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CHAPTER I. ALLAN QUATERMAIN HEARS OF MAMEENA

We white people think that we know everything. For instance, we think that we understand human nature. And so we do, as human nature appears to us, with all its trappings and accessories seen dimly through the glass of our conventions, leaving out those aspects of it which we have forgotten or do not think it polite to mention. But I, Allan Quatermain, reflecting upon these matters in my ignorant and uneducated fashion, have always held that no one really understands human nature who has not studied it in the rough. Well, that is the aspect of it with which I have been best acquainted.

For most of the years of my life I have handled the raw material, the virgin ore, not the finished ornament that is smelted out of it--if, indeed, it is finished yet, which I greatly doubt. I dare say that a time may come when the perfected generations--if Civilisation, as we understand it, really has a future and any such should be allowed to enjoy their hour on the World--will look back to us as crude, half-developed creatures whose only merit was that we handed on the flame of life.

Maybe, maybe, for everything goes by comparison; and at one end of the ladder is the ape-man, and at the other, as we hope, the angel. No, not the angel; he belongs to a different sphere, but that last expression of humanity upon which I will not speculate. While man is man--that is,

before he suffers the magical death-change into spirit, if such should be his destiny--well, he will remain man. I mean that the same passions will sway him; he will aim at the same ambitions; he will know the same joys and be oppressed by the same fears, whether he lives in a Kafir hut or in a golden palace; whether he walks upon his two feet or, as for aught I know he may do one day, flies through the air. This is certain: that in the flesh he can never escape from our atmosphere, and while he breathes it, in the main with some variations prescribed by climate, local law and religion, he will do much as his forefathers did for countless ages.

That is why I have always found the savage so interesting, for in him, nakedly and forcibly expressed, we see those eternal principles which direct our human destiny.

To descend from these generalities, that is why also I, who hate writing, have thought it worth while, at the cost of some labour to myself, to occupy my leisure in what to me is a strange land--for although I was born in England, it is not my country--in setting down various experiences of my life that do, in my opinion, interpret this our universal nature. I dare say that no one will ever read them; still, perhaps they are worthy of record, and who knows? In days to come they may fall into the hands of others and prove of value. At any rate, they are true stories of interesting peoples, who, if they should survive in the savage competition of the nations, probably are doomed to undergo great changes. Therefore I tell of them before they began to change.

Now, although I take it out of its strict chronological order, the first of these histories that I wish to preserve is in the main that of an extremely beautiful woman--with the exception of a certain Nada, called "the Lily," of whom I hope to speak some day, I think the most beautiful that ever lived among the Zulus. Also she was, I think, the most able, the most wicked, and the most ambitious. Her attractive name--for it was very attractive as the Zulus said it, especially those of them who were in love with her--was Mameena, daughter of Umbezi. Her other name was Child of Storm (Ingane-ye-Sipepo, or, more freely and shortly, O-we-Zulu), but the word "Ma-mee-na" had its origin in the sound of the wind that wailed about the hut when she was born.[*]

[*--The Zulu word "Meena"--or more correctly "Mina"--means "Come here," and would therefore be a name not unsuitable to one of the heroine's proclivities; but Mr. Quatermain does not seem to accept this interpretation.--EDITOR.]

Since I have been settled in England I have read--of course in a translation--the story of Helen of Troy, as told by the Greek poet, Homer. Well, Mameena reminds me very much of Helen, or, rather, Helen reminds me of Mameena. At any rate, there was this in common between them, although one of them was black, or, rather, copper-coloured, and the other white--they both were lovely; moreover, they both were faithless, and brought men by hundreds to their deaths. There, perhaps, the resemblance ends, since Mameena had much more fire and grit than

Helen could boast, who, unless Homer misrepresents her, must have been but a poor thing after all. Beauty Itself, which those old rascals of Greek gods made use of to bait their snares set for the lives and honour of men, such was Helen, no more; that is, as I understand her, who have not had the advantage of a classical education. Now, Mameena, although she was superstitious--a common weakness of great minds--acknowledging no gods in particular, as we understand them, set her own snares, with varying success but a very definite object, namely, that of becoming the first woman in the world as she knew it--the stormy, bloodstained world of the Zulus.

But the reader shall judge for himself, if ever such a person should chance to cast his eye upon this history.

It was in the year 1854 that I first met Mameena, and my acquaintance with her continued off and on until 1856, when it came to an end in a fashion that shall be told after the fearful battle of the Tugela in which Umbelazi, Panda's son and Cetewayo's brother--who, to his sorrow, had also met Mameena--lost his life. I was still a youngish man in those days, although I had already buried my second wife, as I have told elsewhere, after our brief but happy time of marriage.

Leaving my boy in charge of some kind people in Durban, I started into "the Zulu"--a land with which I had already become well acquainted as a youth, there to carry on my wild life of trading and hunting.

For the trading I never cared much, as may be guessed from the little that ever I made out of it, the art of traffic being in truth repugnant to me. But hunting was always the breath of my nostrils--not that I am fond of killing creatures, for any humane man soon wearies of slaughter. No, it is the excitement of sport, which, before breechloaders came in, was acute enough, I can assure you; the lonely existence in wild places, often with only the sun and the stars for companions; the continual adventures; the strange tribes with whom I came in contact; in short, the change, the danger, the hope always of finding something great and new, that attracted and still attracts me, even now when I have found the great and the new. There, I must not go on writing like this, or I shall throw down my pen and book a passage for Africa, and incidentally to the next world, no doubt--that world of the great and new!

It was, I think, in the month of May in the year 1854 that I went hunting in rough country between the White and Black Umvolosi Rivers, by permission of Panda--whom the Boers had made king of Zululand after the defeat and death of Dingaan his brother. The district was very feverish, and for this reason I had entered it in the winter months. There was so much bush that, in the total absence of roads, I thought it wise not to attempt to bring my wagons down, and as no horses would live in that veld I went on foot. My principal companions were a Kafir of mixed origin, called Sikauli, commonly abbreviated into Scowl, the Zulu chief Saduko, and a headman of the Undwandwe blood named Umbezi, at whose

kraal on the high land about thirty miles away I left my wagon and certain of my men in charge of the goods and some ivory that I had traded.

This Umbezi was a stout and genial-mannered man of about sixty years of age, and, what is rare among these people, one who loved sport for its own sake. Being aware of his tastes, also that he knew the country and was skilled in finding game, I had promised him a gun if he would accompany me and bring a few hunters. It was a particularly bad gun that had seen much service, and one which had an unpleasing habit of going off at half-cock; but even after he had seen it, and I in my honesty had explained its weaknesses, he jumped at the offer.

"O Macumazana" (that is my native name, often abbreviated into Macumazahn, which means "One who stands out," or as many interpret it, I don't know how, "Watcher-by-Night")--"a gun that goes off sometimes when you do not expect it is much better than no gun at all, and you are a chief with a great heart to promise it to me, for when I own the White Man's weapon I shall be looked up to and feared by everyone between the two rivers."

Now, while he was speaking he handled the gun, that was loaded, observing which I moved behind him. Off it went in due course, its recoil knocking him backwards--for that gun was a devil to kick--and its bullet cutting the top off the ear of one of his wives. The lady fled screaming, leaving a little bit of her ear upon the ground.

"What does it matter?" said Umbezi, as he picked himself up, rubbing his shoulder with a rueful look. "Would that the evil spirit in the gun had cut off her tongue and not her ear! It is the Worn-out-Old-Cow's own fault; she is always peeping into everything like a monkey. Now she will have something to chatter about and leave my things alone for awhile. I thank my ancestral Spirit it was not Mameena, for then her looks would have been spoiled."

"Who is Mameena?" I asked. "Your last wife?"

"No, no, Macumazahn; I wish she were, for then I should have the most beautiful wife in the land. She is my daughter, though not that of the Worn-out-Old-Cow; her mother died when she was born, on the night of the Great Storm. You should ask Saduko there who Mameena is," he added with a broad grin, lifting his head from the gun, which he was examining gingerly, as though he thought it might go off again while unloaded, and nodding towards someone who stood behind him.

I turned, and for the first time saw Saduko, whom I recognised at once as a person quite out of the ordinary run of natives.

He was a tall and magnificently formed young man, who, although his breast was scarred with assegai wounds, showing that he was a warrior, had not yet attained to the honour of the "ring" of polished wax laid over strips of rush bound round with sinew and sewn to the hair, the

"isicoco" which at a certain age or dignity, determined by the king, Zulus are allowed to assume. But his face struck me more even than his grace, strength and stature. Undoubtedly it was a very fine face, with little or nothing of the negroid type about it; indeed, he might have been a rather dark-coloured Arab, to which stock he probably threw back. The eyes, too, were large and rather melancholy, and in his reserved, dignified air there was something that showed him to be no common fellow, but one of breeding and intellect.

"Siyakubona" (that is, "we see you," anglice "good morrow") "Saduko," I said, eyeing him curiously. "Tell me, who is Mameena?"

"Inkoosi," he answered in his deep voice, lifting his delicately shaped hand in salutation, a courtesy that pleased me who, after all, was nothing but a white hunter, "Inkoosi, has not her father said that she is his daughter?"

"Aye," answered the jolly old Umbezi, "but what her father has not said is that Saduko is her lover, or, rather, would like to be. Wow! Saduko," he went on, shaking his fat finger at him, "are you mad, man, that you think a girl like that is for you? Give me a hundred cattle, not one less, and I will begin to think of it. Why, you have not ten, and Mameena is my eldest daughter, and must marry a rich man."

"She loves me, O Umbezi," answered Saduko, looking down, "and that is more than cattle."

"For you, perhaps, Saduko, but not for me who am poor and want cows. Also," he added, glancing at him shrewdly, "are you so sure that Mameena loves you though you be such a fine man? Now, I should have thought that whatever her eyes may say, her heart loves no one but herself, and that in the end she will follow her heart and not her eyes. Mameena the beautiful does not seek to be a poor man's wife and do all the hoeing. But bring me the hundred cattle and we will see, for, speaking truth from my heart, if you were a big chief there is no one I should like better as a son-in-law, unless it were Macumazahn here," he said, digging me in the ribs with his elbow, "who would lift up my House on his white back."

Now, at this speech Saduko shifted his feet uneasily; it seemed to me as though he felt there was truth in Umbezi's estimate of his daughter's character. But he only said:

"Cattle can be acquired."

"Or stolen," suggested Umbezi.

"Or taken in war," corrected Saduko. "When I have a hundred head I will hold you to your word, O father of Mameena."

"And then what would you live on, fool, if you gave all your beasts to me? There, there, cease talking wind. Before you have a hundred head of

cattle Mameena will have six children who will not call you father.

Ah, don't you like that? Are you going away?"

"Yes, I am going," he answered, with a flash of his quiet eyes; "only then let the man whom they do call father beware of Saduko."

"Beware of how you talk, young man," said Umbezi in a grave voice.

"Would you travel your father's road? I hope not, for I like you well; but such words are apt to be remembered."

Saduko walked away as though he did not hear.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"One of high blood," answered Umbezi shortly. "He might be a chief to-day had not his father been a plotter and a wizard. Dingaan smelt him out"--and he made a sideways motion with his hand that among the Zulus means much. "Yes, they were killed, almost every one; the chief, his wives, his children and his headmen--every one except Chosa his brother and his son Saduko, whom Zikali the dwarf, the Smeller-out-of-evil-doers, the Ancient, who was old before Senzangakona became a father of kings, hid him. There, that is an evil tale to talk of," and he shivered. "Come, White Man, and doctor that old Cow of mine, or she will give me no peace for months."

So I went to see the Worn-out-Old-Cow--not because I had any particular

interest in her, for, to tell the truth, she was a very disagreeable and antique person, the cast-off wife of some chief whom at an unknown date in the past the astute Umbezi had married from motives of policy--but because I hoped to hear more of Miss Mameena, in whom I had become interested.

Entering a large hut, I found the lady so impolitely named "the Old Cow" in a parlous state. There she lay upon the floor, an unpleasant object because of the blood that had escaped from her wound, surrounded by a crowd of other women and of children. At regular intervals she announced that she was dying, and emitted a fearful yell, whereupon all the audience yelled also; in short, the place was a perfect pandemonium.

Telling Umbezi to get the hut cleared, I said that I would go to fetch my medicines. Meanwhile I ordered my servant, Scowl, a humorous-looking fellow, light yellow in hue, for he had a strong dash of Hottentot in his composition, to cleanse the wound. When I returned from the wagon ten minutes later the screams were more terrible than before, although the chorus now stood without the hut. Nor was this altogether wonderful, for on entering the place I found Scowl trimming up "the Old Cow's" ear with a pair of blunt nail-scissors.

"O Macumazana," said Umbezi in a hoarse whisper, "might it not perhaps be as well to leave her alone? If she bled to death, at any rate she would be quieter."

"Are you a man or a hyena?" I answered sternly, and set about the job, Scowl holding the poor woman's head between his knees.

It was over at length; a simple operation in which I exhibited--I believe that is the medical term--a strong solution of caustic applied with a feather.

"There, Mother," I said, for now we were alone in the hut, whence Scowl had fled, badly bitten in the calf, "you won't die now."

"No, you vile White Man," she sobbed. "I shan't die, but how about my beauty?"

"It will be greater than ever," I answered; "no one else will have an ear with such a curve in it. But, talking of beauty, where is Mameena?"

"I don't know where she is," she replied with fury, "but I very well know where she would be if I had my way. That peeled willow-wand of a girl"--here she added certain descriptive epithets I will not repeat--"has brought this misfortune upon me. We had a slight quarrel yesterday, White Man, and, being a witch as she is, she prophesied evil. Yes, when by accident I scratched her ear, she said that before long mine should burn, and surely burn it does." (This, no doubt, was true, for the caustic had begun to bite.)

"O devil of a White Man," she went on, "you have bewitched me; you have

filled my head with fire."

Then she seized an earthenware pot and hurled it at me, saying, "Take that for your doctor-fee. Go, crawl after Mameena like the others and get her to doctor you."

By this time I was half through the bee-hole of the hut, my movements being hastened by a vessel of hot water which landed on me behind.

"What is the matter, Macumazahn?" asked old Umbezi, who was waiting outside.

"Nothing at all, friend," I answered with a sweet smile, "except that your wife wants to see you at once. She is in pain, and wishes you to soothe her. Go in; do not hesitate."

After a moment's pause he went in--that is, half of him went in. Then came a fearful crash, and he emerged again with the rim of a pot about his neck and his countenance veiled in a coating of what I took to be honey.

"Where is Mameena?" I asked him as he sat up spluttering.

"Where I wish I was," he answered in a thick voice; "at a kraal five hours' journey away."

Well, that was the first I heard of Mameena.

That night as I sat smoking my pipe under the flap lean-to attached to the wagon, laughing to myself over the adventure of "the Old Cow," falsely described as "worn out," and wondering whether Umbezi had got the honey out of his hair, the canvas was lifted, and a Kafir wrapped in a kaross crept in and squatted before me.

"Who are you?" I asked, for it was too dark to see the man's face.

"Inkoosi," answered a deep voice, "I am Saduko."

"You are welcome," I answered, handing him a little gourd of snuff in token of hospitality. Then I waited while he poured some of the snuff into the palm of his hand and took it in the usual fashion.

"Inkoosi," he said, when he had scraped away the tears produced by the snuff, "I have come to ask you a favour. You heard Umbezi say to-day that he will not give me his daughter, Mameena, unless I give him a hundred head of cows. Now, I have not got the cattle, and I cannot earn them by work in many years. Therefore I must take them from a certain tribe I know which is at war with the Zulus. But this I cannot do unless I have a gun. If I had a good gun, Inkoosi--one that only goes off when it is asked, and not of its own fancy, I who have some name could persuade a number of men whom I know, who once were servants of my father, or their sons, to be my companions in this venture."

"Do I understand that you wish me to give you one of my good guns with two mouths to it (i.e. double-barrelled), a gun worth at least twelve oxen, for nothing, O Saduko?" I asked in a cold and scandalised voice.

"Not so, O Watcher-by-Night," he answered; "not so, O He-who-sleeps-with-one-eye-open" (another free and difficult rendering of my native name, Macumazahn, or more correctly, Macumazana)--"I should never dream of offering such an insult to your high-born intelligence." He paused and took another pinch of snuff, then went on in a meditative voice: "Where I propose to get those hundred cattle there are many more; I am told not less than a thousand head in all. Now, Inkoosi," he added, looking at me sideways, "suppose you gave me the gun I ask for, and suppose you accompanied me with your own gun and your armed hunters, it would be fair that you should have half the cattle, would it not?"

"That's cool," I said. "So, young man, you want to turn me into a cow-thief and get my throat cut by Panda for breaking the peace of his country?"

"Neither, Macumazahn, for these are my own cattle. Listen, now, and I will tell you a story. You have heard of Matiwane, the chief of the Amangwane?"

"Yes," I answered. "His tribe lived near the head of the Umzinyati,

did they not? Then they were beaten by the Boers or the English, and Matiwane came under the Zulus. But afterwards Dingaan wiped him out, with his House, and now his people are killed or scattered."

"Yes, his people are killed and scattered, but his House still lives. Macumazahn, I am his House, I, the only son of his chief wife, for Zikali the Wise Little One, the Ancient, who is of the Amangwane blood, and who hated Chaka and Dingaan--yes, and Senzangakona their father before them, but whom none of them could kill because he is so great and has such mighty spirits for his servants, saved and sheltered me."

"If he is so great, why, then, did he not save your father also, Saduko?" I asked, as though I knew nothing of this Zikali.

"I cannot say, Macumazahn. Perhaps the spirits plant a tree for themselves, and to do so cut down many other trees. At least, so it happened. It happened thus: Bangu, chief of the Amakoba, whispered into Dingaan's ear that Matiwane, my father, was a wizard; also that he was very rich. Dingaan listened because he thought a sickness that he had came from Matiwane's witchcraft. He said: 'Go, Bangu, and take a company with you and pay Matiwane a visit of honour, and in the night, O in the night! Afterwards, Bangu, we will divide the cattle, for Matiwane is strong and clever, and you shall not risk your life for nothing.'"

Saduko paused and looked down at the ground, brooding heavily.

"Macumazahn, it was done," he said presently. "They ate my father's meat, they drank his beer; they gave him a present from the king, they praised him with high names; yes, Bangu took snuff with him and called him brother. Then in the night, O in the night--!"

"My father was in the hut with my mother, and I, so big only"--and he held his hand at the height of a boy of ten--"was with them. The cry arose, the flames began to eat; my father looked out and saw. 'Break through the fence and away, woman,' he said; 'away with Saduko, that he may live to avenge me. Begone while I hold the gate! Begone to Zikali, for whose witchcrafts I pay with my blood.'

"Then he kissed me on the brow, saying but one word, 'Remember,' and thrust us from the hut.

"My mother broke a way through the fence; yes, she tore at it with her nails and teeth like a hyena. I looked back out of the shadow of the hut and saw Matiwane my father fighting like a buffalo. Men went down before him, one, two, three, although he had no shield: only his spear. Then Bangu crept behind him and stabbed him in the back and he threw up his arms and fell. I saw no more, for by now we were through the fence. We ran, but they perceived us. They hunted us as wild dogs hunt a buck. They killed my mother with a throwing assegai; it entered at her back and came out at her heart. I went mad, I drew it from her body, I ran at them. I dived beneath the shield of the first, a very tall man, and held the spear, so, in both my little hands. His weight came upon its point

and it went through him as though he were but a bowl of buttermilk. Yes, he rolled over, quite dead, and the handle of the spear broke upon the ground. Now the others stopped astonished, for never had they seen such a thing. That a child should kill a tall warrior, oh! that tale had not been told. Some of them would have let me go, but just then Bangu came up and saw the dead man, who was his brother.

"'Wow!' he said when he knew how the man had died. 'This lion's cub is a wizard also, for how else could he have killed a soldier who has known war? Hold out his arms that I may finish him slowly.'

"So two of them held out my arms, and Bangu came up with his spear."

Saduko ceased speaking, not that his tale was done, but because his voice choked in his throat. Indeed, seldom have I seen a man so moved. He breathed in great gasps, the sweat poured from him, and his muscles worked convulsively. I gave him a pannikin of water and he drank, then he went on:

"Already the spear had begun to prick--look, here is the mark of it"--and opening his kaross he pointed to a little white line just below the breast-bone--"when a strange shadow thrown by the fire of the burning huts came between Bangu and me, a shadow as that of a toad standing on its hind legs. I looked round and saw that it was the shadow of Zikali, whom I had seen once or twice. There he stood, though whence he came I know not, wagging his great white head that sits on the top

of his body like a pumpkin on an ant-heap, rolling his big eyes and laughing loudly.

"A merry sight,' he cried in his deep voice that sounded like water in a hollow cave. 'A merry sight, O Bangu, Chief of the Amakoba! Blood, blood, plenty of blood! Fire, fire, plenty of fire! Wizards dead here, there, and everywhere! Oh, a merry sight! I have seen many such; one at the kraal of your grandmother, for instance--your grandmother the great Inkosikazi, when myself I escaped with my life because I was so old; but never do I remember a merrier than that which this moon shines on,' and he pointed to the White Lady who just then broke through the clouds. 'But, great Chief Bangu, lord loved by the son of Senzangakona, brother of the Black One (Chaka) who has ridden hence on the assegai, what is the meaning of this play?' and he pointed to me and to the two soldiers who held out my little arms.

"I kill the wizard's cub, Zikali, that is all,' answered Bangu.

"I see, I see,' laughed Zikali. 'A gallant deed! You have butchered the father and the mother, and now you would butcher the child who has slain one of your grown warriors in fair fight. A very gallant deed, well worthy of the chief of the Amakoba! Well, loose his spirit--only--' He stopped and took a pinch of snuff from a box which he drew from a slit in the lobe of his great ear.

"Only what?' asked Bangu, hesitating.

"Only I wonder, Bangu, what you will think of the world in which you will find yourself before to-morrow's moon arises. Come back thence and tell me, Bangu, for there are so many worlds beyond the sun, and I would learn for certain which of them such a one as you inhabits: a man who for hatred and for gain murders the father and the mother and then butchers the child--the child that could slay a warrior who has seen war--with the spear hot from his mother's heart.'

"Do you mean that I shall die if I kill this lad?' shouted Bangu in a great voice.

"What else?' answered Zikali, taking another pinch of snuff.

"This, Wizard; that we will go together.'

"Good, good!' laughed the dwarf. 'Let us go together. Long have I wished to die, and what better companion could I find than Bangu, Chief of the Amakoba, Slayer of Children, to guard me on a dark and terrible road. Come, brave Bangu, come; kill me if you can,' and again he laughed at him.

"Now, Macumazah, the people of Bangu fell back muttering, for they found this business horrible. Yes, even those who held my arms let go of them.

"What will happen to me, Wizard, if I spare the boy?' asked Bangu.

"Zikali stretched out his hand and touched the scratch that the assegai had made in me here. Then he held up his finger red with my blood, and looked at it in the light of the moon; yes, and tasted it with his tongue.

"I think this will happen to you, Bangu,' he said. 'If you spare this boy he will grow into a man who will kill you and many others one day. But if you do not spare him I think that his spirit, working as spirits can do, will kill you to-morrow. Therefore the question is, will you live a while or will you die at once, taking me with you as your companion? For you must not leave me behind, brother Bangu.'

"Now Bangu turned and walked away, stepping over the body of my mother, and all his people walked away after him, so that presently Zikali the Wise and Little and I were left alone.

"What! have they gone?' said Zikali, lifting up his eyes from the ground. 'Then we had better be going also, Son of Matiwane, lest he should change his mind and come back. Live on, Son of Matiwane, that you may avenge Matiwane.'"

"A nice tale," I said. "But what happened afterwards?"

"Zikali took me away and nurtured me at his kraal in the Black Kloof, where he lived alone save for his servants, for in that kraal he would suffer no woman to set foot, Macumazahn. He taught me much wisdom and many secret things, and would have made a great doctor of me had I so willed. But I willed it not who find spirits ill company, and there are many of them about the Black Kloof, Macumazahn. So in the end he said: 'Go where your heart calls, and be a warrior, Saduko. But know this: You have opened a door that can never be shut again, and across the threshold of that door spirits will pass in and out for all your life, whether you seek them or seek them not.'

"It was you who opened the door, Zikali,' I answered angrily.

"Mayhap,' said Zikali, laughing after his fashion, 'for I open when I must and shut when I must. Indeed, in my youth, before the Zulus were a people, they named me Opener of Doors; and now, looking through one of those doors, I see something about you, O Son of Matiwane.'

"What do you see, my father?' I asked.

"I see two roads, Saduko: the Road of Medicine, that is the spirit road, and the Road of Spears, that is the blood road. I see you travelling on the Road of Medicine, that is my own road, Saduko, and growing wise and great, till at last, far, far away, you vanish over the precipice to which it leads, full of years and honour and wealth, feared yet beloved by all men, white and black. Only that road you must travel

alone, since such wisdom may have no friends, and, above all, no woman to share its secrets. Then I look at the Road of Spears and see you, Saduko, travelling on that road, and your feet are red with blood, and women wind their arms about your neck, and one by one your enemies go down before you. You love much, and sin much for the sake of the love, and she for whom you sin comes and goes and comes again. And the road is short, Saduko, and near the end of it are many spirits; and though you shut your eyes you see them, and though you fill your ears with clay you hear them, for they are the ghosts of your slain. But the end of your journeying I see not. Now choose which road you will, Son of Matiwane, and choose swiftly, for I speak no more of this matter.'

"Then, Macumazahn, I thought a while of the safe and lonely path of wisdom, also of the blood-red path of spears where I should find love and war, and my youth rose up in me and--I chose the path of spears and the love and the sin and the unknown death."

"A foolish choice, Saduko, supposing that there is any truth in this tale of roads, which there is not."

"Nay, a wise one, Macumazahn, for since then I have seen Mameena and know why I chose that path."

"Ah!" I said. "Mameena--I forgot her. Well, after all, perhaps there is some truth in your tale of roads. When I have seen Mameena I will tell you what I think."

"When you have seen Mameena, Macumazahn, you will say that the choice was very wise. Well, Zikali, Opener of Doors, laughed loudly when he heard it. 'The ox seeks the fat pasture, but the young bull the rough mountainside where the heifers graze,' he said; 'and after all, a bull is better than an ox. Now begin to travel your own road, Son of Matiwane, and from time to time return to the Black Kloof and tell me how it fares with you. I will promise you not to die before I know the end of it.'

"Now, Macumazahn, I have told you things that hitherto have lived in my own heart only. And, Macumazahn, Bangu is in ill favour with Panda, whom he defies in his mountain, and I have a promise--never mind how--that he who kills him will be called to no account and may keep his cattle. Will you come with me and share those cattle, O Watcher-by-Night?"

"Get thee behind me, Satan," I said in English, then added in Zulu: "I don't know. If your story is true I should have no objection to helping to kill Bangu; but I must learn lots more about this business first. Meanwhile I am going on a shooting trip to-morrow with Umbezi the Fat, and I like you, O Chooser of the Road of Spears and Blood. Will you be my companion and earn the gun with two mouths in payment?"

"Inkoosi," he said, lifting his hand in salute with a flash of his dark eyes, "you are generous, you honour me. What is there that I should love better? Yet," he added, and his face fell, "first I must ask Zikali the

Little, Zikali my foster-father."

"Oh!" I said, "so you are still tied to the Wizard's girdle, are you?"

"Not so, Macumazahn; but I promised him not long ago that I would undertake no enterprise, save that you know of, until I had spoken with him."

"How far off does Zikali live?" I asked Saduko.

"One day's journeying. Starting at sunrise I can be there by sunset."

"Good! Then I will put off the shooting for three days and come with you if you think that this wonderful old dwarf will receive me."

"I believe that he will, Macumazahn, for this reason--he told me that I should meet you and love you, and that you would be mixed up in my fortunes."

"Then he poured moonshine into your gourd instead of beer," I answered.

"Would you keep me here till midnight listening to such foolishness when we must start at dawn? Begone now and let me sleep."

"I go," he answered with a little smile. "But if this is so, O Macumazana, why do you also wish to drink of the moonshine of Zikali?" and he went.

Yet I did not sleep very well that night, for Saduko and his strange and terrible story had taken a hold of my imagination. Also, for reasons of my own, I greatly wished to see this Zikali, of whom I had heard a great deal in past years. I wished further to find out if he was a common humbug, like so many witch-doctors, this dwarf who announced that my fortunes were mixed up with those of his foster-son, and who at least could tell me something true or false about the history and position of Bangu, a person for whom I had conceived a strong dislike, possibly quite unjustified by the facts. But more than all did I wish to see Mameena, whose beauty or talents produced so much impression upon the native mind. Perhaps if I went to see Zikali she would be back at her father's kraal before we started on our shooting trip.

Thus it was then that fate wove me and my doings into the web of some very strange events; terrible, tragic and complete indeed as those of a Greek play, as it has often done both before and since those days.