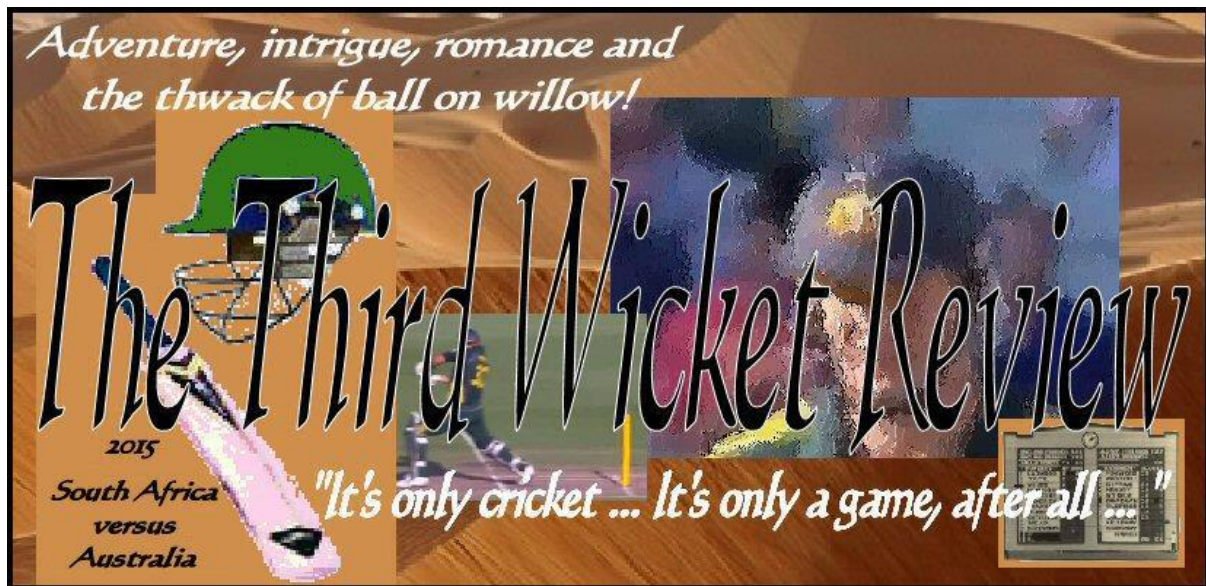




It's only cricket! It's only a game after all!

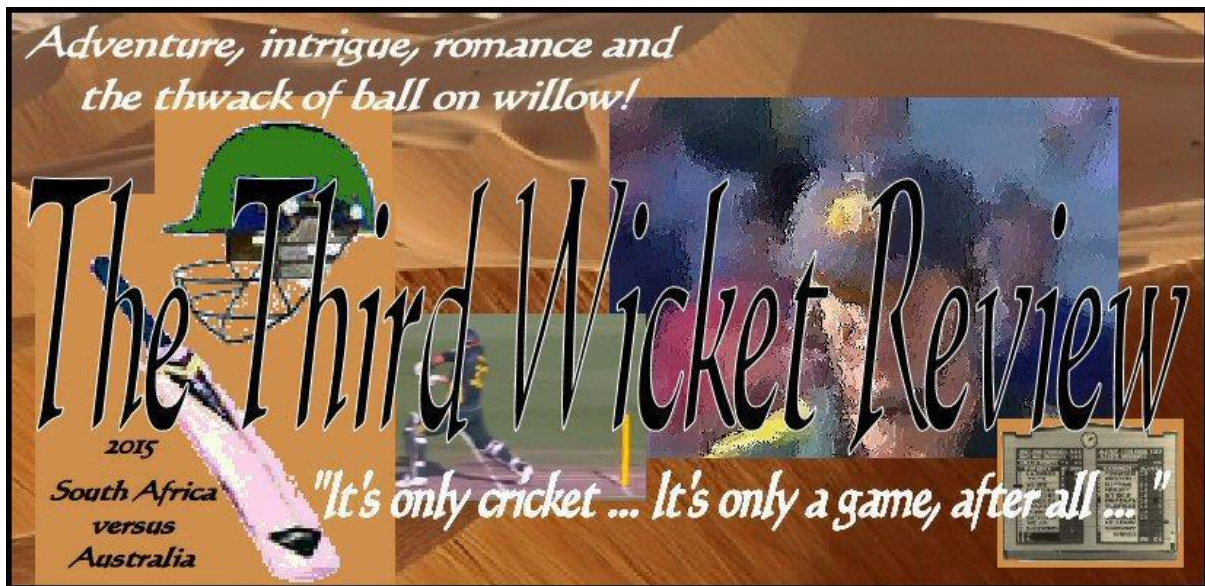
Hal Thornside (elite cricketer) is playing for Australia in South Africa.

When there is a review on the loss of the third wicket (ANY third wicket!)

Hal is whisked back to a mysterious Middle Eastern country.

Hal must negotiate a difficult (even dangerous) path

in order to make sense of this phenomenon.



PROLOGUE

Prologue Scene i: The Australian Bush, Dream Sequence

Our camera level stays below knee-level throughout.

The opening scene is a well-lit thicket on the edge of the bush in central Australia.

The only sounds we can hear are those of the bush: no human sounds are apparent.

A small superb fairy wren hops about, his plumage the most iridescent blue. It pecks about for insects.

The bird flies off. Now we can clearly hear the heavy footfall of a man as he tramps through the bush.

We hear a sharp and heavy knife hacking through branches of wattle and see branches of bright yellow wattle falling to the ground.

And then the man cruelly scrunches the wattle blossom with the end of a cricket bat.

Into the Titles

The wattle now begins to “bleed” a superb golden liquid like molten gold.

The bush scene fades out, except for the wattle blossom bleeding the molten gold, which oozes down as the titles appear.

The titles will be accompanied by dramatic music, with heavy emphasis on kettle drums and deep, throbbing notes.

And throughout, the gold will continue to ooze down the screen from the wattle bloom.

THE FIRST SCENE OF THE PROLOGUE SNAPS OFF LIKE A CUT THREAD AS WE LAUNCH INTO THE
SECOND SCENE (OF THE PROLOGUE)

Prologue Scene ii: Staffy Saledis At The Sydney Post Newspaper Office

Sydney January 2015

The filthy window allows us just enough view to see the Sydney Harbour Bridge as well as glorious Harbour scenes.

Staffy's desk is a garbage heap. The man himself is a slob: the sloppiest sports reporter in Sydney, bar none. He is bordering on obesity, wears a back-to-front baseball cap and dirty, slovenly clothes (more like rags). His desk is at complete odds with its surroundings.

When we discover Staffy, he is sitting at his desk with his head resting on a pile of stuff. He has dozed off (with the computer mouse still in his hand).

Kerrienne marches about in the background, to and fro. As she walks about, she berates Staffy. We almost make out a general sledging: refer "vile" in the Thesaurus. Then Kerrienne marches over to Staffy's desk with a wastepaper basket to swipe his junk into this receptacle with her forearm. She is now closer and more audible.

Kerrienne *savage* You have to try and have some self-respect, Staffy. And respect for your fellow workers, who all agree that you are a total slob.

In response, Staffy groans.

Kerrienne *stern* We are first-rung sports reporters but you behave like a uni student. Yes, I realize that it's Sunday evening, but you can't use that as your excuse every weekend.

Staffy stirs, making unintelligible sounds.

Kerrienne What?

Staffy *groans* Cricket ... The Cronulla Eleven ... we won ... we ...

Kerrienne *crisp* Well, put the local game behind you and think **international** cricket. Pull yourself together.

Staffy No good. Lost my lunch ...

Kerriane You threw up? How unbelievably gross!

Staffy *groans* No. Lost my lunch. In the Gents.

Kerriane *shocked* What? What did you say?

Staffy I had a (oh shit!) I had a Chicko roll in my pocket and me and me mates --

[trying to sound more sophisticated]

(my mates and I ... my fellow cricket aficionados and yours truly) went into the Gents for a collective slash and next thing, my Chicko roll floated away in the urinal. In the River of Piss.

Bobbing about like a --

Kerriane reels back in horror.

Staffy *shame-faced* I seem to remember that I tried to fish it out.

Kerriane is appalled.

Staffy tries to stand and fails. He flops back into the chair with a huge groan and an even louder fart. Kerriane moves quickly away, continuing her rant. Then we see Kerriane from behind Staffy belting him across the head with a rolled-up newspaper. She passes about in the background spraying Glen20.

Kerriane So! I've been ringing and ringing and ringing your phone. And that mysterious, weird lady's disembodied voice keeps telling me that you are unavailable. So! What's that all about? I mean you never don't answer your phone.

Staffy *reasoning* You can buy a pack of 4 frozen Chickos for around \$5 or \$6. At the SuperDooperMarket ... What's that come to ... ?

Staffy punches numbers into a calculator on the laptop screen.

Kerriane Your **phone!** I urgently needed to --

Staffy That's in the realm of \$1.50 each. \$1.50 each! Do you know what

I paid for that sucker? \$8.00! That's highway robbery. The Queen should knight the Cronulla Ladies' Auxiliary for services to rip-offs.

Kerrienne *frustrated* Stafford! Answer me now!

Staffy Turned it off. Shit! I'd better --

Staffy gropes about for his mobile phone.

Kerrienne You can't do that, can you? Aren't you kind of "always on call"?

Staffy locates his phone and cranks it into action as he speaks. Meanwhile Kerrienne is riveted by shock. The phone beeps many times. Staffy sighs long and hard.

Staffy Yeah ... No ... Some prick has been calling me, saying that he's Ted Thornside. Put the wind up me. So I switched off the phone.

Kerrienne *hardly audible* Ted Thornside? The **late** Ted Thornside?

Staffy *nods* He knew a lot of stuff that only Ted and I knew. The caller I mean ... The caller knew ... I simply turned off the phone and --

Kerrienne And bolted from your flat to meet up with a pack of like-minded yobos to get drunk at the local cricket match, losing your --

Staffy Ted Thornside. Who's been dead for ... God! And the bastard even sounds like him. Freaky plus twelve.

Kerrienne plonks down into a nearby office chair. She stares in disbelief at Staffy, utterly stunned.

Kerrienne *whispers* Ted Thornside! Whoa ...

Staffy stares back as his eyesight kicks in. He nods sagely.

Kerrienne That is so bizarre! That makes me feel really strange.

Staffy No, Babe. That'll be all the smelly stuff you've been spraying around.

Kerrienne No! I had a really weird dream and that's why I wanted to talk to you. About Ted's brother Hal.

Staffy *with authority* Who is batting for Australia in South Africa as I write.

Kerriane But listen! I was me but I wasn't me. It was really insane.

Staffy *smartarse* Yeah well insanity is a state of mind. You'll get over it.

Kerriane You don't think that Hal Thornside (and not Ted Thornside) rang you? As a joke or something?

Staffy *scornful* Nah! Not his style.

Kerriane *worshipful* Hal Thornside! If he rang **me**, I'd keel over. And then send him 18 selfies of me in my birthday nothingness.

Staffy *laughs* Funny that! I have exactly the same thoughts! (**My** nuddy shots, not yours, course).

Kerriane's mobile phone rings. She moves quickly to another part of the office. We can only hear vague grabs of her phone conversation.

Staffy *to himself* Work! Now don't get me wrong, Princess. It was **simply grand** of you to drop in to tidy up, but I now can't find anything.

With a heavy and loud sigh, Staffy gets busy answering his missed phone calls.

END OF PROLOGUE



ACT I

SOUTH AFRICA versus AUSTRALIA

First Test Beginning Friday 16th January 2015 at SuperSport Park, Centurion South Africa

THIRD WICKET REVIEW from South Africa (fielding) against the NOT OUT decision (Billy Tongreene catch).

Result: decision overturned → Australian batsman Hal Thornside is deemed to be OUT.

Plot progression explained:

The “war” in *Third Wicket Review* does not take place in the mythical kingdom of Assrishna as expected. That war is thankfully averted due to some clever footwork performed by the major players.

No. The “war” unfolds on the cricket pitch. It is in no way essential to understand cricket to follow that “war”.

Essential background information regarding Assrishna is provided in Scene I following.

I, Scene i: Assrishna 1057 BCE

Music: A light Middle Eastern piece for flute.

The actress who plays Kerrianne also plays Princess Unela.

In his private chambers, Syl-Artron and the other three members of his faction (Rampe, Memlash and Nathi) sit about, attended by male slaves, working diligently at reading clay tablets, and “writing” in cuneiform script. They obviously hold very senior and responsible government positions.

Out in the large corridor, Princess Unela (her long robes rucked up to her knees to enable her to run) scampers along the corridor. As she passes, the guard slaves drop to their knees to prostrate themselves in honour of her high rank. She ignores them.

Unela bursts into the chambers. She is ignored by Syl-Artron and his henchmen. However, the slaves (apart from Horvex, the trusted personal slave) prostrate themselves. There is an acute silence, broken only by the sounds which the men make as they work, and Unela’s ragged breathing.

Horvex coughs significantly. He whispers in Syl-Artron’s ear.

Syl-Artron displays surprise. He looks about. He sees Unela looking daggers at him. He rises, feigning pleasure.

Syl-Artron Gentlemen! We are honoured to receive an unexpected courtesy call from our beloved Princess.

The other gentlemen stand, bowing slightly. Then they resume their seats, whereas Syl-Artron continues to stand, hands folded.

Syl-Artron *to the* Up!
slaves, authoritative

The slaves stand again.

Syl-Artron *extremely* To what do we owe the –

bonhomous

Unela is passionate and emotional.

Unela *voice throbbing* You **know** why I'm here!

I want to fight and you dare not deny me the right. King Etki has this very day deigned it permissible for women to fight in his Army. It has been announced in the public square. You **shall** not say me nay.

Syl-Artron studies Unela in a patronizing way. The other men laugh but do their utmost to disguise and hide their laughter. A faint smile hovers on Syl-Artron's lips.

In his dealings with the wilful princess, Syl-Artron is very avuncular, patronizing and clearly making game of her. However, he pretends as far as he is able to be on her side.

Syl-Artron With all my pleasure, Princess. I shall enlist you myself. We'll start with the badge of honour. Nathi!

Syl-Artron clicks his fingers autocratically. Nathi scampers over to him, holding a large gold badge on a chain. He gives this to Syl-Artron.

Smiling in an oily way, Syl-Artron bows as he obsequiously hands over the badge to Unela. The other men continue to snigger.

Unela is suspicious.

Unela *narrow-eyed* Thank you. Why do your kinsmen snigger like that?

Syl-Artron *off-hand* I've no idea. Perhaps they shared a joke upon visiting the Gentlemen's Room of Easement. Who knows?

[Warmly, with hands spread]

At any rate, beloved Princess: welcome to the King's Army and long may you serve in it.

Unela allows herself to be pleased.

Unela *preparing to* Is that all there is?
leave the chambers

Syl-Artron *utterly charming*

Of course.

[Vaguely waves]

Once we've taken care of a few little administrative formalities, you will be a duly-designated member of the Assrishnan fighting forces.

Unela *frowning*

Well? What "formalities"?

Syl-Artron

The uniform. My son, Rampe will obtain for you a uniform. The smallest size available, I think, Rampe.

Rampe, hand over mouth to hide his laughter, rushes to the door. Then he stops, bowing to his father.

Rampe

Syl-Artron! Father ... the beard ... You will need to inform the Princess of the maximum permissible beard length.

Syl-Artron

Of course. Thank you, Rampe. The King is keen that there be no shagginess of the whiskers amongst his soldiers. You are advised to respect the King's wishes and to keep your beard to a maximum of eight fingers in length, from the point of the chin.

Unela *horrified*

I don't have a beard.

Memlash *feigning concern*

But a beard is part of the uniform. You cannot –

Syl-Artron *pretending to support Unela*

Tush! That is as nothing. She will obtain a false beard and the thing is done.

Nathi bows, then gestures to a large stone (with metal handle) which stands in the room.

Syl-Artron

Oh yes! And you must lift the Stone of Loyalty at least two fingers above the floor. 'Tis easily done, as a mark of bona fide strength and courage.

Unela is dubious. She tries to lift the stone but is powerless to do so.

Syl-Artron *appears*

What? But 'tis not a difficult requirement. Only two fingers off ...

surprised Let my man Horvex give the lead.

Proudly, Horvex strides to the stone, and grunts as he uses all his strength to lift the stone about two feet off the floor.

Memlash *whistles* Show-off! There's no need to be so bullish. Here, Princess: this is all you need to do.

Memlash (with no seeming effort) lifts the stone the required two fingers up.

Syl-Artron *kindly to* Try again, dear Princess!

Unela

Unela is now very close to tears. Using every bit of her strength, she almost manages to lift the stone. Exhausted, Unela falls to her knees. Memlash gallantly assists her to rise. She shrugs off his assistance, breathing in a ragged way and looking daggers at everyone in the room.

Syl-Artron We'll come back to that later.

Our final checkpoint is naturally one of health and welfare. The medical chap shall be duly summoned, and he'll check your "old fellow" and your stones for soundness.

While the men do their utmost to remain solemn and serious, there is a taut silence. Unela looks angrily from one man to another.

Unela *throbbing voice* You know that as woman I don't possess those things.

Rampe *from the door, feigning concern* That might prove the impasse, dear Father.

Syl-Artron is enjoying himself. He sweeps across to a window-like gap in the wall, and (with hands folded) looks out at the view. He is giving the impression that he is working to find a solution.

Syl-Artron *thoughtful* Yes, my son, I can't see our way clear to work around **that** one.

There is a precedent for this impasse, too. I remember it well.

One chap was refused a posting in the forces due to his having been savaged by a hawk: took off one of his stones and ripped his dick apart whilst stooping ... Out in these hills, it was. They now

call that chap "Righty" for some unfathomable reason. But at least he **had** a package. I'm sure that we cannot (given that precedent, as I said) allow the enlistment of one who has never had a package at all.

Syl-Artron turns away from the view and approaches the enraged girl, tweaking the badge of honour from her fingers, and patting her shoulder.

Syl-Artron *silky smooth* I'm so very sorry, my dearest Princess Unela. We might have overlooked the beard and the weight-lifting, but –

Syl-Artron shrugs his shoulders expansively.

Unela *tight, low voice* Oh, I hope that you've finished making fun of me. I see what your game has been.

There never was (nor never would be) the remotest hope for **any** female to be accepted. Not a hope!

Syl-Artron *haughty* Our King made these rulings, not I.

Let's just say that he expressed a wish for you ladies to join the man's Army but set insuperable barriers in the way of your actually doing so.

Unela *teeth clenched* I'll find a way around this scandalous –

Syl-Artron *dominating* You'll naturally go one better.

the proceedings

Quite sensible, really. You'll obtain a champion.

Let **him** do the fighting, whilst you trot along beside him, shouting encouragement.

The only possible solution, and it fits neatly into our way of life.

Memlash *urging* Yes! Yes! A champion.

Unela *seething* I'll get me a champion to best all the heroes who ever buckled a sword to their belts. He'll ride at my side as I roar into the fray. I'll –

There is a loud interruption. Princess Unela stops. Everyone in the room (apart from the slaves) looks alert.

Paluke-Joshua (personal soothsayer of King Etki) explodes into the room, waving a loosely-woven flax chart. Paluke-Joshua shouts, seeing that he has captured everyone's attention

Paluke-Joshua *loud and self-important* A stranger! A stranger comes! King Etki has sent out a royal emissary to greet the astral traveller. We shall banquet him in the Great Hall. Every honour shall be his ... Every luxury at his command.

Syl-Artron is perplexed, as are all the men.

Syl-Artron What is this that you speak?

Paluke-Joshua flops into a chair, breathless.

Paluke-Joshua *full of news* Our gods have heeded our prayers. They are sending a great man to deliver us from the evils of war, greed and disenfranchisement. All these things, and more, this man shall relieve. He is the greatest warrior ... I must return to the throne room. We are all a-gush with the thrill of this momentous occasion.

Syl-Artron He is in Assrishna, you say? He really is here?

Paluke-Joshua No! No! But we expect his arrival on the moment.

Paluke-Joshua goes to leave in haste.

Syl-Artron Stay! Does the Syl-Ibsel party know of this?

Paluke-Joshua Aye! For they were in audience with the King upon my seeing the prognostication in the smoking bones of my craft. But I shall not tarry.

Paluke-Joshua dashes from the room with all the bustle of one who believes that his business must be the most important business on Earth.

As everyone is distracted, Unela dives towards Syl-Artron and snatches back the badge of honour from his grasp. She tears to the door.

Unela *triumphant* I'll have him! He will be my champion, this galactic adventurer.
 See if I don't have him! Just you wait and see!

Music: A burst of very grand, exotic music bursts forth as the camera moves backwards and upwards to take in the fabulous wealth and beauty of Assrishna.

At this juncture, as we admire the beauty of the palace, Unela is seen to be running off, with slaves prostrating themselves to her as she passes (as seen from above).

END OF SCENE

Below: the scoreboard as it is shown as the next scene opens.

CENTURION SCOREBOARD	
Australia G. Wilkes 19 c/b M. Martin D. Timberling 24 run out C. Veeshook K. Fernwell 13 H. Thornside 25 J. Cowper P. Lansborough S. Onwardon B. Kentalbot J. Guyville B. Romanov A. de Jonge	South Africa M. Martin 5 over – 1 wicket – 2 maiden K. Reemuhs 2 over – 0 wicket – 0 maiden C. Veeshook 8 over – 1 wicket – 3 maiden

Plot progression explained:

Hal undertakes the FIRST fleeting visit to Assrishna from the Centurion oval. He is whisked away and then delivered back without any purposeful effort on his part. He is understandably stunned by the event which he will later disclose to the team's physiotherapist.

There are essential activities which must take place to facilitate this journey back in time.

Most of these activities take place on the field but are interspersed with the balcony used by the Australian team (adjacent to their dressing room).

Scene ii: FIRST TEST

The First Australian Innings: Hal's First Encounter With Assrishna

Music: None.

The scene on the cricket oval is as follows.

There is absolutely no radio nor TV commentary here.

The noise of the crowd hums in the background. The players call to each other giving encouragement to team-mates, or mild sledging to opponents. This is unscripted as I want all of the cricket play to be natural (other than where the plot demands certain events to occur).

The accents of the players must be true to their nationality: the Australians are batting and the South Africans are fielding. Hal Thornside faces the pace bowling of Marin Martin.

Play continues. Hal hits a nice 4. The camera shows the Australian players (seated on the balcony of the dressing-room) applauding, and the umpire signalling "4" with outstretched, sweeping hand movement.

*The following **essential** action ensues (the Billy Tongreene disputed catch):*

Camera is in close-up as Hal taps the end of his bat on the pitch. In the background, we see the other batsman (Kip Fernwell), the umpire, the bowler preparing to run in, and the slips fieldsmen lean forward in anticipation.

Hal looks about at the field. Each fieldsman seems to register with Hal **(being outlined in bright purple)** as if they are characters in a computer game. There is an audible click as Hal identifies each fieldsman.

The bowler runs in and delivers the ball.

Hal bats aggressively.

Very, very close to the ground, the ball appears to be caught by William Tongreene. He has dived at full length for the catch but may have allowed the ball to touch the grass prior to snatching it up.

There is a large shout from the South African fieldsmen, who rush in to congratulate Tongreene.

The umpire deems that the catch was not successful, and signals “Not Out”.

There is much disagreement and consternation from the South Africans, and from the pro-South African crowd.

The captain (Hauer Van Der Hanh) formerly requests a review on the disputed decision.

The umpire signals that a review is required of the third wicket.

In the **background**, on the huge screen, a slow-motion vision of the catch is shown several times from different angles. No matter how we look at it, it is impossible to judge if the ball touches the grass or not. It is simply not clear.

Meanwhile, at the same time, in the **foreground**, Hal displays that he is “off” in the other place, as follows.

Hal goes into a mild fit as he fleetingly visits Assrishna.

Now, it is the action in the foreground which is important. The two Australian batsmen (Hal and Kip) stand together, ostensibly discussing the “catch”. Hal has reached out to grip Kip’s forearm tightly.

Kip concerned What’s the matter? Why are you gripping my arm like that?

Only some disjointed sounds from Hal’s throat can be heard. Even with the heavy helmet on, we can see that Hal’s eyes are wild.

Kip really very worried What’s the matter, mate? What is it?

*In quick succession, the following **essential** action ensues (the review of the Billy Tongreene disputed catch):*

In large red letters, the words “OUT Decision overturned” appear on the huge screen.

The crowd cheers and applauds.

The South Africans rush in to cheer bowler and catching fieldsman.

Hal (head bowed) tucks his bat under his arm and walks quickly off the arena.

On the balcony, the other Australian team members can be heard and seen to jeer. They shout

"Bullshit" and "Rubbish" and so forth.

The next batsman (Johnnie Cowper) passes Hal at the gate saying "That was not out, mate" as he passes.

Hal strides up towards the dressing room between the rows of seats. There is polite applause for him. A few Australian spectators wave Aussie flags.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Later, on the balcony, Hal sprawls on one of the back seats, minus his gloves, arm protection, pads and helmet. He has a Gatorade in hand, and drinks in a thirsty manner.*

*Kip plonks down beside Hal, also stripped of his batting gear. Wordlessly, the two men give each other a high-five. Other players congratulate Kip, as he has knocked-up 51 runs before going out.*

*Kip sotto voce to Hal*      Are you okay? What was that all about, during your review?

*Hal merely shrugs.*

*Kip persistent*                      I thought you were having a fit or something out there. You looked --

*Kip watches the play. He claps, as do all the other Australian cricketers and hangers-on (apart from Hal, who is completely divorced from the action).*

*Kip sotto voce to Hal*      You know what I thought? I thought you looked eviscerated.

*Hal grins in spite of himself.*

*Hal*                                      That's a big word ...

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

Hal sits in a straight-back chair looking anything other than comfortable. He is in a small office.

Josh *voice-off* So then Kip had a chat to Gavin and Gavin had a word in my ear.
What was it? What happened?

Hal shifts about, looking miserable.

Josh *voice-off* Something made you go troppo out on the field today. When that
fuckwit umpiring panel adjudicated on the fall of your wicket, and
got it completely arse-about ...

I need to know, Hal. Put me in the picture.

Hal opens his mouth but cannot speak.

Josh *voice-off* I know it's not drug related. I know you don't do drugs.
encouraging *[Pause]*

Come on, spill your guts, mate.

[Harder, more demanding]

The lost dog eventually trots back across the desert to me, not to
some other joker ...

I'm the poor stooge who has to make all the ends meet. Stitch-up
the package. Araldite the rubber soles back on the shoes. So don't
come the raw prawn with me, Hatboy: I need to know
everything about ***everyone***.

What was it that upset you?

Hal clears his throat.

Hal *quietly* Nothing.

The camera now focuses on the Head Coach. He is scratching his head.

Josh Nothing? Wrong answer. That's not how Kip Fernwell saw it.

Hal is extremely uncomfortable. The camera focuses on Josh.

Hal *voice-off* I can't ... Josh, is it okay if I talk with Louise Kemtalbot? I can
explain it to her. She'll understand.

Josh *very pleased at the break-through* Yeah, sure. Louise? Yeah, talk to her by all means. She'll sort it out ...

🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀 **Break** 🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀

In a very up-market hotel, Louise Kemtalbot and Hal sit at a table in a very stylish bar where smart casual dress is the requirement. Louise is the sister of team-member Blake and is one of the physiotherapists supporting the Aussie team.

Louise So, this thing happened while they were making that ludicrous decision to overturn the umpire's call?

Hal Yeah. Something flashed in front of me.

Louise How long did it go for?

Hal looks about, trying to recall the details.

Hal *vague* Um ... dunno ...

It felt like ages, but it can't have been.

Louise It sounds fascinating.

I mean, I believe you and all that, but ...

Your eyesight was okay, yeah?

Hal *distracted, repeats himself* Something flashed in front of me.

Louise *keen* When you dinked that shot?

The fog seems to be clearing for Hal.

Hal *more focused* No. It was after that, during the review itself.

I was standing around, hoping like fuck that I'd got away with it (as you do) when it happened. And then someone yelled "Out", and I was on my way back to the pavilion.

It happened between then and then.

Louise Tell me again what --

Music: mysterious. "Something-is-going-to-happen".

The highlighting of Hal's speech indicates that it is pivotal to the audience's understanding of what is happening.

Hal *rewinding in his mind*

I wasn't on the ground anymore. I was in a huge desert ...

People on camels were converging on me and I was still kitted-out in my batting gear: you know, helmet, gloves, bat, pads, box ... just as if I'd been batting for Australia (as indeed I was).

One of the camel-riders reached down and actually took my hand. And (with his help) I hauled myself up onto the camel's back, behind the guy.

Louise *guessing* Hallucination? Too much sun?

Hal *positive* Nuh. I was actually there.

I felt the hand through my batting gloves.

I felt his strength as he heaved me onto that camel's back.

I'm no lightweight ...

And then ... I was out. The umpire reversed his decision and gave me "Out". And it was over.

Louise and Hal look at each other for a long time. Hal (looking miserable) shrugs.

Louise Nothing since?

Hal Nuh ... You won't tell anyone about this, will you?

Louise *slightly offended* Oh, come on! You should know me better than that.

I'll pass it off as a momentary something-or-other ... I'll think of something ...

END OF SCENE

I, Scene iii: In Assrishna, The Syl-Ibsel Faction Discuss The Whisp-Shivver Man

The quarters in the palace which are occupied by Syl-Ibsel and his retinue are far grander and more lavish than those of his rival Syl-Artron.

Syl-Ibsel sits at a large marble table, on which a plate of tempting morsels of food has been placed. Behind and about Syl-Ibsel stand his henchmen: Nick, Harlim and Melki. All these men are dressed in shimmering silks, are armed with daggers and appear to be of the highest rank.

Before Syl-Ibsel stands Paluke-Joshua, who holds several small branchlets of whisp-shivver (the local version of the Australian wattle, but of a very washed-out creamy colour). When Paluke-Joshua speaks, it is clear that he adores the spotlight, being the centre of attention. He employs the vegetation in the manner of a prop, to add colour to his speeches.

Syl-Ibsel is shaking his head and sighing as he picks at the offering of food.

Paluke-Joshua *buoyant* I'll think of something, Lord, never fear.

Syl-Ibsel To what end? You lost him.

Paluke-Joshua He will return.
encouraging

Syl-Ibsel's eyes narrow.

Syl-Ibsel How can you be sure of that?

Paluke-Joshua *eager* I sensed (a very strong signal, it was) that he yearned to join us.

Syl-Ibsel *scornful* It was Artron's slave (rather than yourself) who pulled him up onto the camel, just prior to his disappearance. So I am at a loss to comprehend how it is that you "sense" anything with regard to this man.

Paluke-Joshua I'll lure him back to Assrishna, trust me.
confident

Syl-Ibsel continues to languidly pick over the food. Then he gestures to a slave to remove the repast.

The slave does so. Syl-Ibsel stretches, watching Paluke-Joshua.

Syl-Ibsel Describe him to me. What does an adventurer from the stars resemble? Is he formed in the same physical frame as other men?

Melki *chuckling* Or does he bear horns and a bifurcate phallus?

Paluke-Joshua He would pass for any one of us males, Lord Ibsel.

He is a large, heavy man: well-muscled and fit, he is. A well-fed prince.

Syl-Ibsel *surprised* A prince?

Paluke-Joshua Definitely. His green diamond and silver crown is an ingenious contrivance fashioned to fit over the face in the manner of armour.

Melki *mocking* I heard that he wore a bright metal melon on his scone.

A ripple of laughter greets this comment.

Paluke-Joshua *presses* And a small picket fence is attached to each leg.
on

The men gasp and wonder at this last pronouncement.

Syl-Ibsel I must suppose that to be an attempt at leg armour. Go on ...

Paluke-Joshua Large serviceable gauntlets, he has ... As well as other pieces of curiously wrought armour ...

Oh! And his costume is of the deepest, darkest green not seen hereabouts.

But ... most significant ... Some clever artist has painted sprigs of whisp-shivver over his chest. Not this nondescript, insipid version that one finds by the side of any road ...

No. This is of the brightest sun yellow. Very dramatic.

The men look at each other in concerned wonderment.

Nick Whisp-shivver? Why, that is the herb most favoured by --

Melki *portentous tone* By the Pathfinder.

Syl-Ibsel And yet (for all that you describe a god-like being, Paluke-Joshua), witnesses describe his sword as being but an ill-worked stump of wood.

Paluke-Joshua *firmly* My augurs were clear – never clearer. This man shall --

Syl-Ibsel Yes, according to your smoking bones, this well-armoured whisp-shivver man with the lousy wooden sword is bent on his mission of dragging our beloved country back from the brink of despair. Do I have that right?

Paluke-Joshua *definite* Most assuredly, Syl-Ibsel.

Syl-Ibsel stands and looks Paluke-Joshua over with half-shut eyes. He snorts.

Syl-Ibsel *drily* Well, I never shall put my trust in altruism. You'll find that this fellow will show-up again, spouting all kinds of world-beating intentions, only to dope your finest racing horse and seduce your favourite sister.

Syl-Ibsel signals to Paluke-Joshua that he is to leave the chamber. Paluke-Joshua bows in a theatrical manner and turns. Just as he steps away, Syl-Ibsel calls to him.

Syl-Ibsel Advise me immediately should this chap actually return to Assrishna. And bring him to me or to my men at once.

END OF SCENE

Plot progression explained:

Hal visits Assrishna again (as before). Now, however, the penny has dropped and Hal realizes that the portal to the past is only available during a review on the third wicket. Again, he will explain this to the team physiotherapist.

I, Scene iv: The First South African Innings: Hal's Second Encounter With Assrishna

The scene on the cricket oval is as follows.

We are still watching the First Test Match. South Africa is batting, which means that Hal (fielding in the slips) is now dressed in the fielding strip, with a baggy green cap replacing the helmet: no gloves and no pads.

The ball is whacked solidly by Boslooper. It floats towards Hal but seems to be too high for a catch.

Hal quickly leaps into the air to his right (in a very instinctive gesture) and takes the catch. He rolls over and over on the ground, still holding the ball. On jumping to his feet, he hurls the ball skyward in the manner of a fieldsman taking a marvellous catch. The Australians rush towards each other, shouting in utter joy. They congratulate both Siggie and Hal.

However, the joy is short-lived. The batsman does not move from the pitch. Rather, he goes into closed discussion with his partner.

The Hal Thornside disputed catch on the Boslooper shot:

The well-modulated voices of two commentators are heard (to assist the plot progression and by way of explanation). Whilst we listen to these commentators, we see that Hal has frozen.

Male #1 *voice-off* ... and the South African batsman is not certain that the ball came off the bat. He appears to be claiming that the shot was off his arm.

Male #2 *voice-off* I can't see that. It appeared to be a clean stroke to me.

Male #1 *voice-off* They've gone to the Umpire. And evidently, they are asking for a review on the dismissal.

Male #2 *voice-off* I'd be very surprised if ... Very surprised ... This is a wasted appeal, in my view.

On the large screen, we see the slow-motion views of the hit, along with all the usual electronic gadgetry.

Suddenly, Hal comes to life. He races about, wild-eyed. He speaks to anyone who happens to be near him.

Hal *very keen* Is this the fall of the third wicket? Is it?

Music: very exciting. The crowd noise is lost in the music.

The huge screen shows in large letters the words: "OUT Umpire decision upheld".

The desolated Boslooper strides off towards the dressing room.

But Hal is still wildly excited.

Hal *over the top* That review was on the third wicket, wasn't it ... Just the same as last time.

The fieldsmen around Hal nod. It is unlike Hal to become so animated. Their faces indicate that they are wondering about his irrational behaviour.

🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀 **Break** 🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀

Louise and Hal sit once again in the lounge at the swanky hotel in Johannesburg (which is 44Km from Centurion). They have chosen a discreet table. Hal is unusually animated, and Louise is puzzled and concerned at the turn of events.

Hal They can't understand a word I say, and of course ditto for them. But the guy who pulled me aboard his camel the first time drew a picture in clay. He was trying to find out where my pads were. And my helmet. So I did a mime of me batting with the pads and helmet on, and then showed them how (with the headgear and pads stripped off) I would jump up and take a catch. I sort of think that they sort of got it ...

Louise frowns heavily as Hal drinks his beer.

Hal *recalling*

They couldn't cop the box, of course. They thought I was coming the raw prawn with that one.

Anyway, one dude was a really tall bloke, who seemed to be in charge. Everyone bowed and scraped to him. I think he's called Sylvester.

He said: "Gabble, gabble, gabble" and they escorted me to a room filled with those clay tablets (tied together like kludgy books). I tell you what: every little thing in that place is swanky plus. Very swish and palatial, it is.

Anyway, in the book-room, they shouted-out and yelled for some dude called Labesh. But he must have ducked out for a slash.

I did a "Coo-ee" just for a joke, but they didn't get it.

Louise

Hal, are you trying to tell me that when there is a review on the third wicket (and only then) you --

Hal *ignoring the question*

I wasn't worried or afraid or nothing like that. I just felt like it was supposed to be happening. Like when they gave me a taste of their food: it was like Malaysian food, sort of. But I just hoed-in as if I was confident.

Louise

But other than this business of shooting off to this mystery land, you feel okay?

Hal

Never better. Now that I know to look out for a review on the third wicket (not the loss of the wicket itself), I'll be keyed-up for it.

Louise *warning*

Hal, you're going to have to go easy on this thing.

Hal

Oh yeah, definitely! I'll make sure that I have some desert-type things with me just in case. I mean, obviously I can't carry a water-bottle. But a Swiss Army knife and a box of matches ... a compass, maybe ...

Louise I'm trying to tell you that your cricket comes first. That's way above any other consideration.

Hal *distract* Yeah, I know ...

I'll race around and borrow the knife and the compass from Josh Tiers's sons. They're always going off on bush-walking events and orienteering, so --

Louise *strongly* Hal! I mean it!

The change in Louise's tone jerks Hal back to reality.

Hal *blinking* Yeah, yeah ... Blood oath!

END OF SCENE

Plot progression explained:

This quick scene serves 2 purposes.

It indicates that Hal is a nice guy, despite evidence to the contrary.

It gives Hal the idea to try the search engine on the Web to discover more about Assrishna.

I, Scene v: The Web Search Engine

In his Johannesburg hotel room, at night, Hal phones his mother. When we enter this scene, Hal is sitting on the bed, smiling with real affection. We can hear his mother laughing.

Hal *chuckling* So, were you able to clean it up? Was the bank manager blubbing?

Mother *phone-voice-off* Oh, yes. They carted him off in tears. I've never seen a drunk so hopelessly uncoordinated.

Thought I'd turn the situation around to my advantage. So, I promptly marched into the bank to beg for a loan on the very next

day, but could only speak to an underling.

Again, mother and son laugh delightedly.

Hal You're a dag, Mum ...

And how's the quiz show going? Have you managed to get through yet?

Mother *phone-voice-off, very put-out* Ooooooooooh! They took the quiz off the radio because the buggers were cheating. So, I missed my chance.

Hal Cheating?

Mother *phone-voice-off* Yes! They were all sitting there on their laptops -- on the Web -- on the search engine ready to find the answer. The presenter or DJ or whatever you call him could hear them tapping on the keys. Finally, in sheer despair, he pulled the plug. They have a lady reading the tea-leaves now. Bloody disappointing.

We see that this has given Hal an idea.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*The camera now focuses in close-up on Hal's laptop screen. We see that he is accessing a search engine. Hal types in ASSRISHNA and presses the enter key.*

*The new page is as follows:*

*Your search for ASSRISHNA has redirected to this page:*

### **Satrapy of Beulan (Medo-Persian)**

Little is known of the Kingdom of Assrishna, an enclave of Beulan situated along that country's southern border. Mentioned in the "Rhymes of Tanques", the author (Satrap Tanques of Beulan) speaks of a lush, green belt of habitable territory adjacent to the deserts of Beulan. Of the inhabitants and structure of government, there is scant information.

*We see Hal's face. He is concerned, thoughtful. He scrolls down the page.*

All that Tanques wrote is that he was able to speak to some people of the kingdom in his own tongue, and that they understood him.

Hal *to himself*                      So what language was that?

*Hal types and looks. We see his eyes scanning the screen.*

Hal *to himself*                      Ah! That's alright, then ... I'm halfway there ...

END OF SCENE

Plot progression explained:

Throughout the plot, until further advised, Hal understands the name "Labesh" to be that of a man. It is only much later that he is introduced to the girl Labesh (comic interlude) and realizes his mistake.

The workaround dream is a tactic to allow Hal to learn the rudiments of the language of the Assrishnans.

## **I, Scene vi:** The Workaround Dream Scene

*We now find ourselves in a spot of bother.*

*In order to get the most and best out of our remaining visits to Assrishna (whereby Hal will be much in evidence), Hal needs to learn the language, which we now know (from Scene iv) is a cousin/derivative of the Persian language.*

*We're dead against having subtitles and invented languages here. What will happen is that Hal will simply use mime and speak in "Rhubarb" until he masters the lingo, whilst the Assrishnan folk will continue to speak in what appears to us as English.*

***Here's what we've decided to do:***

*Hal has already mentioned his being taken to the book-room to be instructed in the rudiments of the language by a man called Labesh (who is in reality a female and sister to the king).*

*Hal will dream that he is being taught by a man. The dream will be a quick succession of rolling scenes depicting his repetition of Assrishnan words (delivered in English) in conjunction with pictures etched on clay tablets by slaves.*

Hal will receive a lightning course in Ancient Persian from Professor Penfold.

But first: Hal needs Staffy to make the connection for him, as Hal cannot find a teacher without assistance.

And a language teacher (moreover) situated somewhere in South Africa.

*This dream occurs on the same night as the action in Scenes iii and iv.*

*So, we want this to be quick and effective: the audience needs to know that Hal is dreaming and that by this means he is ready to take on the third visit to Assrishna.*

There is a dreamlike quality to this scene.

Slaves are seen to etch objects into clay tablets: dog, cow, horse, woman, child, tree, vegetables, king and so on.

The man (supposedly "Labesh") repeats the words in English and Hal speaks the words back to him in English.

END OF SCENE

## **I, Scene vii: "To Shave Or Not To Shave?" Next Morning**

*Hal (bare-chested) prepares to shave, lathering his face. He raises the razor to his upper cheek, and then pauses.*

*Hal looks at his reflection with interest. Then, after a couple of seconds, he puts the razor back into the toilet bag, and rinses off the lather.*

*So, from now on, Hal will allow his whiskers to grow, such that he will more easily blend-in with the men of Assrishna. He will shave off his beard just prior to the Epilogue.*

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT I



## ACT II

SOUTH AFRICA versus AUSTRALIA

Second Test Beginning Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at St George's Park, Port Elizabeth South Africa

ACT II

THIRD WICKET REVIEW from South Africa (fielding) against the NOT OUT decision (LBW) affecting Hal Thornsides.

Result: decision overturned → Australian batsman Hal Thornsides is deemed to be OUT.

Plot progression explained:

The First Test Match in Centurion has ended in a draw with no further reviews on the third wicket.

In this Second Test Match South Africa wins the toss and elects to bat.

On the third day (Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February), Australia bats. Hal Thornside is giving every indication that he is “on song” and will knock-up a big score.

In this ACT, we shall move from a telecast of the cricket action (as seen in an Australian yacht club) straight to Assrishna and then back to the yacht club. As the LBW decision is an unknown species to the non-cricketing sections of this film’s audience, we shall simply skirt around it.

## **II, Scene i:** Sunday Late Afternoon At The Subiaco Yacht Club Western Australia

Sunday February 1<sup>st</sup> 2015.

*Music: A very lyric rock ‘n’ roll piece.*

*This scene is breathtakingly lovely. The sea is calm as the yachts return to the marina at the Royal Subiaco Yacht Club, Subiaco. 4WDs rock up, complete with boat trailers as sightseers wander about watching boaties work on their craft. The marina is a-buzz with activity even though it is late in the afternoon.*

*Our camera moves to the balcony of the yacht club itself. Everything herein bespeaks money, pride and self-confidence. We hear a shout go up. Several yachties and their hangers-on are having an alcoholic beverage of some kind or a coffee in front of a huge and imposing plasma HD screen. These people are not yobos: they represent the cream of Perth and Subiaco society. We hear in the background a South African woman describing the beauty of Port Elizabeth to her fellows.*

Well-dressed woman      Come and watch this! Thornside has just hit a smashing 6.  
*calling to husband*

*Quite a little crowd gathers. We see on the screen that Hal hits a very sound 4, and the on-lookers at the yacht club give out a very vocal cheer. Now the television commentary team is heard briefly.*

Male #1 *voice-off*      ... coming in at number 4 ... And Thornside looks set for a lengthy and constructive session.

*Now the camera focuses on the crowd in the yacht club. They are expectantly watching. From the television screen (our camera is taking the place of the screen) we can hear the odd crowd noise (from St George’s Park).*

## The On-Field War Between Hal and Hauer.

*We see a close-up of Hal as he takes his position as the defending batsman. We see that a bouncer is bowled. The ball nearly takes Hal's head off – he gingerly bobs back out of the way. Then Hal can be seen to bang his bat on the turf. Suddenly and without warning Hal runs up the pitch. He faces up to Hauer, yelling abuse. Hauer returns the verbal abuse to Hal. There are two background noises heard: the South African crowd (from the TV) and the patrons of the yacht club.*

Male #1 *voice-off*            Ah ... Something has obviously been said. Thornside has evidently taken ... oh dear ... Thornside must have taken offence at something that has been said. Unfortunately, the captain of the South African side has a nasty habit of ... oh dear ...

*To the total surprise of everyone Hal shoves the end of his bat (which he had lately been banging into the ground) towards the stomach of Hauer. Hauer however reacts quickly to the intended assault, grabbing the bat in his hands. Hauer pushes Hal back (via the bat). The announcers try to give a calm coverage of this unusual savagery but are unable to do so. The push and shove and the shouting on field continue.*

Male #2 *voice-off*            I'm sorry. Apologies to all viewers around the world for this ... um ... spectacle. I would prefer that we go to an ad break now (if that's possible) ...

*Now the entire fielding team (South Africa) closes in on the warring pair. Hal's partner at the crease (Kip) stands beside Hal in an attempt to calm him.*

*Consumed by anger, Hal storms back to the popping crease. The South African crowd howl and boo whereas the audience in the yacht club call out support for the Aussie batsman as they applaud.*

*Hal then faces up to the next bowled ball. It is evident that Hal is still very angry. His answer to the South African abuse is to smash another huge 6. The Perth crowd erupt in jubilation.*

*The camera now closes right in on Hal as he readies himself to face the next ball.*

Male #1 *voice-off*            ... Cook runs in to bowl to Thornside ...

*The following **essential** action (with overlap) ensues (the Thornside disputed leg before wicket):*

We hear the South African players shout “Howzat?” aggressively at the same time as the local Port Elizabeth crowd shouts.

We vaguely hear the word “LBW” from the commentator.

We see the yacht club patrons shake their heads and agree with each other that it’s not out: that it’s too high.

We see the yacht club patrons evidence relief as the umpire gives a NOT OUT decision.

We vaguely hear the commentators discuss the possibility of a South African appeal (that is, request for review).

We see the yacht club patrons evidence annoyance and/or disgust when it becomes clear that a review of the umpire’s NOT OUT decision is in progress.

END OF SCENE (to be continued on Hal’s return from Assrishna)

## **II, Scene ii: SECOND TEST MATCH During The First Australian Innings: Hal’s Third Encounter With Assrishna**

Plot progression explained:

Let’s hark back to the ever-present language problem.

Hal is not yet fluent with the language of Assrishna but is very keen to get alongside these people and so makes every effort to understand and be understood. When he speaks, he obviously can’t be heard to speak in English, so we’ll hear it as “Rhubarb”. This gets around the confusion of “why can’t they understand Hal?”

Hal’s first major fluff is with the handshake. Hal caps that with his Labesh imitation. After that, it is all smooth sailing.

*Hal is still completely kitted-out for his batting stint: pads, helmet and so on, just as when the Assrishnans first met him. At all times (until the audience with King Etki), Hal keeps the bat tucked up under his left arm.*

*Princess Unela holds Hal's hand as she leads him along the impressive corridors of the palace. Hal is taken aback by the prostration of the slaves. The Princess talks non-stop as she leads Hal along.*

Unela                    I can't for the life of me see how you're to become my champion when we can't even hold a decent conversation together. But Labesh is to train you up. She's King Etki's sister, and has seen 21 summers, which of course makes her an old maid.

And for heaven's sake, don't spout-off about her beloved Djashnu. He's my uncle, by the way. He's gone missing (in every sense of the word).

*[Whispers]* A rival claimant to the throne so he's made himself scarce for a bit.

*[Normal voice]* She'll start crying all over again on account of Syl-Ibsel banning her from seeing him. She might have to settle for Nathi in the end ... Labesh just simply refuses to have a bar of him. So it's all shouting and weeping.

My friends and I are bent on joining the Army so that we can get out of having to marry crusty geysers like Nathi and his ilk.

*As they progress along the ornate corridor, their way is blocked. Syl-Artron and his henchmen (Rampe, Memlash, Nathi and the slave Horvex) appear and bow to Unela.*

Unela *pleased*                    Ah! Here is Syl-Artron. Now he is the brother of our late Queen Fala (who was Labesh's mother, you understand). And so that makes him uncle to King Etki.

*[Turning to Syl-Artron]*

Look! I have my champion! Isn't he a dreamboat?

*Syl-Artron opens his previously folded hands and bows in a gesture of welcome to Hal.*

*Hal strips off his right batting glove, tucking it into the top of his leg pad. Hal steps forward and takes the right hand of Syl-Artron (there is much resistance) to shake it. Hal then shakes the hands of all the men, except for Horvex who backs away in alarm as Hal touches his hand. They all look complete bamboozled.*

Hal *smiling*                      Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb, gabble, gabble, rhubarb.

*Princess Unela gives a wan smile to Hal, makes a comic face and presses on with the introductions and running commentary.*

Unela                              Right!

Well, this is Nathi --

*[Winks twice to Hal]*

-- and this is his adopted brother Memlash. Now this is where it gets interesting. My grandmother Senta was married before and had a son called Churath. You probably won't meet him because he's always ... you know ... under the care of a witchdoctor, so --

Syl-Artron *sighs*                      Dearest Princess ... Do you **really** have to elaborate our various relationships for this poor man? It is as plain as day that none of your verbal florescence is filtering through to him.

Unela *undeterred*                      Oh, poop! You're enjoying this catalogue, aren't you, Ducky? (We think that his name is "Hal". He often points to himself and says: "Hal").

Hal *pointing to his chest*                      Hal. Hal.

Unela *smiling, smug*                      Oh, there he goes ... Right on cue!

Syl-Artron *annoyed*                      I wished to interview this fellow, but under the circumstances --

Unela *smug*                              Well, there you are! Labesh is to give Hal a speed course in Assrishnan. And teach him some manners whilst she's at it.

|                        |
|------------------------|
| Hal's Comic Interlude. |
|------------------------|

*Hal hears the name "Labesh" several times and now decides to indicate to the party that he is already aware of Labesh. Recalling the second visit (which Hal described to Louise), Labesh could not be found. Hal had then assumed that Labesh was male (and so dreamt that a male taught him some easy words). Hal had further assumed that "this Labesh bloke" might simply have gone off for a piss. So, Hal decides to perform a mime of this little episode.*

|                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hal pretends to walk into a room and look about, scratching his head. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Then he calls out as loudly as possible "Labesh? Labesh?" |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| He then gestures with an expansive shrug and pout that the missing Labesh cannot be found. I |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hal cups his hands about his mouth and calls "Cooee!" several times. Again, he shrugs expansively. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Then he finishes the mime by pretending to be standing at a urinal taking a leak (using his thumb to represent his dick), and makes the sounds "Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle" before adjusting his attire. He points to his chest and says: "Labesh", nodding and laughing. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------|
| With a nod and smile, Hal awaits further developments. |
|--------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| There is an awful silence. The camera pans the people watching Hal's unexpected performance. They are open-mouthed and in shock. Hal continues to smile and nod. |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

*It is Syl-Artron who recovers first. He clears his throat with a slight cough.*

|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Syl-Artron <i>drily</i> | I see that Princess Labesh will have her work cut out for her with this specimen. Do take him to her with all speed and let us hope that he is a quick learner. Especially as concerns etiquette ... |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

*The men bow to Hal, and then move off, with Horvex eyeing Hal in great alarm. Unela takes Hal's hand again. They continue as before, walking at speed along an immense and beautiful corridor populated by dozens of slaves.*

|       |                                                                                |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unela | Back to Churath: he is Memlash's real father and thus adopted father of Nathi. |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Rampe is Syl-Artron's son.

And you should not have reached out for Horvex, even if he is in an exalted position. He's a slave. Therefore, your grabbing at him without good cause was a real no-no.

*A black woman appears leading a cheetah about the palace. Unela ignores her for the moment. Hal is fascinated.*

Unela                      I'll dump you here at the book-room. Labesh will give you a quick bout of tuition and then the King wants to inspect you. There'll be loads of food and drink – you'll like that ...

*Hal watches Unela flit off with the cheetah-woman. He strolls into the book-room, where a bevy of slaves await him. They do not prostrate themselves nor bow. Labesh comes forward. Hal frowns with head cocked.*

Labesh *pointing to her chest*      Labesh. I am Labesh.

*Hal stares and then points to her.*

Hal *confused*              Labesh?

*Hal now realizes what a fool he has made of himself with the Syl-Artron party. However, as an elite sportsman from the sports-mad country of Australia (and thus used to being idolized), he is above feeling real embarrassment. He simply looks back towards the doorway and gives a chuckle, shaking his head.*

Labesh                      Come. We shall work with the slaves. I would like to cover the basics.

*Hal recalls his dream. He walks quickly over to the slaves and points to each of their drawings in turn.*

Hal *enumerating from his dream*      Horse ... cow ... dog ... woman ... baby ... tree ... flower ... bucket ... plate ... mm ... Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb ...

*Labesh is impressed. Hal (still kitted out as before in full batting strip) mimes sleeping by lying on the floor. He jerks about in the manner of a person having a dream and points to his forehead. Then he*

*jumps back to his feet and points to the clay tablets on which the slaves etch the drawings. However, Labesh does not get the gist of Hal's mime. She smiles at Hal rather wanly.*

Labesh                      This is a very good start. Let's continue, shall we ... ?

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo **Break** ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo **The Court of King Etki** ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

*Several high-flyers of Assrishnan society (such as it is) are present in the throne-room of King Etki. His immediate family sit beside him. All have enjoyed a lavish feast, the remains of which are being cleared by slaves.*

*As this scene opens, Hal is standing in a clearing between massive tables (where the Assrishnans sit, watching him). He uses sign language to explain to Harlim that when the latter throws the cork ball at him, it should arrive no higher than Hal's knee.*

*In his turn, Harlim mimes to Hal that he has a choice of hard throw or soft throw.*

*Hal responds with a strong-arm movement. Harlim chuckles.*

Harlim                      Alright, my friend ... Hard it is!

*The crowd applauds and then waits in expectant silence.*

*Harlim throws strongly and Hal whacks the ball into a far corner of the throne-room. There is a burst of admiring applause. King Etki appears to be particularly impressed.*

*Again, Harlim throws. This time, Hal puts the ball over his left shoulder. Again, the King and his court are super-impressed.*

*Hal spots a boy stationed way up high, watching from a balcony. Hal signals to the boy that he will send a catch up to him. Harlim throws, Hal drops to one knee and dollies the ball directly into the hands of the boy, who duly takes the easiest of catches. This is a show-stopper.*

*Harlim and Hal repeat the action again and again: whack, whack, whack! And then somebody approaches the King to speak to him. The King is annoyed and brusquely waves the interloper away. The latter is insistent.*

King Etki *very annoyed* Out!

ABRUPT END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene iii:** Continuation, Subiaco Yacht Club Western Australia

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2015.

### The On-Field War Between Hal and Hauer.

*Picking-up exactly as we left off at the sudden end of Scene i, the yachties and friends are in our camera focus as they watch the huge plasma screen.*

*The following essential action ensues (continuation of the Thornside LBW review):*

We see the yacht club patrons evidence annoyance and/or disgust when it becomes clear that a review of the umpire's NOT OUT decision is in progress.

The yacht club patrons call out "Wrong", "Bulldust", "Rubbish" and so on.

Via the TV we hear the crowd at St George's Park, Port Elizabeth cheer loudly in agreement with the review taking place.

Whilst the yacht club patrons (of whom more have gathered) and the TV commentators thrash it out, our camera moves around 180 degrees in time to catch the CGI cartoon of the ball barely brushing the off stump, and barely being low enough even to graze the top of the stump.

Our camera will absorb the action on the plasma screen.

There is another burst of very mild abuse from the well-bred yacht club patrons. We hear "Look! It's never out" and so on.

The TV commentary now becomes clear.

Male commentator #1      Ooooo ... That's touch and go. I'd have to agree with the Ump on  
*voice-off*                      that one. But it's a very close-run thing.

Male commentator #2      In my view, it's too high, too wide. It's never going to dislodge the  
*voice-off*                      bails and that's what we're looking for. Thornside is NOT OUT in  
my view.

The huge letters on the screen ("DECISION PENDING") are replaced with "OUT Umpire decision overturned".

To put this into plain language, Hal is now OUT and must return to the Australian dressing room in the pavilion, making way for the next batsman. Although the umpire ruled that he was NOT OUT, the review panel found otherwise.

All of the South African players, and the crowd are elated.

The patrons of the yacht club can be heard expressing their extreme disapproval.

### **What happens next (from here to end of scene) is crucial.**

Male commentator #1      I'm surprised, and yet not surprised (if you get my gist). It was  
*voice-off*                      always going to be line-ball.

Male commentator #2      It had to be very close ... It had to be just a question of  
*voice-off*                      millimetres in the end.

### **Hal Reacts Badly To The Result Of The Review.**

*Hal stands his ground. He does not leave the pitch (which he is absolutely required to do when given OUT by the umpire).*

*The South African players note Hal's belligerence and gather near him. The Umpire appears confused. Hal angrily bangs the end of his bat down into the pitch. The restless crowd at St George's Park begin to jeer, boo and catcall. Apart from anything else, such behaviour from Hal Thornside is totally unexpected.*

*The noise of the Port Elizabeth crowd (as heard over the TV) becomes very loud and menacing.*

Male commentator #1    This ... This is not good ... Oh, dear ... Not again ...  
*voice-off*

|                                  |
|----------------------------------|
| Hauer and Hal Go Chest To Chest. |
|----------------------------------|

*Hal strips off his helmet. The South African captain (Hauer Van Der Hahn) strides manfully up to Hal and the two men stand toe-to-toe, chesting each other and shouting obscenities at each other (which mercifully are not picked up by the commentators' microphones). But it is eminently clear to us (the audience) that this is what is going forward.*

*Now, seeing the confrontation, the St George's Park crowd really give it to Hal. At the same time, the yacht club members show loud support for their boy. They call out such things as "Good on ya, Hal!" and "Stick it up 'em".*

*A note of alarm is now discernible in the voices of the commentators.*

Male commentator #2    Disgraceful! I don't think that this can be tolerated ... We've  
*voice-off*                      witnessed some very distasteful behaviour not normally seen on a  
                                     cricket pitch ...

The Umpire must intervene here. This is beyond what is acceptable in a game of cricket. These two men will be coming to blows at any second. It's disgraceful ... It really is.

This clearly brings the game of cricket into disrepute and is quite unacceptable. No better than sheer thuggery.

Male commentator #1    I must admit to being somewhat appalled. And perplexed!  
*voice-off*                      What I can't understand is what Thornside thinks he can get out  
                                     of this. What can he achieve? How can he --

Ah, the Umpire has touched Thornside on the elbow and is indicating the dressing room to him.

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Male commentator #2<br><i>voice-off</i> | This is very awkward. The Umpire should never have had to go to these lengths in order to call a halt to ugly scenes, such as we've witnessed in this session. |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

*To the overwhelming noise of the Port Elizabeth cricket fans (who are now extremely hostile towards Hal), Hal turns abruptly on his heel and strides off the field, angrily slashing at the grass with his bat. It is a long walk, and Hal shows no signs of remorse. This further inflames the crowd, whilst bringing more rousing support and applause from the yacht club patrons.*

*A large Australian flag is shown, as it is waved to and fro by a lone Australian fan at the Port Elizabeth oval.*

END OF SCENE

### EXPLANATION OF “FOLLOW-ON” IN CRICKET

The team that batted second and scored at least 200 fewer runs than the team that batted first may be forced to **follow-on**.

That means that the team batting second will resume batting immediately – their second innings immediately follows their first.

This gives the team that batted first a huge advantage: they will then probably win the Test Match.

But as a corollary – there is a great psychological advantage in forcing the follow-on.

Put simply, the team forced to follow-on feel like complete losers.

## II, Scene iv: Confrontation In The Gymnasium Where The Truth Will Out

The night of Sunday February 1<sup>st</sup> 2015.

*The four trainers/coaches (Josh Tiers, Luke Duquesne, Matt Hines and Gavin Arvide) are in the middle of a heavy discussion. Our camera is behind them as they walk at speed through a large up-market gymnasium in Port Elizabeth where lots of gym-junkies are right into it. The South African hosts have kindly enabled the Australian cricket squad full access to this gym. The tone of the heavy discussion concerns problems being faced by the men, especially as relates to Hal Thornsidge.*

Josh *rasping voice* ... and if one more person puts it down to simple "gamesmanship", I'll personally chuck them over the nearest cliff.  
Where do we find him?

Matt Ah ... Probably at the indoor heated pool. It's booked out for us. They're all doing laps and having swimming contests ... Stuff like that.

Josh So ... which way is the pool?

*Luke and Gavin point towards the end of a row of impressive-looking exercise machines. The four men continue to walk very fast.*

Josh *pontificating* You can't get away from it. It comes down to the usual two main points: discipline and performance. And that's the correct order: discipline first, and performance second. He could be the best fucking batsman in the known world but if he's gonna charge around whacking people like a thrashing machine, then I'll be forced to kick him several times where it hurts.

Luke He stopped short of fisticuffs, remember.

Josh Near enough to it ... Besides the business with the bat-shoving, the fists were definitely clenched ...  
So what does Lou say?

Matt She can't and won't say anything. Sanctity of the confessional.

Josh *scathing* Pig's arse!

Matt *patient* The guys all open-up to Lou, and it's for just that very reason: that they know that she won't dob them into us.

Josh *snorts* Well, she can explain that to the Australian cricket-loving public ... That the reason why our boys are going down in flames is because Thornside is losing the plot.  
Bloody "bat again, please" ... I'll give Thornside the follow-on ...

*They arrive at the pool.*

*The men plough through the large swinging doors and into the pool area where the Australian team members are doing competitive laps. There is much steam, splashing, noise and male shouting (both encouragement and denigrating comments). Josh strides up to a young man in singlet, shorts and rubber thongs.*

Josh *shouts*                      Where is Thornside? Is he here?

*The young man (who is obviously somewhat fearful of Josh) shakes his head.*

Young man *shouting* Try the boxing ring. He's grabbing some time with the professional.

*Josh glowers. He nods to the young man, and then turns on his heel, signalling to the other three men to follow him. Josh is furious. He crashes through the heavy swinging doors, unmindful of how the others will exit behind him.*

Josh *chagrined*,                      That'd be right ... Sparring! Getting in some practice so's he can  
*seething*                                      bash-up the Boer bastard.

Well, that's it. I've had just about all I can stomach of this.

Matt *placating*      Hey! Come on. He's only getting some exercise.

Gavin                      He often puts on the gloves and works the speedball. Don't read too much into it.

Josh *savage*                      Bullshit!

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

They troop off to the small boxing ring. There is Hal (wearing all possible protection) sparring with the South African professional. Hal maintains an attractive boxing stance, mixing it well with the professional (who calls out his approval when Hal's punches connect).

Josh marches up to ringside. There is a short break. Josh imperatively signals to Hal to step down from the ring. Hal and the professional shake hands (in the manner of boxers).

Hal (sweaty and breathless) rubs himself down with a small towel, and nimbly clears the ropes. Hal jumps down beside Josh, who is suitably unimpressed at the professional's congratulations of Hal's prowess in the ring. In fact, Josh has worked himself up into a towering rage. Somebody removes Hal's boxing gloves as the following speeches progress.

The professional *to Josh* That's a nice Jo you got there. He might have made a pile in the ring.

Josh *snarling* He might have to, yet!
[Close to Hal: in his face]

Well? What was that crap all about this morning?

Hal *noncommittal* Nothing ...

Josh *not messing about with niceties* Don't start with that "Nothing" shit again. You've put the whole team off their game with that stunt, do you know that?

I'm either going to get an explanation from you, or you'll be packed off home. I'll send for Leyland. He can fly over here and take your place in the squad.

Hal stops rubbing himself down. With a mulish look and squared chin, he looks Josh up and down.

Hal *expressionless* Fine. Do that.

This seeming indifference has the effect of further enraging Josh.

Josh *harsh, snarling* Right! You're on notice, Thornside.

Josh makes no attempt to hide his fury and contempt for Hal. He quickly steps away, reeling his mobile phone out of his pocket to find a phone number. Having pressed a couple of buttons, Josh listens to the ringing sound, glaring challengingly at Hal.

Josh *mocking Hal* I'll get young Leyland to bat for Australia. You can go and do the other thing.

Gavin goes to Josh, speaking sotto voce. Josh snaps shut his mobile phone, restoring it to his pocket. Gavin (his nerves really on edge) goes to Hal.

Gavin *harassed* Okay, everyone cool it!

[Takes a big breath]

What's sort of weird, Hal – what's not sitting square with us – is that you normally act so placid when tempers flare. You're Mr Unruffled.

[Looks at the others for inspiration: there is none forthcoming]

Your blow-ups today with Van Der Hahn were so completely out of character, Hal. We can't fathom what drove you to --

Hal *slight smile* "Fathom"? That's a depth measurement they use at sea, isn't it?

Gavin stares at Hal. He is not getting through to the young man. He is now ready to plead.

Gavin *awkward and exasperated* Aw, come on, Hal, give me --

Hal *sudden attack but without malice* He hit me.

The coach and the three trainers stiffen, on the qui vive.

Matt Who?

Hal *without emotion* That Van Der Cunt. He slugged me. I owe him one.

Josh snorts in disbelief.

Josh *disparaging, disbelieving* Oh, yeah ... Right! Big bad Hauer hit you. Nice try, Thornside.

Luke *appalled* When? When was this?

Hal Not long after we landed in Joh'burg.

[To Gavin]

Remember, Gav? You were worried about the side of my face being puffed-up and my black eye. I told you it was from batting practice in the nets.

[Shrugs]

That was a lie.

The four men now converge on Hal, obviously very keen to hear the full story.

Josh *aghast* What? That arsehole **really** hit you?

Hal We'd all gone out for a welcome party. Then we went on to a disco. He staked me out. When I stopped to piss on a wall in an alley he came up to me. There was some pushing around.

He reckoned he had an old grudge to settle. Christ only knows what it was ...

I told him to fuck off. And then he swung a punch at me. I dodged out of the way (as you do) and then we started to scuffle on the ground. He got on top of me and managed to slam my face with his full fist. Hurt like buggery: he's as strong as an ox.

Anyhow ... I chucked him off and we kept scuffling. He broke away and pissed off.

Hal shrugs again. While the other four men stand gobsmacked, Hal nods and goes to walk off to the shower room. However, the four men move quickly to corral him.

Luke *urgent* Wait a minute! The captain of the Proteas punched you?

Hal Sure. That's what I said. I gotta have a shower.

Hal goes to move off again and is again corralled.

Matt Hang on, will you?

Luke But ... But you never said --

Hal He's going to be the special guest on tomorrow night's cricket show. I know this because he rang me tonight just as I was leaving the hotel to come here. Told me all about it. And you know what the prick is going to do? He's going to announce to the cricket-lovers of the world that he king-hit me.

[To each man in turn]

He's going to say that he started it and finished it.

Live to air.

On the TV show.

Tomorrow night.

There is a ghastly hush. Hal nods to the four men before he heads for the showers.

Josh *awestruck*, You're joking ...
whispers

Hal turns towards his fellow countrymen just as he is about to disappear into the Gents.

Hal *dour* And the word "War" will be mentioned.

END OF SCENE

II, Scene v: Staffy Saledis At The Sydney Post Newspaper Office

It is 13:57 in Sydney (and thus 7:57 in Port Elizabeth) on Monday February 2nd 2015.

Despite Kerrianne's efforts to tidy up Staffy's work area, there is no improvement. Everything is a mess. It is like a rubbish tip.

Staffy wears a set of earphones as he gobbles a dish of Cheerios. His voice is gravelly, gruff and raspy.

Staffy ... Yeah, so get photos of the ragamuffin with Jacobson. If you can catch them sneaking out of the hotel room by the back door or via the car park, all the better. And any tit shots or snatch, and you get a giant-sized Mars bar. Alright?

Yeah, I know it's tacky, mate, but it sells papers. Yeah ... See ya

...

Staffy's interpretation of multi-tasking is to stab at his disgustingly filthy keyboard with one filthy finger while at the same time stabbing at the soft-phone switch with another grimy finger, and at the

same time using his thumb to check his grotty iPad. He whistles annoyingly through his teeth, shovelling more food into his mouth as he does so.

Staffy *to himself with some satisfaction* I know a guy whose rugby career might be O-V-E-R, if not his marriage.

We hear the sound of a football hooter: this is Staffy's ring tone on his soft phone. There follows more stabbing of keys and buttons.

Staffy *distracted, into the earphone mike* Staffy Saledis. Speak to me!

There is a pause in the stabbing and distraction. Staffy is listening intently. Then he gives a gigantic shout of over-the-top laughter.

Staffy *shouts delightedly* Harold Angus Thorn-In-My-Side! The "Hatboy" himself. How the **fuck** are ya?

Staffy listens as he returns to the stabbing of the various keyboards at his disposal.

Staffy *shouts, surprised* You want **what?**

[Pause]

Fair dinkum? Jeez ...

Hey, you're not tuggin' at my dick, are ya?

[Pause]

Wow! Okey-doke, I hear ya ...

Staffy laughs outright again.

Staffy *shouts* **Really** exclusive? Good one! Email is best ... Yeah. Okay, I'll get onto that right away. What's best for you, mate – the old e-traffic? Bewdy!

There is more frenetic stabbing, along with a huge coughing fit. Now Staffy is onto a new phone call.

Staffy *shouts, gruff and threatening* Staffy Saledis here. Speak to me ya useless bastard!

[Listens; then face softens, breaking into a huge smile; complete

change of tone]

Ah ... My little chicky pea ... Kerrienne Harvey.

What d'ya know, gorgeous?

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Hal is just outside the foyer of the hotel in Port Elizabeth (where he is staying). The cricketers are boarding the minibus, whilst their immense cricket bags are loaded into a support van. Many fans and other onlookers have gathered around the vehicles. Some take photos with their mobile phones.*

*Hal has found a private spot in order to make his call to Staffy. Grinning, Hal can be seen to fold his mobile phone and pocket it. The bus driver toots the horn, and Gavin hangs outside the bus door calling to Hal. Hal waves and then trots up, jumping nimbly onto the bus. The door shuts and the bus departs.*

END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene vi:** Hal Watches The SAFRICKET TV Show In His Hotel Room

Plot progression explained:

It is still Monday (Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>): night.

In his hotel room in Port Elizabeth, Hal has the TV on in the background.

This will allow us (the film audience) to see snippets of the SAFRICKET Cricket Show. The show takes the usual format: a few armchairs and a couch along with a coffee table covered in cricket books and other memorabilia. The men will discuss the day's cricket (from the South African point of view).

These presenters are former cricketing greats: Klijne Jooste, Tromp Zeeman and Kobus Hardewicke.

Without going to too much bother (this is in the background after all and we'll be lucky to hear any

of it), I shall give some dialogue below, but it's very much "concept-only".

Of course, when Hauer Van Der Hahn takes the spotlight, we will want to hear his statements.

*Hal is talking to his mother, but his attention is aimed at the TV screen. He sits at an elegant table in his hotel room, with the TV on in the background (as above). So when Hal is listening to his mother, we'll be able to hear what is said on the SAFRICKET show. The concept of what is said by them is detailed below.*

Hal *talking on the land line* Hello, Mum! I said "How are you?"

Mother *phone-voice-off* Freddie has a sore paw. I've put Man-and-Beast on it. Worried that it might fester.

Hal *absently* Aw, that's no good ... And how are you keeping yourself? Are you keeping out of mischief?

Mother *phone-voice-off* More than **you** are.

Hal Yeah, sorry about that. Anyway, I've teed-up with Staffy Saledis to publish my side of the story. I'll just email him a couple of choice lines. Look out for it at your local newsagent, sort of thing.

Mother *phone-voice-off* Staffy Saledis is gutter-press. He's no more than a derro wordsmith.

Hal *laughs* Yeah, and he speaks well of you, too.

Mother *phone-voice-off* You have absolutely no idea of how that donnybrook went over here at home. People have been ringing --

Hal *quickly, urgent* Gotta go! Sorry, Mum, but the Boer is making a personal appearance on a local TV show tonight. I'll ring you tomorrow.

*Hal slams down the phone and stands in front of the TV.*

***This is the spiel which would be being broadcast on the TV whilst Hal phones his mother.***

South Africa is poised for a big win in the Port Elizabeth Test Match, after forcing Australia to follow-on.

South Africa was all out for 428 at the end of day 2. And Australia began its run chase well. But then night watchman Darren Timberling lost his partner cheaply which brought dour Hal Thornsides to the crease at number 3.

And to his credit (despite a dummy-spit or 2), Thornsides looked set to make a respectable, if not impressive, score. His eye was in ... He faced up to some very savage bowling from quicks Charlie Veeshook and Marin Martin ... He was belting the pill around all over the place ...

Yes, Tromp. There were 2 glorious sixes and 3 very nice fours. He was looking to be right in the groove. There was some fine stroke play from Thornsides.

And then Thornsides was not out to a very poor call ... Very questionable. But captain Van Der Hahn was super-keen for the review on this third wicket.

Kobus, there was a shout for LBW ... The umpire turned it down ... That I think was correct. I doubt if that ball would ever have touched the wicket if it had got through.

Yes, that was a not out.

But Van Der Hahn proved right: the Protea's captain had demanded a review and ultimately the decision was overturned. That's when things got ugly again: the Aussie batsman simply refused to leave the crease. And that challenge was taken up by Van Der Hahn. Neither man was prepared to give ground.

It reminded me of a gladiatorial contest, Kobus. I honestly believed that these two highly-charged sportsmen would start throwing punches, such was their evident anger against each other.

Well, boys, we are very, very fortunate that this evening we will be joined in the studio by the very same Protea's captain, and he will tell us all about the fracas.

*The TV show now takes our interest in full. Hal stands quite close to the TV, hands jammed in his pockets, frowning deeply.*

Tromp                      My spies in the Aussie camp are telling me that the ignominy of the follow-on is being blamed wholly and solely on Thornsides. There is talk that he's in the middle of some kind of breakdown or mental crisis. Now, you were looking directly into his baby-blues yesterday: what's your reading of the situation?

Hauer *most definite*                      He's no more crazy than I am.

Tromp                      Well, let's retrace our steps here. You had a very strange run-in with the Hatboy after a Marin bouncer. And then all hell broke

loose when Hal Thornside acted badly (if not rudely) in refusing to leave the pitch after the review found that the LBW call was justified. And you marched right up to him then ... What was said? And no expletives, please, Hauer.

*The four men chuckle.*

Hauer *amusing*

Oh, well, there were plenty of those, believe me!

*More laughter.*

Klijne and Korbus  
*together*

Come on, Hauer. You two were gunning for each other like --  
Do you blame the Aussie batting collapse on that face-off?

Hauer *in command*

I'll tell you this straight. There has been a deep-rooted hatred between us that goes back quite a few years. We've had issues in the past. I'm not going to drag you into what those issues were ... They're maybe not all about cricket ...

Have you your notebooks ready, gentlemen of the Press? Because I'm guessing that what I'm about to tell you will be front page news tomorrow. Okay? Ready, set, go ...

Just about at the time when the Aussie sheep-biters landed in Joh'burg, there was a jersey-pulling tussle between the Hatboy and myself. I grand-slammed him. I started it and I finished it. So there is now an unofficial declaration of WAR in existence between him and me.

Klijne *shocked*

War? You actually hit him?

Hauer *nods*

If you take out all the swear words from yesterday's couple of brouhahas and pulverize our "conversation" down to the bare bones, then ***that's*** where we stand. It's war.

*From Hal's laptop, we hear the sound of an email arriving. As he turns to read the new correspondence, Hal snarls, speaking to the TV.*

Hal *nasty, sneering*

You complete dickhead!

*Hal plonks himself down on a chair in front of the laptop. We see him scanning the screen, and then looking very pleased. He speaks to himself.*

|                                                            |                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hal <i>happy with the news as he reads from the screen</i> | Ah! Clematis ... 2 hours south-east of Cape Town. Professor Alexander Penfold (retired) ... a Pom ... now almost totally blind ... Poor old bloke! |
|                                                            | Good work, Staffy my man! Good work, old son!                                                                                                      |

END OF SCENE

## **II, Scene vii:** An Emissary From Beulan Is Welcomed At Court In Assrishna

*The scene is set in the glorious reception hall. Our camera will focus only upon a very small area (with the action going on off camera).*

*Syl-Artron and Syl-Ibsel stand either side of General Moshek. The General is dressed impressively in armour and stands rigidly to attention. He is a man who has the height and breadth of Hal. However, he is in his mid-30s (Hal is in his late 20's). The General's fists are clenched tightly at his side at hip level.*

*This scene will have some slight humour about it, as the two Syls must speak to each other by leaning forward or back to speak around the General, who does not react to their speech, except to answer Syl-Ibsel (once only).*

*In the background, unseen, will be heard a man's voice droning on (indistinct words), broken by sporadic applause.*

|            |                                                                    |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Syl-Artron | Our beloved king ought to be here to greet the Beulanish emissary. |
| Syl-Ibsel  | Quite.                                                             |
| Syl-Artron | And so ... Where is our king?                                      |
| Syl-Ibsel  | He is currently enjoying the company of his latest bit of crumpet. |

Syl-Artron Is this one any different to the last one?

Syl-Ibsel Not at all. And no different to the one before that, and the one before that. A scrubber with all the poise and glamour of a spittle-faced, gnarled and rheumy road-digger.

*There is a pause. We hear the emissary from Beulan praising the verdant lands of Assrishna.*

Syl-Artron Perhaps we could employ her to lure the Pathfinder back to our country, such that he will come to our aid.

Syl-Ibsel No. That will not pass.

Syl-Artron *thoughtful* Alright. So be it. We'll find a troop of boys, then.

Syl-Ibsel *annoyed* No! I have not the slightest idea whether he is a womaniser or not.

I meant to say that if he returns to Assrishna, he will by no means prove to be our saviour.

Syl-Artron But surely ... He was decked-out in whisp-shivver: an unmistakable message from the heavens that --

Syl-Ibsel The man is a complete nincompoop!

*[Imitation of Hal, even down to the Australian accent]*

"Cow – tree – baby – house – cat --" ... And that shall be our response to the might of Beulan, hmmm, should she become aggressive?

Syl-Artron Give him a chance ... Let him become familiar with our tongue.

*Syl-Ibsel snorts his impatience. Syl-Artron offers a sensible suggestion.*

Syl-Artron The young man will need encouragement. Let him comprehend that we are eager to retain his services.

It would seem that he's about the same build as General Moshek, here. Alright, let the General be a guide and mentor to the Pathfinder (should we be so fortunate as to see him again.)

Perhaps they might become friends: play at skittle pins and touch-football ... and so on. Enjoy the manly pursuits.

Syl-Ibsel *dryly*

That might be all that this "Hal" is capable of: manly pursuits involving a bat and/or ball.

Syl-Artron *musng*

There's wrestling, of course. Chaps like to grapple with each other ...

He might enjoy chariot-racing, or the equestrian pastimes. I am well aware that Moshek is peculiarly fond of these amusements. Maybe Hal is, too.

Take him hunting on the marshes, perhaps ... And fishing ...

Do you know, I'm almost tempted to join them ...

*[Encouraging]*

Then will you (as his superior officer) give Moshek your orders in this regard?

Syl-Ibsel *not looking at Moshek*

Moshek. Befriend the Pathfinder Hal upon his return. Lead him about and entertain him. Masculine endeavours only.

Moshek *not looking at Syl-Ibsel*

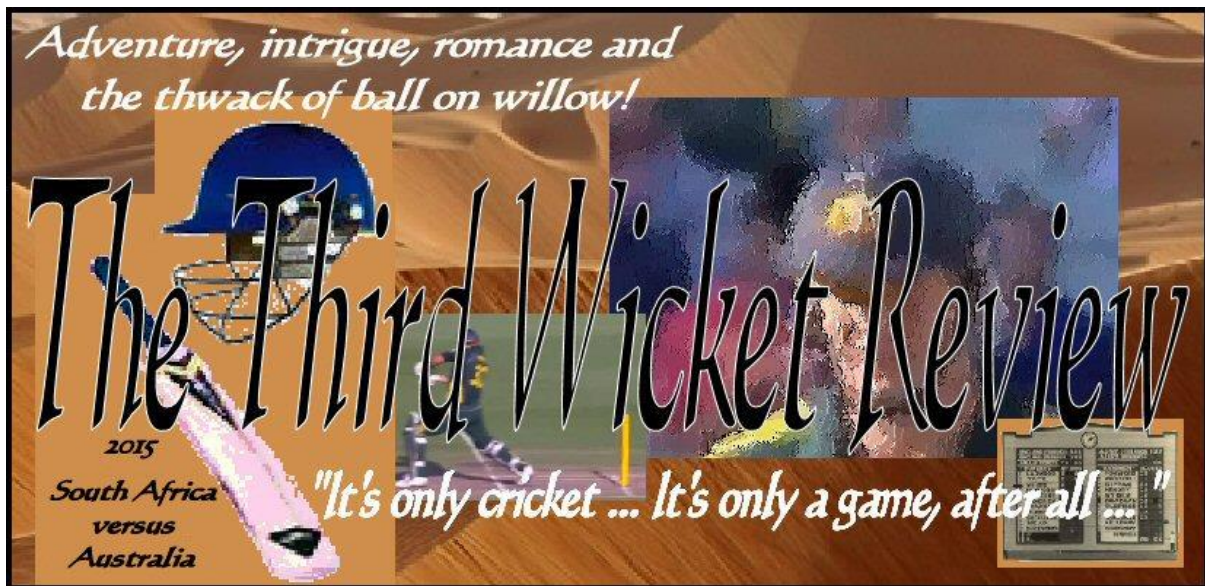
It will be done, Sir. I obey your every command.

*The emissary's peroration has wound-up. So, our two Syls applaud, and then burst into smiles, gushing forward towards the camera, with hands extended in welcome.*

Syl-Ibsel and Syl-Artron *as one voice* Welcome to Assrishna, Excellency! Your speech was a triumph!

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT II



## ACT III

SOUTH AFRICA versus AUSTRALIA

Third Test Beginning Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at Newlands, Cape Town South Africa

Plot progression explained:

The First Test Match in Centurion has ended in a draw.

The Second Test Match in Port Elizabeth was a 91-run win to South Africa.

Most of the action in Assrishna will take place over three third wicket reviews in Cape Town, to which city Hal and the team are now flying for the Third Test.

**III, Scene i: A View From On High, Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

*The aeroplane carrying (amongst others) the members and ancillary staff of the Australian team prepares to land in Cape Town. We follow it, with a local radio broadcast being audible.*

Female *voice-over* ... and here at the Cape, we're looking forward to a top of 28 degrees Celsius, which is lovely beach weather.

Male *voice-over* Terrific! And Bernice we welcome the Australian Cricket Team to our beautiful city on this balmy day. They'll be glad to have left Port Elizabeth, with all its disappointment for them.

*Recorded sound of a cartoon dog laughing.*

Female *voice-over* Gully, you didn't say **how** we'd be welcoming them. Spears? Tomahawks? Another follow-on?

*Recorded sound of a cartoon mouse having a fit of hysterics.*

Male *voice-over* According to my spy on the wall, the plane is not far off landing. And a cheer squad of 8 or 9 Aussies will be there to greet them. That's all the friends they have left.

*Recorded sound of a room full of people sympathetically saying: "Oh!"*

Female *voice-over* They'll be all of a-tremble. What will Hauer Van Der Hahn have up his sleeve? Will there be another king-hit awaiting their number 4 batsman?

Male *voice-over* Bernice, if I were Hal Thornside, I'd be having nightmares of Marin Martin charging in at 125 kilometres per hour at me.

*Recorded sound of a rocket blasting off.*

Female *voice-over* Pow! Kebang! And he's OUT!

Male *voice-over* Well, let's hope that the Proteas can give the Aussies another batch of fine bowling, fine batting.

Female *voice-over* The game starts on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February – Hey! That's Valentine's Day!

*Recorded sound of a room full of people sympathetically saying: "Oh!"*

*Recorded sound of a violin playing a syrupy, romantic tune.*

Male *voice-over*                      Happy Valentine's Day to all the Aussie boys!

Female *voice-over*                      Yes, girls: send your Valentine's Day cards to the Aussie team.  
They might need cheering up.

END OF SCENE

### **III, Scene ii:** Hal And Kerriane, Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015

*Hal has moved into his room at the Cape Town Hotel.*

*Hal's case is positioned on the luggage rack, which is too low from Hal's big frame. He kneels on the floor, rooting around in his case. And then his mobile phone rings. He reaches across for it and answers.*

Hal *into mobile phone*      What?

You're a friend of Staffy Saledis, are you? That's funny: I didn't think the old Staffo had any friends ... But if you say so.

Did you say your name was Kerriane –

Yeah, well I can tell you straight that Staffy is right and that what the Boer bastard said is correct. 100% factual.

He hit me.

Oh, about 5 weeks ago or so ... I dunno ... When us Aussies first lobbed in South Africa.

He hit me, Kerriane – just like he said.

END OF SCENE

### III, Scene iii: Another View From On High, Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015

*The view from Hal's room at the Cape Town Hotel is sumptuous. He has moved the room's telephone out onto the balcony and wanders about (having dialled the Professor's number) waiting for his call to be answered.*

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **In The Garden, Clematis** ~~~~~

*Professor Penfold sits in a folding chair, his straw hat pulled down over his face. Nearby, sitting cross-legged on a low stone wall sits his attractive grand-daughter, Mim (short for Miriam). She has a large book on her lap when she first hears the telephone ring. Mim races inside, flinging herself towards a large desk, reaching quickly for the phone.*

Mim *into the phone*      Hello?

Hal *phone-voice-off*      Hi! Is this the right number for Professor ... er ... Professor Penfold?

Mim *into the phone,*      Who's calling, please?  
*cautious*

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **The Balcony of Hal's Hotel Room** ~~~~~

Hal *into the phone*      Yeah, my name's Hal Thornside. I'm from Australia, with the cricket team. We've just landed this morning. We've wound-up in Port Elizabeth, see, and ...

Um, I was wondering if I could meet the Professor while I --

Mim *phone-voice-off*      You're Australian? However did you manage to get my

grandfather's name?

Hal *into the phone*

Look, I know it sounds dodgy, but I'm trying to teach myself Ancient Persian and --

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

~~~~~ **In the House, Clematis** ~~~~~

Mim *into the phone*

You can't be the Aussie cricketer who was acting like a juvenile delinquent when the umpire gave him out? Surely not!

Hal *phone-voice-off*

Yeah, that's me.

Mim *into the phone,*  
*affronted*

Well, I --

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

~~~~~ **Split Screen Such That Both Mim and Hal Can Be Seen** ~~~~~

Hal *into the phone*

Honest! I'm not a thug or a hoodlum or that ... I'm just a normal bloke. That (what you saw on the teeve) was just a bit of polite gamesmanship. We almost choreographed it, see.

Please let me call at your grandfather's house and let me meet him.

*Mim seems unimpressed and put-off by the whole thing and will fob Hal off.*

Mim *into the phone*

Saturday night. Not tomorrow night: the following one. We're at 11 Minerva Drive. I'll put the front light on for you.

Hal *into the phone*

Er ... Okay, then. That's the 14<sup>th</sup> of February. Any particular time?

Mim *into the phone*

Not too late. Grandpa goes to bed by 10.00 pm.

*As Hal speaks, we see Mim hang up. She makes a face to signify that she thinks that Hal is a goose. Mim walks out of camera shot.*

Hal *into the phone*,            I'll ring you again --  
*pleased*

*Hal realizes that Mim has hung up on him. So, he slowly hangs up, too. But he is evidently pleased, and nods to himself.*

🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿
Break
🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿

🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿
In The Garden, Clematis
🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿

*Mim strolls back out to her former position on the low wall. The Professor shivers perceptibly.*

Mim *concerned*                      What's the matter?

Professor Penfold *from* Someone just crept over my soul.  
*under his straw hat* [More forceful]

That telephone call you ran inside to take: who wants me and why?

Mim *disparaging* Oh, just some nutter claiming to be an Aussie cricketer. Impossible to understand his thick accent and has absolutely no idea of distance. Probably thinks he can simply waltz down here from the Cape in 15 minutes. Utterly hopeless!

Professor Penfold *from* And why was this Aussie yobbo so keen to see me?  
*under his straw hat*

Mim *airily* He's teaching himself Ancient Persian. Isn't that a scream?

*Mim is preoccupied. She fails to realize that Professor Penfold has stiffened. We (the audience) see his fists clench.*

END OF SCENE

Plot progression explained:

Hal comes in to bat as usual at number 4 following a useful knock by the opening pair (Wilkes and Timberling). When Wilkes goes out for 84, Hal strolls up to the wicket, not long before the lunch break. Hal takes a while to make his 50 and then really puts his shoulders into it, knocking-up 118 before end of play for the day.

We will catch up with replays of the highlights of this 118 as he comes into bat on day 2 (Sunday).

### **III, Scene iv: Hal Takes A Crash Course In Ancient Persian**

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

*Professor Alexander Penfold is nearly blind. He is now attended by his grand-daughter Mim. He sits in a very large, square armchair, with Mim sitting beside him on one of the large chair arms. The sitting room is dingy, old-fashioned and cluttered. A cat wanders about.*

*Hal sits on a straight-backed chair facing the elderly Professor.*

Professor Penfold            You came here by helicopter? Truly?  
*aghast*

Hal                                That's right. From Cape Town. I wanted to make sure that I got the most out of my visit. I was bloody lucky (I reckon) that you were close enough to the Cape for me to reach you that way.

Professor Penfold            I'm very flattered, I must say ... Ancient Persian ... ?

Hal                                Only the spoken language. Not to write or anything. I realize that it's a big ask, but ...

*[Voice trails off]*

*The Professor holds his head back, as if staring at the ceiling. Hal shifts in his chair and looks at Mim, who smiles encouragingly at Hal.*

Professor Penfold            I listened to the radio for a short while. I heard what the

gentlemen said about you. You performed very well, today, Hal.  
What score did you end up with, hmm?

Hal Er ... 118, I made, not out.

I was sluggish and stiff until I got my half-century, but then I  
relaxed into it and –

*[Reddens, embarrassed]*

Sorry. I shouldn't talk shop.

Professor Penfold No, no, I want you to run on as if you were on rails.

I need to comprehend how it is that a young man from Australia  
who is capable of taking the stage in International Cricket at its  
highest level and hit a ton with relative ease can then be the same  
young gentleman who visits my old-fashioned sitting room in order  
to become fluent in a dead tongue of Ancient Persia. Not to write  
it, mind, but to converse in it and then to understand his  
interlocutors when they speak it.

Do you follow my drift, Mr Thornside?

*[Softly, almost menacingly]*

It just doesn't gel, dear boy. Doesn't gel ...

*Hal is lost. He stares at Mim who looks back at him. She moves her head and eyes: she is indicating to him that he had better come up with a story of some kind.*

Professor Penfold You'd better tell me. It'll come out in the end anyway.

Remember, Hal: I'm a very old man and not easily shocked  
(except perhaps when Australian Test batsmen fly in on a  
chopper).

*Hal grins and shakes his head. Mim nods her head and uses her eyes: Hal had better come up with something. Hal presses his lips together as he stares at Mim.*

*Music: mysterious and evocative.*

Hal                                    There's a certain combination of factors which only happen during these Test Matches. I go to a country where they speak Ancient Persian. They think I'm some kind of strongman ... It might be that they are preparing for war and I'm to be a leader. I'm not sure of that ...

It would be easier all round if I could understand them and vice versa.

*The Professor (with his head back as far as it will go) and his granddaughter are unfazed.*

Hal                                    It's a bit hard to cop, I know. One moment I'm waiting for the review on the Umpire's call and then the very next moment, I'm dealing with the hangers-on of a foreign king.

*The Professor takes in a gasp of air.*

Professor Penfold *very softly*    Which king is this? Have you heard his name?

Hal                                    King Etki. His sister Labesh is the one who's been giving me language lessons.

*There is a long pause. Hal looks purposefully at Mim and points to her, mouthing "She's you!" Mim is surprised, taken aback. The Professor gasps again for breath.*

Professor Penfold                King Etki ... Of Assrishna?

Hal                                    Yes, that's right.

Professor Penfold                Hmmm ... We'll start the lessons. In the timeframe, we are only able to cover the barest basics. Mim will read from the book and you will repeat the words after myself. And then you may take the book with you for review, once you know how to pronounce the words.

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo **Break** ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

*The Professor shifts about. Mim shows some concern. Hal appears to be mentally exhausted, as he stares down at the large leather-bound volume.*

Professor Penfold

I'm alright, my dear. Alright ...

Go and fetch some tea, will you? The lesson is at an end.

*[To Hal]*

I suppose that you would like to scull a beer, being an Australian.  
But you won't get any beer here.

Hal *reassuring*

No! I'm fine, thanks ... I'll drink whatever comes.

*Mim rises, nods and then leaves the room. The two men are alone in the tired sitting room. The Professor takes this opportunity to speak privately to Hal (while Mim is out of the room).*

*The Professor leans forward, stretching desperately out (fingers splayed), as if trying to find Hal.*

Professor Penfold *harsh* Take my hand! Quickly!  
*whisper*

*Hal does as he is asked. The Professor takes the proffered hand in both of his, feeling Hal's hand and forearm eagerly. As he speaks, the old man grips Hal's hand with all his failing strength.*

Professor Penfold *low, eager, with passion*

Yes, this is the strong hand needed to grasp the willow.

But for the job in Assrishna, you'll want wits and not strong hands.  
You'll have to **think** it through. Your mind, Thornside ... Your brain ...

*Suddenly, the Professor releases Hal, to sit back in his chair as before (with head very far back). Hal is confused, until Mim returns to the sitting room carrying the tea tray. Now follows the business of the tea-pouring, milking and sugaring. Mim offers cake, which both men accept. The silence is only broken by the murmurs and tea-taking of the occupants of the sitting room, along with the purring of the cat.*

*When the Professor speaks, he has resumed his former more professional tone.*

Professor Penfold

You spoke of Assrishna ... Their king (King Etki) was a weak, vacillating man, who fell under the spell of a veritable parade of

nymphs and temptresses of every hair tint, of every predilection towards evil...

A palpable fool ... cost him his kingdom.

Hal *quickly* He was a ladies' man, then?

Professor Penfold To a fault ... To a fault ...

Hal And he lost his kingdom in battle, did he? I suppose that's what happened.

*Hal is about to speak further, but the Professor forestalls him.*

Professor Penfold Tanques (the poet, the starry-eyed dreamer) wanted the lands and wealth of Assrishna (Beulan being an overcrowded desert land). He chose to overtake the greener land by means of a single heavily-armed sweep.

That was the intention, anyway ...

*The Professor ignores Hal. He is recalling some historical facts which were not available to Hal on the Web.*

Professor Penfold The enemy to be scotched is a tough, wily man. He cannot be  
*matter-of-fact* beaten with brawn. It is not possible. But his nemesis is The Pathfinder (or so they call him) ... Perhaps that is you, this Pathfinder.

Hal Whoever he is: will he win?

Professor Penfold You've no doubt heard of the Rhymes of Tanques. Nothing!  
*laughs weakly* Nothing is mentioned of the Pathfinder. Very strange ...

*Hal looks at Mim as he finishes his cup of tea.*

Hal *carefully* Then how do you know about him?

*The Professor bites his lower lip in a kneading action.*

Professor Penfold *softly* Miriam tells me that your sports uniform features a large spray of wattle. The answer to all of your questions lies therein ... For in

Assrishna there is ... There is ...

*Mim looks worried. She stands quickly, putting down her cup and saucer. Her eyes indicate to Hal that he'd better leave. Just as he stands, taking the old man's hand in a gentle handshake, Hal's phone signals that he has received a text message. Hal checks it, and then smiles.*

Hal                               The chopper's ready to take me back. Thanks very much, Sir. I'll be able to use the words you taught me. And I'll be extra careful with the book. We go on from Cape Town to Durbin and from there to Bloemfontein. I'll make sure that the book gets back to you safely. I promise.

*The Professor has dropped off to sleep. Hal is lost. He looks towards Mim. She has gone to the door.*

Mim                               I'll show you out.

*Hal (with the large book tucked under his arm) and Mim move towards the front door.*

Mim *speaks softly*           Grandpa gets tired very easily. We don't have visitors as a rule. Too exciting ...

*Hal nods. Mim smiles sadly. They stand in the open doorway.*

Mim                               Thank you so much for going to all this trouble ... Coming in a helicopter ...

*Hal does not exit through the open door. He is unable to take his eyes off the girl's face.*

Hal                               There's not much point in getting tickets for you both, is there? Tickets for the cricket. I could get you really good seats.

*Mim shakes her head. There is a wistful quality of "what-might-have-been" in her smile.*

Mim                               Grandpa can't see. And I can't go on my own and leave him here. But thanks, anyway, Hal.

Hal                               Pity ...

*There is an awkwardness now. Hal will not leave. He stands before Mim, looking at her.*

Mim                               That's very kind of you.

*Hal takes Mim's hand as if to shake it, and then does not let her hand go. Hal strokes the back of her hand with his thumb.*

Hal                                      And ... um ... There's not much point in my kissing you or that, is there?

*The sudden suggestion of sexuality surprises and alarms Mim. She shakes her head quickly. But the damage is done: Hal is drinking in her beauty and he has not been in love much prior to this.*

Hal *fatally*                              Point or not ...

*Hal quickly takes Mim's jaw in his hands (with the book still tucked up under his arm) and kisses her directly on the lips. It is a clean, sweet, affectionate kiss. Hal does not drop his hands.*

Hal *low-voiced*                              I've got your phone number. I'll ring you. Goodnight.

*But Hal still does not move. He rubs his thumbs over the girl's cheeks. Hal kisses Mim again: a much longer, more searching kiss.*

*Finally, Hal pulls away and goes smartly towards the gate. As he opens the gate, he turns to wave to Mim. And then he disappears. We can hear the whirring of the helicopter and we can hear Hal running along the street. Then the chopper takes off. Mim watches it disappear into the night sky, waving slightly.*

END OF SCENE

### **III, Scene v: On The Way To A Double Century, Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

*We have a 3-D map of Australia, seen from just above sea-level, starting with Tasmania.*

Hobart: a radio quiz

*Zero into Hobart, into a lovely home overlooking the River Derwent. The pretty young woman is on the telephone, as she has entered a radio quiz. The DJ and the young lady contestant are laughing uncontrollably.*

DJ *voice-over, still chuckling* As if you didn't know Bass Strait... That was too easy ... Okay, Alicia (that's a beautiful name, Alicia).

Alicia *voice-over* Oh, thanks Brett.

DJ *voice-over* Okay, Alicia, second question on your way to \$500 of Sunday Cash: what's the name of the Australian cricketer who knocked-up a ton in Cape Town yesterday?

Alicia *voice-over* Um, it's Ian Thornsides, isn't it?

DJ *voice-over* Well ... You have the surname right ... Try again ... it rhymes with "Sal" ...

*Zero out, back to the 3-D map of Australia, and zoom to Central Australia. Zoom in on a "major" centre therein.*

#### Central Australia: a truck-stop last-chance petrol station

*In the heat of Central Australia, a group of tough-looking motorbike riders smoke and stand about as a huge road train roars off onto the highway. One of the bikers studies the Adelaide Advertiser, reading the lead story, which features an action shot of Hal batting under the headline: "Hal Storm in Cape Town". The man calls out to his mates, who come over to him to look over his shoulder. The camera moves upwards, catching up with the road train and seeming to follow it from the air. Then our camera goes up higher to zoom-in on Darwin.*

#### Darwin: The Casino, Peacock Tail Lounge

*Despite the fact that it is Sunday, a group of very casually dressed people, all very jovial and convivial, gather about in drinking schools. The Peacock Tail Lounge contains a number of large plasma screens. However, it is around the main screen that the guests gather. We hear some introductory music, then it's straight into the preview to the broadcast.*

#### The plasma screen in the Peacock Tail Lounge

Commentator *voice-* ... second day of the Third Test in Cape Town ... welcome to our

*over*

many viewers in Australia. It's a glorious summer Sunday in Cape Town. The wind is fresh, but not bad enough to cause any problems, I'd imagine.

No doubt you are all eager to see whether Thornside is able to add to his already impressive score. Hal Thornside made a gutsy 118 not out yesterday. Here's how he did it.

## Flashbacks on the TV

On the large screen, we see a few highlights (and hear the accompanying commentary) of Saturday's innings by Hal. He belts the ball about with consummate ease.

*The commentators appear on the screen, discussing the strong Australian position. Whilst they do so, we watch the 2 umpires and the South African fieldsman saunter lazily out into the middle of the cricket ground.*

*Then we watch Hal and his batting partner Kip stride down from the dressing room; both look eager and confident. As they walk out onto the turf, there is a mixture of boos and applause from the local Cape Town crowd.*

*Hal performs windmill movements with bat in hand, rolling his left arm over and over as he strides out to the pitch. He then swaps to his right arm.*

*Some of the Darwinians give loud support for the Aussie batsmen. This leads other people to clap and sing out encouragement. Our camera zooms in, such that it is evident that we are moving out of the TV coverage and into real time.*

**Break**

Real time in Cape Town (no longer plasma screen)

Hal takes position, tapping the end of his bat about (as if gardening).

Hal then raises his bat to rest over his shoulder. Just as in ACT I, Scene i Hal looks about at the field. Each fieldsman seems to register with Hal (**being outlined in bright purple**) as if they are characters





*Throughout this scene, Hal gives the distinct impression of being edgy, toey, eager and excited. As the two men stride manfully along the corridor, they are followed by the Princesses Unela and Labesh. Unela trots along in the wake of the men, whereas Labesh struggles to keep up.*

*Suddenly, Hal stops, turning on his heel, smiling kindly at Labesh.*

Hal *in a kindly manner*    What's the matter, Hon? Are we going too fast for you?

*This causes a bitter rebuke from Unela.*

Unela *miffed*                      If **I** can keep up, **she** can!

*From a side passage, Paluke-Joshua and Oringshay bustle up to our party. Paluke-Joshua is overjoyed. He holds a small unlit scented candle.*

Paluke-Joshua                      Ah! Heaven and the gods be praised with joyous voices raised in song!

I shall offer a votive candle. The ox and the virgins shall be spared!

*The truth of this statement hits Oringshay. All of a sudden, he is devastated.*

Oringshay *to himself*        Bummer!

*Undeterred, Paluke-Joshua begins his peroration, still holding the small unlit candle.*

Paluke-Joshua                      Oh, mighty Whisp-Shivver man, --  
*grandstanding*

*Hal is too busy and bustling to stand about like this.*

Hal                                      Yeah, thanks PJ. Listen! Not much time!

*Hal sees the votive candle which Paluke-Joshua holds out to Hal, thinking that it is a deodorant. Hal grabs it, smears it on his armpits (by diving into his shirt). Then he quickly hands the candle back to Paluke-Joshua (who is gobsmacked).*

Hal *winks*                              Bewdy! Thanks, mate. I was getting a bit whiffy out there in the sun.

*Hal moves on quickly, with Moshek beside him. The others trail along as best may be. As he strides along (speaking over his shoulder), Hal reaches over to pat Moshek's armour at chest height.*

Hal Moshek and I are jumping into a chariot headed for Beulan. Find this Tanques guy. Peace talks.

Moshek With 100 men to escort us. They will ride camels.

*Hal, pleased, nods.*

Hal *nods* Bewdy!

Princess Labesh can stop here with the other Princess. I should be right with the lingo --

*Unela responds by stopping abruptly to stamp her foot petulantly.*

Unela *miffed* Why should I have to --

*Our camera stops with Labesh, who gives up her pursuit of the others. She watches the party (including the defiant Unela) charge off into the distance.*

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

The party reaches a huge sacerdotal area. On one flank stands Syl-Artron and his faction; and on the other side, Syl-Ibsel and his men.

Hal is seen to pull up abruptly. He is surprised, stunned. Hal's face is etched with a surprised smile. He laughs.

Hal *amazed and astounded* ***What the fuck?!***

The camera slowly turns around to view the 100 men who stand to attention in the yard. They are all dressed in the exact same uniform as Hal: as Australian batsmen.

Hal is completely unembarrassed. He speaks loudly, such that the men may hear him.

Hal *loudly such that he can be heard* Whoa! Now, you all look great!

But we gotta hurry, hurry, hurry!

I'm on 192 and we haven't got long before the dickheads in the

control room make a decision on Kip's LBW.

Oh, don't worry! He was safe. It was too high. Those Boers just had to be smartasses.

The men look lost. Hal can see that his words have fallen on barren soil.

Hal takes a big breath and changes tack. He addresses the men, with a call to battle.

Hal *very exuberant and loud* Alright, boys! Let's serve it up to those arseholes in Beulan! For King and Country!

The men roar their approval, waving their bats high over their heads.

Unela *angry* Cease and desist!

[To Syl-Ibsel]

This man has to be duly registered for military service. He can't just rock up and take command in this casual fashion.

Syl-Artron steps forward, addressing Unela.

Syl-Artron Well spoken, treasured Princess.

Syl-Artron gestures gracefully towards Syl-Ibsel.

Syl-Artron My compatriot and I had anticipated this moment, and we are more than ready to issue the badge of honour to Prince Hal, should he pass our stringent requirements.

Syl-Artron bows to Unela, who looks anything but gratified.

Hal *impatient* Can we keep it rolling along? Time's the big enemy here, boys.

Syl-Ibsel steps up to Hal, taking Hal's jaw in his hand. Hal grabs Syl-Ibsel's wrist, surprised, as if violated.

Syl-Ibsel *calm* The beard is coming along nicely. No shagginess there.

Syl-Artron gestures towards the 100 batsmen.

Syl-Artron Already in the newly-approved uniform. Good, so tick that off!

Paluke-Joshua And now to lift the Stone of Loyalty. Checkpoint number 2, Prince.

Horvex lugs the stone up to Hal.

Hal What do I have to do?

Syl-Artron My dear man, please lift that stone up to half the level of your knee, using the handle provided.

Hal *grunts as he lifts* What – like this?

Hal easily lifts and lowers the stone. All the men nod, smiling. Unela rolls her eyes.

Syl-Artron Excellent! And now for point 3. Paluke-Joshua and Oringshay, would you please do the honours?

Paluke-Joshua *self-important* Certainly!

Paluke-Joshua silently signals to Hal that he is to drop his strides. Hal does not understand.

Moshek *drily* Your old fellow and family jewels have to be inspected.

[We see Hal from behind.] Hal nods, and immediately (and without embarrassment) drops his strides. Meanwhile, Paluke-Joshua and Oringshay have taken position in front of Hal. They reel back in some horror.

Oringshay *appalled* What's happened to you, man?

Hal looks down. He laughs, pulling down his jockstrap and removing his box.

Hal Oh, sorry! Forgot my nut sling and box.

As Hal holds the box up, tapping it with his knuckles, Paluke-Joshua, Moshek and Oringshay now seem to be pleased with Hal's anatomy. Moshek grins broadly.

Hal *joyful to the 100 batsmen/soldiers* Never bat without your box, fellas. If you don't wear it, you might start off singing baritone and end up singing soprano.

As Hal dresses in much haste, Syl-Artron places the badge of honour around Hal's neck.

The camera backs away, such that we can see 100 camels being led by slaves onto the large ground-level area. The camels stoop in order for the batsmen/soldiers to mount easily.

Several large chariots (each chariot powered by 4 white horses) are also led up. We see the men on the dais rush down the broad stone steps to take position in their respective chariots. Moshek drives

dude or other to sort things out for you and King Etki. So, suck it in, mate.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **Arrival in Beulan** ~~~~~

Beulan is more of a Middle Eastern terrain than Assrishna (which is green and fertile). Over rocky ground, the cavalcade progresses. Some senior members of the Satrap's government rush up to them on foot.

Hal *confused, to himself* This is weird! I should have been whizzed-off by now. They **must** be taking drinks. Or maybe I've passed out and the Doc is slapping my face ... ?

Syl-Ibsel *to the Beulan men* Where do we find Satrap Tanques?

At the same time, many of the Beulan men call out and point, indicating that the Satrap is to be found at his ease at the oasis.

Moshek, instructed by Syl-Ibsel's gesture, follows the pointing fingers. The cavalcade follows.

In the distance, we can make out the silhouette of a shimmering oasis.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*As the cavalcade approaches the oasis (which is a superb affair of palm trees, tropical plants, well-placed rocks and statuary), it can be seen that the two Syls are very annoyed and put-out by Hal's behaviour: Hal has been practising his batting technique within the confines of the chariot. Moshek is amused.*

*And as Moshek pulls up his four steaming white horses, Hal disappears. The two Syls look at each other, and sigh.*

Syl-Artron *waspyish*            Superb timing, as usual.

Moshek                            He did warn you, Sir that he might --

Syl-Ibsel *haughty*            Silence! When we are in need of your sage pronouncements,  
                                          Captain Moshek, you will be informed of the fact in advance. Other  
                                          times, please confine yourself to the welfare of the horses.

Moshek                            As you require, Syl-Ibsel.

*As Syl-Ibsel descends from the chariot, his face is set in a hard mask. Syl-Artron smiles kindly at Moshek, patting him on the arm.*

END OF SCENE

### **III, Scene vii: The Double Century, Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

#### Return to the Casino in Darwin: The Peacock Tail Lounge

*On the big plasma screen, the Newlands Oval electronic scoreboard is the focus. The words "NOT OUT" appear on the screen. A large cheer goes out from the patrons, with the odd shout of "Good on ya, Kip!" ringing out along with plenty of high fives. At the same time, we hear the commentator (such that we the audience can know where we are at in this scene).*

Commentator *voice-over*            And after a lengthy review, Kip Fernwell's wicket is safe, and he is permitted to continue with the bat.

*We watch the patrons in the Peacock Tail Lounge potter about in the few seconds that Kip is still batting. And then Hal is on strike, with a score of 192. This causes a rush of Casino patrons to the screen, to see if Hal can get to the double century. So, all eyes are glued to the big plasma screen.*

Hal goes for the double century

*Hal hits a huge six which is caught by a teenage boy on the first tier of the stand (refer back to ACT II, Scene ii). There is a great cheer in the Peacock Tail Lounge. The excitement is now electric.*

Commentator *voice-over, thrillingly*      Thornside is on 198. Two to go for his 200. Can he make the magic number?

*Hal smacks a neat shot, starts to run (watching the fieldsmen) and then lopes up to the centre of the pitch on the realisation that the ball has reached the boundary (signifying a four) and he's now on 202. He leaps into the air, brandishing his bat. Then he hugs Kip before removing his helmet to acknowledge the reluctant applause of the crowd. Hal is seen to pull out the Assrishnan medallion from under his shirt and kiss it. The South African fieldsmen look stricken and depressed. There is huge elation in the Peacock Tail Lounge.*

Commentator *voice-over*      And that's how Hal Thornside rubs Hauer Van Der Hahn's nose in it ... right in it!

END OF SCENE

**III, Scene viii: Paluke-Joshua Is Desperate To Lure Hal To Beulan**The slaves and the kitchen

*The scene is centred around the kitchen attached to the Satrap's demesne. The kitchen is much more open than what we would know: more of a stable spilling-out into a stony yard. There are dozens and dozens of slaves of both sexes and all ages either in the yard or in the huge kitchen. These slaves are involved in cleaning fish, preparing poultry, butchering, dressing meat and boiling vast pots of vegetables. They carry comestibles on their backs or in their arms, or they push small carts. The food also appears to be stored in all manner of pottery containers; the eggs are seen in woven baskets.*

*There are many fireplaces (all ablaze) with trivets, hooks on chains and hot stones. All these are being used in some manner to prepare the feasts for the King and his court. Some food is seen to be wrapped in palm leaves and steamed in the hot coals (buried). Some of the hens are gutted but left*

*with their feathers intact to be heavily daubed with clay such that they can be baked. A vast variety of fruit is laying in basket-weave shelves, turned by slave girls.*

Paluke-Joshua and Oringshay

*Into this busy, colourful scene come Paluke-Joshua and Oringshay, his apprentice. They bustle their way through the seething crowd. Paluke-Joshua chatters away, as Oringshay listens politely, interpolating the odd question when he can.*

Paluke-Joshua                   ... and when one falls into disfavour with the high and the mighty, one must **act**, my dear boy. And I intend to bring --

*In their travels, the two men are separated by many hard-working slaves. The two men re-unite. Paluke-Joshua stops and continues his monologue with vehemence.*

Paluke-Joshua *intense*   Through the agency of my especial magic, I'll bring this Hal back to the bargaining table. He is needed there. He **must** come! He cannot resist!

Oringshay *trying to help*           That concoction you made to coax the stillborn child from the grieving mother's womb ... ?

*Paluke-Joshua draws a withering breath and then shakes his head sadly. Then, Paluke-Joshua bursts into activity, threading his way between the slaves, moving in the direction of the kitchen. Oringshay rushes after him.*

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

The two men are now standing somewhat under the shelter of the kitchen roof. They find many bunches of dried herbs (many including the flowers) hanging from the rafters nearby to the trays of fruit. Reaching above him, and assisted by Oringshay, Paluke-Joshua rips off this and that from the overhanging dried greenery, chucking his collectibles into a large wooden bowl carried by Oringshay. Paluke-Joshua speaks as he plucks.

Paluke-Joshua I'll pound and mince and chop ... Then, with the addition of a

conspiratorial slurp of my elixir, these twigs of Nature's bounty will be steeped for three days. And only **then** shall I slaughter the sacred beast on the marble altar, as I paint over its heaving, pulsing flesh my blessed herbal brew.

Oringshay Of course, I always lent towards the virgins --

Paluke-Joshua *impatient* Every time I mention the possibility of you having sexual intercourse with untried nubile girls, you salivate. Are you crazed, boy?

Oringshay *shrugs* No ... I wouldn't say that ...

But that was my favourite subject in my sorcery classes. I always got good marks for screwing virgins – more than for any other subject. You know – I'm really good at it!

[Now tries to placate his boss]

But (on the other hand) the herbal infusion will definitely get results. Sounds like a plan.

Spotting a large female wandering about with butter cakes on a tray, Paluke-Joshua dashes out and grabs a couple of the treats, much to the slave's surprise. Paluke-Joshua winks at the woman and then returns to Oringshay, silently handing him a cake. Both men nibble at the cakes with evident pleasure.

Paluke-Joshua *thickly* Oh, it's a plan alright! Do you see, Oringshay? That that gives me the result for which I seek. And the Pathfinder will once again stride amongst us and sit in on these Beulanish guys for the peace talks.

Oringshay *concerned* Do you have three days? Is not the Satrap's impatience --

Paluke-Joshua *with emphasis* They have no choice! But I see where your mind is headed. That my disgrace at court (owing to the continued absence of this Whisp-Shivver man) must deepen the longer he tarries. But when he returns to us **this** time, 'twill be to our very great advantage.

END OF SCENE

III, Scene ix: In The Presence Of Satrap Tanques

This scene is set in a fantastic and beautiful patio. On the edge of the oasis, amid a riot of tropical plants and palms, Satrap Tanques reclines on a scattered pile of silk-covered cushions. Several scribes attend him, amidst an impressive amount of clay tablets. On small marble tables, bowls of sweetmeats are to hand. The Satrap has in one hand a superb jewel-encrusted goblet, from which he occasionally sips wine.

Syl-Artron and Syl-Ibsel stand to the side, attending on Tanques. Their erstwhile companions are not in this scene.

Tanques ignores the two Syls, preferring to finish-off his most recent composition. He lazily consumes a few sweetmeats.

Tanques Read that back, Baptiste.

Baptiste *reads* "With wings bowed, the hawk does undertake his blessed work.

Free from the confines of the scholar, the philosopher, the prophet
does he fly.

Marked underwing, this bird with noble head oversees our labours
here.

We that are bound not to soar heavenward can only wonder at
the hawk's majestic mastery of the air."

There follows a moment of reflective silence. Tanques breaks the stillness with a long sigh. When he speaks, he seems to address the ornate ceiling.

Tanques *dreamily* I understand, Syl-Ibsel, that you have obtained the services of
your own hawk.

Syl-Ibsel *bows* Indeed Lord Tanques. Our Pathfinder drops from the stars
whenever he is able; whenever his heavenly duties permit him to

do so.

Tanques *interested* He appears suddenly and without fanfare in your midst, stays awhile and then just as suddenly evaporates with not a word of warning. Is that so?

Syl-Ibsel *bows* Just so.

Tanques I long to meet this Starman. He sounds thoroughly marvellous. Is he a fine specimen of a man, with jaw of granite and dependable shoulders?

Syl-Ibsel Lord Tanques, you will find that Hal the Wanderer possesses every attribute one would desire in a warrior. Added to which, he has a habit of speedy decision-making and quick activity.

Syl-Artron: you are of a poetic turn of phrase. Will you not advise the illustrious Satrap as to the many attributes of the Whisp-Shivver man?

Satrap Tanques does not like this turn of events, for he is very jealous of Syl-Artron's language skills. He frowns even as Syl-Artron begins to wax lyrical.

Syl-Artron To view Lord Hal is to be amazed at the might of --

Tanques *interrupting* And he comes and goes at a whim?

Syl-Artron We mortals watch in awe the steady rhythm of the tides, of the seasons. We know that day follows night, and night dogs the day. But the Pathfinder appears without a pattern: when he comes, he comes. And then he dissolves into the ether with the same mysterious and random custom. He is incalculable and peerless.

Tanques Can you not summon him with spiritual device? Where is your Holy Man?

Syl-Ibsel I have urgently set him on the task of luring Lord Hal back to our bosom.

Tanques *pleased* Good! Good! Bring him to me on the instant of his re-appearance.

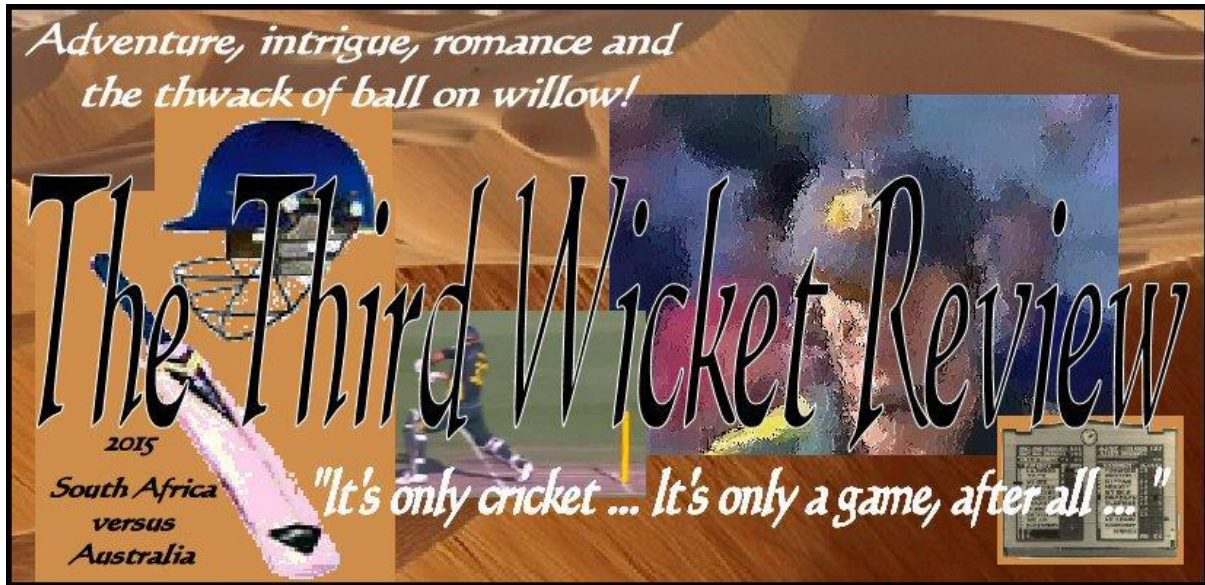
Now leave me and Baptiste to continue in our reflections ...

The two Assrishnan Syls bow low to the Satrap and walk quickly away from his presence. Our camera stays with these two Assrishnan men.

Syl-Ibsel *caustically to* The gods must help us to inveigle Hal to return. And swiftly! I can
Syl-Artron only imagine what punishments that verse-tinkerer will visit upon
 us should Paluke-Joshua fail ...

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT III



Plot progression explained:

Days 1 and 2 of the Third Test Match in Capetown were taken up with Australia batting. Only at the very end of Day 2 did the Australian captain (Paul Lansborough) declare the innings closed. Hal had made a gutsy 223 before being run out.

So South Africa began their First Innings not long before stumps. They got off to a disastrous start, losing the first wicket cheaply.

Our next Third Wicket Review will occur during the South African innings.

However, there is an intervening rest day on the Monday.

ACT IV

Continuation of Third Test Beginning Saturday 14th February 2015 at Newlands, Cape Town South Africa

IV, Scene i: An Outing To The Venjit Market Monday 16th February 2015

There is a rest day for the cricketers on Monday 16th February. The boys have decided to have a BBQ by the hotel pool; they've just booked the area. So, the man on the reception desk advises them to check out the Venjit market for their food.

Bobbie Romanov, Johnnie Cowper, Kip Fernwell, Anthony de Jonge, Siggie Onwardon, Paul Lansborough (the Australian captain) and Hal have gathered at the hotel's reception desk. They are all very casually dressed.

As the scene opens, the man on the desk is drawing a map for Paul indicating how to get to the Venjit Market.

Desk Man *to all* ... but you can't miss it. There's a wrought iron sign – like an archway -- with "Venjit Market" on it. Don't worry: you'll smell the curries anyway!

The upbeat young men chuckle as Paul thanks the desk man, and in a very jolly manner the Aussie cricketers head off. We hear scattered comments regarding what they will buy and how much food is required. And then they disappear out of the large front doors. The desk man picks up his desk phone and quickly dials an in-house number.

Desk man *into the phone* Hi, Bing. The Aussies have booked the barbeque area by the pool for lunch today. Can you check that all the barbeques are functioning in good order, please? And you'd better tell Kevin that he'll need to stock up the pool fridge with some of that Aussie beer we've laid by. I'll have Jessie take out stacks of plates and cutlery and all the usual stuff.

[Adds caustically]

I'll make that **unbreakable** plates, hmmm? Okay – thanks, pal.

The desk man replaces the handset and continues with his work.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~  
~~~~~ **At the Venjit Market** ~~~~~

The Aussie cricketers wander about: it is all colour and noise and movement at the Venjit Market. The Aussies tend to be much taller than the people amongst whom they mingle (mostly folk of Indian heritage). Indians are as cricket-mad as the Australians, and so they recognize the men. Thus, as they move about there are "Ahs!" and "Ohs!" of recognition and appreciation. Autograph hounds follow and plead with them; also there are plenty of kids wanting selfies taken with their heroes.

An ebullient Indian man is rattling away on a microphone in front of a camera. He is the ever-popular TV chef Allem Jellibunathia ("Jellyman"), and his program is being pre-recorded in situ at the Venjit Market. One of his satellites (a very confident, pretty Indian woman) spots the Aussie cricketers. She rushes over to them and lures them near enough to Allem such that he can include them in the show. Allem beams with genuine pleasure as Siggi Onwardon, Johnnie Cowper and Bobbie Romanov join him to try out the food.

There is loads of happy banter, with Allem making pleased comments and the sportsmen making the usual tasteless comments which will have to be edited-out later. But Allem and his satellites smile and nod, and the Aussies take photos of each other with their mobile phones.

Suddenly, Hal is arrested by something he has seen. He dashes off without a word to his surprised team mates, threading his way through the stalls and the shoppers.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

~~~~~ **Hal chases an elusive figure through the Venjit Market** ~~~~~

Hal pulls up, somewhat breathless, outside a very trendy-looking pub (forming one of the boundaries of the market), with an extensive outdoor area. Pushing through the plants in containers, tables, barrel-chairs and so on, Hal runs his quarry to ground. He starts with extreme surprise to find that the man he has been pursuing is indeed Professor Alexander Penfold: in this case he is a younger, fitter man. Of course, it is his ghost that Hal has pursued.

Smiling cheekily at Hal, the Professor (wearing his casual garden attire and straw sunhat) stands in an out-of-the-way corner. He is not at all breathless, whereas Hal is gasping for breath, with hands on knees.

Hal *panting* Jeez! I thought I was fit. You're unreal!

The Professor nods as he approaches Hal, patting him affectionately on the back.

Professor Penfold Hello, Hal.

wistful It's the first time I've seen you ... I imagined that you would be just such a young man.

There is a pause. Hal is still leaning down, with his hands on his knees. He looks up, staring at the Professor in wonder.

Hal *puzzled* You mean that your sight has returned?

Sadly, the Professor's ghost shakes his head.

Professor Penfold I was hanging on for something, someone ... And then you flew in on a helicopter. The relief of ... what do they call it now, Hal? "Closure?" Yes, the relief of closure is unarguably intoxicating.

Hal stands up straight, continuing to stare at the older man.

Hal *even more puzzled* But --

Professor Penfold My time is over. And so I can only give to you the very briefest of advice before I take my final curtain.

You and Miriam must connect with two fables of the Ancients and turn them to your advantage in Assrishna. Androcles and the Lion and the Sword of Damocles deserve your closest attention.

Hal *very confused* Who? What?

Professor Penfold Write it down so that you don't forget. "Androcles" and "Damocles". Whatever did you learn at school?

Hal Um ... Well, I was really only interested in Sport and Automotive.

Professor Penfold

That figures!

chuckles

Damocles and sword, Androcles and lion ... Recall your own surname.

Hal rakes his hair with his fingers in consternation.

Hal *worried*

You're not dead, are you?

The eyes of the Professor's ghost sparkle brilliantly.

Professor Penfold

Yes! I am!

On that instant, the Professor completely disappears. Hal looks about, bemused.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Hal has moved only slightly and is phoning Mim using his mobile.*

Hal *into the phone,*  
*very gentle*

I'm really sorry, Mim, but I think that your Grandpa might have passed away.

*[Pause]*

Can you check?

*A pause ensues. Hal must wait while Mim checks her Grandfather's condition. While waiting, Hal looks around about at the jolly crowd. He wears an expression of sincere regret.*

Hal *into the phone,*  
*very gentle*

Oh, I just knew ... Look, I'm really, really sorry.

*[Pause]*

Is there anyone who can ... Okay, that's a good idea. I'll get to you as quick as I can. You ring me at any time. Okay? The Test Match ends on Thursday. I've got a rest day today, but: do you want me to – Alright, then. I'll get to you on Friday. No, I won't be able to make it any sooner. Sorry, but ...

Okay, then. Keep strong, Mim. And ring me!

END OF SCENE

Plot progression explained:

Hal Thornside is not involved in the next 3<sup>rd</sup> wicket review. However, he is vehement in his enthusiasm for a review.

The first and second South African wickets are lost cheaply, and then the number 3 batsman (Erland Danepoel) is the subject of a runout. It is a very close thing, and the South African batsman gets the benefit of the doubt. **There is no review in this instance.**

Now the other batsman (Van Der Hahn) is on strike. He is the subject of a dodgy LBW appeal. This time, the 3<sup>rd</sup> wicket review proceeds, the Umpire's ruling is upheld, and the decision stands.

**So, be aware that Hal is wearing his fielding strip in this scene.**

#### IV, Scene ii: Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015 The Fifth Review

*The scenario described immediately above has happened during this session of play, sending Hal off to Assrishna.*

*We are travelling direct to Beulan, as by now we (the audience) are aware of how the third wicket review works. We shall briefly sort this out for the viewing audience when Hal returns to current time.*

*Hal finds himself rowing (in his fielding strip, as described above). There is a squad of 8 men, keeping perfect rhythm as the blades of the oars dip and lift. The sinews in the men's arms are seen to work in uniformity. Princess Unela has scrunched herself up in the bow, as if the cox.*

*Hal glances about. The scenery on either bank of the wide river on which the men row is superb, breathtaking, sumptuous.*

Hal *to no-one in particular and with* Why did you say I'm rowing like a galley slave, again?

*sarcasm*

*No-one answers.*

Hal                                      Am I in the rowing squad for some reason?

What I mean: If I'm some sort of special warrior to you blokes,  
then how come I'm doing the hard yards like I'm a slave?

*Again, no-one answers. Hal appears put-out.*

Hal *miffed, sing-song*              There I was, minding my own business, a top-flight international  
cricket star, watched by millions around the world ...

*As they are rowing with their backs to the landing, they are unaware how close it is.*

Male voice *with*                      Ship oars!  
*authority*

*As one, the men (even Hal) ship their oars. Someone on the landing secures the gondola to the  
landing. The men and Unela alight.*

*A servant gestures to a covered portico adjacent to the landing.*

Servant                                      Satrap Tanques awaits you, Pathfinder.

*Jogging into the shade of the portico, Hal's eyes become accustomed to the dim lighting. Unela runs  
along in Hal's wake.*

Male voice                                      This is Satrap Tanques.

*Small branchlets of whisp-shivver are strewn over the floor on the approach to Tanques.*

*Tanques stands with arms-crossed, almost side-on. He grimly watches the approach of Hal.*

*Hal, on recognizing Tanques as the spitting-image of his dead brother, slows down, looking aghast.*

*The following flashback represents the Channel 9 News footage of the tragedy, along with a publicity  
shot of Ted Thornside. In it, Ted stands in exactly the same pose as does Tanques (arms-crossed,  
almost side-on).*

## FLASHBACK

News reporter

Police and coastguard volunteers at Port Stephens (north of Sydney, on the New South Wales coast) have all but given up hope of finding alive Lions lock Ted Thornside and his father Eddie, who are believed to have drowned while rock fishing on Sunday.

Two British tourists who were visiting the beach at the time of the incident have stated that Ted Thornside (8 times selected for State of Origin duties) may have been swept off the rocks by a rogue wave. It is believed that his father may have dived into the surf in an effort to rescue Ted Thornside.

Ted's younger brother Hal (a member of the Sydney Colts cricket team) was unable to join his father and brother on the fatal fishing trip due to cricket duties in New Zealand. He is flying back to Sydney, having been told of the tragedy ...

## END OF FLASHBACK

*Tanques does not indicate to the assembled throng that he recognizes his erstwhile brother Hal (who is shocked and stunned to recognize him). Tanques glances at the costume Hal is wearing and gives the slightest of smirks.*

*Hal goes through a range of emotions: denial, disbelief, surprised delight, doubt.*

*Tanques looks the carpet of whisp-shivver over with no evident emotion. Hal turns away sharply, raking his hair with his fingers, and gasping for air.*

*Hal then stops, turning slowly to face Tanques, who points towards the floor.*

Tanques *cold*                      Are we sure that this man is the long-sought Pathfinder? He would seem to be nothing more than a floppy-eared puppy.

*Apart from Hal, the assembled men display discomfort. Hal stands stiffly, arrested.*

Hal *s/y*                              What was the name of the floppy-eared puppy?

*Tanques shrugs.*

Tanques *vague*                      One might have called him ... um ... Freddie.

*Tanques shrugs again, with a pout. The men in the room look doubtful; even perplexed. Tanques smiles.*

*After an infinitesimal pause, Hal quickly steps forward and gives Tanques an almighty hug. It happens so quickly that the Satrap's minders hesitate.*

Hal *whispers only for*              Dad's body washed-up a coupla days later. Your corps was never  
*Tanques to hear*                      found ...

*Hal steps back. Tanques seems to regain command of himself. Unela (eyes goggling) slaps her palms over her mouth in awe. Both men are built on similar lines and resemble one another.*

Tanques                                  Perhaps I was mistaken in this man. Perhaps he is overwhelmed  
to meet my august personage.

*Tanques walks away, leaving Hal unsure how to proceed.*

Tanques *calling to his*              Whoever this man is, he is welcome in my land. I command that  
*servants*                                  you bring forth the proposed entertainment for my godlike visitor.

*A bevy of divinely beautiful girls (including Unela who rushes to join them), carrying sprays of flowers and garlands sing a lovely part-song as they walk along a winding garden path that leads into the portico. As they approach, Hal is ushered into a chair and offered drink and food. Tanques has disappeared. Hal looks about and then loses himself in admiration of the lovely nubile girls parading before him as they dance. When Unela nears him, Hal points at her, winks and gives the thumbs-up sign. Unela (in her very best looks) beams at him.*

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene iii: REVIEW #5, Back To The Cricket At Newlands Cape Town**

*The large screen at Newlands Oval displays a large OUT in red, under the words "Review Complete".*

*All of the Australian fieldsmen have rushed in to congratulate bowler Jules Guyville. They are jubilant. Hauer Van Der Hahn storms off, banging his cricket bat angrily on the grass as he rips off his batting helmet. We see the jubilation on the faces of the fieldsmen, especially Hal who watches Hauer tramp off the field in high dudgeon.*

END OF SCENE

#### **IV, Scene iv:** Hal's Hotel Room, Cape Town

*Night.*

*Mim lies on the carpet on her stomach. She is trying to reach a slim paperback which has fallen to the floor near the wall under the bed.*

*Hal simply drops to the floor and lies on her. Mim starts laughing helplessly.*

Hal *cajoling*                      This is the best known beauty treatment ... A heavy weight on the back gives no end of benefit --

Mim *giggling*                      What? Squishing me to death will make me look beautiful? Get off!

*Hal kisses her neck. Mim groans as she stretches out for the book.*

Hal *tenderly*                      What do they call that thing where the males and females are different?

Mim                                  Sex. Gender.

Hal                                  Yes, "sex"-something. You know: the drake is bigger than the duck and --

Mim                                  Oh, you mean "sexual dimorphism". It comes from herds of animals. The females all --

Hal *triumphant*                      That's it! "Sexual dimorphism" ... I'm forcing you to stand out from the crowd of other females by choosing to mate with you.

*Mim stretches as far as she can under the bed.*

Mim *sarcastic*                    Implying that you'll mate with all the others as well.

*[With meaning]*

Will you get **off** me, Beachmaster? Please? I'm trying to help you with this ... with this ... Ah! Got it!

*Mim has reached the book. Hal immediately takes it from her.*

Hal                                "The Handbook of War". Good read, is it? A page-turner? Can't put it down?

Mim                                I was reading it last night.

*Hal slips off Mim and stands. He puts out his hand to draw Mim up to her feet. She grunts with discomfort.*

Hal                                And it put you to sleep, did it? Or – No! You lost it down the side of the bed.

Mim                                Well, I have it now. You can tell me how these salient points fit in with the Assrishna-slash-Beulan situation.

*Mim opens the book at the place where a slip of white paper is in evidence.*

Mim *reading,*                    The causes of war ...  
*paraphrasing*                    A desire for natural resources. That includes converting the subdued populace into slaves.

Hal                                Check.

Mim *reading,*                    And that concept encompasses lebensraum.  
*paraphrasing*                    Timing: an infant or female ruler is on the throne.  
"We'll never have this chance again" ...

Hal *thinking*                    Nope.

*[Changes his mind]*

Hang on! Yes, that's a "yes". Etki is a dipstick. But my guess is that it would be an internal putsch rather than a cause for war. No

... Make that a “no” after all ...

*Mim nods agreement.*

*Mim reading,  
paraphrasing*

A naked thrust for power (presumably to impress your courtiers).  
*Force majeure*: AKA sabre rattling.

*Hal nods*

Yep. Definitely possible.

*Mim reading,  
paraphrasing*

Religious fervour to convert neighbours ... which finds its darkest form in ethnic cleansing.

*Hal shakes head*

Nuh.

*Mim reading,  
paraphrasing*

Blockade of trade route (land, river, sea, mountain pass) causing economic distress. A deliberate impasse.

*Hal*

No, nothing like that.

*Mim*

And there are some other silly ones which don't apply here.

Right!

So it's all about Tanques and the Satrapy being drunk on their own power, and looking enviously at their neighbours in Assrishna: land, wealth, people ... the lot!

*Hal*

Many a major war has started just that way.

*Mim*

Yes.

Now, back to what Grandfather said to you. Play it back in your mind. I want to know ***exactly*** what he said to you.

## FLASHBACK

Professor Penfold

My time is over. And so I can only give to you the very briefest of advice before I take my final curtain.

You and Miriam must connect with two fables of the Ancients and turn them to your advantage in Assrishna. Androcles and the Lion and the Sword of Damocles deserve your closest attention.

Hal *very confused* Who? What?

Professor Penfold  
*patient* Write it down so that you don't forget. "Androcles" and "Damocles". Whatever did you learn at school?

Hal Um ... Well, I was really only interested in Sport and Automotive.

Professor Penfold  
*chuckles* That figures!

Damocles and sword, Androcles and lion ... Recall your own surname.

## END OF FLASHBACK

*Mim looks at Hal, willing him to remember. Hal tries to recall.*

Hal *haltingly* Something that I should have learned at school ... He wanted me to write it down ... A sword of – but I didn't recognize the name of the metal.

Mim *frowning* Did he say a sword **made** of something or the sword **of** something?

Hal Dunno ... And a similar name ... I remember! A lion. And my surname ...

Mim *frowns* Your surname is Thornside" ... A lion ...

*Mim's expression changes. The penny drops.*

Mim *pleased* "Androcles and the Lion"! Androcles was a Roman slave who helped a lion by pulling a thorn out of its paw. And then in the Colosseum, when Androcles was thrown to the lions, he met up with the one that he'd saved. Thus, he was saved himself.

Hal That's a good lurk.

Mim And the "Sword of Damocles"?

Hal *doubtful* Yeah ... Sounds like it, but I can't be sure ...

Mim *keen* And Van Der – what is the history between you two?

Hal *explosive*                    There is **no** bloody history – that’s the point!

Mim *confused*                   But he said --

Hal                                    He jumped me and started a fight. He king-hit me. I’m lucky he didn’t knock me unconscious. And then he got on national TV and told the eager public that there’s a long-standing feud between us ... And the ...

                                          What do you call it? Sounds like “carcass belly” ...

Mim *smiling*                    “Casus belli” ... “Cause of the war” ...

Hal                                    Yeah. (Of course, I’ve been covering it with the peeps by saying that we made it all up together as a joke). And anyway the casus belli is maybe not even anything to do with cricket ...

*[Scratches head]*

                                          Bugged if I know ... I can’t remember ever doing anything to upset him ...

END OF SCENE

REVIEW #6 Plot progression explained:

On Wednesday South Africa is in a hopeless position (batting).

As the third wicket is now under attack, Hal is determined that there will be a review and questions everything, to the dismay of friend and foe alike.

He gets his wish. There is a run-out. Australia appeals, and the umpire decides in favour of the South African batsman, Marius Boslooper. Hal goes so wild with enthusiasm that he actually blacks out and keels over.

**IV, Scene v:** Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015 The Sixth Review

*At this time, Marius Boslooper (on strike) bats, partnered by Hauer Van Der Hahn. Hal (fielding at cover) leaps forward towards the bowler, who is Bobbie Romanov.*

Hal *excited*                      If you bowl down his left side, he'll put his guard up. Get him that way!

Bobbie *exhausted*              Look, I'm doing my best, Hat-boy. Jeez, you're strung up something fierce today. What's wrong with you?

Hal *earnest*                      It's the third wicket, isn't it? I want you to go for an LBW so that they'll appeal. I need them to appeal.

Bobbie *annoyed*                Fuck off! I'm following the captain's game plan, not yours. Go back to your position, Thornside.

*The fielders are ready. Bobbie goes to his marker, turns and bowls a leg break. Only a batsman with Boslooper's talent would be able to tackle such a ball. He does hit the ball, however his stroke is not strong and is quickly fielded. Boslooper has attempted a single and is almost run out. The ball which keeper Paul Lansborough whips into the stumps connects at exactly the same second that Boslooper makes his ground, arm and bat stuck out in a desperate effort.*

*Hal, red-faced and looking as if he will burst a blood-vessel, shrieks at the captain.*

Hal *overexcited,*                He's out! He's out! Howzat!  
*screams*

*There is a very slight, throbbing pause. The umpire wanders over to the umpire at square leg to confer with him. Meanwhile, Hal can be seen to be beside himself, hopping about doing physical jerks.*

*The umpire then shakes his head as he returns to his position. Hal rushes to keeper and captain Paul Lansborough. Hal almost knocks Paul over.*

Hal *overexcited,*                Get a review! He's out! Get a review!  
*screams*

Paul *annoyed by Hal's*        Alright, alright, alright ... Settle down, will ya?  
*wild behaviour*

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

The camera (representing Hal's face) is situated on the ground, facing upwards. Into focus (looking down at the camera) are Hauer (who is just now removing his batting helmet), Marius and some of the Aussie fielders. Everyone is concerned. We see keeper and captain Paul Lansborough signal with waving hand to the dressing room for assistance.

Hal *voice-off, tone of desperation, but weak* Hold back, Tanques! Tell your men to hold back! Djashnu is the Pathfinder, not me!

Paul squats down, his hand is very near the camera as if patting Hal on the chest.

Paul *concerned* Y'alright, mate?

The camera focuses up at Hauer.

Hal *voice-off, very weak* Hauer ... What are ya doing here? Why aren't you in the thick of the battle?

Hauer *laughing* I'm playing cricket. What the fuck else would I be doing, Boyo?
Have you got sunstroke?

Hal *voice-off, exhausted* I have to talk to you ... To discuss the battle plans ... Council of war ... The sword and the lion ...

We hear Hal groan, and then all the faces become blurred, sepia-coloured and then they fade out.

Blackness takes over. The music is ultra-dramatic and overpowering.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene vi: Staffy Saledis At The Sydney Post Newspaper Office

Staffy stares (awestruck) at his laptop screen. We can vaguely hear cricket commentators discussing the fact that play is halted at Newlands in order to stretch Thornside from the oval. The commentators (like Hauer) conjecture that Hal has obviously suffered from sunstroke.

Staffy *yelling* Kerrienne! Get your swervy, curvy, yummy body in here! Hat-boy is down and out.

Kerrienne *voice-off* Did Van Der Hahn drop him again?

Kerrienne rushes up and stands near Staffy. Like him, she stares at the screen.

Kerrienne *awestruck* Jeez! What happened?

Staffy *shrugs* They reckon it could be sunstroke. He's out cold.

Kerrienne *enthusiastic* Story! Story! There's a story here ...

Kerrienne dashes off, leaving Staffy (as if hypnotized) staring at the laptop screen.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene vii: During REVIEW #6 The Dungeons, The Fort Of Tanques In Beulan.

Hal and Unela are at the fort of Tanques in Beulan.

Evidently, Hal and Unela have stayed on at Beulan from the last review.

Hal *urgent* Quick! I need to see the dungeons.

Unela *frowning* How should I know where they are?

Hal *thwarted* But I must find ... Just as I arrived back here, somebody put the hard word on me: "the dungeons of Beulan ... Djashnu is there".

Who will know ... Who can I ask?

Unela *excited* Ooo! Ooo! I know! I know! Moshek will be able to show you where

they are.

Hal Of course! Good old Moshy.

Unela *excited* Come on!

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Hal (holding Unela's hand) and Captain Moshek run along the corridors of Satrap Tanques's fort.*

*Moshek points to a dark, slim passageway which leads to steep steps.*

*Churath stands in their way. Churath is dressed in a loincloth, has long hair and long beard, is extremely unkempt and drools noisily. He looks anorexic, and heavy chains bind his wrists and ankles.*

Unela Remember how I told you about Memlash and his adopted brother Nathi?

*Hal nods. Unela points to Churath.*

Unela This is Churath, who turns out to be Memlash's father. **You'd** say that he was as mad as a cut snake. But King Etki has provided kind and efficacious care.

*Churath laughs. A huge glob of drool drips onto his chest. The madman's keeper quickly wipes the drool away.*

Hal *drawls* Y-e-a-h ... It looks like it ...

Moshek This way, Pathfinder.

*Hal hangs back, looking searchingly at Churath.*

*Hal pats Churath on the chest in friendly way.*

Hal *kindly* Well, see ya later, Churath. Nice to meet you. Keep your pecker up.

*As Hal turns to go, Churath speaks. He has a refined Oxford accent, despite the absence of teeth.*

Churath *twee* Good afternoon, Hal. May your enterprise prosper.

*Hal does a double-take, open-mouthed.*

Hal *gobsmacked* Uh?

Churath *twee* Yes, follow the brave captain if you wish to discover Djashnu. For that is your purpose, is it not? He has returned from the desert at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, it would seem, and hides himself in the bowels of the Earth ... Where I should be.

*Hal stares in disbelief. Churath nods and then (with the aid of his keeper), he carries off his chains such that he is able to hobble away.*

Unela *voice off, calls*      Come **on**, Hal!

~~~~~ Break ~~~~~

The actor playing the part of Hauer also takes the role of Djashnu

When they reach the dungeons, the only light available is provided by small fires which smoke horribly. This causes everyone to cough. There is hardly light enough to see.

Unela *loud whisper* Uncle Djashnu? We are friends to your cause. Please discover yourself.

We watch as Moshek, Unela and Hal try grimly to see in the darkness.

Moshek *low-voiced* Honourable Lord Djashnu. It is time to return to us. We are no enemy. We come in peace.

When Djashnu speaks, his voice seems to reverberate around the rock walls of the dungeon, disallowing the visitors to work out where he is.

Djashnu *voice-off* It is death to all of you if you are found in my company. I am despised by Tanques and Etki alike.

Moshek, Unela and Hal peer into the darkness.

Unela We're here to help, Uncle Djashnu.

Djashnu *voice-off* For that you will require an army of thousands of men and yet you are only three little people.

Hal I am Hal. They call me the Pathfinder.

Djashnu *voice-off* That is their mistake, for I am the Pathfinder for whom the folk of Assrishna seek.

Hal *equably* Whatever – have it your own way ...

My instructions from my wise counsellor are that we are to fight using our brains, not our brawn. Do you savvy?

Djashnu *voice-off* Go on!

Hal It was explained to me by a wise man ... Assrishna cannot (repeat **cannot!**) attempt to defend itself against the Beulan Army. Just won't happen. We've gotta do some clever head work and not rely on the power of the armed forces.

We hear the deep clanking of many heavy chains. Out of the gloom, Djashnu emerges, with body dragged down by the weight of his chains of incarceration.

He is Hauer Van Der Hahn to the life. Djashnu looks from one to the other. Hal is gobsmacked. He emits throat noises.

Unela What's the matter? Are you alright, Hal?

Hal *croaky voice* I was at Port Arlington once. I was eating a Veal Cordon Bleu out in the beer garden when a seagull shat all over it. That's how I feel now.

Unela takes this in, with head on the side.

Unela *uncertain* Right ...

Unela rushes to her uncle's side, feeling the chains. Moshek appears stricken.

Unela Can we free him?

Moshek draws his curved blade from his belt and looks doubtfully at it.

Hal dives a hand into his pocket and hauls out the Swiss army knife that he has previously abstracted from Josh Tiers's sons.

Hal *proudly* Should be able to do some serious damage with this little arsenal.

END OF SCENE

IV, Scene viii: Djashnu, Hal and Moshek, At The Border Between Assrishna and Beulan.

This scene reflects the very opening prologue. However, it is set in Beulan, not Australia.

Our camera level stays below knee-level throughout.

The opening scene is a well-lit thicket on the edge of a bushy outcrop just within the border of Beulan.

The only sounds we can hear are those of the bushy outcrop: no human sounds are apparent.

A small superb wren hops about. It pecks about for insects.

The bird flies off. Now we can clearly hear the heavy footfall of men as they tramp through the brush.

We hear a sharp and heavy knife hacking through branches of whisp-shivver and see branches of pale cream whisp-shivver falling to the ground.

Djashnu and Moshek gather the whisp-shivver and bind it into faggots. These they strap to their backs, as they ride bare-back on scrappy ponies. Hal stands at a distance, holding the ponies.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*The three men are now mounted on the ponies, and riding towards King Etki's palace in Assrishna.*

*They rein-in. Moshek and Djashnu look back at Hal, who is in the rear.*

Djashnu *frowning*                   What's up?

Hal *doubtful*                       Without meaning to, I seem to come and go and come and go.  
I've been here a helluva long time on this gig ...

Djashnu *confused*                   What?

Moshek *explaining*               Hal is trying to explain that he cannot be given a distinct task to undertake as his divine province calls him back just as soon as it spits him out. He is uncountable and may not be depended upon, through no fault of his own.

Djashnu *nods*                       I see ...

Hal                                   When and *if* I can, I'll set up a sword to dangle dangerously over some dude. I could manage that alright.

                                         Not sure if I have the nerve to muck around with a lion's paw or that ...

                                         Still, you never know.

                                         But you see how it is with me ... I can't promise anything.

*Djashnu nods again and canters off on his dodgy pony. Moshek and Hal are alone.*

Moshek *kindly*                       What else ails you, friend? You are not happy. Unburden yourself to me. Your secret admissions are sacred to me.

Hal *wry smile*                       Jeez ... Where to start?

                                         Well, back in my real life (where I play cricket), Labesh is a girl called Mim that I've got the hots for.

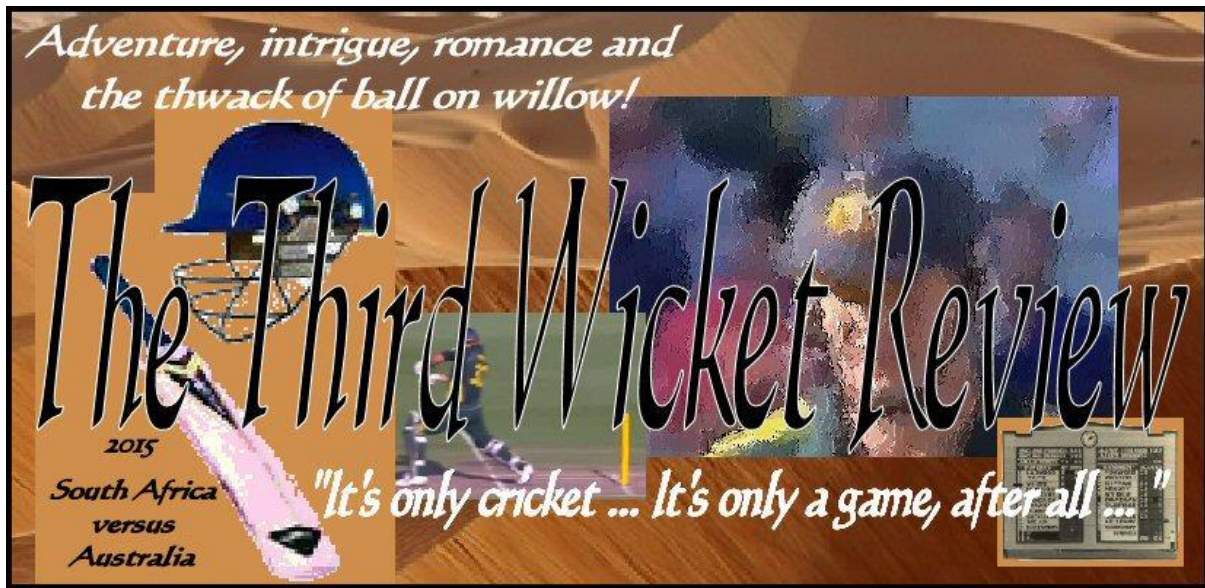
                                         Djashnu is my sworn enemy. But fucked if I know why.

                                         And Tanques is the re-incarnation of my dead brother.

                                         That's enough to be going on with ...

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT IV



Plot progression explained:

Plenty of activity and action occurred on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015. (Refer ACT IV, Scene v).

To recap, Hal was over-enthusiastic for a review on the third wicket on this (the penultimate day of the Third Test Match), so keen was he to return to Assrishna.

When the review comes, Hal passes out as he murmurs to Hauer Van Der Hahn. And then he is off again to Assrishna, meeting both Churath and Djashnu. The Assrishna high command is preparing to go to war against the invading Beulan forces.

That aside, Hal's unconscious condition (and subsequent overnight stay in hospital) causes massive alarm bells to ring amongst the members of the Australian cricket team. Before play recommences on the Thursday, a crisis meeting is called in some random boardroom.

Australia declared just prior to stumps on the previous evening, meaning that they will be fielding in this morning session.

## ACT V

### **V, Scene i:** Boardroom, Cape Town

Thursday Feb 19<sup>th</sup> 2015

*The staff and members of the Australian cricket team (except for Hal) have been provided access to a large boardroom in Cape Town (we do not care where/what it is). The administrators are all dressed in their casual-wear uniform, whereas most of the players have donned their fielding strip. The men and Louise filter into the room in small groups.*

*Josh is the last to arrive: he is flustered and bustling (as is his way).*

*There is quite a crowd in this room once they have all arrived.*

*The following players wander into the room:*

|                            |                |                   |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| (Captain) Paul Lansborough | Gordon Wilkes  | Darren Timberling |
| Kip Fernwell               | Johnnie Cowper | Siggi Onwardon    |
| Blake Kemtalbot            | Jules Guyville | Bobbie Romanov    |
| Anthony de Jonge           |                |                   |

*The following administration people wander in, with the players:*

|                  |               |            |
|------------------|---------------|------------|
| Louise Kemtalbot | Luke Duquesne | Matt Hines |
| Gavin Arvide     |               |            |

*As they enter, they sit anywhere, but not at the end of the table where the white screen is situated.*

Josh *breathless*

Right! Thanks all for coming.

There's no presentation ... I just want to sound you out about what happened yesterday before you head out onto the oval for

the morning session.

*There is an interruption as the last stragglers take their seats. Johnnie's mobile phone rings.*

Josh *annoyed*                      Phones off, please! And no texting. I want youse all to give this pow-wow your full attention.

*Johnnie (discomforted) dashes off. The cricketers organize their phones, setting them to silent mode.*

Johnnie *apologetic*              I'll just have to get this ... Sorry, Josh ... The missus is up the duff ... Better see what's wrong ... Back in a Minnie.

Josh                                  Righto then ... Let's kick this off.

*Josh turns purposefully towards Louise, who is seated next to her brother Blake.*

Josh *firm*                              You have to tell us what the hell is going on with Hatboy. It's now situation critical and this "sanctity-of-the-confessional" bizzo is wearing a bit thin with all of us.

You'll have to spill the beans, Lou. No more mucking around.

*Every eye is on Louise (the only female in a room filled with elite sportsmen). She looks stricken. As she nods she takes a deep breath.*

Louise                                Okay, then. It all started at Centurion.

*This announcement pricks something in the memories of both Kip and Gavin. Gavin points his biro at Louise.*

Gavin *narrow-eyed, emphatic*                      When Hatboy was batting ... That dropped catch by Billy Tongreene that was reviewed as an okay catch. Bloody disgrace! Absolute scandal, that was.

*There is loud agreement. Johnnie slips back into the room and sits.*

Josh                                  Yeah, alright. Settle down. Settle down.

So ... It started with the first test. On the very first day.

Louise                                And always on a review of the third wicket.

Josh *surprised*                      The third wicket?

Louise *nods* And **only** on the third wicket and **only** where there is a review of the third wicket. Doesn't matter whose review ...

*All the males in the boardroom are stunned. The camera pans around, noting their discomfiture.*

*Then Jules becomes very alert, snapping his fingers.*

Jules *excited, alert* The Boslooper catch at Centurion!

Don't you remember? Hatboy took a great catch – a real ball-biter – the decision was good, even after the review.

The Proteas wasted that review, in my opinion.

But anyway what I wanna say is that Hatboy was running around like a banshee. He wasn't talking about the catch itself: he was rabbiting on like a maniac about it being the third wicket.

Gordon *frowning* Yeah ... Now that you mention it ... Yeah, he was acting funny ...

*A ripple of disquiet runs through those assembled in the boardroom, with some players nodding.*

*Josh takes a big breath but is unsure how to proceed.*

Kip The first time it happened, he grabbed my arm ... I thought he was gonna break it. And his eyes went all distant and glazed ... Like he was off with the fairies ...

Bobbie *irritable* Does that explain what I had to put up with yesterday? God, he was a pest! He was a total shithead: gave me the fucking shits – going on and on and on about wanting a review.

*The noise level rises. The players are in agreement. Josh imperatively calls for quiet.*

Josh *loudly* Bit of shoosh. Settle down.

Was this on the third wicket?

*The players agree.*

Josh *to Louise* So ... Have we got **any** idea what this is all about?

*Everyone turns back to Louise.*

Louise *reluctant* Yes, he told me in the strictest confidence. But as you say, Josh ...  
"situation critical" ...

*[Takes a huge breath and licks lips]*

It's crazy. He goes off to some other time – an ancient time and place – he's their saviour.

Matt *appalled* Oh, Christ no!

Louise *continues* Do you remember when he made the double-ton, and he kissed a medallion hanging around his neck? I saw that medallion: it's out of a museum for sure ... Not something you'd pick up in Myer.  
  
According to Hal, it's a medal of honour that he won in that other place ...

*Our camera pans the men as Louise speaks. They are all confounded and uncomfortable by these disclosures.*

Louise *continues* On St Valentine's Day, when everyone else was kicking-up their heels and having a great time, he was off kilometres away taking a crash course in Ancient Persian.

*There is a horrible pause. The men look at each other in disbelief. We see Gordon mouth "Fuck-a-duck!"*

Josh *distracted* He snaffled a whole lot of boy scout stuff from my sons ... He might need them, he said. A snake-bite kit, a compass and knife, and et cetera et cetera ... **Jesus H. Christ** ...

Matt Well ... I mean ... Is this rubbish tied-up with Van Der Hahn dropping him? And all the argie-bargie between him and Hal?

Siggi I thought they were gonna have a punch-on at Port Elizabeth. Fair dinkum, I've never seen Thornside so worked-up. His eyes! Man, that was scary ...

*Everyone murmurs their agreement.*

Paul But you're all missing the point. Hatboy's never been in such great form. He's playing better than I've ever seen him play.

*Again, there is general assent.*

Josh *to Paul* Okay, Paul: you're the captain. Can we keep going with this? Can Hatboy stay on board?

Paul *confident* Sure we can. Keep him in the team by all means. Now that we know what we're up against.

Bobbie *disgruntled* Now hang on ... I don't fancy having him at my elbow giving instructions like he does.

Paul *placating* We'll stop that. We'll control it.

All group together and keep him away from Hauer and keep him diverted while we're in "third-wicket" territory.

Josh *pleased* Good! That's good. That's what I wanted to hear. Work together. Let's go! And good luck all of youse.

END OF SCENE

## **V, Scene ii:** A Hospital Bed In A Private Ward

*Hal sits up in a hospital bed. He watches a television set which is suspended from the ceiling. Three nurses stand beside his bed, also watching the television. We can hear a garbled quacking from the TV commentary, but we are unable to make it out.*

*Some provocative action occurs with the cricket causing the three female nurses (being South African) to look pleased, whereas Hal is evidently disgusted. He swears roundly.*

Nurse #1 *laughing* Don't get yourself too excited, Mr Thornside. We'll have to take the telly away if you start throwing spit balls at it.

Hal *equably* But I'm not a bowler, so that's not likely to happen.

*The nurses laugh as they move away. Hal reaches for his mobile phone. A text message has arrived from Kerrienne Harvey.*

Hal *grinning, to himself* So Stinking Staffy gave you my number, did he? And I told him not to do that. He always was a pushover for a piece of hot crumpet.

*[Slight pause]*

Maybe you're not hot after all ...

*Hal types in some characters using the keypad. He puts the phone aside and continues to watch the cricket.*

Hal *roars loudly* Howzat! Yes, you're out, you fucking bastard!

*Then Hal realizes where he is and how inappropriate that outburst was: he blushes.*

*A male orderly bursts into the room.*

Orderly You okay? You need a doctor?

*Hal (shamefaced) points up to the screen.*

Hal No, mate. Sorry, I was barracking a bit too loud.

*The orderly is promptly followed by Nurse #1.*

Nurse #1 Yes, you **were** too loud.

*[Quietly, for emphasis]*

We'll have to take the telly away if you get too boisterous.

Remember, Mr Thornside, keep the volume down, please. Other patients.

Hal *aside* Why don't you stitch up my mouth and send me home, then? It's bloody hard to be a good, quiet boy when you're on a war footing

...

*The nurse departs. Hal lets out a long, blowing sigh. The orderly has picked up Hal's mobile phone.*

Orderly                      Wow! She's a hottie! Is that one of your cricket groupies?

Hal                          That's Kerrienne, I'd imagine. I asked her to send me a selfie.

*The orderly begins to sing "Hey Kerrienne" by the Hollies. Hal lies back against his pillows, watching the cricket. He idly fiddles with the mobile phone and then glances at the screen. Hal does a double-take on seeing Kerrienne's photo thereon. He does not know Kerrienne – but he knows Uneela.*

Hal *unbelieving*              Shit-a-brick! This is getting crazier by the minute ...

END OF SCENE

Plot progression explained:

The Third Test has finished during Hal's stay in hospital. The result was another draw.

The Fourth Test is mooted for Durban, however bad weather is predicted.

So far, prior to the Fourth Test, the single win to Australia is: Third Test, Cape Town.

The single win to South Africa is: the Second Test, Port Elizabeth.

And the First Test in Centurion was a draw.

## **V, Scene iii:** The Assrishnan Council Of War

*Melki (grim-faced) rushes along the same corridor as witnessed in the opening scene of ACT I.*

*He runs slap into his sister Unela as she emerges from another passage.*

Melki *urgent*                      Can't stop to chat, Sis. Urgent news for Syl-Ibsel.

Unela *concerned*              But what?

Melki                          Build-up of Beulan troops on our Northern and Western borders.

*As Melki departs swiftly, Unela calls after him.*

Unela *shouting*                      And our Uncle Djashnu has emerged from the desert.

*Melki waves, to signify that he is aware of that fact.*

**Break**

*This scene is situated in Syl-Ibsel's chambers, as described in ACT I, scene (iii).*

*The Assrishnan council of war is in process, with men coming in and out of Syl-Ibsel's quarters. Beside Syl-Ibsel, groups of officers hover over maps (etched onto clay tablets) and seem to argue. It is a very busy scene, and were we to hear it, there would be a murmur of discussion broken by bouts of loud, angry shouting.*

*However, we merely see the activity and manly bustle in deep background.*

*In the foreground, Moshek draws Syl-Artron aside.*

Moshek *low-voiced* As you will know, the Pathfinder released Prince Djashnu, whom Tanques's men had bound in chains. These two men (Hal and Djashnu) are ***both*** convinced that to fight Tanques would be tantamount to offering ourselves up to utter annihilation. To do so would be to deliver us into Tanques's desires.

Syl-Artron                      They counsel suing for peace?

Moshek *nods*                      Emphatically yes, Syl-Artron.

Syl-Artron *low-voiced* Syl-Ibsel won't hear of such a thing, unless King Etki were to sanction it.

*[Thinking]*

## Whereabouts is the King?

Moshek *with distaste*      The King cowers in his robing room.

*Syl-Artron emits a sound of disgust. Moshek nods.*

Syl-Artron *inspired*      Here is what you must do. Find Lady Labesh and beg her to speak

to her brother. She can use her gentle persuasion on the King: get him to understand that this all revolves around the findings of the soothsayer.

Then you will approach Paluke-Joshua ... Let him go about his omens and augurs, and then he will deliver his findings to Syl-Ibsel, in the King's name. Syl-Ibsel dare not countermand the King's edict.

Moshek                      And shall I intimate to Paluke-Joshua what we expect of him?

*Syl-Artron emits a long "Mmm" sound.*

Syl-Artron                  A well-placed word here and there ... Nothing too obvious ...

*[Eager]*

And then (with cunning and shiftiness) we'll coerce the King to travel to Tanques in person.

Moshek                      To sue for peace?

Syl-Artron                  To sue for peace ...

Go now! All our futures depend upon you, good Captain Moshek.

END OF SCENE

Plot progression explained:

Djashnu is now freed, thanks to Moshek, Hal and Unela.

We now find out (below) that Djashnu's alter ego (Hauer) has been kidnapped by a yahoo from Perth (and his mate) and locked bound and gagged in the boot of a sedan car which has been dumped in thick bush somewhere near Cape Town.

**V, Scene iv:** The Kidnapping Of Hauer Van Der Hahn

*Hal's stay in hospital ends with his being discharged on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at around morning tea time. Mim has come to collect Hal. The next section of speeches is rather long. So what we shall do is to have Staffy and Hal in voice-over, such that our camera hangs back a little, following Hal from hospital bed to check-out to Mim's car.*

*And note that Hal does not mention Kerriane to Staffy as Mim is with him.*

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Staffy <i>voice-over</i>      | What the fuck are ya doin', Hatboy?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Hal <i>voice-over</i>         | Staffy! How are ya mate?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Staffy <i>voice-over</i>      | I'm alright ... But what I wanna know is what are <b>you</b> doin'?                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Hal <i>voice-over</i>         | Where? When?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Staffy <i>voice-over</i>      | Do you honestly think that the Aussies can't beat 'em, so you'll just kill 'em off instead?                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Hal <i>voice-over, at sea</i> | What are you --                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Staffy <i>voice-over</i>      | Kill off the Proteas one-by-one, eh? Make sure that you win the series by default. That's a good lurk, eh?                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Hal <i>voice-over</i>         | Nah, you've lost me, Staffy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Staffy <i>voice-over</i>      | The peeps all wanna know how come Staffy Saledis gets his juicy gossip when all he does is to sit on his fat arse in his grotty office all day looking out over the Harbour.<br><br>But I got eyes and ears workin' on my behalf, see? And I heard somethin' with your name attached. |
| Hal <i>voice-over</i>         | Go on!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Staffy <i>voice-over</i>      | Some dude on holiday in Bloomfountain got the hard word to me that a bloke from Perth and 'is brothers or cousins or ... I dunno<br><br>...<br><br>Anyhow, they've kidnapped the Boer captain and got 'im locked in the boot of a car.                                                |

Hal *voice-over*                      Shit!

Staffy *voice-over*                    Did you hire 'em?

Hal *voice-over*                      ***What?!*** 'Course I didn't! Christ Almighty! I've been in hospital for the best part of three days.

Staffy *voice-over*                    I wouldn't put it past you to hire a hitman, Hatboy. You're very competitive, ya know.

Hal *voice-over*                      Are you fair dinkum? Some idiot has really put the snatch on Van Der Hahn? You're not joking, Staff ... ?

Staffy *voice-over*                    Stop tuggin' yourself!

Hal *voice-over*                      Do you really trust this "eyes-and-ears" bloke?

Staffy *voice-over*                    Yeah, why not?

                                              This Perth bloke and his mates were braggin' off loudly at the bar of some tough hotel or other. A fight broke out and they ended up in the Gents.

                                              Anyhow as they were moppin' each other up and that they were jabberin' on about their plot to grab Van Der Hahn and take him out of commission.

                                              My mate was on the dunny at the time, doin' the crossword puzzle and he managed to write down the bizzo around the edges of the newspaper like dictation.

*[Large gasp of wheezing laughter]*

                                              Imagine that, eh? Havin' a shit and takin' dictation at the same time.

*We can hear Staffy roar with laughter, whilst at the same time hacking and coughing.*

Hal *voice-over*                      Jeez, Staffy!

                                              If Hahn is really locked in a car boot, then I have to rescue him.

Staffy *voice-over*                    Rescue him? Why do that?

Hal *voice-over* Jesus!

And how come you reckon my name is attached to this scheme?

Staffy *voice-over* My dunny scribe heard the ringleader say several times that he was doin' it for **you**.

Hal *voice-over* Oh, hell ... What a balls-up! ...

Listen, Staff: how can we find this car? We gotta find this fucking car.

Staffy *voice-over* Yeah, yeah ... If a guy from Perth hires a car in Bloomfountain –

Bah! Shouldn't be too hard to trace him. Leave it with me ... I'll get you a make, model and rego.

ABRUPT END OF SCENE

## **V, Scene v:** The Rescue Effort In The Bush

*It is night in the bushland of a wildlife nature park not far from Cape Town.*

*Hal and Mim both carry torches as they walk quickly along a dirt road, and Hal also lugs a heavy crowbar. Mim is constantly referring to a GPS system in her hand.*

Mim This is about where the tourists saw the car ... Somewhere around here ...

*Both Hal and Mim search the bush with their torches. Hal steps forward quickly, concentrating his torch on a clump of trees. The reflection of torch light on metal flashes momentarily.*

Hal *excited* Here it is! It's in here.

*Hal stomps manfully into the bush with Mim in his wake.*

Mim *breathlessly* Shouldn't you be resting or sleeping? You've only just been discharged from hospital.

*Hal reaches the car. He quickly ascertains that the car is locked. So, he heads straight to the boot and begins urgent work with the crowbar.*

Hal *grunting*                      A man's life is worth more than a sodding game of cricket.

*Mim shines her torch onto the car boot as Hal works desperately to free Hauer.*

Mim *reasonable*                      I know that. It's only cricket ... It's only a game after all.  
  
But I was thinking of your physiological state, rather than your batting average.

*After much grunting and muscle-work, the boot snaps open. Hal pushes the boot wide to reveal Hauer bound in chains and gagged. Hal runs the torch over Hauer, while Mim gasps loudly.*

Hal *soothing,*                      It's okay, mate; we'll get you out of here as quick as we can.  
*breathless*

*Hal speedily runs his hands over the chains, all the while murmuring to Hauer to be patient. Mim is equally concerned. Hal drags the Swiss army knife from his pocket.*

Hal                                      Talk about déjà-vu. I've "déjà-vued" this before, so I know it works.

*Hal simply has to locate the large padlock and then pick it open (just as he performed previously for Djashnu) using one of the tools attached to the knife. Then he removes the chain from Hauer. Meanwhile, Mim has carefully but quickly ripped masking tape from Hauer's mouth. Hauer can only groan and gasp for air.*

Mim *warning*                      Careful when you get him out. There might be wounds. He might have been coshed over the head.

*With comforting words and sounds, Hal lifts Hauer out of the boot. Hauer is a heavy man so this feat exhausts Hal utterly. Mim supports Hauer (leaning on him such that he is supported also by the side of the car) as Hal rings for police and ambulance. Hal does what he can to assist Mim to prop Hauer up against the car. Hauer drapes his arms over Mim, allowing his head to rest on her head. Then Hauer begins to describe his abduction and incarceration but can only babble; only the odd word or two is clear.*

*Our camera backs away.*

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

Hal is sitting in the corridor of a hospital outside the room into which Hauer has been stretchered. Hal is on his mobile to Staffy.

Hal *annoyed*

You know what? The police questioned me for **hours**.

Yeah. Yeah.

They must have honestly believed that I was somehow involved.

Anyhow, thanks for putting me onto it. You done real good, Staff old man.

Hal listens for a couple of seconds, then laughs.

Hal

Okay, mate. And thanks again. Oh, and thanks for putting Kerrienne onto me. Yeah, she's okay. I'll have to meet her some time.

As Hal finishes his call and pockets his phone, a couple of uniformed policemen approach him. Hal looks up, sighing.

END OF SCENE

V, Scene vi: The South African Cricket Authorities Question Hal And Hauer

The camera is pointed towards a wall on which a large portrait of the Queen hangs. Below the portrait, and facing the camera is a plain wooden chair behind a table. With each separate speech, either Hal or Hauer will sit on the same chair, facing the camera. It will appear (through judicious editing) that either man is being interviewed by a cricketing official. [Doing it this way will make it more interesting, and I like the rapid-fire effect of this quick interchange.]

Male official *voice-off* ... and I do not believe that you understand the seriousness of what --

Hal *angry* This is a stitch-up! My contact in Sydney will confirm everything.

Hauer I was leaving the match on Thursday and I don't remember anything after walking to the taxi rank. I'd had a few ... Couldn't drive.

Hal I can't explain it any other way. We all pulled together to find Hauer: Miss Penfold, Mr Saledis and me. That was on Friday.

Hauer I woke up in the car boot unable to move. Then I blacked out, I guess.

Hal *angry* Jeez! I ***didn't*** know he'd be bound in chains. I was prepared for anything ... That's why I had the Swiss Army knife with me ... I've had it in my pocket for ages ...

Hauer And then I saw light from a torch and I thought: "I'm for it now". But it was Hatboy and Mim.

Male official *voice-off* I am still not convinced that you did not instigate or at least encourage the attack on Mr Van Der Hahn. You see my point, your rescue of him seems too good to be true.

Hal stares at the camera, and then turns aside with a "Hmph!" of disgust.

Hauer Come on. It's unreasonable.

Well think it through: you hire a car and dump it in the bush with a body stashed in the boot, dead or dying ... What happens when the car doesn't turn up ... What does the hire company do?

For God's sake: they've got your ruddy name, address, phone number and the colour of your cat on their files.

Hal I was totally shocked when I heard about it.

Hauer How did they think they could get away with it? Pack of dopes,

they were.

Hal I can't say from first hand ... Look, Mr Saledis knows what happened. Something about a bloke on a public toilet writing down what he heard.

Hauer But yeah ... I was pretty toey ... Scared I was ... Naturally ...

Hal It was just dumb. I'm not such a tosser to leave wide-open clues scattered all over the place.

Hauer No, no threats and no plot. It just came out of the blue.

Hal Of course I can. I'll write down his email address for you. He'll validate that I first heard of it when he rang me on the Friday. I was just getting out of hospital and Mim (Miss Penfold) was with me.

Hauer Aggression? No ... nothing out of the ordinary.

Hal That was a rort. We wanted to give the punters their money's worth. We got together (Hauer and me) before the First Test in Jo'burg.

Male official *voice-off* All these on-field incidents (the fracas and so on) were devised by you two as a sham?

Hauer *shrugs* Yeah ... We had a bit of a contact meeting in Jo'burg.

Hal The idea of open hostility between us – of a “war”, if you like to use that term for it – We fostered that ...

Hauer No, you're right. We're not the best of friends --

Hal We're two big men in our 20's, both batting at number 4 and both fielding in slips or cover ...

Hauer But yeah I'd shake his hand ... Why not?

Now, both Hauer and Hal stand under the portrait of the Queen, facing each other. Smiling and pleasant, they shake hands. And then they go into a man-hug.

END OF SCENE

Plot progression explained:

There are no third wicket reviews during the Fourth Test Match in Durban.

We (the audience) are not told why:

Maybe it just panned out that way (the weather caused many delays) or maybe the vigilance of the Australian XI prevented such occurrences.

At this time, with Djashnu returned to the action, things move quickly in Assrishna without Hal being aware of them.

SOUTH AFRICA versus AUSTRALIA

Fourth Test Beginning Saturday 28th February 2015 at Kingsmead, Durban South Africa

V, Scene vii: Hal Receives A Disturbing Call From His Mother

Durban Dream #1

Somehow, we have to deliver Hal's dream to the viewing audience such that they know it is a dream.

It may be enough that the phone rings to wake Hal up.

The dream action takes place in the dungeon from which Djashnu was rescued.

Hal (in ancient armour) fights valiantly. He slashes about with a bronze broadsword, teeth gritted. At his side, also wearing armour and fighting against an unseen enemy are Captain Moshek and the slave Horvex. The faces of the men are desperate: we ascertain that other men are also involved in the heated battle. The bronze weapons slash and smash.

Hal *shouting* If either of youse boys spot a lion with a crook foot, will ya please
give us a yodel!

Horvex and Moshek Rightio! No worries, mate.
together, grim-faced

Break

Hal is actually in bed (alone) in his darkened hotel room in Durban. Rain can be heard to fall. His mobile phone rings urgently. Hal grabs the phone. It is his mother and she is upset; so Hal will sit up in bed and then swing his legs over, feet to the floor as he speaks.

Hal *groggily* Hello? Hello, Mum, are you okay?

Aw ... Yeah ... Yeah ... Yeah, I've been thinking of Ted as well.

Don't cry, Mum. I can't understand you if you –

Sorry, I forgot that it was his birthday yesterday. First of March.

I know, but I should have remembered.

Yeah ... Look, is there anyone with you? Well, ask Penny to make you a coffee or –

Okay, no I'm not mad at you for ringing. It's a rest day tomorrow and it doesn't stop raining anyway, so not much cricket. It's virtually a washout.

Okay ... Okay ... Ta, bye Mum. Love you ...

Hal's face was lit by the reflected luminescence of his phone. He shuts it and his face goes back into the gloom. With a shuddering sigh, Hal flops back onto the bed. He stares up at the ceiling.

Durban Dream #2

Hal falls asleep again and has another dream.

Hal is standing alone in the desert in his batting strip, a ball is bowled at him from nowhere – he smacks it out into the desert, far away. From the horizon (where the ball seemed to land) comes a huge army of men on camels. They wear traditional middle Eastern garb. Hal stands alone as this huge army swoops down on him in the desert.

And then (the army having somehow dissolved) Hal relives the very first encounter with the Assrishnans, when Horvex dragged Hal bodily onto the back of his camel and then rode swiftly off.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Again, Hal wakes with a violent start.*

*Someone is banging ungently on his hotel door.*

Siggi *voice-off*                      Come on, Hatboy! We're all going swimming at Blicky Beach.

Hal *annoyed*                      It's too bloody early and it's raining.

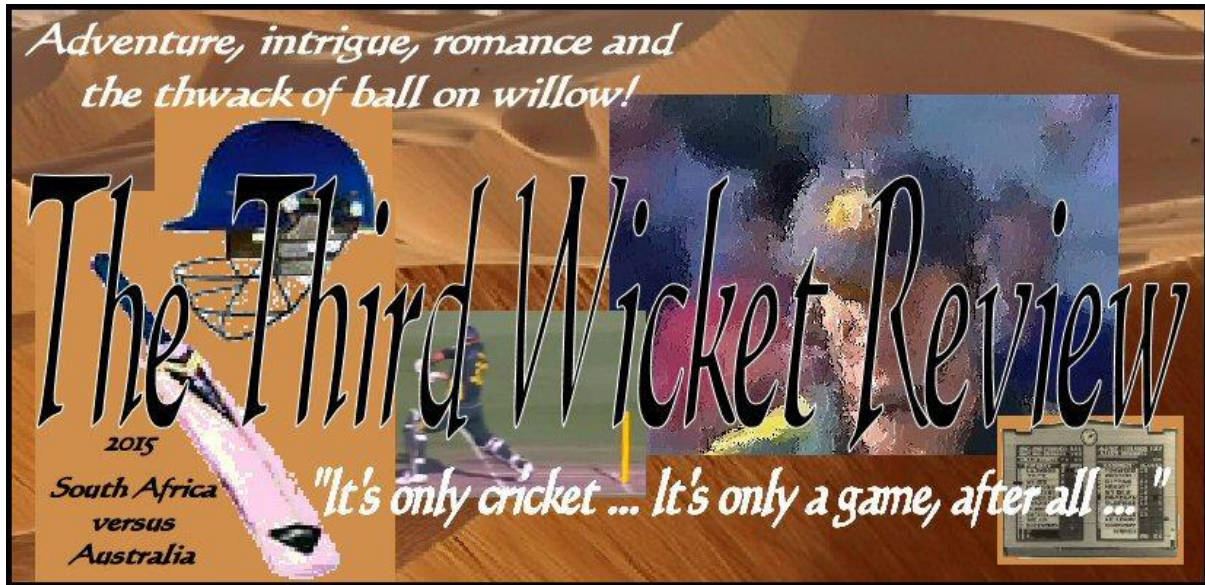
*From outside the door we hear Siggi yelling out something encouraging.*

*Hal rummages in his case without interest.*

Hal *grumpy*                      I can't find my bathers ... I'll have to skinny-dip ...

END OF SCENE

END OF ACT V



Plot progression explained:

The final ACT of the film brings together the various threads.

The Australian players go all out to prevent a third wicket review, thereby denying Hal his fervent wish: to return to Assrishna.

In Hal's absence, Professor Penfold's advice that brain would win over brawn comes to fruition. But it is not Hal who achieves this: it is Djashnu.

Hal's cricket achievements soar; his frustration at not being able to join the Assrishnan people in their hour of need is denied him. So, Hal (conflicted and in despair) manages one last visit. His heart is no longer in it ...

## ACT VI

### VI, Scene i: Syl-Ibsel and Syl-Artron Prepare For War

*Syl-Ibsel and Syl-Artron are dressed for war. They are within a large tent, in a section which is separated from the rest by blankets which act as screens. Both men have been drinking, but Syl-Ibsel is really on the go. In the background, we can hear the bustle of war preparations.*

*When this scene opens, Syl-Artron is as close as possible to the camera, looking into it as if into a shaving mirror. He hums to himself as he trims his beard with a knife.*

*The camera moves back as Syl-Artron turns from it.*

Syl-Artron                      Shall I pass muster? It's years since I donned armour.

*Syl-Ibsel is feeling the weight of a spear and practising with it in order to loosen his muscles.*

Syl-Ibsel *spirited*              Wasted years! A man's only right occupation is to crouch low on the back of a sturdy camel as he charges into battle.

Ah, Syl-Artron! Syl-Artron! We become young men again: taut of sinew and bright of eye. This is our moment to be at once glorious and brave.

But this wine sits about undrunk ... Drink! Drink!

*Syl-Artron obeys, thoughtful.*

Syl-Artron                      It's very kind of you to involve me in your affairs, old fellow. If you won't be too offended, I should say that you usually shut me out of them.

*Syl-Ibsel grabs Syl-Artron's shoulder with his free hand.*

Syl-Ibsel *sincere*              That is because I am an autocratic prig who despises the notion that other men might be cleverer than I. Sometimes ... Why, I am breathless in the wake of your poetic utterances ... And a tad jealous ...

But **today** that is all forgot, since we shall soon ride into battle

side-by-side and shoulder-to-shoulder.

Syl-Artron *feigning  
delight*                      Wonderful ... Can't wait ...

*There is an interruption. A messenger bearing a clay tablet enters and wordlessly hands the tablet to Syl-Ibsel, who grunts in acknowledgement. Syl-Ibsel reads the tablet, puts it aside and then nods dismissal to the messenger, who exits.*

*Both of the Syls continue to drink.*

Syl-Artron                      This is very good ... Will you unbend yourself to tell me where it came from – this wine?

Syl-Ibsel *shrugs,  
indifferent*                      Our noble King. King Etki. Your beloved nephew. If only nevvu knew what he's missing.

Syl-Artron                      You **stole** it from the King? My dear fellow ... Courting danger is one thing but --

Syl-Ibsel *defensive*                      "Abstracted" – not stole!

Do you recall the King's infatuation with Seleema, the Charmer from Tazhmere? She told him that she was heavy with child (his child) and so, our beloved leader and spiritual guide in all things rushed out to buy some liquor such that he might celebrate the birth. This lot was shipped in from Spain at immense expense.

Syl-Artron                      Spain? Well ... It's very good ...  
  
*[Frowns, trying to recollect something]*  
  
Say, I don't recall a child ... Was it stillborn?

Syl-Ibsel                      It wasn't born at all; it was an enormous lump of lard in Seleema's belly rather than a babe. And thus this liqueur was never broached, until now.

So! Drink up, my friend! It might be the last potable substance that passes your lips before you soar to heaven.

*Whereas Syl-Artron stands about (a bit at a loss), Syl-Ibsel is full of business. He darts to the curtain of blankets and parts it.*

Syl-Ibsel *calls out*                Send Paluke-Joshua to me at once!

*Through the curtain come Melki, Nick, Paluke-Joshua and Oringshay.*

Syl-Ibsel                                Yes ... Yes, come in all of you. Take a beaker of wine for your comfort.

*Oringshay makes himself useful and organizes the wine for himself and the three other men. Paluke-Joshua commands the spotlight, as is his way. He postures as he makes his grand pronouncement.*

Paluke-Joshua                        Triumph! We shall triumph! Our beautiful country of Assrishna  
*theatrical*                                shall not be despoiled.

Syl-Ibsel                                Well?

Paluke-Joshua                        A sturdy oxen was slaughtered, its entrails examined and then fed  
to the crows in the prescribed manner.

Syl-Artron                                That sounds most propitious.

*[Sarcastic]*

And how many virgins did you get through?

Paluke-Joshua *gestures*            My valued assistant Oringshay did not spare his loins, such was his  
*to Oringshay*                                fervour to serve his country.

*All eyes turn to Oringshay, who smiles beatifically.*

Oringshay                                I counted about eight of them. Phew! I'm totes shagged-out.

Syl-Ibsel *autocratic*                Prurient boy! You shall not utter such salacious braggadocio in my  
august presence.

*There is now a very humorous by-play during the next lot of speeches. Syl-Artron takes Oringshay aside to console him (following his supposed heroic patriotic effort). Oringshay is given more liqueur and some dainty treats which he shoves into his mouth. We can see Syl-Artron sympathizing kindly with Oringshay as the latter describes (with mimed actions) how he managed to deflower all of eight virgins. All this will be visible for the viewing audience (us) but will be ignored by others in the tent.*

*In the meantime, in front of the camera, the following proceeds.*

Syl-Ibsel                      I have only to issue the command and my troops will rally behind me as I surge into the fray. However, I would not countenance any such action until I had consulted you, as is the custom in these matters.

Therefore, wise seer ... Am I to undertake this glorious if perilous undertaking?

Paluke-Joshua              Not so, noble Syl. Not so ...

The auspices were most clear. King Etki should immediately proceed to the Satrapy and sue for peace with Tanques.

Syl-Ibsel *appalled*              Peace?

Paluke-Joshua *nods, assertive*              As I say, nothing could be clearer. The Pathfinder himself (upon his latest fleeting visit to our fair land) was insistent: a resolution to this matter was to be sought by brain, and not by brawn. We cannot undertake to win a war against Tanques: his might and power are too strong for us to best. However, the Pathfinder has laid-out a heady scheme with which to glorify our treasured land of Assrishna.

*Syl-Ibsel schools his features to mask his disappointment.*

Syl-Ibsel *said under sufferance*              This is indeed encouraging. You have done well.

Then, your prognostication is for us to send the King and some other of us immediately to Beulan?

Paluke-Joshua              Indeed, noble Syl. Nothing else shall answer.

Syl-Ibsel *aside to himself*              And so goodbye to renown as a warrior. That's the war for you!

END OF SCENE

**VI, Scene ii: King Etki Meets Satrap Tanques**

*This scene takes place in Beulan, in the portico just as it was described in ACT IV Scene ii (even the whisp-shivver remains scattered over the floor). Tanques stands in a prominent position with Baptiste at his side.*

*All members of the Syl-Ibsel faction have accompanied King Etki to Beulan, but only Syl-Artron has been dragged along from his own faction.*

*Syl-Artron is a man of culture, and he cringes visibly on being asked to deliver this ghastly paeon for Tanques. It is by this means that King Etki falls into the trap set for him: that he will overdo the praise for Tanques and end up under the sword of Damocles.*

King Etki                      My uncle and advisor here, whom you know as Syl-Artron will extol your virtues (Oh wise ruler!) in words which I myself have etched in all humility and grace into eternity (on a clay table, you understand). That is to say ... I am aware of your love of verse and ...

*Tanques stares down Etki, such that the latter runs out of steam. Etki gestures to Syl-Artron, who reluctantly but loyally steps forward. Syl-Artron has committed the poem to memory. As Syl-Artron recites, King Etki seems to give encouragement and support.*

Syl-Artron *sonorous*      My voice sings in service to your might  
My heart beats as bird wings to the height.  
My lips hum a paeon to your name  
My hands enclose my worldly goods you claim.  
My feet march from mountain top to sea  
My love encompasses your grace and majesty.

*Syl-Artron bows and steps back. There is a ripple of polite applause. Tanques continues to stare-down King Etki.*

Tanques *smooth*              Very pretty. Quite charming.

King Etki *over-enthusiastic*      You are the most magnificent of men, Lord Tanques.

Tanques *aside to Baptiste* And my shit doesn't stink.

King Etki *ploughing on* You are the envy of all.

Tanques *puzzled* No, no that can't be right. You (the king of a tiny bountiful land who wants for nothing) envy **me** (whose vast satrapy is for the most part a burning desert)? Impossible!

King Etki *cajoling* I am a little ruler whereas you are a great one.

Tanques *unctuous* And you'd like to take a stab at being me, would you? Ruler of this vast domain who has not a care in the world? Mmm?

King Etki *gulps* That thought never obtrudes, Worshipful One ... I only meant that --

Tanques I too have fashioned a dear little verse in your honour, dear King Etki. My scribe Baptiste here scribbled it down for me.

Baptiste *straight-faced, reading* 'Tis true M'Lud  
Cows chew the cud  
Pigs roll in mud  
You are a dud. Bud.

*Tanques smiles politely and bats his eyelids as a burst of enthusiastic applause greets his silly ditty.*  
*The members of the Assrishna contingent appear ill at ease.*

END OF SCENE

## **VI, Scene iii:** Hal Bats At Kingsmead Oval

*Under threatening grey skies, Hal is at the crease. Cook bowls and Hal (in close-up) plays a superb shot, sending the ball hurtling towards the boundary.*

Hal *shouting with* You want to fight me, Hauer? You can ditch the dog in the desert,

*meaning* but he always comes back home to me!

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

Hal is sitting in the Kingsmead pavilion along with all the other Australian fieldsmen. Rain tumbles down. Hal is in a brown study, recalling his many adventures.

FLASHBACK

In a wide corridor of Etki's palace, Hal holds Labesh's hand. He smiles at her in a kindly way.

Hal *gently* I have to go ... You know, time is the enemy ... I'm always saying that ...

Labesh (lovely, adorable) smiles rather sadly, nodding to Hal. He lets go of her hand and runs off, followed devotedly by Unela.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Unela follows Moshek (with Hal in the rear) as they scramble down the dark stone stairway that leads to the Beulan dungeon. Unela turns to Hal, taking his hand.*

Unela *low-voiced, imperative* Come **on**, Hal, before you get whisked back to that place – wherever it is you come from!

*They continue down the stairs, holding hands.*

## END OF FLASHBACK

*Hal sighs, watching the rain fall.*

END OF SCENE

**VI, Scene iv:** Back to the Yacht Club in Perth

*Refer back to ACT II Scene i.*

*There is an announcement on the TV about the state of play at the cricket. The scene on the TV shows the rain-affected pitch and the groundsmen working in the rain.*

Announcer *voice-over*     The fourth Test Match between South Africa and Australia at Kingsmead Oval in Durban has ended in a draw.

Rain and squally winds hampered the cricketers throughout the 5 days of the Test Match.

Dour batsman Hal Thornside was awarded Man of the Match after a stunning 193 not out in the first Australian innings.

END OF SCENE

**VI, Scene v:** Hal Lays It On The Line, Durban

*This is an emotion-charged scene whereby Hal describes his frustration, bitterness and despair. He and Louise are swimming in a superb sculptured outdoor pool at a hotel in Durban.*

*It is early in the morning. Not many people are around. The surroundings could not be more inviting.*

*Louise and Hal are lolling about near a spa, which softly spills warm water into the pool. Many birds twitter and call, and the shadows are long (to indicate how early it is).*

Louise                             You can't expect there to be a review every time anyone looks the wrong way. For one thing, they're costly to the team making the review. You only get 2 per innings as you know: they have to be saved for dire emergencies.

*Hal looks blankly at the fringe of palms surrounding the barbeque area.*

Louise *reasonable*             Look, Hal: I know that you're worried about these people. But my gut feeling is that they've got on without you. You took to them

the information they needed to beat the other side. That was your role; it's now up to **them** to profit by it.

Hal Yes, right.

The Professor told me some ancient guff and Mim deciphered it. I simply passed that on. But ...

Louise And so your job is done ... That's all there is to it.

Hal *firm* No, no. You're wrong. There's more to it.

They gave me an army of men: I was their captain ... their leader. Some dude called Paluke-something almost barred-up whenever I lobbed into Assrishna. I was their saviour and their leader, not just a passer-on of the good oil.

*Louise is desperate for Hal to understand.*

Louise *pleading* It's doing your head in. You have to let it go.

Hal The satrap who's in charge of the other side (the enemy) is Ted.

Louise *aghast* Your brother Ted? – who was washed off the rocks whilst fishing?  
A few years ago?

*Hal nods.*

Louise Bullshit!

Hal A man recognizes his own brother. Besides, he knew stuff that only Ted could know. So, all my efforts **in** Assrishna and **for** Assrishna are directed against my dead brother who has sprung back to life.

Louise *frowning, very concerned* I'm really getting worried. You really have to drop this, Hal.

Hal *pressing on* The girl that I'm in love with (Labesh) is also the deceased Professor's granddaughter, Mim (short for "Miriam"). When her grandfather died, she was at a loose end, so she stayed with me.

We had sex a couple of times (more than that if you have to know) and I believed that she and I were an item.

Louise *prompting,*  
*pleased*

Yeah?

Hal

She's done a runner – shot through.

She's organized work for herself (she's a nurse) and she's now gone to stay with the Van Der Hahn family. Near Jo'burg.

Louise

As in the "Hauer Van Der Hahn" family?

Hal

Yep.

Louise *shocked*

You're joking!

Hal *shrugs*

Nuh.

*Hal swims off into the beautiful sparkling crystal water. Then he flops back towards Louise, diving as would a dolphin.*

Hal

Anyway, it all fits like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Djashnu and Labesh are supposed to be getting married anyway.

Djashnu is Van Der Cunt and Labesh is Mim.

It all fits.

*Louise is unable to say anything; she shakes her head in disbelief.*

Hal

And all I wanna do is to run amok in Beulan and clean them up (except for Ted, of course). Maybe I could take him prisoner ...

Louise *earnest*

Hal, listen to me! You **have** to focus on your cricket and let this other business melt away. You **have** to! The way you're going on, you'll end up in the nut-hut.

*Hal continues to splash around as if he does not have a care in the world.*

Louise

I'm serious.

*Louise ducks under the water, coming up gasping for breath. And then she swims out to Hal.*

Louise                      We're going to Chevrolet Park in Bloemfontein and then it's over. That's the last Test Match. I want you to totally concentrate on winning that Test, and that will put Australia in the lead. We can win that one, but only if you're on song.

Hal *musings*              Look at my hand shaking! I put away a few bucketsful last night.

*Hal watches drops of water dripping off his fingers.*

Louise                      Do you hear me? You have to let go.

END OF SCENE

Plot progression explained:

Now we have a huge amount of action and activity to get through.

The war was avoided: and Hal missed all the fun.

This is where Djashnu persuades Tanques. King Etki winds up being the one hovering under the sword (Tanques's sword). Tanques "persuades" Etki to relinquish the throne of Assrishna in favour of Djashnu and his betrothed (Etki's sister).

## **VI, Scene vi: Djashnu Saves Tanques's Foot After A Bad Fall**

*Tanques goes to the clifftop and looks out proudly over his massed troops (down in the valley).*

*Baptiste has tagged along in case some dictation is required. He carries several styli and some clay tablets.*

*The wind up at this height is quite strong.*

*Tanques stands close to the cliff edge.*

Baptiste *nervous*              Honoured Satrap Tanques, your noble and loving advisers have warned that you must not stand too close to the edge. Especially

not in all this wind. Begging your pardon, Honoured Sir.

*Tanques ignores his scribe's words of warning.*

*Baptiste nears his master.*

Tanques *loudly* Are you able to hear me above this howling wind?

Baptiste Yes, Master. Your voice rings clear over the valley, in the manner of the voice of a god.

Tanques *sighs* Please don't flatter me, Baptiste. Haven't we had enough of that rubbish?

*Baptiste nods in a scared manner.*

Tanques *grand manner* The sight of my troops below fills my very heart with –  
Dictation! Take down these words which spill off my tongue, won't you Baptiste?

*Tanques is no longer in camera shot. Baptiste settles himself on a flat rock. He takes up a clay tablet preparing to write.*

*The wind whips hard at Baptiste's clothes. His stylus is poised above the clay tablet.*

*He looks up. Tanques is nowhere to be seen.*

*Baptiste panics: both through the horror of what has befallen Tanques and by the thought that he will be accused of pushing Tanques off the cliff. He slaps his hand over his mouth.*

Baptiste *crying,* I didn't kill him ... I didn't push – Oh, taint me not with guilt!  
*terrified*

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

Tanques has not died. He has fallen into a ravine with his left foot trapped under a heavy rock. He cannot get himself into a suitable position such that he could roll the rock off his foot. Tanques groans and yells in pain. A devilish snake slithers towards Tanques along the rocks.

Tanques hears a noise. He whips his head around, a shimmering dagger in his hand.

Djashnu climbs over rocks, still laden on his back with bunches of whisp-shivver. Djashnu (snarling) kicks aside the snake.

Djashnu sees the evil-looking blade of Tanques's dagger and gives a mean smile.

Djashnu Don't be hasty! I've not come to tear out your heart or your guts, richly though you deserve it.

Just let me see if I am able to give you some ease.

Djashnu approaches Tanques, who has sheathed the dagger.

Tanques *through* My foot! My foot is damaged by this rock. I'm pinned down. Are
gritted teeth you able to push it away? The pain is incredible.

Djashnu puts his feet into the best strategic position and then pushes with his back (so that he is facing Tanques). Together, using all their strength, the two men manage to lift the rock enough to allow Tanques (in horrible pain) to extract his foot from under it. Tanques lets out a gripping "Agh!" sound as he writhes in pain.

Djashnu Let me see that foot. It'll be crushed, no doubt.

Tanques is unable to answer. He slaps his hand on the rocks in his withering pain.

Djashnu places a hand on Tanques's shoulder.

Djashnu *soothing* Keep steady, man! I'll do what I can to aid you.

~~~~~ **Break** ~~~~~

*Djashnu has removed his outer tunic and ripped it into bandages. He has also managed to build a nice warm fire in the ravine.*

*Tanques (still wincing) is propped against the side of the ravine, near to the fire. His left foot is heavily bandaged.*

*Djashnu squats nearby to Tanques, holding up a large splinter of rock between finger and thumb.*

Djashnu *grinning*            You have to give it to that Hal man. He loaned to me these bibs and bobs from his other life. Something to quickly light fires ...  
Something to pull rock splinters out of the foot of a Satrap ...

*Djashnu stares at Tanques. His tone now changes to one of thinly-veiled menace. He leans closer to Tanques.*

Djashnu                        Hal came to Assrishna for one reason and one reason only: to help me to ensure that Beulan and Assrishna might co-exist without war, greed and disenfranchisement. May I have your word that you will support Hal's wishes? Wishes (might I add) that the sorcerer has confirmed in the entrails of a sacred ox and a bevy of virgins.

*Tanques nods, reluctantly.*

Djashnu                        And in case you wondered, Hal was **not** the Pathfinder. He was merely an assistant to that noble personage.

Tanques *very weakly*        I already knew that. I watched him walk over the carpet of whisp-shivver ... Nothing happened ...

*Djashnu smiles. He stands and releases the bundles of whisp-shivver from his back. He spreads these out on a rock in the ravine. Then he climbs onto the rock and stands on the whisp-shivver.*

*A luscious, viscous liquid spills forth from the whisp-shivver blossom: it is like liquid gold. Before Tanques's surprised eyes, the golden liquid drips down off the rocks.*

Tanques *aghast*                You?! You are --

*Just now, some of the leaders of the Beulan forces stand on the cliff face high above the ravine, calling out to Tanques.*

Djashnu                        Only the true Pathfinder can pull-off that trick, is that not so, Satrap Tanques?

*Djashnu quickly gets himself into a position such that those standing perilously on the cliff face can see him and hear him.*

Djashnu *calling up*            I have him here. He is safe. Lower stout ropes so that you may

draw him up, out of this trap.

*Some random sounds are heard.*

Djashnu *to Tanques*      Soon be out! And you will remember our agreement?

Tanques *nods*      You will be King in Etki's place and I shall leave you be ... You and your countrymen will be as welcome in Beulan as ... I'll visit more often.

*Djashnu watches the ropes coming into view.*

Djashnu *grinning*      Oh, and please refrain from standing on the edge of a cliff during a high wind. You're lucky I saw you topple.

Tanques *weak smile*      Pity about that, you know ... I felt an extraordinarily good verse welling up ...

*[Whispers]*

And thank you, Pathfinder. Thank you!

END OF SCENE

SOUTH AFRICA versus AUSTRALIA

Fifth Test Beginning Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at Chevrolet Park, Bloemfontein South Africa

## **VI, Scene vii:** Prior To The Seventh And Last Review In Bloemfontein

*The scene returns to that which we left in Scene ii.*

*King Etki sits in the grand and ornate chair of Satrap Tanques. Above him is suspended a long wicked sword. King Etki (horrified) looks up, swerving his shoulders from side to side in unison with the slight movement of the sword.*

*Here, we hark back to ACT II, Scene vii.*

*Syl-Artron and Syl-Ibsel stand either side of General Moshek. The General is dressed impressively in armour and stands rigidly to attention. The General's fists are clenched tightly at his side at hip level.*

*This scene will have some slight humour about it, as the two Syls must speak to each other by leaning forward or back to speak around the General, who does not react to their speech.*

Syl-Ibsel                      My vineyards have developed to a point where they are interesting: fascinating, if you must have it.

Syl-Artron *nods*              Aromatic wine, purple grapes and goats cheese ... What more could any man of culture desire?

That life is to die for, Syl-Ibsel.

Syl-Ibsel *wryly*              I had rather that you not use the word "die" too frequently.  
  
However, be that as it may, I am sure that (much as I adore my court duties) I must sacrifice those desires in order to care for the family enterprise.

Syl-Artron                      And goats? What a pastime ... A flock of goats nibbling and foraging on the cliffs by the sea ...

Syl-Ibsel *trying to sound eager*              Yes! I'll pass over the reins of duty to Harlim and Melki.

Syl-Artron *airily, innocently*              And not to Djashnu? He was one of your stalwarts, was he not?

Syl-Ibsel *very low-voiced and discomfited*              But as you'll recall, I was not a stalwart for him.  
  
Do you think that his banishment is over? That he will return triumphant from disgrace? If so, then my vineyards will be in **urgent** need of my overseeing.

*Syl-Ibsel appears to be uncomfortable. Syl-Artron is pleased: he coughs and then rocks on the balls of his feet.*

*Our camera returns to the stricken King, terrified to sit under the swinging sword.*

King Etki *horrified*              I wonder if I too might not be happier in my vineyard? And goats

... Yes, goats. And a parade of goat maids to while away a precious hour or five ...

*Suddenly, there is a tremor and the sword plunges downward, grazing Etki's shoulder and upper arm. Etki screams: the sword is stuck in the table, pinning Etki to it. Tanques limps forward, with left foot heavily bandaged. Tanques holds the hilt of the sword, glaring straight into Etki's eyes.*

Tanques *menacing*      You will renounce your throne (just as you've suggested) in favour of your sister Labesh, who soon marries the Pathfinder. I have promised to Djashnu that I shall hold back from armed invasion if he is king in your stead. So ...

*Tanques hoicks the sword from its resting place, causing Etki to once again scream in terror.*

Tanques *pleasant*      Yes. Wine, women and goats will suit you admirably.

*Etki (shaking and trembling) nods in the manner of a very scared man.*

END OF SCENE

## **VI, Scene viii: Hal And Hauer Chat On The Pitch During The Fifth Test**

*Hal strides onto the field to warm applause (which is unexpected). Head down, he turns each arm over and over, holding the bat in his hand to give maximum impact on his muscles, in the manner of a windmill. The camera moves with him (as if this was part of the television coverage).*

*As is his custom, Hal looks about at the field. Each fieldsman seems to register with Hal (**being outlined in bright purple**) as if they are characters in a computer game. There is an audible click as Hal identifies each fieldsman.*

*The bowler runs in, and Hal hits a huge 6 into the crowd. Someone in the crowd has taken a catch; which involves a bit of a delay as a huge fuss is made of the fan. Hal wanders about, tapping the pitch. Hauer approaches him.*

Male commentator #1      Van Der Hahn and Thornside seem to be involved in conversation.



the emotion, if possible ...

Hal *to Hauer*

Are you ever going to tell me what the old grudge was? I don't have even the remotest idea what I ever did to make you slug me like you did in Jo'burg.

Hauer *nasty tone*

Yeah ... I'll come to wave you off from the airport and I'll tell you then. But by then, you might already have worked it out.

*The camera backs right back, to show the entire oval. Hauer and Hal can be seen to turn from each other and walk away.*

END OF SCENE

## **VI, Scene ix:** The Second South African Innings: Hal's Final Encounter With Assrishna

*Hal stands in the long corridor of the palace at Assrishna. King Djashnu looks Hal up and down.*

Djashnu

So where's your usual outfit? Where's the little fences on your legs?

Hal *shrugs*

I'm fielding.

Djashnu

I would have let you off if you'd been wearing them, but the usual form is to kneel in my presence. I am King of Assrishna in Etki's place.

Sink down to your knees, Whisp-Shivver man. I am the ruler of Assrishna. You must honour me and display obeisance.

Hal *moody, sullen*

I'm not kneeling to you. You're just a bloke like me. I rescued you ... Remember?

Djashnu *laughs*

Yes, with that dandy little gadget that can be used to pick locks or remove pebbles from the hooves of a horse.

Thanks for permitting me to borrow that utensil. It was more than useful ... One might claim that it helped to elevate me to my current position of power and authority.

That and my close association with Etki's sister.

Hal                      You mean Labesh. How is she?

Djashnu                      My wife is a perfect angel. But perhaps you had already surmised that?

In that "other place" ... Where you say that you are "fielding" ...  
From whence you appear before us and then to which you  
disappear ...

Did you (in that place) love Princess Labesh, body and soul?

Hal *surprised*                      Well, not Labesh as such, but somebody very like her.

Djashnu *menacing tone* Because if I found out that you had seen Labesh in her unclothed state, or had touched her inappropriately ...

Hal *argumentative*      You're hanging me out to dry. I swear that she was **not** Labesh! I never laid a finger on her ... Not in that way. The other girl was ...

*[Gives up in frustration]*

Oh, what's the use ...

Djashnu                      Because, Boyo: if I discovered that you had violated her when she was under your care, I'd throw you to the ground and punch the daylights out of you.

Hal *sighs*                      “Boyo” ... You even speak like Hauer ...

You know what? I can't argue with you about anything because life is so bloody different back in the real world. The only good thing about coming here was dashing about with Unela and Moshek. Oh, and seeing Ted again. But then even my brother has turned into an obnoxious prat.

Djashnu                      You know, Whisp-shivver man, most of the time I am unable to make out half of what you speak.

Very well. No doubt your visit here will be brief ...

I shall permit you a parting farewell to Queen Labesh – chaperoned.

*Hal steps up close to Djashnu and they glare at each other.*

Hal *nasty tone*              Thanks. And you're a fucking asshole in the real world, too.

*Djashnu steps back, appearing to dust off his regal attire. Hal looks Djashnu up and down.*

Hal *snarling*                Okay! You won the girl, but I'm gonna win the war. See ya later, Boyo ...

*Hal turns on his heel, angry and humiliated.*

*Captain Moshek has jogged up, and Hal immediately embraces him. Labesh stands at a distance, looking radiant. Hal nods to her and gives a half-smile.*

*Just as he begins to step towards Labesh, Princess Unela skips into view, taking Hal's hand. She is her usual effervescent self.*

Unela *elated*                Dearest Hal! My own champion! Welcome back after such a long time.

You'll be thrilled beyond belief with what's happened to me. I've been given all sorts of official duties and Uncle (I should say "King") Djashnu has waived all the gung-ho male tests and allowed me to join the army. Only as a scout, of course, but it's a start. Aren't you totally thrilled?

Oh, and Syl-Artron wants you to visit him in his quarters. He has some excellent plans to discuss with you. Syl-Ibsel has retired to his vineyards. Things didn't quite go well for him, overall.

Come on!

*As Unela takes Hal's hand, Hal turns to take a last look at Labesh. However, she and her husband Djashnu have wandered off, hand-in-hand. Hal gives a last wistful look at them.*

*Unela (ever impatient) tugs at Hal's hand.*

Unela *urgent*

***Come on, Hal!***

Heaven only knows when you'll be whisked off again.

Oh, and Paluke-Joshua has written a poem in your honour, which he wants to present to you and --

Hal *insistent*

For Christ sake, shut up will you, just for a minnie.

In one sense, it's good-bye, and in another ...

*Hal pulls Unela into his arms and they kiss with real meaning.*

END OF SCENE

## EPILOGUE

*So that we (the audience) is aware that the epilogue takes place at the Sydney International airport, we shall hear airport announcements and see travellers bustling about, complete with cases, bags and backpacks.*

*There are many small electronic billboards in the terminal, flipping over their ads in regular rhythm. One of the "ads" is a news bulletin, displaying a photo of Hal receiving an award with the headline: "Thornside Man Of The Series".*

*Hal is now clean-shaven.*

*Hal and Kerrianne have found a discreet corner of a very rowdy bar within the International terminal and appear to have hunkered down for some while.*

*Kerrianne has a pot of Rebellion gold beer and Hal a short bottle of Crown Lager.*

*They appear to be enjoying each other's company. Kerrianne studies Hal's face, grinning broadly.*

Kerrianne

What? Why are you staring at me like that for?

Hal                      Because you're gorgeous.

*[Takes a drink and smacks his lips]*

Maybe ... Maybe meeting you will be one of my best ever memories from the Series. Just maybe ...

*Kerrienne chuckles. She sips her beer.*

Kerriane *bright* This is absolutely my favourite beer ... It's like liquid gold.

Hal                      You sound like you're making an ad ...

Which reminds me: I'm making an ad for a man deodorant at the end of this week ... or next week ... My agent will have that all sorted out.

Kerrienne What's it called? Are you wearing it now?

*Hal looks down. He takes a sip of beer. It is as if he is unwilling to divulge top secret information.*

Kerrienne Aren't you allowed to tell me? Is it a secret?

Hal                      No, I can tell you ... It's just a bit funny, given what I've been through ...

It's called "Swordplay".

Kerrianne But that sounds terrific. Very masculine.

Hal                    The ad will start out with some fencing moves and then morph into me smacking a cricket ball around.

Kerriane                      You don't have to strip to the waist and slap on the product, do you?

Hal *wryly*                      Yep.

*Kerrienne gasps in disbelief and then both laugh.*

Kerrianne Well, I'm sure you'll do it with great aplomb.

Hal *drily* Bound to ... I'm good at smacking a cricket ball around and I'm a champion at slapping on smelly stuff ... But not much else.

apparently ...

*The camera drags back. We can easily discern that Kerrianne argues against this poor summary of his self-worth given by Hal. She touches his hand and arm, leaning towards him.*

~~~~~

The camera draws back a little further.

The credits roll through as Hal and Kerrianne continue to be engrossed in each other.

END OF SCENE AND CREDITS

END OF ACT VI

END OF FILM