

CHAPTER VIII. THE KING'S DAUGHTER

When I got back to my wagons after this semi-tragical interview with that bombastic and self-seeking old windbag, Umbezi, it was to find that Saduko and his warriors had already marched for the King's kraal, Nodwengu. A message awaited me, however, to the effect that it was hoped that I would follow, in order to make report of the affair of the destruction of the Amakoba. This, after reflection, I determined to do, really, I think, because of the intense human interest of the whole business. I wanted to see how it would work out.

Also, in a way, I read Saduko's mind and understood that at the moment he did not wish to discuss the matter of his hideous disappointment. Whatever else may have been false in this man's nature, one thing rang true, namely, his love or his infatuation for the girl Mameena. Throughout his life she was his guiding star--about as evil a star as could have arisen upon any man's horizon; the fatal star that was to light him down to doom. Let me thank Providence, as I do, that I was so fortunate as to escape its baneful influences, although I admit that they attracted me not a little.

So, seduced thither by my curiosity, which has so often led me into trouble, I trekked to Nodwengu, full of many doubts not unmingled with amusement, for I could not rid my mind of recollections of the utter

terror of the "Eater-up-of-Elephants" when he was brought face to face with the dreadful and concentrated rage of the robbed Saduko and the promise of his vengeance. Ultimately I arrived at the Great Place without experiencing any adventure that is worthy of record, and camped in a spot that was appointed to me by some induna whose name I forget, but who evidently knew of my approach, for I found him awaiting me at some distance from the town. Here I sat for quite a long while, two or three days, if I remember right, amusing myself with killing or missing turtle-doves with a shotgun, and similar pastimes, until something should happen, or I grew tired and started for Natal.

In the end, just as I was about to trek seawards, an old friend, Maputa, turned up at my wagons--that same man who had brought me the message from Panda before we started to attack Bangu.

"Greeting, Macumazahn," he said. "What of the Amakoba? I see they did not kill you."

"No," I answered, handing him some snuff, "they did not quite kill me, for here I am. What is your pleasure with me?"

"O Macumazana, only that the King wishes to know whether you have any of those little balls left in the box which I brought back to you, since, if so, he thinks he would like to swallow one of them in this hot weather."

I proffered him the whole box, but he would not take it, saying that the King would like me to give it to him myself. Now I understood that this was a summons to an audience, and asked when it would please Panda to receive me and "the-little-black-stones-that-work-wonders." He answered--at once.

So we started, and within an hour I stood, or rather sat, before Panda.

Like all his family, the King was an enormous man, but, unlike Chaka and those of his brothers whom I had known, one of a kindly countenance. I saluted him by lifting my cap, and took my place upon a wooden stool that had been provided for me outside the great hut, in the shadow of which he sat within his isi-gohlo, or private enclosure.

"Greeting, O Macumazana," he said. "I am glad to see you safe and well, for I understand that you have been engaged upon a perilous adventure since last we met."

"Yes, King," I answered; "but to which adventure do you refer--that of the buffalo, when Saduko helped me, or that of the Amakoba, when I helped Saduko?"

"The latter, Macumazahn, of which I desire to hear all the story."

So I told it to him, he and I being alone, for he commanded his councillors and servants to retire out of hearing.

"Wow!" he said, when I had finished, "you are clever as a baboon, Macumazahn. That was a fine trick to set a trap for Bangu and his Amakoba dogs and bait it with his own cattle. But they tell me that you refused your share of those cattle. Now, why was that, Macumazahn?"

By way of answer I repeated to Panda my reasons, which I have set out already.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, when I had finished. "Every one seeks greatness in his own way, and perhaps yours is better than ours. Well, the White man walks one road--or some of them do--and the Black man another. They both end at the same place, and none will know which is the right road till the journey is done. Meanwhile, what you lose Saduko and his people gain. He is a wise man, Saduko, who knows how to choose his friends, and his wisdom has brought him victory and gifts. But to you, Macumazahn, it has brought nothing but honour, on which, if a man feeds only, he will grow thin."

"I like to be thin, O Panda," I answered slowly.

"Yes, yes, I understand," replied the King, who, in common with most natives, was quick enough to seize a point, "and I, too, like people who keep thin on such food as yours, people, also, whose hands are always clean. We Zulus trust you, Macumazahn, as we trust few white men, for we have known for years that your lips say what your heart thinks, and

that your heart always thinks the thing which is good. You may be named Watcher-by-Night, but you love light, not darkness."

Now, at these somewhat unusual compliments I bowed, and felt myself colouring a little as I did so, even through my sunburn, but I made no answer to them, since to do so would have involved a discussion of the past and its tragical events, into which I had no wish to enter. Panda, too, remained silent for a while. Then he called to a messenger to summon the princes, Cetewayo and Umbelazi, and to bid Saduko, the son of Matiwane, to wait without, in case he should wish to speak with him.

A few minutes later the two princes arrived. I watched their coming with interest, for they were the most important men in Zululand, and already the nation debated fiercely which of them would succeed to the throne. I will try to describe them a little.

They were both of much the same age--it is always difficult to arrive at a Zulu's exact years--and both fine young men. Cetewayo, however, had the stronger countenance. It was said that he resembled that fierce and able monster, Chaka the Wild Beast, his uncle, and certainly I perceived in him a likeness to his other uncle, Dingaan, Umpanda's predecessor, whom I had known but too well when I was a lad. He had the same surly eyes and haughty bearing; also, when he was angry his mouth shut itself in the same iron fashion.

Of Umbelazi it is difficult for me to speak without enthusiasm. As

Mameena was the most beautiful woman I ever saw in Zululand--although it is true that old war-dog, Umslopogaas, a friend of mine who does not come into this story, used to tell me that Nada the Lily, whom I have mentioned, was even lovelier--so Umbelazi was by far the most splendid man. Indeed, the Zulus named him "Umbelazi the Handsome," and no wonder.

To begin with, he stood at least three inches above the tallest of them; from a quarter of a mile away I have recognised him by his great height, even through the dust of a desperate battle, and his breadth was proportionate to his stature. Then he was perfectly made, his great, shapely limbs ending, like Saduko's, in small hands and feet. His face, too, was well-cut and open, his colour lighter than Cetewayo's, and his eyes, which always seemed to smile, were large and dark.

Even before they passed the small gate of the inner fence it was easy for me to see that this royal pair were not upon the best of terms, for each of them tried to get through it first, to show his right of precedence. The result was somewhat ludicrous, for they jammed in the gateway. Here, however, Umbelazi's greater weight told, for, putting out his strength, he squeezed his brother into the reeds of the fence, and won through a foot or so in front of him.

"You grow too fat, my brother," I heard Cetewayo say, and saw him scowl as he spoke. "If I had held an assegai in my hand you would have been cut."

"I know it, my brother," answered Umbelazi, with a good-humoured laugh, "but I knew also that none may appear before the King armed. Had it been otherwise, I would rather have followed after you."

Now, at this hint of Umbelazi's, that he would not trust his brother behind his back with a spear, although it seemed to be conveyed in jest, I saw Panda shift uneasily on his seat, while Cetewayo scowled even more ominously than before. However, no further words passed between them, and, walking up to the King side by side, they saluted him with raised hands, calling out "Baba!"--that is, Father.

"Greeting, my children," said Panda, adding hastily, for he foresaw a quarrel as to which of them should take the seat of honour on his right: "Sit there in front of me, both of you, and, Macumazahn, do you come hither," and he pointed to the coveted place. "I am a little deaf in my left ear this morning."

So these brothers sat themselves down in front of the King; nor were they, I think, grieved to find this way out of their rivalry; but first they shook hands with me, for I knew them both, though not well, and even in this small matter the old trouble arose, since there was some difficulty as to which of them should first offer me his hand. Ultimately, I remember, Cetewayo won this trick.

When these preliminaries were finished, Panda addressed the princes, saying:

"My sons, I have sent for you to ask your counsel upon a certain matter--not a large matter, but one that may grow." And he paused to take snuff, whereon both of them ejaculated:

"We hear you, Father."

"Well, my sons, the matter is that of Saduko, the son of Matiwane, chief of the Amangwane, whom Bangu, chief of the Amakoba, ate up years ago by leave of Him who went before me. Now, this Bangu, as you know, has for some time been a thorn in my foot--a thorn that caused it to fester--and yet I did not wish to make war on him. So I spoke a word in the ear of Saduko, saying, 'He is yours, if you can kill him; and his cattle are yours.' Well, Saduko is not dull. With the help of this white man, Macumazahn, our friend from of old, he has killed Bangu and taken his cattle, and already my foot is beginning to heal."

"We have heard it," said Cetewayo.

"It was a great deed," added Umbelazi, a more generous critic.

"Yes," continued Panda, "I, too, think it was a great deed, seeing that Saduko had but a small regiment of wanderers to back him--"

"Nay," interrupted Cetewayo, "it was not those eaters of rats who won him the day, it was the wisdom of this Macumazahn."

"Macumazahn's wisdom would have been of little use without the courage of Saduko and his rats," commented Umbelazi, and from this moment I saw that the two brothers were taking sides for and against Saduko, as they did upon every other matter, not because they cared for the right of whatever was in question, but because they wished to oppose each other.

"Quite so," went on the King; "I agree with both of you, my sons. But the point is this: I think Saduko a man of promise, and one who should be advanced that he may learn to love us all, especially as his House has suffered wrong from our House, since He-who-is-gone listened to the evil counsel of Bangu, and allowed him to kill out Matiwane's tribe without just cause. Therefore, in order to wipe away this stain and bind Saduko to us, I think it well to re-establish Saduko in the chieftainship of the Amangwane, with the lands that his father held, and to give him also the chieftainship of the Amakoba, of whom it seems that the women and children, with some of the men, remain, although he already holds their cattle which he has captured in war."

"As the King pleases," said Umbelazi, with a yawn, for he was growing weary of listening to the case of Saduko.

But Cetewayo said nothing, for he appeared to be thinking of something else.

"I think also," went on Panda in a rather uncertain voice, "in order to

bind him so close that the bonds may never be broken, it would be wise to give him a woman of our family in marriage."

"Why should this little Amangwane be allowed to marry into the royal House?" asked Cetewayo, looking up. "If he is dangerous, why not kill him, and have done?"

"For this reason, my son. There is trouble ahead in Zululand, and I do not wish to kill those who may help us in that hour, nor do I wish them to become our enemies. I wish that they may be our friends; and therefore it seems to me wise, when we find a seed of greatness, to water it, and not to dig it up or plant it in a neighbour's garden. From his deeds I believe that this Saduko is such a seed."

"Our father has spoken," said Umbelazi; "and I like Saduko, who is a man of mettle and good blood. Which of our sisters does our father propose to give to him?"

"She who is named after the mother of our race, O Umbelazi; she whom your own mother bore--your sister Nandie" (in English, "The Sweet").

"A great gift, O my Father, since Nandie is both fair and wise. Also, what does she think of this matter?"

"She thinks well of it, Umbelazi, for she has seen Saduko and taken a liking to him. She told me herself that she wishes no other husband."

"Is it so?" replied Umbelazi indifferently. "Then if the King commands, and the King's daughter desires, what more is there to be said?"

"Much, I think," broke in Cetewayo. "I hold that it is out of place that this little man, who has but conquered a little tribe by borrowing the wit of Macumazahn here, should be rewarded not only with a chieftainship, but with the hand of the wisest and most beautiful of the King's daughters, even though Umbelazi," he added, with a sneer, "should be willing to throw him his own sister like a bone to a passing dog."

"Who threw the bone, Cetewayo?" asked Umbelazi, awaking out of his indifference. "Was it the King, or was it I, who never heard of the matter till this moment? And who are we that we should question the King's decrees? Is it our business to judge or to obey?"

"Has Saduko perchance made you a present of some of those cattle which he stole from the Amakoba, Umbelazi?" asked Cetewayo. "As our father asks no lobola, perhaps you have taken the gift instead."

"The only gift that I have taken from Saduko," said Umbelazi, who, I could see, was hard pressed to keep his temper, "is that of his service. He is my friend, which is why you hate him, as you hate all my friends."

"Must I then love every stray cur that licks your hand, Umbelazi? Oh, no need to tell me he is your friend, for I know it was you who put it

into our father's heart to allow him to kill Bangu and steal his cattle, which I hold to be an ill deed, for now the Great House is thatched with his reeds and Bangu's blood is on its doorposts. Moreover, he who wrought the wrong is to come and dwell therein, and for aught I know to be called a prince, like you and me. Why should he not, since the Princess Nandie is to be given to him in marriage? Certainly, Umbelazi, you would do well to take the cattle which this white trader has refused, for all men know that you have earned them."

Now Umbelazi sprang up, straightening himself to the full of his great height, and spoke in a voice that was thick with passion.

"I pray your leave to withdraw, O King," he said, "since if I stay here longer I shall grow sorry that I have no spear in my hand. Yet before I go I will tell the truth. Cetewayo hates Saduko, because, knowing him to be a chief of wit and courage, who will grow great, he sought him for his man, saying, 'Sit you in my shadow,' after he had promised to sit in mine. Therefore it is that he heaps these taunts upon me. Let him deny it if he can."

"That I shall not trouble to do, Umbelazi," answered Cetewayo, with a scowl. "Who are you that spy upon my doings, and with a mouth full of lies call me to account before the King? I will hear no more of it. Do you bide here and pay Saduko his price with the person of our sister. For, as the King has promised her, his word cannot be changed. Only let your dog know that I keep a stick for him, if he should snarl at me.

Farewell, my Father. I go upon a journey to my own lordship, the land of Gikazi, and there you will find me when you want me, which I pray may not be till after this marriage is finished, for on that I will not trust my eyes to look."

Then, with a salute, he turned and departed, bidding no good-bye to his brother.

My hand, however, he shook in farewell, for Cetewayo was always friendly to me, perhaps because he thought I might be useful to him. Also, as I learned afterwards, he was very pleased with me for the reason that I had refused my share of the Amakoba cattle, and that he knew I had no part in this proposed marriage between Saduko and Nandie, of which, indeed, I now heard for the first time.

"My Father," said Umbelazi, when Cetewayo had gone, "is this to be borne? Am I to blame in the matter? You have heard and seen--answer me, my Father."

"No, you are not to blame this time, Umbelazi," replied the King, with a heavy sigh. "But oh! my sons, my sons, where will your quarrelling end? I think that only a river of blood can quench so fierce a fire, and then which of you will live to reach its bank?"

For a while he looked at Umbelazi, and I saw love and fear in his eye, for towards him Panda always had more affection than for any of his

other children.

"Cetewayo has behaved ill," he said at length; "and before a white man, who will report the matter, which makes it worse. He has no right to dictate to me to whom I shall or shall not give my daughters in marriage. Moreover, I have spoken; nor do I change my word because he threatens me. It is known throughout the land that I never change my word; and the white men know it also, do they not, O Macumazana?"

I answered yes, they did. Also, this was true, for, like most weak men, Panda was very obstinate, and honest, too, in his own fashion.

He waved his hand, to show that the subject was ended, then bade Umbelazi go to the gate and send a messenger to bring in "the son of Matiwane."

Presently Saduko arrived, looking very stately and composed as he lifted his right hand and gave Panda the "Bayéte"--the royal salute.

"Be seated," said the King. "I have words for your ear."

Thereon, with the most perfect grace, without hurrying and without undue delay, Saduko crouched himself down upon his knees, with one of his elbows resting on the ground, as only a native knows how to do without looking absurd, and waited.

"Son of Matiwane," said the King, "I have heard all the story of how, with a small company, you destroyed Bangu and most of the men of the Amakoba, and ate up their cattle every one."

"Your pardon, Black One," interrupted Saduko. "I am but a boy, I did nothing. It was Macumazahn, Watcher-by-Night, who sits yonder. His wisdom taught me how to snare the Amakoba, after they were decoyed from their mountain, and it was Tshoza, my uncle, who loosed the cattle from the kraals. I say that I did nothing, except to strike a blow or two with a spear when I must, just as a baboon throws stones at those who would steal its young."

"I am glad to see that you are no boaster, Saduko," said Panda. "Would that more of the Zulus were like you in that matter, for then I must not listen to so many loud songs about little things. At least, Bangu was killed and his proud tribe humbled, and, for reasons of state, I am glad that this happened without my moving a regiment or being mixed up with the business, for I tell you that there are some of my family who loved Bangu. But I--I loved your father, Matiwane, whom Bangu butchered, for we were brought up together as boys--yes, and served together in the same regiment, the Amawombe, when the Wild One, my brother, ruled" (he meant Chaka, for among the Zulus the names of dead kings are hlonipa--that is, they must not be spoken if it can be avoided).

"Therefore," went on Panda, "for this reason, and for others, I am glad that Bangu has been punished, and that, although vengeance has crawled after him like a footsore bull, at length he has been tossed with its

horns and crushed with its knees."

"Yebo, Ngonyama!" (Yes, O Lion!) said Saduko.

"Now, Saduko," went on Panda, "because you are your father's son, and because you have shown yourself a man, although you are still little in the land, I am minded to advance you. Therefore I give to you the chieftainship over those who remain of the Amakoba and over all of the Amangwane blood whom you can gather."

"Bayéte! As the King pleases," said Saduko.

"And I give you leave to become a kehla--a wearer of the head-ring--although, as you have said, you are still but a boy, and with it a place upon my Council."

"Bayéte! As the King pleases," said Saduko, still apparently unmoved by the honours that were being heaped upon him.

"And, Son of Matiwane," went on Panda, "you are still unmarried, are you not?"

Now, for the first time, Saduko's face changed. "Yes, Black One," he said hurriedly, "but--"

Here he caught my eye, and, reading some warning in it, was silent.

"But," repeated Panda after him, "doubtless you would like to be? Well, it is natural in a young man who wishes to found a House, and therefore I give you leave to marry."

"Yebo, Silo!" (Yes, O Wild Beast!) "I thank the King, but--"

Here I sneezed loudly, and he ceased.

"But," repeated Panda, "of course, you do not know where to find a wife between the time the hawk stoops and the rat squeaks in its claws. How should you who have never thought of the matter? Also," he continued, with a smile, "it is well that you have not thought of it, since she whom I shall give to you could not live in the second hut in your kraal and call another 'Inkosikazi' [that is, head lady or chieftainess].

Umbelazi, my son, go fetch her of whom we have thought as a bride for this boy."

Now Umbelazi rose, and went with a broad smile upon his face, while Panda, somewhat fatigued with all his speech-making--for he was very fat and the day was very hot--leaned his head back against the hut and closed his eyes.

"O Black One! O thou who consumeth with rage! [Dhlangamandhla]" broke out Saduko, who, I could see, was much disturbed. "I have something to say to you."

"No doubt, no doubt," answered Panda drowsily, "but save up your thanks till you have seen, or you will have none left afterwards," and he snored slightly.

Now I, perceiving that Saduko was about to ruin himself, thought it well to interfere, though what business of mine it was to do so I cannot say. At any rate, if only I had held my tongue at this moment, and allowed Saduko to make a fool of himself, as he wished to do--for where Mameena was concerned he never could be wise--I verily believe that all the history of Zululand would have run a different course, and that many thousands of men, white and black, who are now dead would be alive to-day. But Fate ordered it otherwise. Yes, it was not I who spoke, but Fate. The Angel of Doom used my throat as his trumpet.

Seeing that Panda dozed, I slipped behind Saduko and gripped him by the arm.

"Are you mad?" I whispered into his ear. "Will you throw away your fortune, and your life also?"

"But Mameena," he whispered back. "I would marry none save Mameena."

"Fool!" I answered. "Mameena has betrayed and spat upon you. Take what the Heavens send you and give thanks. Would you wear Masapo's soiled blanket?"

"Macumazahn," he said in a hollow voice, "I will follow your head, and not my own heart. Yet you sow a strange seed, Macumazahn, or so you may think when you see its fruit." And he gave me a wild look--a look that frightened me.

There was something in this look which caused me to reflect that I might do well to go away and leave Saduko, Mameena, Nandie, and the rest of them to "dree their weirds," as the Scotch say, for, after all, what was my finger doing in that very hot stew? Getting burnt, I thought, and not collecting any stew.

Yet, looking back on these events, how could I foresee what would be the end of the madness of Saduko, of the fearful machinations of Mameena, and of the weakness of Umbelazi when she snared him in the net of her beauty, thus bringing about his ruin, through the hate of Saduko and the ambition of Cetewayo? How could I know that, at the back of all these events, stood the old dwarf, Zikali the Wise, working night and day to slake the enmity and fulfil the vengeance which long ago he had conceived and planned against the royal House of Senzangakona and the Zulu people over whom it ruled?

Yes, he stood there like a man behind a great stone upon the brow of a mountain, slowly, remorselessly, with infinite skill, labour, and patience, pushing that stone to the edge of the cliff, whence at length, in the appointed hour, it would thunder down upon those who dwelt

beneath, to leave them crushed and no more a people. How could I guess that we, the actors in this play, were all the while helping him to push that stone, and that he cared nothing how many of us were carried with it into the abyss, if only we brought about the triumph of his secret, unutterable rage and hate?

Now I see and understand all these things, as it is easy to do, but then I was blind; nor did the Voices reach my dull ears to warn me, as, how or why I cannot tell, they did, I believe, reach those of Zikali.

Oh, what was the sum of it? Just this, I think, and nothing more--that, as Saduko and the others were Mameena's tools, and as all of them and their passions were Zikali's tools, so he himself was the tool of some unseen Power that used him and us to accomplish its design. Which, I suppose, is fatalism, or, in other words, all these things happened because they must happen. A poor conclusion to reach after so much thought and striving, and not complimentary to man and his boasted powers of free will; still, one to which many of us are often driven, especially if we have lived among savages, where such dramas work themselves out openly and swiftly, unhidden from our eyes by the veils and subterfuges of civilisation. At least, there is this comfort about it--that, if we are but feathers blown by the wind, how can the individual feather be blamed because it did not travel against, turn or keep back the wind?

Well, let me return from these speculations to the history of the facts

that caused them.

Just as--a little too late--I had made up my mind that I would go after my own business, and leave Saduko to manage his, through the fence gateway appeared the great, tall Umbelazi leading by the hand a woman. As I saw in a moment, it did not need certain bangles of copper, ornaments of ivory and of very rare pink beads, called infibinga, which only those of the royal House were permitted to wear, to proclaim her a person of rank, for dignity and high blood were apparent in her face, her carriage, her gestures, and all that had to do with her.

Nandie the Sweet was not a great beauty, as was Mameena, although her figure was fine, and her stature like that of all the race of Senzangakona--considerably above the average. To begin with, she was darker in hue, and her lips were rather thick, as was her nose; nor were her eyes large and liquid like those of an antelope. Further, she lacked the informing mystery of Mameena's face, that at times was broken and lit up by flashes of alluring light and quick, sympathetic perception, as a heavy evening sky, that seems to join the dim earth to the dimmer heavens, is illuminated by pulsings of fire, soft and many-hued, suggesting, but not revealing, the strength and splendour that it veils. Nandie had none of these attractions, which, after all, anywhere upon the earth belong only to a few women in each generation. She was a simple, honest-natured, kindly, affectionate young woman of high birth, no more; that is, as these qualities are understood and expressed among her people.

Umbelazi led her forward into the presence of the King, to whom she bowed gracefully enough. Then, after casting a swift, sidelong glance at Saduko, which I found it difficult to interpret, and another of inquiry at me, she folded her hands upon her breast and stood silent, with bent head, waiting to be addressed.

The address was brief enough, for Panda was still sleepy.

"My daughter," he said, with a yawn, "there stands your husband," and he jerked his thumb towards Saduko. "He is a young man and a brave, and unmarried; also one who should grow great in the shadow of our House, especially as he is a friend of your brother, Umbelazi. I understand also that you have seen him and like him. Unless you have anything to say against it, for as, not being a common father, the King receives no cattle--at least in this case--I am not prejudiced, but will listen to your words," and he chuckled in a drowsy fashion. "I propose that the marriage should take place to-morrow. Now, my daughter, have you anything to say? For if so, please say it at once, as I am tired. The eternal wranglings between your brethren, Cetewayo and Umbelazi, have worn me out."

Now Nandie looked about her in her open, honest fashion, her gaze resting first on Saduko, then on Umbelazi, and lastly upon me.

"My Father," she said at length, in her soft, steady voice, "tell me, I

beseech you, who proposes this marriage? Is it the Chief Saduko, is it the Prince Umbelazi, or is it the white lord whose true name I do not know, but who is called Macumazahn, Watcher-by-Night?"

"I can't remember which of them proposed it," yawned Panda. "Who can keep on talking about things from night till morning? At any rate, I propose it, and I will make your husband a big man among our people. Have you anything to say against it?"

"I have nothing to say, my Father. I have met Saduko, and like him well--for the rest, you are the judge. But," she added slowly, "does Saduko like me? When he speaks my name, does he feel it here?" and she pointed to her throat.

"I am sure I do not know what he feels in his throat," Panda replied testily, "but I feel that mine is dry. Well, as no one says anything, the matter is settled. To-morrow Saduko shall give the umqoliso [the Ox of the Girl], that makes marriage--if he has not got one here I will lend it to him, and you can take the new, big hut that I have built in the outer kraal to dwell in for the present. There will be a dance, if you wish it; if not, I do not care, for I have no wish for ceremony just now, who am too troubled with great matters. Now I am going to sleep."

Then sinking from his stool on to his knees, Panda crawled through the doorway of his great hut, which was close to him, and vanished.

Umbelazi and I departed also through the gateway of the fence, leaving Saduko and the Princess Nandie alone together, for there were no attendants present. What happened between them I am sure I do not know, but I gather that, in one way or another, Saduko made himself sufficiently agreeable to the princess to persuade her to take him to husband. Perhaps, being already enamoured of him, she was not difficult to persuade. At any rate, on the morrow, without any great feasting or fuss, except the customary dance, the umqoliso, the "Ox of the Girl," was slaughtered, and Saduko became the husband of a royal maiden of the House of Senzangakona.

Certainly, as I remember reflecting, it was a remarkable rise in life for one who, but a few months before, had been without possessions or a home.

I may add that, after our brief talk in the King's kraal, while Panda was dozing, I had no further words with Saduko on this matter of his marriage, for between its proposal and the event he avoided me, nor did I seek him out. On the day of the marriage also, I trekked for Natal, and for a whole year heard no more of Saduko, Nandie, and Mameena; although, to be frank, I must admit I thought of the last of these persons more often, perhaps, than I should have done.

The truth is that Mameena was one of those women who sticks in a man's mind even more closely than a "Wait-a-bit" thorn does in his coat.