my other wives and children. These they sent away, all except Moosa, the son of Anadi, who lay sick—that boy who was born eight days before Umslopogaa, the son of Chaka. Him they kept in the hut and kissed him, giving him imphja (a variety of sugar cane) to eat, and they did this fearing lest it should seem strange to the women, my wives, if Umslopogaa being gone, they would take notice of no other child.

Now, as they sat thus, presently the doorway was darkened, and behold! the king himself crept through it and saw them fondling the child Moosa. When they knew who it was that entered the women flung themselves upon the ground and he bade them be seated. Then he spoke, saying: "You wonder why it is

that I come here into the hut of Mopo I will tell you; it is because he is away upon my business, and I hear that his wife Anadi is sick. Therefore, as the first doctor in the land, I am come to cure her."

Thus he spoke, and though his words were gentle they shook with fear, for when Chaka spoke thus gently he meant death to many. But Unandi answered, saying that it was good that the king had come, since his medicine would bring rest and peace to her who lay sick.

"Yes," he answered; "it is good. It is pleasant, moreover, my mother and my sister, to see you kissing yonder child. Surely, were he of your own blood you could not love him more."

Now they trembled again and prayed in their hearts that Anadi, the sick woman, who lay asleep, might not wake and utter foolish words in her wanderings. But Anadi woke, and hearing the voice of the king, her sick mind flew to him whom she believed to be the king's child.

"Ah!" she said, sitting upon the ground and pointing to her own son Moosa. "Kiss him, Mother of the Heavens, kiss him! Whom do they call him, the young cub who brings ill fortune to our doors? They call him son of Mopo and Macropha!" and she laughed wildly and sank back upon the bed.

"They call him son of Mopo and Macropha," said the king in a low voice. "Whose son is he, then, woman?"

"Oh, ask her not, O king?" cried his mother and his wife. "She is bewitched, and has dreams and fancies."

"Peace!" he answered. "I would listen to this woman's wanderings. Who then is he, woman?"

"Who is he?" she answered. "Are you then a fool that asks who he is? He is the son of Chaka and Baleka, the sister of Mopo, whom Unandi, Mother of the Heavens, palmed off upon this house to bring a curse on it, and whom she would lead out before the people when the land is weary of the king, to take the place of the king."

"It is false, O king!" cried the two women. "The boy is her own son Moosa, whom she does not know in her sickness."

But Chaka stood up in the hut and laughed terribly. "So this is the trick thou hast played upon me, my mother! Thou wouldst give me a son to kill me. Good! Mother of the Heavens take thou the doom of the heavens! Die, Unandi!—die at the hand thou didst bring forth!" And he lifted the little assegai and smote it through her.

For a moment Unandi, Mother of the Heavens, wife of Senzangaona, stood uttering no cry. Then she put up her hand and drew the assegai from her heart.

"So shalt thou also die, Chaka the Evil!" she cried, and fell down dead. Now when Baleka saw what had been done she turned and fled so swiftly that the guards at the gates could not stop her. But when she reached her own hut she fell senseless on the ground. But the boy Moosa, my son, staid where he was, and Chaka, believing him to be his son, murdered him also.

Then he stalked out of the hut and commanded a company of soldiers to surround the kraal and fire it. This they did, and as the people rushed out they killed them, and those who did not rush out were burned in the fire. Thus then, perished all my wives, my children and my servants.

Then Chaka sent messengers bidding them kill Macropha my wife and Nada my daughter, and him who was named my son. But they should not slay me, but bring me living before him.

Now it was my belief that I was saved alive only that I might die later and in a more cruel fashion. Therefore why should I, who was already doomed, wait to meet my doom? In my girdle I carried a secret medicine; he who eats of it, my father, will see the sun's shadow move no more and will never look upon the stars again. Surely now was the time to use it.

So I thought, but even as I did so I remembered my daughter Nada, who was still left to me, though she sojourned in a far country, and my wife Macropha and my sister Baleka, who lived yet, so said the soldiers, though how it came about that the king had not killed her I did not know then. Also another thought was born in my heart. While life was in me, I might be revenged upon him who had wrought me this woe. Time to die when the voice of Chaka spoke my doom. Not yet would I taste of that medicine of mine.

So I lived on and the soldiers led me back to the kraal of Chaka. Now, when we came to the kraal it was night. Still, as charge had been given him, the captain of those who watched me went in before the king and told him that I lay without in bonds. And the king said, "Let him be brought in before me who was my physician, that I may tell him how I have doctored those of his house."

So they led me through the doorway of the great hut. At the door of the hut certain of the councilors seized me and dragged me toward the fire. But Chaka said, "Let him be, I would talk with my servant." Then I sat down on the floor of the hut over against the king, and we talked through the fire.

"Tell me of the cattle that I sent thee forth to number, Mopo, son of Makedama," said Chaka. "Have my servants dealt honestly with my cattle?"

"They have dealt honestly, O king," I answered.

"Tell me, then, of the number of the cattle and of their markings, Mopo, forgetting none."

So I sat and told him. "So," said the king, "it goes well. There are yet honest men left in the land. Knowest thou, Mopo, that sorrow has come upon thy house while thou wast about my business?"

"I have heard it, O king!" I answered. "Yes, Mopo, sorrow has come upon thy house, the curse of heaven has fallen upon thy kraal. They tell me, Mopo, that the fire from above ran briskly through thy huts."

thy gates grew mad at the sight of the fire, and dreaming 'there was no escape they stabbed themselves with assegais or leaped into the flames."

"I have heard it, O king! What of it? Any river is deep enough to drown a fool!"

"Thou hast heard it, Mopo, but thou hast not yet heard all. Knowest thou, Mopo, that among those who died in thy kraal was she who bore me, she who was named Mother of the Heavens?"

Then I wailed aloud as though in utter grief.

"Spare my ears, Black One!" I wailed. "Tell me not that she who bore thee is dead, O Lion of the Zulu. For the others, what is it? It is a breath of wind, it is a drop of water; but this trouble is as the gale or as the sea."

"Cease, my servant, cease!" said the mocking voice of Chaka; "but know this: thou hast done well to grieve aloud because the Mother of the Heavens is no more, and ill wouldst thou have done to grieve because the fire from above has kissed thy gates. For hadst thou done this last thing or left the first undone, by now thou wouldst have wept indeed—tears of blood, Mopo."

Now I saw the greatness of the pit that Chaka had dug for me, and blessed my Elohe, who had put into my heart these words which I should answer.

"Knowest thou, Mopo," said the king, "that as my mother died in yonder flames of thy kraal, she cried out that thou Mopo, and thy sister Baleka, and thy wives had conspired together to give a child to me who would be childless. Tell me now, Mopo, where are those children that thou ledst from my kraal, the boy with the lion eyes who is named Umslopogaa, and the girl who is named Nada?"

"Umslopogaa is dead by the lion's mouth, O king!" I answered, "and Nada sits in the Swazi caves; and I told him of the death of Umslopogaa and of how I had divorced Macropha, my wife."

"The boy with the lion eyes to the lion's mouth!" said Chaka. "Enough of him; he is gone. Nada may yet be sought for with the assegai in the Swazi caves; enough of her. Let us speak of this song that my mother sang through the flames. Tell me, was it a true tale?"

"Nay, O king; surely the Mother of the Heavens was maddened by the heavens when she sang that song," I answered. "I know naught of it, O king."

"Thou knowest naught of it, Mopo!" said the king. "Thou knowest naught of it, Mopo? Surely thou art a-cold; thy hands shake with cold. Nay, man, fear not—warm them, warm them, Mopo! See, now, plunge that hand of thine into the heart of the flame!" and he pointed with his little assegai, the assegai handled with the royal wood, to where the fire glowed reddest—aye, he pointed and laughed.

Then, my father, I grew cold indeed. Chaka would put me to the trial by fire. For a moment I sat silent, thinking. Then the king spoke again in a great voice: "Nay, Mopo, be not so backward; shall I sit warm and see thee suffer cold? What, my councilors, rise, take the hand of Mopo and hold it in the flame, that his heart may rejoice in the warmth."

"There is little need for that, O king," I answered. "I thank the king for his graciousness and I will warm me at the fire. Speak on, O king, while I warm me at the fire, and thou shalt hear true words," I said boldly.

Then, my father, I stretched out my left hand and plunged it into the fire—not into the hottest of the fire, but where the smoke leaped from the flame. Now my flesh was wet with the sweat of fear, and for a little moment the flames curled around it and did not burn it.

For a short while Chaka watched me, smiling. Then he spoke slowly, that the fire might find time to do its work: "Say, then, Mopo, thou knowest nothing of this matter of the birth of a son to thy sister Baleka?"

"I know this only, O king," I answered, "that a son was born in past years to thy wife, Baleka, that I killed the child according to thy word, and laid its body before thee."

Then the king spoke again. "Dost thou swear by my head, Mopo, that no son of mine was suckled in thy kraals?"

"I swear it, O king! I swear it by thy head," I answered.

"Ah!" Chaka said at length, "I see that thou grovest warm, Mopo. Withdraw thy hand from the flame. I am answered; thou hast passed the trial; thy heart is clean."

"It is well, O king!" I said calmly. "Fire has no power of hurt on those whose heart is pure."

But as I spoke I looked at my left hand. It was black. Look at it now, my father; you can see, though my eyes are blind. The hand is white, like yours—it is white and dead and shriveled.

"It seems that Nobela, the doctress who is dead, lied when she prophesied evil on me from thee, Mopo," said Chaka again. "It seems that thou art innocent of this offense, and that Baleka, thy sister, is innocent, and that the song which the Mother of the Heavens sang through the singing flames was no true song. It is well for thee, Mopo, for in such a matter my oath had not helped thee. But my mother is dead—dead in the flames with thy wives and children, Mopo, and in this there is witchcraft. We will have a mourning, Mopo, thou and I, such a mourning as has not been seen in Zululand, for all the people on the earth shall weep at it. And there shall be a 'smelling out' at this mourning, Mopo. But we will summon no witch doctors; thou and I will be witch doctors, and ourselves shall smell out those who have brought these woes upon us. What! shall my mother die unavenged, she who bore me and has perished by witchcraft, and shall thy wives and children die unavenged—thou being innocent? Go forth, Mopo, my faithful servant, whom I have honored with the warmth of my fire, go forth!" and once again he stared at me through the reek of the flame, and pointed with his assegai to the door of the hut.