

The lemon orchard



They had come into a wide gap in the orchard, a small amphitheatre surrounded by fragrant growth, and they all stopped within it. The moonlight clung for a while to the leaves and the angled branches, so that along their tips and edges the moisture gleamed with the quivering shine of scattered quicksilver. The dog started barking in high yaps again. This time it was louder than before. 'Somebody shut that dog up,' the fifth man shouted. It seemed like as if the dog's bark was getting louder, as though it was coming closer to them.

Unexpectedly, the dog suddenly stopped barking. 'Thank god the dog has finally stopped,' said Andries. 'I want something to drink now. ' He sat down and grabbed a bottle of water. He completed it all. 'Go and get some more water for him. ' Oom ordered the coloured man. 'You might as well go with him,' Oom said to the fifth man. 'I don't want to go with that hotnot,' the fifth man replied. The lantern bearer looked at Oom and said, 'I'll go with him. 'Here hold the lantern. ' He gave the lantern to the fifth man and began to walk towards the fresh water spring with the victim. The coloured man was shivering and couldn't protect against the coolness of the night.

It was so dark that they couldn't even see just a few centimetres ahead. After a little while, the lantern bearer asked the coloured man, 'What was it that you have done to get this punishment? ' The man remained quiet. 'Go on say it, I won't tell anyone. ' The coloured man started to speak inaudibly. 'Speak up,' the lantern bearer insisted. 'A few weeks ago I was going past the minister of the church and he called me. I thought he was probably calling me because of something important but he called me towards him and started beating me up for no reason.

Then I went to the court to get some justice for myself. Because I went to the court, Oom took me from my lodgings without even giving me a chance to speak. ' 'And is that why he got you here with your pjamas on? ' the lantern bearer asked. 'Yes,' the coloured man replied nervously. They got the water and walked back to the small amphitheatre where the other men had stopped. The night was getting darker and darker and while they were making their way back, they could hear the crickets' creek-creek-creek.

The natural world seemed subdued and it was as if the crickets were muttering about the events in the orchard. 'About time you came. Hurry and give the bottle,' Andries took the bottle from the coloured man. Suddenly the dog who had been barking earlier jumped in front of them and started to bark in high yaps. Oom pulled out the gun and pointed it. He then moved to pull the trigger but as soon as he tried to shoot, the dog yelled out and jumped up and bit Oom's hand. Oom fell and hit the hard, cold ground. He unintentionally pushed the trigger and a bullet was fired.

Somebody has been shot. Everyone was shocked. The whole lemon orchard was now silent as a vacuum. It brought darkness and quietness to the orchard. The lantern bearer held on his chest and dropped slowly to the cold harsh ground. The dog without delay took the gun and ran. This gave the coloured man a little more self-confidence and a sense of relief. Oom looked at the lantern bearer and then pointed at Andries. " Andries get that gun off that bloody dog and I will look after him. " The fifth man was worried. " What are we going to do now?

He was right; we shouldn't get involved in any murder. It was him who said it earlier and he is the one who has been shot. " The beauty of the lemon orchard was being taunted by the fifth man's cries which were getting louder. The dark clouds crouched over them all, as if trying to smother their hate-filled hearts. Andries went to get the gun but the dog was running at high-speed. The dog was rapid and Andries couldn't get anywhere near it. Tension was building rabidly that they didn't know what to do. The orchard was in total silence.

No one was looking at the coloured man so he had a good chance to escape. He tried to move away but Oom grabbed him and told the fifth man to put the lantern down and keep his eye on their captive. The lantern bearer was breathing heavily. He was taking his last breath and no one could do anything to save him. " Get something so we can dig a grave," Oom ordered the fifth man angrily. Behind a lemon tree the fifth man found an old shovel left behind by the orchard workers that afternoon. Oom start digging and buried the lantern bearer under a mound of cold, wet soil. You can't do that you have to let his family know," the coloured man spoke up.

" You stay out of this you hotnot. I don't want to be arrested. " The cold, chilly, biting wind was now attacking the men, as if it was accusing them for their inhuman behavior. Out of nowhere the lantern went out. The darkness of the night was covering everything now. They all had to stay close. " Stay together, we will have better chance to get out of here if we do," The fifth man spoke with the wind altering his words. Suddenly the dog came running back and Oom could just make out it silhouette in the darkness.

Oom stood in front of the dog, grabbed it and took the gun off it. He then pulled the trigger of the gun and shot the dog without hesitation. " Now you have killed two living things," the coloured man said. " You bloody hotnot stay out of this. " Oom pointed the gun at the coloured man and said, " You speak another word and this is going in your head. " The coloured man feared Oom. The crickets were screaming, as if they were crying for the mercy in the darkness. They could not take the terrible deeds that are committed in the beautiful orchard.

The coloured man wasn't as scared as before, as he started to realize that they might not find him again in this darkness. The coloured man was in the middle of the three of them. Suddenly he ducked, turned backwards and tried running. Oom pointed the gun at him and said " What are you doing? " " I need the toilet. " Oom would not allow him move. Instead he said " Shut up and carry on walking with us. " The coloured man knew he had to do something, if he was to escape from Oom's evil clutches. Suddenly the victim dashed at Oom and punched him in his face, right next to the nose.

Andries grabbed the coloured man, bent his knee and felled him. Meanwhile, Oom lifted the gun, despite his injury and shot again. The lemon orchard went silent again. The fifth man was shocked. He couldn't believe the number of dreadful incidents happening in the beautiful, sweet-citrus lemon orchard. These dreadful incidents were witnessed by the nature itself. The leaves cried and the crickets creaked, as if they would never stop. The heavy clouds rained down on the blood, bath below, each drop resembling a tear, as if the heavens were crying with shame.