

'N LOOPSOPIE OP DIE DAMASKUSPAD

Or/Of

ONE FOR THE ROAD TO DAMASKUS

**'n Tweetalige toneelstuk in vyftien tonele
A bilingual play in fifteen scenes**

Deur/ by Temple Hauptfleisch

Please note that this is a work of fiction and pure speculation on the author's part. Some of the leading characters are based on actual persons and I have naturally borrowed lines and ideas from the works of both writers and their biographers (as acknowledged). However, as far as I am aware, such a meeting never occurred, nor did the conversations take place. It all *could* have happened though, for the circumstances and the dates fit rather remarkably well - and perhaps it *ought* to have happened....

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‘n Spesiale nota oor verhoogaanwysings/ A special note on stage directions:

Since the play is bilingual (*English* and *Afrikaans*), with the 1896 scenes predominantly in *English* and the 1933 scenes predominantly in *Afrikaans*, the natural convention is thus that in the *English* scenes stage directions will also be in *English*, while the stage directions in the *Afrikaans* scenes will be in *Afrikaans*. The same principle applies in the case of the speeches.

Ek wil in hierdie verband ook dan graag ‘n spesifieke woord van verduideliking rig aan al die wat tans taalbeswaard is oor die toekoms van Afrikaans, en spesifiek ook die groep wat Neelsie na verwys het as die “geleerde professore van Stellenbosch”. My besluit om, benewens die T-opsie hierbo genoem, die raam van die teks (of dan as mens dit geleerd moet naamgee – die marginalia) slegs in Engels te verskaf, is bloot gedoen om uiters pragmatiese redes, en met geen verdere bybedoelings of insinuasies nie. Die “bedoelings” wat ek met die teks sou hê, veral wat taal en taalbeleid betref, lê opgesluit in die teks...

Characters:

Events of 10 July 1896

TWAIN: Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) at 60. He slips between his three personae - *Sam Clemens* the playfully impudent man-boy and would-be serious author and thinker from Hannibal, Missouri, *Mr S.L. Clemens* the urbane socialite and businessman from Hartford, Connecticut, and *Mark Twain* the media-created, idolized, internationally recognized and popular author and humorous speaker. He speaks slowly, hesitatingly almost, but meditatively, utilising long and almost exaggerated pauses for effect. His voice is grating and gives evidence of a lifetime of smoking.

Kerneels = C. J. Langenhoven as young man of just about 23 yrs of age. He speaks English very well, but with a marked "Africander Dutch" or "Cape Dutch" (= "Afrikaans") accent. His voice is somewhat high pitched, and he speaks with some excitement. He already wears the familiar bow tie, dark coloured jacket, dark coloured waistcoat (reversible with *Barend's* light one) and carnation of the older *Neelsie*.

ACHMAT: A middle-aged Cape Malay Waiter who speaks both a distinctive form of Cape Dutch (Africander Dutch) and the heavily accented but good English of the Cape community.

RUTH: A young woman, somewhere between 16 and 18, she is slightly built, dark-haired. An engaging and intelligent schoolgirl at a good Cape school, she speaks with an upper-class Cape English accent - a slightly flattened "Oxford" English.

LIVY: Olivia Clemens. A strong-willed woman of about 50, still small, trim and handsome.

Events of 10 July 1933

NEELSIE: "*Sagmoedige NEELSIE*:" or *C.J. Langenhoven* as an old man, one month short of 60. Ill with a cold, hallucinating a little, having just come from a political campaign in Colesberg. He speaks Afrikaans slowly, creatively - and English very well, still with a marked "Afrikaans" accent.

BAREND: *Barend Gouws* is about 23, looking very much like the young Langenhoven, he is a young and ambitious cub-reporter. He speaks good Afrikaans and a very distinctive "Afrikaner" English. He wears a tie, glasses, light coloured waistcoat (reversible with *Kerneels*'s dark one) and a light coloured (or chequered) jacket.

ACHMAT: A middle-aged Cape Malay *Waiter* who speaks both a distinctive Cape dialect of Afrikaans (known as "Kaaps" today) and the heavily accented but good English of the Cape community.

Sarah: *Sarah Goldblatt* (also called *Sub* by *Neelsie*). A self-assured, small, trim and handsome school teacher of about 35 and Langenhoven's personal assistant and "intimate friend". She speaks Afrikaans well and idiomatically, but with a still marked English/Jewish accent.

Some notes about the casting:

The 1896 scenes and the 1933 scenes are played by the same actors, some doubling as follows: *Twain/Neelsie*, *Kerneels/Barend*, *Ruth/Sarah*. *Achmat* (like the *Lounge*) remains unchanged throughout the play.

Setting:

The main stage is a lounge in the *Grand Hotel*, where Twain stayed during his time in Cape Town. There is a fireplace/black stove with a fire and a few chairs and coffee tables. It is a wet, blustery and cold Cape Town night outside and the background sounds of the street traffic, the Pub next door and the station in the distance are prominent every time any of the doors open. This setting is the same for both periods of the play. Downstage right and left are two lecterns, where the "speeches" are made. The one is designated for *Twain* (*Lectern 1*), the other for *Neelsie* (*Lectern 2*). These take place outside the frame of the central play and are lit by single spotlights. The background lights usually fade during the speeches - unless otherwise indicated. A fourth space utilized is a "passage", which can be downstage, where *Livy* and *Ruth* have their conversations.

Sound effects:

The play is set in a hotel, and popular music of the period can be used to set the time and the tone of the various scenes.

Time:

The action shifts between events late the afternoon, early evening and late evening on *July 10th, 1896* and late afternoon and early evening on *July 10th, 1933*. Some of the speeches and a few memory scenes however are from other appropriate times.

SCENE ONE/TONEEL EEN

*A spotlight fades in on the actor playing **Neelsie** and **Twain**. He is in his shirt sleeves and suspenders (i.e. in the first two scenes he is **both** characters), sitting at a table writing. He begins speaking as **Neelsie** before the light appears. (If these roles are being played by two men, they obviously will appear on stage as needed, though dressed similarly.)*

NEELSIE ... Reeds is daar herhaaldelik aangekondig dat my uitvoerige eie lewensbeskrywing, waarin ek niks omtrent my deugde en die gebreke in my tydgenote sal verkort of verswyg nie, ná my dood sal verskyn. As die leser ongeduldig na die boek uitsien, moet hy my tog vergewe dat ek nie in sy ongeduld kan deel nie. Intussen leef ek nog. Maar omdat ek so 'n donkere en geheimsinnige lewe gelei het ... dat niemand daar iets van af weet nie (nie eens my vrou nie, dan het sy nooit ja gesê nie), word ek dag vir dag oorval met aansoeke van bloemlesingversamelaars om besonderhede omtrent my persoonlike geskiedenis.

Ek kan nou net nie verstaan waarom dit die lesers van daardie versamelings sou interesseer om te verneem waar ek oral rondgeswerwe het en watter brande en bankrotskappe ek geniet het nie. Wat traak jou die persoonlike sake van die telegraafbode, solank hy jou maar behoorlik die telegram aflewer? 'n Skrywer is maar 'n boodskapper; wat hy self met bewuste opset sê, beteken niks. Net omdat 'n man 'n skrywer is, moet hy nou op 'n verhoogde-statuspaal ten toon gestel word en bôgom, bôgom skree en sy nakende liggaam wys omdat hy sy siel ontbloom het. My werke is dáár; nader as dit aan die wesentlike Langenhoven sal geen biografie ooit kom nie.

Ek het gedink ek sal daardie volledige outobiografie vernietig sodat ek kan dood wees wanneer ek dood is.... Want waarheid kan dit tog nooit werklik wees nie ... dis die stories wat die waarhede bevat...

Maar toe vergeet ek van die naakte waarhede van die alledaagse lewe: daar is sekere spesies wat jy nooit afgeskud kry nie, al bokspring, klap en skree jy soos 'n besetene. Vlieë, muskiete, bloedsuiers, assurancesie-agente, dokters, prokureurs en veral daardie knaende bloemlesing-skêr-en-gompot literateurs waarvan ek nou effens gepraat het, hulle het ons maar altyd by

en om ons. Om al die nieskrywende boekproduseerders dan om hemelsnaam tevrede te stel en van my nek af te kry, gee ek vir julle hiermee 'n klein kort "potted biography" of blompotsketsie van my wedervaringe tot hier toe...

Ek is in die jaar 1963 gebore in die stad Utrecht in Holland onderwyl my vader in Japan was en my moeder in die Pêrel. Haar naam was Pollie en haar reis daarheen word in 'n bekende volksliedjie besing. Dadelik die dag ná my geboorte het die liefdadige universiteite van Holland 'n aantal eregrade aan my toegeken omdat ek die aarde ontdek het, maar ek het daardie doktorstitels deur onbruik laat verval, om nie met so 'n tallose skare van gelykbegunstigde Afrikaners verwar te word nie. Ek het maar altyd na onderskeiding gesoek....

The light fades while he speaks the last line.

SCENE TWO/TONEEL TWEE

*There is silence for a beat then he speaks as **Twain**, and the light fades in again.*

TWAIN: ...In this autobiography I shall keep in mind the fact that I am speaking from the grave. I am literally speaking from the grave, because I shall be dead when the book issues from the press. I speak from the grave rather than with my living tongue for a good reason: I can speak thence freely. When a man is writing a book dealing with the privacies of his life - a book which is to be read when he is still alive - he shrinks from speaking his whole frank mind; all his attempts to do it fail; he recognizes he is trying to do a thing which is wholly impossible to a human being... so he does what we all do... he tells lies, he relates fables, he imagines incidents...and then reshapes and reformulates them into tales and stories. That is what writers do, that is what I do...

But, be that as it may ... the fact is, I was born the 30th November, 1835, in the almost invisible village of Florida, Monroe County, Missouri. My parents removed to Missouri in the early 'thirties; I do not remember just when, for I was not born then and cared nothing for such things. ...The village contained a hundred people and I increased the population by one per cent. It is more than many of the best men in history could have done for a town. It may not be modest of me to refer to this, but it is true. There is no record of a person doing as much - not even Shakespeare. But I did it for Florida and it shows I could have done it for any place - even London.

Recently someone sent me a picture of the house which I was born in. Heretofore I have always stated that it was a palace but I shall be more guarded now...

The light fades while he speaks the last line.

SCENE THREE/TONEEL DRIE

Die Lounge. Achmat is besig om kroeg tipe dinge te doen. Dit storm luidrugtig buite. Die deur gaan oop en 'n bedremmelde Barend kom binne, skud die water van hom af en kyk rond na die leë kamer, stap dan kroeg toe.

BAREND: Magtag! Maar dis 'n stormwind daarbuite. (*Kyk weer rond.*) Waar is almal vanaand? Seker knus in die bed met 'n warmwatersak, of hoe?

ACHMAT: Naand meneer. Kaapse winter meneer. Wat sal dit wees..?

BAREND: Naand ja. Kaapse winter.. Ghnmf. Wat vir 'n gereënery in die winter is dit met julle? Daar op Bloemfontein waar ek vandaan kom reën dit ordentlik - én op die regte tyd - vinnig, hard en in die somer.... As dit reën, moet ek bysê. Gee maar daar 'n bier man. Voor 'n floute my oorval hier...

ACHMAT: Hier is hy meneer - 'n flessie teennie floute (*Gee hom 'n bier.*)

BAREND: Ah ja. (*Drink*) Laat ek jou vertel... um.. wat is jou naam?

ACHMAT: Achmat meneer..

BAREND: Achmat , ja, nou laat ek jou vertel Achmat - ek kom nou pas van Colesberg af, oor Beaufort en Laingsburg - en dit was nat en koud en wit gesneeu al die pad. Ons het byna gevrek. Ek kan nie wag om terug op Bloemfontein en voor my vuur te wees nie. Dit alles vir 'n paar sinnetjies 'n dag met dieselfde ou politieke spookstories oor volk en vaderland, droogte, runderpes, die Engelse gevaar, die Nasionale Sosialisme, ... Ai. Verkiesing, verkiesing, stem sus, stem só - dis al wat jy hoor... En om jou vrek mense van die honger, die dors of die angs oor die ekonomie. Wat skryf jy dan as jy nie almal tot selfmoord wil dryf nie..?

ACHMAT: Dis slegte tye meneer..

BAREND: Slegte tye, ja slegte tye... Maar nouja... (*Drink sy bier.*) Dank vader tog vir mense soos Senator Langenhoven, mense met 'n sin van humor. Na hom kan jy darem luister... Die res, ai tog! Dor net die land verder uit... (*Drink*)

ACHMAT: Dis politiek meneer.. so sê hulle my.. ek sal nie juis weet nie..

BAREND: Ja, dis nou vir jou politiek. (*Stilte*) Achmat my vriend - droom jy nie ook soms oor beter dinge nie? Hê? Om hier uit te kom, om iets te dóén nie?

ACHMAT: (*Trek skouers op en glimlag*) Dis 'n jop meneer, ek't hom by my pa geërf en hy bring darem kos virrie tafel... ag en die mense is nie te onaardig nie.. 'n tippie hier, 'n tippie daar en mens hoor baie stories...

BAREND: Stories!! Man nou praat jy... Jy weet ek... ek wil eintlik 'n skrywer word. Stories maak... my kop loop oor van idees weet jy... En toe gaan werk ek by die koerant. Om te leer skryf, nê? Om stories te versamel en hulle so fênsie en lekker neer te kan skryf. En wat kry ek? Dié jop. Ry as hiertjy saam 'n senior joernalis wat meer tyd in kroë spandeer as in vergaderings, dan moet ék in sy plek na die die klomp droë dr... semels gaan luister en hulle onbenullighede opteken - sodat sy hoogheid die senior joernalis stofbelaaide telegramme vol "wyskede" terug kan stuur na die hoofkantoor. "Political turmoil in Colesberg when Ds Malan speaks" - ek werk vir 'n Engelse koerant, *The Friend*, sien, maar ek skryf stilletjies ook goed vir die *Landstem* bo in die noorde "Kiesers stroom na vergadering op De Aar"..... Hoeww!!! Ek moes miskien maar ook jou jop kom doen het...

ACHMAT: Jy sien darem die land, meneer... ek sien net hierdie kamer...

BAREND: (*Lag*) Hmmph. Jaa.. miskien is jy reg... Maar waar's die *stories*, man?

Die deur gaan oop, stormkranke, en NEELSIE: kom binne. Trek sy oorjas uit, skud hom droog, kyk rond, loop na 'n tafel toe, waar hy gaan sit. Hy wink vir Achmat. Hy het griep en is effens koorsig en nie altyd heeltemal by nie. Hy steek dadelik 'n sigaret op. Hy rook een strook deur hierdie toneel.

BAREND: Waar is die stories... Maar...jaa wat, Achmat, miskien is jy reg. Miskien moet ek gelukkig wees met wat ek het...dis 'n bymekaarmaaktyd...ek moet ophou neul en stof versamel en dit in my stories inwerk.. Soos daardie Kipling-vent jy weet - die Ooste deurkruis en stories oor Fakirs en Rajahs en sulke goed bymekaarmaak... (*Staar na sy bier. Achmat beweeg na Neelsie toe.*) Wat deurkruis ek? Die Vrystaat, Noordkaap en hoë Karoo...Ai, mens kan maar seker droom. Ek wens net iets wil met my gebeur! Voel my my lewe is een lang verveling...(Drink sy bier leeg. Kyk om en sien nou eers Achmat is by die nuweling.)

NEELSIE:: Achmat, hoe gaan dit my jong?

ACHMAT: Goeie naand meneer Langenhoven. Dit gaan goed, nog altyd so op 'n drafstappie langes...

(Barend hoor en besef wie dit is. Dit kom vir hom soos 'n openbaring.)

NEELSIE:: ..drafstap bog! Swem, swem lyk dit my... Moses se vloed... Die Kaapse weer is so 'n verdekselse bedrieglike spul... Gee my daar 'n brandy asseblief jong, die koue is my bene in.. Wag alweer vir die laatnag trein.

ACHMAT: Die elfuur trein na Laingsburg en Oudtshoorn?

NEELSIE: Dis net hy...

ACHMAT: Dis nog so 'n uur om te wag... hoekom sit meneer nie nader aan die vuur nie..

NEELSIE: Die vuur.. ah ja. *(Staan op en stap vuur toe terwyl Achmat die brandewyn gaan kry. Sit daar, staar na die vlamme. Barend stap nader, staan 'n ent weg van hom af, skraap sy moed bymekaar om met Langenhoven te praat. Neelsie word bewus van die man langs hom wanneer hy sy drankie kry. Hy kyk na Barend, dan terug na die vuur.)* Vuur...van die mens se bestaan af was die vuur jou dierbaarste besitting, die bymekaarplek van die familie, die volk, die eensame reisiger in die vreemde, vryers en vyande, die vuurtjie wat ons warm maak, ons voed, ons drome laat droom... Ai!

BAREND: ..Naand Senator...

NEELSIE: Dis wat ons meer gemaak het as die diere, dié ontdekking, weet jy?... Die wonderbaarlike towenary van 'n knetterende vuur...

BAREND: Kan ek vir 'n oomblik hier met oom gesels?

NEELSIE:: Dis 'n vry land en 'n publieke kroeg seun... en die wêreld is koud en woes daarbuite... waarom sit jy nie?

BAREND: Dankie *(Sit)* Uh my naam is Barend Gouws oom...

NEELSIE: *(Knik)* ..Ek voel soms ek kyk in my eie siel in as ek so in die vlamme staar... of ek waarhede en gesigte sien..*(Kyk na Barend, glimlag.)* Het jy al in die vuur gestaar, en jouself gesien...? *(Ruk hom reg)* Lyk my ek yl... *(Hoes)* seker maar die verdekselse verkoue.. alles voel so, so in 'n waas vanaand...

BAREND: Ek wil net sê, ek het oom .. ek bedoel Senator.. se lesing..

NEELSIE: Oom is 'n beter titel, seun, daar's meer adel soms in goeie oom wees as in 'n middelmatige senator. Ek's 'n beter oom as senator sou ek sê...

BAREND: Dankie Oom, ek wil net sê ek was saam op die Colesberg toer... en ek wil net sê..

NEELSIE: (*Effens brommerig-ongeduldig*) Sê dan man! Moenie soos 'n werfhond heen en weer stofdraaie gooi by die paal waar jy 'n merk wil maak nie...

BAREND: (*Alles met een slag, om dit uit te kry*). Ja, ek's jammer oom, ek bedoel ek wou net sê hoeveel ek oom se stories geniet en die toesprake geniet het...

NEELSIE: Dankie. Ek is verheug dat jy ten minste die tyd op reis met ons politieke sirkus plesierig gevind het.... (*Beduie vir Achmat vir 'n hervul*)

BAREND: (*Lag onseker.*) Nie alles...of almal nie, oom..

NEELSIE: (*Kyk met effense belangstelling na die seun*) Ah, nogal 'n sinikus, nê? Is jy dalk 'n kritikus?

BAREND: (*Onthuts*) Nêe oom, nie 'n kritikus nie! Ook nie sinies nie... (*Lag dan*) .. maar soms maar bra verveeld, as ek eerlik moet wees.....

NEELSIE: O, wees altyd eerlik... dit sorg gewoonlik darem vir so 'n bietjie struweling en aksie, en werk die verveling teë. (*Sien die effense geskokte verbasing op die seun se gesig en lag.*). Moet ek jou 'n geheim vertel ou seun - die ou wêreld is maar hoofsaaklik verveling - as hy nie vol sonde en ergernis en belasting is nie... Solank daar mense is, solank jy bure het, gaan hulle jou óf verveel óf jou lewe versondig - of dalk albei as jy dit sleg tref. (*Achmat kom met drankie*) Dankie. Dink maar nou aan Achmat se lot, nê? Hier moet hy luister na al die dwaashede wat die mens ooit kan kwytraak... En hy sien byna almal een of ander tyd. Is jy verveeld Achmat?

ACHMAT: (*Lag*) Nee Senator... ek hou my besig.. met ditjies en datjies, en dan is daar mos interessante stories ook...

NEELSIE: Ah, 'n filosoof die man. Jy is 'n veel beter man dan ek Gungha Din!! ... Sê my ou seun, wat bring jou vanaand hier...op hierdie byna god en mensverlate plek, by hierdie vuur...? Watter bestiering bring ons so bymekaar...?

BAREND: Ek is op pad terug huistoe... Bloemfontein toe. Ek wag vir die trein.

NEELSIE: Soos ek.. 'n reisiger terug...

BAREND: ...en ek is 'n joernalis oom, 'n korrespondent vir die *Landstem* en 'n "cub-reporter" vir die Bloemfontein *Friend*

NEELSIE: ..en jy soek 'n "interview" vir jou Ingelse bladjie..?

BAREND: Ja.. nee.. ja ..ek bedoel as oom nie omgee nie.. (*Hy trek sy baadjie uit, kry pen en papier reg.*) ... Dit sal so 'n "scoop" wees...

NEELSIE: (*Peinsend, sien nie juis die voorbereidings nie*)..en wat maak jy as ek dan omgee, as ek g'n sin daarin het nie? Wat maak jy dan? Gaan jy dan huistoe en versin sommer 'n onderhoud? Maak of hierdie gesprek gebeur het, dig hom vol wysshede...?

BAREND: Néé oom, ek sal mos nou nie...

NEELSIE: En wat vir 'n joernalis is jy dan?! Deurdruk jong man, dis al raad. Feit of fiksie - die storie moet uit!

BAREND: ..ek leer nog om te skryf oom, maar ek is nie daardie soort...

NEELSIE: O, ja, ek onthou nou, jy is *eerlik*, jy vertel net die waarheid -

BAREND: Oom..?

NEELSIE: (*Amper of hy hom tereg wys*) .. jy gaan dit nie maak as skrywer nie, boet! Weet jy wat is die basiese kuns van die skrywer? Jy moet leer leuens vertel. Alle stories is liegstories op een of ander manier... Soos 'n man eenmaal vir my gesê het, die hoof kenmerk 'n *goeie* storie is slegs die oortuiging waarmee jy jou leuen vertel.... "the skill of storytelling lies in the quality of the lie" (*Hoes, ruk hom weer reg. Sien die seun se gesig. Lag*) Toemaar seun, dis die koors en die knetterende vuur en die brandewyn wat so onnutsig is... Ek terg met jou ... ek dink soms die ware storieverteller se fyn net van uitgesoekte leuens bevat meer waarheid as al die grootpraterige, pronkerige fiksies van politikusse en wetenskaplikes. (*Barend skryf naarstiglik die dinge neer*)... Ons almal verdraai wat met ons gebeur het, kleur dit in om onself of die saak te versier en goed te laat voorkom - of sleg. Ek het honderde watersake in my lewe hanteer, en as jy nou vindingryke leuens wil hoor moet jy daar gewees het: geen mens is so erg oor sy besittings soos 'n boer oor 'n leibeurt nie! En "all's fair in love and war" Om die waarheid te se, ek begin glo hoe nietiger die saak, hoe groter die leuen.

BAREND: Maar oom, al die stories en boeke, hulle bevat tog seker ook ware verhale...?

NEELSIE: Daar is nie boek - hoor jy my? - nie 'n boek ... wel, behalwe miskien die Bybel as jy wil - wat die volle waarheid vertel nie. "Want wij zien nu door eenen spiegel in eene duistere rede, maar alsdan zullen wij sien aangezicht tot aangezicht, nu ken ik ten deele, maar alsdan zal ik kennen gelijk ik

gekend ben", soos ons lees. Die groot probleem is eintlik óns, ons is en was nog altyd *storievertellers* - of ons stories nou geskiedenis, hofgetuienis of 'n toneelstuk is. Iemand, ek dink dis daardie Amerikaner Mark Twain, het eenkeer iets gesê soos "a historian who wants to convey the truth has to lie. He must often enlarge on the truth, otherwise his reader will not be able to see it." Jy sien, dis alles maar taal en taal is die medium waarmee ons ons siele openbaar - en toespinnend in mooi klere en versiering. Want ná Adam se ou mistastingkie loop ons nie meer trots en kaal nie, ons moet vyeblare oes en stik en kledingstukke daarvan maak - ons skaam ons oor ons eerlike swakhede... (*Kyk na sy glas.*). En dit is wat politiek is - leuens vir die beswil van die volk. Of dis wat dit seker moet wees... Ongelukkig is daar ook dié wat selfsugtige leuens vertel... of wat dink net hulle leuen kan die ware leuen wees... .. (*Besef skielik dat alles neergeskryf word. Word kwaad.*) Skryf jy alles neer? My magtag, gaan ek nou alweer hierdie dinge lees in die Bloemfonteinse *Companion of Courier*, ...of ..*Tell-me-a lie*.. of watookal

BAREND: *Friend ... (brommend)*

NEELSIE: *Friend - ja ... en al die ander Engelse "papers" van die land...?? Moet ek weer agterkom ek het ketterse dinge kwytgeraak en die res van my lewe swoeg om dit af te leef...? "Langenhoven reveals the truth about the lies" of "Langenhoven exposes the opposition" sal hulle sê... en dan kêf en blaf al die Afrikaanse koerante agterna... "Langenhoven sê almal lieg!" of "Langenhoven maak 'n bespotting van die politiek", of "Langenhoven stem alweer vir Engels"...*

BAREND: Néé Oom, dis sommer notas, ek sal mos nie...

NEELSIE: (*Praat met homself nou, starend na die vuur*) ...Maak nie saak wat ek vir my taal en my volk gedoen het nie, nee, hulle sal nooit vergeet nie... iewers sal daar iemand wees wat onthou...en dit wat gebeur het verdraai, want hulle was nie daar nie, weet nie wat ek wou doen nie... Domonnosele esels wat nie 'n argument kan lees en volg nie... dan word hulle verslaggewers, of kritici of professore .. (*Kyk na **Barend** met erns, praat aantygend*) Is jy dalk ook 'n hooggeprese professor doktor van Stellenbosch?!!

BAREND: (*Onthuts oor die vurigheid van die ouer man, maar lag tog*) Nee.. nee nooit oom...

NEELSIE: (*Langenhoven gluur hom 'n oomblik aan, vee die sweet sy voorkop af en dis of hy weer bykom*) O.. goed.. goed...

BAREND: (*Desperaat*) Maar Oom, niemand kan tog so iets dink nie - kyk net wat Oom alles reggekry het.. die boeke wat ons leer lees, en lag en saamstaan

het, die berigte wat ons oorreed het, die wette wat die taal gevestig het ...?
(*Hy wikkel sy das los in die spanning van die oomblik*)

NEELSIE: (*Nog iewers anders*) ...hulle was mos nie dáár nie... hulle weet nie waar dinge vandaan gekom het nie... (*Stilte. Hy drink aan sy brandewyn, steek weer outomaties 'n sigaret op. Staar dan vir 'n oomblik na **Barend***) ... wat is jou naam nou weer ou seun....?

Ligte verdof tot donker.

SCENE FOUR/TONEEL VIER

*It is dark on stage. In the dark **Barend** sheds his tie and glasses, reverses his waistcoat and puts on a bow tie - thus changing to **Kerneels**. As a spotlight comes on at **Lectern 2** we hear the sounds of conversation and occasional laughter, etc. Somebody raps on the table and announces "Silence please for our next speaker, Mr Cornelius Langenhoven...third year student ... to debate the point "What shall be the future language of South Africa." Scattered applause and student ribaldry, then the noise subsides as **Kerneels** walks to the lectern, putting down his voluminous hand-written notes. He reads from the notes. In the background **Neelsie** remains seated, listening, in a dim pool of light, from where he interrupts on occasion.*

KERNEELS: Ladies and gentleman, to a stranger English is a more helpful language in Holland than Dutch is in any country outside of Holland, excepting the few Dutch colonies and South Africa. In our opinion no greater injustice could be done to our country than by forcing upon us a worthless and insignificant language, especially after it has clearly been shown that the rising generation takes to English more easily and appreciates it more readily than Dutch.... However, there is also a third competitor, namely Africander Dutch.There is some discussion as to whether Africander Dutch is an independent language or a dialect. To me it appears that this can make no difference to the question. A good dialect is better than a bad language; and the qualifications of Afrikander Dutch for the position of national language will depend not upon its greater or lesser individuality, but upon its intrinsic qualities, and upon circumstances. Now, would these justify the adoption of Africander Dutch as a national language? ...I do not think so, since Africander Dutch offers no scope for intellectual training, for it has no literature, and a very poor vocabulary. For internal intercourse and as trade medium, English is superior to it; and for foreign trade it stands nowhere...

*Light on **Lectern 2** fades, lights on **Lounge** fade in.*

SCENE FIVE/TONEEL VYF

*In die donker trek **Kerneels** sy strikdas uit, draai sy onderbaadjie om, trek die das aan en sit sy bril op, om so weer **Barend** te word. Intussen hoor ons **Neelsie** praat.*

NEELSIE: ...hulle was mos nie dáár nie... hulle weet nie waar dinge vandaan gekom het nie... (*Stilte. Hy drink aan sy brandewyn, steek in die donker weer outomaties 'n sigaret op.*) ... wat is jou naam nou weer ou seun..? (*Die ligte kom aan en ons sien hoe **Neelsie** weer oor sy voorkop vee, bietjie verward*) O ja, Barend.. Barend Gouws. Jammer, ek yl weer. Achmat, skink maar hier vir my...

BAREND: Maar regtig oom, het oom regtig geglo Engels is die taal vir die land...? Ek bedoel, vroeër..?

NEELSIE: Sien, selfs jy vergeet nie, en jy was nie eers gebore toe nie! Niemand let daarop dat dit 'n *debatspunt* was nie, en derhalwe net 'n oefening in denke en redenering. Wat ek goed gedoen het, terloops! Té goed seker... (*Dink daaroor na*) Maar... ja, in die tyd? Ja, ek het gedink Engels is die taal vir die land. En ja ek het van insigte verander op veertigjarige leeftyd. En wat ek met trots kan sê is dat ek ten minste kón verander en dit *erken*. En dit reg te maak... waar reg te maak is. Wat min mense in ag neem is hoeveel intussen ook in die land en die taal self verander het en waarom. En wat jy nie weet nie, wat min mense weet, is wat dit *my* gekos het nie.. jy weet nie van die worstelings wat ek moes deurmaak, hoe ek ontwikkel het, of waarom nie...

BAREND: (*Verward, maar voel hy is op die spoor van iets.*) Dis seker so oom, ek weet nie, ek weet te min, maar ek *wil* weet. Ek wil kan skryf wat ek weet oom, nie wat ek sommer uit my duim gesuig het nie...

NEELSIE: (*Kyk Barend stip aan.*) Jy weet... jy herinner my aan iemand wat ek eentyd geken het...byna veertig jaar gelede voel dit my...

BAREND: (*Lag*) ek is drie-en twintig oom...

NEELSIE: Drie-en-twintig...O, hý was ook op 'n keer drie-en-twintig ou seun. En toe was hy veertig.. Ek ook... En eendag, binnekort, is jy ook veertig... (*Lang stilte. **Barend** raak kriewelrig. Dan begin **Neelsie** mymerend praat.*) ...Jy weet ou seun, 'n hoë ouderdom sal ek seker nie bereik nie. Die feit is, hoe spoedig mens by jou bestemming aanland, hang nie af van hoe lank die pad was nie, maar hoe vinnig jy gereis het. Ek het nie alleen vinnig geleef nie maar baie lewenstye se aandoenings en ervarings in my een lewe saamgepak. (***Barend** wil in die rede val, bly dan stil.*) Jy weet, ek het seker veel meer as my regmatige beurt gehad, oneindig minder as my verdiende deel van leed, oneindig meer as my verdiende deel van geluk. By doen en by nalaat was ek en bly ek 'n sondaar, (*sotto voce*) God alleen weet hoe

groot, maar onreg en bedrog en valsheid, hetsy in my omgang teenoor my ewenaaste, hetsy in my beroep of in die politiek, was nooit my gebruikelike ondeug nie. (*Nou driftig*) En vir die res sien ek nie in wie geregtig is op besonderhede omtrent van my lewensloop nie. Omdat ek probeer het om te dien, moet ek gestraf word met inkwisisies buitekant die grense van my diens? My werke is dáár; nader as dit aan die wesentlike Langenhoven sal geen biografie ooit kom nie. Lees die goed man, doen om hemelsnaam jou verdekselse huiswerk!.

BAREND: (*Aanvanklik verslae oor die erns van Neelsie. Dan probeer hy weer.*) Ek.. ek het oom...ek het hulle byna almal al gelees dink ek... (*tentatiewe glimlag*) en ek weet vir 'n feit daardie laaste betoog was 'n aanhaling uit oom se eie werk...

NEELSIE:: (*Glimlag bars deur sy koors en geagiteerde gees*) Ah ja, ek sien jy het voorberei. (*Drink weer.*) ...Maar hierdie aand, hierdie weer, dit voel of dit alles voorheen gebeur het, of ons al hierdie gesprek kon gehad het.. ek was jy, jy was ek miskien... is dit dalk wat die Franse *dé ja vu* noem? (*Barend is nou bekommerd oor die ou man se gesondheid*) Here weet, ek hét so byna-byna daarvan vergeet. Hoe kan mens so iets vergeet...? Dink jy Paulus het vergeet van die insident op die pad na Damaskus...? Dalk was die verskyning aan hom ook maar net een van 'n reeks klein gebeure, wat hy opgeblaas het en bygedig het in sy oorvertelling daarvan...? Hy wás tog 'n skrywer en 'n digter die man.. Wie sal weet, want net hy was daar.. om dit waar te neem... Maar die insident wat *hy* verkies het om te onthou en oor te skryf... .. Ek onthou 'n ou man se woorde eenmaal - hier in hierdie einste stad ... ek het destyds gedink hy maak 'n grap. Hy het gesê "When I was younger, I could remember anything, whether it happened or not; but I am getting old, and soon I shall remember only what never happened..." (*Sluk sy drankie af. Kyk na sy horlosie, wink vir Achmat om vol te maak.*) Dit was nie 'n grap nie...(Besluit) Barend.. dit is mos Barend, nê? Barend van Bloemfontein se vriendskaplike Ingelse koerant... Sal ek vir jou 'n storie vertel....oor 'n eksentrieke ou man en oor 'n verwarde jong leerling prokureurtjie - self ook later 'n kleindorpse verslaggewertjie...Dis nie 'n storie wat in die boeke is nie. Ek gee dit vir jou - maar onthou - ek is nou self 'n ou man met 'n glibberige en kreatiewe geheue, iemand wat nie noodwendig homself gaan beperk tot feite wanneer hy uitsprake maak nie... so, jy moet maar self die waarheid of die leuen daarvan uitpluis...

BAREND: Maar oom...!!!

Ligte verdof tot donker.

SCENE SIX/TONEEL SES

A neutral space at the front of the stage, representing a passage somewhere in the Hotel, it is now 1896. **Livy and Ruth** appear, walking slowly, arm in arm. The girl is carrying a 1890's copy of **Huckleberry Finn**.

RUTH : (*voice offstage*) ... my friends envy me so much, having actually spoken to him, discussed his books with him, played gin rummy with him... (*they enter*) ...and meeting you and Clara, having tea with you. Mamma says we are so fortunate, for we seldom get truly fashionable people here... Though Mr Kipling has visited us.... but I never got to talk to *him*...And I hear Mr Wells has plans for coming.. Oh - It's truly like a dream..

LIVY: (*Polite smile*) I am glad.....it seems like dream to me too, Ruth my dear... (*pause*) though at times almost more like one of those remorseless dreams you fear you are never going to wake up from... (*sees the girl's stricken face*) Oh come now, I'm sorry, you misunderstand me, I am not saying that we have not enjoyed ourselves here with your family and all the magnificent scenery of the Cape Colony... it has been glorious and you have all been so terribly kind. I am just a little tired now and then, so I pine for home and the rest of my children. (*laughs lightly*) Ten months of travelling around the globe can do this to you.

RUTH : Oh. (*Smiles*) Oh yes, of course, sorry. You must miss them terribly. And all those uncomfortable vehicles, the endless packing and unpacking and meeting of people must be wearying for you. But to think of all that adventure! And surely, travelling with Mr Twain.. I mean Mr Clemens... It must be *such* fun... He is so funny and entertaining..

LIVY: Oh, yes, that he certainly is.... (*she is about to add something, but holds back*)

RUTH : ...I wonder where he is now..?

LIVY: (*Realizes the subject's been changed. With an indulgent smile*) ... he's no doubt somewhere playing billiards with some of the men or holding court on the wonders of his travels, the evils of imperialism and the marvels of American civilization... and then he'll no doubt slip off to the bar for a drink and a bit of a rehearsal...

RUTH : Oh. (*Laughing, then a little uncertainly*) Really, Mrs Clemens. But do you think he wants to rehearse? He said I should meet him in the Lower Lounge, he said he would sign my book then... but I wouldn't like to disturb him..

LIVY: (*Looking her over for a moment - then a little wryly*) ...Oh, I am sure he would not mind being disturbed by you.. he'll be only too happy to meet you there and sign your book my dear ... He loves to be fawned upon.. All

authors do in fact... If I were you, I'd go and get the book, and practice your fawning a bit... while Clara and I go to meet your parents..

RUTH : *(Her voice as they leave the stage, with an uncertain laugh..)* ...I am not sure how good a fawner I could be, Mrs Clemens...

LIVY: *(Voice)* Oh but I think you are doing exceedingly well my dear...

Lights fade out

SCENE SEVEN/TONEEL SEWE

The Lounge where Achmat is busy doing waiter-like things, when not cleaning ashtrays, etc, he can flit between bar and off-stage tables with trays of drinks, or just stand motionless by the door to the bar, watchful for any customer needing help.

The door to the foyer opens, allowing in street noises etc, and Kerneels enters, wet and rather dishevelled, a small suitcase in his hand,. He looks around and sees the fire, but hesitates to go there. Goes to Achmat, asking softly about having a drink. Achmat indicates a seat at a nearby table, then slips through to the bar to get the order. Looking about him, obviously his first time in this space, Kerneels takes off his wet raincoat, makes himself comfortable, lights a cigarette. Achmat returns with a brandy and water.

ACHMAT: A brandy and water sir. That will be sixpence sir.

KERNEELS: Sixpence, yes. Of course. Ses pennies. Wag net... *(searches clumsily, gets the money)* Hierso.

ACHMAT: Dankie meneer. *(Steps away to the door)*

KERNEELS: Wag.. wag. Sê my, sê my umm .. hoe vêr is dit van hier af na die Royal Hotel toe? Ek bedoel - hoe lank sal dit my vat om soontoe te loop?

ACHMAT: *(Thinks)* Dis so 'n halwe myl, meneer. So tien minute as mens jou litte roer, kwartier as jy gatsleep.

KERNEELS: Dankie.....ek moet môreoggend die trein haal terug Oudtshoorn toe.

ACHMAT: Oudtshoorn? "Half past seven, platform two". ... um .. so half agt . Ek weet.. my swaer vat hom altyd terug Worcester se kant toe.

KERNEELS: Dis hy ja.. dankie *(He feels compelled to explain.)* Ek het net papiere vir die prokureurskantoor op Ladismith by die hooggeregshof kom afgee... Gisteraand gekom. In die Royal hotel geslaap - "courtesy of Mr Theophilus Johnson, attorney at law and notary, of Ladismith, Cape

Province" .. (*Silence*) My baas. Ek is 'n klerk by hulle... of eintlik maar 'n onbetaalde hiertjy en "glorified" bode as jy wil weet... en hulle kry wrintiewaar hulle ponde vleis ook. (*Sighs*) Maar nouja.. Dis werk en mens sal seker iets leer. Meer miskien as op Stellenbosch by die College.... Maar dit gaan maar rof.. Om des brode gee ek nog private Duitse taallesse ook - in die aande, en probeer so tussendeur leer vir die prokureurseksamens. (*Laughs*) Nie veel tyd vir danse en vry na meisies nie! Nie dat daar juis plaaslik te krye is nie, moet ek byvoeg..

ACHMAT: Droogte wêreld of hoe dan? Ek dink ek bly dan ma' hierso, waar dit woel...

KERNEELS: (*Laughs*) Wel ja.. jy kan dit so stel.. Maar dis ook nou nie dat ek nie my deel van die kommer en sorg van die liefde ontglip het nie ... Dalk meer as my regmatige deel daarvan as jy my vra...

Achmat smiles briefly, returns to his post by the door. Silence. Kerneels sighs deeply. Sips his drink, lights a cigarette, then takes out a pen and some writing paper, begins to compose a letter.

*The babble of voices approaches and then foyer door is pushed open and held. We cannot see anyone yet, but hear the voices in their excitement. The central voice is that of **Twain** holding court, then we hear a man's voice:*

A MAN: So - it is clear you do not approve of Mr Rhodes or the imperial policy or the way the Colonel Jameson led his soldiers That does seem to be a rather popular sentiment today. But really, now that you've seen them, sir - what do you think of our boers, Mr Twain? (*General laughter*)

TWAIN: ..Ah well, there you have me. I do think you overshoot the mark a little by calling him "your" Boer, I do not think he is yet owned by anyone - certainly not by your queen Victoria or Mr Rhodes - nor does he ever want to be, judging by his actions. But then, I have little real experience of him, for I have not met many boers on this trip, so all I have is their reputation to go on. And that is quite a varied species of reputation, it makes him appear a very singular archaeological curiosity indeed, something like the wild man of Borneo or the savage Red Indian of America. It is as if he is locked into the past somehow and has elected to stay there for reasons of his own. In fact the reports are so conflicting and wide-ranging as to puzzle me exceedingly. I think I'll have to study him far more thoroughly than I have been able to, and little more scientifically too. (*The door opens fully and Twain appears*) ... You do not perhaps have a few in captivity for me, do you sir? ... (*General laughter.*) But I do beg you to excuse me, I shall see you all a little later... I would like to do some preparation if you don't mind.. (*He closes the door and the voices recede, discussing his remarks excitedly. He stands with his back to the door for a moment,*

vaguely viewing the room. Slowly we see his pumped up **Twain** persona diminishing, and a sadness and tiredness settle over his face. He does not notice **Neelsie**, but gestures to **Achmat** and moves over to the fire, where he sits down.)

TWAIN: Good afternoon Achmat. Can we try an "old fashioned" again? And go easy on the lemon this time ... Thank ye.... *(Takes out a notepad and pen, putting them on the table in front of him. Then prepares a cigar and sighing deeply, lights up slowly, staring at the fire.)*

There is silence for a moment, sounds of people far off, doors opening and closing, letting in the sound of the storm. Kerneels, having stopped his writing, is staring at the old man in puzzlement and a slowly mounting anger. Achmat returns to report.

ACHMAT: An old fashioned Scotch Mr Clemens coming up sir. The barman says he make sure of the lemon this time and thank you for the recipe. He says good luck for the talk tonight...

TWAIN: Huh? Oh, yes, thank you my friend. A pleasure.... *(Relapses into a brown study for a second. Rouses himself when he realizes Achmat is still hovering.)* Some pretty inclement weather you're having here it seems to me. Enough to scare off all your customers. All except me that is... *(Looks around at the empty room and sees Kerneels. Hesitates, turns to the Achmat.)* ... oh, and our young friend over there. *(Takes another, more calculating look at Kerneels)* Why don't you ask him to come on over to the fire... there's plenty of room and he seems rather unhappy over there in the cold. *(Takes up his notepad, begins working on his notes for his speech later that evening.)*

ACHMAT: Thank you Mr Clemens. I'll tell him - he came in wet. *(Walks over to Kerneels, speaks softly to him.)* Die ou man wil weet of meneer nie maar ook by die vuur wil kom sittie... daar's baie plek sê hy.

KERNEELS: *(Looking calculatingly at Twain.)* Het jy gehoor wat die ou vrexel sê toe hy inkom? *(Diplomatically Achmat does not say anything, simply walks away.)* Hmm ja.. jy stem seker saam met hom, jy met jou uniform soos 'n lord en jou Engelse airs. *(Shivers, laughs off his own bad humour, and decides to take up the offer. Gathers his things and moves over to the fireplace.)* Good evening sir.. thank you for the invitation to share the fire.. It is cold tonight.

TWAIN: Mmm? Oh, yes... it is. *(Staring at the fire, making a note or two, he offers no further comment for a moment. Eventually notices Kerneels watching him.)* Please go on with your meditations son, I saw you pondering over there. I have no wish for conversation at the moment - just some heat. I am

sure you have much to concern you. I know I have...I have to prepare myself for the public stage, and you have no idea what that does to a man... (*Almost as if to himself. There is a pause, he makes a note or two.*)

KERNEELS: (*Hurt and feeling rejected, cringes a little and drinks the last of his brandy, then looks for a new cigarette, but his packet is empty. Beckons to Achmat, who has come in with the drink.*) Achmat! Jy kan nie dalk vir my 'n pakkie sigarette kry nie? Flags as julle het. (*Gives Achmat some money, Achmat goes off*) Dankie.

TWAIN: (*Suddenly interested when he hears the Afrikaans. He looks at Kerneels from under his bushy eyebrows for a while.*) Interesting. What language was that you were speaking now? It almost sounded like German, is it some kind of Dutch?

KERNEELS: It is Dutch... well of a sort. What we call "Africander Dutch"... and other people speak of "Cape Dutch" or even of "kitchen Dutch".

TWAIN: That is a language?

KERNEELS: Yes.. I suppose it depends on what you mean by a language .. I would call it a language.. a new or perhaps an evolving language.. yes.

TWAIN: But I thought you all spoke ordinary Dutch.. I mean Dutch as they speak it in Holland .. if you do not speak English, that is. Surely there aren't more than these two languages here - it would be ridiculous to use two languages that are almost the same as if they are distinctive....

KERNEELS: Well, I suppose so, but they aren't that similar really. Cape Dutch *is* a form of Dutch yes, but there are also very real differences between it and formal Dutch - enough to make it a distinctive language of its own in the eyes of some. I believe so for example.. though there many who argue differently

TWAIN: Differences such as..?

KERNEELS: The simplified grammar for example, it is without the complex inflections of Dutch or German, so it really approximates English in this respect. There are quite a large number of words and expressions which have been created here or borrowed from the local languages of the Bushmen, the Hottentots and so on. Many of these are only used here. And then there is the very different pronunciation... No, if I think about it, I believe we are talking of a distinctly separate language.. or a dialect which is rapidly becoming a distinctive language.

TWAIN: My goodness - you are most informed and informative on this. Who speaks this language?

KERNEELS: The descendents of the Dutch mainly, who came out here almost two hundred and fifty years ago, to settle on the farms...

TWAIN: The boers?

KERNEELS: Boere. Yes.

TWAIN: And people like Achmat...? I heard him talking to you in it...

KERNEELS: Yes... well, them too... though some again argue it is the white man's language..

TWAIN: And you, what do you say?

KERNEELS: Well, I've not thought about it much.... But I don't think you can dictate who owns a language, the people decide.. the language is just there...

TWAIN: My sentiments too. But if so many people here speak it, why is it not the official language of the country, or at least one of them. At least of the boer republics..? Why am I told the official language there is Dutch?

KERNEELS: That is because many of the speakers and their political representatives there do not themselves accept the idea that Africander Dutch is a separate and distinctive language, they all think that what they speak is pure Dutch....

TWAIN: But why don't they accept it if everyone speaks it, for heaven's sake?!

KERNEELS: Because they feel it is a slang form, which has no set grammar, dictionary or established literature, nor is it ready to be used for political, legal or scientific debate... Which is true I suppose, for it simply does not have the required vocabulary. They argue that Dutch on the other hand does have these attributes, so that is why it must be the language for the country.

TWAIN: You sound as if you agree..

KERNEELS: Yes to a large extent... though I am not so certain about the Dutch. Few people here can speak or write formal Dutch sufficiently well to run a country on. It is actually quite laughable to hear some people battling to speak in Dutch - putting in all kinds of erroneous inflections and extensions to their sentences in an effort to sound Dutch not South African...

TWAIN: So what would you suggest?

KERNEELS: Oh, I think the official language must remain English - there is no question of that. It has all the necessary attributes in abundance.

TWAIN: I am puzzled. Do you speak this Africander Dutch at home? (*Kerneels nods*) And when you write? What do you use?

KERNEELS: English. Or Dutch. Depending on what the writing is for.

TWAIN: A love letter for instance..?

KERNEELS: (*Embarrassed*) In English... or even German..

TWAIN: (*Laughs*) A love letter in German? To a girl who also speaks this Cape Dutch at home..? And can read English...? (*Kerneels nods*) Surely you don't seriously use that ponderous and unromantic language for this lofty purpose..? (*Kerneels says nothing*) This must be a most *Serious Romance*...

KERNEELS: Goethe did not seem to think that it was such an unromantic language.....

TWAIN: I suppose not...but look what happened to Goethe's heroines! Disappointment, Death, Lamentations in hell...

KERNEELS: But is that not what love is...?

TWAIN: Oh my, a true cynic. (*Looks at him calculatingly*). You are how old... twenty three? Are you engaged? Married? (*Kerneels makes a gesture of uncertainty*.) You are...in a way? Don't want to talk about it, eh? An excellent attitude, if I may say so. Let the women prattle on about love and romance and chivalry... you be strong, silent and masterful. If you are able... (*Looks at Kerneels for a moment*.) But tell me, I am intrigued: is your attitude about the language not a wee bit unpatriotic?

KERNEELS: Why do you say that..?

TWAIN: You say that you and your compatriots speak this informal Cape Dutch language for all the intimacies of home ... while you use formal Dutch for writing ... but when you write about even such intimate things as love and relationships... you choose to do so in English or - God forbid - in German. Are you not betraying your culture and people by saying that?

KERNEELS: What "culture", what "people" of mine? I am a subject of the British Empire... and English is the language of the empire.. not Dutch. Dutch is the other official language yes, but it is an inefficient one, which few of us can use properly...

TWAIN: And you hate to embarrass yourself... yes? It is your age my boy, that will pass.. But surely you must be a Boer and have pride in that?

KERNEELS: If by that you mean am I a farmer, sir, no. I'm not a farmer, though I did grow up in a rural community and on a farm. If you mean am I a person of Dutch descent, well then guilty as charged. ... *(Irritated by the sharp cross-questioning, in a small burst of suppressed anger, scathingly)* Unhappily I am not in captivity as requested... nor can I offer you any such...

TWAIN: *(A moment's surprise, he looks involuntarily at the door. Smiles)* Oops! You heard that statement then, did you? *(Looks keenly at the young man now, puts his notepad down.)* I take it you are a little disturbed are you? And being young and insecure in your opinions, you are angry because you feel you are being ridiculed, but at the same time you are frustrated by these wonderfully displayed grey locks of mine and my venerable bearing which serve to protect me, not so? If it had not been for the fact that I appear ancient to you and may even have one foot in the grave already, you could have taught me a real lesson tonight - right? Man to man, toe to toe. Allowing me to choose my weapons, you would confront me. Outside perhaps, in the rain... so as not to scandalize the proprieties of the grand colonial establishment.

KERNEELS: *(Thinks about these images. Answers slowly)* Ye..es. Yes perhaps. Then again, perhaps not.. for I always think of the words of our Lord: "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do". If he can forgive them, I should be able to forgive ignorance and bigotry Nevertheless, I think I have a right to be upset at such blatant and unabashed prejudice...

TWAIN: *(Laughing)* Ooo.. Harsh words, harsh words... but alas they are true - *if* what I had said were the truth. In your place I would have been at my throat a long time ago... for I am not a temperate man and learnt my trade on the mines and the river. However, I've noticed that you Boers are so polite, like the English. Even when you make war... Perhaps you are right, perhaps you do belong in the British empire - though I cannot see President Krooger bowing to Queen Victoria! *(Smile of reconciliation.)* Believe me, all that out there was mere performance my boy, you must really learn to tell the difference in this world. We all perform for other people - it is the way to get ahead, and getting ahead, becoming famous, is what life is about, surely. Now those society people I was speaking to have very fixed ideas about things - about themselves, about the Boers, about the blacks, about Americans and about humorists. They are pretty satisfied with themselves, their homes, their families and their British empire - so extremely self-satisfied. And look down upon all the rest - including humorists, which is of course a terrible sin for which they will burn in eternal purgatory. But never mind, they'll get used to it. But at

present they are my hosts, they pay for the hotel and the meals, cart me around, organize everything - and in turn I make jokes to please them - it is called paying the piper, or singing for your supper, if you prefer. Though what I would really like to do is puncture them and their images of themselves. Which I may do - later. You see: what I actually believe sir, is far less certain and more difficult to fathom, even for me. Certainly at this time in my travels... For one only remembers these things later and can process them in retrospect, modified by later experience. I am waiting for the modification to take place, as it will do in the next few months I am certain. So if I have offended you, I apologise. ...The fact is, had I said to the eminent gentlemen that I had met President Steyn of the Orange Free State and found him a most impressive and admirable man, they would most probably laugh, thinking it was a joke. Which it is not. Similarly, if I said that I am in awe of Rhodes as I am in awe of any natural disaster, but that I despise his principles, who would even understand me?

KERNEELS: (Slow, shy smile.) Perhaps I do.. he seems a strange phenomenon of contradictions to me... (Cannot help himself) ...But then, what do I know, I am but an uneducated savage who belongs in the veldt...

TWAIN: Come, come, not still moping are you. You drive a hard bargain, do you? (Smiles. Silence for moment. Then rouses himself in genuine interest.) But honestly now, you were born a boer? (Kerneels nods.) But... you don't look like one. You do not dress in that depressingly dowdy fashion, like the veld boers I saw, who travelled with me on the train or met us at the stations.. You appear clean, fashionably dressed, well educated and you speak good English. Plus some sort of garbled Dutch which you claim to be a language and which I mistook for German... I find that remarkable..

The door opens tentatively, and Ruth appears. She looks around and sees Twain. She is about to approach then she sees and hears Kerneels and stops, uncertain. She is unnoticed, so stands and listens, entertained.

KERNEELS: (Angry again) Oh, yes? For your information sir, I not only read and write formal Dutch, English and German, I can also read Greek and Latin, I can recite the tables, play the organ and sing without embarrassment in church. I can can hold a pen, drive in a nail and inspan a horse - even make and drink my own coffee and get dressed without the help of a nurse or a valet... And I can bring you hundreds of other young men who can do the same.. without stumbling over words, or ideas, or their own two clumsily shod feet...

TWAIN: (Ignoring the outburst, thoughtfully, slowly.) Oh my....You know, sir, if you could lose those wildly passionate displays of anger, you have the makings of a very sweet satirist in you. (Recalls himself) But again, I gather I need to apologize, I appear to have offended you once more.

Please accept my humblest apologies for denigrating you and wounding your fragile sensibilities. (*Slow smile.*) Is an apology from someone you are determined to despise not the very devil to accept? It is so embarrassing to any man. However, do bear in mind that in this particular case the apology is quite momentous - for it is of course extremely magnanimous of me to descend from my lofty estate as distinguished visiting American author and speaker to offer you one. As you will soon learn, we Americans are in training to rule the world after the English - and one of the cardinal rules of empire-building - taught to us by the The Romans, Atilla the Hun and the British - is never to show any regrets, no matter how devious or vicious your acts. ... As we have just seen in the Transvaal. (*Kerneels smiles despite his anger*) So you see, by apologising to you I have just proved that I am an absolutely hopeless case - and no threat at all to Mr Rhodes's eminence in that field. Which, of course is a pity, for I would've been far more efficient in the practicalities of suppressing democracy, dispensing injustice, oppressing people and destroying cultures than he can ever be - he is a dreamer, I am a practical doer. (*Thoughtfully*) There are many who say I have done much already to destroy American culture... killing it off even before it was properly born. But they are critics and therefore of negligible consequence ... (*Sees the look of puzzled amusement on Kerneels's face. He sees Achmat approaching with the drinks*) Achmat, do stop me. I see I am rambling on and on again and boring my young Boer friend here... though he is bearing it stoically and well...

KERNEELS: (*Embarrassed again*) ..Oh I'm not bored...

TWAIN: I am delighted to hear that... and not so angry anymore either I hope?..*(sees Ruth)* Ah, Ruth my dear, do come in! Come, come...*(As she approaches, they both get up. Kerneels is drawn irresistibly by her fragile good looks, and goes into hunter mode, while Twain immediately switches from the rather low key Mr Clemens to being "Mark Twain".)* Come sit over here by the fire with us. Let me introduce you to my remarkable young friend .. umm...*(pause, smile)*... whose name I do not know

KERNEELS: Kerneels...Langenhoven ... from Ladismith. Good afternoon...

TWAIN: Kernels..? Kerneals? Long-and-hoofin? (*Ruth titters*)

KERNEELS: (*Mumbles in embarrassment but slightly angry at being treated like this in front of the girl*) Cornelius, rather call me that... it will be easier.

TWAIN: Ah, yes. Cornelius then. Cornelius, may I introduce miss Ruth Berman, daughter of Dr Oscar and Mrs Veronica Berman. (*They nod and mumble greetings*) Her parents are among my hosts and are exceedingly well-to-do and fashionable... Ruth is a most erudite young lady who has read

most widely in all my books and has also been kind enough to teach me some of the local customs... Ruth , my dear, Cornelius is a young Boer - though he denies being a farmer, why I cannot think, it's a noble calling, tilling the soil and so on. Very fulfilling, very satisfying, or so they tell me, though *I* have never done any tilling as such - except to seek for gold and diamonds.... But anyway, he is - as he says, from a place called Ladismith. But my dear, despite his romantic tendencies - which you might find more praiseworthy than I do - this young man has been telling me the most interesting things about this country and its languages, things even I do not know... despite my superior intellect and grey hairs. Now you must come and sit here by me, for I need you to tell me when he is lying to me... For you see, he is of a prodigious satirical bent and - if I'm not mistaken - something like a poet, (*whispers meaningfully*) he writes German love-letters... and as you know, all writers are liars...so you must keep your ears open! (*A thought*) You do speak this Africander Dutch don't you my dear...? Because he and Achmat there tend to spring that on me every now and then...

RUTH : (*A little shocked and embarrassed*) Well.. I don't really speak it.....

TWAIN: Why not? It's a language of the country after all? Do you speak Dutch at all? (*She is flustered now*)

KERNEELS: Um.. I think Miss Berman comes from an English-speaking home, sir... she would not speak or even need to know the dialect or Dutch for that matter... (*smiles, turning on the charm*) I am sure Miss Berman knows Latin and French very well though...

RUTH : (*She shoots him a grateful smile, one noticed by **Twain***) ... Yes, I do... (*a little curtsy to Kerneels*) Merci beaucoup, monsieur...

TWAIN: (*Miffed*) Ah, and do *you* speak French my young pup...?

KERNEELS: (*His blood up, as he senses that a gauntlet has now been thrown down*) No, not French - but Latin yes, and as I've said, Dutch and German.. And you sir ...Mr..um...

RUTH : (*There is a moment as everyone realizes **Kerneels** does not know **Twain**. Even in her surprise, **Ruth** hands him her book as a prompt. Before he can really take in the information on the cover **Twain** continues*)

TWAIN: (*Twain can hardly believe this, but what do you say?*) German? That ponderous language with its lumbering sentences and infinitely postponed verbs...? Oh I know something of it, I sweated at it too. It is a language which enables a man to travel all day in one sentence without changing cars... But I managed it excellently ...(*He cannot help the facetiousness*)

...till my natural laziness reaffirmed itself and I converted the German to English.. I also happen to know enough of French to understand merci beaucoup on the lips of a charming young girl...*(Thundering it out)* ... I have fortunately not had my knowledge obliterated by University as you seem to have had, for I have seen the world and made it mine... thus I retain my natural good sense and hard-earned experience unsullied, something you still have to regain...!

(Kerneels is staring at the cover, then at Twain. He is really embarrassed now. Ruth sees this.)

RUTH : *(With a little trill of laughter, trying to lighten things. She takes the book from Kerneels.)* I have brought my book for you to sign... but I do hope I am not disturbing your rehearsal for tonight's performance, Mr Clemens..?

TWAIN: *(Stunned to silence, he recalls his manners a little, then begins to laugh as well)* Gawddamn - pardon me - you see what they teach these girls at those society schools, Cornelius my boy? Such delicacy and tact... She sees this thundering war of two intellects looming, so she sweetly turns our attention to her and her fine manners... Not only stopping the argument but giving you my name... which you clearly did not know... Which is a distinct black mark against your education, but another sharp lesson in humility for me as well. Ah my, such fame, yet so little known... Mr Cornelius Long and Hoofin - that's it, not so? ... Good. My name is Sam Clemens, otherwise known as Mark Twain - and if you have not met Mark Twain, you have missed a great deal. He is a gem among men, a colossus who bestrides the literary world, a distinguished raconteur and liar, and the sole author of numerous works of extraordinary literary skill and brilliance - such as *Innocents Abroad*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn* and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Works of such magnitude as will astonish and demolish you in any duel ...! *(Ruth laughs, Kerneels smiles)* Cornelius, I am most pleased to make your acquaintance. *(They formally shake hands, saying "Mr Clemens", "Mr Cornelius". Kerneels barely able to suppress his laughter. To an equally amused Ruth, taking her hand.)* Thank you my dear. What that ill-advised Dr Jameson and the Boers of the Transvaal could not have done with your tact in recent times... *(Briskly)* Now, if you two young folk will excuse me for a moment, I have something to discuss with that man Achmat... *(Gets up and goes to the bar, then stops)* I assume I know what you need Cornelius, can I get you anything my dear...tea, lemonade?.

RUTH : Some lemonade would be excellent, Mr Clemens ... Thank you. *(As he leaves, she sits down, not looking at Kerneels. There is a brief, awkward silence. Then they both start. The conversation between is hesitant, laden with their mutual sexual attraction.)* So you come from Ladismith, Mr Langenhoven...

KERNEELS: So you live here in Cape Town Miss Berman...

(They both stop, then answer)

RUTH : Yes...

KERNEELS: Yes...

(They both stop again, then look at each other and laugh.)

KERNEELS: *(Serious now)* Thank you for helping out there...

RUTH: That's fine... you helped me out too...

KERNEELS: *(Still serious)* I felt such a fool. I did not realize... Oh, what must he think of me?! The truth is I have read his books... I really loved *Huckleberry Finn*...

RUTH : Oh, Mr Clemens is a sweet man at heart... he'll tease you about it endlessly... as he will me about the Dutch. But at heart he likes people. He really does.. And by the way, his own favourite is *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

KERNEELS: Well, he has strange ways of showing his liking for people at times. But does seems to have at least one keen follower..

RUTH : *(Stung)* It's not what you think...!

KERNEELS: Not at all - but he is rather possessive of you.. *(Gallantly)* However, who then would not be? I even feel that way already ... and I hardly know you...

RUTH : Oh go on! You are as bad a flatterer as he is. *(Slyly)* Is this bold and direct address the way of all young boer men from the veldt...?

KERNEELS: Don't you start with this boer of the veldt business...! I am a South African. Like you.

RUTH : *(Without thinking)* Oh, but we're not the same as the boers... they're...*(Realizes, stops)*

KERNEELS: *(Drily)* Yes? What are they?

RUTH : So.. different... so strange.. I have read Miss Schreiner and she says that they tend to be dirty and lazy.....and ...

KERNEELS: I am sure she does.. so does Mr Twain. If you believe that why do you sit here talking to me? I'm one of "them". Or are you simply too polite to get up and run out screaming at being left alone with me.....?

RUTH : (*Stung*) I'm not afraid of you!! (*puzzled, as she thinks about this*) I don't... know... perhaps Mrs Schreiner was not.. telling the truth.. I heard what you said to Mr Clemens... you have studied and you know languages..... You're different somehow..

KERNEELS: (*Smiles*) Different from what? Different from different.., different from what you expected..? Have you ever thought, Miss Ruth Berman of Cape Town, how distinctly "different" *you* must appear to those boer ladies of the veldt in you lace and finery, your trim shoes, your English manners and peculiarities...?

(*Twain appears with Achmat, who is carrying a tray with the drinks. They stop by the door to talk.*)

TWAIN: ...But if you are Mohammedan... and this is supposed to be a Christian country... how do you survive...I mean in your religion..?

ACHMAT: Oh, we are not bothered... I think they tolerate us...

RUTH : (*Having thought about it, slowly*) No, I suppose have not thought about it... one does not think about it that way.. ... But perhaps one should? Do you think *I'm* different..?

KERNEELS: Oh yes - I do... (*Turning on the romantic charm*) I think you are exotically different, like some rare flower, which I am seeing for the first time... Remember, I grew up among the boers, and the sheep and ostriches, and the karoo shrubs.... You know, I think the girls from Ladismith would be quite appalled at just how different you are... and a quite envious perhaps..

RUTH : Appalled...!!?

KERNEELS: ...and envious remember...!

RUTH: Well I don't know them well enough to envy them...

KERNEELS: Perhaps you should come out there and meet some of "them"...?

TWAIN: (*He sees the two talking earnestly. Calls out.*) Oh what does this young man have to say which engrosses you so, my dear? I hope his fiancée does not object to his talking to lovely young ladies.....! (*Walks over*)

RUTH : Fianceé...?!!

KERNEELS: I...I 'm not engaged...

TWAIN: (*Smiles maliciously*) Oh, then I was misinformed...

KERNEELS: I never said I was engaged... I merely said..

TWAIN: (*Ignores him pointedly*) So what were you discussing my dear... if not his fianceé..?

RUTH : Nothing.. nothing.. just talking about people ... and the differences between people..

TWAIN: Ah yes, differences. Differences between nations? Differences between the races? Or differences between men and women perhaps? The very set of differences that makes all others pale into insignificance? I've always said, differences are important, for it is differences which make horse races - and for interesting travel. It also makes for interesting quarrels of course - as well as disputes, court cases, duels and wars. Of what kind of differences were we talking here?

KERNEELS: Of racial differences actually.. between Boer and Englishman, for example..

TWAIN: Ah! Serious differences then. (*Pause*) Or more interestingly perhaps, the vast and imponderable differences between a young Boer and an English lady? (*Smiles*) So where do you stand on that my dear?

RUTH : (*Blushing*) Oh come on Mr Clemens...

TWAIN: Oh, I'm not being facetious, believe me, Ruth my dear. I am sure you must think differently of the boers now than you did before this meeting, not so? Come, admit it! Now that we know that Cornelius here is not an engaged man - we can consider him forthrightly (*She smiles, so does Kerneels.*) I admit I do feel differently - I admit it freely. Cornelius here is an excellent example for us all you know - also for his fellow countrymen I would suppose. Don't you think so? He is the very epitome of this country: he lives in a country of vast contrasts and interesting quarrels, he speaks many languages and belongs to a number of cultures. I am sure he does not quite know who he really is, where he belongs or where he is headed yet - he's far too young for that, as you are my dear - but he does appear to be rather passionate about the journey! (*Hands them their drinks*) Here, let us drink a toast to differences, passions and long

journeys! *(They drink laughingly.)* Now, shall I sign that book for you my dear? *(He does so, while the two young people stand waiting together)*

KERNEELS: *(Softly)* I .. *was* engaged... for a while.. but it did not work out...

RUTH : *(She nods, then gathering her courage, says softly)* Are you going to hear him speak tonight...?

KERNEELS: *(Softly)* I only arrived this morning, so I did not know about it.. so I did not buy a ticket...As you saw - I did not even know he was here..

RUTH : *(Softly)* Oh, perhaps you could join us... Daddy has taken a box... there's plenty of space.. *(she is shy suddenly)* .. but I suppose you are not...

KERNEELS: *(Softly)*...Oh ... don't you think your parents would mind..?..

RUTH : *(Softly)* Oh I don't think so, not if Mr Clemens likes you.. and he does!

She glances at Twain and back at Kerneels. Twain looks up, sees them standing, stares at them.

TWAIN: *(Sharply, holding out the book)* There. Now you can go sell that for a great deal of money!

RUTH : Thank you Mr Clemens... I'll treasure it..

TWAIN: Hmmm. *(Turning away from them)* Now - if the two of you will excuse me, I need to run through some lines for tonight...

The two young people move off towards the door in some confusion. They stop, rather unwilling to part, speaking softly.

RUTH : So... will we see you there..?

KERNEELS: If you want me to go.. *(He sees what he assumes is an answer)* .. I would be honoured..

RUTH : I shall go and tell Daddy...

*They exit as the lights to fade to dark, **Twain** still staring at the door.*

SCENE EIGHT/TONEEL AGT

*A spotlight comes on at **Lectern 1**. Sounds of conversation and occasional laughter, etc. Applause as **Twain** walks over to the lectern, cigar ready. This dies down as he begins to speak.*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to present you with a man whose great learnin' and veneration for truth, is only exceeded by his high moral character and majestic presence. I refer in these vague general terms to myself. I consider introductions unnecessary, but if it is the custom to have them, I prefer to do the act myself... because I can rely on getting in all the facts. I was born modest, but it wore off. I was once introduced to an audience by a lawyer, who kept his hands in his pockets. He introduced me as Mark Twain, a humorist who is really funny. A very rare creature indeed. Why I was struck speechless.. by this complimentary thunderbolt. I have scarcely in my lifetime listened to a compliment so beautifully phrased. Or so well deserved. But we had a much rarer creature in our midst than a humorist who is really funny. We had a lawyer who kept his hands in his own pockets.

Oh but I do like compliments, why we all do, humorists, burglars, congressmen, all of us in the trade. The plan of the newspaper is good, if you can't get a compliment any other way, pay yourself one. I do that often. I can do it right now, I can state that at this moment that there are two men that are most remarkable - Kipling is one, and I am the other one. Between us we cover all knowledge, he knows all that can be known, and I know the rest.

Well now ladies and gentlemen, I hope you won't mind if I smoke. I believe there is some commandment against smokin' during insurrections of this dignified nature. I'm working to get it removed. Mind you I have no objection to abstinence. So long as it does not harm anybody. I practice it myself on occasion. I make it a rule never to smoke when asleep. Not that I care for moderation myself, I do it as an example to others. And to prove that I am not a slave to the habit. I can give it up whenever I want to. I've done it a thousand times.... I once had occasion to recommend the remedy of abstinence to an elderly lady friend of mine, she'd gone down, down to the point where medicines no longer had any helpful effect on her. I told her I could cure her in a week. I said she must give up smokin' and drinkin' and eatin' and swearin' and by the end of the week she'd be on her feet. Why, she said she couldn't give up smokin' and drinkin' and swearin', because she'd never done any of those things. So there it was. She'd neglected her habits. She was a sinking ship with no freight to throw overboard. Why just one or two bad habits woulda saved her. She was just a moral pauper.

Now, speaking of morality and bad habits, someone once asked me about my first lie, and how I got out of it. Now I don't remember my first lie, it is too far back, but I remember my second one very well. I was nine days old at the time, and had noticed that if a pin is sticking in me and I advertised it in the usual fashion, I was lovingly petted and coddled and pitied....

*Light on **Lectern 1** fades with his voice over the course of the last line,
lights on **Lounge** fade in.*

SCENE NINE/TONEEL NEGE

The **Lounge** where **Achmat** is busy doing waiter-like things. It is now about 10h30 the night, the Pub is about to close. From the pub itself we here voices. **Kerneels** is sitting by the fire, staring morosely at a glass of brandy. Each time he hears a sound at the door he starts expectantly, as if to get up. In the **Passage** downstage, **Ruth** and **Livy** appear, returning from the party held for Mark Twain. **Ruth** is highly upset. As they pass across the stage, **Kerneels** remains as he is, he cannot see them.

RUTH : ...I was so embarrassed Mrs Clemens, how can my father do that to me? And to Mr Langenhoven.. ? To turn him away like that...!! In front of all those people..

LIVY: Come..come my dear... now be honest, what did you expect? He is a very nice young man I am sure... and quite good looking, as far as I could tell...but your parents know nothing about him and he is so much older that you are...

RUTH : Daddy is *fifteen* years older than Mamma..!

LIVY: Yes, but they are cousins my dear, they come from the same social class... their parents knew each other.. they had been properly and formally introduced..

RUTH : ..oh, you all sound as if I was planning to marry the man!! All I did was invite him to hear Mr Clemens talk... he was here all alone, he seemed rather sad, and he and Mr Clemens were enjoying each other's company. Mr Clemens did not object to him!

LIVY: Ah!..So Sam invited him?!

RUTH : Well, no, not really ... I did... but why shouldn't I? If Sam... if Mr Clemens does not object to him, why should Mamma and Daddy?

LIVY: (*Smiles*) Oh, my dear, dear child - if we had to take home everyone Sam Clemens does not object to, we would be overrun by charlatans, beggars, robbers and vagabonds! (*As Ruth attempts to interrupt*). No wait, listen Ruth. I am not saying your young Cornelius is a vagabond... I am sure he is intelligent and charming and honest and all of that. But he *is* a Dutch speaking South African, what people here seem to call a "boer"... he is not English speaking, he is not Jewish, nor is he even a member of Cape society... Which does not make him a criminal or anything despicable... it simply means that he is a visitor here, his customs are alien to those of you and your parents .. and that your parents feel they must protect you from what they believe would be an awkward association with someone totally incompatible to their way of life....

RUTH : And what if I do not care? Do you agree with them...? Aren't Americans supposed to believe in democracy and the freedom of the individual..?

LIVY: You *are* angry aren't you? But yes, I suppose that you could expect us as Americans to believe in each person's right to individual freedom - that is what the constitution says. But that also includes the right to look after your own, to associate with those whom you feel comfortable with. So, you see it is pretty much theory - despite what my dear Sam says in all his rages and in his writing... Unfortunately, no Connecticut Yankee is going to change the way the world works, and certainly not how this complicated society works in this country...So, yes my dear, I do agree with them... to a degree. In this particular case, I think it would be prudent to just let it go. Let your friend Cornelius go back to his home town and find himself someone from his own social sphere, with whom he can be happy.

RUTH : And what about Mr Langenhoven? Who is going to explain this to him? I was not even allowed to talk to him .. he most probably thinks I did it on purpose to shame him in front of all those people.. I asked him to meet me here, so that I can explain... if I don't arrive.. what will he think of me?

LIVY: And that matters to you? (*She sees the girl's face*) Yes, of course it does. And it should. Shall I go and tell him..?

RUTH : Tell him what..? That he is not my social equal? That he does not belong in Cape Society? Why can't I talk to him..?

LIVY: (*Smiles*) No my dear. I think you must go on to the Ballroom and join your parents so long. I shall give the young man your regards and apologies. I shall tell him that you made an error. He seemed sensible enough, and if he can weather Sam, he can manage to forgive you too. Come on Ruth dear, go on up now ...I'll round up Mr Clemens and we'll see you at the banquet...

They exit, and Livy goes to the Lounge, looking for Twain but sees Kerneels instead, who jumps up in anticipation at her entrance, then sits down in disappointment. She comes to him, he jumps up again.

Good evening Mr ... Cornelius I think it is?

KERNEELS: Kerneels.. Cornelius.. Langenhoven, madame, at your service...

LIVY: I am Mrs Olivia Clemens...I am Samuel Clemens's wife. I'm so glad I've found you. I'm afraid I come on a rather delicate matter, concerning our young mutual friend Ruth Berman... (*Seeing the anger rise in his face*)

...please sir, allow me to offer you Ruth's most sincere apologies. She is immensely upset by what occurred, and I offered to talk to you...

KERNEELS: *(He battles for a moment to control his anger.)* How do you do? I appreciate your gesture, but I had been hoping to talk to Miss Berman herself...

LIVY: I realize that... and that I am but a poor substitute...but reflect Mr Cornelius.. if her parents do not feel it proper that the young girl should bring some stranger to the theatre with her, how can they condone her meeting him in the lounge of the hotel? *(She sees him digesting this, and - perhaps - accepting it).* I know the whole thing was most awkwardly handled, but she had actually placed her parents in a most difficult position... I am sure you can understand that? But she wanted me to assure you she had no intention of humiliating you ... *(He stands silent, brooding on this. She waits a second, then continues quietly.)* She is still a very young girl, she is from a well-known family in the city, everyone here knows her and her parents... what do they know about you?

KERNEELS: Only that I am that despised thing... a boer.. I suppose. No matter what my personal qualities are or my prospects... Oh, I understand Mrs Clemens, thank you. *(Takes a deep breath)* Tell Ruth.. Miss Berman.. that I appreciate her kindness and that I wish her well. You can assure her that I do not blame *her* for this... *(She holds out here hand and he hesitates then takes it.)* And I thank you for coming to tell me...

Twain appears in the doorway, sees the two together.

TWAIN: *(Who is very much "Mark Twain" still, hyped up and full of whisky and pepper)* Ah ha! So what is going on here? One women's heart broken not enough for you young rascal? Unhand her sir! Livy, my angel, run, I'll keep him covered...!

LIVY: Oh Youth!!

TWAIN: What is going on here? Where is young Ruth ? And all those Bermans? Where is anybody?

LIVY: Unlike you they have all gone directly on to the reception they're holding for their distinguished guest...

TWAIN: another goddamned reception ... and I I shall be expected to talk again! *(Though he protests, it is clear he rather relishes the attention.)* Tomfoolery of English formalities... all glib evasion, easy manners and extravagant foppery, no honest guts and reality... *(He pretends to subside into a brown study, then smiles slowly.)* Though I must say, the

appearances have been profitable for us, haven't they...? (*To Kerneels directly*) Hey, you tired Mr Long-in-the-Tooth..? No, no Long in the Hoof...that's it! (*Kerneels, hurt and humiliated, gets up in a flash of anger and storms through to the bar.. Sam stares after him in amazement.*)

KERNEELS: Verdekselse verwaande klomp uitlanders!! Gaan vlieg julle en julle spottery almal in julle maai in!

TWAIN: What's up with him? That sounded a lot like some mighty fine cursing to me...

LIVY: Oh Youth!! Why must you be such a clumsy idiot sometimes? Can't you see the poor boy's hurting? (*She remembers*) No, of course not... you weren't there.

TWAIN: I wasn't where? What happened...? Did I miss something entertaining?

LIVY: Ruth the little fluffy-headed fool invited Mr Cornelius there to accompany her to your talk... and wanted him to come to the reception as well.

TWAIN Well, what's wrong with that... it would be good for him.. he could have been morally uplifted..

LIVY: (*Ignoring the interruption*) However, she neglected to ask her parents for their permission first... so her father quite simply refused, and asked the boy to leave the box... in front of all of us..

TWAIN: What? You mean he never heard the show?

LIVY: Samuel Clemens - you are the most frustrating man I know! The point is, not about your performance, but that the boy was humiliated - in front of the society people of Cape Town, and in front of Ruth . (*She looks at him like a mother at a recalcitrant child*) This is all your fault of course! (*The shock of this attack leaves him speechless*) Playing the grand old man with these children, filling their heads with romantic ideas ...

TWAIN: Me??!! How do you manage to arrive at that deduction...? I would think her gawd-danged father and his pompous colonial clan of Queen worshippers were responsible. What did *I* do for heaven's sake?!

LIVY: I don't know how, I simply know. When things starts exploding, you are generally somewhere in the background blowing on the coals to encourage the fire! (*She hugs him*). Come, they're waiting for us upstairs in the Ballroom - ready and willing to sing the praises of Mark Twain..

TWAIN: As well they should be (*Following her.*) And by the way, what is so wrong with romantic ideas anyway? You know the romance of life is the only part of it that is overwhelmingly valuable... (*To himself*) .. and let's face it, romance often dies with youth.....

*Lights fade to dark on as **Twain** and **Livy** exit. Light fades in on the **Lectern 1**.*

SCENE TEN/TONEEL TIEN

*A spotlight comes on at **Lectern 1**. Sounds of conversation, clatter of plates and cutlery, occasional laughter, etc. Then someone raps on the table and announces "And now I would like to ask our guest of honour, Mr Samuel Clemens, to say a word." Applause, this dies down as **Twain** walks over to the lectern.*

Thank you sir, good evening ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for all the praise lavished on my person over the course of this dinner. It is not undeserved of course, but I thank you anyway for taking the trouble. There is of course nothing you can say in answer to a compliment. I have been complimented myself a great many times, and they always embarrass me - I always feel they have not said enough.

However - if you had not said those marvellous things about me, you would have compelled me to take up the task myself. So you have saved me a great deal of trouble. I thank you for that too.

To return the favour then, I would like to mention that someone yesterday asked me what was the most impressive thing I had seen on my travels in South Africa. Or perhaps someone has not asked - yet. However, someone is bound to ask it sooner or later. They always do - they asked it of me in all the cities of India and in Australia. And I answered them - for I am an experienced traveller, and always prepare an answer, so as to have it ready at hand, able to pull it out in spontaneous fashion. So I will give you my the answer to the South African question so long, then you can owe me the question - no interest charged. A few days ago, when we arrived in Cape Town, the end of our African journeyings. And well satisfied; for towering above us was Table Mountain - a reminder that we had now seen each and all the great features of South Africa, except Mr Cecil Rhodes. Of course I realize that that is quite a large exception. I know quite well that whether Mr Rhodes is the lofty and worshipful patriot and statesman that multitudes believe him to be, or Satan come again, as President Kruger and the rest of the world account him, he is still the most imposing figure in the British Empire outside England. The whole South African world seems to stand in a kind of shuddering awe of him, friend and enemy alike. However, next to Mr Rhodes, whom it seems I am unfortunately not going to get to see on this visit, to me the most interesting convulsion of nature in South Africa has been the diamond crater at Kimberley....

*Light on **Lectern 1** fades, lights on **Lounge** fade in.*

SCENE ELEVEN/TONEEL ELF

The *Lounge* where *Achmat* is busy doing waiter-like things. It is later, the *Pub* is long closed. *Twain* and *Kerneels* are hunched over a bottle of whisky and a bottle of brandy, by the dying embers of the fire.

TWAIN: Now let me get the rest of this straight ... (*he uses objects on the coffee-table to illustrate*) you are engaged to the one woman from...some place called Klahr - Chlor...

KERNEELS: (*Has had a few drinks by now. Nods seriously.*) Klaarstroom...yes. Helena de Vries.

TWAIN: Helena..da Freeze..? Right. You are engaged to her. (*Kerneels nods.*) But you are also seeing another young girl in Ladismith...

KERNEELS: (*Nods seriously.*) Ankies...Anna van Velden, ja.

TWAIN: Fun Felden? Another Dutch woman...?

KERNEELS: Girl. I teach her... German

TWAIN: Girl yes. This Anna. But you now fancy yet another girl...woman..?

KERNEELS: No, not fancy... I think I love her! Mrs Van Velden...Magdalena... Lenie... is a widow...and a wonderful person.. but she's Anna's mother..

TWAIN: (*Awestruck*) You love this other woman who is the girl's *mother*..?! (*A confused, sad nod from Kerneels*) But you are still engaged to the first girl..? (*Shakes his head*) And now our delectable young Ruth has crossed your path and set your pulses racing off in another direction again... so you leap onto your charger and chase after *her* as well?.

KERNEELS: It is not a matter of "chasing" her...I have told you all ready... Of course I enjoyed Miss Berman's company, I am most obliged to you for introducing us, I find her attractive and intelligent.. I liked the idea of going to the Opera House with her to hear you speak.. I would certainly like to know more of her.. she is ... foreign ... to my experience, and that excites me.. See I admit that. But I am here for a day only... I leave tomorrow morning... (*Consults his watch*) this morning... and I have to see about my affairs at home...

TWAIN: Listen, take it from one who has seen the world, one frequently only finds out how really beautiful a beautiful woman is after considerable

acquaintance with her. Or you find out that she may be beautiful, but you cannot live with her. This too takes time. And I am afraid my precipitous Cornelius... time is not on your side - or mine - in the case of this fair Ruth, as you so rightly point out. So it seems she's not for you - even had her father not shoved his arrogant nose into your affairs or my own dear Livy been so persuasive.... You do not have the time nor the capacity of heart to woo her, even if you were allowed into her society. I would say it is best to forget her and her tribe, and take up one of your three options at home. . That is more than most men - except for a Mormon elder, or Eastern potentate, or Zulu Chief - usually have!

KERNEELS: But what if they are all the wrong ones? What if I make a ghastly mistake, and this is actually the one...? What if fate brought us together... intended us to be together? Are we simply to be torn apart like this, in this stupid manner - what if she's the one true love of my life?

TWAIN: Oh my, Kerneels my young friend, I think you are in deep trouble here. It is a known fact that love is not a product of reasoning and statistics of course and that it just *comes* - none knows whence - and cannot explain itself.The fact is, love is a madness and always a gamble. If thwarted it develops fast and needs some kind of consummation.. Sometimes - as in my case - you are lucky and get it right first time, more often it seems not. I believe you have the fever in huge abundance and are a menace to good society. Perhaps it is best young Ruth was snatched from your clutches. A sexual firebrand who should not be let loose on his own! My god, you have packed more livin' into your twenty-three years of life than I have in sixty! And I am a man of outstanding taste and enormous energy, who has seen the world...! I do worry about your morality boy - if you can switch and change your relationships so easily... how are you ever going to get anywhere in life..?

KERNEELS: (*Shakes his head in despair. Really in the doldrums now.*) I don't know... I seem to mess up everything. I went to University... and made a mess of that.

TWAIN: I would guess you could easily do that.. I could have done it too, without much effort, given the chance...fortunately I never let schooling interfere with my education...

KERNEELS: Anyway, then I met Helena, she is a good woman, beautiful and sensible, and we get along well together - so we became engaged. But her father doesn't like me ... objects to my smoking and drinking...

TWAIN: Very strange man... Personally I haven't a particle of confidence in a man who does not have a few redeeming petty vices ...

KERNEELS He said I did not have a steady job.. so how would I be able to support Helena. So I went off to the Transvaal to become a teacher at a farm school in Heidelberg..

TWAIN: Good, good! A man of action then.

KERNEELS: And made another damn mess of that...!

TWAIN: Some woman again was it?

KERNEELS: No! No, of course not. I was an engaged man.

TWAIN: Like now...?

KERNEELS: Yes, well... I was. It was just the teaching... or rather not the teaching itself - I liked that - I enjoyed the talking and demonstrating and telling stories.. and so did the pupils...

TWAIN: Oh I bet...

KERNEELS: But then they all failed the exams - it seems my stories were not the stories the examiners wanted...So then the inspectors came and they asked for my student records, the school books, looked at the state of the school grounds and class rooms, and so on.. The fact is I could not manage all that silly administration and still don't see the reason for it....

TWAIN: So you left and became a lawyer? Have you made a mess of that yet?

KERNEELS: Not yet... but..

TWAIN: But you will? You don't like that either...?

KERNEELS: Well some of it I like... and some of it I do well. For example, I can argue a case fairly enough, if only they would let me... I was very good at debating at University..

TWAIN: But..?

KERNEELS: (*Shrugs*) It doesn't excite me.. not what they want me to do...

TWAIN: What does excite you then..?

KERNEELS: I don't know..

TWAIN: Ah!. That's a real problem. (*They sit in thought for a long while.*) Don't you have any dreams, any passions my boy? Excepting women now, that is?

KERNEELS: I enjoy reading, hearing and telling stories, I enjoy writing them down. I think I could enjoy being like you Mr Twain... to write stories for a living. But, well, I suppose one has to be a genius for that... I'm not bad at carpentry though and I like that...

TWAIN: What I can safely say from my experience is that the exercise of an extraordinary gift is the supremest pleasure in life, all the rest is drudgery. So, go with your gifts - be it writing, making a speech, panning for gold, making love or sawing wood. Listen boy, I'll give you a piece of simple advice I give every shiny-eyed, whining young man who talks of becoming a writer - and talks and talks...: If you really, passionately want to be a writer, if it is a craving in your very soul, - go ahead and *write*, don't sit there and mull and moan over it like a cat over a dead fish... Write your stories, write without pay until somebody offers to pay you. That will provide you with the training you need and serve as a measure for your ability at the same time. If nobody offers to do so within three years, you may look upon this circumstance with the most implicit confidence as the sign that sawing wood is what you are intended for after all.... Or - in your case perhaps - a sign that you should find yourself a rich wife and settle down to tending cows, chickens and children.

KERNEELS: Do you always make a joke of everything Mr Twain...?

TWAIN: Always - when I can help it. Humor is my craft, comic stories are my business and irreverence is my strongest defense against the fool and the bore and the prince of darkness and despair. And my barrier against confused young men who are bent upon telling me sad little circular tales of lost loves and frustrated dreams and grandiose ambitions...

KERNEELS: I'm sorry I have wasted your time..... (*Gets up in a huff.*)

TWAIN: Oh damn you man, sit down, stop doing that injured act with me. My God, there really is no sadder sight than a egocentric young pessimist. Have drink and talk to me about what really rouses you.. Because you are truly pathetic at the moment, you know... no wonder young Ruth fled...

KERNEELS: She did not flee!!!

TWAIN: ...who would want to sit with someone who cannot decide which of four women treally interested him, which of three languages he preferred, where he wanted to live, what kind of work he wanted to do, where his political loyalties lie...with a moth-eaten old queen in England, a ragged band of sharpshooting Calvinists in the Transvaal, or a disinherited band of subservient boers in the veldt...

KERNEELS: I am not like that...!!

TWAIN: Don't interrupt! I am only pointing out a few areas to work on, Goddamnit..!

KERNEELS: I know all these things....!! And I shall work them out myself - without the help of you or your insults thank you sir!

TWAIN: Of course you have to work them out yourself! I can't do it for you. No man can reach old age by another man's road. My habits protect my life, but they would assassinate you. My passions are part of my soul - your soul has its own demons and angels! But you damn-well have to accept that they are there and they are yours. I am just playing the irritating goad tonight, trying to vex you enough to start digging!

KERNEELS: Why?

TWAIN: Why? Why am I playing the goad? Why? Because you infuriate me, blast your pernicky soul, you trouble me...

KERNEELS: You hardly know me...

TWAIN: Oh, I do! I do ... forty years ago I *was* you... I watch the emotions run across your face and I feel them as if it was yesterday...and forty years from now you will be me!! You will feel my feelings then, talking to some snot-nosed young pup who wants to take you on in a duel of words and ideas... or worse. The thing is, Cornelius - I have to look after my immortality! (*Long pause, then a slow smile*) Is that serious enough for you...?

KERNEELS: (*Fully angry now, lividly so. Has to get up to talk, raising his voice.*) You take great pleasure in teasing and playing with me don't you? You sit there clothed in the fancy trappings of your wealth and fame and venerable years, making jokes while you insult and humiliate me - in the same way as Ruth and her parents did, and those damn Englishmen at the Opera House...! It was so enjoyable was it not, laughing at this sad little boer with his pathetic country clothes, Dutch accent and pretentious dreams of a meaningful future... (*Achmat comes in to see why all the shouting. He stands listening*) You don't expect me to ever hit back, to feel the pain, to retaliate in some way - because of course I would not dare, for I am part of an inferior race, an embarrassing but necessary part of the society - but please God, stay in the Platteland, don't come to the city, don't you dare intrude on our idyllic life here... We all serve the same Queen, we are part of the same empire - yet we are not - we are only second class members of the great British club. And you, you and your American democratic principles, come here knowing nothing smirking and ridiculing everything...What do you want here Mr Important Writer from America?! What are you doing in South Africa? Why don't you go back and harass your Indians and your Negroes, burn a few books or a witch or

two..... (Almost shouting the last line and **Achmat** comes forward involuntarily)

ACHMAT: Please sir, could you please speak more quietly...?

KERNEELS: Achmat, die ou derduiwel begin weer met my lol...en oor my taal en my lewe... as ek my sondes nie ontsien nie gryp ek hom nou, grys hare en al...

TWAIN: What am I doing here? What am I doing here? Goddamn you, I am trying to earn some money to sort out my own life - don't think you are the only one in the world harried by the stupidity and incomprehension of your fellows and the spectre of financial and creative bankruptcy. Try being a writer and experience that feeling of rejection and alienation! Wait till you have poured out your soul and convictions on paper - and they come for you - those men with their college trained and inkstained brains - and begin to tear it all apart, word by word, bloodied sentence by bloodied sentence...

ACHMAT: Please Mr Twain sir....

TWAIN:Then come wailing to me about how you were wronged...(*Flushing slightly with anger now, ignores **Achmat**, but involuntarily lowers his voice, speaks slowly, ostensibly calmly.*) Do you really think that being celebrated as a fabulously handsome, eloquent and successful literary figure safeguards you from the daily pains of life, illness, ridicule, persecution and death? Then you are vastly more naive than I ever thought - then I have absolutely no hope for you. (*Flings his cigar down, stands up and thunders*) Do you think you have some kind of sole patent on the darkness of despair? Don't *you* come shouting at me about joking, smirking and ridiculing till you have faced the Faceless One sitting in the dark, waiting for you...!!

ACHMAT: Please sir, the manager will be here soon...!

TWAIN: (*Takes up a new cigar, his hands shaking with emotion. Goes through the slow process of lighting it. Then looks up at **Kerneels**.*) Come on boy, let us calm down here... we will lose Achmat his job... (*Puffs at cigar, as **Kerneels**, circling the room comes to rest.*) I told you once before. You have sweet talent for satire and invective. That bit about the Indians, Negroes and books was particularly fine...But you must find the real target for your genius, don't waste it on inferior targets. And believe me, it isn't this old man who is the target.....

KERNEELS: What? (*Almost as if coming out of a daze, turns to **Achmat**.*) O. Ja, jammer vir die lawaai. Yes. Of course. (*Then back to **Twain**.*) What is the target then, Oh wise one?

TWAIN: Oh I don't know..yet. For I cannot read your mind. But what I am talking of is a cause of some kind. Something that will be more important to you than the petty everyday battles for approval by your fellows, more important than life itself perhaps.

KERNEELS: Like patriotism...perhaps?

TWAIN: Well, not necessarily. For patriotism and nationalism are slippery and even dangerous ideas... Nationalism is each nation *knowing* it has the only true religion and the only sane system of government, each despising all the others, each an ass and not suspecting it... It relies on Majority Patriotism, which is the unquestioning allegiance to such beliefs. It is the customary patriotism - which inevitably promotes and supports prejudice and oppression of minorities.

KERNEELS: Like slaves...

TWAIN: Indeed. Or even people such as yourselves... for I believe that any kind of royalty, however modified, *any* kind of aristocracy, however pruned, is rightly an insult and an imposition, for an aristocracy is but a band of slaveholders under another name.

KERNEELS: So now we are slaves too...?

TWAIN: As much as anyone here, as much as Achmat there and our dear Ruth even. I mean, are you free Cornelius, are you truly *independent*? Really, tell me the truth, are you? True independence you know, is loyalty to one's best self and principles - and it comes at a cost, for it often entails disloyalty to the general idols and fetishes of your people or the people you accept as rulers. So the modern patriotism, the True Patriotism - indeed the only rational patriotism - is and must be loyalty to the *nation* all the time, loyalty to the government only when it deserves it. But, because we teach our children to regard as traitors, and hold in contempt, such as do not shout with the crowd, the patriot is paradoxically the traitor. No wonder that, in the beginning of a change, the patriot is a scarce man, and brave, and hated and scorned. When his cause succeeds of course, the timid join him, for then it costs nothing to be a patriot.

KERNEELS: Would you consider yourself a patriot then Mr Twain - I mean, in that sense?

TWAIN: Let's put it this way, I would not voluntarily march under my country's flag, or any other, when it was my private judgement that the country was in the wrong. ... My kind of loyalty is loyalty to one's country, not to .. its office holders. So, should my country invade another, as your empire just tried to do, I would be against it, I would protest it, I would have ridiculed it... As indeed I have done and shall continue to do in this case..

KERNEELS: And you think ridiculing the immoral politicians will stop them...?

TWAIN: (*More seriously now - Sam Clemens for the moment - he actually believes this most fervently*) There is unquestionably only one really effective weapon against the wrongs of this world - laughter. Power, money, persuasion, supplication, persecution - these can tilt at any colossal humbug or campaign - push at it a little - weaken it a little, century by century. But only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand. Irreverence is the champion of liberty and its only sure defense, and satire and ridicule are its tools. No god and no religion can survive ridicule and the resultant laughter. No church, no nobility, no royalty or other fraud, can face ridicule in a fair field and live. The talks of the satirist and humorist is an onerous and dangerous one, remember that...

KERNEELS: (*Silence, then he asks tentatively*) You believe this, even in the case of an armed insurrection? How would you feel about a revolution for example...

TWAIN: (*Mark Twain again, with a laugh*) Oh, while I'd hesitate taking up arms myself - since I would be more likely to cause death and destruction in my home camp than anywhere else - I am a revolutionist by birth, reading and principle. So I am always on the side of the revolutionists, because I believe there never was a revolution unless there were some oppressive and intolerable conditions against which to revolute.

KERNEELS: So you *were* on the side of Mr Jameson and his band of armed incursors in the Transvaal after all...?

TWAIN: Oh no, not then. My sympathies were with the people they pretended to represent - the Uitlanders. The Uitlanders have just cause to rebel against the unjust laws, but they chose not to rebel, they sought a political solution... they certainly did not support the militant doctor. No that was a politically inspired incursion at the behest of moneygrubbers... A revolution is what we had in America when we threw the English out of the country... and what will no doubt occur here in time when people tire of the good Queen, Mr Rhodes and their minions, and in Russia as well once the serfs build up enough courage and find a leader, if one reads the signs correctly..... To lodge all the power in one party and keep it there is to insure bad government and the sure and gradual deterioration of public morals - which lead to insurrections, rebellions and revolutions. And I am for them under such circumstances. My question is, where will we find you?

KERNEELS: I don't know. I cannot foretell the future... I can hardly comprehend today...

TWAIN: Stop trying to intellectualize this! Attend to your innermost thoughts and dreams man. A man's private thought can never be a lie; what he thinks, is to him the truth, always.... Life does not consist mainly - or even largely - of facts and happenings. It consists mainly of the storm of thoughts that is forever blowing through one's head. And in those thoughts we constantly return to the notions that govern our lives.

KERNEELS: Those thoughts are nothing but a blur of passionate moments at present... and stretches of boredom and uncertain desire...

TWAIN: (*Losing patience*) And there we have your trouble, just there. In a nutshell. Beautiful words - with no meaning, no fire, no taste, and no courage in them. Merely indiciveness, evasiveness, procrastination, meaningless phrases...with no point to them. All borrowed from your beloved English romantics no doubt.. ... Good God man, what kind of a wimp are you? You know, it is your kind of pusilanimous, mealiemouthed, aesthete which tires me and makes me lose all faith in mankind... Perhaps you should go back to the veldt and play with the sheep and ostriches... I wash my hands of you... and your tribe..!

KERNEELS: (*A burst of real flaming anger now.*) Hou jy jou smoel van my en my mense af, jou verdomde ou doodsafwagtende...Wat in Godsnaam wil jy van my hê???! (*Almost shouting the last line and **Achmat** comes forward involuntarily*) What do you want here?!

ACHMAT: Please sir, could you please speak more quietly...?

TWAIN: (*Sensing the anger, enflamed himself now*) Don't you start shouting at *me* in that guttural gibberish, you young colt. Who do you think you are addressing...??

KERNEELS: It is not gibberish, I told you! ...It is a language as much as that slurred American dialect you use is a language! As much as German, or Dutch or French are languages!!

TWAIN: Prove it.

KERNEELS: What?!

TWAIN: I said - *prove it*. You claim that noise you make is a language. But all I've heard so far are some vague philological statements about how it differs from Dutch, and otherwise some swearing, some anger and a few drinks orders. That does not constitute a "language" in my book ... A language needs to be in use and useful as an active means of daily communication,

within a real society, it needs a community, it needs speakers, readers, students, a literature...Does your Cape Dutch have all of this?

KERNEELS: (*Stung, but does not quite have an answer.*) Well... no, I suppose it does not. No it does not have all of that.

TWAIN: So you grant that it is gibberish then...or at least a dialect of proper Dutch, right?

KERNEELS: No... No, not that, not a dialect. It is more... it is used widely...

TWAIN: So are many dialects..

KERNEELS: Yes, but... it is the language of a whole emerging nation...look at the Transvaal and the Free State...

TWAIN: It is a language... it isn't a language...? It is still pretty much of a mystery my boy... for a lawyer you are mightily diffident it seems to me...and elusive. ... No - on second thoughts, I retract that. That is precisely like a lawyer. What does your local Dutch need to qualify do you think...? It seems to me it does have a fully developed grammar and the necessary speakers.... Many of them as you say...

KERNEELS: I suppose a more complete vocabulary...and the literature, so one can teach it...

TWAIN: Can this not be developed...? Surely the language itself can encompass everything Dutch or even English does, given time. All you need to do is mobilise everyone, the writers, the teachers, the politicians, all of them...to use the language, teach it, work with it ... to create a literature.. to tell the stories, write the poems and songs ... That isn't so impossible, it has been done elsewhere... in Ireland and Belgium for example...

KERNEELS: I suppose so...

TWAIN: All one needs is someone fired up enough to begin... even one person with enough daring to be

KERNEELS: Of course... (*He smiles, recognizing the implied boast*) ... as they say you did in America for American literature...

TWAIN: Well now, I would not be one to blow my own horn... too often. But yes, I believe I did contribute there, along with a number of other fine writers, to changing the way people viewed American writing.

KERNEELS: But the problem is... if the language is not written, only spoken... where will the readers come from..?

TWAIN: Now that *is* a conundrum. Clearly you cannot have a literature unless you have readers, and to have readers you need writers producing books. And who will publish them? Who will buy the books? Who will read them? Who will teach those who buy them to read? A wonderful prospect this - a most interesting time to live in this country my young Cornelius. Aren't you excited by it...?

KERNEELS: Should I be ...?

TWAIN: Oh certainly - you have a whole new continent to discover.... Virgin forests to explore... .

KERNEELS: I suppose you are right...

TWAIN: (*He thinks about this long and seriously.*) Listen son, I know you have difficulty accepting me and my crank ideas now - but I am beginning to think that you and I have much in common as our countries go. This language thing is only one aspect of it, so is the literature problem, but there are other matters, as pressing. I once had to make speech on our thanksgiving day - you know it? Celebrating the coming of the pilgrim fathers, God bless their iron-willed souls. Anyway, I said to the gathering of venerable stuffed shirts posing as gentlemen that my first American ancestor was an Indian, and early Indian, and that their ancestors had skinned him alive - leaving me an orphan. All those Salem withches, I said, were also ancestors of mine, and their ancestors had burnt them at the stake, The first slave brought to New England out of Africa by their progenitors was an ancestor of mine - for, you see, I am a mixed breed, an infinitely shaded breed and exquisite Mongrel. And so are you all here. Achmat too.

KERNEELS: Yes, that may work for America... but...

TWAIN: Oh no, there are no buts about this... I have travelled widely here and I can tell you... you will have to accept that statement as a fact...if not now, then some day. Only by accepting it can you begin to have the kind of pride that makes nations and makes for greatness... The universal brotherhood of man is our most precious possession, what there is of it.. and we must fight for it...

KERNEELS: And for you that includes the uncivilized peoples...?

TWAIN: Listen, there are many humorous things in the world; but outstanding among them is the white man's notion that he is less savage than the other savages. Don't let that stand in the way of the great idea...or a great moral truth...

KERNEELS: What you propose is an enormous, sweeping project. You propose a reformation of human nature...No mere man can undertake that! Or will even contemplate it...

TWAIN: No, not any normal everyday man. Not on his own. But we cannot sit by and merely let things slide... we can all contribute *something* of value. (*Slow smile, as he comes out his dark mood.*) You can do your bit for language tolerance and your unread Cape Dutch, I will work on tolerance of sin and the devil... I love the underdog. A brick here, a brick there will all help build the fortress we need against stupidity, ignorance and the fools who run and ruin our world... However, let us also be thankful for the fools. But for them the rest of us could not succeed.If all the fools in this world should die, lordy God how lonely I should be.The trouble is not that there are too many fools, but that the lightening isn't distributed right.

KERNEELS: (*Smile*) That would be a fine solution for some of my neighbours as well...

TWAIN: Your neighbours? Don't you mean your enemies...?

KERNEELS: In my case they are often the same... I could tell you endless stories about my trouble with my neighbours...

TWAIN: (*Laughs*) Well, stop talking about it and *do* it. Write a novel, call it something like "The Trouble with my Neighbors". But keep it light. Remember that readers prefer stories and laughter to long, convoluted sentences and sermons and lessons - for preaching buries the message under a pile of boredom and disinterestedness before it can be delivered, while humor and a good story draws the reader to youand then you can let them have it! For that reason I have always believed that that literature is best and most enduring which is characterized by a noble simplicity. Look at the Uncle Remus stories. Look at *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. Filled to the brim with hearty laughter and good moralizing! I think of my own works are like water. The works of the great masters are like wine. But everyone drinks water. And there endeth the lesson. (*He is tired now that the anger has seeped out of him. Yawns, then raises his glass again*) I have been rough on you this evening, young man - but I am getting tired now. Come, shall we make this a last loving cup....? To the things we agree on and the things we don't..? (*Slowly, with a wry smile, Kerneels lifts his glass and nods. Twain stares at the fire for a few moments. Then stirring himself from his reverie*) You know Cornelius my young friend...I have a great affinity for heavenly bodies... And I'm not talking of my own dear Livy, or the two or three boer wenches who confuse you so greatly at present, or even of your sadly lamented little Ruth of heavenly proportion - even though she stirred

our warring blood so not many hours ago ... and has caused you so much humiliation and pain.

KERNEELS: You mean angels...?

TWAIN: No, not them either. I am thinking of those other celestial beings, the planets and their moons, shooting stars and comets... For I am one, y'know. I am a comet. A fiery phenomenon of nature streaking to the future.. And you must beware.. so are you - we speed across the firmament .. we speed across it and burn out too soon.. far too soon.. ... *(Pause, as he lights a cigar)* Comets. You know comets? You know Halley's comet? Now that is *my* comet, that one. Did I tell you? I came in with Halley's Comet in 1835. It is coming again in .. um ... fourteen years, and I expect to go out with it. It will be the greatest disappointment of my life if I don't go out with Halley's Comet. The Almighty has no doubt said often enough, "Now here are these two unaccountable freaks - this comet and this man - they came in together, they must go out together." Oh I am looking forward to that.

There are times I think I have made a pact with the devil... but, oh, how he has made me fly!! Oh yes! *(Looks at Kerneels)* You take care to choose your devils well, my young boer friend... *(Sudden laugh.)* Hey, come, enough of this sentiment. Here's to all the freaks of nature...*(They raise their glasses)* .. may we prosper ..!! *(Twain gets up slowly. So does Kerneels. Twain shakes his hand, clasping it warmly.)* I am going to get some sleep now... thank you for talking me through this aftermath of the evening.. And you take care now Cornelius. You go out there and do what you need to do...go tell your stories, go fire your arrows of satire and laughter... they are the best weapons in any war...

KERNEELS: Thank you sir... it has been an enormous pleasure to meet you...

TWAIN: Of course it has been.... Good night.

Twain leaves, Neelsie sits down and stares at the fire, as the lights fade to dark. Achmat starts clearing the glasses.

SCENE TWELVE/TONEEL TWAALF

A spotlight fades in on the actor playing Neelsie and Twain. He has stripped down to his shirt sleeves and suspenders (i.e. as in the first two scenes, where he is both characters), He is again sitting at a table writing. He begins speaking as Neelsie before the light appears. (If these roles are being played by two men, they obviously will appear on stage as needed, though dressed similarly.) A soft spotlight comes on at Lectern 1. Sounds of conversation and occasional laughter, etc. Then someone announces "And please

*welcome our guest for the evening, one of the world's greatest and best loved authors
..... Mr Samuel Clemens, better known to us all as Mark Twain!! " and the actor speaks
in the voice of **Twain***

TWAIN: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I must say that I am sorry to hear my name mentioned as one of the great authors, flattering as it is, because they all have a sad habit of dying off. Chaucer is dead, Spenser is dead, so is Milton, so is Shakespeare ... and I am not feeling very well myself!

However, I want to warn against that overreaching praise for another reason - it may be untrue. My literary ideals have never been so incredibly lofty, they have been merely to please, to be read and enjoyed - and, to tell the truth, as I see it - even in my lies. To my mind that literature has always been best and most enduring which is characterized by a noble simplicity.....

But on a more serious contemporary note, a few years ago I returned from a journey around the circumference of the world - to a most bitter personal sorrow with the death of my daughter Suzy. But that is past and I endure... As we all must in the face of sorrow... we endure..

The journey itself is reported on in a book entitled "Following the Equator", which I wrote in 1897 and which was published by Harper in New York. I saw many wondrous things on that journey, with which I can entertain you for much of this evening - but I shall not. Buy the book and read it ... or use it as a doorstop or paper press, as you prefer. However, I did find myself most impressed by the landscapes and colours of India, the murderous activities of the Thugs in the same region, the animals and peoples of Australia, the graceful natives of South Africa , the awe-inspiring riches of the country and the all-encompassing presence of Mr Cecil Rhodes... And in all these places I found people to be the same: dreaming of a future filled with hope, and love, and security and righteousness.. They also have the same troubles and fears and sorrows... I recall for example a long and enjoyably robust exchange I had with a young boer in a hotel lounge in Cape Town... For he was a easily roused young man, with a good sense of satire and an excellent fund of swearwords to spice up his conversation.... Though I could understand little but the grit and passion of them, for he spoke in Cape Dutch. He also, if I remember correctly, had some trouble disentangling his love life at the time, which implicated no less that four women... a veritable harem of problems and complexities... a most admirable man...I do not remember his name, but I do still feel his passion and his potential when I read about his country today... and I occasionally wonder, amidst the stupid conflict now initiated in that beautiful region by the bullying British Empire, where he finds himself.....

Light on Lectern 1 fades, a soft spotlight on Lectern 2 fades in. The actor now speaks as Neelsie.

SCENE THIRTEEN/TONEEL DERTIEN

NEELSIE: Wat is my filosofie as skrywer, vra u my ywerige jong vriende? Ek het 'n aantal jare gelede gesê dat ek glo skrywers in hierdie land het een groot en onvermydelike doel gehad: om ons volk te leer lees. En daardie doel staan vandag, ses jaar op die pad van Afrikaans af, nog vas - ook vir elke nuwe skrywer. En vir die hieropvolgende half-eeu of meer lê die verantwoordelikheid op ons om te kies hóé ons wat nuwe skrywers is nuwe lesers sal maak in 'n nuutgeskrewe taal. Watter van twee teenoorgestelde koerse sal ons inslaan: sal ons skryf vir die geringe deeltjie van ons volk wat die kruine van die berge bereik het - vir die predikante, onderwysers, professore, wetsgeleerdes, dokters, akademies ontwikkeldes oor die algemeen - met die verwagting dat wat daar skoon en waar en goed is in ons woorde gestadig daar van bo af sal afdal, soos reën uit die hemel, om eendag 'n volksbesitting te word? Of sal ons daardie uitgesoekte minderheid opsy laat en regstreeks en meteens vir die menigte hier onder op die vlakte sorg - vir hulle leer lees, vir hulle aan die gang sit om ook die berg te begin klim?

My eie keuse in die saak het natuurlik oor die jare ontwikkel, maar stam, soos ek by 'n ander geleentheid reeds gesê het, grootliks uit my bewondering vir die ontsaglike werk wat Hendrik Conscience in België, op wie se grafsteen die volgende mooi woorde pryk: "Hij heeft zijn volk leeren lezen". Sou enige mens - enige skrywer - ooit 'n beter grafsskrif wou hê?

Maar julle het my gevra oor invloede, en invloede werk soms op vreemde maniere, soms onbewustelik, waar 'n saadjie geplant word, maar eers na jare van versigtige en liefdevolle versorging begin bot en vrugte dra. Ek is by die werk aan hierdie lesing byvoorbeeld herinner aan 'n vreemde gesprek wat ek deur blote toeval as jongman eenkeer met 'n bekende skrywer in Kaapstad gehad het. Hy was 'n uiters flambojante mens, en seker een van die beroemdste en mees beminde skrywers in die wêreld op daardie stadium - in sy eie oë sowel as die van die menigte, en sy verhale oor sy jeugdae en sy wedervaringe in die wêreld het almal aan sy lippe laat hang. Hy sê van sy eie werk het Mark Twain gesê. "To my mind that literature is best and most enduring which is characterized by a noble simplicity. My works are like water. The works of the great masters are like wine. But everyone drinks water."

Dit wil ek ook oor my beskeie bydrae sê. Ons mense het water bitter nodig, water uit eie bodem, water wat die gees van elkeen sal verryk, ook die armes, die verstoteling, die eensames, die sukkelendes onder ons...

Dit moet ons strewwe wees om die water te verskaf aan almal wat dors het... Ek kan maar net vertrou dat ek ook daar my deel gebring het in hierdie grootse opdrag...

(Ligte verdof op hom.)

SCENE FOURTEEN/TONEEL VEERTIEN

Die Lounge. Achmat is besig om kroegtipe dinge te doen. Barend sit by die vuur met Neelsie, wat diep in die stoel weggesak sit, glas in die hand, en staar na die vuur. Hy sing saggies 'n Gesang. Sy baadjie is uit. Hy hoës sleg, en sy spraak sloer wanneer hy uiteindelik praat. Die bottel is byna leeg. Dit storm luiddrugtig buite.

BAREND: Maar was dit dan die laaste keer wat oom hom gesien het...? *(Hy probeer desperaat iets sinvols uit Neelsie kry. Neelsie kyk hom net soms dofweg aan, vir die res van die tyd staar hy na die vuur, drink sistematies en rook.)* Oom..? Wat het toe geword van die vrouens... van die Ruth...? Was daar regtig so-iemand... of is dit nog 'n stories...?

NEELSIE: *(Trek skouers op)* wie weet... jy's die skrywer... of wil die skrywer wees, sê jy my.... Toe ek jonger was, kon ek alles onthou... of dit waar was of nie. Maar nou word ek oud... en binnekort sal ek net dit onthou wat nooit gebeur het nie... of dit wat met iemand anders gebeur het, byna veertig jaar gelede.... Maar die man is dood... na die plek waar ons almal gelyk sal wees - ook ek en jy... en hy... Op 21 April 1910 is hy weg, saam met Halley se Komeet - nes hy voorspel het! Ai, was daar maar vir my ook so 'n hemelse ryperd..!!Wat is jou naam nou weer ou seun...?

BAREND: *(Uiters bekommerd nou)* Barend Oom...

NEELSIE: Ah, ja. Barend... wat wou ek nou weer sê Barend...?

BAREND: Ek weet nie oom... iets oor die man? Oor die meisie..? *(Neelsie hoës)* Oom, moet oom nie liewer in die bed kom ...of 'n dokter gaan sien nie...?

NEELSIE: Los my uit! Is jy dalk my verpleër...? Ek makeer niks, net 'n verkoue... skink daar ...

BAREND: Maar oom... dis laat... en ek moet netnou die trein haal... en oom ook.

Die deur gaan oop en Sarah kom binne, skud die water van haar af en kyk rond. Achmat stap na haar toe.

ACHMAT: Can I help you miss...?

BAREND: Nou goed...maar wat het van die vrouens geword, oom...?

SARAH: I'm looking for Senator Langenhoven. (*Barend kyk om, sien Sarah. Dadelik getref deur die aantreklike voorkoms van die vrou.*) I was supposed to meet him here.

NEELSIE: Watter vrouens...?

BAREND: Ek weet nie oom, daar was soveel van hulle in die storie...

ACHMAT: He is over there by the fire ... with that gentleman I think.

NEELSIE: ...O ja, daar was baie ... maar daar is uiteindelik net één vir elke mens... en jy sal weet ou seun... mens weet altyd... jy sal haar herken..

(*Neelsie hoës. Sarah hoor dit en kom vinnig oor na hom, terwyl Barend na haar staar.*)

BAREND: Hy is hier in die stoel juffrou... maar ek's bevrees hy is baie siek...

NEELSIE: ...jy weet soms net vêr te laat....soos hy gesê het.. mens het tyd nodig...

ACHMAT: Die Senator is die hele aand al aan die kuier... } *Gelyktydig*

BAREND: Goeienaand juffrou... my naam is Barend Gouws....

SARAH: (*Ongeduldig in haar benoudheid.*) Ja...ja. Help my hier - jy en jy Mnr Gouws... (*Die ligte verdof oor die volgende woorde, terwyl hulle Neelsie ophelp uit die stoel.*) Kan jy my asseblief help om hom in my motor kry... die man is siek... Chief, toe nou, help ons...!!! (*Die ligte begin uitgaan*) Chief...!!!

Donker.

SCENE FIFTEEN /TONEEL VYFTIEN

Twee figure sit op die verhoog. Barend by die tafel, waar hy onder 'n kollig sit en skryf. Sarah sit in die skadus. Die volgende twee stukke word gelyktydig gelees: dit begin met die lewensberig (obituary) vir Neelsie, gelees deur Barend, en word dan sag gevolg deur 'n voorlesing van die gedig deur Sarah van waar sy in die skemer sit. Soos dit vorder verdof die ligte en stem van Barend, en versterk die een op Sarah, tot sy alleen in 'n kol lig sit, wat dan weer stadig verdof.

BAREND: Cornelius J. Langenhoven is dead... the passionate patriot and inspired champion of the Afrikaans language has passed away, and Sagmoedige Neelsie is no more....

(Silence)

BAREND: The man who taught his people to laugh and to read, passed away in his sleep on Friday, 15th of July, 1933. The following day the *Burger* in Cape Town carried two blank columns to mourn its and our loss, while the *Oudtshoorn Courant* of his home town said that his sudden demise ...has had such a stunning effect that the reality of the tremendous loss cannot yet be fully realized... Oh, the shock of his death has reverberated throughout the length and breadth of the country....

(Silence)

BAREND: To touch each one of us in some special way... causing us to articulate our own, private grief... our own sense of immense loss...

SARAH: *(Softly)* Die laaste maal, en die laaste maal,
Het ek hom op sy naam geroep - my naam
Vir hom, die naam van net ons twee alleen.

BAREND: And I, who only met him briefly, one rainy night - is it a bare week ago....? Why shall I not cry as I write this in the privacy of my back room - or even for my own readers here in the Free State?

SARAH: *(Still softly, but audible)* Hy sou geantwoord het, al is dit dan ook
Met 'n snik om my vaarwel te sê.
Maar hy was weg, was sonder afskeid weg,
Gevoelloos, koud, die stilte ingegaan -
Nooit meer, nooit meer 'n stem van hom vir my.

BAREND: Why shall I not tell of the warmth of the man, his wisdom, his sharp wit... and compassion. Why shall I not talk of his stories, relate the flights of his soaring imagination - and his heartfelt passions... which so inflamed my own thoughts and gave them too wings to soar... had I but his skill, his genius, his encompassing mind...

SARAH: Maar dis tog syne, hierdie dooie boek!
'n Dooie boek? Sy stem swyg ewig stil,
Maar in sy werke leef sy woorde voort,
Leef sy gevoel, gedagtes, hart en siel:
Ja, daarin leef sy liefde nog vir my.

BAREND: But these are all mere abstractions, beautiful yet almost meaningless words in which to clothe the reality of the awful loss and the devastating grief gripping my gut... Let me rather remember him for what he gave me on that night ... a simple story of another meeting...

SARAH: Die laaste maal, en vir die laaste maal,
Het ek my soen gedruk op sy gelaat -
Op syne, myne: ons twee s'n alleen.

BAREND: ...another time, other people...

SARAH: Hy sou geglimlag het, al was dit ook
Maar deur 'n traan, om my vaarwel te sê.

BAREND: ... a tale of two men... and a young girl... and the mysteries of life and
growing up in the world...

SARAH: Maar hy was weg, was sonder afskeid weg,
Gevoelloos, koud, die donker ingegaan -
Sy eie beeld was nie meer syne nie.

BAREND: *(His voice fades away on this, as his light dims)* But perhaps that is my
story... remembered as I wish it to be... while others will have versions of
their own...

SARAH: *(Her voice gets gradually stronger, as the light hones in on her.)*

'n Dooie marmerbeeld, yskoud en bleek!
So bleek was sy gelaat en koud, ja bleek
En koud soos hierdie blok van marmerklip.
Maar dit was tog sy eie vlees en bloed,
Al was dit dood. En hierdie is ook dood -
'n Blote blok van dooie marmerklip.
En tog ... sy eie beeld was syne nie,
En hierdie wat nooit hy was nie is hy:
Die vlees en bloed was dood, die marmer leef.

Die lewende is dood, die dooie leef -
Die dooie boek, die dooie marmerklip.
Waar daar geen siel is, is geen lewe nie;
Waar daar 'n siel is, is geen dooie nie.

Seg ek hy leef daar in die dooie boek,
Hy leef daar in die dooie marmerklip?
Daar is geen lewe waar geen siel is nie.
Daar is geen siel waarvan geen ander weet,
Daar is geen ander waar geen liefde is nie.

The light fades while she speaks the last line.

DIE EINDE | THE END