

forward and gave me my veld-shoes, a spare pair. She had filled my saddle-bags with biltong and biscuit, and while I was pulling on the boots she went to the door and called Oompie. He came in and took my hand and shook it.

I felt calmer when I had pressed his hand in my turn, and I put the future away from me. What had I to do with tomorrow when the rain might be cleared away, the sky clearer and the ground dry?

I went outside with him and together we mounted our horses. Elias held my stirrup as I mounted, and as he handed me the gun he said, "Good-bye, old master," but when I tried to answer my tongue stuck fast in my mouth and I could get out no sound. I lowered my head on my breast and clutched the mane of the horse, and as I waited for the order to move I scarcely felt how wet my hands were, till I heard some one addressing me.

"Lord," said 'Noldus, offering me his pouch; "Lord, it is a bad night. Will you take a fill, neef Frikkie?"

I stuffed my pipe, but when I tried to light it my fingers shook and the match flared and went out, and I put the pipe back in my pocket, unlighted. I looked towards the house, and in the dim light I saw the ayah and Elias standing in the doorway and waving their hands to me. I turned away and dug my heel into my horse's flank, and as he bounded forward I slung my rifle over my shoulders and rode up to the others. They were laughing and chatting and made way for me cheerfully. The wet mud of the path splattered my boots and nearer and nearer came the lap of the pond water. My brain was in a whirl and I could scarcely think, but when I looked back I saw that the darkness hid the house and I could no longer see the fire.

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