

## Slimjan

Jan Botha nursed his brandy and coke, stretching it as long as possible. He reflected ruefully that having been raised with a Calvinistic view of life - honesty and a work ethic – had not helped him in business.

His partner had double crossed him and swindled him out of his share of their company. Dirk had managed this in large part due to the fact that Jan's wife had seduced him into a torrid affair. When she had him firmly in her sexual clutches she had persuaded him to help her defraud Jan of his share of the business. She wanted Dirk to have the total share of the business so that she had twice the income to indulge her passion for spending. She needed Dirk because of his lack of business ethics and so was quite happy to create his wildest sexual fantasies to meet her own ends.

The two of them had played their cards so well that Jan was left with nothing - no company, no money and nowhere to stay. His clothes and his car were all that he had left.

"Hey Jan, I hear that the diamond mine is looking for blokes with your qualifications."

"What diamond mine?"

"You know man, up at the Orange river. They're hiring now I hear."

Jan stared at his glass for a while.

"Piet, will you lend me the petrol money to get there?"

"I'll give it to you boet, you deserve a break after what that blerry bitch and that effing crook did to you."

"Mr Botha you impressed the foreman with your knowledge. We want a three year contract. If you break it you must repay a portion to the company."

Jan considered the offer for a while, "I'll take it," he said.

The mine was a close knit community and they could not understand why Jan did not want to socialize. He came to be regarded as rather odd and stood out like a sore thumb.

He did not partake in community activities and did not drink and he managed to save virtually his whole salary so, when after two years he applied to break his contract, he could easily afford to buy himself out.

At the gate the mine detectives stopped him and told him to drive his car to the mine workshop.

While one of the detectives examined every single article in his sparse luggage another supervised the mechanics as they virtually took his car apart.

Jan patiently endured the delay.

When he was finally released he set off for Springbok where he booked into the Grand Hotel.

This was 1956 and every small dorp still had either a Grand or a Royal Hotel. In their day they probably were Grand and Royal but already the platteland was being denuded of the folk who used to patronise these establishments and as a result most were pretty basic.

After dinner Jan wondered around the town. He'd heard a lot about Springbok but had never been there.

He knew that the town had a Royal Hotel as well and headed there.

A copper mine had been the reason for Springbok's existence and there must have been a lot of money around once upon a time.

He walked through the Royal's lobby and wandered into the yard.

He took in all the vehicles parked there.

It was with a feeling of satisfaction that he later ordered a double brandy and coke.

The next morning Jan set off for Vryburg at a leisurely pace. It wasn't long before he saw the Buick in his rear view mirror. A contented smile crossed his features.

After a few days there he set off for Kimberley where he conducted some business before setting course for Cape Town.

On the way he wondered if that mercenary bitch had by now disposed of Dirk as well and was running the company with some young upstart who knew the business and whom she controlled with a rod of iron, a cheque book, and a bed.

There was no need for a hasty decision on how he would tackle the future but he smiled ruefully as he thought of his past. "If only I'd have realised early on that you control women with money while they control us with sex. Perhaps instead of trying to save I'd have splashed piles of money on the bitch I may've had the sex instead of Dirk – and the company. She certainly knew how to please a man in bed."

"Hello Jan."

Jan turned and a broad smile of recognition crossed his features, "Well, well. Is this a coincidence or have you flatfoots tracked me down?"

"Jan we have a warrant to search your belongings."

"Hand it over."

Jan studied the document. After a while he handed it back, "You okes are more than convinced that I've pinched stones."

There was no response.

Rising, "Let's go down to the cop shop. I'll hand them my car and hotel keys and insist that they send cops with you to ensure that you okes don't plant any stones to frame me."

Both men looked shocked and a little hurt but they agreed.

Later on as Jan sat in the hotel lounge reading the Argus the two detectives and the two policemen returned his keys.

The detectives apologised a trifle sheepily but Jan waved away their apologies.

"You chaps must have had a hard time sneaking after me on the company's miserable S and T. Please let me to invite you to supper."

After a sumptuous feast and three bottles of excellent vintage Jan said, "Let me set your minds at rest."

He produced a number of savings books from his pocket and handed them to the two men.

Their features fleetingly revealed pained expressions before the senior one broke into a drunken smile, "You win. You've beaten us and the system. How the hell did you manage it?"

"Did it ever occur to you two flatfoots to search your own car?"