

CHAPTER XXI

THE KING VISITS ZIKALI

Next morning, as a result of my cogitations, I went to see Zikali. I was admitted after a good deal of trouble and delay, for although his retinue was limited and, with the exception of Nombe, entirely male, this old prophet kept a kind of semi-state and was about as difficult to approach as a European monarch. I found him crouching over a fire in his hut, since at this season of the year even in that hot place the air was chilly until midday.

"What is it, Macumazahn?" he asked. "As to your going away, have patience. I learn that he who was King of the Zulus is in full flight, with the white men tracking him like a wounded buck. When the buck is caught and killed, then you can go."

"It is about Nombe," I answered, and told him all the story,

which did not seem to surprise him at all.

"Now see, Macumazahn," he said, taking some snuff, "how hard it is to dam up the stream of nature. This child, Nombe, is of my blood, one whom I saved from death in a strange way, not because she was of my blood but that I might make an experiment with her. Women, as you who are wise and have seen much will know, are in truth superior to men, though, because they are weaker in body, men have the upper hand of them and think themselves their masters, a state they are forced to accept because they must live and cannot defend themselves. Yet their brains are keener, as an assegai is keener than a hoe; they are more in touch with the hidden things that shape out fate for people and for nations; they are more faithful and more patient, and by instinct if not by reason, more far-seeing, or at least the best of them are so, and by their best, like men, they should be judged. Yet this is the hole in their shield. When they love they become the slaves of love, and for love's sake all else is brought to naught, and for this reason they cannot be trusted. With men, as you know, this is otherwise. They, too, love, by Nature's law, but always behind there is something greater than love, although often they do not understand what that may be. To be powerful, therefore, a woman must be one who does not love too much. If she cannot love at all, then she is hated and has no power, but she must not love too much.

"Once I thought that I had found such a woman; she was named Mameena, whom all men worshipped and who played with all men, as I played with her. But what was the end of it? Just as things were going very well she learned to love too much some man of strange notions, who would have thwarted me and brought everything to nothing, and therefore I had to kill her, for which I was sorry."

Here he paused to take some more snuff, watching me over the spoon as he drew it up his great nostrils, but as I said nothing, went on--

"Now after Mameena was dead I bethought me that I would rear up a woman who could still love but should never love a man and therefore never become mad or foolish, because I believed that it was only man who in taking her heart from woman, would take her wits also. This child, Nombe, came to my hand, and as I thought, so I did. Never mind how I did it, by medicine perhaps, by magic perhaps, by watering her pride and making it grow tall perhaps, or by all three. At least it was done, and this I know of Nombe, she will never care for any man except as a woman may care for a brother.

"But now see what happens. She, the wise, the instructed, the man-despiser, meets a woman of another race who is sweet and good, and learns to love her, not as maids and mothers love, but

as one loves the Spirit that she worships. Yes, yes, to her she is a goddess to be worshipped, one whom she desires to serve with all her heart and strength, to bow down before, making offerings, and at the end to follow into death. So it comes about that this Nombe, whose mind I thought to make as the wings of a bird floating on the air while it searches for its prey, has become even madder than other women. It is a disappointment to me, Macumazah."'

"It may be a disappointment to you, Zikali, and all that you say is very interesting. But to us it is a danger. Tell me, will you command Nombe to cease from her folly?"

"Will I forbid the mist to rise, or the wind to blow, or the lightning to strike? As she is, she is. Her heart is filled with black jealousy of Mauriti and of you, as a butcher's gourd is filled with blood, for she is not one who desires that her goddess should have other worshippers; she would keep her for herself alone."

"Then in this way or in that the gourd must be emptied, Zikali, lest we should be forced to drink from it and that black blood should poison us."

"How, unless it be broken, Macumazah? If Heddana departs and leaves her, she will go mad, and accompany her she cannot, for

her Spirit dwells here," and he tapped his own breast. "It would pull her back again and she would become a great trouble to me, for then that Spirit of hers would not suffer me to sleep, with its continual startings in search of what it had lost, and its returnings empty-handed. Well, have no fear, for at the worst the bowl can be broken and the blood poured upon the earth, as I have broken finer bowls than this before; had I all the bits of them they would make a heap so high, Macumazahn!" and he held out his hand on a level with his head, a gesture that made my back creep. "I will tell her this and it may keep her quiet for a while. Of poison you need not be afraid, since unlike mine, her Spirit hates it. Poison is not one of its weapons as it is with mine. But of spells, beware, for her Spirit has some which are very powerful."

Now I jumped up, filled with indignation, saying--

"I do not believe in Nombe's spells, and in any case how am I to guard against them?"

"If you do not believe there is no need to guard, and if you do believe, then it is for you to find out how to guard, Macumazahn. Oh! I could tell you the story of a white teacher who did not believe and would not guard--but never mind, never mind. Good-bye, Macumazahn, I will speak with Nombe. Ask her for a lock of her hair to wear upon your heart after she has enchanted

it. The charm is good against spells. O-ho--Oho-o! What fools we are, white and black together! That is what Cetewayo is thinking to-day."

After this Nombe became much more agreeable. That is to say she was very polite, her smile was more fixed and her eyes more unfathomable than ever. Evidently Zikali had spoken to her and she had listened. Yet to tell the truth my distrust of this handsome young woman grew deeper day by day. I recognized that there was a great gulf between her and the normal, that she was a creature fashioned by Zikali who had trained her as a gardener trains a tree, nay, who had done more, who had grafted some foreign growth of exotic and unnatural spiritualism on to her primitive nature. The nature remained the same, but the graft or grafts bore strange flowers and fruit, unholy flowers and poisonous fruit. Therefore she was not to blame--sometimes I wonder whether in this curious world, could one see their past and their future, anybody is to blame for anything--but this did not make her the less dangerous.

Some talks I had with her only increased my apprehensions, for I found that in a way she had no conscience. Life, she told me, was but a dream, and all its laws as evolved by man were but illusions. The real life was elsewhere. There was the distant lake on which the flower of our true existence floated. Without this unseen lake of supernatural water the flower could not

float; indeed there would be no flower. Moreover, the flower did not matter; sometimes it would have this shape and colour, sometimes that. It was but a thing destined to grow and bloom and rot, and during its day to be ugly or to be beautiful, to smell sweet or ill, as it might chance, and ultimately to be absorbed back into the general water of Life.

I pointed out to her that all flowers had roots which grew in soil. Looking at an orchid-like plant that crept along the bough of a tree, she answered that this was not true as some grew upon air. But however this might be, the soil, or the moisture in the air, was distilled from thousands of other flower lives that had flourished in their day and been forgotten. It did not matter when they died or how many other flowers they choked that they might live. Yet each flower had its own spirit which always had been and always would be.

I asked her of the end and the object of that spirit. She answered darkly that she did not know and if she did, would not say, but that these were very dreadful.

Such were some of her vague and figurative assertions which I only record to indicate their uncomfortable and indeed but half human nature. I forgot to add that she declared that every flower or life had a twin flower or life, which in each successive growth it was bound to find and bloom beside, or

wither to the root and spring again and that ultimately these two would become one, and as one flourish eternally. Of all of which I understood and understand little, except that she had grasped the elements of some truth which she could not express in clear and definite language.

One day I was seated in Zikali's hut whither by permission I had come to ask the latest news, when suddenly Nombe appeared and crouched down before him.

"Who gave you leave to enter here, and what is your business?" he asked angrily.

"Home of Spirits," she replied in a humble voice, "be not angry with your servant. Necessity gave me leave, and my business is to tell you that strangers approach."

"Who are they that dare to enter the Black Kloof unannounced?"

"Cetewayo the King is one of them, the others I do not know, but they are many, armed all of them. They approach your gate; before a man can count two hundred they will be here."

"Where are the white chief and the lady Heddana?" asked Zikali.

"By good fortune they have gone by the secret path to the tableland and will not be back till sunset. They wished to be alone, so I did not accompany them, and Macumazahn here said that he was too weary to do so." (This was true. Also like Nombe I thought that they wished to be alone.)

"Good. Go, tell the king that I knew of his coming and am awaiting him. Bid my servants kill the ox which is in the kraal, the fat ox that they thought is sick and therefore fit food for a sick king," he added bitterly.

She glided away like a startled snake. Then Zikali turned to me and said swiftly--

"Macumazahn, you are in great danger. If you are found here you will be killed, and so will the others whom I will send to warn not to return till this king has gone away. Go at once to join them. No, it is too late, I hear the Zulus come. Take that kaross, cover yourself with it and lie among the baskets and beerpots here near the entrance of the hut in the deepest of the shadows, so that if any enter, perchance you will not be found. I too am in danger who shall be held to account for all that has happened. Perhaps they will kill me, if I can be killed. If so, get away with the others as best you can. Nombe will tell you where your horses are hidden. In that case let Heddana take Nombe with her, for when I am dead she will go, and shake her off

in Natal if she troubles her. Whatever chances, remember, Macumazahn, that I have done my best to keep my word to you and to protect you and your friends. Now I go to look on this pricked bladder who was once a king."

He scrambled from the hut with slow, toad-like motions, while I with motions that were anything but slow, grabbed the grey catskin kaross and ensconced myself among the beerpots and mats in such a position that my head, over which I set a three-legged carved stool of Zikali's own cutting, was but a few inches to the left of the door-hole and therefore in the deepest of the shadows. Thence by stretching out my neck a little, I could see through the hole, also hear all that passed outside. Unless a deliberate search of the hut should be made I was fairly safe from observation, even if it were entered by strangers. One fear I had, however, it was lest the dog Lost should get into the place and smell me out. I had left him tied to the centre pole in my own hut, because he hated Zikali and always growled at him. But suppose he gnawed through the cord, or any one let him loose!

Scarcely had Zikali seated himself in his accustomed place before the hut, than the gate of the outer fence opened and approaching through it I saw forty or fifty fierce and way-worn men. In front of them, riding on a tired horse that was led by a servant, was Cetewayo himself. He was assisted to dismount, or rather threw his great bulk into the arms that were waiting to receive

him.

Then after some words with his following and with one of Zikali's people, followed by three or four indunas and leaning on the arm of Umnyamana, the Prime Minister, he entered the enclosure, the rest remaining without. Zikali, who sat as though asleep, suddenly appeared to wake up and perceive him. Struggling to his feet he lifted his right arm and gave the royal salute of Bayete, and with it titles of praise, such as "Black One!" "Elephant!" "Earth-Shaker!" "Conqueror!" "Eater-up of the White men!" "Child of the Wild Beast (Chaka) whose teeth are sharper than the Wild Beast's ever were!" and so on, until Cetewayo, growing impatient, cried out--

"Be silent, Wizard. Is this a time for fine words? Do you not know my case that you offend my ears with them? Give us food to eat if you have it, after which I would speak with you alone. Be swift also; here I may not stay for long, since the white dogs are at my heels."

"I knew that you were coming, O King, to honour my poor house with a visit," said Zikali slowly, "and therefore the ox is already killed and the meat will soon be on the fire. Meanwhile drink a sup of beer, and rest."

He clapped his hands, whereon Nombe and some servants appeared

with pots of beer, of which, after Zikali had tasted it to show that it was not poisoned, the king and his people drank thirstily. Then it was taken to those outside.

"What is this that my ears hear?" asked Zikali when Nombe and the others had gone, "that the White Dogs are on the spoor of the Black Bull?"

Cetewayo nodded heavily, and answered--

"My impis were broken to pieces on the plain of Ulundi; the cowards ran from the bullets as children run from bees. My kraals are burnt and I, the King, with but a faithful remnant fly for my life. The prophecy of the Black One has come true. The people of the Zulus are stamped flat beneath the feet of the great White People."

"I remember that prophecy, O King. Mopo told it to me within an hour of the death of the Black One when he gave me the little red-handled assegai that he snatched from the Black One's hand to do the deed. It makes me almost young again to think of it, although even then I was old," replied Zikali in a dreamy voice like one who speaks to himself.

Hearing him from under my kaross I bethought me that he had really grown old at last, who for the moment evidently forgot the

part which this very assegai had played a few months before in the Vale of Bones. Well, even the greatest masters make such slips at times when their minds are full of other things. But if Zikali forgot, Cetewayo and his councillors remembered, as I could see by the look of quick intelligence that flashed from face to face.

"So! Mopo the murderer, he who vanished from the land after the death of my uncle Dingaan, gave you the little red assegai, did he, Opener of Roads! And but a few months ago that assegai, which old Sigananda knew again, thrown by the hand of the Inkosazana-y-Zulu, drew blood from my body after the white man, Macumazahn, had severed its shaft with his bullet. Now tell me, Opener of Roads, how did it pass from your keeping into that of the spirit Nomkubulwana?"

At this question I distinctly saw a shiver shake the frame of Zikali who realized too late the terrible mistake he had made. Yet as only the great can do, he retrieved and even triumphed over his error.

"Oho-ho!" he laughed, "who am I that I can tell how such things happen? Do you not know, O King, that the Spirits leave what they will and take what they will, whether it be but a blade of grass, or the life of a man"--here he looked at Cetewayo--"or even of a people? Sometimes they take the shadow and sometimes

the substance, since spirit or matter, all is theirs. As for the little assegai, I lost it years ago. I remember that the last time I saw it was in the hands of a woman named Mameena to whom I showed it as a strange and bloody thing. After her death I found that it was gone, so doubtless she took it with her to the Under-world and there gave it to the Queen Nomkubulwana, with whom you may remember this Mameena returned from that Under-world yonder in the Bones."

"It may be so," said Cetewayo sullenly, "yet it was no spirit iron that cut my thigh, but what do I know of the ways of Spirits? Wizard, I would speak with you in your hut alone where no ear can hear us."

"My hut is the King's," answered Zikali, "yet let the King remember that those Spirits of which he does not know the ways, can always hear, yes, even the thoughts of men, and on them do judgment."

"Fear not," said Cetewayo, "amongst many other things I remember this also."

Then Zikali turned and crept into the hut, whispering as he passed me--

"Lie silent for your life." And Cetewayo having bidden his

retinue to depart outside the fence and await him there, followed after him.

They sat them down on either side of the smouldering fire and stared at each other through the thin smoke there in the gloom of the hut. By turning my head that the foot of the king had brushed as he passed, I could watch them both. Cetewayo spoke the first in a hoarse, slow voice, saying--

"Wizard, I am in danger of my life and I have come to you who know all the secrets of this land, that you may tell me in what place I may hide where the white men cannot find me. It must be told into my ear alone, since I dare not trust the matter to any other, at any rate until I must. They are traitors every man of them, yes, even those who seem to be most faithful. The fallen man has no friends, least of all if he chances to be a king. Only the dead will keep his counsel. Tell me of the place I need."

"Dingaan, who was before you, once asked this same thing of me, O King, when he was flying from Panda your father, and the Boers. I gave him advice that he did not take, but sought a refuge of his own upon a certain Ghost-mountain. What happened to him there that Mopo, of whom you spoke a while ago, can tell you if he still lives."*

[*--See Nada the Lily.--EDITOR.]

"Surely you are an ill-omened night-bird who thus croak to me continually of the death of kings," broke in Cetewayo with suppressed rage. Then calming himself with an effort added, "Tell me now, where shall I hide?"

"Would you know, King? Then hearken. On the south slope of the Ingome Range west of the Ibululwana River, on the outskirts of the great forest, there is a kloof whereof the entrance, which only one man can pass at a time, is covered by a thicket of thorns and marked by a black rock shaped like a great toad with an open mouth, or, as some say, like myself, 'The-Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born.' Near to this rock dwells an old woman, blind of one eye and lacking a hand, which the Black One cut off shortly before his death, because when he killed her father, she saw the future and prophesied a like death to him, although then she was but a child. This woman is of our company, being a witch-doctress. I will send a Spirit to her, if you so will it, to warn her to watch for you and your company, O King, and show you the mouth of the kloof, where are some old huts and water. There you will never be found unless you are betrayed."

"Who can betray me when none know whither I am going?" asked Cetewayo. "Send the Spirit, send it at once, that this one-armed

witch may make ready."

"What is the hurry, King, seeing that the forest is far away?
Yet be it as you will. Keep silence now, lest evil should befall
you."

Then of a sudden Zikali seemed to go off into one of his trances.
His form grew rigid, his eyes closed, his face became fixed as
though in death, and foam appeared upon his lips. He was a
dreadful sight to look on, there in the gloomy hut.

Cetewayo watched him and shivered. Then he opened his blanket
and I perceived that fastened about him by a loop of hide in such
a fashion that it could be drawn out in a moment, was the blade
of a broad assegai, the shaft of which was shortened to about six
inches. His hand grasped this shaft, and I understood that he
was contemplating the murder of Zikali. Then it seemed to me
that he changed his mind and that his lips shaped the words--"Not
yet," though whether he really spoke them I do not know. At
least he withdrew his hand and closed the blanket.

Slowly Zikali opened his eyes, staring at the roof of the hut,
whence came a curious sound as of squeaking bats. He looked like
a dead man coming to life again. For a few moments he turned up
his ear as though he listened to the squealing, then said--

"It is well. The Spirit that I summoned has visited her of our company who is named One-hand and returned with the answer. Did you not hear it speaking in the thatch, O King?"

"I heard something, Wizard," answered Cetewayo in an awed voice.

"I thought it was a bat."

"A bat it is, O King, one with wide wings and swift. This bat says that my sister, One-hand, will meet you on the third day from now at this hour on the further side of the ford of the Ibululwana, where three milk-trees grow together on a knoll. She will be sitting under the centre milk-tree and will wait for two hours, no more, to show you the secret entrance to the kloof."

"The road is rough and long, I shall have to hurry when worn out with travelling," said Cetewayo.

"That is so, O King. Therefore my counsel is that you begin the journey as soon as possible, especially as I seem to hear the baying of the white dogs not far away."

"By Chaka's head! I will not," growled Cetewayo, "who thought to sleep here in peace this night."

"As the King wills. All that I have is the King's. Only then One-hand will not be waiting and some other place of hiding must

be found, since this is known to me only and to her; also that Spirit which I sent will make no second journey, nor can I travel to show it to the King."

"Yes, Wizard, it is known to you and to myself. Methinks it would be better were it known to me alone. I have a spoonful of snuff to share (i.e., a bone to pick) with you, Wizard. It would seem that you set my feet and those of the Zulu people upon a false road, yonder in the Vale of Bones, causing me to declare war upon the white men and thereby bringing us all to ruin."

"Mayhap my memory grows bad, O King, for I do not remember that I did these things. I remember that the spirit of a certain Mameena whom I called up from the dead, prophesied victory to the King, which victory has been his. Also it prophesied other victories to the King in a far land across the water, which victories doubtless shall be his in due season; for myself I gave no 'counsel to the King or to his indunas and generals.'"

"You lie, Wizard," exclaimed Cetewayo hoarsely. "Did you not summon the shape of the Princess of Heaven to be the sign of war, and did she not hold in her hand that assegai of the Black One which you have told me was in your keeping? How did it pass from your keeping into the hand of a spirit?"

"As to that matter I have spoken, O King. For the rest, is

Nomkubulwana my servant to come and go at my bidding?"

"I think so," said Cetewayo coldly. "I think also that you who know the place where I purpose to hide, would do well to forget it. Surely you have lived too long, O Opener of Roads, and done enough evil to the House of Senzangaona, which you ever hated."

So he spoke, and once more I saw his hand steal towards the spearhead which was hidden beneath the blanket that he wore.

Zikali saw it also and laughed. "Oho!" he laughed, "forgetting all my warnings, and that the day of my death will be his own, the King thinks to kill me because I am old and feeble and alone and unarmed. He thinks to kill me as the Black One thought, as Dingaan thought, as even Panda thought, yet I live on to this day. Well, I bear no malice since it is natural that the King should wish to kill one who knows the secret of where he would hide himself for his own life's sake. That spearhead which the King is fingering is sharp, so sharp that my bare breast cannot turn its edge. I must find me a shield! I must find me a shield! Fire, you are not yet dead. Awake, make smoke to be my shield!" and he waved his long, monkey-like arms over the embers, from which instantly there sprang up a reek of thin white smoke that appeared to take a vague and indefinite shape which suggested the shadow of a man; for to me it seemed a nebulous and wavering shadow, no more.

"What are you staring at, O King?" went on Zikali in a fierce and thrilling voice. "Who is it that you see? Who has the fire sent to be my shield? Ghosts are so thick here that I do not know. I cannot tell one of them from the other. Who is it? Who, who of all that you have slain and who therefore are your foes?"

"Umbelazi, my brother," groaned Cetewayo. "My brother Umbelazi stands before me with spear raised; he whom I brought to his death at the battle of the Tugela. His eyes flame upon me, his spear is raised to strike. He speaks words I cannot understand. Protect me, O Wizard! Lord of Spirits, protect me from the spirit of Umbelazi."

Zikali laughed wildly and continued to wave his arms above the fire from which smoke poured ever more densely, till the hut was full of it.

When it cleared away again Cetewayo was gone!

"Saw you ever the like of that?" said Zikali, addressing the kaross under which I was sweltering. "Tell me, Macumazahn."

"Yes," I answered, thrusting out my head as a tortoise does, "when in this very hut you seemed to produce the shape, also out of smoke, I think, of one whom I used to know. Say, how do you

do it, Zikali?"

"Do it. Who knows? Perchance I do nothing. Perchance I think and you fools see, no more. Or perchance the spirits of the dead who are so near to us, come at my call and take themselves bodies out of the charmed smoke of my fire. You white men are wise, answer your own question, Macumazahn. At least that smoke or that ghost saved me from a spear thrust in the heart, wherewith Cetewayo was minded to pay me for showing him a hiding-place which he desired should be secret to himself alone. Well, well, I can pay as well as Cetewayo and my count is longer. Now lie you still, Macumazahn, for I go out to watch. He will not bide long in this place which he deems haunted and ill-omened. He will be gone ere sunset, that is within an hour, and sleep elsewhere."

Then he crept from the hut and presently, though I could see nothing, for now the gate of the fence was shut, I heard voices debating and finally that of Cetewayo say angrily--

"Have done! It is my will. You can eat your food outside of this place which is bewitched; the girl will show us where are the huts of which the wizard speaks."

A few minutes later Zikali crept back into the hut, laughing to himself.

"All is safe," he said, "and you can come out of your hole, old jackal. He who calls himself a king is gone, taking with him those whom he thinks faithful, most of whom are but waiting a chance to betray him. What did I say, a king? Nay, in all Africa there is no slave so humble or so wretched as this broken man. Oh! feather by feather I have plucked my fowl and by and by I shall cut his throat. You will be there, Macumazahn, you will be there."

"I trust not," I answered as I mopped my brow. "We have been near enough to throat-cutting this afternoon to last me a long while. Where has the king gone?"

"Not far, Macumazahn. I have sent Nombe to guide him to the huts in the little dip five spear throws to the right of the mouth of the kloof where live the old herdsman and his people who guard my cattle. He and all the rest are away with the cattle that are hidden in the Ceza Forest out of reach of the white men, so the huts are empty. Oh! now I read what you are thinking. I do not mean that he should be taken there. It is too near my house and the king still has friends."

"Why did you send Nombe?" I asked.

"Because he would have no other guide, who does not trust my men."

He means to keep her with him for some days and then let her go, and thus she will be out of mischief. Meanwhile you and your friends can depart untroubled by her fancies, and join the white men who are near. Tomorrow you shall start."

"That is good," I said with a sigh of relief. Then an idea struck me and I added, "I suppose no harm will come to Nombe, who might be thought to know too much?"

"I hope not," he replied indifferently, "but that is a matter for her Spirit to decide. Now go, Macumazahn, for I am weary."

I also was weary after my prolonged seclusion under that very hot skin rug. For be it remembered I was not yet strong again, and although this was not the real reason why I had stopped behind when the others went to the plateau, I still grew easily tired. My real reason was that of Nombe--that I thought they preferred to be alone. I looked about me and saw with relief that Cetewayo and every man of his retinue were really gone. They had not even waited to eat the ox that had been killed for them, but had carried off the meat with other provisions to their sleeping-place outside the kloof. Having made sure of this I went to my hut and loosed Lost that fortunately enough had been unable to gnaw through the thick buffalo-hide riem with which I had fastened him to the pole.

He greeted me with rapture as though we had been parted for years. Had he belonged to Ulysses himself he could not have been more joyful. When one is despondent and lonesome, how grateful is the whole-hearted welcome of a dog which, we are sometimes tempted to think, is the only creature that really cares for us in the world. Every other living thing has side interests of its own, but that of a dog is centred in its master, though it is true that it also dreams affectionately of dinner and rabbits.

Then with Lost at my feet I sat outside the hut smoking and waiting for the return of Anscombe and Heda. Presently I caught sight of them in the gloaming. Their arms were around one another, and in some remarkable way they had managed to dispose their heads, forgetting that the sky was still light behind them, in such fashion that it was difficult to tell one from the other. I reflected that it was a good thing that at last we were escaping from this confounded kloof and country for one where they could marry and make an end, and became afflicted with a sneezing fit.

Heda asked where Nombe was and why supper was not ready, for Nombe played the part of cook and parlourmaid combined. I told her something of what had happened, whereon Heda, who did not appreciate its importance in the least, remarked that she, Nombe, might as well have put on the pot before she went and done sundry other things which I forget. Ultimately we got something to eat

and turned in, Heda grumbling a little because she must sleep alone, for she had grown used to the company of the ever-watchful Nombe, who made her bed across the door-hole of the hut.

Anscombe was soon lost in dreams, if he did dream, but I could not sleep well that night. I was fearful of I knew not what, and so, I think, was Lost, for he fidgeted and kept poking me with his nose. At last, I think it must have been about two hours after midnight, he began to growl. I could hear nothing, although my ears are sharp, but as he went on growling I crept to the door-hole and drew aside the board. Lost slipped out and vanished, while I waited, listening. Presently I thought I heard a soft foot-fall and a whisper, also that I saw the shape of a woman which reminded me of Nombe, shown faintly by the starlight. It vanished in a moment and Lost returned wagging his tail, as he might well have done if it were Nombe who was attached to the dog. As nothing further happened I went back to bed, reflecting that I was probably mistaken, since Nombe had been sent away for some days by Zikali and would scarcely dare to return at once, even if she could do so.

Shortly before daylight Lost began to growl again in a subdued and thunderous fashion. This time I got up and dressed myself more or less. Then I went out. The dawn was just breaking and by its light I saw a strange scene. About fifty yards away in the narrow nek that ran over some boulders to the site of our

huts, stood what seemed to be the goddess Nomkubulwana as I had seen her on the point of rock in the Vale of Bones. She wore the same radiant dress and in the dim glow had all the appearance of a white woman. I stood amazed, thinking that I dreamt, when from round the bend emerged a number of Zulus, creeping forward stealthily with raised spears.

They caught sight of the supernatural figure which barred their road, halted and whispered to each other. Then they turned to fly, but before they went one of them, as it seemed to me through sheer terror, hurled his assegai at the figure which remained still and unmoved.

In thirty seconds they were gone; in sixty their footsteps had died away. Then the figure wheeled slowly round and by the strengthening light I perceived that a spear transfixed its breast.

As it sank to the ground I ran up to it. It was Nombe with her face and arms whitened and her life-blood running down the glittering feather robe.