

in Matabeleland, and a brother had come out to look after it for her until the boy was old enough to come into his own. Other Fort Georgites were scattered far and wide. I heard sometimes from Colonel Blow, in Bulawayo, and Gerry Deshon at Umtali; but people in Africa are always too busy with the interesting people round them to have much time for remembering those who have passed on elsewhere. Annabel Cleeve's husband had died in England a few months after their marriage, and left her a rich widow. Mrs. Valetta was still living in Mgatweli.

I had never been to call on her, for I made few calls except the official ones required of me. Even if I had not heard that she was too ill to receive visitors, I could not suppose her anxious to renew so painful an acquaintance as ours had been. She had never been well since the Fort George days, they said. Fever! Malarial fever covers a multitude of ills in Rhodesia. Would she get better when—— Ah! that hurt—think of something else quick!

But I could not think of *anything else* for long. Back, back my thoughts came always to *that*, as my eyes went always back to the hills. Maurice had been gone a week. No news yet. But sometimes, when all was still, I seemed to hear the beating of horses' feet over the soft veldt grass.

I missed Makupi's red blanket against the blaze of the zinias, where he was wont to sit, expelling the melancholy of his soul with the throb of his weird tom-tom, and hiding in his heart through all these months a secret that changed the face of life for three people!

Down in the camp a trooper, sitting outside his hut, was at the same business as myself—darning his footwear; and save for his idle song there was no other sound to break the hot, tranquil silence of the afternoon. Along the town road a boy with a letter held aloft in a cleft stick was approaching, with the peculiar rhythmical motion affected by letter-carriers. Everything was very still. The world had a pregnant, brooding look to me.

The boy with the letter had reached the camp, and given his letter to the trooper, and the trooper had given it back, pointing to me. Carefully the boy replaced it in his stick, as though he had still many miles to go, and, resuming his rhythmical step, came up the winding path to me.

I did not know the straggly writing upon the envelope, nor at first the signature at the foot of the brief note—*Annunciata Valetta*.