

HOMELAND

by

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Homeland was originally commissioned by Big Brum Theatre-in-Education Company for a tour of schools, as part of a whole-day TIE programme in 1988. It was subsequently re-worked for a tour of small-scale theatre venues in England and Northern Ireland.

The original cast was as follows:

Pule Captain Vernon and others	Michael Aduwali
Dipou Uncle Sello and others	Lorna Laidlaw
Lady Sarah Wilson Sarie Joseph Chamberlain and others	Anne Hetherington
Colonel Baden-Powell Freddy Johannes Headmaster and others	Peter Wynne-Willson
Director	Jimi Rand
Designer	Natalie Bennion

SCENE 1 - INTRODUCTION

[The four actors enter. They are singing 'Rule Britannia'. They face the audience, and share the narration.]

Narration: It is December 1899. The old century is drawing to a close. Queen Victoria... God Bless her... Queen Victoria sits on the throne. She is Queen of England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Nigeria, The West Indies, Somaliland, Indonesia, Malaya, Ceylon ...

Queen Victoria: We are Queen of the Empire on which the sun never sets.

Newsboy: Latest from the Boer War! Latest from the War in South Africa! Latest!

Narration: One quarter of the land of the world is covered by the British Empire. And still it grows. In South Africa, another war is underway. In South Africa, the British Army is fighting against the Boers. Thousands of miles from Britain, they are standing firm for the Empire.

Newsboy: New dispatch from Mafeking! New dispatch from Mafeking!

Narration: In our modern world of telegraphs, news comes flooding back. To Britain. To the heart of the Empire. To Birmingham....

SCENE 2 - A PUBLIC SCHOOL IN BIRMINGHAM

[Organ music. Enter the Headmaster.]

Headmaster: Boys. You will, I am sure have heard one name from the war in South Africa, whispered or shouted in the corridors of the school - the name of Mafeking. Perhaps there are those among you who have sat back and thought, 'What has this small town in darkest Africa to do with me, a mere schoolboy, thousands of miles away, in Birmingham?'. But it should be of concern to you all, distant though it be, because you are British.

When I was no older than many of you, my father was himself a missionary in Africa, spreading christianity and civilization and christianity among the savages. And, on one occasion he returned from a long voyage accompanied by a converted native boy, 'Billy'. Now when this poor creature Billy first clapped eyes upon the young me, he stood back amazed, shaking wildly, and exclaimed, 'Are you an Englishman?' It was a question that somehow perplexed me, and so I went at once to my father. 'Sir' I said, 'How does one know if one is an Englishman?' 'Ah, you may never know it' he replied with a smile full of his experiences. 'But, if you follow the example of the finest of your ancestors, the British blood in you will work its natural miracle. You may not feel different from other men, and yet other men will look at you and say, 'that fellow is brave decent and wise. There goes an Englishman.'

Remember that, boys, for it is just such an example that we are hearing from the very edge of the empire. Listen to the tale of Mafeking as it unfolds, and absorb, each one of you, the inspiration of its heroes. When it is your turn, go out into the world and live your lives with the same bravery and decency which distinguishes the British race. Let us sing Hymn number 641.

[They sing]

Boys: Oh may the soldiers, faithful true and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them the victors crown of gold
Alleluya, alleluya.

[They go out, laughing and 'shooting']

SCENE 3 - INTRODUCTION TO MAFIKENG

[Early Morning. Dipou enters, still waking up.]

Dipou: Oh ... Ay ... They sing so early these people. I hope they have a god that is awake all night, and not one that is angry in the mornings. Pshaw, if I was their god, I tell you, and they sang hymns to me before dawn, I would be so angry. 'Hey, shut up, you Boers. Don't you know your god is trying to sleep, you stupid people. Shut up your singing, or I will send a thunderbolt to burn off your beards.'

Narration: Mafeking, on the northern edge of the British territory in South Africa. Surrounded by the Boers, and by now under siege for several months. In fact there are two Mafekings. Dipou is one of five thousand Barolong people living in the old town of Mafikeng - the place of stones. Half a mile away are the 1500 white people of the new town. They are trapped together, in this small place that stands for the whole country.

Dipou: Who are you ?

Narration: This is the place that the entire Empire is watching, and pinning its hopes upon. Mafeking.

[She moves over. There is no-one there.]

Dipou: Oh well. So, you want to see our town. You are welcome. I have my water now, I shall show you. But be careful. You know we are in a war.

[Pule comes in. He is her young son.]

Pule. What are you doing here ?

Pule: I have to go to the chemists shop, Mme.

Dipou: You are supposed to be at the kgotla, my boy.

Pule: What ?

Dipou: Chief Wessels called all the men and boys. I thought 'He is not in his bed, he must have gone to the Chief now.'

Pule: But I must fetch a bandage for Dinku.

Dipou: Well be quick, eh, and then run along to the kgotla, Pule.

[He is looking around]

Hup, hup, don't keep him waiting.

[Pule runs off]

Pule is my son. His name means the rain. He is a clever boy really. Some day he is going to be an important man among the Barolong.

[Gunfire]

That is where the fighting is today. The sound of the makasono comes and goes all the day. Our people and the Mfengu have dug big trenches for the English at the edge of the town. They hide in these trenches, and now and then they jump up like this and shoot at the Boers. Maka, maka. I say my dutch friend, you are dead now, sir. Maka, maka. Always they call each other sir. Maka. They are very polite people.

[Enter a British officer]

Officer:What on earth are you doing, woman ?

Dipou:Good morning, baas.

Officer:Did someone tell you could come here ?

Dipou:I am sorry I am here, baas. I have just been fetching my son, baas, and going over to get some water. I am so sorry, baas, that I am here.

[He looks at her, and then goes.]

If you stay here you will learn. Whatever you do, you must be very sorry. Then you will be all right with the English. If you are not sorry enough, then they will beat you.

[Gunfire]

The Boers are white men too. But they have beards and they speak down their noses. They have fought against us ever since they came to our land. They hate the English. The English hate the Boers. We do not hate anyone, but no-one asks us what we think.

[Enter Lady Sarah Wilson and Colonel Baden-Powell]

Baden-Powell:It is a white man's war, and must remain so. On that the Boers agree with us, although of course they cannot be relied upon to abide by that agreement.

Lady Sarah:Have you had no trouble with the natives then, Colonel ?

Baden-Powell:Gratifyingly little, Lady Sarah. There is a knack to handling the black man, which I learned in Matabele. So long as you're firm but fair, he knows where he stands. Put on that footing, he will be remarkably loyal. You see, I made something of an example of a few th

at were caught stealing early on. Since then, they've worked jolly hard in general. Of course, They've hated the Boers for years.

Lady Sarah:Of course.

Dipou:This is the colonel, the man in charge, Colonel Baden-Powell. Everybody tells us he is a wonderful man. The best soldier in the whole of the Queen's army, they say. He is very funny, and all the white children like him, and all the women. He whistles too much and shoots too many people for me to like him. The pretty lady is Lady Sarah Wilson. She has just come, but she is one they like too. Mostly the men.

Baden-Powell:Are you settled in now ?

Lady Sarah:Admirably, yes. You must call in and see my bomb-proof, Colonel.

Baden-Powell:I should like that, yes.

Lady Sarah:The men built it in a trice, and I've done it up really quite bearably. Yes, I do believe it will be a lot less grim than they imagine, back in England.

[He salutes, and they leave in opposite directions. B-P is whistling]

Narration:The white town of Mafeking is a dull rectangle of flat, tin-roofed buildings. A hotel, a town hall, a few shops and Colonel Baden-Powell's headquarters. The railway has been cut off. The stores of food have been requisitioned and are rationed. It is half a mile from the native town, and the only black people allowed there are working.

Dipou:Hey, I am supposed to be showing them around the place.

[A shell explodes in the town. Chaos]

Dipou:Shell! Shell! Pule ...Pule!

[She shouts. She is stopped by a soldier, Freddy]

Freddy:Get back out, all of you ... stay away! Back! Oh Kate, it's you. I might have known it would be. Go on get back out, there's nothing there you'll want to see.

Dipou:But Pule was in there baas.

Freddy:He's all right, Kate, I've just seen him.

Dipou:Are you sure ?

Freddy:Yes I am. Now go on, it isn't pretty in there. A lucky shot I'm afraid.

Dipou:Who was there ?

Freddy:No-one. It's not worth me talking about. I must get back in.

[He goes]

Dipou: That is Freddy, one of the English soldiers. He has to guard out by our town often, so he is the only one we talk to. He calls me Kate, because he says it is an English name that suits me. I know he calls me Kate because it is his wife's name, in England. You must not tell him. It makes him happy to think I do not understand. Oh yes, that was a shell from 'Creechy', the Boers' big gun. They have it up on a hill there, and it fires shells a few times every day onto us. That is the first, his 'Bad Morning' shot, to wake us up.

[Pause, she shouts]

Boers, can you hear me? One time, the shell will turn around in the sky and decide to come back to kill you all.

[Sarie, a Boer woman, comes on]

Sarie: We were here many years before the British. Our fathers and mothers trekked from the Cape not so many years ago, thousands of miles across hard country in waggons to come here. We were chosen by God and led to this land, and it belongs to us. We scratch our living from it. Then, they come here with their high and mighty British ways. They tell us we are ruled by their queen. Now, my husband Johannes, and our sons, and I myself have worked hard for this farm. Why should we? What do they know? Tell me, where in the Bible does it say that it is right for them to tell us how to live our lives? That is why we are fighting. That is why we shall fight until we die, if God wills it.

[Enter Pule, running]

Pule: Mme, Mme. The chemist's shop is hit. I was just leaving, Mme. A shell has hit it direct, right through the middle of the roof. It has killed a man.

Dipou: I do not want to hear about it, Pule.

Pule: I was there, I saw it, Mme. It could have been me.

Dipou: I know it Pule. Now shut your mouth. You are not hurt are you, ngwana-waka?

Pule: No Mother. The man, I think his name is Keshupile, Mme. he was thrown right over the table. His arm had gone right off, Mme, and his leg was hanging on by threads of skin.

Dipou: Will you be quiet now.

Pule: The white people stood and looked at him, just still, like mafika. He was still talking quietly when they put him on the stretcher, 'I am hurt, baas, I am hurt', and they picked up his arm, and put it on the side of ...

Dipou: Didimala! Pule, go! Go, speak to your uncle.

[He pauses, then goes]

Pule?

Pule:Yes, Mother.

Dipou:Keshupile, is he dead ?

Pule:Yes mother, they are burying him.

[He goes]

Dipou:You see, they say this is a white man's war, and they are right. The white men do the fighting, we do the dying, and the burying. Now you have seen our town. You are welcome to Mafikeng, the place of stones.

SCENE 4 - AT UNCLE SELLO'S HOME

[Pule goes to his uncle, Sello, an old man.]

Pule:My mother says I must speak to you, uncle.

Uncle Sello:Does she ?

Pule:I have seen a man killed. By a shell, Uncle. It took his arm and leg off him, and the white people stood and watched him.

Uncle Sello:Did your mother say I would answer that ?

Pule:No, Uncle.

Uncle Sello:Pule, you know that I am an old man now, and that you are young ?

Pule:Yes, Uncle.

Uncle Sello:When I was a young man, I would run the length and width of our village, like a fenced horse that wants to run further than the fences will allow. It was most important above all to show my strength, show my speed, to race with others, to fight. And I was good at fighting. Many of us were. But we are not fighting people, Pule. When I was only small, I hid behind a boulder to listen to Chief Molema. He was a great man, a quiet man, but this was a time when the Barolong were frightened from attack by Mzilikazi. It was the first pitso I ever heard, and I will not forget, behind that boulder. 'This time', our Chief Molema said, 'This time we might have to fight. There is no other choice open to us, but do not ever forget that we are fighting only to defend our people, our land, that which is sacred to us. We are not fighting people. We are not Mzilikazi, we are not the Zulu, we are not the white men. We do not attack others. It must not be that the Barolong go into battle except for these reasons, to protect what is sacred for us. The blood of our people, the soil, the earth of our land, the place of our birth and our burial.'

This war now, Pule, this is not our war. This is brought by the white men. I know that some of our men are fighting now, we are not given any choice. Do not forget.

Pule:I will not forget.

Uncle Sello:Go well, my boy.

Pule:Stay well, my Uncle.

[He goes]

SCENE 5 - BIRMINGHAM NOVEMBER 1899

Newsboy:Mr Joseph Chamberlain, MP for Birmingham, speaking today in the Town Hall! Read Joe's speech! Mr Chamberlain's speech today!

Chamberlain:Since the day I came to office as Secretary for the Colonies, I have hoped for peace, I strove for peace. Make no mistakes, my dear fellow citizens of Birmingham, we are fighting this war in South Africa because we are compelled by the aggression of the Boers. We are fighting to defend the principles of the Empire, and to defend the rights of the poor natives so abused by these bullies. It is a matter of principle.

Newsboy:Mr Lloyd George! Read what the traitor says! Lloyd George speech today!

Lloyd George:It is a war about one thing, and one thing only - money. Do not be fooled by Joseph Chamberlain's lies. He is fighting for land which has gold and diamonds in it. He is fighting, men are dying, for money.

SCENE 6 - MAFIKENG. BY THE RIVER

[The Barolongali, the African women, sing a traditional song 'Stoki, stoki' Church bells ring. Pule is carving]

Pule:Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

Dipou:On Monday, on Tuesday, on Wednesday, on Thursday, on Friday, on Saturday, on each day, when the bell rings it means a shell is coming. On Sunday, it means the church is opening. All week they wait for shots or fire shots, except on Sunday. Strange people. They must have a day of rest, so that on Monday they are rested and better at killing.

Pule:Dinku says they are mad for that.

Dipou:They may be, but I am glad for the madness that gives us these Sundays.

[Pause]

When they crown me queen, Pule, I shall have three Sundays in every week.

Pule:One of the runners that took the newspaper man's message through last night was Manomphe. I was speaking with him just now. He went right past the noses of the Boers. Right through between them. He is not very much older than me, Mme.

Dipou:But he is older than you. So many of the men in the town have gun

s now, Pule, there are enough of them fighting.

[Pause]

What is it you are carving ?

Pule:It is a cricket bat.

Dipou:Oh I see.

Pule:Freddy has told me to make it, and showed me the shape. It was when I watched them playing last Sunday. He will teach me now.

Dipou:Will he ? You must take care, Pule.

Pule:Colonel B-P has told them all it is important to play their games, even if they are soldiers. He says it will keep them healthy, and help show the Boers their pluck.

Dipou:Does he ?

[Freddy arrives]

Freddy:How are you getting on, boy ?

[Pule shows him the 'bat']

Oh, that's good. Yes, that is really good. Look, I've got something to show you.

[He produces a battered cricket ball]

Do you know what it is ?

Pule:Of course I know. It is a cricket ball. I have seen them playing their big games on Sunday.

Freddy:Right. You stand like this. One hand above the other, and drive forward, or pull round, you see ? Let's have a look. Not bad. Now I'll pitch it to you.

[He moves back and throws the ball]

That's good.

Pule:It will not take me long to learn.

Freddy:Yes, well, I'll bowl it properly now.

[He does so. Pule hits it into the audience, fetches]

Good shot.

Pule:I would like to be a soldier like you, when I am older. I will fight for the Queen and Empire.

Freddy:Will you now ?

[He bowls. Hits him.]

Pule:Ow!

Freddy:Now that was my quicker one you see. If you want to play cricket , you've got to learn to take a bit of pain, boy. The rules of the game . It's important.

Pule:Why ?

Freddy:It just is.

[He bowls again. Pule again fetches it]

Pule:When I have enough beard, I will be in a Barolong regiment of all the men my age, like our heroes from the stories. When we have won this war, we will be allowed to have guns, and fight in the British army. Because I am the best soldier, they will make me an officer, and I will have men around me, just like Colonel B-P. Even my mother will be proud of me.

Freddy:The British Army doesn't have officers like you, boy. Or me, for that matter.

[He bowls again]

Pule:Are you not proud to be a soldier ?

Freddy:There's two kinds of soldier, boy. There's them, and there's us. For them it's an adventure, they come to Africa for the sport, or for the health, and they enjoy themselves. For us, it's the job. I come here because I had no choice. There's not a lot of the lads that enjoy fighting. It's a different world, you wouldn't understand.

Pule:I can understand things. I speak three languages, and I have not been to school. I can hit a ball, and I can make the bat. I could shoot a gun, and I would be proud. I think you should be more proud.

Freddy:Do you, boy ?

[Ball goes over to Dipou]

Dipou:You be careful now, Pule. Oh I am sorry.

Freddy:The boy's a good cricketer.

Dipou:Of course he is.

[They play on]

Baas. Can you find extra food for me, if I ask you ?

Freddy:If I could, I can tell you I would eat it myself.

Pule:They give you five times as much as us.

Dipou:Pule!

[Pause]

It is not for me, it is for MaBadirile. She has a baby and three other children. I only ask in case you find any. And my Uncle Sello is sick.

Freddy:I don't know. Listen, meet me at the large sycamore this evening.

Dipou:You will have some food.

Freddy:If you are there Kate, I will try. meet me.

Officer:Private Edwards? Fall in, man. You spend too much time with the natives, damn you.

Freddy:Yes Sir!

[He goes]

SCENE 7 - BIRMINGHAM, DECEMBER 1899

Newsboy:Happy Christmas! Christmas Edition! Happy ...

[Chamberlain buys a paper and reads.]

Chamberlain:'At Mafeking, after two months of siege, our people are holding out splendidly. Many festive entertainments are planned. The Boers have agreed to suspend hostilities for the day, and a proper bean-feast has been planned for the children, by the acknowledged first lady of the town, Lady Sarah Wilson' A toast to little Mafeking. Happy Christmas, and may you hold out, for all our sakes.

SCENE 8 - LADY SARAH'S BOMB-PROOF. CHRISTMAS DAY 1988

Vernon:Well, I must say, lady Sarah, you really are a marvel. What an absolutely splendid meal.

Lady Sarah:Think nothing of it, Captain Vernon.

Baden-Powell:Yes, marvellous. Gordon is a damned lucky chap to have got himself such a lucky wife. A stroke of bad luck for the rest of us, I should say.

Lady Sarah:Some of us are always going to need more luck than others, B-P. I'm just glad that Mr Weill's shop had overlooked the turkey. Somehow, Christmas would not be quite complete without one.

Vernon:I heard that the town altogether got through more than a ton of pudding.

Baden-Powell:Indeed ? Perhaps we should send a menu over to Johnny Boer . We wouldn't want him to think we were having to go without, would we ?

Lady Sarah:Compliments of the season to you both.

Baden-Powell:Yes, a very merry Christmas.

Vernon:And may it be our last in Mafeking.

Baden-Powell:Hear hear.

[They toast each other]

Vernon:What was it you were saying, Colonel ?

Baden-Powell:Oh, it was simply that I believe the importance I have placed on the men's morale has clearly paid handsomely thus far.

Vernon:Quite so.

Baden-Powell:At times it may seem a jot eccentric, and I am aware of the odd snigger behind my back at my involvement in entertainments, but I regret nothing. The garrison for the most part, is a proud and jolly band, and had we simply been sitting here and rotting, we would instead have a listless rabble. It is for that reason that these small kicks against the enemy are important, Vernon. So that the men are kept aware that they are fighters, and so that the Boer is in no damn doubt of it. Excuse me.

Vernon:Absolutely. Boredom is an enemy for which one is not trained.

Lady Sarah:I was hearing today about your megaphone, B-P. Someone said that you had one made, so as to use your whistling as a weapon.

[Embarrassed pause]

Vernon:No, no, Lady Sarah. That is part of another piece of the colonel's ingenuity. He uses it to convince the Dutchmen that there are more of us than there actually are. You see, he sneaks out at night, all alone, and whispers out orders through it, in different voices. It is quite brilliant. 'Sergeant Jackson, prepare the men for attack' 'Yes Sir' His voice carries for yards. Sometimes they even fire at empty trenches.

Baden-Powell:It is a joyous little dodge, that one. I must say it is invigorating to have to bend one's mind towards these somewhat improvised forms of warfare. We have a Sergeant Page, Lady Sarah, who is something of a wizard at fishing, and who has now perfected the art of casting dynamite bombs in fruit tins, with his rod and line. Not a classical method, but jolly effective.

Vernon:It is a comical sight, honestly.

Lady Sarah:Necessity is indeed the mother of invention.

Baden-Powell:And more is possible. I haven't told you Vernon, what I have in mind. The formation of a Cadet Corps. Bring all the young lads

together, involve them in some of the scouting. There's many that's as keen as mustard. All they want is the proper military set-up, and I believe they could be well used.

Vernon:What, a whole corps of sort of boy scouts.

Baden-Powell:Absolutely. I'm going to put it to Major Cecil.

Lady Sarah:Just his cup of cocoa, I should think.

Baden-Powell:Yes. You see, I think they would be deuced useful, spying on the Boer, running messages, that sort of thing, and I believe there would be an extra advantage in occupying some of the more boisterous hooligans among them.

[Pause]

I am sorry, Lady Sarah, we have been talking shop all evening, haven't we ?

Lady Sarah:No, it has been enlightening, I assure you, B-P. We have our own amusements of course, at the women's camp and at the convent. Quite a formidable array, in its own right, what with the nurses, and those comical Irish nuns. Have you seen them, working away at making gunpowder cartridges in the ..

Baden-Powell:You know my opinions on this. I have never been entirely happy that women should in any way be involved in warfare. Not that one does not appreciate your efforts. Now if you'll excuse me, I did promise the men a brief festive appearance in the mess.

Vernon:What is it to be tonight, Sir ? I do hope you're going to do your personation of that Polish pianist. It was first rate. Did you see it, Lady Sarah ?

Lady Sarah:Yes. Hysterical, quite.

Vernon:It brings tears to my eyes just thinking about it.

Baden-Powell:Paderewski ? Bit of harmless nonsense. No, I think not tonight.

Lady Sarah:What then, tonight ?

Baden-Powell:Ah no, I shouldn't really say. Spoil the moment. Pop in and see it, why don't you.

Lady Sarah:I will. Happy Christmas.

Baden-Powell:To you indeed also.

[He kisses her hand]

Madam.

Lady Sarah:So gallant, alongside all your other gifts.

Baden-Powell:Vernon.

Vernon:Sir!

[He salutes. Baden-Powell goes.]

Well, we are the only revellers left, it seems.

Lady Sarah:Now that our life and soul has left, yes. I hardly think this should be allowed in society.

Vernon:We are hardly in society just now, Lady Sarah.

[Pause]

Lady Sarah:There is some excitement in the air, Captain Vernon.

Vernon:Christmas, I suppose.

[Pause]

Well, I should on no account be telling you this, Lady Sarah, and it is perhaps only because of the quantity of brandy in your plum pudding. There might be excitement beyond merely the Christmas spirit, but please, you must remember that mum is the word. What is the word?

Lady Sarah:I believe it to be 'mum', Captain Vernon.

Vernon:Mum. Tomorrow, we have persuade the Colonel at long last to let us have a go at the damned enemy properly. We are storming Game Tree Fort. That perhaps might explain the high spirits; I tell you my squadron is champing at the bit in no small way, madam, and the Boer shall feel the capital effect of a British Christmas, sure as my name is Captain Ronald Vernon. I say that is my name isn't it?

Lady Sarah:It most certainly is.

Vernon:To Game Tree Fort ... Sh.. sh...To Game Tree Fort.

Lady Sarah:To Captain Ronald Vernon.

SCENE 9 - OFFICERS MESS CHRISTMAS NIGHT

[Officer on stage as MC]

Officer:Ladies and gentleman, and Sergeant Page.

[Laughs]

Would you give a rousing seasonal welcome to our own top of the bill here, the cockney king of Mafeking, Mr B-P of London Town.

[B-P comes on as a 'cockney character' and sings a music hall song. More cheers and laughter.]

Shout up lads. Let the Dutch beggars hear what a Happy Christmas is.

[Outside the Boers and prisoners are singing a Dutch Carol, which builds up and then fades away.]

SCENE 10 - THE ATTACK ON GAME TREE FORT. DECEMBER 26TH 1899

[Just before dawn, the unit assembles, prepares and then charges, led by Captain Vernon. The fort is ready and waiting. The attack is a failure, many people are killed, including Vernon. Freddy, slightly injured, is walking back from the scene of the charge.]

Dipou: You are stupid people indeed. Eh, you all just run and run into the bullets, and then run on again, because the man that would say 'go back' has been the first to die.

Freddy: Oh Kate. God it hurts. Look. Look at them all. Can you believe this? Do you think any of us really expected to die. Oh God I'm scared Kate.

[He goes to her. Cries]

Dipou: I saw it. You are very brave men, just like our men are very brave. Is that what you want?

[There is no reply for a moment. She gives him water.]

Freddy: This is his doing, you know. It is easy to be a good soldier, if you're nowhere near the front, just taking messages about the latest score. It's all the Tommy Atkins like me that soak up the bullets in the end, like stupid sheep... God knows... What the hell did I come here for, into this nightmare, eh? They said it was my duty you know. The greatest honour of all, to fight for the queen. Hey, don't let them see us.

Dipou: No baas.

[They move over]

She must be a very great woman, this queen, for all these men to do this for her.

Freddy: How come you speak English so well, Kate? I mean, and the boy and that.

Dipou: I worked for Mr Bell in the town.

Freddy: Oh yes?

Dipou: Yes. You see, I listen well, to people talking, and so does Pule. If you speak English, there is more choice for you here. And the people at the church teach a little.

Freddy: Do you go to church a lot?

Dipou: We go when they are teaching, or when they have food or clothes to give. But, there are men in the town who do not like you to go.

Sometimes they do not allow me to go. The Chief has many arguments with Molema about it, because he says we should not help the British, and they give us nothing for it, but Molema and many of the other men say we will be paid well later if we help now.

Freddy:What do you think ?

Dipou:I think I must just stay happy and hope we are well used. If you do not trust people ever, you live always in fear. But then, sometimes I think I cannot trust white men ever to be fair, when I see our people badly used, or shot without reason or some ... but I should not say that.

Freddy:No.

Dipou:Is that better ?

Freddy:I signed up in the army for six years, Kate. After this, I am going to get back to Birmingham as quick as I can, if it means swimming even.

Dipou:Where is that ?

Freddy:Oh, it isn't easy to explain. I'd better ...

Dipou:Yes.

SCENE 11 - THE FUNERAL OF THE BRITISH SOLDIERS

[Procession, music. Body of Captain Vernon draped in flag.]

Baden-Powell:Though, in a time of conflict, we have become sadly accustomed to the presence of death in our small town, on no occasion has it been with us with such heaviness as it is today. The untimely parting of twenty-four of our bravest men is without question a bitter pill for us to swallow, but we must wash it down with a tot of pride, that these men went forward to their deaths unflinchingly, and were killed in fearless and loyal service of their Queen.

Chaplain:They lost their lives, but they won ageless renown. No tomb is as splendid as theirs, they are not buried, but embalmed in undying glory.

Baden-Powell:Do not think that Captain Ronald Vernon, and the rest of these brave chaps have died in vain. I am sure that this attack, though it failed, will serve to show the Boers the fatal results of storming a well-defended position. I am sure that being the cowards they are, they will look at these our dead, and decide against future assaults on us. Much goodwill thus have come from the sacrifice of these men in this brilliant example.

[The last post]

SCENE 12 - AT THE BOER FARM

Sarie: Listen Johannes, they are burying their dead.

[Calls out]

You cannot boast so loudly tonight, can you? God is on our side, and your punishment is just beginning now. Ja, they are not so proud today.

Johannes: I have something for you, Sarie. A present from the Queen of England.

[He produces a tin of chocolate]

We went out under the white flag to help them to remove the dead and injured. It was a pitiful sight.

Sarie: Chocolate.

Johannes: They say she has sent a tin to every soldier in her army.

Sarie: There will be many tins left over when we have finished.

Johannes: Ja.

SCENE 13 - BY THE RIVER

Dipou: We must now go to the edge of town every day to fetch food. We must show a soup ticket, or we are not given any. The Colonel has said that it would be best if some of the Barolong people will leave Mafikeng, leave their homes, that there is food waiting for anyone who can escape through the Boers. Some have gone, some of the people that were given no soup ticket. We do not know how many have got safely to their food. Most of our cattle have been taken away, and some of our men try to get more back from the Boers. The milk we draw must be given to the white women and children. My uncle is very sick, but he gives his food to our children. They say that in England everyone says we are heroes, and we will be saved soon.

[Pule runs in]

Pule: Mm, he will not do it. I do not believe it. He was ... What a friend we have there.

Dipou: Be calm, Pule. What happened?

Pule: I went to the soup kitchen like you said, Mm, and just as Silas said, Freddy was serving out the soup today. But he would not speak to me. He looked around everywhere but at me. I said, 'You are our friend, and our uncle is sick and dying. You will fill my bowl one time for him. Freddy, I am asking you to, please. Answer me please. Why do you stay quiet?' Not one time did his eyes cross with mine. I waited quiet until everyone had gone, except for the others that waited like me in hope. And then his captain said to us all 'There is no more today. If you need more food, cross the enemy lines. We are all hungry. Get back to your homes'. Freddy went away and still said nothing. What a friend, Mm.

Dipou:He is told what to do, Pule.

Pule:Oh yes, he is told my uncle must die, so he will do nothing.

Dipou:Go and fetch Ngaka. He will try to make him stronger.

[Pule goes]

You know, the soup they give us is made from weak horses and stray dogs. They tell us to shoot them, and they grind the bones, to make the soup thicker.

SCENE 14 LADY SRAH'S BOMB-PROOF

[Lady Sarah is writing a letter home.]

Lady Sarah:The food is inferior and there is very little of it. I have today tried the indian delicacy of curried locusts, and found it not at all bad, something like prawns. Thomasina has done so also, but has been plagued since by the memory of the poor locust's face. She says it looked unhappy, which one can well imagine is quite natural if you are to be eaten. There will certainly be some stories to tell back home, and dining at Hughenden will never seem quite the same. In fact, due to the foresight of B-P and the store-keeper Mr Weill, there is enough food for our rations to be unpleasantly small, rather than actually dangerous. The natives are dying rather regularly though, so of course they would be far better off trying to escape. Poor Cecil had his pet dog disappear on Tuesday, I am afraid it is not difficult to imagine its fate. Even the dog that died of fever at the convent last week is no longer in its grave. The weather is divine still, and there is bridge every afternoon, but all days are much alike.

SCENE 15 - BY THE RIVER

[Pule is carving]

Dipou:Pule, Pule. Your uncle died this morning when the sun rose.

[He continues carving]

He was an old man, but he did not die for reaching the end of his time. He died because he was hungry and gave his food to the children. Lekoko says we will bury him today.

[Pule continues carving]

He was killed by Freddy and the English men and women. They do not starve.

Pule:No, Mme, you cannot ...

Dipou:Listen my boy, they killed him just as if they had put a gun to his mouth and fired. Just as they have killed Dingiswayo, and Tshipithata, and both the smallest children of MaLetsi. There are people as thin as

sticks lying in the streets, and crawling down by the river. Their stomachs are swelled, they lick at tins and bones, and the englishmen today are coming through to count how many of our people are left. They will tell more to leave. And MaBadirile shows me marks on her back where she was beaten by the Boers trying to escape. She says more than twenty women were not so lucky just to be beaten on the back. Chief Lekoko says we must trust the Colonel, and fight as we can for him, but he will do nothing to give more food. What is it we have done for Molimo to bring these people down on us ?

Pule:Mme, haikonna!

Dipou:Will you think of the stories your uncle has told you, Pule. When this town has been attacked before, our people have been fighting their own fight. Before any of the white people came, the Barolong were here, and we had our food, our cattle, our horses, our God - and now they take everything. We have to run where we are told, and eat only when they decide to throw us scraps of food.

Pule:Mme, you are angry because of Uncle Sello. You have always told me to respect the white men. I do not understand.

Dipou:Yes I am angry because of Uncle Sello, of course my boy.

[Pause]

Come here, ngwana-waka.

[She holds him, sings to him, 'Mangwa nem pule le'. He sings too]

[Pause]

Pule:Will you let me fight now ?

Dipou:I will not. Why should you fight and die for them too ?

Pule:For you, Mme.

Dipou:Remember what your uncle said. We are not fighting people.

Pule:He is dead, Mme.

Dipou:He was old, you are young.

Pule:Many young men and women are dead. Is that not what you have been saying ?

Dipou:We are not fighting people. Think of the Badimo, your ancestors.

Pule:So, you would want me to stand and wait, Mme ?

[Pause]

We fight for the blood of our people, the soul of our land. I can help fight to fetch food. To get back some cattle. I will go and see Dinku.

Dipou:Pule! You must be careful. Think how it would be for me if you die too.

Pule:I will not die. Stay well, my mother.

Dipou:Go well, my son

SCENE 16 - THE BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL JANUARY 1900]

Headmaster:Colonel Baden-Powell is emerging as one of the great heroes of this war. He has a brilliant, inventive mind, a cheerful appearance, even under the most appalling conditions, and he is a military genius. Consider boys, that he has at his disposal a motley assortment of men. A brave crew, but a motley crew nonetheless, and that he must also cope with the considerable extra burden of feeding all the people of the town, and also the natives, who are most probably difficult, and a considerable encumbrance to him. Seldom has the Empire produced so magnificent a specimen. We must all wish him well.

SCENE 17 - BEYOND THE EDGE OF THE TOWN, NIGHT

[Johannes is guarding cattle, Pule crawls to lie in hiding]

Pule:Dinku! Over this way. Now!

[Dinku runs beside him. Hides]

Dinku:I am here.

Pule:We must wait until we have long enough.

[They wait. Johannes is cold and bored. He moves over. Pule starts to run past, makes a noise, sees Johannes turning and has to run back. Johannes slowly walks back.]

Dinku:Let me try first.

[Again Johannes turns away. Dinku gets up and creeps past, gets the cattle, makes noise. Johannes shoots at him. Pule stands to draw his fire. He shoots both ways. Noise. They throw rocks. Run.]

[Drum music]

SCENE 18 - ON THE BOER FARM

Sarie:How many have we lost ?

Johannes:I have told you it was two.

Sarie:Two out of the four ?

Johannes:Two out of the four woman, ja. What am I supposed to do ? The

re is blood on the kraal, I have at least hit one of the thieving kaffirs.

Sarie: Maybe it was one of the cows that you hit ?

Johannes: Oh, ja, and now I don't know a cow from a kaffir ?

Sarie: I am sorry, Johannes. God knows, he has given us a heavy burden now.

Johannes: I am sure that the boy would have come to tell us, but he must have wanted to let them in. Sis, we have been fools to trust any kaffir now, you know. I wish I didn't need him.

[Pause]

We have two left, and we still have our corn. We will be all right, Sarie. You and I, you know, we are diamond sort of people. You must be hard to live here, we have always known that haven't we ?

Sarie: What does the general say, Johannes ? Are you going to attack Mafeking soon ? The rumours at the kerk were strong last week that the town is ready to be taken. Surely if you were to take it we would have our cattle back.

Johannes: There is a new man, Eloff, who is now in the camp, and he has more heart and stomach than the old General. He is planning, you know, and we will have Mafeking by the end of the month. He has promised to have breakfast in the town any day now. He is a man with more about him. Already he has put the British Colonel in his place with fighting despatches, and the burghers are ready for a real fight now. They say that more and more of the kaffirs in the town have starved. It is only time before the British start to die. All their cheating, and all their using kaffirs to fight against us, like cowards, you know, all that will not help them. God will make them pay with their lives. We will march in and claim our rightful place in that town. Even if there is not much left of it when we take it, we will take it, I can promise you that.

Sarie: Half an egg is better than an empty shell, Johannes. Will you come to pray with me today ?

Johannes: Ja, later I may. I have to build a new fence first. Where is the kaffir ?

Sarie: He was outside, Johannes, by the kopje.

Johannes: I will flog him until he tells me what he knows, and then when we have built the fence, Sarie, I will go to the camp to hear the plans for attack.

Sarie: God will have us die before we speak English, Johannes.

SCENE 19 THE BOER CAMP

Eloff: Dear Colonel Baden-Powell. I understand from the newspaper that your men are playing cricket and organising concerts on Sundays. Could we join you ? It would be most agreeable to spend some time with the

fairer sex, of whom there are few out here. Wishing you a pleasant day,
I remain your obliging friend, Commandant S Eloff.

SCENE 20 - MAFEKING

Baden-Powell: Thank you. I should like nothing better, after the current match is over. Just now we are having our innings, and have so far scored two hundred days not out, against your best bowlers. We are having an enjoyable game. I remain yours truly Colonel Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell.

Have a runner take that under the white flag this morning.

Clerk: Sir!

SCENE 21 - ELOFF'S ATTACK

Narration: On May 11th 1900, after more than two hundred days of siege, the Boer forces start a major attack on the town of Mafeking. Before dawn, three hundred men, under the leadership of Eloff, make their move, crawling up the river bed, and into the African town, setting fire to large sections.

[Alarm, church bells. Freddy runs on, stares at the burning huts. Officer runs on]

Officer: Back off. Retreat. Muster by the police barracks.

[Freddy runs off. Another soldier calls out]

Soldier: At last, I can smell them, at long last. Here they are lads! Come up, and catch us if you can Boers!

Officer: Back up to HQ man. Tell the Colonel they've cut the telephone wires, and come right through the native town. Got that? Run!

[They go off in separate directions. Pule has run on.]

Pule: Mother! My God, Dinku, the toropo. Fire man fire. Every one of them is on fire, every roof. The sky, it is ... The sun rise has come early. Back again! Dintsatse! Never such a fire. No, Dinku, my mother. Be alive, please God, mother, be alive. Lintsa! Lintsatse!

[Freddy runs back to police barracks. Pule runs off. There is widespread panic. Reaction to the Boer attack. Fighting. Screams. Orders and messages are called out.]

Officer: Estimate three hundred of them. They have taken Colonel Hore, and set up in the police block.

Five hundred reinforcements heading for the native village. If they get through, we have had it.

[Pule comes in again, with a gun]

Pule: Get back, murderers, go! Out of our home. Get out of here. I will kill every one of you! Dinku!

[He charges off, gesturing and throwing]

Officer: Eloff and his force are through to the town.

The natives have fought back the reinforcements.

They are going.

Eloff is caught. The town is safe.

Eloff is captured. The town is safe.

[Baden-Powell appears, and stands to address the men.]

Baden-Powell: The town is safe men, and Eloff is a prisoner in the Masonic Hall. Tomorrow, he shall have breakfast with myself and Lady Sarah Wilson in Mafeking, as he wished. The final sting has today been pulled from the Boers' tail, and a famous victory has been won. Congratulations to Captain Marsh, Fitzclarence, Godley and Hore, and to all of you. The Boers today showed themselves to be brave fellows, but we have shown them that the British are better yet. The relief column is now only a few days from us, and we shall shortly see this siege raised at last. The game is almost over, chaps. We are ahead, we have won the final scrummage, and we need only wait for the referee's whistle.

SCENE 22 - BY THE RIVER

Dipou: I woke to hear the noise of my home burning down around me, of my friends screaming, and of guns that cracked madly. It is not a way that I will ever want to wake again. The roof was still above me, except for a hole where I would see the sky, if it was not for flames and smoke instead. My son was not asleep. Nor was he there, but I was calm and good, I did not cry nor run but moved outside.

Molimo gave me time to see slowly in all the running. To see that this is a picture of what I have allowed to happen to my home. The fire is an orgy, there is twisted black wood and the smell of black, black smoke. An old man, I cannot even see who, is running with a coat of flames, running right down the middle of the town until he falls down, and I am sure I hear my son call for me in the corner. When I hear this, I turn my back on my home and move on my own to the river and the shelter of the sycamore tree.

When I walk back to our town, I can see what lies ahead for me, and so there is no surprise in anything I find. There is twisted black wood at the sides of the path, and there is blood running over the mud painted on the ground. And there is my son, lying in a small crouch, his hands clutched tight around his gun, and a sea of his blood soaking into the soil of his home.

SCENE 23 - BIRMINGHAM. THE RELIEF

Newsboy:Mafeking relieved! At last, the Siege of Mafeking is over!
Mafeking relieved! Read about the Relief of Mafeking!

Public:It's true ?

Of course it's true.

Down in Lozells they've ben celebrating for two days.

But is it official ?

Newsboy:Mafeking relieved. Official!

[The word is passed on]

Public:Mafeking relieved etc etc. Three cheers for Colonel Baden-Powell
, hip hip, hooray, hip hip hooray, hip hip hooray!

Chamberlain:This is a great great day for Birmingham, Britain and the
Empire. One of the finest defences in our history has ended successfull
y. Like all of you, I cannot conceal my pride. A famous victory indeed
. God save the Queen.

[The celebrations continue.]

SCENE 24 - MAFEKING

Freddy:I was in the middle of Mafeking when the relief came. Everyone
was too tired to be energetic about celebrating. For me, it had finishe
d in that final Boer attack a week before. I was half way out to the
native stadt, and the Boers had done the full job on it, flames
everywhere. We couldn't see anyone, and even in the low light and the
smoke I knew that there were people in there, I mean that the enemy was
there. It was like a slow nightmare. Quiet in spite of the noise, if y
ou know what I mean. Just one of them came through from out of the smok
e of the burning huts, about the length of a cricket pitch from me, running
towards me with a gun. In the time it takes for a bullet to pass the
distance, I had done what the Queen and the Empire wanted of me, and the
man lay back on a boulder, with the cordite scorching his old worn coat
, and in the time it took for the smoke to blow back over, I got to know
his face as well as my mother's, every bit of his rough white face. I
dodged his bullet, but I don't suppose I'll dodge the look in his face in a hurry.

Now, we are all the heroes we were promised all along, and what waits fo
r us at home is the welcome we all dreamed of, and the thanks of the
country. I just wonder if my wife's big room, that I've been thinking o
f back there, if it will be big enough to lose that man in.

[Dipou comes on, carrying Pule]

Dipou: Hello

[Freddy looks at her, looks down, and leaves.]

This is the land I was born on, it is the land where the food that I eat has been grown, and where my cattle have fed. I have danced on this land, I have cried tears onto this land. This land is where I have buried my mother and my father, where I have buried my uncle, where I myself will be buried, and where now I must bury my only son. This land belongs to the dead, the living, and the unborn generations of our people. I do not say that it belongs to me - land cannot be bought and sold like jewels, it is not right to take it, to give it, to fight for it like the white men and women. It is not just dust. I do not say it belongs, I say only that it is sacred to me, it is a spiritual force, a source of life. It is the land of my home. Let the rain come now, and water the soil. Let it wash away the blood and the pictures of this war, answer the hopes of my people and bring peace. Ha Pula ene. Let the rain fall. Ha pula ene.