

## Chapter 1

The street was quiet: no cars, no children racing on bicycles. Walking along was a teenage boy. He was slightly built, but had an air of purpose about him. His straight dark hair was as long as the school rules would allow, with a fringe that fell to his eyes. He was wearing his school uniform: grey trousers, light-blue shirt, and school tie. The tie was navy-blue, with light-blue and white stripes running diagonally. It was the Worcester Boys High School uniform.

The houses here were old and rustic. Most had roofs of corrugated zinc, and there were usually smooth cement stoeps in front of them, with old chairs, now empty, in the shade. Some of the houses had wooden shutters which could be pulled closed over the windows against the glare of the South African sunlight.

The trees in the large yards were ancient, with gnarled stems and dark leaves. The smell of rotten fruit on the ground was heavy in the dry late-summer air of Worcester. There were loquat trees in the yard of the house David was walking past now, the fruit bright yellow against the dark leaves, but where they lay on the ground they were brown and soft, lying between dried-out leaves. This house also had a stoep, in front, and running along the side. It was red, and David wondered how they managed that, whether it had been painted red, or had something been mixed into the cement when it was made?

Behind the roofs and trees, in the distance, were pale-blue mountains which towered into an even paler sky. It seemed that in any direction one looked in Worcester, there were mountains. In the winter the snow came and it always surprised David just

how low the snow lay, how beautiful it looked. Slowly, as the snow thawed in the warming weather, waterfalls would appear on the side of the mountain.

“Hey, Sweetpea!” someone called. “Howzit.”

David Kramer looked up. He saw the caller on the other side of the street and broke into a grin. When he smiled he was pure charm, soulful eyes alive with warmth, stretching from ear to ear. It was easy to understand why girls were attracted to him. It was because his mother and her friends also considered him cute, that they called him Sweetpea, after Popeye and Olive Oyl’s baby.

“Howzit,” David replied.

Through the small-town quiet came the sound of a saw. Someone was playing it. One put the saw over one’s lap and rubbed the edge with a bow, the same bow used to play a violin. The blade was bent up or down to make the tune. The mournful music reached the boys, exaggerated tremolo notes trembling on the fruit-scented air.

“What *kak* is that?” the boy across the street scoffed, but David listened intently, captivated.

Yes, it was overly-sweet kitsch, but it was a kitsch so bad that it had gone full circle, and was now beautiful in its own way. Most of the pop music David heard on the radio was beamed in from outside South Africa, LM Radio from Mozambique, or if you wanted the really heavy stuff you tuned in to Swazi Music Radio. This could only be heard at night on medium wave, and sometimes the signal was very faint, but they played music like Audience’s album *House on the Hill*.

At the time, the Worcester teenagers were playing 7-singles at parties, black vinyl records which were seven inches in diameter. According to [www.rock.co.za](http://www.rock.co.za), the pop hits for 1969 were:

- Suspicious Minds - Elvis Presley
- Don't forget to Remember - The Bee Gees
- You can Cry if you want to - The Troggs
- My Sentimental Friend - Herman's Hermits
- Crimson and Clover - Tommy James and the Shondells
- Cry to Me – The Staccatos
- Time is Tight - Booker T and The MGs
- Sugar Sugar - The Archies
- Saved by the Bell - Robin Gibb
- Jesamine - The Casuals

A big hit of 1969 was Peter Sarstedt's "Where Do You Go To My Lovely?", and it was one of the songs you *had* to be able to play if you had a guitar.

"Okay, check you," the friend said in the typical Worcester colloquialism.

"Check you," David replied.

David went on his way, walking through the streets towards Western Furniture, the shop where his father worked.

David passed a music store, and went in to look at the guitars.



Downtown Worcester.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight/183665053/in/set-72157594189985584/>

## Chapter 2

Solly Kramer worked for his father as a salesman at Western Furnishers. Like many other young men at the time, his life was interrupted by World War II. When he came back from the war he walked with a limp from an injury he suffered in the fighting. He settled back into his routine, until he met a young woman.

He courted Frances Miller and soon she accepted his marriage proposal. They moved into a middle-class suburb called Langerug, on the edge of town. From home it was a short walk before Solly found himself in the veld. There were almost no flowers, only round, brown-green bushes, and a few clumps of tall eucalyptus trees. The tough bushes could withstand the hot wind that blew in summer or the biting chill that came down from the mountains in winter.

It was a very different landscape to the one which the inhabitants of Langerug were trying to cultivate. Their gardens were attempts at recreating a slice of Europe, green lawns surrounded by bright flower-beds, sprinklers rotating on the lawns, chip-chip-chip-chip. Children ran about, trying to duck under the spray, their laughter ringing out in the peaceful quiet of Worcester in the 50's.

Solly was a diligent worker and he did his best to take care of his family. During the week he worked long hours and on Sundays he enjoyed a game of golf. Sometimes he and Frances went to the Worcester yacht club to relax and catch up on the local gossip.

Their firstborn was a boy. They named him John. At an early age John exhibited a love for drawing. Then came a second child, another boy, on 27 June 1951. This boy they named David.



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight>



This old cinema slide was a great find. It would have been projected in one of the two local bioscopes in Worcester (South Africa). It shows an interior shot of what the then 'new' Western Furniture shop looked like in the late 1930's. This is the only interior shot of the store that I have seen. The store belonged to Mr Harry Fox of Cape Town and my grandfather was the local manager. I think that's my grandfather serving a customer in the background.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight>

### Chapter 3

Worcester was about an hour and a half's drive from Cape Town before the new tunnel was built. The drive went through the Brandwacht Mountains, the narrow road winding up and up. Solly loved the name: The Fireguard Mountains. He and Frances would load up the Austin and take the family on rare trips to Cape Town where they could swim in the ocean. More regular were the drives around Worcester. A favourite spot was the Karoo Gardens. On these ventures John and David went nearly mad with boredom. While their parents read the *Sunday Times*, sitting in fold-up camping chairs, the boys were wondering when they were going home.



Drawing by David Kramer, (p.47 *Short Back and Sides*)



The Karoo gardens were on the foothills of the surrounding mountains. The boys would walk around, the smell of the dusty dry air rich with the aroma of the succulents native to the area. They were ugly plants, the boys thought, with thick, spiky leaves. Sometimes there would be an orange flower on top. The soil was a powdery orange-brown. The call of birds would travel for miles on the clear hot air.

One time, it was dead quiet. John and David set out to investigate. They walked to the edge of the plateau where their father had parked the car and gazed out over Worcester which lay sleeping below them. From up here the boys could see the grey ribbon of road far below. A vehicle came along the highway, a small speck in the distance, too far away for them to hear it.

“Look, there’s a road,” David told John. “With a car.”

“That’s the N1,” John informed his younger brother. “It goes all the way to Johannesburg.”

“To Johannesburg?!” David gasped.

“Where they get the gold.”

David stared wide-eyed at the road far below, and the car moving along it. Johannesburg! David could not get enough of this road and the idea that it went as far away as the city of gold. He didn’t have words to describe the emotions he felt, but it was something wonderful.

From then on, David couldn’t wait for his parents to take them on picnics to the Karoo gardens. He would drag his fold-up chair so that it faced down the slope of the hill and watch the N1 highway far below. He pretended that he was driving to Johannesburg. He had conversations with people in his head, all kinds of exciting, glamorous people.

At this time David and John attended Worcester Boys Primary School, until John went on to high school. Both institutions were about fifteen minutes walk from home, which was on De Vos Street. The houses had large gardens in the front, and the pavements were lush lawns. In the yards were trees with neat holes around them, the grass carefully cut away. The gardener trimmed the edge by stepping down on a spade, slicing off the excess grass.

David would cross the big road all by himself, walk down the slight incline, and there it was: Worcester Boys Primary. The primary school and the high school were next to one another in those days, and the boys wore similar uniforms. To one side of the primary school was a church, and in front were the workshops for the blind. The workers made furniture from cane, and this is where the teachers got their weapons: cut-offs from the workshops.

David often saw blind people walking along the streets of the town. Sometimes they had Labrador guide-dogs, but usually they guided themselves with a white stick. They'd let the tip slide along the water furrows which ran alongside the roads. These furrows carried water from Hospital Dam down to the old part of town. It was great to play in the sluices, barefoot and splashing. The water trembled over the children's hands as they tried to dam up the water. Sometimes small tadpoles would slip by and the kids would shriek with horror and excitement.

David's first teacher, in Sub A and B, was Mrs Bybee. The two classes were put together in one big classroom. It was right next to the principal's office and all the students had the feeling that there was a looming presence of authority over them. When

the bell for break rang, they raced past the principal's office before he could see them, and somehow catch them out on something they had done or had forgotten to do.



The shoes David is wearing could well be his first pair of school shoes, quite possibly Bata Toughes. (p.10 *Short Back and Sides.*)

In Standard 1 and 2 he was in Miss. Dryer's class. She was sweet-natured and soft-spoken, and would always praise her charges when they read well. Reading was easy for David. Miss Dryer taught them a poem that he loved:

Fatty and Thinny went to bed.  
Fatty rolled over, and Thinny was dead.

One Saturday afternoon in Standard 2 Solly called the boys to the kitchen table, where he was doing the books.

“Look,” he grinned. “It’s the new money.”

“Wow!” John exclaimed, taking one of the notes in his hands.

David stood on his toes and also leaned over the table.

“Let me see! Let me see!” he demanded.

Up until then the currency in South Africa had been the British Pound. The boys held the strange rands in their hands, crisp and neat. John took a coin and turned it over, inspecting it on both sides.

South Africa became a republic in 1961, and the children in Worcester were taught that South Africa had beaten the mighty United Kingdom, freeing herself from the shackles of the Commonwealth. There had been a big deal about that, and children from all the schools had lined High Street, waving small flags. But it was only white people lining the streets, freshly scrubbed and hair neatly brushed.

The previous year 69 people had been killed in Sharpeville by the police. The Pan African Congress had organised a protest against the carrying of pass books. A group of between 5,000-7,000 people had converged on the Sharpeville police station to offer themselves up for arrest for not carrying the books.

Since then there had been a vague, nagging sense of unease. David watched his father count the new money, doing grown-up work. It didn’t feel the same anymore.

Sometimes his parents spoke in hushed tones, using words like “government, ANC, and Mandela”.

Suddenly there was a commotion outside. It sounded like the lady next door. She was screaming.

“And now?” Solly wondered out loud, getting to his feet.

They rushed outside. David stood squinting for a moment in the bright sunlight. Then he saw the woman in her front garden. She was on her knees, cradling her son in her arms. The boy was about five years old. He was lying on the ground, his shoulders and torso in his mother’s lap. She shook him.

“Wake up!” she was screaming.

David and John went closer, but only by a few steps. They watched as Solly and Frances ran over to the neighbour’s house. It was horrible, but David couldn’t look away. He was close enough to see that the little boy’s eyes were rolling around left to right.

“That’s a scorpion sting,” Solly informed his neighbour. “We have to take him to the hospital.”

“Garth isn’t here ..!” the woman wailed. “He’s out!”

“I’ll take him in my car,” Solly decided. “Wait here.”

He looked over at the boys.

“Get my keys, John. Shake a leg, now.”

John dashed into the house to retrieve the car keys.

Solly picked the lad up and carried him to his driveway. Frances opened the car door and her husband placed the boy in the backseat. His mother sat down next to him.

John came running up with the car keys. Solly got in and started the car. David and Frances watched as Solly reversed out of the driveway. The car disappeared from sight.

Later when Solly returned, David and John crowded him in the living room as he dropped his keys on the table next to his favourite chair, right where he always put them.

“What happened, Daddy?”

“He’s going to be alright,” Solly shared, sitting down with a sigh.

“Where did the scorpion sting him, Daddy?” John wanted to know.

“In South Africa,” Solly teased.

“Daddy ..!” John whined, pretending to be angry. “Where?”

“On his foot.”

Frances was still standing, her arms folded. She had a worried frown on her face.

“You boys must be careful,” she admonished.

In Worcester the kids ran around barefoot, and it was par for the course to come home with bleeding toes or cuts under their feet. They were always treading on nails and thorns. And when they walked through the bush, God alone knows what was waiting for them in those dark shadows under the khaki-green bushes.

## Chapter 4

One of the most important things that happened to David in standard 3 was hearing Jeremy Taylor on the radio. It was one of the big hits of that year:

### **Ag Pleez, Deddy**

Ag pleez, Deddy, won't you take us to the drive-in?  
All six, seven of us, eight, nine, ten!  
We wanna see a flick about Tarzan an' the Ape-men,  
An' when the show is over you can bring us back again.

Chorus: Popcorn, chewing gum, peanuts an' bubble gum,  
Ice cream, candy floss an' Eskimo Pie!  
Ag, Deddy, how we miss nigger balls an' liquorice,  
Pepsi Cola, ginger beer and Canada Dry!

Ag pleez, Deddy, won't you take us to the fun-fair?  
We wanna have a ride on the bumper-cars.  
We'll buy a stick of candy floss and eat it on the octopus.  
Then we'll take the rocket ship that goes to Mars.

Chorus.

Ag pleez, Deddy, won't you take us to the wrestling?  
We wanna see an ou called Sky High Lee.  
When he fights Willie Liebenberg, there's gonna be a murder,  
'Cos Willie's gonna donner that blerrie yankee.

Chorus.

Ag pleez, Deddy, won't you take us off to Durban?  
It's only eight hours in the Chevrolet.  
There's spans of sea an' sand an' sun an' fish in the aquarium.  
That's a lekker place for a holiday.

Chorus.

Ag pleez, Deddy...

Voetsek!

Ag sis, Deddy, if we can't go to bioscope  
Or go off to Durban, life's a hang of a bore.  
If you won't take us to the zoo, then what the heck else can we do  
But go on out and moer all the oukies next door?

David loved the South Africa of the song. The film in his head clearly saw the images, almost as if he and his family were watching it in a drive-in like the song's. What also got David's attention was the delivery. Jeremy Taylor sang in an accent which, even though David didn't know anyone who actually spoke like that, appeared to be the accent of working class men in Johannesburg. After all, almost every time someone told a joke in South Africa, it was delivered in this accent.

The pop charts of 1962 were ([www.rock.co.za](http://www.rock.co.za)):

- I can't stop Loving You – Ray Charles
- Telstar – The Tornadoes
- Peppermint Twist – Joey Dee & The Starlighter
- I Remember You – Frank Ifield
- Good Luck Charm – Elvis Presley
- The Locomotion – Little Eva
- Speedy Gonzales – Pat Boone
- The Young Ones – Cliff Richard & The Shadows
- The Stripper – David Rose
- Can't help falling in Love – Elvis Presley



In 1962 Worcester had no traffic lights, or robots, as they were called by the locals. Even High Street, the most important street in the town, had none. The joke in town was that if there was a robot and it turned green, the cows would eat it.

When David walked down the hill from Langerug to High Street, he would find himself at the western side of town. Here High Street ran into The Drostdy, one of the high schools. Drostdy was the arch enemy of Boys High, which David would soon be attending. Turning left, David strolled on past the Shell garage. A little further along was the Caltex. He crossed over Porter Street, and now the Mobil garage was to his left, next to the *Worcester Standard*, the weekly newspaper. Across the road was the Koffiehuis Café with the fish and chips shop, Madeira, next to it. Mr. De Nobrega had been the first shop owner in town to get one of the Curly Whip ice cream machines, and the town flocked to his shop, anxiously watching as he pulled the lever, letting a thick, delicious flow of ice cream ooze down into the cone. He would move the cone around and around, letting the ice cream pile up. One, two, three turns. You could have a Flake in the cone, so that the ice cream covered it, with a cherry on top.

The boys in David's class generally agreed: Tex and Lunch Bar were the two best chocolates. Kit Kat was also pretty good. And don't forget about Chox. Those were yummy!

But today David had no money, and in any case, it was too cold for ice cream. Well, not really. It could never be too cold for ice cream. Now that it was winter, the boys weren't barefoot anymore, except when they played rugby.

Tomorrow would be the last test match between the Springboks and the Lions. The 1962 tour had not been kind to the British Lions. They had lost the three previous

tests, and everybody expected another Springbok victory the next day in Bloemfontein. David had heard his parents muttering something about Nelson Mandela being on the run, their faces troubled, but it was the rugby that everybody was discussing. Mannetjies Roux, Jannie Engelbrecht, Mof Myburg, Avril Malan. These were the names all the boys were banding about. And of course, the captain, Johan Claassen.

Suddenly David's attention was caught by an unusual sight at Droomer's Garage. It was one of the men who filled your car with petrol. He was sitting on the concrete platform where the petrol hoses were. There were no cars now, so he had some free time. He held a homemade guitar. The body was made from a Castrol Oil tin. The big hit that year was Little Eva's "The Locomotion", which would later be a hit for Grand Funk Railroad, and also a massive hit for Kylie Minogue. But this music was nothing like what David heard on the radio, unless by chance it was tuned to Radio Xhosa.

The petrol-pump attendant was stomping a foot as he sang one line again and again in a rather high, sweet voice. The guitar line was just a few notes, and the last part of the riff was the same note, played a few times rapidly. David watched, taking it in.

The man grinned widely at David, tilting his head forward slightly to indicate he was singing the song to David now.

"Jy, kaffir!" someone shouted from inside the garage. "Hou op met raas en kom help my."

David started. The tone of voice was exactly the same as the bullies who called to him. "Hei, jy! Rooinek!"

The musician reluctantly put down his guitar and went over to the service centre, disappearing into the gloom. David had a good idea how the man felt. He went on his way.

“Daddy, can I get a guitar?” he asked his father that night.

“A guitar?!” Solly asked, surprised.

Solly’s hand hovered over the bowl, ladle in his hand, the food forgotten. He looked at his youngest son in wonderment.

“A guitar?” he repeated, and once again David nodded his head emphatically.

“He wants to be Elvis Presley,” Frances teased.

“His hair’s too short,” John pointed out, and they all laughed.

“I’ll think about it,” Solly said.

“Please, Daddy ..!” David begged.

“I said, I’ll think about it,”

David knew it would be prudent to drop the subject. For now.

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Saturday morning. The winter rains had come and gone, but it was still bitterly cold. The mountains were capped with snow. As David came gliding down the slight hill past school on his bicycle, he saw there was a high school rugby game in progress. He took a quick look. He hoped for their sake they weren’t playing Drostdy, because if they were, they were probably going to lose again. Parents were standing on the edge of the field, huddled in warm coats. There was a commotion, rising, subsiding, and then rising again. That could mean that Boys High were close to scoring a try, but more likely it was Drostdy that were about to score.

David turned in at the gates. He was hoping to see one of his friends. There were quite a few cars parked in the school grounds, behind the boarding school, and next to the metalwork shop. David stopped his bike and looked about, legs straddling the Raleigh.

From one of the cars came the sound of music. It was The Briels.

“Dit het gebeur op die trein naaaa Pretoooriaaaaa...,” sang Sannie Briel.

It sounded more like a church hymn than a song heard on the radio, but there it was, the heartbreaking song of poverty, an armbank meisie trying to get to the capital, Pretoria, to see her dear dying mother.

Dit het gebeur op die trein na Pretoria  
Die weer was bitterlik koud  
In 'n hoekie sit 'n meisie  
Sy lyk vir my skaam en benoud

Die kondukteur die vra toe haar kaartjie  
Sy het nie geld om een te koop  
Maar ek moet gaan na Pretoria  
Al moet ek ook daarheen loop

My Moeder die lê daar op sterwe  
en ek's haar enigste kind  
en ek moet gaan na Pretoria  
As ek haar ooit nog lewend wil vind.

David knew about The Briels. Their forced rhyme-schemes, images of poverty, and low-budget recordings made them “real”, and “the people’s musicians”, according to their fans. They were well known for their slow tear-jerkers, until they seemed to become a parody of themselves, turning out the same melancholy self-pitying records time after time. He remembered looking at one of their albums at the OK Bazaars.



<http://www.jump.co.za/product/frans-en-sannie-briel-9094027.htm>

On the cover were Frans and Sannie, somewhere in the bush. It looked like it was the Transvaal. The couple seemed more like undertakers than singers. The foliage was tall, dry grass - a bleak and depressing picture. David had flipped through the records and found another Briels record, also on the Pêrel label. There were tracks such as:

- Die Dag As Ek Sterf,
- Drie Wit Kruisies,
- Die Sterwende Kind Se Boodskap,
- Saans Deur Die Tralies,
- Ter Nagedagtenis Van 435 Mynwerkers – Deel 2,
- Mammie Is Alles Verby?,  
and
- Vou Jou Handjies.

The titles of these songs say much of their oeuvre:

- The Day I Die,
- Three White Crosses,
- A Dying Child's Message,
- At Night Through the Bars,
- In Memory of 435 Mine Workers – Part 2,
- Mummy, Is It All Over?,  
and
- Fold Your Little Hands.

The Briels's obsession with strife and death are clear in these titles. Particularly interesting is the song dedicated to the mine workers who died in a gruesome mining accident. This shows that The Briels had a deep affinity for working men and women, people who toiled hard, in dangerous conditions, workers who, when they workers died, they were not forgotten and pushed to one side, as possibly the mine owners did, but were praised, their life of struggle commemorated in song.

On 21 January 1960, 435 miners and 70 horses died when a tunnel in the Coalbrook coal mine collapsed. The implicit message was that the working men and women were gunfodder for the wealthy ruling class.

David was intrigued by this. To him the songs were ruined by overbearing sweetness, kitsch, but yet, there was something about The Briels. How did they become the champions of the people? It wasn't enough for David to scoff and declare that their fans adhered to the law of the lowest common denominator – surely the majority have the rule, whether David might think of their tastes less than his. And all things being said, David felt, they sure had a knack for writing songs in their particular genre.

How much of it was true and how much was myth, he wasn't sure, but it was pretty interesting, either way. The story went that Frans and Sannie Briel were orphans, and when they grew up they got jobs at Yskor. Sannie even operated a crane! David figured she was a hell of a lady.

He didn't see any of his friends, so he got back on his bike and made his way to Western Furniture. When he got there he leaned the bike against a wall and made his way inside.

"Hello, Daddy," he greeted.

Solly nodded his head. He was busy with a customer.

David noticed an elderly man close by. It seemed as though he was Saturday window-shopping. The man was a coloured, and he looked as though he was a farm labourer. He was wearing his weekend best, but the clothes seemed to be second-hand, maybe donated by the chap's church. He had a grey goatee, and his face was very wrinkled. He wore a black hat with a band of black satin around it. What immediately caught David's attention was the guitar he held by the neck.

"Kan jy daai ding speel?" David asked.

The man looked down at the guitar.

"Laat ek vir kleinbaas wys," he offered.

The man bent over slightly and lifted his right leg, standing on the toes of his right foot. He put the guitar on his thigh and pressed it against his waist. David realised that although there was a chair next to him, he didn't sit on it, as though he felt it would have been disrespectful.

David watched as the man tuned the guitar. First the thick string on the top. Then the next, and so on. Finished, he strummed the guitar. To David it sounded perfect, but the man wasn't satisfied. He turned one of the machine heads a bit, then another, and finally he was ready.

By now Solly had come over.

“Can he play something, Daddy?” David asked.

“Of course,” Solly replied. “Toe, laat ons hoor.”

The man grinned widely, beaming at them. He took a breath, and strummed the first chord, pressing the guitar against his chest, but Solly pulled a nearby chair closer.

“Sit,” he told the man. “By the way, wat's jou naam?”

“Klaas, Baas,” he answered, still hesitating about sitting on the chair. “Ek is Klaas van Rooyen, van die Plaas Koelfontein.”

“Nou ja, Klaas, speel. Laat ons hoor.”

Klaas sat down, shifted the guitar in his lap, and began playing. It was an up-tempo number, typical of the boermusiek style. Kadoom-chic, kadoom-chic went the beat. Klaas tilted his head back and hollered in a nasal voice.

“Wit brood en jam, wit brood en jam ..!”

C major, G 7<sup>th</sup>, and back to C major.

“Lita, o, Lita, kom eet tog saam met my ...”

By now the few people in the store had ambled over and were watching Klaas play, smiles on their faces.

“O, wit brood en jam, wit brood en jam ..!”



David realised there was something else in the smiling faces. It was as though they were watching a performing monkey. David wondered whether Klaas was aware of this. If he was, he didn't show it.

“Lita, o, Lita ... Jy het die pot, en ek het die lepel ...”

There was a roar of approval from the small audience, and Klaas let out a naughty cackle. David didn't see what was so funny.

“Wit brood en jam, o, wit brood en jam ..!”

The song went on its bumpy way, and then came the last chord, some snazzy augmented arrangement that would have been at home in any jazz number.

“Wat se liedjie is daardie?” Solly asked. “Ek ken hom nie.”

“Dis my eie liedjie, Baas,” Klaas replied.

“Jou eie liedjie ..!” Solly exclaimed, surprised.

David took the words in. This was amazing, that you could make up your own songs, and have people enjoy them.

“Dan is jy mos 'n talentvolle kêrel, Klaas,” Solly said.

“Ooeeee ..!” Klaas laughed in a high voice, clearly delighted at the praise.

When he laughed he displayed a big pink mouth without teeth. He beamed at the people around him. Then he stood up.

“Hoe weet jy wat die chords is?” David asked.

Klaas sat down again and formed the A major chord.

“Hierdie is A,” Klaas informed David. “En hierdie is B.”

David watched as Klaas played the chords.

“So daar is sewe chords?” David asked. “A, B, C, D, E, F en G?”

“Dis hy,” Klaas replied. “Saam met die minors, en so aan.”

“Miners?”

Klaas formed A minor and strummed the strings.

“Ek hou van daai chord,” David declared.

“Dis A minor,” Klaas told him. “Hier, laat Kleinbaas probeer.”

Klaas got up and handed David the guitar. David sat down, the guitar in his lap. His fingers were clumsy, and he didn’t know how to form any chords. Klaas took his fingers and placed them in the right places. David strummed. It was awful.

David beamed from ear to ear.

“A minor ..!” he grinned.

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After that David’s nagging was relentless. He wanted a guitar. Please, could he get a guitar. Please, please, please. He nearly drove Solly mad.

David was small for his age, but what he lacked in bulk, he more than made up for in tenacity. Like Solly, he was a pretty nifty sportsman and did well on the tennis court, running down every ball like a terrier. Eventually his persistence paid off.

Solly stood in the showroom of Western Furniture, his hands on his hips, a frown between his eyes. Ask him anything about the furniture in his shop, and he could tell you, but he had to admit to himself that when it came to guitars, he was in the dark. And now his youngest son wanted one.

“What do you know about guitars, Bruce?” Solly called over to his salesman.

“You play guitar, don’t you?”

“A bit. Why? Are you thinking of becoming a rock and roller?”

Bruce flapped his legs about and hunched up his shoulders, presumably mimicking Elvis Presley. Solly chuckled.

“No, David wants one,” he replied.

“If David’s really serious about music, then I suggest you get him a good guitar. You get what you pay for.”

Solly nodded his head, taking Bruce’s words in. Then he went over to his desk and sat down. He looked up the number of the agents in Cape Town and called them.

“S & G Importers. May I help you?” answered a young woman.

“Yes. This is Solly Kramer from Western Furniture. Could you put me through to Martin Schneider, please?”

“You’re going through.”

There was some static on the line, and then a booming voice.

“Schneider. How may I help?”

“Martin? Solly here. I’m looking for a guitar. For my son, David.”

“Sure. What do you have in mind?”

“Well, I’m open to suggestions. You’re the expert. Give me some ideas.”

“That depends on how much you’re willing to spend, Solly.”

“Well, he’s never played before, but he’s been driving me crazy with guitar this and guitar that. At any rate, I thought I’d give you a call ...”

“Uhm, you might want to get him a nylon-string guitar. It’s easier on the fingers, if he’s a learner.”

“Fine. What else do you have?” Solly wanted to know.

They discussed the matter for a few more minutes, Solly getting as much information as he could.

“Okay, thanks a lot,” Solly said once he had decided on a guitar for David.

One day there was a delivery at the store. It was David’s guitar. Solly was eager to get home that night to give David what he had been nagging for for so long.

When he came home he parked the car and went inside. Frances was in the kitchen, and saw the big box in his hands.

“What on earth is that?” she wanted to know.

“David’s guitar,” Solly replied with a grin.

Solly went to David’s bedroom, Frances close behind. David was lying on his bed, reading. It was Enid Blyton’s *The River of Adventure*. He looked up and saw his parents in the doorway and the large cardboard box under his father’s arm. He knew exactly what it was! He jumped up, the book forgotten. Kiki the parrot, along with Jack, Philip, Dina and Lucy-Ann, would have to wait.

“A guitar! Thank you, Daddy!”

Solly watched as David laid the box on his bed, opened it, and took out the brand new guitar. It was almost as big as his son. David sat down on the edge of the bed and put the guitar in his lap, his head bent over the new possession as he gripped the neck. He tried to make a chord, but the sound was horrendous.

“There’s a book in the box,” Solly informed David.

David peered into the box, and yes, there it was. *100 Guitar Chords*. He took it out, opened it, and looked at the photographed hands in the pictures. He copied what he saw with clumsy fingers. Solly and Frances left the room but David was hardly aware.

“I’m sure this fad will soon blow over,” Frances told Solly.

The guitar, once he had it, was somewhat of an anticlimax for David. It made an awful sound, and the strings hurt his fingertips when he tried to make a chord. Whilst the music wouldn’t come, David posed in front of the mirror, adjusting the height with which he held the guitar over his chest. He decided that really low, over his hips, was the coolest pose, and when he was red-hot on a stage somewhere, that would be the pose for him.

He practiced playing chords, and bit by bit the strings didn’t buzz too badly anymore, but he was still a way off from where he could change from one chord to another in an effortless, smooth action.

## Chapter 5

Standard 4 was nothing to write home about for David. He heard his parents speak about the arrest of senior African National Congress members at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, Johannesburg. Mauritius and Cameroon barred both South Africa and Portugal from their sea- and airports. When South Africa wanted to buy submarines from the United States, the request was a difficult one for the US, as America was aware of the unpopularity of South Africa's apartheid policies.

In the winter of that year the Australian rugby team travelled to South Africa. The test series was a draw, two matches each.

Towards the end of 1963 the South African cricket team also took the long trip 'Down Under'. The 5 match series came out even, a win a piece to each team, the other 3 matches drawn.

The Beatles had a very good year, with three big hits: "From Me to You", "She Loves You" and "I want to Hold your Hand". Cliff Richards and The Shadows also fared very well, charting with three hits of their own: "Bachelor Boy", "Summer Holiday", and "Foot Tapper" (without Cliff Richard).

David was slowly making inroads with the guitar, trying to copy the songs from the radio with limited success. Like most boys learning to play the guitar, "The House of the Rising Sun" was the first song he learnt.

Without a doubt, the most nauseating song of the year was "I Like It!" by Gerry and The Pacemakers.

“I liiiiike it... I liiiiike it ..!” yelled Gerry in his irritatingly high, apparently cockney voice.

Cor blimey, guv!

That’s what Billy Bunter and the other characters from the annuals said. *Beano* and *Hotspur* were comics from Britain. Each year a thick hardcover “annual” came out, which Worcester boys eagerly awaited.

Wotcher, mate.

Skid Solo raced to another chequered flag, Billy the Cat jumped from rooftop to rooftop, and Dennis the Menace did his best to be wilder than the Bash Street Kids. Roy of the Rovers was another favourite, scoring match-winning goals in the final seconds of each game.

David grew his hair as long as he could, which wasn’t any great length. Inevitably, his endeavours to look like a Beatle were cut short by school rules. The best David and his chums could do was to instruct the barber not to cut their fringes. However, more than one boy pushed it too far, letting his hair grow until it fell to his eyebrows. Whilst this was the desired level of hip, it was beyond what Worcester Boys Primary would tolerate, and the troublemaker would have to go back to the barber. A few unlucky lads were made to sit on top of their desks while their teacher hacked off the offending fringe with a pair of blunt paper scissors.

The last year of David’s primary school was spent with Mr. Ellis, a quiet, gentle man, except when it came to the weekly spelling tests which happened every Friday, without fail. There would be ten questions, and only two were allowed to be wrong. If you tried to change a letter while writing the word, it counted as an error. Three mistakes,

and you got cuts. The boys who failed the test had to line up at the front, and bend over when their turn came. The cane would come swishing down, delivering a tremendous whack!

Mr. Ellis's eldest son, Johan, would later become a Springbok water-skier. His other son, Flippie, turned out to be a very good squash player.

Mr. Ellis was also a part-time photographer, and many people in Worcester went to his studio in High Street to get their portraits done. It was opposite the library where David and his friends discovered *The Secret Seven*, *The Famous Five*, *the Castle of Adventure*, and the Afrikaans stories about Trompie, and Sias en Mias.

Failing the weekly spelling tests was bad, but even worse were the constant threats from the Afrikaans students. Every morning before school the boys would gather in the playground. The English kids would make a line, holding hands, as would the Afrikaans. Then, yelling and screaming, the two lines would run straight at one another. Almost every time the English line would break. The Afrikaans kids were huge, especially the ones in the special box. If you failed three times, you went to the special box. They were a group of separate classrooms, more like the offices found at a construction site. Some of the students were as old as fifteen, and they were nothing but raw power. David was very wary of them.

Worcester was a very Afrikaans town. Worcester High was to be the English-medium school and Montana the Afrikaans equivalent. However, of the six matric classes at Worcester High, five were in fact Afrikaans-medium.

“Jy, jou fokken rooinek ..!” someone would call, and one would have to run for one's life.



The Nobel laureate JM Coetzee makes the following remark about growing up in Worcester in his memoir, *Boyhood – Scenes from Provincial Life* (p. 69):

What he hates most about Worcester, what most makes him want to escape, is the rage and resentment that he senses crackling through the Afrikaans boys. He fears and loathes the hulking, barefoot Afrikaans boys in their tight short trousers, particularly the older boys, who, given half a chance, will take you off to some place in the veld and violate you in ways he has heard leeringly alluded to – *borsel* you, for instance, which as far as he can make out means pulling down your pants and brushing shoe-polish into your balls (but why balls? Why shoe-polish?) and sending you home through the streets half-naked and blubbering.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Ma ...!”

“What?” Frances Kramer replied from one of the other rooms.

“Can I go to the swimming pool?”

David was walking down the passage, and now he stood in the doorway of the bedroom. The cupboard doors were open so his mother could put away freshly-ironed shirts. She turned to face David.

“Have you done your homework?”

“Yes.”

“Ok, then.”

“Thanks.”

“Be home by five ...” she called after his disappearing back. “And take one of the old towels.”

David pulled his bicycle away from where it leaned at a crooked angle against the wall, next to the garage. He cycled past the park, then over the bridge which crossed the

railway line. At the top he could see the drive-in theatre to his left, rows and rows of humps with poles which looked like parking meters, and the big white screen. Soon he was peddling alongside the tracks.

This was where the men who worked for the South African Railways and Harbours lived, Hospital Park. The pavements were wide, but with no grass or flora, just big, red-brown rocks the size of one's fist. All the houses were exactly the same. The fences were made of wire and pipe, with only an occasional flower trying to add some warmth to the bleak place. The weeds, on the other hand, flourished, tall, thin and dry, which one had to grab with both hands to pull out of the ground.

Outside one of the houses he saw an orange Railways bakkie parked in the driveway. The occupant was probably a foreman who worked far away from home. One benefit was that he could use a Railways pick-up truck to commute between home and work. After his few days off, he would return to the middle of nowhere, black workers sitting in the back of the bakkie as they drove deep into the scorched semi desert.

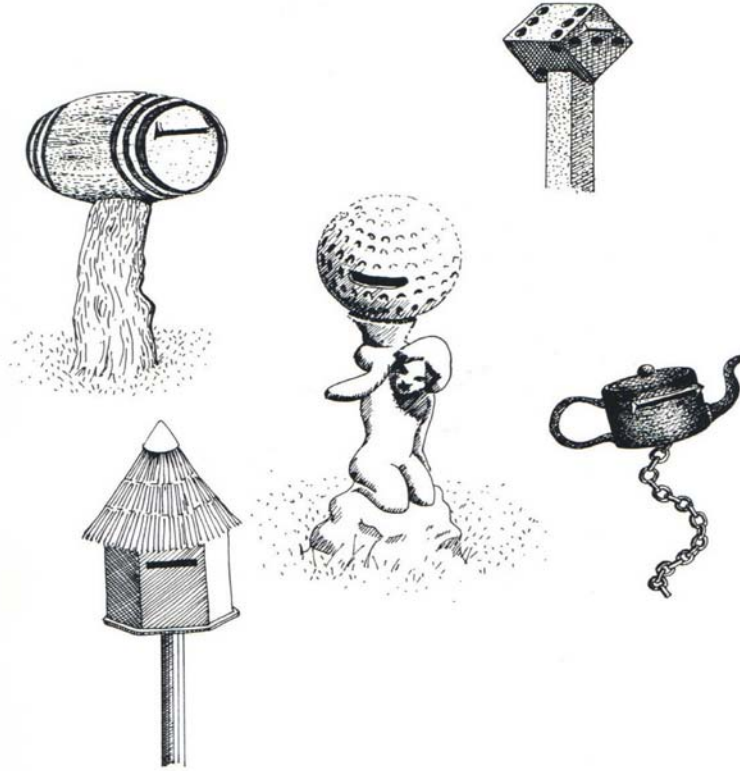
As David cycled, shunters were moving train coaches to his right. A locomotive slowly chugged up and down, white steam billowing from its funnel as it worked hard. The men were arranging the coaches, making up the train. One of them was hanging from the side of a coach as it free-wheeled. It had been given a nudge by the locomotive. Then with a crash it collided with the other coach. The man hanging from the side rocked a bit, but he didn't fall off. He must be as strong as an ox, David thought. Then the shunter jumped off fleet-footed and ducked between the two coaches, completing the coupling. Later, the steam locomotives would be replaced by sleek diesel brutes, but when David was still a boy he could sometimes hear the sound of the steam being released in huge

whooshing blasts from the black old faithfuls. The crashing of the coaches being strung together would travel for miles in the quiet summer air at night.

Ahead lay a steep hill. He had to get up and stand on the pedals, grimacing as he pulled the handlebars with all his might and mashed the pedals. In those days very few bicycles had gears, most were single-speed. On the hill slopes were row after row of small, identical houses on either side of the road. This was Station Hill. Each house had a tiny garden in front. One of them had an open front door and David caught a glimpse of a small gloomy kitchen. He assumed the table had four matching chairs, also with chrome legs. There would be a stainless steel strip that ran around the table top to disguise the fact it was made of cheap pressed wood. The wood pattern would be irregular grey shapes, with occasional red and yellow patches thrown in for variation. This set could well have been purchased from Western Furniture where David's father worked.

But what really caught David's attention was the post box in front of the house. It was a length of chain which miraculously stood erect, twirling upwards, with a golf ball, the size of a soccer ball, at the top. In the golf ball was a slit, through which the postman was to slip mail. David had to stop and take a closer look.

He pulled the brakes, came to a halt, and leaned the bike against the curb. He walked over to the house and stood at the wire fence, peering at the post box. He tried to see how it was that the chain could stay upright by itself.



Drawing by David Kramer (p. 56 *Short Back and Sides*)

A man came to the doorway of the house. The stranger was wearing baggy grey pants with pleats at the belt. His short-sleeved shirt was also oversized. His hair was cut very short at the sides. The kids in Worcester mockingly referred to this haircut as “whitewalls,” but only when they were sure no adult was in hearing distance. David assumed that his name was something like Piet van der Vyver. Or maybe Koos Malan.

“Middag, Oom,” he greeted, automatically speaking in Afrikaans. “Hoe staan hierdie ketting so vanself op?”

The man chuckled. Die klein rooinek praat nogals goed Afrikaans, he thought to himself, hands in the pockets of his trousers.

“Dis ’n secret,” he grinned.

The man looked a lot like the “Ruiter in Swart”, a cowboy who featured in photo-comic books which David sometimes paged through at Pandora restaurant next to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century bioscope. Ben was his name. He went from town to town on his black stallion, Satan. He wore only black, from head to toe, hence his name. He always stuck out his lower jaw when he punched a man, and it only took one jab before the guy was lights out. Even when he fought a whole gang of ruffians, his wide-rimmed black hat never came off. The way his jaw protruded showed that he was manly, not only in the way he could throw a knife into a tree twenty paces away, but also in a dependable, honest manner. It was no wonder that in each adventure a girl would go mad for him. But the “Ruiter in Swart” never stayed. He was restless, a loner. It would be with a very serious look in his eyes that he would tell the beautiful girl he had to leave because the road called his name. He looked into the distance, his eyes slits as though the sunlight was very bright. That’s what this man standing in the doorway of the small house looked like to David.

He knew that he was not going to get any more information out of the man, so he let it go.

“Totsiens, Oom,” he greeted.

The man nodded his head, and David went back to his bicycle. It was a struggle to get going again up the steep slope. David pushed himself forward, but the first two attempts failed. He didn’t have enough momentum. The third time he made it. He gripped the handlebars tightly and pulled. He ducked his right shoulder down, trying to get the right pedal to turn, then the left, and bit by bit he moved forward.

A few more pedal turns and he was at the crest of the hill. Now he was in another world. Here the pavements were neatly trimmed grass, the houses bigger and more

modern. It would be a stretch to call them beautiful. It seemed to David that everything in Worcester, houses included, ascribed to the type of kitsch that was particular to South Africa. David liked the wide windows and the lush green lawns of the house he was passing, but did they have to do that to the number of the house? It was lot 32, with the 2 slightly lower than the 3. From inside the house came the faint sound of a radio. South Africa had no television service, so radio was the only entertainment. Most people were glued to the serials beamed out by Springbok Radio. A commercial break was playing.

“Koue-water Omo...” David heard as he passed the house.

At this time of the afternoon it was “Die Geheim van Nantes” which entertained the audience.

After he reached the top, it was downhill, and soon he was flying down. He briefly caught sight of the highest diving board at the swimming pool. Apparently there was only one other diving board in South Africa that was as high as this monster. In Pretoria, the Worcester children told one another.

David left his bicycle in the rack without locking it. That wasn't necessary in Worcester. There was a trellis which covered the path leading up to the entrance of the swimming pool. Purple bougainvillea twisted around the wooden beams of the structure, making shade. He paid his two and a half cents, grabbed his paper ticket which the lady had torn in half, and turned right, into the boys's changing rooms.

He changed, and ran out to where his friends always hung out. Their place was close to the flat slab of cement which was the tennis court. Here they could play cricket and be as far away from the swimming pool superintendent, Mr. Rumbles, as possible. On the other side of the pool was the tuck shop.

David recognised his friends's towels, abandoned by his mates who were already in the water, swimming. He dropped his towel and ran over to the water's edge, the cement hot under his feet. Around him was that particular swimming pool smell: chlorine, and water drying on cement. His mates were in the shallow end, yelling as they played aan-aan.



The swimming pool at Worcester. Photograph: Etiennedup  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/8270787@N07/942725080/in/pool-worcester/>

Behind the diving boards is the entrance. To the left are the boys's changing rooms and to the right the girls's. Next to the girls's changing rooms is the house where the superintendent lives. In those days it was Mr. Rumbles.

Note the boy standing on the highest diving board – he has probably been standing there for quite a while, trying to pluck up the courage to jump off. Behind the photographer was the pump house, as well as a small zoo.

The game moved from the pool to the small zoo behind the pump-house. A huge tortoise was slowly lumbering about.

This was the place where boys and girls met up for steamy kisses. At that moment a couple were lying on a towel a few metres away in an embrace, the boy lying over the girl, their lips locked. David vaguely knew the girl. Her name was something Van Der Spuy.

“I saw this weird post box,” he informed his friends. “It was a golf ball, standing upright on a chain.”

“Where?”

“Coming up Station Hill,” David replied, tipping his head to one side to indicate the direction where the post box was.

“Those Nats are mad,” another of the boys declared to general agreement.

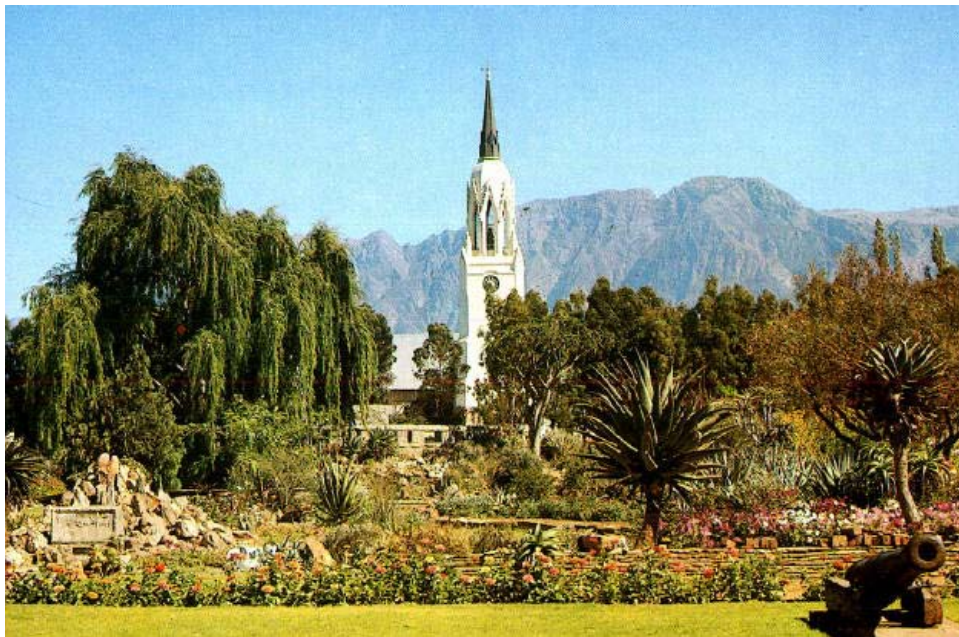
Most of the Station Hill men were Nats. They voted for the National Party and stood by their government, no matter what. In fact, the notion of questioning was seen as disloyal. Disloyal to your country and disloyal to your God. Questioning was akin to the original sin. It just wasn't done.

The order at the time was that everything was ruled by God, and that the National Party government was doing God's work. Every town in South Africa had a street called Church Street, where the Dutch Reformed church could be found. The implication was that this church, the church of the National Party, was the true church. Other religions such as the Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, Jews, and so on, were grudgingly tolerated. In the “proper” church it went without saying that sermons were delivered in Afrikaans.

The Dutch Reformed church in Worcester was situated across from Memorial Park, a city block of lawn with a pond in the middle where one can take a stroll, maybe



stop to look at the fat red fish slowly gliding about, or the big round lily leaves floating on the dark water. Around the pond the weeping willows were green and lush, and the succulent shrubs typical to Worcester thrived. Along the perimeter of the park, alongside the streets, were eucalyptus trees, their barks a yellow-white colour, strips of it sometimes peeling off. The park's lawn was green, but during the harsh dry summers it changed, sometimes becoming yellowish and threadbare.



Garden of Remembrance and Dutch Reformed Church, Worcester, from High Street. Photo by André Dumas.  
<http://www.pbase.com/dewas/image/71004463>

David had many questions about the things he heard at school from his schoolmates.

“What’s the Ossewa Brandwag, Daddy?” he asked one evening when they were all in the living room.

Solly and Frances sat on the couch and John lay on the carpeted floor, drawing in a book. David sat in one of the big chairs.

“It’s a political movement,” Solly replied.

“What’s a political movement?” David wanted to know.

Solly thought for a while.

“Do you know about elections?”

“Yes.”

Just recently there had been elections in Worcester. Vote in the middle – Vote for Siddle, had been one of the slogans.

“In any case, where did you hear about this nonsense?” Frances interrupted, a frown between her eyes.

“At school.”

One of the Afrikaans kids had chased David around the school yard. David had ducked left and right, so the boy had been unable to grab hold of him. There was a large potted fern in front of the school building, and David ran behind it. Now he and his tormenter faced one another. When the boy moved left, David moved right. It was a stalemate.

“Die Ossewa Brandwag sal jou nog kry ..!” the boy hissed.

David frowned.

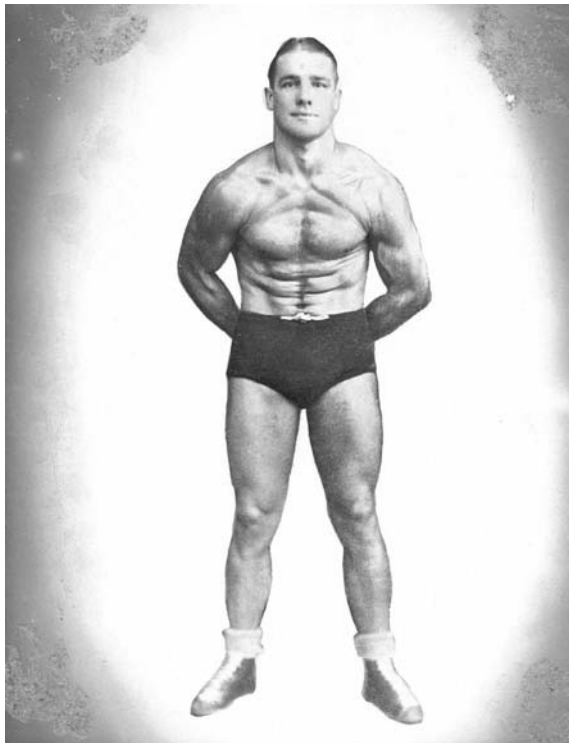
“Wat is die Ossewa Brandwag?” he asked.

The Afrikaans boy wasn’t exactly sure himself, so he ignored the question. Instead he moved to his right, around the fern, David sidestepping him.

“Robey Leibbrandt was hul leier.”

“Wie is Robey Leibbrandt?”

“Jy’s darem fokken stupid ..!” the boy snarled to cover up the fact that he didn’t know.



Robey Leibbrandt.

<http://thm-a02.yimg.com/image/e1d2ee3d6f69b164>

Then the bell rang for the end of break, and the two made their way to their respective lines with their classmates. It was the unwritten law that once the bell had rung, all hostilities were off.

“It’s a far-right political movement,” Solly tried to explain now, but he could see David’s eyes begin to glaze over.

“They agreed with the Nazis,” Solly told David.

David recoiled with shock. That was a forbidden word.

“Their leader was Robey Leibbrandt,” Solly began.

Frances put her magazine down, and watched her husband. John stopped drawing, looking at his father, waiting for him to continue. This seemed like something grown-up.

“Robey Leibbrandt’s family came from Germany. He was a strong chap, and pretty good at boxing,” Solly began telling them. “Everyone thinks he would have won the gold medal at the Olympics.”

Solly grinned at Frances.

“But he had apparently forgotten about the final bout. He didn’t arrive for the match and was disqualified.”

“Not the sharpest tool in the shed,” Frances observed.

“No,” Solly agreed. “At any rate, he joined the Ossewa Brandwacht and came back to South Africa in a submarine ...”

“A submarine..?!” John exclaimed, not believing his ears.

“Lucky they didn’t let Robey drive, otherwise they would have gotten lost,” Frances observed dryly, and Solly laughed out loud.

“Why did he come in a submarine?” John asked, his drawing forgotten.

“How did he get out?” David wanted to know.

This was a great story!

“At any rate, the Germans dropped him off, along the coast of South-West Africa, and he rowed ashore in a rubber dingy. He had some money and a radio.”

“What was he going to do?” Frances asked with a naughty giggle. “Start a radio station?”

“How does the submarine know where it’s going?” John wondered.

Solly continued.

“He was going to assassinate Smuts. That would be the sign for all his followers to rise up against the Smuts government. But he got caught.”

“How does the submarine know where it’s going?” John insisted.

The next day at school David watched his Afrikaans schoolmate in the school yard. He wondered whether this boy was also a member of the Ossewa Brandwag, a sort of Nazi?

Putting it out of his mind, he went over to the side gate, opposite the Gereformeerde Kerk. Cowboy was there, as usual during the school breaks, with his big delivery tricycle, filled with ice creams. On the side of the box was a large sticker which read “Walls Ice Cream”.

“Cowboy!” David called, and the man grinned at him.

“What can I give you today?”

“Let me look.”

It was always the same. The kids always wanted to clamber onto the wheel of the tricycle and peer into the box, staring at the different ice creams.

“A wafer,” David eventually decided.

Cowboy reached in and took out the treat, vanilla ice cream between two strips of wafer cake. David handed over his money.

“Thanks, Cowboy,” David mumbled, tearing at the wrapper.

Cowboy had a transistor radio which hung from the side of his tricycle. A woman was talking and laughing. David didn’t understand what she was saying. It was Radio Xhosa. As David listened, he noticed once more that Cowboy was a pretty sharp dresser

from his shoes to his hat. Music began playing. He and his friends all called it gumboot music because they had seen short reels at the movies of black miners, wearing hardhats and gumboots. The men would be standing next to one another in a line. They would step forward and backwards, then duck and slap the sides of their gumboots, in time to the music. Some of the gumboots had a wire circle around the ankle, which held dozens of bottle tops. Each bottle top had a hole through the centre and threaded onto the wire. The rows of wire around the gumboots made a percussive sound as the dancers stamped their feet. Then, the men would stand up straight and kick their legs high in the air, as high as their heads.

Often one of them would sing something and the others would reply. David loved it, even though he didn't understand the words.

Cowboy was known to many children in Worcester, and he became the subject of a song on David's album *Delicious Monster*.

### **Cowboy (1982)**

He wore those Florsheim shoes and turn-ups  
He was the coolest Kwezi cat  
With those mirror-like sunglasses  
And a big white Stetson hat  
That's why we called him Cowboy  
He pedalled the icecream cart  
And he sang us songs like Moon River  
Until we knew all the words by heart  
He sold us wafers  
And he told us jokes  
We laughed at his Kwezi style  
We were suckers for his stories  
That he spun from behind his smile  
The saddle was his bongo drum  
The sidewalk was his stage  
He'd show us the latest dance steps

When marabi was the rage  
And then one day when the school bell rang  
Cowboy just wasn't there  
He disappeared just like that  
And no-one turned a hair.



Drawing by David Kramer (p. 39 *Short Back and Sides*)

The song is rather vacuous, but the bite comes at the end, when it tells that Cowboy suddenly disappeared. Even though Cowboy had not been arrested by the security police, the event of Cowboy getting another job and not coming to the school anymore had obviously stayed in David's mind, and resurfaced as inspiration for the political barb at the end of the song. Furthermore, there is also a reprimand to David's

own audience, that they weren't in the least perturbed, or not perturbed enough to become active, by the disappearance of political activists.

But thoughts like these were still in the future. Ice cream in hand, David made his way back to the front of the school where his class always played. He stood near the flagpole, enjoying his treat. The material at the top lay limp, no breeze to move it. The children had to draw the flag in their schoolbooks. Orange at the top, white in the middle, and blue at the bottom. Oranje, blanje, blou: die meide hou van jou, the kids sang when they chased one another around in the school yard. And in the white strip there were three more flags: a small British Union flag, an Orange Free State Vierkleur, and to the right, the Transvaal Vierkleur.



## Chapter 6

David and John clambered into the back seat of the car, eager to get going. Frances leaned over her seat to make sure the boys had shut the doors properly. Solly turned the key and the car started. He threw his arm over the back of Frances's seat and turned around, craning his neck as he looked out through the rear window, and reversed the car slowly out of the yard.

Worcester was usually quiet, but Sundays were especially so. Nothing moved. Virtually no cars were on the streets. If a mother called a child to come in from the heat to have lunch, her voice easily travelled across two or even three houses. It was rare to see children chasing one another. No balls were kicked. Even the leaves in the trees hung limp, motionless, only occasionally daring to rustle ever so slightly. Solly drove through the deserted streets of Worcester, down the hill towards High Street, and past Drostdy High School. Near the coloured part of town he turned right. Now they were in the veld, brown-green grass struggling in the South African heat, stubborn little bushes, and in the distance clumps of trees, mostly eucalypts.

The car windows were down so the Kramers could get some relief from the stifling heat. They passed the golf club on their left, and after a few minutes some horse paddocks on their right. A group of people was riding, moving up and down, up and down as the horses cantered. There was a flash of light as sunlight reflected off a bridle, and then the car had passed. David turned around so he could watch the riders through the rear window. The grass was green, but yellowing in places, and patches of orange-

brown soil showed through. There were a few wispy clouds in the sky, far away. The sky itself was a very pale blue, the colour washed out by the heat. Far away were mountains, a jagged thin line on the horizon. It was much too far away to see any detail. The scene gave David the impression of openness and great distances, of an old, old place.

There were ancient bushman paintings on some of the rock walls deep in the mountains. David wondered what other secrets lay in this quiet landscape. Was there a wagon, fallen down a ravine, the coach on its back, broken wheels to the uncaring sky? Would he stumble over the skeletons of the horses and driver? Perhaps there were wooden crates, cracked open, their contents long rotten away? Or maybe a large heavy metal container, the government's seal on it, opened by the force of the fall to reveal handfuls and handfuls of gold coins, worth millions and millions of rands?

“Here's the bridge,” Solly warned.

David and John leaned forward to look. It spanned the Breede River, and was very long.

“I don't trust this bridge,” Solly warned the boys. “I'm sure it's going to collapse today.”

The boys knew he was only joking, but still a chill gripped them.

“No ..!” David yelled, clutching the back of Solly's seat.

The car hit the bridge, and the sound of the tyres changed slightly. The wheels seemed to make a buzzing sound very different to the hum of the highway. When they passed each baluster of the concrete wall next to them there was a thip-sound. Thip-thip-thip as they drove.

“Did you feel that?!” Solly cried, pretending to be alarmed.

“What?!” David wanted to know anxiously.

“I swear I felt the bridge move ...”

“No ..!”

“Yes! There! I felt it again ..!”

David looked about in alarm. Was the bridge really falling? Far below was the river, now just a narrow stream of water. Round white rocks lay everywhere. The water, when David saw it through the bridge’s balusters, was brown and swift-flowing. At the bank, where the river made a bend, reeds grew as high as a man, grey-ochre in colour. This wasn’t where David wanted to die! If they fell down here, would anyone ever find them, or would they be another secret of the flat landscape, like the wagon with the gold of David’s imagination?

Solly turned the steering wheel slightly and the car zig-zagged a bit. The boys howled out, close to crying.

“Stop that!” Frances reprimanded, clearly unnerved by her husband’s antics.

Solly laughed out loud. He put his foot down and the car sped to the other side. They raced over the edge, and the boys shouted, more with relief than exuberance. Just after the bridge was a T-junction where Solly turned left, towards Brandvlei Dam. From the intersection it was just a few hundred metres until Solly turned right, into the hills surrounding the dam. He had to cross into the other lane and the boys were always nervous about this. Maybe a car would come around the bend in front of them, hitting them head-on. But today there was no traffic and Solly made it safely across. They drove off the tarred road onto soft sand.

There was a wire fence with a gate which had been left wide open. On one of the fence posts was a sign with faded letters.

“Worcester Yacht Club,” it read.

This was where the Kramers could usually be found on Sunday afternoons.

## Chapter 7

In 1965 David was in Standard 6, his first year of high school.



<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=3401055161#!/photo.php?pid=1151974&o=all&op=1&view=all&subj=3401055161&aid=-1&id=582704752&fbid=52003664752>

The pop hits of that year were ([www.rock.co.za](http://www.rock.co.za)):

- Crying in the Chapel – Elvis Presley

- Forget Domani – Connie Francis
- Tossing and Turning – Ivy League
- Goodbye my Love – Murray Campbell
- What’s New, Pussycat? – Tom Jones
- Unchained Melody – The Righteous Brothers
- Come back, Silly Girl – The Staccatos
- Torture – Gene Rockwell
- The Carnival is Over – The Seekers
- I need You – Ricky Nelson

But David and his crowd were much too hip to be bothered with the South African charts. Instead, David diligently purchased the *New Musical Express* every Wednesday at the CNA, which was next to his father’s furniture store. David would huddle for hours over his newspaper, devouring the articles and pictures. He dreamed of getting out of Worcester, living in London. London! Even the name gave him goosebumps.

That’s where the real bands were, as far as David and his friends were concerned.

In May of 1965 the British charts (<http://www.sixtiescity.com>) had songs such as:

- Here Comes The Night - Them
- Bring It On Home To Me - The Animals
- For Your Love - The Yardbirds
- The Last Time - The Rolling Stones
- Times They Are A-Changin' - Bob Dylan
- I Can't Explain - The Who
- Subterranean Homesick Blues - Bob Dylan.

*Those* were the songs that David’s crew were into, the heavier stuff, and they were not easily found in South Africa. One might be lucky to catch one on the radio, but if one were really serious about music, one had to splash out and buy the albums. And

that sometimes entailed a trip to Cape Town to the big record stores. A popular album was Bob Dylan's *Freewheelin'*, as well as *Help!* by The Beatles, with songs such as "Yesterday", "You've got to Hide your Love away", and "Ticket to Ride".

David strummed again, nodding his head to himself. He was getting it. James Munro would always be a much better guitarist than him, but at least David could play a few songs.

One of the local bands was The Offbeats. David had seen them a few times, wishing with all his heart that he could be in a group like that. They consisted of Chris Munro on lead guitar, Robert Honeysett on rhythm guitar, John (Teddy) Peltret as the drummer, and bass was played by David Smith. The Offbeats played cover songs, and some of their Beatles versions were quite good. Their bassist, David Smith had come up with the name. "The Offbeats" was the name of the second track off an album called *Beat Girl*, which was the soundtrack to a beatnik type film which had been banned in South Africa. One wonders how he had discovered this album?

David heard the doorbell ring. Frances went to answer it.

"Hello, Mrs. Kramer. Is David here?" David heard.

It was Donny Andrews.

"Hello, Donny," Frances answered. "He's in his room."

Donny went through to David's room. He was sitting on his bed with his guitar in his lap. On the table where David did his homework, Donny noticed an open sketch book. He saw that David's drawing was rather good. Like John, David's older brother, art was a big love in his life. He was thrilled to be able to take it as a subject at school.

"Howzit," Donny grinned.

“Howzit.”

“You feel like doing something?”

“Okay,” David replied.

Then he remembered something.

“Hey, check here,” he said excitedly, getting to his feet.

He opened his cupboard, took something out and put it on his head, tugging it this way and that. He turned around with a flourish.

“Check here!” he said proudly.

Donny gasped with shock. It was a Beatles wig.

“Jis, it checks nice ..!” Donny exclaimed.

David strode over to the bed, picked up the guitar and struck a pose. Donny looked at his friend in wonderment. David was one of the cool guys at school. He always knew about the newest records, songs that the Worcester kids had never heard about, and he was hip to the latest fashions. He was one of the few people in town who had a pair of boots with pointed toes. The only chink was the short hair, but now with this Beatles wig he looked just like a pop star! No wonder the girls liked him.

David played a chord. F major.

“Yesterday,” David sang with a huge grin.

E minor 7<sup>th</sup>.

“All my troubles seemed so far away.”

A 7<sup>th</sup>. D minor.

He played the whole song, and the boys grinned at one another. Then Donny pointed to the door with his chin.



“Let’s go outside,” he suggested.

David put the guitar back in its cardboard box and slid it under his bed. They went outside, got on their bikes and set off towards Hospital Dam.

The water was flat, the blue sky and white clouds reflected on its surface. They stopped under the shade of a tall tree. In front of them lay the dam that supplied the water running through the old part of Worcester. On the far side of the water were clumps of reeds.

“Let’s go over there,” David said.

They set off pedalling around the dam to the reeds. They lay their bicycles down and went to investigate. The sand was powdery under their bare feet, but as they got to the reeds, it turned to mud. The reeds were grey-brown and taller than the boys.

“Check here ..!” David called.

There were oval-shaped nests hanging from the tops of the reeds, which had been woven by birds. They had openings at the bottom where the birds went in and out. David was peeping into one of the nests.

“There are eggs in this one ..!” he whispered excitedly.

Donny came over quickly to look, the reeds swaying wildly as he pushed his way through them. He stood close to David and peered into the opening, and sure enough, there they were, two small eggs, off-white with grey and blue specks.

“Don’t touch them,” David warned. “The birds will smell you.”

“I know.”

Then there came a call.

“Hey, David!”

David looked over his shoulder and saw André du Toit and Marcelle Steyn. Both boys were on their bicycles, and like David and Donny, they were also barefoot.

“Jis,” David greeted. “Waar gaan julle?”

“Ons gaan skerpioene vang,” replied André.

“Skerpioene vang?!” David gasped, shocked.

“Ja. Kom saam.”

This was unbelievable. The Afrikaans boys were going to catch scorpions. David shuddered, no doubt remembering the time the boy next door had been stung. Yet, he had to see this. The nest finders went back to their bicycles, picked them up, and rode over to André and Marcelle.

They pedalled along the dusty track. André veered off, weaving between the bushes. There was some garbage lying about. André dismounted and the others followed his example. There was an old piece of cardboard lying on the ground. It had once been a cardboard box, but the months in the sun and rain had flattened it. André picked it up gingerly, peering underneath. Nothing.

“Daar’s nog een daarso,” Marcelle pointed out.

“Waar?”

“Daar.”

André looked at where Marcelle was pointing and saw another piece of cardboard. They went over and watched as André lifted this one as well. Once again: nothing. Just a lizard that slithered away quickly, disappearing in the undergrowth. André made a grab for it, but it was too fast. Surreptitiously, Donny softly stroked his toe over David’s bare foot, and David jumped with fright, lifting his feet high, shouting.

Donny laughed, and the other boys realised what he had done. David also chuckled, but his eyes scanned the ground around him nervously.

“Oh, you doos,” he playfully scolded.

They kept looking, and when Marcelle pulled away an old newspaper, he shouted excitedly.

“Hier’s een ..!”

The boys pushed against one another to look. There it was: pale orange, about four inches long. There seemed to be a glassiness about its body. André took an old cigarette packet from his pants pocket, Paul Revere 20. He opened the box, then stepped forward and crouched over the scorpion. He tapped the ground close to it with his finger, and the scorpion lifted its tail in short, angry jerks. David could see the sting, the curved point. André moved his hand behind the tail, took hold of the sting between his thumb and forefinger and lifted the scorpion up. David could not believe his eyes. André dropped the creature into the cigarette packet. It was a tight fit. He had to move the scorpion back and forth to let it slide down into the small box. Then he let go of the sting. The scorpion was not completely in the packet, and André had to be careful as he brought the lid down, shutting it. They could hear the scratching of the scorpion inside. André put the packet into his shorts pocket.

“Lekker!” he chuckled.

David shook his head with an elaborate stage-shudder.

“Thanks, but no thanks,” he said, and they laughed. “Hey, I have to go home.”

“Me too,” replied Donny.

David cycled home. When he got back he saw a small yacht in the driveway. It was a Dabchick, just like the children sailed at the yacht club. He leaned his bicycle against the garage wall and approached the Dabchick to take a closer look. His father opened the back door and came outside. He had a grin on his face.

“I thought you’d like to have your own yacht,” he said, much to David’s surprise.

Frances joined them outside.

“Remember to be careful on that thing,” she said.

“I will, Mummy,” David promised.

Solly and Frances watched as David potted about the little boat. Solly felt great. It was wonderful to be able to buy his son an expensive gift like this.

By the end of that month David had sold the Dabchick.

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The front door slammed. David sat on the edge of his bed. He was in deep, deep trouble now. Deep, deep trouble. He put down his new electric guitar, laying it on the bed.

“David!” Solly bellowed. “Come here ..!”

David heard his father’s footsteps coming down the corridor, and turn into the kitchen. A chair was pulled out, followed by the sound of Solly sitting down. Even that sounded angry. Deep trouble.

“David ..!” Solly shouted impatiently.

Like a man being led to the gallows, David trod his weary way to the kitchen. The house was silent. John had disappeared somewhere, probably to his room. Far enough to be out of the storm’s range but close enough to enjoy the devastation. When David got to

the kitchen, Solly and Frances were waiting for him. Frances stood with her arms folded.

Solly was sitting at the kitchen table.

“What’s this I hear about you selling the boat?” Solly charged.

David didn’t reply. What was there to say?

“I’m talking to you, young man ...”

David shrugged his shoulders.

“I wanted a guitar ...”

“A *guitar*?!”

“Yes ...”

“You’ve got a guitar!” Solly bellowed. “And who the hell told you you could sell the boat?!”

He got to his feet, the chair making a scraping sound as it was pushed back.

“Solly...,” Frances tried to calm him.

“Now you listen to me, young man, you’re going back to that buddy of yours, and you’re going to get back that boat ...”

“But, Daddy ...”

“No buts.”

Now things were really going south for David.

“I don’t want a boat! I want a guitar!” he tried to explain.

“Who do you think you are? John Lennon? You’re taking back the boat!”

David took a deep breath and dug his heels in.

“But it was *my* boat. And if I wanted to sell it, I could ...”

Solly’s face went even darker.

“What?!”

“You gave it to me. It was mine,” David hurriedly pointed out as he tried to make his case. “I could do what I wanted with it.”

Solly’s face was a dangerous shade of red. He took a breath, but David quickly continued.

“And I got exactly what you paid for it. We didn’t lose any money.”

David watched his father’s face contort. Solly frowned as he digested this information.

“I’m grateful for the gift, Daddy, but I would rather have a guitar.”

Solly bit his lip. His eyes bored into David’s. It was dead quiet. Outside a car drove past the house. Solly continued glaring at his youngest son. David squirmed.

“But you have a guitar,” Solly eventually repeated.

“This is an electric guitar.”

“An electric guitar?!”

“Yes ...”

“And do you think you’re going to make all that damn noise here day and night?”

David shrugged his shoulders. He was smart enough to know this was a rhetorical question, and to answer it would only enrage his father more.

Suddenly David’s luck changed. From the neighbour’s house came the strains of the Beatles singing their current hit.

“She’s got a ticket to rah-heed ...”

“I can play that song,” David pointed out, laying his credentials as a guitarist on the table.

Solly shot Frances a glance. She shrugged slightly and did something with her eyebrows which could have meant anything. But it was clear that this made an impression on his parents.

“Wait,” he said.

He dashed to his room and picked up the offending guitar. He ran back to the kitchen, listened to the music coming from over the fence and after a few bars, he began to strum along. He had to look at the neck to see where his fingers were going because the first chord was a bit tricky, F#minor. A ticket to - Dmajor - rah-heed ...

The electric guitar made a tinny sound, but his parents could hear that he indeed could play this tune. When the song ended David looked at them, waiting for their response.

“Well,” Solly muttered, still irked, but clearly proud of his son.

He looked at Frances. Let her say something.

“If this is what you want, David,” she began.

“Oh, yes!” David affirmed.

Frances nodded her head slightly, but she wasn’t finished.

“The moment you don’t do your homework, that guitar goes,” she threatened.

David grinned widely.

“I’ll do my homework,” he promised, mentally crossing his fingers - he had done absolutely no homework yet today.

“You have to study. You’ll never get anywhere with this music nonsense,” Frances warned.

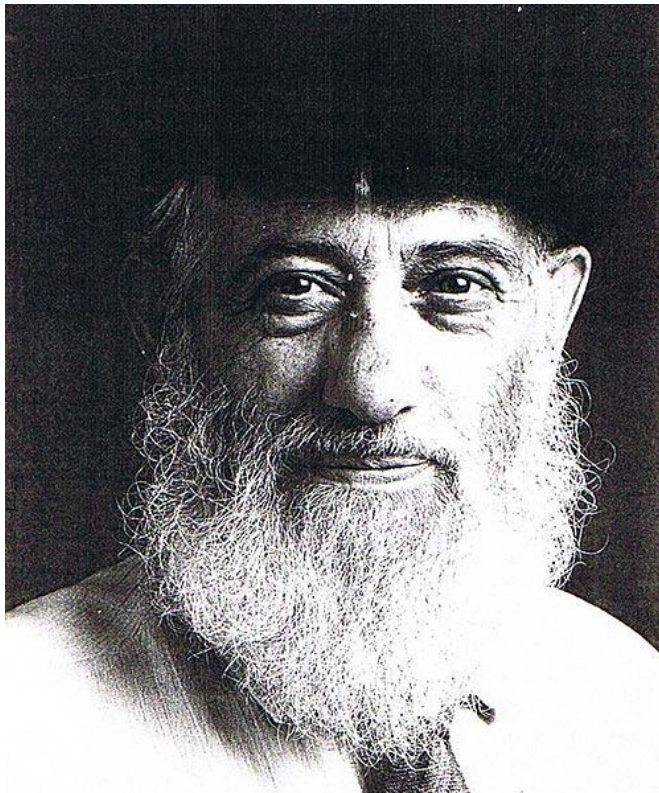


This is David's playing a nylon-stringed "Spanish" guitar, easier to play for beginners (steel strings hurt the fingers of the hand forming the chords). (p.37 *Short Back & Sides*)



## Chapter 8

David had a few music lessons from Cromwell Everson, a Worcester musician who wrote the first Afrikaans opera, *Klutaimnestra*, which consisted of four acts. His other works include an incomplete symphony, a piano suite, five sonatas, a trio, a set of inventions, four song-cycles, as well as miscellaneous movements for the piano, guitar, and string quartet.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Cromwell\\_Everson\\_000.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Cromwell_Everson_000.jpg)

However, David learnt most of his craft from his friends.

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He leaned over his guitar, closer to James Munro. James was home from the army for a weekend, his hair very short. David frowned as he watched James's fingers on the fretboard. He looked down at his own hand and moved his fingers.

"The next string," James said. "Your little finger."

David moved his little finger and strummed the strings lightly. It sounded okay. He was getting better. At least the strings weren't buzzing anymore.

"There you go," James praised. "C 7th."

David and James played a few more songs, David singing in his raspy voice. A singer, he was not. But then again, neither was Dylan.

"Okay, I've got to go home. I've got to do my homework," David sighed.

Munro walked with David to the front door.

"Okay, check you," Munro greeted.

"Check you."

Walking home with his guitar, David was floating. He had been accepted into Worcester's coolest band, The Offbeats.

He and Donny had been playing in a band called The Creeps. Donny had a homemade electric guitar which he painted a very bright orange. But, when James Munro finished high school and had to enter the army, there was a vacant spot for a guitarist in The Offbeats. David auditioned and was accepted. Auditioned is perhaps too weighty a word. He offered his services, saying he had an electric guitar, and as there weren't really any other guitarists in Worcester, he was accepted into the band.

He was only fourteen and the other guys were much older than him. They had been playing together for quite a while so there was already a camaraderie within the

group. They had in-jokes and were quite comfortable with one another. David tried hard to fit in but he didn't have to worry, because they were a friendly bunch.

It may be said that The Offbeats realised that whatever David lacked in musicianship, he more than made up for it with the style he brought to the group. He was good-looking and the girls adored him. He was also very trendy, from his Chelsea boots up to the Beatles wig he wore when they played parties.

The Offbeats had quite a reputation. They had even made it to the finals of the Battle of the Bands at The Luxurama movie theatre in Cape Town! Their equipment was pretty slick too, much of it having been made by Alex Munro, their genius sometimes-drummer/technician. At other times Ian Walters sat down behind the drums. The other members were Teddy Peltret and Robert Honeysett, whose father was Worcester's fire chief.

They were invited to play at local parties, which were very popular in the 60's. Discotheques had yet to be invented. Some of the biggest parties The Offbeats played were for Dr. Domisse's daughter, Anne, and the architect Revel Fox's daughter, Grethe. Grethe Fox went on to become one of South Africa's most famous actresses, her blonde hair and wide smile giving her a fun kind of sexiness.

When The Offbeats weren't playing at parties, they were the entertainment at the Friday night debates held at Worcester Boys High. These debates were hugely popular, because, one suspects, this was one of the few times boys and the girls could get together. The air hummed with sexual electricity as each sex eyed the other, anxious for a break when they could enjoy a clinch in a darkened corner. The Offbeats played a dance track or two, but the highlight was their slow song, the so-called blues number.



This haircut was David flirting with a caning: too long, especially at the back. But it *did* mark him as extremely hip. (p.37 *Short Back & Sides*)

The Worcester of David's teenage years was one where he played cricket in the yard, carefree, and yet on the other hand he was aware of a life outside, somewhere he could escape the hideous kitsch and narrow-mindedness of his hometown. In "Just my Father's Son" David reflects on those days with a mixture of bitterness and fondness, as he refers to the town in the Boland he grew up in as

a place I couldn't wait to leave.

Although there is something disloyal about this sentiment, it was understood by many of the Worcester teenagers of the time. All the cars drove past Worcester on their way to the bright lights of Cape Town or Johannesburg. Staying in Worcester was to die. Also, it was also understood that David was referring to the narrow-mindedness of the

townspeople who were more than happy to continue with the political and social status quo as it was.

David gives insight to his mood at the time, as well as his view of the country as a whole in these lyrics also from “Just my Father’s Son”:

I grew up with Dylan and the Beatles  
And trying to sing the blues  
It was haircuts and hidings and cadets  
And sport ruled the day  
You didn’t belong singing Beach Boy songs  
If the guitar was all you could play.

Worcester in the 60’s was a place where boys would be caned if their hair length infringed on the school rules. In an effort to make men out of the boys, they had to join the cadets. On cadets day the lads had to come to school in their brown shirts and march up and down the rugby fields with a rifle. Left arms were at a military 90 degrees, the butt of the rifle pressed against the palms of their upturned hands, the barrel against their shoulders. The right arm swung briskly in time as they marched in a healthy, reassuring, masculine way.

Later in “Just My Father’s Son” David refers to the Good Hope Café, which was an actual restaurant in Worcester. Behind the Good Hope was a billiards hall where the high school kids would sometimes hang out.

Behind the Good Hope Café in High Street  
We played snooker in the afternoon  
Joking and smoking and swearing  
Just like old men in that dark saloon  
So it was rugby and religion

And traditions that die hard  
We played electric guitars in my father's garage  
And cricket out in the yard.



Photograph: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight>.

To the right of Good Hope Café was The Scala movie theatre. David would sometimes play there with The Offbeats between the serial and main feature. Their rival group, The Jets, would be over at the 20<sup>th</sup> Century cinema, next to Pandora restaurant, doing the same thing. David's life consisted of school, trying to learn the new songs for The Offbeats, and Renaye Lange.

## Chapter 9

David first saw Renaye at the swimming pool with her friends. They were diving into the water from the side of the pool, elegant arches, hands held together over their heads: very feminine, very graceful. They would pull themselves out of the water and dive in again. There was *something* about that girl, David thought as he watched surreptitiously.

The next time he saw her was late one afternoon as she was walking along Meiring Street, the trees throwing long shadows over the sidewalk. She was on the other side of the street. Her brown hair was tied up, as she was still in her school uniform. With her hair pulled back her jawline was even more elegant, her ears more delicate. The summer sun had burnt her hair a lighter shade, a lovely imbroglio of brown and tawn. She had beautiful eyes. Her skin was flawless. David felt his heart give a squeeze. There was definitely something about her.

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The water in the swimming pool twinkled. The diving boards towered up into the clear sky. The boys were sitting on their towels, their hair still wet. Further away was a line of trees through which they could see bits of houses: roofs and windows. Behind them, in the distance, blue mountains rose into a pale blue sky. The sound of coaches being shunted back and forth, slamming into one another, faintly reached the boys.

“Hey, Gaigher, who’s that girl?” David asked the boy sitting next to him.

Oratio Gaigher looked in the direction David was pointing with only a small gesture. He didn’t want to broadcast to the whole world that he was talking about her.

“Dunno,” Oratio replied.

“That’s Renaye Lange,” Raffaele Barocci informed them, munching on his Lunch Bar.

“Renaye Lange?” David asked, perking up.

“Yes,” Raffaele said, nodding his head. “I think her father owns the Coke factory.”

David set about meeting her. One Saturday night there was going to be a party, and David mentally prepared himself. He practised lines in his head, and he lay out his clothes on his bed, checking to see that it went together well. Unsatisfied, he tried a few combinations.

By the time Saturday came he was a nervous wreck. However, he needn’t have bothered, because Renaye didn’t arrive at the party. David kept his eyes riveted on the door, but she didn’t come.

“Well then, I’ll chat up some other girl,” David said to himself, rather miffed and very disappointed.

This was not as pleasureable as he had hoped, and he left the party somewhat dejected.

He was determined to forget all about the girl with the pearl-like skin. But she was all he could think about. School was spent watching his watch – he couldn’t wait for school to be over so that he could rush to the swimming pool where he might see her again.

He orchestrated his moves and eventually he was in the same room as her, then speaking to her, plying her with his charm. He walked her home, and a few blocks from



her house he reached out and took her hand. His heart was thumping. What if she snatched her hand away? What if she said something belittling? Or, heaven forbid, slapped his face?

But the beautiful Renaye did nothing, only moved her hand more comfortably in his. David was walking on air.

Soon they were meeting at dances, the swimming pool, and through the various social events that were organised. In the afternoons David would go to her house for coffee. ‘Going for coffee’ was a loose term which generally meant visiting, and often David was accompanied by a friend or two. Sometimes these visits included doing homework, or at least discussions about doing it. It was rare that any real, quality work was done.

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The dozens of glass bottles clinking by on the conveyor belt made a heck of a racket. They were distinctive Coca Cola bottles, filled with the world-famous drink, the flamboyant logo painted in white on the sides.

Through huge open doors David could see glimpses of the yard at the back of the bottling company where rows of red trucks were being loaded with cases of soft drink. He was still in his school uniform, as was Renaye. As he followed her past the rattling bottles he noticed how the workers greeted her, as though she was a visiting princess. It was obvious she was the boss’s daughter.

“Where’s my father?” Renaye asked one of the men in blue overalls.

“He’s in the yard, Miss Renaye,” the man answered.

Renaye beamed her mile-wide smile at the worker, and led David through to the yard. Once outside, they saw Mr. Lange speaking to one of the workers. He caught sight of his daughter and broke off his conversation. He also noticed she had a boy with her.

“Hello, Daddy,” she greeted. “This is David Kramer. I wanted to show him how we put the Coke in the bottles.”

“Good afternoon, Mr. Lange,” David greeted.

Louis Lange shook the offered hand and gazed into David’s eyes. Earnest youngster, he decided.

“So you’re a Kramer?” he inquired.

“Yes, Mr. Lange. My father’s Solly Kramer ...”

“Oh, so you’re Solly’s boy!”

David relaxed a bit. It was clear that his father’s name got him some mileage with Renaye’s father. Mr. Lange waved an arm.

“I see you have a camera. Are you a photographer?” he asked.

David nodded, touching the camera hanging off his shoulder.

“Yes, Mr. Lange. My brother John is more the photographer, but I also like taking the odd picture or two. I’m hoping to get some interesting shots here in the factory.”

“Well, enjoy your tour. Remember to tip your guide. Maybe a coffee at the Koffiekamer ...”

Renaye blushed a bit and David’s grin widened even more. It seemed as though he had been given the green light.

“See you later, Daddy,” Renaye said, and, grabbing David’s hand, she continued her tour of the bottling plant.

David and Renaye spoke and spoke and spoke. About everything under the sun, from politics to which pop records were cool and which ghastly. She was surprised at how well he could draw, and she knew that he would some day make his living by doing something creative. He, on the other hand, was delighted by her sharp mind, her ability to go to the core of a problem or an argument.

Of course, at first their relationship was not all smooth sailing. They were both shy, and David was somewhat of a dreamer, whereas Renaye was more pragmatic. It was also the first time for both of them to be serious about a member of the opposite sex, although their relationship was an innocent teen one. David was allowed a lengthy goodnight kiss, and that was it.

This was all new to them, and when they had their first argument, it, and the make-up that followed, was clumsy and heartbreaking in its naïvity. But bit by bit they got better at it, and soon they were fitting together rather well.

## Chapter 10

David's crew were gathered in the loft above the garage of Reverend Jones's house. This was one of their favourite haunts. They had thrown Buck Jones's younger brother, Mark "Mossie" out. He was much younger than the others and had to make way for their seniority. On the den wall hung an abstract painting of John Kramer's, very similar in style to that of Piet Mondriaan.

"Where are you going?" David asked one of the boys.

"Voortrekker Hoogte," came the reply.

There was a glum silence. In a few months's time they would finish high school. Then it was off to the army for a year.

There were so many conflicting emotions. On one hand they still felt like kids and on the other there was a cocky sense of wanting to be seen as someone responsible. They were still playing children's games, chasing one another around the swimming pool while Mr. Rumbles shouted at them not to run. Some of the boys in Worcester had begun making their own fandangled bicycles. They welded one frame on top of the other. To make a bike like this, you had to reroute the chain up to the top set of pedals. The rider perched precariously high up in the sky on the top frame. Getting on and off was pretty tricky, and if the police saw you, you were in trouble.

As David and his friends prepared for their military service, the question of ethics arose: should they register as conscientious objectors?

It was one thing to bleat the national anthem with all the other kids during assembly and important events, but it was quite another to actually die fighting for a cause you didn't believe in.

Die Stem van Suid-Afrika  
(CJ Langenhoven)

Uit die blou van onse hemel, uit die diepte van ons see,  
Oor ons ewige gebergtes waar die kranse antwoord gee.  
Deur ons ver-verlate vlaktes met die kreun van ossewa -  
Ruis die stem van ons geliefde, van ons land Suid-Afrika.

Ons sal antwoord op jou roepstem, ons sal offer wat jy vra:  
Ons sal lewe, ons sal sterwe - ons vir jou, Suid-Afrika.

David was wracked with doubt and guilt. Wasn't it wrong for him to become a conscript? While he felt it was his duty to partake in this period of military service, he knew the army was part of an apartheid government which he despised. These emotions touched him deeply and would affect his future writings, evidenced in songs such as "Dry Wine" or "Driver, Driver".

Driver, Driver (1986)

It must be nearly midnight  
And still we've not yet arrived  
At the journey's end you promised us  
When we left here at five-to-five  
You said you knew the way  
You reassured our fears  
But why is your hand sweating now  
As you try to change the gears

*Driver, Driver, Driver*  
*I'm sure that we are lost*

*Tell me why they're burning down  
The bridges we've just crossed*

I'm looking for direction  
I'm trying to speak my mind  
Some say I'll need correction  
Others say I'm just the liberal kind  
But I wonder where we're going  
And I wonder what we'll find  
Seems there's no way of knowing  
The chances we leave behind

*Driver, Driver, Driver  
I'm sure that we are lost  
Tell me why they're burning down  
The bridges we've just crossed*

Well I'm trapped in my situation  
I'm chained like a pet baboon  
I watch the dust clouds rolling  
As I sit here in my room  
Acting the repentant sinner  
Who fears impending doom  
Preaching to the converted  
On a Sunday afternoon

*Driver, Driver, Driver  
I'm sure that we are lost  
Tell me why they're burning down  
The bridges we've just crossed.*

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The boys streamed out of the school grounds, laughing and cheering. School was over for ever! They slowly made their way in groups of twos and threes, not quite sure what to do next. It was a strange sensation. After twelve years, there would be no more school. The feeling of freedom was tinged with a sense of trepidation. "Reality" was about to start.

The holidays were similar to past years, but perhaps a bit subdued as the boys ticked off the days they had left before reporting to the army.

All too soon that day came, and David joined dozens of other teens at Cape Town station. They milled about on the platform, making small talk. Parents and girlfriends were told to say their goodbyes at the station entrance, and there were many tears. A sergeant and two lance-corporals herded the conscripts together, calling their names from a list. Everything was done in Afrikaans.

Orders were barked as the recruits boarded the train with their single bag of belongings.

The journey took the rest of that day and night. David watched the landscape through the coach window. There was a white circle on each pane, about as big as a coffee cup, and in the middle was a leaping springbok. Through the logoed window the view was sparse: large open spaces. As they lumbered deep into the Karoo, the hills remained the same. The tips were hard, craggy rock, on top of a large mound of sandy slopes, the result of many, many years of erosion. They came in several shades of tan, ochre, grey and faded green. The horizon was always flat and far away, pressed down by a wide empty sky.

The train rumbled on, hour after hour, swaying and rocking. The young men chatted to those they knew and made tentative conversations with the new faces they were thrown together with. There were all types here: the braggarts, the quiet, the ugly-enough-to-scare-away-ghosts, but one thing they all had in common was the slight fear in their eyes.

As the hours passed, the sun began setting. The conscripts were given a pre-packed meal served in a cardboard bowl, along with a white plastic fork. David pulled off the round lid with a little anxiety. In the container was rice with a red-brown sauce on top. He assumed it was beef stew.

“Excuse me, I’m a vegetarian,” one of the soldiers complained.

A bombardier rooted himself before the vegetarian soldier.

“So you can’t eat this?” he asked, pointing his chin to the beef stew and rice.

The tone of his voice was considerate and caring, allowing the young intake to sigh with relief. It seemed that someone would understand his predicament. Maybe it wasn’t going to be so bad after all.

“Yes, I’m a vegetarian ...,” he began.

The bombardier stuck out a thick, muscular arm, grabbed the food from the boy’s hand, and passed it over to the conscript next to him.

“Hierso,” he said, switching to his native Afrikaans. “Komplimente van die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag. Sê dankie vir jou maatjie.”

The lad looked at the food in his hand, then at the senior officer, and finally at the unfortunate vegetarian next to him.

“I ...,” he stammered.

“Wat?” inquired the bombardier.

Everyone was staring, eyes like saucers in their heads. They knew trouble was coming.

“Nie goed genoeg vir jou nie?”

“Nee ...”



“Nee, *Bombardier*, jou klein kak!”

“Nee, *Bombardier* ..,” came the weak echo.

The bombardier bent forward, his face an inch away from the young conscript’s. His face flushed red as he worked himself into a rage.

“Ek moet op my moeë voete staan terwyl jy op jou fokken gat sit?!” he bellowed.

“Staan op!”

The recruit jumped to his feet, his eyes huge, his face white. In both hands was a tub of rice stew. The bombardier turned and glared at all present in the compartment.

“Julle almal, staan op! *Donners!*”

There was a rustle as everyone jumped to their feet. They weren’t sure what to do with the food, so they held the cardboard bowls in front of them.

“Die President het spesiaal gevra dat julle hierdie gesonde kos kry, omdat hy julle lief het, omdat hy bekommerd oor jul gesondheid is. Hierdie heerlike dis is in die President se woonhuis voorberei, deur sy liefdevolle vrou. Maar wat maak julle? Julle trek jul neuse op vir hierdie wonderlike maal!”

He turned and faced each boy, his hands on his hips. Then his voice dropped to a whisper.

“Julle is verraaiers,” he stated as though the realisation had just come to him, taking a step back in shock and disgust.

The boys began shaking their heads in denial, and one or two opened their mouths to protest.

“Ek ken ’n verraaiër wanneer ek een sien,” the bombardier informed them. “Ek is hoogs opgelei.”

He slapped his upper arm.

“Sien julle hierdie?”

He turned around so everyone could get a good look at the two chevrons sewn onto his shirt. The boys nodded their heads.

“Hierdie,” he said, slapping the chevrons again, pushing out his chest. “Is aan my toegeken deur die President. By sy huis.

“Ons was in die kombuis gewees. Die President se vrou het vir ons koffie gemaak. Met Ouma beskuit. Twee stukke.

“Hoekom twee?”

The boys were silent, too afraid to speak.

“*Hoekom twee stukke beskuit?!*” he bellowed.

“Omdat Bombardier twee strepe gekry het ..?” a voice piped.

The bombardier whirled about.

“Presies!” he called out.

His eyes were like an eagle’s as he lurched towards the boy who’d dared to speak, stopping inches away from him.

“Jy,” he declared. “Is fokken slim. Jy gaan ver kom.”

He stepped back half a pace and contemplated the figure before him.

“Het jy jou land lief?”

“Ja, Bombardier ...”

“Is jy ’n verraaier?”

“Nee, Bombardier!” came the horrified reply.

The lad stood to attention with only one arm at his side, his hand clutching the plastic fork. The other hand held the tub of food. He was unable to blink.

“Troep, jy mag sit,” came the bombardier’s permission. “Die res van julle, sak vir twintig!”

The boys stood for a few confused moments, then scrambled about finding a place to put their tubs of rice and beef stew, before they fell to the floor and began doing push-ups.

“Troep, hoeveel push-ups het die verraaiers al gedoen?” asked the bombardier.

“Ek weet nie ..,” the boy stammered from where he sat.

“Jy weet nie? Dan moet jou maatjies weer van voor af begin.”

One or two of the chaps doing push-ups craned their necks to glare red-faced at the boy sitting down. They were looks that could kill.

“Waar is die gay een?” the bombardier wanted to know.

Everyone knew that he meant the vegetarian.

“Ek is nie gay nie, Bombardier,” the boy gasped as he did his push-ups, but the bombardier ignored him.

There were sniggers, which soon turned angry.

“Moffie, hoeveel push-ups het julle al gedoen?”

There was a moment’s silence as the vegetarian tried to digest the new bit of cruelty that was flung his way. He had thought that the kid sitting down was supposed to do the counting.

“Ek weet nie, Bombardier,” he reluctantly confessed.

“Begin van voor af,” instructed the bombardier.

“Aag nee, fok ..!” someone swore angrily.

One of the boys counted out loud as they started the new set of push-ups, the others chiming in. This was a good idea.

“Een, twee, drie ...”

“Sak vir twintig” was a phrase that the conscripts were going to hear many times. But for now they gritted their teeth, hating the people who had gotten them into this mess.

Bombardier Fourie hounded them, effortlessly painting them into corners with his slippery tongue. No matter what you said, he twisted it so you came out sounding like a communist who wanted to place a bomb in the Houses of Parliament. A traitor. It was never quite clear what was being betrayed, just a vague mish-mash of disloyalty to South Africa, God, and all things good.

Mid-morning the following day the train stopped at yet another station. This time there was a commotion as the order came to disembark. The boys took their belongings and shuffled towards the doors. Bombardier Fourie was close by.

“Kom, manne,” he called enthusiastically. “Ons gaan oorlog toe! Die helfte van julle sal sterf, maar dit sal glorie aan jul families bring. Glorie, sê ek!”

The boys trembled visibly. Bombardier Fourie slapped one of the lads heartily on his slender shoulders.

“Wat is jou naam, troep?”

The conscript had trouble speaking at first, spluttering a few non-sensical syllables.

“Anton van Dyk, Bombardier,” he finally managed to answer.

“Jy moet vir my jou adres gee, Van Dyk. Ek wil persoonlik vir jou ouers vertel van jou dood. Dis die minste wat ek kan doen.”

Apparently Bombardier Fourie wasn't expecting a reply, because he moved away to make sure his charges were all there.

“Maak 'n lyn,” he ordered. “A straight streep.”

The boys shuffled their feet, not knowing what to do. Bombardier Fourie watched them for a moment, building himself up into a high rage. Then hot, furious air burst from his mouth. He pointed to the ground, drawing an imaginary line where he wanted his troops to stand. And he wanted it done before the oxen outspanned for the night, or they would be eating barbequed testicles tonight. The boys jumped into action, pushing one another out of the way as they desperately tried to stand in a straight streep. Finally there was a line, more or less. Bombardier Fourie tucked his clipboard under his arm and moved down the line, inspecting his troops, his face black with rage. He stopped at the front and turned to face the ragged line. He glared at the ashen faces saying nothing, just glaring with fury. Finally he whispered.

“Ek het, uit die goedheid van my hart, geoffer om hierheen te kom, om myself oor julle te ontferm,” he informed the attended boys solemnly. “Dis die minste wat ek vir my land kan doen.”

He dropped his chin and shut his eyes, a slight frown forming on his forehead as he apparently prayed or contemplated the joys of being a South African lucky enough to serve in the South African Defence Force. He raised his head and looked at them with sad eyes.

“En al wat ek terug vra is dat julle my waardeer, respekteer. My miskien na jul huis toe uitnooi sodat ek jul suster kan steek. Maar nee.

“Die kos wat ek vir julle voorberei het, was in my gesig teruggegooi.”

David was dying to point out that yesterday Bombardier Fourie told them that the food had been prepared by the President’s wife, and now he was singing another tune, but he bit his tongue.

Bombardier Fourie sighed and shrugged his shoulders.

“Maar dis wat jy kry van kommuniste ...”

He slowly moved down the line, peering into each worried face, searching for a communist. He stopped in front of one lad, glaring into his eyes. The boy stood dead still, not even breathing. The bombardier moved on. He came to a stop in front of another chap.

“Waar kom jy vandaan?” he asked.

“Kaapstad, Bombardier.”

“Is jy ’n kommunis?”

“Nee, Bombardier,” the boy answered.

“Moenie vir my vertel dat bokdrolle rosyntjies is nie, troep! Jy is’n Kapenaar, en Kapenaars is kommuniste.”

Moenie vir my vertel dat bokdrolle rosyntjies is nie, David thought, making a mental note. That was brilliant. Don’t tell me that buck droppings are raisins. He had to remember that line.

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Everything was done in Afrikaans, and each day was a living nightmare. Yet, in some ways it was perhaps the best year of his life owing to the surreal day-to-day events, the

camaraderie, the regime of exercise which made the young men as fit as ever. The lack of responsibility was wonderful in its own way, as the military decided everything for everyone: when to eat, what to eat, what to wear, when to bath, when to sleep.

When they went on runs, the bombardier decided how far they should run, and how many times they should repeat the exercise, seeing as they had done it fast enough, or in an eye-pleasing manner, or any other silly excuse just to have to redo the run. Cleaning one's weapon was similarly easy. Just do exactly what the bombardier said. Grip the stock with your left hand in a manly manner. In a manly manner, asshole! Open the breach with your right, whilst holding the barrel down. Why? So that you don't shoot my fucking head off, that's why. En doen dit fokken mooi, troep!

The almost exclusive use of Afrikaans in the military had quite an effect on David as he realised that when he used it, it seemed as though he could become another person. It was ironic, because while he saw it as the language of the oppressor, it was also the tongue of the everyday-person, the "real" person, it seemed to speak for those who were disenfranchised due to apartheid and/or poverty.

One of Worcester's most famous sons, JM Coetzee (1997:125) says the following about Afrikaans in his memoir *Boyhood – Scenes from a Provincial Life*:

“When he speaks Afrikaans all the complications of life seem suddenly to fall away. Afrikaans is like a ghostly envelope that accompanies him everywhere, that he is free to slip into, becoming at once another person, simpler, gayer, lighter in his tread.”

As the year went by, which it seemed to do quickly, David's political thoughts began to crystallise. The so-called terrorists that the government was warning the soldiers

of, were in fact other South Africans who actually considered themselves freedom fighters, people who felt they had no other route to liberty. They were denied the vote by the current government, and were considered less than human according to the ruling party's interpretation of the Bible. Apartheid was justified as the will of God. It's no wonder David makes an oblique reference to this in "Driver, Driver":

I watch the dust clouds rolling  
As I sit here in my room  
Acting the repentant sinner  
Who fears impending doom  
Preaching to the converted.

Like the so-called terrorists, David saw himself also as an outsider. Hence the rather bitter lines he uses to describe himself in "Driver, Driver". He was, after all, one of those people who wondered whether "terrorists" was the best word – wouldn't "freedom fighters" be more appropriate? So, he as a liberal was just as unwanted as the "terrorists" in the South Africa of that time.

Some say I'll need correction  
Others say I'm just the liberal kind

Bombardier Fourie and his nefarious tongue was a rich source of frustration as well as inspiration for David. He drove the boys mad with his considerable ability to change things to suit himself. If you were a vegetarian you were gay, if you were from Cape Town you were a communist. These things were said as though they were universal truths, something that need not be explained. *Everyone* knew that vegetarians were gay.



As time went by, David came to realise that Bombardier Fourie was intelligent, and one of those rare beings: a born leader. Listening to him talk to the other ou manne, it was clear he also had reservations about the role of the church in their lives: about not being able to watch a film on a Sunday; about sports isolation due to apartheid. But what were his options? Be all soft and liberal and let things slide into chaos? No. This was the time to stand up and be counted.

David was taught how to clean, load and fire his weapon, he was made to pull the pin from a live hand grenade and toss it over a wall of sandbags into an open clearing, his heart thumping in his chest as he waited for it to explode into a million pieces. He saluted anyone with rank, because he had to, feeling ridiculous each time.

The time was flying by, and soon there was talk of “min dae, baie hare.” Their 40 days had come around. The whole day the camp reverberated to the sound of Cliff Richards singing “I’m gonner give yooo... forty day-yeez... to GET BACK!”

When the conscripts were initially given their new kit the material was hard and dark, but as the months passed, the uniforms had softened and faded. Now David wore his fatigues with some pride. They, like David, had some wear and tear behind them.

The food had been terrible, their nights often interrupted to go on runs, they had learnt how to assemble and fire rifles whilst being barked at by a rabid bombardier, but they had made it. They had come out in one piece, and now the summer skies were back. Soon they would be going home.

## Chapter 11

In 1971 the big hits in South Africa were (<http://www.rock.co.za>):

- I hear you Knocking – Dave Edmunds
- No Matter What – Badfinger
- If not for You – Olivia Newton-John
- Butterfly – Danyel Gerard
- I did what I did for Maria – Tony Christie
- Mammy Blue – Charisma
- Co-Co – The Sweet
- Knock Three Times – Dawn
- Look out, here comes Tomorrow – The Dealians
- You – Peter Maffay.

However, David was going to be right in the middle of a trendier hit parade. He was going to Britain! He had been accepted as a student at the University of Leeds to study Textile Design.

David had always looked up to his older brother. John had to a large extent influenced David's way of seeing the world. By the time David left for the UK, John was already at art school. Besides painting, John was always taking photographs, capturing images he found interesting.

Below is a photograph taken by John Kramer of a shop in High Street, Worcester. It's a good example of the eye for small-town nostalgia he shared with David.



K.B. Fakir & Co, corner of High Street and Stockenström (sic) Street, Worcester, 1972.

Photograph: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight>

This was Bakka's Cafe and it was one of my favourite places in the 1950's. Once you got past the rows of tomatoes, lettuce, pockets of oranges, boxes of grapes, watermelons, pineapples, coconuts and bags of unshelled peanuts you got to the sweet counter. There behind the glass counter at my eye-level was a colourful display of pink Star sweets, Niggerballs, Chappies and Wicks bubble gum and Sunrise toffies (sic) with ECB (extra cream and butter). There was liquorice, sour sweets, marshmallow fish and peppermints. All these could be had for 1d each in the 1950's. More expensive items were slabs of Nestle and Cadbury chocolate. Here you could buy ice suckers, Eskimo pies and wafer ice creams.

In racks nearby were the Dell comics; Little Lulu, Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge and Woody Woodpecker. Superman comics printed in black and white were also available. Magazines like Life and the Saturday Evening Post was our window to a wider world. Bakka also had a showcase on the side of the shop facing Stockenström Street displaying all sorts of items a boy was interested in. There were knives and daggers, throwing tops, nail clippers, novelty items and at Guys Fauwkes (sic) time on the 5th November, Rondin fireworks and Big Bang crackers.

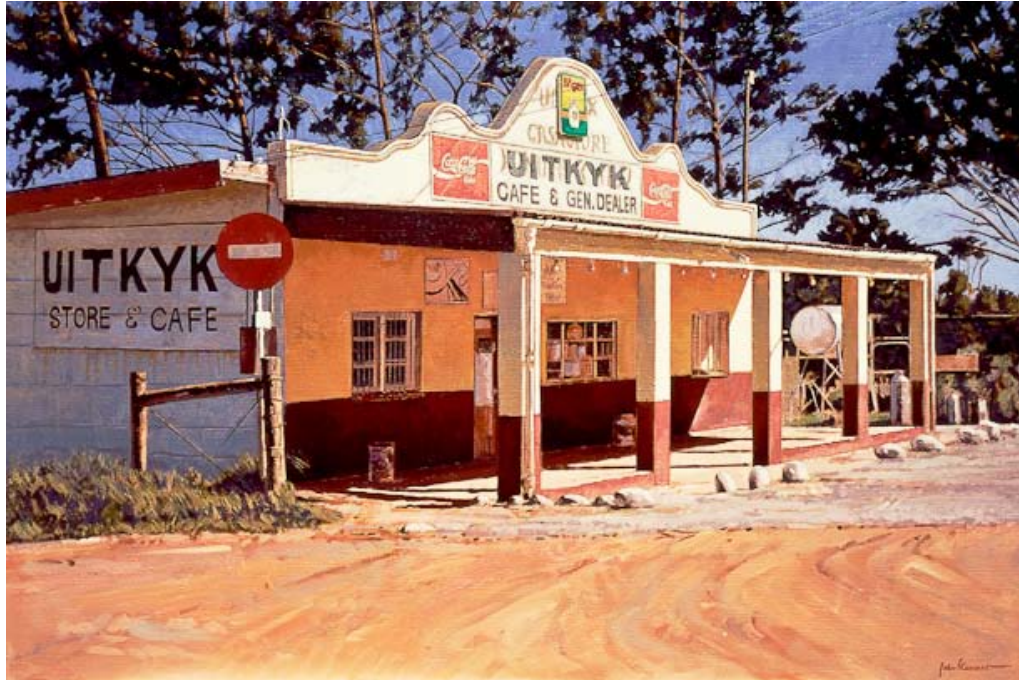
In the street is Bakkas (sic) truck (Dodge or Ford?) that hawked fruit and vegetables to the surrounding suburbs. On certain days of the week it would arrive carrying (sic) its load of cabbages, potatoes and carrots to be weighed out on a large scale mounted on the back.

[Author's note: In the picture one can see a bit of Kramer's Furnishers sticking out from behind the buildings]

As John's style progressed, it evolved into his own brand of photo-realism. What David would later write about in his songs - rural scenes - was what John was painting: shops with their large adverts for Coca Cola on the walls, typical houses of the area, corrugated zinc roofs and cement stoeps. Interestingly, there were almost never people in these paintings.



Painting by John Kramer. [www.johnkramer.net](http://www.johnkramer.net)



Painting by John Kramer. [www.johnkramer.net](http://www.johnkramer.net)



John Kramer. [www.johnkramer.net](http://www.johnkramer.net)

John had quite a sharp eye and was known for his dry observations, and this rubbed off on his younger brother. For example, John took the following photograph, and wrote: (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight/260156683/in/set-72157594306867813/>)

Not sure if I want to buy my sweets and chocolates next to an undertaker. I like the play of the 'Take Aways' and 'Undertaker' though ...!



Photograph <http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight/>. (Possibly John Kramer.)

Like John, David had taken art as a subject whilst at high school. Art classes had been in the afternoons after regular school hours, at the Hugo Naude Art Centre. Pieter Hugo Naude had been one of Worcester's well-known artists.



Painting by Pieter Hugo Naude - Mountain Landscape with River.  
[http://www.johansborman.co.za/index.asp?page=artist\\_detail.asp%3Fid%3D25](http://www.johansborman.co.za/index.asp?page=artist_detail.asp%3Fid%3D25)

Now that David had completed his compulsory military duty, he was free to do as he pleased. He could leave for Europe, grow his hair and see the bands that he had only heard of: The Rolling Stones at The Roundhouse, Bob Dylan at The Marquee! Of course, if he was so inclined, he could watch Manchester United win a match at Old Trafford, or even the men's tennis finals at Wimbledon. The UK was where everything happened!

David received a bursary from the Hex Tex textile company. This was perhaps a good indicator of David's solid financial sense, possibly inherited from Solly. Hex Tex would provide the money for him to study, and there would be a job for him when he completed the course. It was a win-win situation.

Before David had left for the army he had had a few passport photographs taken. It was his standard 5 teacher, Mr. Ellis, who took the photographs. David sat down and grinned widely.

“Don’t smile,” Mr. Ellis muttered from behind the camera.

David tried to pull in his smile but there was still a shadow of it on his face - this was too exciting, too wonderful. He was going to get a passport, and he was going to go to England!

“Okay,” Mr. Ellis said, stepping out from behind the camera. “You can collect your shots tomorrow.”

“Thank you,” David replied.

Frances had found the necessary forms to complete and she helped David fill them out. Name. Address.

By the time David returned from his military service, his passport was waiting for him. He was ready to go. Frances helped him pack his luggage. If it was up to him, he would have taken his guitar and one t-shirt.

Departure day arrived. They all piled into the car. Solly drove over the mountains of the Du Toit’s Kloof pass towards Cape Town. The sound of the car in the mountain’s tunnel was eerie and a bit frightening. As they made their way down the other side of the winding pass they saw glimpses of Wellington far below.

At the airport Solly parked the car and they all got out, stretching after the long drive. Solly found a trolley and heaved David’s luggage onto it. This was a serious occasion, so they were all well-dressed, except John, who took a more bohemian attitude to clothing. Solly pushed the trolley, one of the wheels making a clack-clack-clack noise. Inside the terminal they looked around, trying to get their bearings.

“Over there,” Frances said, pointing.



They moved off again. David joined the queue at the check-in counter. He handed over his luggage, along with his ticket and passport. He eyed the scale nervously, praying that it wasn't over the weight limit allowed. The young woman scribbled with a pen, muttering to herself, then handed him a slip of paper, along with a beautiful smile.

“That’s your boarding pass. Boarding time is at 11:20. Gate 3.”

David grinned back. Boarding pass! Gate 3! It all sounded so international!

“Thanks,” he beamed.

When it was time for him to board he made his way to the gates. Frances hugged him and kissed his mouth.

“You take care, now ..,” she said.

David beamed. He shook his father’s and brother’s hands, turned and went through the gates, showing his boarding pass. On the other side he turned back and waved, before the crowd swallowed him up.

When they touched down in the UK, it was freezing. David took out a jacket from his hand luggage and shrugged into it. He followed the other passengers towards the immigration desks. On board the plane it had been mostly English and Afrikaans, but now with all the travellers swarming about inside the terminal building David’s ears were bombarded with snippets of different languages. Once through customs, David retrieved his bags from the carousel. He loaded them onto a trolley and made his way to the foyer.

He was in London!

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David frowned slightly as he looked at the map of the London Underground. You are here, said the inscription, with a red arrow pointing to the spot on the map where he was standing. It was his second day in London and it was still all very new.

“OK,” he muttered over the din around him. “Camden Town. That’s where I am. I’ve got to transfer at Leicester Square, to the blue line. The next station is Piccadilly Circus ...”

When the train came down the line David inched forward, pushed on by the crowd. He got onto the train and grabbed an overhead strap, clinging on for dear life. When the train began slowing down he peered through the window, craning his neck to see where he was. Mornington Crescent. Good. He was going the right way. People shuffled off and others rushed in to take their place. It was all a blur: the faces, the accents, David only catching a few words here and there.

There were the obligatory things to do and see in London, and David felt compelled to go through the list. Piccadilly Circus – done. Trafalgar Square – done. But this was the best so far: his visit to the *New Musical Express*. He had bought this newspaper every Wednesday at the CNA, and now here he was, standing on the pavement in front of its very offices. David took a deep breath and stepped forward, pushing the doors open and entering the building. He took the elevator up to the third floor, stepped out, and there it was, bustling and noisy, the offices of the *New Musical Express*. Above the entrance were the big red letters David knew so well: NME.

“May I help you?” a voice asked.

David turned and saw a tall young man in his late twenties in what can only be described as groovy threads. The velvet bell-bottom pants were so wide that it seemed as

though he was wearing a skirt. David realised that the man wasn't really that tall, it was the 3-inch soles of his platform shoes that made him seem so.

"I, er, I'm just visiting," David mumbled. "I always get the NME back home ..."

The man took David's accent in.

"Where you from, then?"

"South Africa."

"South Africa?"

David watched the expression on the face opposite him. South African - wonder what makes him tick?

Another man strode up to them, also attired in groovy threads. But unlike his colleague, he wore sandals, man. With his long hair and beard he looked a lot like Jesus.

"Have you finished with the Floyd layout, Andy?" he asked.

"Of course," the man in the three-inch platforms replied. "Simon's developing the prints. Then all I have to do is drop the pics in."

"Bring it to my office when it's done," the older man ordered, far more severely than Jesus would have done, and strode off in a wave of hair that reached his jeans.

"Fuck!" Andy swore under his breath. "The Floyd layout ..."

"I thought you finished it?" David inquired.

"First rule of journalism, my son: always lie."

David chuckled.

Andy eyed the camera David had slung over his shoulder.

"You could well be my saviour," he muttered. "What's your name, my lad?"

"David Kramer."

“Wrong. Your name is Simon Bough, photographer. Come with me.”

David followed Andy down a passage.

“I’m Andy Gophin,” Andy introduced himself. “And I forgot to arrange with Simon for today’s shoot.”

“You’re in deep shit,” David pointed out.

“Not at all. Simon is right here, behind me, and he’s going to take brilliant pics.”

David had read many of Andy Gophin’s articles. And here he was, actually talking to the man himself! No-one was going to believe this story, he thought. They entered a tiny office cluttered with a desk, filing cabinets and piles of paper. Not to mention the members of Pink Floyd.

David felt faint.

“Right, lads. Let’s take the pics, and then we’re good to go,” Andy breezed with a wave at David.

He moved in behind his desk and began hammering at the keys of an electric typewriter. It was clear that David had to take over from here.

“This way, lads,” David mumbled, hoping he sounded Swinging London.

He left the office, went down the corridor, not having a clue what he was supposed to do.

“Crazy weather we’re having, isn’t it?” he asked.

There was general agreement to this statement.

“Oh, yes. Hot one moment and freezing the next.”

“You guys have any plans for the rest of the day?” David wanted to know.

“Got to get back to the studio. Lay down a few tracks.”

“Hope it goes well,” David said. “Maybe Mrs. Floyd can come over and sprinkle some magic dust.”

He shuddered. What the hell had just fallen out of his mouth? There was a moment’s silence, and then the band chuckled. Someone slapped David’s back.

“You guys have a title for the album yet?” David wondered.

“Dark Side Of The Moon.”

David raised his eyebrows.

“That’s a great title,” he complimented.

“Thanks.”

When he reached the foyer he pressed the elevator button, the members of Pink Floyd watching with him as the numbers above the elevator changed. The doors opened and they filed in. David pressed the button for the top floor. They reached the tenth floor and the doors opened again. They trundled out and David found the door leading to the rooftop, his heart pounding in his chest. If this door was locked he was screwed!

The handle turned and the door opened. He led the band out onto the roof. His hands were trembling as he took off the lens cap and squinted with one eye at the rooftops around him.

“So what do you want us to do, then?” one of the band members asked.

David had to think about this for a moment.

“Nothing,” he replied, daring to look at the band. “You’re Pink Floyd, do what you like.”

The group absorbed this, and then burst out laughing. Yes, they were Pink Floyd, and they were too cool to pose. David focused and snapped, moving about on the roof.

Each member relaxed and strolled about, looking out over the roofs around them. Then a miracle happened: the band was standing at the wall together. They had been looking over the wall, but had now turned to look in David's direction again. As he snapped, a flock of pigeons flew past, close to the group. It all happened too fast, and David was unaware of it.

“That's it, lads,” he said, grinning feebly at them.

And with that Pink Floyd was out of his life. They opened the door and left the roof. David stayed behind, fiddling with his camera, trying to settle his mind. When he went to the foyer to get the elevator, Pink Floyd was gone. David went back down to Andy's office and showed him the roll of film.

“Where do I develop this, Andy?” he asked.

“End of the corridor. Just make sure the red light isn't on.”

David walked down the corridor and found the darkroom. He went in and developed the film, having to look around a bit for the chemicals, as this was a new and strange place to him. He printed a proofsheets and wiped off the excess water with a squeegee. Then he pored over the proofsheets, frowning slightly as he mentally eliminated the bad shots. When he saw the picture of the group with the flock of pigeons, his heart skipped a beat. He knew he had a winner.

He printed the pictures he considered to be the best and went back to Andy's office. The reporter flicked through the pile of photographs. When he reached the last one, David smiled as he saw Andy's reaction.

“Fucking hell! This is far out!”

Andy looked up at David, a wide grin on his face.

“Take a seat. Let me finish this, and then I’ll be with you.”

David sat down on one of the chairs which very recently had held the behind of one of the members of Pink Floyd. Andy left the office and David heard him speak to someone else, whom David guessed was the layout artist. Andy came back with a flimsy sheet of paper in his hand.

“Just want to run the trannies past the editor. Give me the film.”

David handed over the roll of film.

“I want that back,” he warned.

“I’ll guard it with my life. You have my word.”

“Your word means nothing,” David pointed out.

“True,” Andy agreed, and dashed out of the office.

He returned ten minutes later, beaming.

“I have done a great job, and I am wonderful,” he informed David.

“My film ..,”

“Will be returned to you once they’ve finished with the layout. They need to get the pics to the correct size.”

Andy plopped down behind the desk and looked at David, still beaming.

“Once the editor fell in love with your shot, I confessed that I had found this amazing new talent.”

David grinned back at Andy.

“Therefore, tonight you shall accompany me to The Marquee. When you get to the door just say the magic words *Andy Gophin* and *NME*. In that order.”

That night David got his precious roll of film back, and saw The Yardbirds play a sizzling set. Backstage he hung on to every word as Eric Clapton spoke about his other great love: fishing.

“Good luck at Leeds,” the god of guitar said to David by way of saying goodbye, and David walked back to his room flying high.

When he arrived in Leeds two days later, he was exhausted by all his adventures. Unpacking was easy, as he had very little belongings. Registering was not quite so simple.

He woke up early the next morning and looked about, disorientated. Then it all came back to him. He was in Leeds, on campus. He washed, got dressed, and set out. First things first: he was starving. At a tea shop he had a pie and chips with a steaming cup of tea. Now he was ready to face the day. He had to go to the admin building, he was told by a girl with an accent so broad David could hardly make out what she’d said. After a few false starts, he located the administration building. There were long lines, and he queued up with dozens of other students. He craned his neck to see which forms his fellow students had in their hands. He noticed they all had a green form. What was that?

“Excuse me. What is that green form?” he asked timidly.

“It’s the Curriculum form.”

David was blank. Curriculum form?

“You need to choose your subjects from this form.”

David sighed.

“Shit, shit, shit!” he thought.

“Where do I get this form?”

“Room 113.”



“Where’s room 113?”

“Down that corridor.”

“Thanks.”

David left the queue he had been standing in for nearly half an hour and trudged towards room 113, where there was another line. Eventually he made it to the front and asked for a Curriculum form. He took it to a corner and started to read. He ticked off the subjects. Luckily he had perused a handbook whilst in South Africa, so he remembered which subjects he wanted to do. He went back to the main hall and rejoined the queue.

“Over here, mate,” the student he had spoken to earlier called.

Relieved, David retook his place in line.

“Thanks,” he said.

“After this you need to get your student card. I’ll show you. Follow me,” he was told.

“Thanks. I appreciate it. I’m totally lost,” David said. “I’m David, by the way. David Kramer.”

“I’m Mark Knopfler.”

By the end of the day he was registered. He had a student number, a student card, and his class schedule. And he had a new friend who knew the campus like the back of his hand. Like David, Mark was crazy about music.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/popups/press/interview.htm>

For the next few days David set about getting to know his whereabouts. It was a lovely campus, and he savoured the names as he passed the residences: Bodington Hall, Oxley Residences, Lupton Residences, North Hill Court, James Baillie Park.

That Friday David made his way to a nearby pub, hoping to make a few friends.

“Mind if I take this seat?” a voice asked.

David turned to see who was speaking to him. A young man was sitting down on the stool next to him. It was a black man. David had never sat next to a black man in a bar before. The other thing that David took in was how posh his voice was.

“Not at all,” replied David.

They nodded at one another.

“Are you a student, too?” inquired David.

“Yes. And you? By the way, where are you from?”

“South Africa?”

“Oh, really?”

The young man gave David a look, and David had a fair idea what was going through his mind.

“So what are you doing, then?” he asked.

It seemed that David had been forgiven for being a white South African.

“I’m doing textile design. And you?”

“Accounting.”

He gave a shrug, which David took to be an oblique apology for choosing such a boring career. David chuckled.

“So what are you having?” he asked.

“I’d love a beer. I’m Jody, by the way.”

“David.”

They shook hands, and David ordered beers. The bar was filling up, and already the barman was a bit harassed. When the drinks arrived David took a sip, and put his glass down with a horrified frown.

“This beer is warm ...” he complained to the barman.

The barman gave him a glance, but then continued serving his customers. What was this fool on about?

“Beer should be warm,” Jody informed David.

David made his eyes big as he looked at Jody.

“No, it should most certainly not!” he argued.

“So how do you drink it in South Africa?”

“Chilled.”

“Brought to you by a houseboy dressed in a white waiter’s jacket ...”

David chuckled, tilting his head, acknowledging Jody's barb. It was true, after all.

"And a pair of pants," David pointed out. "Madam might be disturbed."

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Life in Leeds was great, Jody showing David the local student haunts. Many a night was spent discussing politics, music and fashion in one of the countless pubs. However, Jody constantly surprised David by taking him to places he would never have bothered with.

"Get up, we're going out!" Jody called from outside David's room one Saturday morning, banging with his fist on the door.

David opened the door cautiously.

"What ..?" he wanted to ask.

"You're dressed? Excellent. Let's get going."

David followed the tall figure of Jody, grumbling about rather wanting to sleep. Jody had procured a car from somewhere. This was his true gift, being able to get things, borrow things, find things. The two drove off, and soon found themselves at Kirkstall Abbey, a rustic old cathedral.

"Completed between 1152 and 1182," Jody informed David. "A unique example of early Cistercian architecture."

"I thought you were an accountant?" David queried.

"Only when I sit behind a big desk," replied his host with a wink.

The wink could have meant any of a million things, and it was typical of Jody's left, left sense of humour.

Finally David was free from the constraints of school, the army, and South Africa. He could grow his hair as long as he wanted, wear what he wanted, and socialize with

whomever he pleased. Whilst England had its fair share of racism, it was far easier to socialise here with an exotic mix of people from all over the world than in South Africa where apartheid was still alive and strong. His neighbour to the left was from Norway, and the chap on the right was a Pakistani, the shyest person David had ever met. But his cooking was a delight, and David always accepted Imraan's invitations.

Imraan had insisted that David eat dinner using only his right hand, and David had agreed. It was Imraan's home, after all, and it was also part of his overseas experience, he told himself. The one thing that brought Imraan out of his shell was cricket, and he and David agreed to disagree on who the greatest cricketing nation in the world was. He did, though, teach David a great deal on the more delicate points of the game, which made David appreciate and enjoy the games he saw on television even more. After some time, David grudgingly agreed that the spin-bowler was a necessary and undervalued part of any team.

Whilst Imraan was passionate about cricket, Henry was a soccer fan.

Henry was another South African, and he often came around. Actually, his name was Hendrik. Hendrik van der Spuy.

He insisted that David join him when he went to watch Leeds play at Elland Road. This was quite an eye-opener for David, witnessing the passion of the supporters. There was full-throated singing, urging "The Whites" on, and David could not help but get sucked up in the excitement, and he became a Leeds United convert. But his first love was still music.

David was desperate to see as much live music as he could, and whenever he got the chance he took the train down to London. He would drop in on Andy Gophin at the

NME, and visited venues like The Roxy and The Marquee. Even though he was studying to be a textile designer, he still harboured serious thoughts on being a musician.

For anyone visiting London, a trip to Wembley stadium to see one of the bands was *de rigueur*. This was where the supergroups played. Rod Stewart was hot at the time, and easily filled the stadium with thousands of yelling fans whilst he pranced and preened, always with a long, flowing tartan scarf. When he kicked footballs into the audience the masses went wild, but David had difficulty understanding the chants called out.

The accents in the UK were confounding. From the east end of London to the thick burs from Scotland, David often nodded his head without having a clue what the person was saying.

Another thing that was new to David was the protests, and the tolerance the authorities had for the protestors. When the prime minister, Mr. Edward Heath declared that in his opinion it was in order for Britain to sell arms to South Africa, there were gatherings outside the South African embassy in London. The Leeds University campus was not unaffected. Students thronged together with banners, making their displeasure at Mr. Heath's statement clear. To David's surprise and relief, there were no riot police wading into the crowds, wielding batons.

Snow was also new to David.

Someone hammered at his door.

“What?” David asked.

“Come on!” a voice called. “It's snowing!”

David got up from the table, leaving his drawing. He grabbed a jacket and went outside. Henry was waiting for him, a huge grin on his face.

“Snow!” Henry laughed, his arms outstretched.

David looked about in amazement. Everywhere he looked it was white. Just like a Christmas card. They tip-toed about gingerly, getting used to walking on the snow.

“We’ve got to have a Christmas dinner ..!” Henry declared. “With real South African food!”

Henry’s enthusiasm was infectious and David grinned back.

Christmas dinner was a huge success. There was roast meat, carrots and potatoes, perfectly, crispy golden on the outside and soft and fluffy on the inside. Someone had made a potato salad with Cross & Blackwell mayonnaise. Paper hats were bought for guests, and everyone had a great time pulling the crackers apart, laughing at the silly little gifts inside.

David was happy to oblige when someone asked him to play a song or two. He took out his trusty guitar and made himself comfortable.

“What would you like to hear?” he asked, a huge smile on his face.

“My Ding-A-Ling ..!” someone called out, and there were hoots of laughter.

Chuck Berry had been number 1 in November with his naughty song about people playing with their ding-a-lings. (The song had been banned in South Africa.)

When I was a little biddy boy  
My grandmother bought me a cute little toy  
Silver bells hanging on a string  
She told me it was my ding-a-ling-a-ling  
Oh  
My Ding-A-Ling My Ding-A-Ling I want you play with My Ding-A-Ling  
My Ding-A-Ling My Ding-A-Ling I want you play with My Ding-A-Ling ..!

Everyone shouted the chorus together as David strummed, and their laughter carried on until late into the night.

“I’d give my right arm to write a song like that ..!” David chuckled.

“I’d give my right arm to be ambidextruous,” said Mark, and there was more laughter.

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Mark Knopfler introduced David to the music scene at the student’s union. It was on one of the walls that David saw the first picture of Nelson Mandela. Underneath the photograph were the words to “Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika”, in English, and David was astonished to read that they meant *God bless Africa*. What a beautiful sentiment, he thought, to words he had been told by teachers and other voices of authority to mean something terrible, hatred, evil and destructive.

He looked at the large picture of Mandela again. In South Africa all images of him were banned, and it was taboo to even mention his name, if you knew what was good for you.

He turned his attention back to Mark. Here at the student’s union anyone could play, either covers or originals. The atmosphere was very laid back and easy-going, but the experience was a revelation for David. He watched Mark step up to the microphone and play a song that was simply stunning. And to top it off, his guitar skills were exceptional. He had a style of his own. David realised that he was still light years behind, just another weak Dylan imitator.

Mark’s song ended and there was appreciative applause from the audience. As Mark stepped off the tiny stage, David walked over to him.



“That’s a great song,” he said.

“Thanks.”

“What’s it called?”

“The Sultans of Swing.”

David nodded his head.

“It’s going to be a huge hit one day,” he prophesised. “Then you’ll escape these dire straights.”

Mark laughed.

“That’s a great name for a band!” he said. “Do you mind if I nick it?”

“Be my guest,” David replied.

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David regularly met with Mark and they played their own compositions to one another. Mark, even then, was clearly a very polished and mature songwriter, so when he complimented David on his songs, David was very flattered.

“That’s a great song,” he told David, and David couldn’t help beaming.

“Thanks.”

“Although you should drop the Dylan stuff. That’s been done, by Dylan, and he does Dylan better than anyone else can.”

David felt crushed. He knew that Mark was right, but he also knew that he didn’t have the answer. It was all so easy for Mark, the way he turned out songs with lovely melodies and great lyrics, all in a style of his own. Mark saw the look on David’s face.

“Come on. Play something else,” he urged.

David thought for a while.

“Ok. I’ll play this song in English, but it’s actually written in Afrikaans ...”

“Afrikaans?” Mark exclaimed eagerly. “That’s great! Now you’re talking.”

David played a verse of the song, translating. Then he continued in Afrikaans.

When he stopped, he explained the lyrics to Mark.

“It’s about a guy who lives on the west coast of South Africa, and he eats biscuits and biltong ...”

“What’s biltong?”

“Dried meat. Jerky, I think you guys call it ...”

“God, that’s brilliant!”

Mark slapped David’s skinny shoulder.

“That’s what you should be doing!”

“You don’t think it’s a bit, er, unsophisticated?” wondered David.

“Not at all. That’s the nature of what you’re trying to say, and the song reflects the audience you’re playing for, if I understand you correctly.”

It felt great. Mark got him and what he was trying to do.

“Tomorrow we’re going to busk at the Black Prince,” Mark informed David.

“The Black Prince?”

“It’s a statue in the City Square.”

The next day they stood at the base of the statue of a man in armour on a horse, and Mark made David one of his un-Dylan songs.

“Remember, no Dylan,” Mark warned.

David strapped on his guitar, took a deep breath, and began playing to the people passing by.

“Ek is ’n Weskus klong ..,” he hollered as he played a very basic, strong, beat on his guitar. I am a West Coast lad ...

David was delighted when someone tossed a coin into his guitar case, even though the person had no idea what David was singing about. Mark gave him a thumbs-up sign from where he stood watching.

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David did well at university. Design came easy to him. He became increasingly well-versed with curtains and dress-material, and his eye began to pick out interesting ideas for his own material designs. He still drew all the time, in his rather naïve style, but his focus was now more on the designing of reams and reams of material, be it for towels, curtains, shirts, and so on.

His closest friend was Arthur Lewis. Arthur was a fervent Leeds United supporter, and the brother of two very pretty sisters, but it was his sharp wit that made him such a valuable friend to David. He had given David a small volume called *Hitler, my part in his downfall*. David had known of Spike Milligan, through the Goon radio shows as a boy in South Africa, but he had been unaware of Milligan’s war memoirs. David and Arthur recited reams of dialogue to one another, ending up in stitches. Arthur would also repeat Monty Python sketches, imitating the voices perfectly, but it was the Milligan gems that he loved the most.

The two often sat at their desks, heads bent as they worked on their designs, giggling as they repeated Milligan jokes, trying their best to get the Peter Sellers accents right, always failing, which seemed to make it funnier for the two.

However, not so light-hearted was the politics of the time in Britain. David was surprised that there was racial tension in the United Kingdom, that even here people of colour were trying to carve out a life where they would not be negatively stereotyped.

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“You’ve got to be kidding,” David said.

Henry was a serious young man, and one could take what he said to be the truth, but this was too ridiculous. Surely he was joking, or had his facts wrong.

“Not at all. January the first, it goes into play,” Henry replied.

“But how ...”

“Heath’s government are adamant they’re not going to give in to the miners, and they want to make the coal stretch as long as possible, and they say in that case there will be a three-day working week. Except for hospitals, and such,” Henry explained.

“But the logistics ...”

“Are a nightmare. God only knows how they’re going to get it done.”

David pondered Henry’s words.

It seemed impossible. How did Britain get into such a predicament, and how were they going to get their way out?

In the following weeks the three-day week came into being, and still the miners did not give in. David started hearing the name Arthur Scargill, and depending to whom one spoke, he was either a hero or a villain. The prime minister, Edward Heath, fared less well, and many of the people David spoke to couldn’t stand him, blaming him for the conditions they found themselves in. Heath, as Jody had told David, was still unpopular on certain fronts for wanting to join the European Economic Community.

When Heath called for a general election, it came as no surprise to David that he lost to Harold Wilson of the Labour Party.

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David was glued to the television set. John Cleese and the gang of *Fawlty Towers* were hilarious. Sybil was in hospital to have an ingrown toenail removed, and due to her absence, so it seemed, all was falling apart, like the moose head.

But as David watched, his mood changed. The major referring to Indians as wogs, and other racial slurs, was not funny. And as the story progressed, with the German guests becoming upset by Basil's repeated mention of the war, "highlighted" by his goosestep walk, David was becoming more and more surprised. This was not what he had expected to find in Britain.

Also, around him in his everyday life, the mood was decidedly bleak. Young people seemed to have no faith in the future, knowing that they were destined to end up like their parents in dead-end jobs, if they could find employment, and all around the country, it seemed to him, that there were protests and strikes.

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"You've got to see this band," Andy enthused.

David had taken the train down to London, first stopping at The White Rose for a beer close to Leeds station, and as he always did when he visited London, he had dropped in on Andy Gophin at the NME. At first he hadn't recognised Andy. Gone was the long hair, gone were the flared jeans. Now he followed Andy down some dirty steps into a club. The walls of the stairwell were covered with graffiti written or drawn with thick felt pen. To his horror he saw the name of Eric Clapton struck out by three harsh black lines.

But that horror was nothing compared to what he experienced when he entered the club. Girls with gharish black eyeliner, skirts made of black dustbin bags, and boys with spiky hair jumping up and down in what seemed to be their tribal dance. A youth bumped into David, and David could not believe his eyes. The young man had pierced his cheek with a large safety pin. But the most shocking was seeing a green-haired Johnny Rotten snarling into a vintage '50's microphone, his shirt in tatters, a row of handcuffs used as a belt to keep up his tartan trousers which seemed to be tied together at the knees.

“I am an anti-Christ!” declared Johnny. “I am an anarchist!”

David walked away from the concert a changed man. In the following weeks and months the images of that experience stayed with him, and whilst he was shocked by what he saw, he knew that everything he had been absorbing as a musician was suddenly totally irrelevant.

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Time marched on, and all too soon David's studies were at an end. In July 1974 he was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in Textile Design. His grade was 2.1. The subjects he'd taken were:

Textiles 1A  
Fine Art 1  
Management Studies A1  
Fine Art 2  
Management Studies A2  
Textile Design 2  
Yarn Manufacturing 2A  
Textile Testing 1A  
Fabric Structure 1A  
Historical & Contemporary Fabric 1  
Knitting 1A  
Textiles 2A

He packed his belongings and with a final look at the room he had called home for the last few years, set off for the airport.

His time in the north of England had been interesting, the music, the culture he found himself in, the vibrant political scene. It had been a time when Edward Heath's conservative government had been very unpopular during the miner's strike, as well as the three-day weeks the government created in an effort to save electricity.

David was sad to say goodbye to England but also excited about going home. Eating home cooking. Hearing the accents he knew so well talk about the weather and rugby matches of the past weekend. And of course, South African sunshine on his face.

His flight took off from Heathrow and he watched the scene below him as the plane banked up and away. Below were rows of semi-detached houses with chimney pots. Just like a postcard.

When David disembarked in the Mother City the heat hit him. He grinned widely. He was back!