

A fantasy

THE SCENE is the kitchen, with breakfast nook, of the small suburban house occupied by MR and MRS X and their year-old daughter.

THE TIME: Five o'clock on a December morning in the year 1974.

THE WEATHER: Rain.

AS THE CURTAIN RISES, MRS X, not yet fully dressed, is preparing breakfast. There is a loud knock at the door.

POLICEMAN 1: (outside) Police. Open up. (He thumps the door again and MRS X opens it. POLICEMEN 1 and 2 stride in.) Where's your permit?

MRS X: What for?

POL. 1: To live in this house.

MRS X: (Hurries to drawer in kitchen table and hands him a paper from it.) Will this do?

POL. 1: (glances at paper and throws it on the floor) What good's a marriage certificate? I want your permit.

MRS X: I am legally married to Mr X and I thought . . .

POL. 2: WHERE'S YOUR PERMIT?

MRS X: (desperate) Look. Please. Please. I went to the office three days in a row to get one but I never got to the head of the queue. Come back tomorrow, they said. And tomorrow. (Her voice rises shrilly) AND TOMORROW. And then my boss told me if I went again I'd get the sack.

POL. 1: Some employers have no consideration. (MR X enters carrying the child in his arms.)

MR X: What's the matter?

MRS X: They want to see my permit to live with you.

DAUGHTER: Why Mummy? I lot I wed somewhere that mawwiage is sacred.

MR X: (fondly to his daughter) Out of the mouths of babes and suckers . . . (to the police) How much?

POLICEMAN 2: Five Rands.

(MR X attempts to hand him R5 but POLICEMAN waves away the money.) Oh

no, you don't. She'll have to pay it herself at the station.

MRS X: But I'll lose my job!

POL. 1: Come along now and stop wasting our time. We have a long list to get through. (He tries to take MRS X by the elbows to propel her towards the door) Bring the kid.

MRS X: (furiously shaking off his hand) Don't touch me! I'd have you remember I'm a non-Black.

POL. 1: (pugnates his jaw) Why does everyone talk about colour the moment there's a situation?

POL. 2: Beats me. (He speaks to MRS X with growing fervency, his voice getting ever louder.) Don't you know that we will be fighting the humiliating race laws until not one remains?

POL. 1: We will fight them on the beaches . . .

POL. 2: We will fight them in the parks . . . (He strikes a histrionic pose)

POL. 1: We will fight them on the trains . . . (He strikes a histrionic pose)

POL. 2: We will fight them in the schools . . .

POL. 1: We will suffocate them until our name will be as the rose of Sharon even unto the uttermost ends of the earth . . .

POL. 2: We will fight them until men and women of all colours can sit down to meat together, yea even in a public place . . .

POL. 1: (in a low voice to his colleague) Easy on there, these things take time you know . . .

POLICEMAN 2: I suppose you're right. But all the same (his voice rises again and he becomes rather excited) I'd like to remind you that we shall not hesitate, that we shall leave no stone unturned, to do away with humiliating measures and practices which harm good relations between Blacks and non-Blacks, and which have nothing to do

with the maintenance of our own identity and sovereignty.

DAUGHTER: How vewy nice of you. When will these fings be?

POLICEMAN 1: Six months. Meanwhile (he again takes MRS X by the elbow) you come along to the station and pay your fine.

Hurry up, the van's nearly full.

(MRS X picks up the child, casts a swift glance at her husband, and exits with the POLICEMEN.)

MR X: (shouting after them) Who's going to turn the first stone?

ELEANOR ANDERSON.

Autumn: A time for dying

VIOLET PADAYACHI CHERRY

The fall goes out in a blaze of color,
Heralding its death pangs,
The leaves range from sheer gold
To mottled red,
Soon there will be heaps of
Crumpled brown
And where once I peered through
Trellis of magic leaves,
Overnight there will be only ghostly
outlines to remind me of those
Golden summer days!

An icy chill greets me
As I pick my way across a carpet
Of newly fallen leaves
My garden will be bare,
With not a single bloom
To break the dull monotony of
Winter's creeping fingers,
Destined to suspend me
In icy gloom,
Through months of wintry cold,
A watery sun, weeks of dreary grey
With only the wind and snow
Breaking the sharp monotony of each day.

I long for the brilliance of my
African landscape,
Bright orange sun, creeping out
Of the Indian Ocean each dawn,
Softly bathing the hills with
Limpid pools of golden warmth,
An indigo sky, blood red bougainvillea
Gently draping the white washed houses,
And the trees — full and radiant
In their golden splendor.

I begin to feel once more the sun
Warming my chilled bones,
And can hear again the birds —
A cacophony of sound!
Against a city awakening to yet
Another day of sun and warmth.
Give me again those brilliant colors—
Tangerine against blue,
Deep purple and emerald green,
The powerful smell of tropical flowers,
And the sound of the sea
As it batters the rocks and creeps
Toward the golden beaches.
A panorama of color, sound
And vibrant life!

I miss the gentle palm trees
Outlining the ridge,
Hinting of a paradise of color,
A touch of mystery,
As I conjure up from afar,
The valley of a thousand hills,
Cattle in the distance, huts here and there,
Faint echoes of the herd boys guitar,
Twanging in the distance.
Fills me with pathos and longing
Of what perhaps will never be again,
Memories of those harsher times
Of yesterday are softened by distance
And lends enchantment to a land
Now far removed, and yet
Still poignantly remembered.

From The Diary of an Exile

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