

## CHAPTER XV. MAMEENA CLAIMS THE KISS

When I reached Nodwengu I was taken ill and laid up in my wagon for about a fortnight. What my exact sickness was I do not know, for I had no doctor at hand to tell me, as even the missionaries had fled the country. Fever resulting from fatigue, exposure and excitement, and complicated with fearful headache--caused, I presume, by the blow which I received in the battle--were its principal symptoms.

When I began to get better, Scowl and some Zulu friends who came to see me informed me that the whole land was in a fearful state of disorder, and that Umbelazi's adherents, the Isigqosa, were still being hunted out and killed. It seems that it was even suggested by some of the Usutu that I should share their fate, but on this point Panda was firm. Indeed, he appears to have said publicly that whoever lifted a spear against me, his friend and guest, lifted it against him, and would be the cause of a new war. So the Usutu left me alone, perhaps because they were satisfied with fighting for a while, and thought it wisest to be content with what they had won.

Indeed, they had won everything, for Cetewayo was now supreme--by right of the assegai--and his father but a cipher. Although he remained the "Head" of the nation, Cetewayo was publicly declared to be its "Feet," and strength was in these active "Feet," not in the bowed and sleeping "Head." In fact, so little power was left to Panda that he could not

protect his own household. Thus one day I heard a great tumult and shouting proceeding apparently from the Isigodhlo, or royal enclosure, and on inquiring what it was afterwards, was told that Cetewayo had come from the Amangwe kraal and denounced Nomantshali, the King's wife, as "umtakati", or a witch. More, in spite of his father's prayers and tears, he had caused her to be put to death before his eyes--a dreadful and a savage deed. At this distance of time I cannot remember whether Nomantshali was the mother of Umbelazi or of one of the other fallen princes.[\*]

[\*--On re-reading this history it comes back to me that she was the mother of M'tonga, who was much younger than Umbelazi. --A. Q.]

A few days later, when I was up and about again, although I had not ventured into the kraal, Panda sent a messenger to me with a present of an ox. On his behalf this man congratulated me on my recovery, and told me that, whatever might have happened to others, I was to have no fear for my own safety. He added that Cetewayo had sworn to the King that not a hair of my head should be harmed, in these words:

"Had I wished to kill Watcher-by-Night because he fought against me, I could have done so down at Endondakusuka; but then I ought to kill you also, my father, since you sent him thither against his will with your own regiment. But I like him well, who is brave and who brought me good tidings that the Prince, my enemy, was dead of a broken heart. Moreover,

I wish to have no quarrel with the White House [the English] on account of Macumazahn, so tell him that he may sleep in peace."

The messenger said further that Saduko, the husband of the King's daughter, Nandie, and Umbelazi's chief induna, was to be put upon his trial on the morrow before the King and his council, together with Mameena, daughter of Umbezi, and that my presence was desired at this trial.

I asked what was the charge against them. He replied that, so far as Saduko was concerned, there were two: first, that he had stirred up civil war in the land, and, secondly, that having pushed on Umbelazi into a fight in which many thousands perished, he had played the traitor, deserting him in the midst of the battle, with all his following--a very heinous offence in the eyes of Zulus, to whatever party they may belong.

Against Mameena there were three counts of indictment. First, that it was she who had poisoned Saduko's child and others, not Masapo, her first husband, who had suffered for that crime. Secondly, that she had deserted Saduko, her second husband, and gone to live with another man, namely, the late Prince Umbelazi. Thirdly, that she was a witch, who had enmeshed Umbelazi in the web of her sorceries and thereby caused him to aspire to the succession to the throne, to which he had no right, and made the isililo, or cry of mourning for the dead, to be heard in every kraal in Zululand.

"With three such pitfalls in her narrow path, Mameena will have to walk carefully if she would escape them all," I said.

"Yes, Inkoosi, especially as the pitfalls are dug from side to side of the path and have a pointed stake set at the bottom of each of them. Oh, Mameena is already as good as dead, as she deserves to be, who without doubt is the greatest umtakati north of the Tugela."

I sighed, for somehow I was sorry for Mameena, though why she should escape when so many better people had perished because of her I did not know; and the messenger went on:

"The Black One [that is, Panda] sent me to tell Saduko that he would be allowed to see you, Macumazahn, before the trial, if he wished, for he knew that you had been a friend of his, and thought that you might be able to give evidence in his favour."

"And what did Saduko say to that?" I asked.

"He said that he thanked the King, but that it was not needful for him to talk with Macumazahn, whose heart was white like his skin, and whose lips, if they spoke at all, would tell neither more nor less than the truth. The Princess Nandie, who is with him--for she will not leave him in his trouble, as all others have done--on hearing these words of Saduko's, said that they were true, and that for this reason, although

you were her friend, she did not hold it necessary to see you either."

Upon this intimation I made no comment, but "my head thought," as the natives say, that Saduko's real reason for not wishing to see me was that he felt ashamed to do so, and Nandie's that she feared to learn more about her husband's perfidies than she knew already.

"With Mameena it is otherwise," went on the messenger, "for as soon as she was brought here with Zikali the Little and Wise, with whom, it seems, she has been sheltering, and learned that you, Macumazahn, were at the kraal, she asked leave to see you--"

"And is it granted?" I broke in hurriedly, for I did not at all wish for a private interview with Mameena.

"Nay, have no fear, Inkoosi," replied the messenger with a smile; "it is refused, because the King said that if once she saw you she would bewitch you and bring trouble on you, as she does on all men. It is for this reason that she is guarded by women only, no man being allowed to go near to her, for on women her witcheries will not bite. Still, they say that she is merry, and laughs and sings a great deal, declaring that her life has been dull up at old Zikali's, and that now she is going to a place as gay as the veld in spring, after the first warm rain, where there will be plenty of men to quarrel for her and make her great and happy. That is what she says, the witch who knows perhaps what the Place of Spirits is like."

Then, as I made no remarks or suggestions, the messenger departed, saying that he would return on the morrow to lead me to the place of trial.

Next morning, after the cows had been milked and the cattle loosed from their kraals, he came accordingly, with a guard of about thirty men, all of them soldiers who had survived the great fight of the Amawombe. These warriors, some of whom had wounds that were scarcely healed, saluted me with loud cries of "Inkoosi!" and "Baba" as I stepped out of the wagon, where I had spent a wretched night of unpleasant anticipation, showing me that there were at least some Zulus with whom I remained popular. Indeed, their delight at seeing me, whom they looked upon as a comrade and one of the few survivors of the great adventure, was quite touching. As we went, which we did slowly, their captain told me of their fears that I had been killed with the others, and how rejoiced they were when they learned that I was safe. He told me also that, after the third regiment had attacked them and broken up their ring, a small body of them, from eighty to a hundred only, managed to cut a way through and escape, running, not towards the Tugela, where so many thousands had perished, but up to Nodwengu, where they reported themselves to Panda as the only survivors of the Amawombe.

"And are you safe now?" I asked of the captain.

"Oh, yes," he answered. "You see, we were the King's men, not

Umbelazi's, so Cetewayo bears us no grudge. Indeed, he is obliged to us, because we gave the Usutu their stomachs full of good fighting, which is more than did those cows of Umbelazi's. It is towards Saduko that he bears a grudge, for you know, my father, one should never pull a drowning man out of the stream--which is what Saduko did, for had it not been for his treachery, Cetewayo would have sunk beneath the water of Death--especially if it is only to spite a woman who hates him. Still, perhaps Saduko will escape with his life, because he is Nandie's husband, and Cetewayo fears Nandie, his sister, if he does not love her. But here we are, and those who have to watch the sky all day will be able to tell of the evening weather" (in other words, those who live will learn).

As he spoke we passed into the private enclosure of the isi-gohlo, outside of which a great many people were gathered, shouting, talking and quarrelling, for in those days all the usual discipline of the Great Place was relaxed. Within the fence, however, that was strongly guarded on its exterior side, were only about a score of councillors, the King, the Prince Cetewayo, who sat upon his right, the Princess Nandie, Saduko's wife, a few attendants, two great, silent fellows armed with clubs, whom I guessed to be executioners, and, seated in the shade in a corner, that ancient dwarf, Zikali, though how he came to be there I did not know.

Obviously the trial was to be quite a private affair, which accounted for the unusual presence of the two "slayers." Even my Amawombe guard

was left outside the gate, although I was significantly informed that if I chose to call upon them they would hear me, which was another way of saying that in such a small gathering I was absolutely safe.

Walking forward boldly towards Panda, who, though he was as fat as ever, looked very worn and much older than when I had last seen him, I made my bow, whereon he took my hand and asked after my health. Then I shook Cetewayo's hand also, as I saw that it was stretched out to me. He seized the opportunity to remark that he was told that I had suffered a knock on the head in some scrimmage down by the Tugela, and he hoped that I felt no ill effects. I answered: No, though I feared that there were a few others who had not been so fortunate, especially those who had stumbled against the Amawombe regiment, with whom I chanced to be travelling upon a peaceful mission of inquiry.

It was a bold speech to make, but I was determined to give him a quid pro quo, and, as a matter of fact, he took it in very good part, laughing heartily at the joke.

After this I saluted such of the councillors present as I knew, which was not many, for most of my old friends were dead, and sat down upon the stool that was placed for me not very far from the dwarf Zikali, who stared at me in a stony fashion, as though he had never seen me before.

There followed a pause. Then, at some sign from Panda, a side gate in the fence was opened, and through it appeared Saduko, who walked



proudly to the space in front of the King, to whom he gave the salute of "Bayéte," and, at a sign, sat himself down upon the ground. Next, through the same gate, to which she was conducted by some women, came Mameena, quite unchanged and, I think, more beautiful than she had ever been. So lovely did she look, indeed, in her cloak of grey fur, her necklet of blue beads, and the gleaming rings of copper which she wore upon her wrists and ankles, that every eye was fixed upon her as she glided gracefully forward to make her obeisance to Panda.

This done, she turned and saw Nandie, to whom she also bowed, as she did so inquiring after the health of her child. Without waiting for an answer, which she knew would not be vouchsafed, she advanced to me and grasped my hand, which she pressed warmly, saying how glad she was to see me safe after going through so many dangers, though she thought I looked even thinner than I used to be.

Only of Saduko, who was watching her with his intent and melancholy eyes, she took no heed whatsoever. Indeed, for a while I thought that she could not have seen him. Nor did she appear to recognise Cetewayo, although he stared at her hard enough. But, as her glance fell upon the two executioners, I thought I saw her shudder like a shaken reed. Then she sat down in the place appointed to her, and the trial began.

The case of Saduko was taken first. An officer learned in Zulu law--which I can assure the reader is a very intricate and well-established law--I suppose that he might be called a kind of

attorney-general, rose and stated the case against the prisoner. He told how Saduko, from a nobody, had been lifted to a great place by the King and given his daughter, the Princess Nandie, in marriage. Then he alleged that, as would be proved in evidence, the said Saduko had urged on Umbelazi the Prince, to whose party he had attached himself, to make war upon Cetewayo. This war having begun, at the great battle of Endondakusuka, he had treacherously deserted Umbelazi, together with three regiments under his command, and gone over to Cetewayo, thereby bringing Umbelazi to defeat and death.

This brief statement of the case for the prosecution being finished, Panda asked Saduko whether he pleaded guilty or not guilty.

"Guilty, O King," he answered, and was silent.

Then Panda asked him if he had anything to say in excuse of his conduct.

"Nothing, O King, except that I was Umbelazi's man, and when you, O King, had given the word that he and the Prince yonder might fight, I, like many others, some of whom are dead and some alive, worked for him with all my ten fingers that he might have the victory."

"Then why did you desert my son the Prince in the battle?" asked Panda.

"Because I saw that the Prince Cetewayo was the stronger bull and wished to be on the winning side, as all men do--for no other reason," answered

Saduko calmly.

Now, everyone present stared, not excepting Cetewayo. Panda, who, like the rest of us, had heard a very different tale, looked extremely puzzled, while Zikali, in his corner, set up one of his great laughs.

After a long pause, at length the King, as supreme judge, began to pass sentence. At least, I suppose that was his intention, but before three words had left his lips Nandie rose and said:

"My Father, ere you speak that which cannot be unspoken, hear me. It is well known that Saduko, my husband, was my brother Umbelazi's general and councillor, and if he is to be killed for clinging to the Prince, then I should be killed also, and countless others in Zululand who still remain alive because they were not in or escaped the battle. It is well known also, my Father, that during that battle Saduko went over to my brother Cetewayo, though whether this brought about the defeat of Umbelazi I cannot say. Why did he go over? He tells you because he wished to be on the winning side. It is not true. He went over in order to be revenged upon Umbelazi, who had taken from him yonder witch"--and she pointed with her finger at Mameena--"yonder witch, whom he loved and still loves, and whom even now he would shield, even though to do so he must make his own name shameful. Saduko sinned; I do not deny it, my Father, but there sits the real traitress, red with the blood of Umbelazi and with that of thousands of others who have 'tshonile'd' [gone down to keep him company among the ghosts]. Therefore, O King, I

beseech you, spare the life of Saduko, my husband, or, if he must die, learn that I, your daughter, will die with him. I have spoken, O King."

And very proudly and quietly she sat herself down again, waiting for the fateful words.

But those words were not spoken, since Panda only said: "Let us try the case of this woman, Mameena."

Thereon the law officer rose again and set out the charges against Mameena, namely, that it was she who had poisoned Saduko's child, and not Masapo; that, after marrying Saduko, she had deserted him and gone to live with the Prince Umbelazi; and that finally she had bewitched the said Umbelazi and caused him to make civil war in the land.

"The second charge, if proved, namely, that this woman deserted her husband for another man, is a crime of death," broke in Panda abruptly as the officer finished speaking; "therefore, what need is there to hear the first and the third until that is examined. What do you plead to that charge, woman?"

Now, understanding that the King did not wish to stir up these other matters of murder and witchcraft for some reason of his own, we all turned to hear Mameena's answer.

"O King," she said in her low, silvery voice, "I cannot deny that I left

Saduko for Umbelazi the Handsome, any more than Saduko can deny that he left Umbelazi the beaten for Cetewayo the conqueror."

"Why did you leave Saduko?" asked Panda.

"O King, perhaps because I loved Umbelazi; for was he not called the Handsome? Also you know that the Prince, your son, was one to be loved." Here she paused, looking at poor Panda, who winced. "Or, perhaps, because I wished to be great; for was he not of the Blood Royal, and, had it not been for Saduko, would he not one day have been a king? Or, perhaps, because I could no longer bear the treatment that the Princess Nandie dealt out to me; she who was cruel to me and threatened to beat me, because Saduko loved my hut better than her own. Ask Saduko; he knows more of these matters than I do," and she gazed at him steadily. Then she went on: "How can a woman tell her reasons, O King, when she never knows them herself?"--a question at which some of her hearers smiled.

Now Saduko rose and said slowly:

"Hear me, O King, and I will give the reason that Mameena hides. She left me for Umbelazi because I bade her to do so, for I knew that Umbelazi desired her, and I wished to tie the cord tighter which bound me to one who at that time I thought would inherit the Throne. Also, I was weary of Mameena, who quarrelled night and day with the Princess

Nandie, my Inkosikazi."

Now Nandie gasped in astonishment (and so did I), but Mameena laughed and said:

"Yes, O King, those were the two real reasons that I had forgotten. I left Saduko because he bade me, as he wished to make a present to the Prince. Also, he was tired of me; for many days at a time he would scarcely speak to me, because, however kind she might be, I could not help quarrelling with the Princess Nandie. Moreover, there was another reason which I have forgotten: I had no child, and not having any child I did not think it mattered whether I went or stayed. If Saduko searches, he will remember that I told him so, and that he agreed with me."

Again she looked at Saduko, who said hurriedly:

"Yes, yes, I told her so; I told her that I wished for no barren cows in my kraal."

Now some of the audience laughed outright, but Panda frowned.

"It seems," he said, "that my ears are being stuffed with lies, though which of these two tells them I cannot say. Well, if the woman left the man by his own wish, and that his ends might be furthered, as he says, he had put her away, and therefore the fault, if any, is his, not hers."

So that charge is ended. Now, woman, what have you to tell us of the witchcraft which it is said you practised upon the Prince who is gone, thereby causing him to make war in the land?"

"Little that you would wish to hear, O King, or that it would be seemly for me to speak," she answered, drooping her head modestly. "The only witchcraft that ever I practised upon Umbelazi lies here"--and she touched her beautiful eyes--"and here"--and she touched her curving lips--"and in this poor shape of mine which some have thought so fair. As for the war, what had I to do with war, who never spoke to Umbelazi, who was so dear to me"--and she looked up with tears running down her face--"save of love? O King, is there a man among you all who would fear the witcheries of such a one as I; and because the Heavens made me beautiful with the beauty that men must follow, am I also to be killed as a sorceress?"

Now, to this argument neither Panda nor anyone else seemed to find an answer, especially as it was well known that Umbelazi had cherished his ambition to the succession long before he met Mameena. So that charge was dropped, and the first and greatest of the three proceeded with; namely, that it was she, Mameena, and not her husband, Masapo, who had murdered Nandie's child.

When this accusation was made against her, for the first time I saw a little shade of trouble flit across Mameena's soft eyes.

"Surely, O King," she said, "that matter was settled long ago, when the Ndwande, Zikali, the great Nyanga, smelt out Masapo the wizard, he who was my husband, and brought him to his death for this crime. Must I then be tried for it again?"

"Not so, woman," answered Panda. "All that Zikali smelt out was the poison that wrought the crime, and as some of that poison was found upon Masapo, he was killed as a wizard. Yet it may be that it was not he who used the poison."

"Then surely the King should have thought of that before he died," murmured Mameena. "But I forget: It is known that Masapo was always hostile to the House of Senzangakona."

To this remark Panda made no answer, perhaps because it was unanswerable, even in a land where it was customary to kill the supposed wizard first and inquire as to his actual guilt afterwards, or not at all. Or perhaps he thought it politic to ignore the suggestion that he had been inspired by personal enmity. Only, he looked at his daughter, Nandie, who rose and said:

"Have I leave to call a witness on this matter of the poison, my Father?"

Panda nodded, whereon Nandie said to one of the councillors:



"Be pleased to summon my woman, Nahana, who waits without."

The man went, and presently returned with an elderly female who, it appeared, had been Nandie's nurse, and, never having married, owing to some physical defect, had always remained in her service, a person well known and much respected in her humble walk of life.

"Nahana," said Nandie, "you are brought here that you may repeat to the King and his council a tale which you told to me as to the coming of a certain woman into my hut before the death of my first-born son, and what she did there. Say first, is this woman present here?"

"Aye, Inkosazana," answered Nahana, "yonder she sits. Who could mistake her?" and she pointed to Mameena, who was listening to every word intently, as a dog listens at the mouth of an ant-bear hole when the beast is stirring beneath.

"Then what of the woman and her deeds?" asked Panda.

"Only this, O King. Two nights before the child that is dead was taken ill, I saw Mameena creep into the hut of the lady Nandie, I who was asleep alone in a corner of the big hut out of reach of the light of the fire. At the time the lady Nandie was away from the hut with her son. Knowing the woman for Mameena, the wife of Masapo, who was on friendly terms with the Inkosazana, whom I supposed she had come to visit, I did not declare myself; nor did I take any particular note when I saw her

sprinkle a little mat upon which the babe, Saduko's son, was wont to be laid, with some medicine, because I had heard her promise to the Inkosazana a powder which she said would drive away insects. Only, when I saw her throw some of this powder into the vessel of warm water that stood by the fire, to be used for the washing of the child, and place something, muttering certain words that I could not catch, in the straw of the doorway, I thought it strange, and was about to question her when she left the hut. As it happened, O King, but a little while afterwards, before one could count ten tens indeed, a messenger came to the hut to tell me that my old mother lay dying at her kraal four days' journey from Nodwengu, and prayed to see me before she died. Then I forgot all about Mameena and the powder, and, running out to seek the Princess Nandie, I craved her leave to go with the messenger to my mother's kraal, which she granted to me, saying that I need not return until my mother was buried.

"So I went. But, oh! my mother took long to die. Whole moons passed before I shut her eyes, and all this while she would not let me go; nor, indeed, did I wish to leave her whom I loved. At length it was over, and then came the days of mourning, and after those some more days of rest, and after them again the days of the division of the cattle, so that in the end six moons or more had gone by before I returned to the service of the Princess Nandie, and found that Mameena was now the second wife of the lord Saduko. Also I found that the child of the lady Nandie was dead, and that Masapo, the first husband of Mameena, had been smelt out and killed as the murderer of the child. But as all these things were

over and done with, and as Mameena was very kind to me, giving me gifts and sparing me tasks, and as I saw that Saduko my lord loved her much, it never came into my head to say anything of the matter of the powder that I saw her sprinkle on the mat.

"After she had run away with the Prince who is dead, however, I did tell the lady Nandie. Moreover, the lady Nandie, in my presence, searched in the straw of the doorway of the hut and found there, wrapped in soft hide, certain medicines such as the Nyangas sell, wherewith those who consult them can bewitch their enemies, or cause those whom they desire to love them or to hate their wives or husbands. That is all I know of the story, O King."

"Do my ears hear a true tale, Nandie?" asked Panda. "Or is this woman a liar like others?"

"I think not, my Father; see, here is the muti [medicine] which Nahana and I found hid in the doorway of the hut that I have kept unopened till this day."

And she laid on the ground a little leather bag, very neatly sewn with sinews, and fastened round its neck with a fibre string.

Panda directed one of the councillors to open the bag, which the man did unwillingly enough, since evidently he feared its evil influence, pouring out its contents on to the back of a hide shield, which was

then carried round so that we might all look at them. These, so far as I could see, consisted of some withered roots, a small piece of human thigh bone, such as might have come from the skeleton of an infant, that had a little stopper of wood in its orifice, and what I took to be the fang of a snake.

Panda looked at them and shrank away, saying:

"Come hither, Zikali the Old, you who are skilled in magic, and tell us what is this medicine."

Then Zikali rose from the corner where he had been sitting so silently, and waddled heavily across the open space to where the shield lay in front of the King. As he passed Mameena, she bent down over the dwarf and began to whisper to him swiftly; but he placed his hands upon his big head, covering up his ears, as I suppose, that he might not hear her words.

"What have I to do with this matter, O King?" he asked.

"Much, it seems, O Opener-of-Roads," said Panda sternly, "seeing that you were the doctor who smelt out Masapo, and that it was in your kraal that yonder woman hid herself while her lover, the Prince, my son, who is dead, went down to the battle, and that she was brought thence with you. Tell us, now, the nature of this muti, and, being wise, as you are, be careful to tell us truly, lest it should be said, O Zikali, that you

are not a Nyanga only, but an umtakati as well. For then," he added with meaning, and choosing his words carefully, "perchance, O Zikali, I might be tempted to make trial of whether or no it is true that you cannot be killed like other men, especially as I have heard of late that your heart is evil towards me and my House."

For a moment Zikali hesitated--I think to give his quick brain time to work, for he saw his great danger. Then he laughed in his dreadful fashion and said:

"Oho! the King thinks that the otter is in the trap," and he glanced at the fence of the isi-gohlo and at the fierce executioners, who stood watching him sternly. "Well, many times before has this otter seemed to be in a trap, yes, ere your father saw light, O Son of Senzangakona, and after it also. Yet here he stands living. Make no trial, O King, of whether or no I be mortal, lest if Death should come to such a one as I, he should take many others with him also. Have you not heard the saying that when the Opener-of-Roads comes to the end of his road there will be no more a King of the Zulus, as when he began his road there was no King of the Zulus, since the days of his manhood are the days of all the Zulu kings?"

Thus he spoke, glaring at Panda and at Cetewayo, who shrank before his gaze.

"Remember," he went on, "that the Black One who is 'gone down' long ago,

the Wild Beast who fathered the Zulu herd, threatened him whom he named the 'Thing-that-should-not-have-been-born,' aye, and slew those whom he loved, and afterwards was slain by others, who also are 'gone down,' and that you alone, O Panda, did not threaten him, and that you alone, O Panda, have not been slain. Now, if you would make trial of whether I die as other men die, bid your dogs fall on, for Zikali is ready," and he folded his arms and waited.

Indeed, all of us waited breathlessly, for we understood that the terrible dwarf was matching himself against Panda and Cetewayo and defying them both. Presently it became obvious that he had won the game, since Panda only said:

"Why should I slay one whom I have befriended in the past, and why do you speak such heavy words of death in my ears, O, Zikali the Wise, which of late have heard so much of death?" He sighed, adding: "Be pleased now, to tell us of this medicine, or, if you will not, go, and I will send for other Nyangas."

"Why should I not tell you, when you ask me softly and without threats, O King? See"--and Zikali took up some of the twisted roots--"these are the roots of a certain poisonous herb that blooms at night on the tops of mountains, and woe be to the ox that eats thereof. They have been boiled in gall and blood, and ill will befall the hut in which they are hidden by one who can speak the words of power. This is the bone of a babe that has never lived to cut its teeth--I think of a babe that was

left to die alone in the bush because it was hated, or because none would father it. Such a bone has strength to work ill against other babes; moreover, it is filled with a charmed medicine. Look!" and, pulling out the plug of wood, he scattered some grey powder from the bone, then stopped it up again. "This," he added, picking up the fang, "is the tooth of a deadly serpent, that, after it has been doctored, is used by women to change the heart of a man from another to herself. I have spoken."

And he turned to go.

"Stay!" said the King. "Who set these foul charms in the doorway of Saduko's hut?"

"How can I tell, O King, unless I make preparation and cast the bones and smell out the evil-doer? You have heard the story of the woman Nahana. Accept it or reject it as your heart tells you."

"If that story be true, O Zikali, how comes it that you yourself smelt out, not Mameena, the wife of Masapo, but Masapo, her husband, himself, and caused him to be slain because of the poisoning of the child of Nandie?"

"You err, O King. I, Zikali, smelt out the House of Masapo. Then I smelt out the poison, searching for it first in the hair of Mameena, and finding it in the kaross of Masapo. I never smelt out that it was Masapo

who gave the poison. That was the judgment of you and of your Council, O King. Nay, I knew well that there was more in the matter, and had you paid me another fee and bade me to continue to use my wisdom, without doubt I should have found this magic stuff hidden in the hut, and mayhap have learned the name of the hider. But I was weary, who am very old; and what was it to me if you chose to kill Masapo or chose to let him go? Masapo, who, being your secret enemy, was a man who deserved to die--if not for this matter, then for others."

Now, all this while I had been watching Mameena, who sat, in the Zulu fashion, listening to this deadly evidence, a slight smile upon her face, and without attempting any interruption or comment. Only I saw that while Zikali was examining the medicine, her eyes were seeking the eyes of Saduko, who remained in his place, also silent, and, to all appearance, the least interested of anyone present. He tried to avoid her glance, turning his head uneasily; but at length her eyes caught his and held them. Then his heart began to beat quickly, his breast heaved, and on his face there grew a look of dreamy content, even of happiness. From that moment forward, till the end of the scene, Saduko never took his eyes off this strange woman, though I think that, with the exception of the dwarf, Zikali, who saw everything, and of myself, who am trained to observation, none noted this curious by-play of the drama.

The King began to speak. "Mameena," he said, "you have heard. Have you aught to say? For if not it would seem that you are a witch and a murderess, and one who must die."



"Yea, a little word, O King," she answered quietly. "Nahana speaks truth. It is true that I entered the hut of Nandie and set the medicine there. I say it because by nature I am not one who hides the truth or would attempt to throw discredit even upon a humble serving-woman," and she glanced at Nahana.

"Then from between your own teeth it is finished," said Panda.

"Not altogether, O King. I have said that I set the medicine in the hut. I have not said, and I will not say, how and why I set it there. That tale I call upon Saduko yonder to tell to you, he who was my husband, that I left for Umbelazi, and who, being a man, must therefore hate me. By the words he says I will abide. If he declares that I am guilty, then I am guilty, and prepared to pay the price of guilt. But if he declares that I am innocent, then, O King and O Prince Cetewayo, without fear I trust myself to your justness. Now speak, O Saduko; speak the whole truth, whatever it may be, if that is the King's will."

"It is my will," said Panda.

"And mine also," added Cetewayo, who, I could see, like everyone else, was much interested in this matter.

Saduko rose to his feet, the same Saduko that I had always known, and yet so changed. All the life and fire had gone from him; his pride

in himself was no more; none could have known him for that ambitious, confident man who, in his day of power, the Zulus named the "Self-Eater." He was a mere mask of the old Saduko, informed by some new, some alien, spirit. With dull, lack-lustre eyes fixed always upon the lovely eyes of Mameena, in slow and hesitating tones he began his tale.

"It is true, O Lion," he said, "that Mameena spread the poison upon my child's mat. It is true that she set the deadly charms in the doorway of Nandie's hut. These things she did, not knowing what she did, and it was I who instructed her to do them. This is the case. From the beginning I have always loved Mameena as I have loved no other woman and as no other woman was ever loved. But while I was away with Macumazahn, who sits yonder, to destroy Bangu, chief of the Amakoba, he who had killed my father, Umbezi, the father of Mameena, he whom the Prince Cetewayo gave to the vultures the other day because he had lied as to the death of Umbelazi, he, I say, forced Mameena, against her will, to marry Masapo the Boar, who afterwards was executed for wizardry. Now, here at your feast, when you reviewed the people of the Zulus, O King, after you had given me the lady Nandie as wife, Mameena and I met again and loved each other more than we had ever done before. But, being an upright woman, Mameena thrust me away from her, saying:

"I have a husband, who, if he is not dear to me, still is my husband, and while he lives to him I will be true.' Then, O King, I took counsel with the evil in my heart, and made a plot in myself to be rid of the

Boar, Masapo, so that when he was dead I might marry Mameena. This was the plot that I made--that my son and Princess Nandie's should be poisoned, and that Masapo should seem to poison him, so that he might be killed as a wizard and I marry Mameena."

Now, at this astounding statement, which was something beyond the experience of the most cunning and cruel savage present there, a gasp of astonishment went up from the audience; even old Zikali lifted his head and stared. Nandie, too, shaken out of her usual calm, rose as though to speak; then, looking first at Saduko and next at Mameena, sat herself down again and waited. But Saduko went on again in the same cold, measured voice:

"I gave Mameena a powder which I had bought for two heifers from a great doctor who lived beyond the Tugela, but who is now dead, which powder I told her was desired by Nandie, my Inkosikazi, to destroy the little beetles than ran about the hut, and directed her where she was to spread it. Also, I gave her the bag of medicine, telling her to thrust it into the doorway of the hut, that it might bring a blessing upon my House. These things she did ignorantly to please me, not knowing that the powder was poison, not knowing that the medicine was bewitched. So my child died, as I wished it to die, and, indeed, I myself fell sick because by accident I touched the powder.

"Afterwards Masapo was smelt out as a wizard by old Zikali, I having caused a bag of the poison to be sewn in his kaross in order to deceive

Zikali, and killed by your order, O King, and Mameena was given to me as a wife, also by your order, O King, which was what I desired. Later on, as I have told you, I wearied of her, and wishing to please the Prince who has wandered away, I commanded her to yield herself to him, which Mameena did out of her love for me and to advance my fortunes, she who is blameless in all things."

Saduko finished speaking and sat down again, as an automaton might do when a wire is pulled, his lack-lustre eyes still fixed upon Mameena's face.

"You have heard, O King," said Mameena. "Now pass judgment, knowing that, if it be your will, I am ready to die for Saduko's sake."

But Panda sprang up in a rage.

"Take him away!" he said, pointing to Saduko. "Take away that dog who is not fit to live, a dog who eats his own child that thereby he may cause another to be slain unjustly and steal his wife."

The executioners leapt forward, and, having something to say, for I could bear this business no longer, I began to rise to my feet. Before I gained them, however, Zikali was speaking.

"O King," he said, "it seems that you have killed one man unjustly on this matter, namely, Masapo. Would you do the same by another?" and he

pointed to Saduko.

"What do you mean?" asked Panda angrily. "Have you not heard this low fellow, whom I made great, giving him the rule over tribes and my daughter in marriage, confess with his own lips that he murdered his child, the child of my blood, in order that he might eat a fruit which grew by the roadside for all men to nibble at?" and he glared at Mameena.

"Aye, Child of Senzangakona," answered Zikali, "I heard Saduko say this with his own lips, but the voice that spoke from the lips was not the voice of Saduko, as, were you a skilled Nyanga like me, you would have known as well as I do, and as well as does the white man, Watcher-by-Night, who is a reader of hearts.

"Hearken now, O King, and you great ones around the King, and I will tell you a story. Matiwane, the father of Saduko, was my friend, as he was yours, O King, and when Bangu slew him and his people, by leave of the Wild Beast [Chaka], I saved the child, his son, aye, and brought him up in my own House, having learned to love him. Then, when he became a man, I, the Opener-of-Roads, showed him two roads, down either of which he might choose to walk--the Road of Wisdom and the Road of War and Women: the white road that runs through peace to knowledge, and the red road that runs through blood to death.

"But already there stood one upon this red road who beckoned him, she

who sits yonder, and he followed after her, as I knew he would. From the beginning she was false to him, taking a richer man for her husband. Then, when Saduko grew great, she grew sorry, and came to ask my counsel as to how she might be rid of Masapo, whom she swore she hated. I told her that she could leave him for another man, or wait till her Spirit moved him from her path; but I never put evil into her heart, seeing that it was there already.

"Then she and no other, having first made Saduko love her more than ever, murdered the child of Nandie, his Inkosikazi; and so brought about the death of Masapo and crept into Saduko's arms. Here she slept a while, till a new shadow fell upon her, that of the 'Elephant-with-the-tuft-of-hair,' who will walk the woods no more. Him she beguiled that she might grow great the quicker, and left the house of Saduko, taking his heart with her, she who was destined to be the doom of men.

"Now, into Saduko's breast, where his heart had been, entered an evil spirit of jealousy and of revenge, and in the battle of Endondakusuka that spirit rode him as a white man rides a horse. As he had arranged to do with the Prince Cetewayo yonder--nay, deny it not, O Prince, for I know all; did you not make a bargain together, on the third night before the battle, among the bushes, and start apart when the buck leapt out between you?" (Here Cetewayo, who had been about to speak, threw the corner of his kaross over his face.) "As he had arranged to do, I say, he went over with his regiments from the Isigqosa to the Usutu, and so

brought about the fall of Umbelazi and the death of many thousands. Yes, and this he did for one reason only--because yonder woman had left him for the Prince, and he cared more for her than for all the world could give him, for her who had filled him with madness as a bowl is filled with milk. And now, O King, you have heard this man tell you a story, you have heard him shout out that he is viler than any man in all the land; that he murdered his own child, the child he loved so well, to win this witch; that afterwards he gave her to his friend and lord to buy more of his favour, and that lastly he deserted that lord because he thought that there was another lord from whom he could buy more favour. Is it not so, O King?"

"It is so," answered Panda, "and therefore must Saduko be thrown out to the jackals."

"Wait a while, O King. I say that Saduko has spoken not with his own voice, but with the voice of Mameena. I say that she is the greatest witch in all the land, and that she has drugged him with the medicine of her eyes, so that he knows not what he says, even as she drugged the Prince who is dead."

"Then prove it, or he dies!" exclaimed the King.

Now the dwarf went to Panda and whispered in his ear, whereon Panda whispered in turn into the ears of two of his councillors. These men, who were unarmed, rose and made as though to leave the isi-gohlo. But

as they passed Mameena one of them suddenly threw his arms about her, pinioning her arms, the other tearing off the kaross he wore--for the weather was cold--flung it over her head and knotted it behind her so that she was hidden except for her ankles and feet. Then, although she did not move or struggle, they caught hold of her and stood still.

Now Zikali hobbled to Saduko and bade him rise, which he did. Then he looked at him for a long while and made certain movements with his hands before his face, after which Saduko uttered a great sigh and stared about him.

"Saduko," said Zikali, "I pray you tell me, your foster-father, whether it is true, as men say, that you sold your wife, Mameena, to the Prince Umbelazi in order that his favour might fall on you like heavy rain?"

"Wow! Zikali," said Saduko, with a start of rage, "If were you as others are I would kill you, you toad, who dare to spit slander on my name. She ran away with the Prince, having beguiled him with the magic of her beauty."

"Strike me not, Saduko," went on Zikali, "or at least wait to strike until you have answered one more question. Is it true, as men say, that in the battle of Endondakusuka you went over to the Usutu with your regiments because you thought that Indhlovu-ene-Sihlonti would be beaten, and wished to be on the side of him who won?"



"What, Toad! More slander?" cried Saduko. "I went over for one reason only--to be revenged upon the Prince because he had taken from me her who was more to me than life or honour. Aye, and when I went over Umbelazi was winning; it was because I went that he lost and died, as I meant that he should die, though now," he added sadly, "I would that I had not brought him to ruin and the dust, who think that, like myself, he was but wet clay in a woman's fingers.

"O King," he added, turning to Panda, "kill me, I pray you, who am not worthy to live, since to him whose hand is red with the blood of his friend, death alone is left, who, while he breathes, must share his sleep with ghosts that watch him with their angry eyes."

Then Nandie sprang up and said:

"Nay, Father, listen not to him who is mad, and therefore holy.[\*]  
What he has done, he has done, who, as he has said, was but a tool in another's hand. As for our babe, I know well that he would have died sooner than harm it, for he loved it much, and when it was taken away, for three whole days and nights he wept and would touch no food. Give this poor man to me, my Father--to me, his wife, who loves him--and let us go hence to some other land, where perchance we may forget."

[\*--The Zulus suppose that insane people are inspired.

--A.Q.]

"Be silent, daughter," said the King; "and you, O Zikali, the Nyanga, be silent also."

They obeyed, and, after thinking awhile, Panda made a motion with his hand, whereon the two councillors lifted the kaross from off Mameena, who looked about her calmly and asked if she were taking part in some child's game.

"Aye, woman," answered Panda, "you are taking part in a great game, but not, I think, such as is played by children--a game of life and death. Now, have you heard the tale of Zikali the Little and Wise, and the words of Saduko, who was once your husband, or must they be repeated to you?"

"There is no need, O King; my ears are too quick to be muffled by a fur bag, and I would not waste your time."

"Then what have you to say, woman?"

"Not much," she answered with a shrug of her shoulders, "except that I have lost in this game. You will not believe me, but if you had left me alone I should have told you so, who did not wish to see that poor fool, Saduko, killed for deeds he had never done. Still, the tale he told you was not told because I had bewitched him; it was told for love of me, whom he desired to save. It was Zikali yonder; Zikali, the enemy of your House, who in the end will destroy your House, O Son of Senzangakona,

that bewitched him, as he has bewitched you all, and forced the truth out of his unwilling heart.

"Now, what more is there to say? Very little, as I think. I did the things that are laid to my charge, and worse things which have not been stated. Oh, I played for great stakes, I, who meant to be the Inkosazana of the Zulus, and, as it chances, by the weight of a hair I have lost. I thought that I had counted everything, but the hair's weight which turned the balance against me was the mad jealousy of this fool, Saduko, upon which I had not reckoned. I see now that when I left Saduko I should have left him dead. Thrice I had thought of it. Once I mixed the poison in his drink, and then he came in, weary with his plottings, and kissed me ere he drank; and my woman's heart grew soft and I overset the bowl that was at his lips. Do you not remember, Saduko?"

"So, so! For that folly alone I deserve to die, for she who would reign"--and her beautiful eyes flashed royally--"must have a tiger's heart, not that of a woman. Well, because I was too kind I must die; and, after all is said, it is well to die, who go hence awaited by thousands upon thousands that I have sent before me, and who shall be greeted presently by your son, Indhlovu-ene-Sihlonti, and his warriors, greeted as the Inkosazana of Death, with red, lifted spears and with the royal salute!"

"Now, I have spoken. Walk your little road, O King and Prince and Councillors, till you reach the gulf into which I sink, that yawns for

all of you. O King, when you meet me again at the bottom of that gulf, what a tale you will have to tell me, you who are but the shadow of a king, you whose heart henceforth must be eaten out by a worm that is called Love-of-the-Lost. O Prince and Conqueror Cetewayo, what a tale you will have to tell me when I greet you at the bottom of that gulf, you who will bring your nation to a wreck and at last die as I must die--only the servant of others and by the will of others. Nay, ask me not how. Ask old Zikali, my master, who saw the beginning of your House and will see its end. Oh, yes, as you say, I am a witch, and I know, I know! Come, I am spent. You men weary me, as men have always done, being but fools whom it is so easy to make drunk, and who when drunk are so unpleasing. Piff! I am tired of you sober and cunning, and I am tired of you drunken and brutal, you who, after all, are but beasts of the field to whom Mvelingangi, the Creator, has given heads which can think, but which always think wrong.

"Now, King, before you unchain your dogs upon me, I ask one moment. I said that I hated all men, yet, as you know, no woman can tell the truth--quite. There is a man whom I do not hate, whom I never hated, whom I think I love because he would not love me. He sits there," and to my utter dismay, and the intense interest of that company, she pointed at me, Allan Quatermain!

"Well, once by my 'magic,' of which you have heard so much, I got the better of this man against his will and judgment, and, because of that

soft heart of mine, I let him go; yes, I let the rare fish go when he was on my hook. It is well that I should have let him go, since, had I kept him, a fine story would have been spoiled and I should have become nothing but a white hunter's servant, to be thrust away behind the door when the white Inkosikazi came to eat his meat--I, Mameena, who never loved to stand out of sight behind a door. Well, when he was at my feet and I spared him, he made me a promise, a very small promise, which yet I think he will keep now when we part for a little while. Macumazahn, did you not promise to kiss me once more upon the lips whenever and wherever I should ask you?"

"I did," I answered in a hollow voice, for in truth her eyes held me as they had held Saduko.

"Then come now, Macumazahn, and give me that farewell kiss. The King will permit it, and since I have now no husband, who take Death to husband, there is none to say you nay."

I rose. It seemed to me that I could not help myself. I went to her, this woman surrounded by implacable enemies, this woman who had played for great stakes and lost them, and who knew so well how to lose. I stood before her, ashamed and yet not ashamed, for something of her greatness, evil though it might be, drove out my shame, and I knew that my foolishness was lost in a vast tragedy.

Slowly she lifted her languid arm and threw it about my neck; slowly she

bent her red lips to mine and kissed me, once upon the mouth and once upon the forehead. But between those two kisses she did a thing so swiftly that my eyes could scarcely follow what she did. It seemed to me that she brushed her left hand across her lips, and that I saw her throat rise as though she swallowed something. Then she thrust me from her, saying:

"Farewell, O Macumazana, you will never forget this kiss of mine; and when we meet again we shall have much to talk of, for between now and then your story will be long. Farewell, Zikali. I pray that all your plannings may succeed, since those you hate are those I hate, and I bear you no grudge because you told the truth at last. Farewell, Prince Cetewayo. You will never be the man your brother would have been, and your lot is very evil, you who are doomed to pull down a House built by One who was great. Farewell, Saduko the fool, who threw away your fortune for a woman's eyes, as though the world were not full of women. Nandie the Sweet and the Forgiving will nurse you well until your haunted end. Oh! why does Umbelazi lean over your shoulder, Saduko, and look at me so strangely? Farewell, Panda the Shadow. Now let loose your slayers. Oh! let them loose swiftly, lest they should be balked of my blood!"

Panda lifted his hand and the executioners leapt forward, but ere ever they reached her, Mameena shivered, threw wide her arms and fell back--dead. The poisonous drug she had taken worked well and swiftly.

Such was the end of Mameena, Child of Storm.

A deep silence followed, a silence of awe and wonderment, till suddenly it was broken by a sound of dreadful laughter. It came from the lips of Zikali the Ancient, Zikali, the

"Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born."