

**EPISTLE OF No.2 CHARIOT**  
**As told by David Henderson**

Now it came to pass in the sunny land of South Africa in the days of Gareth the Great that sheep doctors from all corners of the earth gathered for a great pow wow in Stellenbosch.

And Gareth hath need of guides to shepherd the visitors through the deserts and into the wilderness on their way to the Konservatorium and to wake them from their beds at sparrow-fart to visit places of interest and to see the occasional sheep to justify their expenses.

And Gareth the Great took it upon himself to shepherd No 1 Chariot which was the longest tour for the rich sheep doctors with much time on their hands. However, it was not without hazard, for amongst them were a number of notorious individuals and trouble-makers, to wit one John (Drought Pouch) Plant, the terror of the Australian Bush and Dave (Testicles) West, the intrepid ram tester from Kiwiland.

But Gareth was up to the task for he was a fount of knowledge on all things from history to hyalomma, from poisonous plants to pyometras - much like Drought Pouch, only quieter.

And Gareth spake unto Chris Moses Carrington, saying -  
"Thou hast been a good and faithful servant in the great animal healing place at Onderstepoort for many moons and it is time to reap thy reward, for I have chosen thee to lead No 2 Chariot"

And When Chris Moses heard these things his countenance fell and he was sore distressed for he had better things to do at home, and besides he knew not sheep intimately (as far as we are aware). But Gareth said unto him - "Thinkest thyself lucky, for Ken the Critter Caller hath charge of No 3 Chariot which hath more than its fair share of stroppy Australians who tend to ask awkward questions.

And besides, No 2 Chariot are of superior intellect and technical ability and are on the whole well behaved, except for the Scandinavians who burst into song without warning, terrifying the natives and scaring off the wildlife.

And besides, I have assigned unto thee, a master charioteer - one, Manie the Magnificent - for he is especially skilled at reversing shouldst thou miss a turnoff at speed. And additionally, his chariot is brand new and guaranteed dust-free."

And they all gathered at the Farm Inn - where sheep did graze the lawns and cockerels did crow and lions did roar at night - to make them feel at home in South Africa from the start.

And Chris Moses' worst fears were realised when he saw them, for they were an unruly bunch and he therefore gave them commandments thus:

- Thou shalt board the chariot promptly in the morning
- Thou shalt hand in thy keys without fail

- Thou shalt not use the bogs on board except in emergency - which caused much crossing of legs
- Thou shalt examine thine armpits and crotch each evening in the shower for Hyalomma ticks and
- Thou shalt wop the other chariots in the singing challenge Monday evening

And so they set off into the mountains to explore the caves at Sterkfontein where the remains of ancient man were to be found. And one of the Aussies stood still for too long and was declared a national treasure and was estimated to be 1 million years old according to his teeth, which were worn away from opening beer bottles.

And those of great stature had difficulty not damaging the cave with their heads.

And lo, an ancient man appeared from the caves for he had taken a wrong turn in his sailing boat many moons before when the area was under the sea. And he had a great bushy beard on account of there were no shaving points in the cave. And his name was Jolly John Rodger.

And on the first night they didst arrive at a concentration /-/ pleasure camp called Aventura. And lo, the sun had set and someone cried out - "Where was Moses when the light went out?" - and they all replied in one voice - "In the bloody dark!"

And through the still night air came drifting a familiar melody sung with great sensitivity - "Our little lambs have nothing to worry but Riita and Pertii are totally lost - ooh ooh ooh ooh, timberly, timberly ooh ee ooh ee ooh ee ooh".

And on the second day they sojourned in the desert at the site of a great battle between the Boers and Brits. And it was exceeding hot. And Steve the History gathered them together and marched them to the top of the hill and marched them down again and several passed away en route.

And he spake at length about the battle of Magersfontein - indeed almost as long as the battle itself. And he told them of how the Scotsmen applied copious amounts of cyromazine spot-on in appropriate places on account of they wore nothing under their kilts. And he told of how the English General spake to his men in plummy tones saying - "Now then, listen up you chaps - I expect every man to do his duty for Queen and Country - best foot forward - jolly good show - Scotsmen first - CHARGE!" ..... And the result was Boers 1 - Brits nil! And in due course they came into the Land of Thirst known as the Great Karoo and it was exceeding hot and dry. And Manie the Magnificent was much displeased for they had to traverse dirt roads and his chariot was covered in dust and he had, at that time no ostrich feather duster to dust it with. And the sheep doctors complained of grit in their underwear after unpacking their bags.

And they marveled at the good condition of the sheep grazing on such unpromising material, but mostly they reveled in the beautiful oasis garden and the plentiful food and drink and the beautiful maiden who ministered unto them.

Bye and Bye they came upon a town called Kimberley where pretty pebbles called diamonds could be found. And when Libby (Diamonds are forever) Seamen heard this, her eyes lit up. And they watched with amazement as she lowered herself down into the Big Hole in full diving gear and carrying a pick-axe. But she returned, wet and bedraggled and empty handed... but just in time to hear Steve the History - who was still talking - say " If you bring your girl to Kimberley and don't buy her a diamond then you don't love her". And John was sore displeased for he knew his number was up.

And Libby heard tell of a diamond called the "Star of South Africa" - 85 carats - and she offered 10 oxen, 500 sheep and 1 horse, but her offer was turned down. So she upped her bid to include John's credit cards, and a deal was done.

And about this time they had news of a plague affecting No 1 chariot which was the cause of great sickness and much evacuation. And Richard the Witch Doctor very carelessly became affected himself. And behold he was as much use to them as tits on a boar - or on an Englishman in this case. And they now knew that "Africa's not for sissies".

And No 2 Chariot were concerned for their colleagues in No 1 Chariot, but on the other hand felt that being more than 10 metres from a toilet would be a distinct disadvantage to No 1 Chariot in the singing competition.



Now it came to pass that they came upon an isolated and beautiful habitation in the Great Karoo where the wild beasts did roam and exotic birds did fly - such as the Cecelia Bronzed Backed Sunbird, the Finnish Constant Warbler and the Great Australian Bastard /-/ Bustard! And they were disappointed to arrive by day for they could find their rooms with ease and the element of surprise was missing.

And in the morning, Manie the Magnificent drove them around in the chariot and there were shrieks of delight - stop, stop - Springboks on the left and woha, woha All Blacks on the right and ooh dear - tortoise underneath!

And on the 4<sup>th</sup> day, they proceeded through the mountains to the Little Karoo where they came across strange tall birds with long necks, mischievous eyes and beautiful feathers. And when it was explained that the feathers were worth their weight in gold, Libby's eyes lit up a second time. And she took off into the bush and returned at speed astride the great bird and clutching another two - one under each arm. But Manie drew the line at bird shit in the bus and Libby reluctantly released them. And the beautiful maiden Liza attempted to ride one back to Australia but slid off the back within 50 paces.

And on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, they crossed the mountains to the fertile lowlands where sheep grazed vast areas of wheat stubble. And Chris Moses drew a sigh of relief as they rumbled into Stellenbosch. But lo, his troubles were not

over for Manie was much displeased that he had not warned him of the extraordinary Stellenbosch phenomenon of the reversing Eucalyptus trees, one of which collided with his chariot.

But they arrived safe and sound for their pow wow through Moses' good offices and met with a multitude of other sheep doctors who had not been on safari and thought the Charioteers were mad. And Gareth the Great made them all welcome and Intervet filled their bellies with good food and drink.

And in the morning they got down to the serious business of the pow wow. And during the coffee breaks they were introduced to the great traditions and culture of South Africa in the form of grown-up veterinarians spitting sheep shit through a hole in the wall. And in the evening of the first day of the pow-pow they departed in a caravan to the big barn at Nooitgedacht where they were right royally entertained by Bayer with much singing and dancing and partaking of wine and beer.

And by the forth day they were saturated with good science and bade farewell to their colleagues from around the world. And they gave thanks to Gareth the Great and his band of shepherds for the great job they had done. And they decided to congregate in Greece for the 6<sup>th</sup> great pow-pow. And behold, they did not want to return to their own lands for they had had such an outstanding time in the land of sheep and sunshine.

Here endeth the Epistle.