

CHAPTER XXXV. THE VENGEANCE OF MOPO AND HIS FOSTERLING

It chanced that on this day of Nada's death and at that same hour of dawn I, Mopo, came from my mission back to the kraal of the People of the Axe, having succeeded in my end, for that great chief whom I had gone out to visit had hearkened to my words. As the light broke I reached the town, and lo! it was a blackness and a desolation.

"Here is the footmark of Dingaan," I said to myself, and walked to and fro, groaning heavily. Presently I found a knot of men who were of the people that had escaped the slaughter, hiding in the mealie-fields lest the Slayers should return, and from them I drew the story. I listened in silence, for, my father, I was grown old in misfortune; then I asked where were the Slayers of the king? They replied that they did not know; the soldiers had gone up the Ghost Mountain after the Wolf-Brethren and Nada the Lily, and from the forest had come a howling of beasts and sounds of war; then there was silence, and none had been seen to return from the mountain, only all day long the vultures hung over it.

"Let us go up the mountain," I said.

At first they feared, because of the evil name of the place; but in the end they came with me, and we followed on the path of the impi of the Slayers and guessed all that had befallen it. At length we reached the knees of stone, and saw the place of the great fight of the Wolf-Brethren. All those who had taken part in that fight were now but

bones, because the vultures had picked them every one, except Galazi, for on the breast of Galazi lay the old wolf Deathgrip, that was yet alive. I drew near the body, and the great wolf struggled to his feet and ran at me with bristling hair and open jaws, from which no sound came. Then, being spent, he rolled over dead.

Now I looked round seeking the axe Groan-Maker among the bones of the slain, and did not find it and the hope came into my heart that Umslopogaas had escaped the slaughter. Then we went on in silence to where I knew the cave must be, and there by its mouth lay the body of a man. I ran to it--it was Umslopogaas, wasted with hunger, and in his temple was a great wound and on his breast and limbs were many other wounds. Moreover, in his hand he held another hand--a dead hand, that was thrust through a hole in the rock. I knew its shape well--it was the little hand of my child, Nada the Lily.

Now I understood, and, bending down, I felt the heart of Umslopogaas, and laid the down of an eagle upon his lips. His heart still stirred and the down was lifted gently.

I bade those with me drag the stone, and they did so with toil. Now the light flowed into the cave, and by it we saw the shape of Nada my daughter. She was somewhat wasted, but still very beautiful in her death. I felt her heart also: it was still, and her breast grew cold.

Then I spoke: "The dead to the dead. Let us tend the living."

So we bore in Umslopogaas, and I caused broth to be made and poured it down his throat; also I cleansed his great wound and bound healing herbs upon it, plying all my skill. Well I knew the arts of healing, my father; I who was the first of the izinyanga of medicine, and, had it not been for my craft, Umslopogaas had never lived, for he was very near his end. Still, there where he had once been nursed by Galazi the Wolf, I brought him back to life. It was three days till he spoke, and, before his sense returned to him, I caused a great hole to be dug in the floor of the cave. And there, in the hole, I buried Nada my daughter, and we heaped lily blooms upon her to keep the earth from her, and then closed in her grave, for I was not minded that Umslopogaas should look upon her dead, lest he also should die from the sight, and because of his desire to follow her. Also I buried Galazi the Wolf in the cave, and set the Watcher in his hand, and there they both sleep who are friends at last, the Lily and the Wolf together. Ah! when shall there be such another man and such another maid?

At length on the third day Umslopogaas spoke, asking for Nada. I pointed to the earth, and he remembered and understood. Thereafter the strength of Umslopogaas gathered on him slowly, and the hole in his skull skinned over. But now his hair was grizzled, and he scarcely smiled again, but grew even more grim and stern than he had been before.

Soon we learned all the truth about Zinita, for the women and children

came back to the town of the People of the Axe, only Zinita and the children of Umslopogaas did not come back. Also a spy reached me from the Mahlabatine and told me of the end of Zinita and of the flight of Dingaan before the Boers.

Now when Umslopogaas had recovered, I asked him what he would do, and whether or not I should pursue my plots to make him king of the land.

But Umslopogaas shook his head, saying that he had no heart that way. He would destroy a king indeed, but now he no longer desired to be a king. He sought revenge alone. I said that it was well, I also sought vengeance, and seeking together we would find it.

Now, my father, there is much more to tell, but shall I tell it? The snow has melted, your cattle have been found where I told you they should be, and you wish to be gone. And I also, I would be gone upon a longer journey.

Listen, my father, I will be short. This came into my mind: to play off Panda against Dingaan; it was for such an hour of need that I had saved Panda alive. After the battle of the Blood River, Dingaan summoned Panda to a hunt. Then it was that I journeyed to the kraal of Panda on the Lower Tugela, and with me Umslopogaas. I warned Panda that he should not go to this hunt, for he was the game himself, but that he should rather fly into Natal with all his people. He did so, and then I opened

talk with the Boers, and more especially with that Boer who was named Ungalunkulu, or Great Arm. I showed the Boer that Dingaan was wicked and not to be believed, but Panda was faithful and good. The end of it was that the Boers and Panda made war together on Dingaan. Yes, I made that war that we might be revenged on Dingaan. Thus, my father, do little things lead to great.

Were we at the big fight, the battle of Magongo? Yes, my father; we were there. When Dingaan's people drove us back, and all seemed lost, it was I who put into the mind of Nongalaza, the general, to pretend to direct the Boers where to attack, for the Amaboona stood out of that fight, leaving it to us black people. It was Umslopogaas who cut his way with Groan-Maker through a wing of one of Dingaan's regiments till he came to the Boer captain Ungalunkulu, and shouted to him to turn the flank of Dingaan. That finished it, my father, for they feared to stand against us both, the white and the black together. They fled, and we followed and slew, and Dingaan ceased to be a king.

He ceased to be a king, but he still lived, and while he lived our vengeance was hungry. So we went to the Boer captain and to Panda, and spoke to them nicely, saying, "We have served you well, we have fought for you, and so ordered things that victory is yours. Now grant us this request, that we may follow Dingaan, who has fled into hiding, and kill him wherever we find him, for he has worked us wrong, and we would avenge it."

Then the white captain and Panda smiled and said, "Go children, and prosper in your search. No one thing shall please us more than to know that Dingaan is dead." And they gave us men to go with us.

Then we hunted that king week by week as men hunt a wounded buffalo. We hunted him to the jungles of the Umfalozi and through them. But he fled ever, for he knew that the avengers of blood were on his spoor. After that for awhile we lost him. Then we heard that he had crossed the Pongolo with some of the people who still clung to him. We followed him to the place Kwa Myawo, and there we lay hid in the bush watching. At last our chance came. Dingaan walked in the bush and with him two men only. We stabbed the men and seized him.

Dingaan looked at us and knew us, and his knees trembled with fear. Then I spoke:--

"What was that message which I sent thee, O Dingaan, who art no more a king--that thou didst evil to drive me away, was it not? because I set thee on thy throne and I alone could hold thee there?"

He made no answer, and I went on:--

"I, Mopo, son of Makedama, set thee on thy throne, O Dingaan, who wast a king, and I, Mopo, have pulled thee down from thy throne. But my message did not end there. It said that, ill as thou hadst done to drive me away, yet worse shouldst thou do to look upon my face again, for that

day should be thy day of doom."

Still he made no answer. Then Umslopogaas spoke:--

"I am that Slaughterer, O Dingaan, no more a king, whom thou didst send Slayers many and fierce to eat up at the kraal of the People of the Axe. Where are thy Slayers now, O Dingaan? Before all is done thou shalt look upon them."

"Kill me and make an end; it is your hour," said Dingaan.

"Not yet awhile, O son of Senzangacona," answered Umslopogaas, "and not here. There lived a certain woman and she was named Nada the Lily. I was her husband, O Dingaan, and Mopo here, he was her father. But, alas! she died, and sadly--she lingered three days and nights before she died. Thou shalt see the spot and hear the tale, O Dingaan. It will wring thy heart, which was ever tender. There lived certain children, born of another woman named Zinita, little children, sweet and loving. I was their father, O Elephant in a pit, and one Dingaan slew them. Of them thou shalt hear also. Now away, for the path is far!"

Two days went by, my father, and Dingaan sat bound and alone in the cave on Ghost Mountain. We had dragged him slowly up the mountain, for he was heavy as an ox. Three men pushing at him and three others pulling on a cord about his middle, we dragged him up, staying now and again to show him the bones of those whom he had sent out to kill us, and telling him

the tale of that fight.

Now at length we were in the cave, and I sent away those who were with us, for we wished to be alone with Dingaan at the last. He sat down on the floor of the cave, and I told him that beneath the earth on which he sat lay the bones of that Nada whom he had murdered and the bones of Galazi the Wolf.

On the third day before the dawn we came again and looked upon him.

"Slay me," he said, "for the Ghosts torment me!"

"No longer art thou great, O shadow of a king," I said, "who now dost tremble before two Ghosts out of all the thousands that thou hast made. Say, then, how shall it fare with thee presently when thou art of their number?"

Now Dingaan prayed for mercy.

"Mercy, thou hyena!" I answered, "thou prayest for mercy who showed none to any! Give me back my daughter. Give this man back his wife and children; then we will talk of mercy. Come forth, coward, and die the death of cowards."

So, my father, we dragged him out, groaning, to the cleft that is above in the breast of the old Stone Witch, that same cleft where Galazi had

found the bones. There we stood, waiting for the moment of the dawn, that hour when Nada had died. Then we cried her name into his ears and the names of the children of Umslopogaas, and cast him into the cleft.

This was the end of Dingaan, my father--Dingaan, who had the fierce heart of Chaka without its greatness.