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DEEL EEN

Hoofstuk 1

Characters:

Nathalie – protagonis

Tannie Lettie – eienaar van die Rose en Crown

Laetitia September – die burgemeester van Hoopvol en 'n vriendin van Lettie

Gielie – 'n vriend van Nathalie wat meer as net 'n vriend wil wees

Lukas – die kroegman van die Rose en Crown

Jorrie – 'n seun van die onderdorp wat met 'n studiebeurs in Stellenbosch gaan studeer het

Tannie Door – 'n gastehuseienaar

Tannie Mollie – 'n gastehuseinaar

Eddie en Fiona – skoolmaats van Nathalie wat ook nie na matriek verder kon gaan studeer nie en in Hoopvol agtergebly het

Pastoor en mevrou Chalmers – die Apostoliese pastor en sy vrou wat saam met Nathalie woon en wat vir haar sal sorg totdat sy mondig word

Summary:

The story is set in a small Karoo town named Hoopvol. Nathalie works in the Rose and Crown, which is the only hotel in the town. She works long shifts, and Lettie says that she must be grateful for the opportunity to have a job in a small town like Hoopvol, because jobs are rare.

It is already six o'clock in the evening and Lettie and her friend Laetitia, who is the mayor, are enjoying drinks. When Nathalie asks to leave, Lettie reprimanded her and talked about her disappointment. She thought that she had offered Nathalie a prime position in the hotel and that Nathalie would be grateful for it. She never considered Nathalie as a "nine-to-five" worker.

On her way home Gielie, a friend of Nathalie who is on a scooter, asks her if she wants to go out for the evening. He and some friends are going to play pool at the Rose and Crown and he really wants Nathalie to go with. He tries his best to persuade Nathalie to go with him, but she is not interested in a relationship. She needs to wash clothes when she gets home and declines.

It was already dark when Nathalie returned home. The Chalmers are watching TV and a huge pile of laundry waits for Nathalie.

Hoofstuk 2

Characters:

Ben – 'n seun in die trein op pad Pretoria toe. Daar het skynbaar 'n groot tragedie in sy lewe gebeur waarvan hy nou probeer wegkom

Oom Carlos – 'n buurman. Hy het Ben probeer troos terwyl Ben-hulle se huis afgebrand het

Tannie Pop – 'n buurvrou. Sy het aangebied dat Ben by hulle moet intrek nadat Ben-hulle se huis afgebrand het

Summary:

Ben wakes up as the train suddenly jerks. He thinks about the flames and his teeth chatter uncontrollably. He puts the green handbag against his chest. He remembers the two bodies being carried out under grey blankets by the firemen. Oom Carlos puts his hand on his shoulder and says how terrible it is. People gathered and watched the flames consume the house. Tannie Pop puts her arms around him and says that he must move in with them, but Ben realises that he must leave. He takes money from his mother's purse and takes the train from Johannesburg to Pretoria. His shoulders begin to jerk uncontrollably and when he starts to cry, he buries his face in his mother's purse and can smell her. The woman opposite him tries to comfort him. As he dismounts the train in Pretoria, he wonders "where now?"

Hoofstuk 3

Characters:

‘n Verteenwoordiger – hy oornag in die hotel en teister Nathalie by die ontvangstoonbank

Liefie – ‘n kombuishulp in die hotel, sy en Nathalie was saam op skool

Mietie – die hoofkok van die hotel

Oom Pieter – ‘n winkelleienaar in die dorp

Sol – Mietie se man, en die pa van haar agt kinders; hy werk skynbaar ook by die hotel

Olivia – ‘n kamerbediende in die hotel

Summary:

Nathalie is by the reception desk where she is harassed by a person staying at the hotel. He makes a nuisance of himself and tries to convince her to go to the Cape with him. She ignores him, but he grabs her by the wrist. She tries to pull away furiously as she rings the bell with her other hand, calling for help.

Lettie comes out of her office to see what is going on, and the man casually steps away to fetch his luggage in his room. Nathalie is very upset about the incident, but Lettie says that she must look at the bigger picture and not let it disturb her. She needs to rather use her flirtation to her own advantage. Nathalie still thinks it is unfair to let men who make a nuisance of themselves get away. Sometime later, it is time for a break. Nathalie and Liefie, who were working in the kitchen, sit down on the porch step to drink their coffee. Liefie is very cynical about their existence in Hoopvol. She thinks that democracy has not brought relief for the disadvantaged in the town. They are still struggling to keep afloat. Nathalie shows her that progress has at least been made. Laetitia is the first brown mayor of Hoopvol.

Liefie regrets not getting on the train with most of their schoolmates and leaving Hoopvol. Even if they rode to Beaufort-Wes, it is better than staying in Hoopvol. However, Nathalie thinks that they stayed because there is still hope and that they can make a living there, and that they can perhaps improve things. Liefie believes it for a moment and says “Yes, old Nathalie, actually we are just too lazy and shit-scared.” When Liefie leaves, Nathalie also wonders why she had not left with the other children.

Hoofstuk 4

Characters:

No characters

Summary:

Ben is too tired to tackle the city after he gets off of the train. He shuts himself in a station toilet and tries to sleep, but cannot get the events that took place in their burning house out of his mind.

The next morning, he wakes up at six o'clock to the sound of a broom sweeping the toilet floor. He leaves the station, but does not know where to go. There is R680 in his mother's handbag, their identity booklets and the spare key to their front door – someone will never use that again. He decides to start walking to Pretoria's fresh produce market, though he does not know where it is. He buys himself two apples and later buys a backpack for R50; he puts his mother's green bag in the backpack. The street vendor explains to Ben that he must walk straight to reach the market. Ben realises that he will have to buy clothes, a toothbrush, a razor and a cell phone.

At the corner of Paul Kruger and Pretorius Street, Ben buys a hot dog to eat, but he feels ill and starts vomiting. He concentrates hard to try and get the picture of the two bodies out of his head. Later he goes to Church Square and arrives at the animal garden and aquarium, where a man tells him that he is very far off from the fresh produce market and that he is in the wrong street. He will take a taxi to get there. He realises that he must certainly call tannie Pop and that he must be careful with the money in his mother's purse. He climbs into a taxi that recklessly weaves through the morning traffic.

When the taxi stops a little later at the Tshwane Fresh Produce Market, he wonders what has possessed him to go there. His throat closes as he stops by the side of a building and sees that it is as big as two football fields on the inside. It's very busy this time of the morning, and Ben wonders how he will find his father in the confusion, especially since he has never seen him and is not sure what his name is.

Hoofstuk 5

Characters:

Sakkie – Hoopvol se polisieman; hy is baie toegewyd aan sy taak om Hoopvol misdaadvry te hou

Olivia – 'n kamerbediende by die Rose en Crown

Sherelene – die burgemeester, Laetitia September, se persoonlike assistent

Summary:

September arrives at the Rose and Crown for her daily breakfast at 7:30, served by Liefie. She is dressed smartly and it's clear that she has an expensive taste in clothes and accessories. After fifteen minutes she is finished and ready to go. Outside the hotel Lettie and Laetitia embrace briefly in public together.

Lettie goes inside the hotel and sits down in one of the King George chairs in the front portal. She closes her eyes to think. Her feet are very sore and she finds it difficult to move around. Liefie offers her tea and she says to Liefie and Nathalie that September has many duties as mayor and that she sacrifices a lot for the people of the town. Her personal assistant, Sherelene, has to attend a funeral during the week, and she wants Nathalie and Liefie to take turns going to the mayor's office to help out in her absence.

At 12:45 Sakkie, the local policeman, arrives to eat lunch at the Rose and Crown. Liefie calls him Constable 'Pickup' because he drives around in a van to keep trespassers and criminals off of the streets. Sakkie really likes Nathalie, but she does not make getting through to him easy. Liefie says to Sakkie that he is no longer in Nathalie's class since she became the hotel's personal assistant.

Sakkie is a shy man with impeccable manners towards women. Liefie thinks he would be a good catch for any girl. Sakkie asks Nathalie to go to Beaufort-Wes with him that night, but Nathalie is not in the mood. She does not want Sakkie to come to the wrong conclusion if she went out with him. Liefie promises Sakkie that they will meet him by the Rose and Crown for drinks later. She also invited Olivia, the room attendant, to come, in order to see the 'rainbow nation'.

After Nathalie finished washing that evening's dishes, she decides to accept Gielie's invitation and go to the Rose and Crown. Mevrouw Chalmers's negativity and whining makes her feel trapped. They meet Sakkie, Liefie and Eddie at the bar. Gielie and Eddie play pool, while the other three talk and have drinks. Later Liefie starts to get drunk and Sakkie offers to take her home. He has had no alcohol the whole night.

When they got outside, Liefie insists to sit in the back of the van. She always wanted to know how it felt to be captured by the police. Nathalie decides to go along, because it does not seem that Gielie and Eddie will stop playing pool soon. When Sakkie tries to help Nathalie to get in the van, she says that she does not need help. It irritates her that Sakkie is so decent and well-mannered. Sakkie drops off Liefie first before taking Nathalie home. He would like to stay for coffee, but Nathalie says it's already late and she says goodbye. He waits until Nathalie is safe in the house before he drives off.

Hoofstuk 6

Characters:

Mike – skynbaar die suinige bestuurder/eenaar van Eagletons markagente; hy neem Ben in diens

Leon – 'n ontevrede werknemer van Mike

Costas – een van Eagletons se gereelde klante

Kleynhans – op die stadium weet ons nie wie Kleynhans is nie; Ben is onseker of hy hom moet bel

Summary:

When Ben leaves the giant room, he begins to feel sorry that he got on the train. He should have stayed home and faced the reality. He still wonders if he should call tannie Pop. People may wonder if he was under the rubble of the house. When he leaves, he helps an old man take bags of vegetables out of a bakkie. After they're done, the man gives him R20 and says that he will pay Ben if he helps him every morning.

When Ben walks back to the room, two men with heavily laden trolleys run into each other. Two potato bags burst open and Ben helps the one man (Leon) to pick up the potatoes. A man named Mike starts to shout at Leon and blame him. Leon explains that they have too few hands for the work, but Mike thinks that they are just too lazy to work. When Leon thanks Ben, Ben says that he is looking for work. Leon says that Ben still looks very young, but he takes him to Mike, who is sitting behind a computer and working.

Mike wants to see Ben's identity document in order to prove that he's sixteen. He celebrated his sixteenth birthday last week and their family went to the movies together. Ben cannot believe that it has only been a week. Mike offers Ben R250 per week, for which he will have to work night shift. If he does not work well, Mike is not hesitant to chase him away. Ben's first task is to load twenty bags of potatoes onto Costas' bakkie. He gets instant respect for people who push trollies around when he feels how heavy a loaded trolley is.

By ten o'clock Ben is dead tired, but he realises that he did not think about the fire once during his hard work. He sees a large blister on his hand. Leon offers him a Coke, and suggests that he go to sleep because the night shift starts at nine o'clock when the farmers start unloading, and it is very hard work. Customers already start to arrive and buy at five o'clock, and Prime Veg is their biggest buyer. Leon quickly explains what Ben should do when he reports for duty that night.

Ben has no idea where he is going to sleep before his night shift. He wonders if he should call tannie Pop or Kleynhans. His cellphone battery is flat. He asks a man by the stall opposite Eagletons where he can buy a charger. The man gestures towards the Indian Plaza across the road. At the plaza he buys a charger and a few other necessities. He also buys three samosas and a meat pie. While eating outside on the pavement, the area reminds him of the business area near their home in Mayfair, which burnt down within minutes. The thought of it comes back to him and he throws up all of the food that he had just eaten.

After Ben rests for a while in the alley behind the plaza, he goes back to the market. He decides not to waste money on medicine. At a side door of one of the halls, he discovers the toilets and he is glad to see that there is also a shower. He sees that there is also a public phone, but he doesn't use it. On the west side of the building, where it was quieter, he discovers a dilapidated storage closet with internal plans and a smelly toilet. He sits in front of the storage closet with his back against the wall. After a while he goes to sleep with his head on his backpack. He dreams of a fire at the market and that the horrible Mike is his father.

Hoofstuk 7

Characters:

Sherelene – afwesigheid

Fiona – werk by die ontvangstonbank; was in Nathalie's skool en is in die selfde kerk

Summary:

Nathalie is working by the mayor's office because Sherelene is absent. She is looking forward to getting away from Lettie's gaze. Fiona works by the front desk. Her and Nathalie were in the same school and are in the same church. She is busy painting her nails and listening to hard music. She shows Nathalie her desk, which is just outside the mayor's office. She looks at the office and sees a pile of documents on the big desk. There is a huge bookshelf against the wall with virtually no books on it. There is an ugly mat against the bookshelf that gives the room a suppressive atmosphere.

Nathalie sees Laetitia's appointment book on the table. She asks Fiona for the password, but she does not know. Sherelene's cat is named Meisie and her boyfriend/husband's name is Gilbert,

which could help to decipher the password. Gilbert is the password. Nathalie looks through her documents and finds pictures of her and a man, who might be Gilbert. In one photo his head is shaved and he is wearing orange overalls, like a prisoner.

Liefie warns Nathalie that Laetitia September is on her way to have breakfast at the hotel. When she arrives, she nods briefly to Nathalie and then disappears into the office. People think she is strange, and Nathalie agrees. When she comes for a drink in the late afternoon, Lettie does most of the talking, whilst September just stands by the window and agrees with everything that she says.

Nathalie listens by the office because it is so quiet, and hears September sobbing. She doesn't know what to do and asks for advice from Fiona. Fiona says that she cries between 8 and 8:15, but she does not know why. Fiona suggests to Nathalie that she must take her a cup of black coffee without sugar. She explains where the kitchen is and Nathalie goes there.

When Nathalie knocks on the door, there is no reaction. She hears soft shuffling and says that she brought coffee. September opens the door and her eyes are swollen and red, and she is barefoot. She steps in and sees the expensive shoes lying on the mat. September sits on the leather sofa and says that Nathalie must also sit. She tells the story of the frog prince that her mom used to tell her as a child. She says that life is but a sad old story. September makes herself right and asks Nathalie to bring her diary so that they can see everything that they need to do that week.

Hoofstuk 8

Characters

Tannie Pop – die buurvrou in Mayfair. Sy is baie bly om te hoor dat Ben veilig is

Oom Luke – die man met wie Ben se ma 'n ruk lank getroud was. Hy was nooit 'n ware pa vir Ben nie

Elma – Ben se sussie wat in die brand gesterf het

Summary:

While Ben is sitting in the cafeteria and eating, he remembers his childhood and how his mother told him that his father died of malaria in a foreign African country. It was shortly before their wedding. Ben wanted to believe her, but he also remembered that she once told him that his father died of pneumonia. The story did not make sense to him and he could not believe that his mother could not remember the name of the country that the man who she married died in.

Just as Ben began to feel as if his father was no longer a question for him, he, his mother and his sister met a woman at Fordsburg who was shocked when she saw Ben. Just before the lady was about to say the name of the man who he looked like, his mother quickly left with them. The woman behind them yelled that the man works in the fresh produce market in Pretoria. He then realised that his father is still alive and that is why he came to Pretoria after the fire.

After two weeks, Ben is okay with the night shift. He bought plasters for his hands and made a place to stay from vegetable bags. He also began to develop a routine: as they finished at eleven o'clock, Ben would get something to eat, wash his clothes, and sleep for a while on the cement floor of the courtyard, where he now lived. Then he would go to the farmers with a trolley and wait. Mike also started trusting him to enter data on the computer.

However, Ben's search for his father did not show any results. He has looked all over the market and even went into the office on the top floor to look. He realises that he will not be able to work for Eagletons forever. He also does not want to recharge his phone, because he does not want to receive messages from Johannesburg. Eventually he decides to call tannie Pop. He begins to cry when he hears her voice, and she says that everyone, including the police, is looking for him. He says that he is living by his father in Pretoria and that everything is okay. After talking to tannie Pop, he decides to search for another week before going back to Mayfair and staring the truth in the eyes.

Hoofstuk 9

Characters:

Bobby – Hy doen aflewerings vir die slaghuis en ysterwarewinkel. Hy kom van Noupoot af waarheen dwelmslawe vir rehabilitasie gestuur word. Hy gaan nog 'n groot rol in Nathalie se lewe speel...

Summary:

Nathalie enjoyed her time at the mayor's office a lot. September requests that Nathalie must visit every day. Liefie did not mind much, as she enjoyed working at the hotel's reception desk. Nathalie knows Laetitia better now, and actually quite likes her. She never found out who the frog that did not want to become a prince was. September did mention that she had a breakup.

On Wednesday afternoon, Nathalie is sent to buy wine. After the other staff members left, September would pour a glass of wine for her and Nathalie and sit on the leather couch barefoot. That afternoon she did not have her usual drink at the Rose and Crown. She is very quiet and staring in front of her. Nathalie realises that September is in need of someone's hand, so that she can handle her insecurities. She thinks that this is the reason that September goes to tannie Lettie's 'prime lounge' every afternoon. This week, she was not there once, because Nathalie's sympathy was enough for her.

When Sherelene called to say that she will be there on Monday Nathalie is regretful, as she enjoyed the week. She created order in the filing system and brought September's diary up to date.

September was apparently unaware of the disorderliness, because her head is clearly in another place. Before Nathalie left, September gave her a grateful hug and says that she is going to the Rose and Crown a bit later for her usual late afternoon drink. She also says that Nathalie must always believe in love, because that's what the Bible commands us to do.

When Nathalie returns home, pastoor Chalmers is sitting under a tree in the backyard. They drink coffee together, but Nathalie's thoughts are about the strange Laetitia September. She tells the pastor that she works very hard, but always looks sad. Maybe it's the awful carpet in her office's fault. She sees that he also looks sad. She realises that it must be very hard to be married to mevrou Chalmers. She is constantly angry at everything and everyone.

Pastoor Chalmers has known "die mooi Laetitia" since she was a little girl. He recalls how ambitious she has always been and how she insisted on going to a white school. She was the first brown child admitted to a white school in Hoopvol. After this, more brown ones, like Liefie and Olivia, were also admitted into the school. Her father was a painter and drank a lot, and her mother worked in the Rose and Crown's kitchen. Pastoor Chalmers is very proud of what she has succeeded in despite her humble background. Nathalie gives him a hug and realises that he really is like a father after the death of her real father.

After Sherelene's return Nathalie still helps out at the mayor's office sometimes. She has to do tasks that Sherelene has no time to do. Tannie Lettie is not happy about it, but she does not say anything. Nathalie and September are becoming soulmates and she thinks that she understands her frustration and unhappiness. The long silences between them no longer bother Nathalie.

One Wednesday Nathalie and the other girls are sitting in the courtyard and eating lunch when Nathalie sees a young man with two large boxes at the back stairs. According to Liefie it is Bobby, "die outjie van Noupoot". At Noupoot there is a drug rehabilitation centre. Bobby does deliveries for the hardware store and butchery. He brings another two boxes and Liefie tells him that he is rude not to greet them. He does not respond and disappears into the kitchen. Liefie thinks that he has a really nice butt, and the innocent Olivia is shocked by the comment.

Hoofstuk 10

Characters:

Tannie Joan – 'n ouerige vrou wat vir Moerdyk Markagente werk. Sy het vir Oil geken toe hy daar gewerk het

Oil – ‘n man op die foto in tannie Joan se kantoor. Hy lyk baie soos Ben en kan dalk sy pa wees

Summary:

Mike is very upset when Ben tells him that he will be leaving at the end of the week. He accuses Ben of ingratitude, because jobs are scarce. He always thought that Ben would not stay for long, and he says that Ben could work up to a good position if he wanted to. Mike overloads Ben with work and sends him to take a pile of documents to tannie Joan, who works at Moerdyk Markagents. When Ben arrives tannie Joan is not there, but Ben sees a man in a picture on the wall that looks like him. He doubted whether it could even be his father when he saw the man's name Oil, but when he saw Oil also has a black spot on his elbow, he realizes that it is his father.

When tannie Joan comes back, Ben asks her about the man in the photo. She tells him that Oil worked on an oil rig before he worked at the market. He had a restless nature. She says that Oil went to Bloemfontein, but she doesn't know his surname or exactly where he went. She then mentions that Ben looks a lot like him and asks if they are family. Ben says that he thinks Oil is his dad. Joan asks Ben to leave his number with her so that she can call him if she gets any information about Oil.

Hoofstuk 11

Characters:

Bobby- hy bring ‘n pakkie na die burgemeester se kantoor toe en Nathalie besef dat hy anders as die ander jongmans van Hoopvol is, iets in sy oë maak hom anders. Hy gaan saam met die jongklomp Beaufort-Wes toe en Nathalie wonder oor hom. Sy vind hom nogal aantreklik en hy voel skynbaar ook aangetrokke tot haar

Summary:

Sherelene is unwell and Laetitia September is in Pretoria for a meeting. Nathalie must keep things at the mayor's office going. The place is a madhouse, and the phone is ringing constantly as people are calling with complaints. Bobby, the delivery man, brings a package for September. Nathalie is abrupt with him. She sees how serious he looks, which is different from the other young men in Hoopvol. His eyes speak of suffering and Nathalie wonders if he really was at Noupoot for drug rehabilitation.

Later Sakkie calls Nathalie and asks her if she wants to eat pizza with him in Beaufort-Wes. She is not eager to go out alone with him and says that all the youngsters go there. Sakkie is disappointed, but agrees. They decide that they will travel in two cars. Nathalie rides with Sakkie, whilst Bobby and Gielie ride in Gielie's fathers' car.

On the way to Beaufort-Wes, Nathalie finds everything that poor Sakkie is doing irritating. She thinks that she still might consider being the woman to have children with Sakkie and have a typical small-town existence. She also begins to believe that this is all that the future holds for her.

In Beaufort-Wes, the hopeful place beyond Hoopvol, Nathalie marvels at the illuminated shop windows. It's a largish town and Nathalie wonders if she and Liefie could get work at a hotel or guest house there. She realises that although Beaufort-Wes is better than Hoopvol, life will not be much different. Nathalie cannot imagine life without her friends, and she enjoys working for Laetitia September. She does not really know what she wants to do with her life.

Fiona is also with them in Beaufort-Wes, and she seems quite interested in Bobby. At one-point Bobby disappeared for a while, but re-joined them again. Nathalie tracks him covertly and finds him quite attractive.

Back in Hoopvol the group of friends go to the Rose and Crown for drinks, and Fiona and Liefie drink too much. Sakkie offers to take them home, but Nathalie chooses to walk home alone.

However, Bobby insists to accompany her. They walk in silence, but when they walk by the church's gate, Bobby picks up Nathalie and carries her to the abandoned church grounds with the promise that he might kiss her as she has never been kissed before. Nathalie thinks "Perhaps Hoopvol is a hopeful place after all."

Hoofstuk 12

Characters:

Andrew en Kobus – twee van die mans wat saam met Oil op die foto verskyn. Hulle werk nog steeds vir Moerdyk Markagente in Pretoria. Hulle dink Ben se pa bly dalk nou in Bloemfontein. Oom Luke (Anderson) – die man met wie Ben se ma 'n ruk lank getroud was. Hy is Elma se pa en was goed vir Ben-hulle voordat hy weer weggegaan het.

Summary:

Ben is on a bus on the way to Bloemfontein. Two of the men in the photo with his father, Andrew and Kobus, who still work at Moerdyk Markagente, told Ben that they are sure that his father still works at the Bloemfontein market.

Ben is very happy that he has a real father and he thinks about the time when oom Luke, his mother's husband, was a part of their lives. He was rarely at home, because he worked for a South African company in other African countries. Ben could believe it because oom Luke always brought him back coins from the countries. Oom Luke is Elma's biological father. Although oom Luke was his father, Ben was not able to speak about his father at school.

It was much better financially while oom Luke was a part of their lives. During December holidays they would go on holiday together; Ben got a mountain bike; an expensive Nokia phone; and clothes from the fancy stores in the mall. His mother was also less stressed and cranky when oom Luke was at home. Unfortunately, oom Luke just suddenly disappeared. His mother told them that sometimes things do not work out. She said oom Luke will come visit when he is in Johannesburg, but now that he is working in Nigeria permanently, it would not work for them to move there. Ben remembers that he felt nothing special about oom Luke leaving.

Hoofstuk 13

Characters:

Frans van Eeden – die vorige eienaar van die motorfiets wat Bobby van hom gekoop het

Summary:

While Nathalie is working at the reception desk, she hears the roar of a motorcycle come down the street. Moments later Bobby walks in and says that he bought a second-hand motorcycle from Frans van Eeden. He invites Nathalie to take a quick ride with him. She is reluctant initially, but eventually decides to go with him.

Bobby gives Nathalie a helmet to put on and warns her to hold on tight before he accelerates quickly. She is initially hesitant, but eventually relaxes while she experiences a sense of recklessness. Residents stop to look at the couple who are quickly driving through Hoopvol's streets. Bobby is a good driver and Nathalie knows that he will not put their lives in danger. "He will bring her to where she wants to be safely." She held Bobby's body tightly and at that moment nothing else mattered for Nathalie.

Outside of the town Bobby goes down a gravel road. They climb off of the bike, and Nathalie wants to know what Bobby is planning. He took her to a pond and said that they are going to swim. He accidentally discovered the pool when he was going to do a delivery in the area. Nathalie protest because she did not bring any swimming clothes, but Bobby takes off his clothes and dives in with just his underpants on. Nathalie also gets rid of her clothes. In the water Bobby puts his arms around her. For the first time since her parents died, Nathalie feels that there might yet be a chance in life.

After a while Nathalie and Bobby climb out of the water and sit on a rock in the sun to dry. She feels physically attracted to him. On the way back to the motorcycle she wants to know if he really was in Noupport for rehabilitation. He confirms and says that it was very bad, but it worked.

Hoofstuk 14

Characters:

Alta – ‘n kelnerin by Spur waar Ben eet wanneer hy in Bloemfontein aankom
Kleynhans – Ben se ‘brother in arms’; dis al wat ons van hom weet

Summary:

Ben eats a burger at the Spur before going to the market. The waiter, Alta, reminds him of his cousin. He thinks about how his family and Kleynhans, his ‘brother in arms’, are looking for him. He thinks about his life in Mayfair again. Ever since he can remember, they lived in a home above his aunt Mabel’s dress shop. His mother worked for her so that they could live for free. Later, oom Luke got them a house in Mayfair with a back garden.

When Ben's mother started working at Clicks, she was much happier than at the dress shop. She hated working at the dress shop, but now she talks to customers. She was promoted to assistant manager later and was very excited.

After Ben eats, he takes a taxi to the market. He laughs when he thinks about what stories he will tell his father. He at least knows how his dad looks now.

As he stands in front of the market building, he wonders what he will say to his dad.

Hoofstuk 15

Characters:

Bobby se ouers – hulle is gesiene inwoners van Bloemfontein wat alles moontlik probeer doen het om Bobby met sy dwelmprobleem te help; in die proses het hulle ook baie gely

Summary:

As Nathalie arrives at the Rose and Crown, tannie Lettie warns her about how soon she wants to get serious with Bobby. Drug addicts rarely recover from their drug problem. Nathalie gets annoyed at what Lettie just said to her, but she restrains herself. She realises that Bobby is her only way to finally be able to get out of Hoopvol. Liefie also has her doubts about Bobby, but “ten minste was hy dapper genoeg om te travel weg en hoog en stuf-julle-almal-ver.” She blames Nathalie again about the fact that they did not have the courage to leave Hoopvol with the others.

In Liefie’s family there was no one who wanted to leave and go to live a life in a different place. She was just like them all. The Gautengers that travel to Hoopvol find the place amusing and laugh at them. They think Hoopvol’s people are stupid and vulgar. In Hoopvol there is a lot of alcohol abuse, leading to domestic violence. It is the only way that some people can survive and feel for life. They should have rather named Hoopvol ‘Hoopeloos.’

Nathalie and Bobby go to the swimming pool every Saturday now. The day starts to cool down and Bobby is the only one who is swimming in the cold water. They sit on a rock and talk, and Nathalie still wants to find out about Noupoot. Bobby talks about it seldom, but he decides to tell Nathalie everything.

He tells her about how he got involved with drugs at a school in Bloemfontein. A new girl in his school introduced him to drugs at a club one night, and it felt as if he was flying when he had a sniff for the first time. “Ek dink ek was dadelik gehook, met daai eerste trippie by die club.” The pleasure that he experienced was incredible. There was no stopping him and he was on a downward course quickly.

Bobby’s parents only realised that there was a problem about three months later. Until that time Bobby was a very good son, but he started to steal things from his parents and sell them for drug money. Along with the drugs came a reckless attitude. Drugs gave him a sense of power and Bobby began to impose himself onto girls, often against their will. His parents did everything possible to try and help him. He was sent to various locations for treatment and many prayed for him. He was very reluctant towards help because he did not want to leave drugs.

One night Bobby’s mom was lying in Bed with a headache. She drank pills that her therapist prescribed her and had a damp cloth on her forehead. Bobby looked outside of his bedroom window

and saw his father on a lawn chair by the pool with a glass of whiskey on his chest. He suddenly saw how old his father became in the last while and decided to pull himself together because of his father. He insisted on going to Noupoot for rehabilitation. It was hell, but it changed everything and now he is clean from drugs and can look forward again.

Hoofstuk 16

Characters:

Annatjie – sy is waarskynlik die bestuurder van die Spur restaurant waar Ben nou werk

Summary:

Ben now works at the Spur in Bloemfontein. He is annoyed with the customers and the fact that they have to sing for people's birthdays. When he sits on the steps outside of the restaurant and smokes, Alta warns him that Annatjie will set him on the road. He should look after his work. He thinks Alta is in love with him, but she feels sorry for him because he does not family and can't find his father. She is also kind to him and he wants to tell her that he is not her welfare case. She also arranged a rentable room for him, but he is struggling to save enough money, because people are stingy with tips and he does not want to be friendly with them.

At night Ben continues to have the same nightmare. He dreams that he hears Elma shouting for help, but he cannot move when he needs to run to her rescue. Tannie Pop's back room is more of an option, because it is already too late in the year to deal with school. He has considered committing suicide because he feels responsible for his mother and sister's death. He thinks about his father, wondering why he is not searching for him. He does not know if his father knows of his existence. He is angry at his mother because she lied to him about his father, but he feels guilty about this feeling because his mother is dead.

One Sunday afternoon Ben gets a call from tannie Joan, the woman from Merdyk Markagente. She suddenly remembered where his father went. He got a job at Houtgerus, a furniture factory in Bloemfontein. Apparently he has family living in Bloemfontein.

Hoofstuk 17

Characters

Frans van Eeden – 'n aantreklike skaapboer in die omgewing. Hy het pas klaar studeer in Stellenbosch. Nathalie hulle is saam met sy suster op skool. Hy en Bobby is goeie vriende.

Kevin – 'n jong man wat, net soos Bobby, in tannie Rhoda se losieshuis woon. Liefie vertrou hom nie en dink meisies is onveilig in sy teenwoordigheid, al is hy 'n diaken in die kerk.

Fiona – ons het Fiona reeds ontmoet, maar volgens Liefie het sy van Sustertjie Kloosterkoek in Tawwe Tertjie verander sedert hulle uit die skool is. Volgens Nathalie is sy so mooi dat sy 'n model kon geword het as sy die kans kon kry.

Tannie Rhoda – sy is die eienaar van die losieshuis waar Bobby en Kevin kamers huur. Sy is baie behulpzaam wanneer Bobby seerkry nadat sy motorfiets gegly het

Summary

Nathalie wants to know when Bobby will take her away from Hoopvol so that they can begin a new life somewhere else. Bobby realises that it will not be so easy to do. A person cannot survive on love and cold water. He will have to find a job to be able to provide for them. Nathalie is confident that Bobby will be able to provide for them and that they will be together forever.

Nathalie and them are with a lot of young people at the Van Eedens' farm for a braai and to socialise. Frans has just finished four years of studies in Stellenbosch and he is now working with the sheep on their farm. Nathalie and them were at the same school as his sister and everyone thinks he is the most handsome young man in the district. Since he sold his second hand bike to Bobby they have become good friends.

Fiona and Liefie are in or next to the pool and so are Gielie and Kevin, a young man who lives in the same boarding house as Bobby. Liefie is wary of Kevin and does not trust him. She likes Frans

a lot, but she does not think that there can be anything romantic between them because she is a coloured girl of humble origins and Frans' family will not approve of a relationship. Nathalie also knows that he seemed to have a relationship with a girl who he went to university with. Fiona flirts with all the men and Liefie cannot believe how tarty she has become since leaving school. She used to go to church twice on a Sunday and be very coy.

It's late afternoon at the hotel and Liefie asks tannie Lettie to help her to sort out difficult hotel guests at reception. She and September are busy enjoying drinks in the lounge. September asks Nathalie to pour her a glass of wine. Bobby rushes in from the street and September asks Nathalie if everything that tannie Lettie has told her about them is true. Nathalie does not know how to answer and she wants to know how September knew when she found her true love. Nathalie simply wants to know if it is the right person. She reminds Nathalie again that love is the highest commandment in the Bible and that nothing is more important.

Nathalie hears Bobby approaching with his motorcycle. He quickly reacts when a dog suddenly runs across the road in front of him. He hits the brakes and tries to swerve, but the motorcycle slides and Bobby falls off it. Nathalie storms outside to see if he is seriously injured. Fortunately he only has scratches and burn marks on his elbows and knees, and the motorcycle can still drive. Nathalie drives back to the boarding house where she tends to Bobby's wounds. Bobby's miserable little room reminds Nathalie of the depressing atmosphere of September's office.

After she disinfects the wounds, she lies on the bed with Bobby. They talk about a future together and he considers going to work in a mine in the Northern-Cape, where he could earn a lot of money. Then they can move to Clifton in Cape Town and retire with a lot of money. They will travel regularly and enjoy life together. Wealth and money is not that important to Nathalie, as she just wants to be with Bobby. He feels the same about her.

Hoofstuk 18

Characters:

Oom Fanie – hy bly in die groot huis op die erf waar Ben ook bly. Sy seun is 'n tandarts in Engeland.

Die ontvangsdame by Houtgerus – sy is onvriendelik en onbehelpsaam en wil Ben nie toelaat om na sy pa in die meubelfabriek te gaan soek nie

Summary:

Ben must wait four days until he can go to the furniture factory on Friday morning. He got the address from the telephone directory at Spur. He sometimes wonders if having a dad is really that important in a person's life, but he sees all the fathers with sons and thinks that everyone has a father, except for him.

Oom Fanie, the man living in the big house on the yard where Ben is renting a room, tells Ben that his son is a dentist in England and that they have only visited him once because life there is too weird for them. His son will also not return to South Africa. Ben wonders if his father felt the same as Oom Fanie's son.

When Ben is dropped off at the factory, he decides that he will wait outside for his father.

However, he goes to the reception desk later. The lady at the desk is extremely unfriendly and unhelpful. At first she thought that Ben was looking for work, then she says that everyone in the factory is busy. She tells Ben that he must write his father's name and surname correctly in a notebook, but when she reads the name 'Oil', she says that nicknames without surnames will not work. When Ben asks if he can go and see if his father might work there, she asks him if he understood that he can't enter.

Ben is disappointed and goes to the gate. After he has something to eat and drink, he decides that he has searched for his father long enough. He is going to return to Johannesburg. A father is not so important. If his father cared about him, he would have come looking for him, but he did not.

Hoofstuk 19

Characters:

Sherelene – Laetitia September se persoonlike assistent. Sy is by die kerkbasaar saam met haar kerel.

Gilbert – Sherelene se kerel wat foto's by die basaar neem. Nathalie herken hom skynbaar van die foto's op Sherelene se rekenaar.

Summary:

It's Saturday and Pastor Chalmers' church bazaar is in the park in the centre of the town. They raise money to help the poor coloured community and many of the Hoopvol residents are there to support them. Liefie and Bobby did not want to go, but eventually everyone was there. It reminds Liefie of her poverty as a child and how humiliating it was.

The Van Eedens are also there to support the bazaar. Sherelene and Gilbert are taking photos and Sakkie is braaing sausages for the boerewors rolls. He looks defeated as he sees Nathalie and Bobby running around together hand-in-hand. Bobby has to do a short drive for a quick delivery. While she's alone Nathalie goes to Sakkie, because she wants to talk to him. She takes him to a bench, away from all the people, and apologises that she chose Bobby over him.

Sakkie reminds Nathalie about the fact that Bobby was in Noupoot. He himself expects to receive a promotion soon and then he is going to buy himself a house that he will build up, because he will qualify for a good subsidy. Nathalie tells him that she was planning to leave with Bobby, and he leaves without saying a word. The rest of the day goes well and the young people enjoy themselves thoroughly at the church bazaar. Pastoor Chalmers even agrees to pose for a photo with the group of young people.

One of the municipality's security guards arrive and says that September wants to see Nathalie at her office urgently. Nathalie wonders what could be so urgent. At the office there is a great bustle. All the office furniture is in piles in Sherelene's workspace, because workers are busy putting in a new cream-colored carpet in the mayor's office. It will be a great improvement. September is standing forlornly aside, holding her teddy bear. It's obvious that she has been crying a lot. September hands a card to Nathalie without having to say a word. Nathalie reads the words "Altyd joune, Laetitia met die knopkniee" on the note. The handwriting is undoubtedly that of Pastoor Chalmers and Nathalie gets goose bumps when she realises.

It's Sunday afternoon and Nathalie and Bobby are at their favourite spot by the pool again. Bobby has recovered well after his terrible fall, but he still has a slight limp. Nathalie wants to know why Bobby never visits his parents, but he thinks that they are relieved to have gotten rid of him after all of the problems and heartache that he caused them. They plan to move to Australia soon. Bobby tells Nathalie about how he was heading to Bloemfontein after his rehabilitation in Noupoot, and that he only got off at Hoopvol's station at the spur of the moment to see if he could find a job here. His new life is now here in Hoopvol.

That night Olivia celebrates her eighteenth birthday in the Rose and Crown with a glass of champagne. Bobby is tired and does not go with. Nathalie sees the dark circles under his eyes from lack of sleep and decided to go without him. Before they left the place at the pool, Bobby picked up a beautiful rust-coloured stone and gave it to Nathalie. She kissed him and then put it into her windbreaker's pocket before they drive back to Hoopvol.

Nobody really feels like celebrating for Olivia's birthday, because it is on a Sunday night at the Rose and Crown, but it was a great evening and everyone enjoyed it. It means a lot to Olivia and she is very emotional when they sing for her. A little later they hear a blood-curdling scream outside the hotel. Everyone storms outside and finds a crying Olivia there with blood on her mouth and torn clothes. Her one breast is exposed and she is clearly very upset. Liefie takes her inside and gives instructions to the bystanders. Gieilie is asked to call Sakkie. Nathalie fetches Mietie's overcoat in the kitchen and helps Olivia to put it on, and Liefie forces Olivia to swallow a tight cap of tequila. When Sakkie arrives, he wants to know what happened. Thankfully Olivia was not raped, because the molester fled once she started screaming. Olivia says that she is sure that it was Bobby who tried to molest her. The others cannot believe it and Liefie is sure that there must be a misunderstanding. Nathalie's whole body feels numb with shock and Liefie suggests that she too

must have a tight cap of a drink. Shortly after she walked home and sat down on the porch step when she arrived. She cannot get the image of the frightened Olivia out of her head.

Hoofstuk 20

Characters:

Kleynhans – hy was skynbaar ‘n skoolmaat van Ben. Hulle het baie vrye tyd saam deurgebring. Kleynhans se pa – hy het sy seun vuriglik ondersteun as hy rugby gespeel het, al het sy asem dikwels na drank geruik.

Summary:

Ben watches families enjoying themselves at the Spur. He thinks about how life goes on: children grow up, get married and come to visit their grandchildren as Oupa and Ouma. He remembers how tannie Pop’s children would sometimes visit with her children on Sundays, and how the noise irritated him. Ben and his family went to the Dieretuinmeer (Zoo Lake) on some Sundays and picnicked under the trees. He and Elma would hire a canoe sometimes and paddle on the lake while his mother would sit under a tree and read. On other weekends Ben and Kleynhans would carelessly hang around in shopping malls and enjoy life.

Ben sees how friendly Alta is when she serves customers. After his shifts he sits outside on the steps with Alta and smokes. She is very sad that he is going back to Johannesburg at the end of the month. Ben watches a father and son. The boy is wearing cricket clothes and his father says that he is sure that his son will play for the Proteas one day. The boy looks very proud. Ben also remembers how supportive Kleynhans’ dad was, as he was always next to the rugby field whenever Kleynhans played. This inspired Kleynhans a lot.

Ben struggles to fall asleep and later he goes outside to sit in the cold night air. He decides that he will go to the furniture factory once more to try and find his father, but then it is all over.

Hoofstuk 21

Characters:

Tannie Mabel – Nathalie se tannie in Johannesburg by wie Nathalie wil gaan bly; sy het ‘n rokwinkel in Mayfair.

Summary:

The next morning Nathalie is convinced that it was not Bobby who tried to rape Olivia. She calls Sakkie at his home and he tells her that he locked Bobby in the police cells the previous night. He will conduct the morning statements and try and find an eyewitness. He was very apologetic, but Nathalie put the phone down on him. Pastoor Chalmers joins Nathalie, and she tells him what had happened the previous night. He cannot believe that Bobby would do something like this and he is sure that his innocence will be proven in court.

On her way to the hotel Nathalie turns at the park where all the traffic at the church bazaar is. She wonders if Bobby was just very tired the previous day because of lack of sleep or whether he got involved with drugs again. She suddenly realises that Olivia’s allegations must be true and that Bobby is the culprit. She felt very lonely suddenly, like she did shortly after her parent’s death. As Nathalie arrives at the hotel, it is clear that everyone knows about the previous night’s happenings. Lettie looks at her reproachfully and Sakkie is busy taking statements, because the matter should be thoroughly investigated. When he leaves, Nathalie asks if she can come with because she wants to see Bobby. On the way to the police station Sakkie says that Olivia is certain that it was Bobby. The man who assaulted her was also short and had the lame walk, and she saw him escape in the red delivery truck that Bobby drives.

When Nathalie arrives and sees Bobby, she sees his bloodshot eyes with a wild look in them. He looks very tired. He tries to reassure her in a hoarse voice that he did not do it. She wants to go closer to him and hold him, but then she sees Olivia’s frightened face and thinks about the damning

evidence against him. She retreats slowly and then runs away. Bobby screams that he did not do it as she runs away, but she just covers her ears not to hear.

Sakkie offers to take Nathalie home. He will let Lettie know that she cannot work anymore today. She asks Sakkie if he also thinks that Bobby did it. He is not sure, but he promises to investigate the matter.

That night Nathalie sits by Pastoor Chalmers in the back garden and watches the sun set. She thinks about how things often don't work out. She believes that the pastor and September really love each other, but he married the dragon in the kitchen because it would not be acceptable to marry a brown woman. Now he must live his whole life in an unhappy marriage. She also thinks about her and Bobby. She thinks that she can never forgive him for what he has done.

The next morning Sakkie calls Nathalie to say that Bobby was freed the previous afternoon. Tannie Rhoda from the boarding house apparently saw Kevin leaving the area in the delivery truck the night before. She gave Bobby a sleeping pill and he was fast asleep when the incident with Olivia happened. Kevin pleaded guilty when they confronted him about it.

Nathalie throws the phone down and quickly runs to Tannie Rhoda's boarding house. When she arrives she knocks on the door of Bobby's room, but there is no answer. She remembers the disbelief in Bobby's eyes when he realised that Nathalie also believed that he was guilty. As Nathalie arrives at Tannie Rhoda's house, Tannie Rhoda is busy talking on the phone, but she hangs up when she sees Nathalie. Nathalie goes to Bobby's room again and opens the door. The room is empty and a cleaner is busy vacuuming the carpet. She sees that the closet is also empty and begins to look around the room frantically. All that she sees is the stone that Bobby gave her, which ended up under the bed.

Tannie Rhoda says that Bobby has been gone since the previous day's afternoon already. Gielie saw him drive the van to Beaufort-Wes. At first Nathalie starts to laugh hysterically, but then she bursts into tears while Tannie Rhoda tries to comfort her. Nathalie phones Gielie to find out where he dropped Bobby off. Gielie thinks that Bobby is waiting to hear from Nathalie.

Nathalie goes to Lettie to ask for permission to take the rest of the day off, because she urgently needs to go to Beaufort-Wes. Lettie refuses to give permission. She warns Nathalie that Bobby is bad news and that all men are bad news. She reminds Nathalie about how fortunate she is to have a job at the hotel and says how she would like Nathalie and Liefie to take over the hotel one day when she gets too old to manage it.

Nathalie decides to go and seek help from Laetitia September, but she is in a boardroom for a meeting and should not be disturbed. Nathalie cannot wait and goes inside. She sees September sitting at the head of the table with other people around her. The mayor excuses herself and follows Nathalie to the entrance. Nathalie is in tears and says that Bobby went to Beaufort-Wes and that the next train there is only in the afternoon. September excuses herself and requests that the vice-president continue with the meeting. Sherelene receives orders to arrange the car so moments later Nathalie and September leave for Beaufort-Wes in the white Mercedes. They drive very fast, because September needs to be back at the meeting. Nathalie will take a train back to Hoopvol. Nathalie climbs out at the Engen garage where Gielie dropped off Bobby. September also gets out and gives Nathalie a hug, reminding her that love is the overriding commandment.

Nathalie searches for Bobby the entire morning, but no one knows anything about him. Eventually she realises that her search is pointless, and she gets back onto the train back to Hoopvol. While she is sitting in the compartment, she sees Bobby in the train travelling to Johannesburg on the other railroad. His eyes are closed and he is listening to music with earphones. Initially she could not believe that it was him, but then she saw the black patch on his elbow. She jumps up and starts to call Bobby hysterically, but her train leaves without him seeing. She storms out of the compartment and tells the conductor that she is on the wrong train, but he just shakes his head, because the train is now at full speed.

Nathalie sits in the train aisle and eventually realises that this is the end of her relationship with Bobby. In this moment she decides that she will go to Tannie Mabel in Johannesburg. She will work in her dress shop in Mayfair, even though she hates sewing. At the end of the week she will go to Johannesburg, because there is nothing left for her in Hoopvol.

It is just after lunch by the Rose and Crown when the phone rings at reception. Tannie Lettie comes out of her office to answer the phone. It is Bobby and he wants to speak to Nathalie, but Lettie says that she doesn't work there anymore and that she took a train to Cape Town. When he asks to speak with Liefie, Lettie says that she is busy. It will also not help to contact the pastor, because he does not know where to find Nathalie. Bobby gives his number for Nathalie so that she can contact him, but Lettie says that Nathalie will continue with her life without Bobby and that he must do the same. She crumples up the paper with his number on it and warns Olivia not to say anything. Liefie and Gielie take Nathalie to the station and Liefie is very sad that Nathalie is leaving. On the way to the station, Nathalie thinks about the eighteen years that she spent in Hoopvol. She will not think about a future in Johannesburg. While Gielie buys drinks for them, the two friends say farewell. Nathalie promises Liefie that she will try and get her a job in the cooking industry. The three friends say goodbye and cry. Liefie runs after the moving train and eventually stops. Nathalie realises that she does not have any other choice other than working in her aunt's dress shop, "want sy dink sy sal vir 'n kind moet sorg. 'n Kind wat nie 'n pa gaan he nie..."

Hoofstuk 22

Characters

Kenny – 'n man in die kroeg wat saam met Oil by die meubelfabriek gewerk het, asook sy vriende

Summary

Ben decides to stand on the pavement at the stop street close to Houtgerus' entrance to keep an eye on it. The receptionist told him that most people went home at four. He studies each face that passes by, but he struggles when minibuses pass. He decided beforehand that he would not be disappointed if he does not find his father, and that like before he will continue with his life. It's not so important to him anymore.

Ben's search does not deliver any results, but before he enters a taxi, he turns around and decides to go to the bar across the road. The bar is full and men are playing darts in one corner. The barman wants to know if Ben is 18, and when Ben orders a second beer, the barman starts to second guess. Ben tells the barman he is here with his father, and that his father is playing darts in the corner. Just as Ben starts to relax, he hears that one of the dart players is talking about Oil. He walks to the group of men as they sit at the table. When he asks about Oil, one of the men says that Ben looks like him, with the same mark on his elbow. Ben finds out that Oil left more or less eighteen months ago, whilst looking for a girl who he spoke of regularly. The one man struggles to remember what Oil spoke about, but remembers about a town close to Beaufort-Wes: Hoopvol.

DEEL 2

Hoofstuk 1

Characters

Fiona – Nathalie se skoolmaat, nou getroud en 'n huisagent in Pretoria

Rodney – hy laai goedere op sy bakkie wat by die stasie afgelaai word

Calvin – hy werk by die ontvangstoonbank in die Rose and Crown Hotel

Tannie Liefie – 'n ou skoolmaat en vriendin van Nathalie, nou die nuwe eienaar van Rose and Crown

'n kelnerin – in opdrag van tannie Liefie bedien sy Ben met kos onder die preeel

Oom Frans (van Eeden) – voormalige vriend van Bobby, nou 'n suksesvolle skaapboer in die distrik

Summary

Ben is on a train on the way to Hoopvol. He remembers it's a name he has heard before when they met a stranger in Fordsburg. Her name was Fiona, and she mentioned that it has been a long time since she and Nathalie had seen each other. When she looked at Ben, she was shocked. She said that

he looks exactly like someone, but his mother quickly changed the subject. Fiona shouted at them, as they walked away, that she saw Bobby at the fresh produce market in Pretoria. He asked about Nathalie.

That evening Ben remembered that he saw the name Hoopvol on a letter between his mother's documents. It was an attorney letter that said Pastor Chalmers is not living in the town anymore, and that the property in Winnie Mandelastraat 26 legally belongs to his mother. He is waiting for further instructions from Nathalie about what to do with the house. Ben googled the name and wondered why his mother never spoke about the place. Maybe she was embarrassed because she grew up in such a rural town; or maybe it has to do with his father.

When Ben arrives in Hoopvol, he has the pleasure of driving to the hotel with Rodney, the delivery man. While they are driving Ben cannot believe that his father can be living in this small town. The hotel owner tannie Liefie, is shocked when she sees Ben and looks like she has seen a ghost. He tells her that he is looking for work and she calls a man named Frans immediately. During this time, she calls Calvin who is at the reception to take Ben to tannie Olivia in the kitchen, to feed him. He sits on the porch, and a girl brings him a plate of food. She says that there is also pudding, and that tannie Liefie said that they must look after Ben.

After lunch, Ben walks to the entrance where tannie Liefie is talking to a man. He looks just as shocked when he sees Ben. Ben wonders why everyone stares at him and decides to take his stuff and leave. Tannie Liefie stops him and introduces him to oom Frans. He wants to know if Ben has family in the town, and Ben says that his dead mother, Nathalie, grew up here. He says that he did not know his father. Frans asks Ben if he knows how to farm, and even though Ben doesn't want to work on the farm, he decides to go with oom Frans for food and a place to stay.

Hoofstuk 2

Characters

Tannie Nonnie van Eeden – oom Frans se vrou

Arlie – die van Eedens se huishulp en uithalerkok

Helena – op hierdie stadium weet ons nog nie wie Helena is nie, en Ben wil nie uitvra nie

Charl – die van Eedens se seun wat onlangs in 'n ongeluk oorlede is

Summary

Ben is on the way to the farm with oom Frans. When oom Frans asks Ben about what he came to do in Hoopvol, Ben tells him that he has business to tend to after his mother's death. He plans to only stay for a short while. He also tells oom Frans that his mother and sister were killed in a fire. They then drive to the farm Soetwater where oom Frans introduces Ben to the two boerboele, Dawid and Jonathan, and the hansooi Rebekka.

In the passage oom Frans introduces Ben to his wife, tannie Nonnie. She looks surprised when oom Frans tells her that Ben is going to stay there for a while and work to gain experience. Tannie Nonnie takes Ben to a room on the back porch, and he can immediately see that it is a boy's room. She tells him that their son, Charl, died in a quad bike accident eighteen months ago. She tells Ben to make himself at home and that dinner is at half past seven.

At the dinner table, oom Frans talks about the Karoo that crawls under your skin. Ben compliments tannie Nonnie about her food, saying that it is the best food that he has ever eaten. She tells Ben that he must throw his clothes in the basket in the laundry after dinner. When Ben goes to the washing room, tannie Nonnie says that she heard about his mother and sister, and Ben gets very emotional and trembles. Tannie Nonnie holds him and says that they cannot understand why such things happen.

In the kitchen Ben tells tannie Nonnie exactly what happened that fateful night. He went out to play PlayStation with Kleynhans. He locked the house because his mother and Elma were sleeping. He had forgotten about the burning candle in his mother's room. When he returned, the street was full of firemen and their house was burning down. Tannie Nonnie comforts Ben and says that it is not his fault, just like their son's death was not their fault.

Hoofstuk 3

Characters

Helena – sy is waarskynlik oom Frans en tannie Nonnie se dogter, want sy verskyn saam met hulle op 'n gesinsfoto en sy lyk na tannie Nonnie
Julies – 'n plaaswerker wat baie goed is met skape-tel; hy het baie verantwoordelikhede op die plaas

Summary

During Ben's first morning at the farm, Ben is woken up by oom Frans. He wants to show Ben the farm. Ben eats breakfast and Arlien says that oom Frans is waiting for Ben in the barn. When oom Frans sees him, he says that they need to get a few pairs of shorts for Ben immediately. They explore the farm with the 4x4. Ben cannot believe that sheep can survive in such harsh conditions. They see a big mountain tortoise and Ben wishes that Elma could see. Oom Frans explains how the camps and grazing work. When they ride over a hill, Ben sees hundreds of sheep with their lambs. Oom Frans explains how the farm works. They shear sheep and sell the wool. They also sell meat, especially when the wool prices are low. He also explains how they count the sheep and the cattle; tells him about the cattle thieves and animals that hunt the sheep. They are making sure that all of the fences are intact all the time, that the troughs remain full and that the windmills work. Oom Frans wants to know if Ben can ride horses, because they cannot ride everywhere in the 4x4. After lunch, Ben finds a suitcase with Charl's clothes on his bed, and a note that says that he must see what he can use. He was impressed with the Nikes and the Diesel shirt, but he cannot see himself wearing khaki clothes, although it is very practical on a farm. Oom Frans tells Ben that he must go and explore the farm that afternoon. He walks with the dogs to the windmill and then swims in the dam. He then stretches himself out in the sun. While he looks at the terrain, he thinks about what the Karoo could hold, but he wants to stay and work in the city one day.

Hoofstuk 4

Characters

Helena – Oom Frans en tannie Nonnie se wederstewige dogter. Sy beskou Ben as 'n indringer en wil bewys dat sy enigiets beter as 'n seun kan doen
Helena se oupa – Hy was vroeër 'n matroos met 'n voorliefde vir water. Hy het die poel op die plaas laat bou

Summary

Ben finds oom Frans in the passage where he had spoken with tannie Nonnie the next morning. He says that he wants to give Ben time to find his feet, and that he will talk to him when he is ready. At the breakfast table tannie Nonnie asks Ben if he will go with her to Beaufort-Wes to pick Helena up. Oom Frans gives Ben a list of things that he must get. In Beaufort-Wes they first go to buy clothes for Ben. He worries that he will have to buy the clothes himself, because he needs to have money left over to buy a train ticket to Johannesburg. Tannie Nonnie reassures him that she will pay for everything. After they have eaten something, they go to pick up Helena at the Engen garage. She ignores Ben and talks to her mother about her achievements at the agricultural school in Middelburg. Tannie Nonnie tells Ben that it is her mission in life to show the boys how things should be done. At the house Ben feels good when the dogs do not pay much attention to Helena and instead run to him. Helena goes to her father in the barn, and Ben follows her a short while later. According to oom Frans, Ben is now in Helena's good hands. She is going to teach him everything and make a real Karoo farmer out of the city slicker. She is unwilling to help Ben. Oom Frans tells Ben that he must go to the stables with Helena so that she can teach him how to ride horses. Helena shows him the horses. Koning is hers and Prins is the one that Ben must ride. She explains how to ride a horse briefly and then rides away over the plains. At first Ben is hesitant to climb onto Prins' back, but gets it right soon. They finally arrive at a pond in the woods and Helena tells Ben that her grandfather built the pool. She wants to know what Ben is doing on their farm and Ben says that he

has business in town, which she finds hard to believe. On the way back Helena says that they should at least show her father that Ben can stay on a horse's back, as they slowly ride back to the house. Ben enjoyed his first experience on horseback.

Hoofstuk 5

Characters

Riana – 'n meisie van 'n buurplaas wat 'n verjaarsdagpartytjie hou

Mariaan – 'n pragtige meisie uit die distrik wat baie in Ben belangstel by die partytjie

Johies – Mariaan se naam vir Ben

Anton – 'n lang seun met bree skouers by die partytjie. Hy en Ben gaan buite rook.

Ricky – hy nooi Ben om saam met hulle vierwielmotorfiets te kom ry. Charl was saam met hom toe hy verongeluk het.

Tannie Esme – Riana se ma

Summary

It's Saturday morning and Helena is less horrible with Ben. Ben feels glad that he can ride horses. Tannie Nonnie says that the neighbours have invited them to Riana's party. Nonnie thinks that it is a perfect opportunity to introduce Ben to the young people of the district, but Helena is not excited. After breakfast Helena and Ben drive to the camps with oom Frans. Helena looks annoyed with oom Frans because he is so impressed with Ben and he thinks that Ben will have to teach Helena a thing or two. During lunch Helena impatiently says that she will go to the party but people must not think that Ben is her companion because she does not want to have a boyfriend. Ben feels the same way.

Ben puts Charl's favourite Diesel t-shirt on for the party and tannie Nonnie compliments him about how handsome he looks. Helena wears kind of party make-up and her blonde hair is dangling over her shoulders. She climbs in the back of the 4x4 and lets Ben sit first. At the party Helena introduces him to everyone as Ben 'wat vir haar pa werk.' One of the girls says how 'super cool' Ben is and Helena quickly answers that they are not together at the party and that he is working for her father and is only staying for a while before returning to Johannesburg.

A very pretty girl with an amazing body, Mariaan, asks Ben to dance. After the dance she asks Ben for his cellphone number and told him that she would show him how exciting Hoopvol is. Ben also meets some of the young guys of the area. He smokes with Anton, who tells him how lucky he is to come from a big place like Johannesburg, and Ricky invites him to go quad biking on their quad on Saturday. Eventually Ben dances with Helena, but she is stiff against him and they do not say much to each other. That night in bed Ben realises that he has not had a nightmare since he arrived in Hoopvol. He regrets that oom Frans must take Helena back to Beaufort-Wes on Sunday.

Hoofstuk 6

Characters

Abel Lategan – Hoopvol se enigste prokureur; hy het dokumentasie oor Nathalie se eiendom in Hoopvol

Adri – Abel Lategan se persoonlike assistent

Charl – Volgens Julies was hy 'n bietjie windgat en nie so toegewyd aan die plaas soos Helena nie. "Charl se kop was op anner plekke, maar nou maak dit nie meer saak'ie."

Summary

It's Wednesday morning and at the breakfast table Ben says that he thinks that his mother had a house in the town. Oom Frans says that he vaguely remembers Bens' mother. Ben says that he once saw a letter from his mother's documents in which she corresponded with lawyers about the sale of her house in Hoopvol. Oom Frans says that tannie Liefie knew his mother well, but he will contact Albi Lategan, the long-time attorney in town, to find out more about the property.

Ben goes to the barn to help Julies count the sheep tags. He begins to think that there is something shady about his father and he wonders if his father isn't a 'gomgat' (scumbag) or a drifter who is now in a prison somewhere.

While Ben and Julies are sitting against the storeroom wall and drinking soda, oom Frans calls Ben and tells him that Abel Lategan vaguely remembers something about the house, and that his mother definitely did not sell it. It looks like the house is still theirs. Ben thinks that he will sell the house and when his father comes out of prison they will go to Durban or the Cape and get on with their lives like a normal father and son. Later that night Ben finds tannie Nonnie and oom Frans in the TV room where they are holding hands while tannie Nonnie cries.

On Thursday Abel Lategan calls saying that he found the property's documents and that they must pop in. When they arrive, Abel tells them that the house is still Ben's mother's property. In her last letter she informed that they do not have to sell the house – she will sell it when her oldest child finishes school in order to pay for tertiary education. He also says that the house is very neglected and that it is probably not worth much in the current economic climate. When Abel asks if Ben has any documents, Ben says that he has their ID documents. Whilst they sit there, someone from the farm calls and says that the lynx struck and a lot of sheep are dead. They must leave before Ben can see the house.

Later that afternoon Ben sits with Julies in the shade of a tree and smokes. Julies tells Ben about how Charl would set traps and predators would get caught in them. Charl ruthlessly hunted predators that attacked their sheep. Ben wants to know what kind of person Charl was. According to Julies Charl was okay, but he was not as passionate about farming as Helena. Everyone in the district attended Charl's funeral and Julies thinks that it is unfair that Charl had to die so young. According to Julies oom Frans seems much better since Ben arrived on the farm.

That evening, to his surprise, Ben gets an envelope full of money on his pillow. There is a note from oom Frans that says that it is his well-deserved salary – he can see that Karoo blood flows in Ben's veins. Ben is not sure how he feels about the money. He does not really want to live on a farm for the rest of his life. Johannesburg is his place. He just needs to focus on finding his father.

Hoofstuk 7

Characters

Terrible Tony en Dragon Dangerous – twee karakters in die Super Gangs-speletjie wat deur Ben en Helena op PlayStation gespeel word.

Summary

Whilst they are eating breakfast on Saturday morning, Helena announces that she thinks Rebekka, the hand-reared sheep, is pregnant. Oom Frans is upset to hear this, because Rebekka is very old and does not have access to the rams. He inspects Rebekka to confirm it and then calls Julies on his cell phone to admonish him because they have let the rams get to the sheep.

Oom Frans has bought a new shearing machine and he invites Ben and Helena to see how it works. Four sheep can now be shaved simultaneously. In the wool shed Julies gets his first chance to test it out and he came right with it immediately. He is very excited that they are able to shave much faster. Helena is used to shearing sheep and she masters the new shearing machine very quickly.

When it is Ben's turn to shear a sheep the sheep escapes two times and Helena finds it very funny. The third time Ben makes sure that the sheep does not get away and he slowly starts to shear it while Julies gives advice. Oom Frans praises Ben on his first attempt, but Ben knows that still has a lot to learn. Helena boasts that she is a lot better at shearing than Ben and Ben walks away angry, because she always sees everything as a competition. When she asks him to go riding with her, he ignores her. He walks to the veld with the dogs and decides that he needs to talk to oom Frans about his father urgently. Things must now come to a point.

That night Ben watches TV with oom Frans and the others for a bit, but after a while he goes to his room and picks up the box with PlayStation games in it. He wishes that he had someone who could play with him, as he and Kleynhans used to. They were the champions of Mayfair. Ben sees the titles of the games and it brings back pleasant memories. He connects the game Super Gangs on the

TV set in his room. It's one of his favourites and he was the Super Gangs champion when he was in Johannesburg. He sees that Charl had played to chapter 14 and he decides to play on from there. Later Helena brings coffee and cake for Ben and she is very excited when she sees that he is playing Super Gangs. Ben pretends to have never played Super Gangs before and Helena challenges him to see which of them is better. She is surprised to see that Ben wants to start on chapter 14, because she must first teach him how the game works. She briefly explains how the game works and Ben is filled with laughter, but he does not show it. Ben will play as Terrible Tony and Helena will play as Dragon Dangerous.

The fight begins and they both hold back. Helena is surprised to see how well the 'inexperienced' Ben plays and she wants to know if he is sure that he has not played the game before. They play in silence and Ben's timing is perfect when he throws the last petrol bomb and beats Helena. He pretends to be surprised about winning. Helena is upset that she lost and storms out of Ben's room.

Hoofstuk 8

Characters

Ricky – 'n vriend van Charl by wie hy op sy vierwielmotorfiets gaan ry het op die dag toe hy verongeluk het. Ben het Ricky by Riana se partytjie ontmoet.

Die predikant – hy het die tragiese nuus van Charl se dood aan die Van Eeden-gesin oorgedra

Summary

Ben receives instruction from oom Frans that he and Julies must mix the supplement for the sheep and then take it to the sheep camp that morning. Helena objects as she has always done it since Charl's death. When she and Ben are alone, she wants to know if Ben now aspires to take her brother's place on the farm. According to Ben she is the one who is trying to take Charl's place and he suggested that she stop trying so hard to do so. She is annoyed by Ben's blunt words and saddles her horse, Koning, in order to get away. Ben decides to go along and calls for Prins. Prins is lazier than his father Koning, but as quick when he is encouraged.

Ben decides to race against Helena and show her that she does not always need to come first. She looks at him with an 'I always win' look on her face as she sees what his plan is. Prins moves in front of Koning and Ben is first to arrive at the patch of trees by the lake. A little later Helena joins him. They sit in silence, staring into the water. She tells Ben about her father's grief over her brother's death, saying that he is only pretending to be happy for the sake of her mother. Her father holds himself responsible for her brother's death, because it was him who encouraged Charl to get a quad-bike.

The tragedy happened on a Saturday afternoon when Charl was driving with friends. Helena and her parents were at home when the minister arrived to share the tragic news with them. Initially he did not have the courage to get out of his car and tell them what had happened. The moment is too difficult for Helena to deal with and she dives into the water and invites Ben to come swim with her. The water is cold, but refreshing.

When Ben and Helena sit on a rock later, he begins to stroke her hair impulsively. He expects that she will slap him, but she smiles at him.

Hoofstuk 9

Characters

Gertruida Johanna van Eeden, Petrus Johannes van Eeden – gestorwe voorgeslagte van die Van Eedens wat in die familiebegraafplaas op Soetwater begrawe is.

Robert Benjamin Smit – Bobby se regte name en van

Summary

There is an outbreak of disease amongst the sheep in the Victoria-Wes area and oom Frans is worried that it could spread to his sheep. Ben gets instructed to read about it on the internet. He goes to oom Frans' study and turns on the computer. He sees a picture of a smiling tannie Nonnie,

Helena and Charl on the screen. Helena and Charl were young when the photo was taken by the ocean. Ben looks around the room and sees many pictures hanging on the walls. They are pictures of oom Frans' success with his sheep farming. On the wall there is a row of pictures with the different sheep shearers of the year since 1999. One of the photos draws Ben's attention suddenly. Just when Ben wants to turn back to the computer he notices the picture of the most recent winner in the row. He is astounded to see his father in the picture. It's undeniably Oil, although his hair is longer in the picture. Ben turns and sees oom Frans standing in the doorway. Oom Frans tells Ben that his father was a sheep shearer and initially knew nothing about farming sheep. However, he learnt quickly and during the previous shearing season there was no better shearer than him. He shaved on different farms in the area and lived on the neighbouring farm.

Ben wants to know where his father is now, and oom Frans tells him that he had died the previous winter in a freak accident. It was very cold and snowing. Ben's father went looking for lost sheep and then apparently slipped and fell down a cliff. He did not fall down far, but he probably hit his head on a rock and immediately lost consciousness. They found him dead in the veld the next morning.

Oom Frans says that everyone who knew Bobby immediately knew that Ben was his son when he arrived in Hoopvol. Liefie wanted oom Frans to tell Ben about his father immediately, but he decided to wait until the time was right. He says that Bobby was buried in the Van Eeden's cemetery in Soetwater with a simple Karoo stone as the tombstone, as Bobby had requested. For oom Frans it was an honour to bury Bobby there, because he was a good friend. Ben experiences a strange, empty feeling when oom Frans tells him this.

Late during the next afternoon Ben finally finds the courage to visit his father's grave. He had previously passed by the stone wall around the cemetery, but it went unnoticed. It feels strange for Ben that he will finally be reunited with his father. He sits outside the cemetery to smoke a cigarette before going inside. The sun hangs low when he opens the gates.

In the cemetery Ben sees the various family graves, including Charl's recent one. Ben sees the simple stone in the right corner and his father's name, Robert Benjamin (Bobby) Smit, on the copper plate. In a hesitant tone Ben begins to speak to his father. He talks about himself, where he came from and everything that he has done. He also talks about what happened to Nathalie and Elma and how he holds himself responsible for their deaths and that he is sorry about it.

"Ek is jou seun Pa, en ek is jammer jy het nie geweet nie. Maar dis fine. Ek weet jy het nie geweet nie."

Hoofstuk 10

Characters

Oom Sakkie – die polisiehoof van Hoopvol. Hy het Nathalie goed geken en nooi Ben om saam met hom te gaan jag en rugbywedstryde by te woon.

Tannie Annelie – oom Sakkie se vrou

Summary

Oom Frans and tannie Nonnie invite guests who knew Nathalie de Koker when she still lived in Hoopvol. The local police chief, Sakkie, is the first to arrive and his family is with him. Sakkie is married to Annelie and they have four kids with red hair. The children make themselves at home immediately and run around the farm. Oom Frans introduces the guests to Ben and Sakkie stares at Ben in disbelief. Ben cannot understand why everyone is always staring at him as if he is a circus freak. Sakkie says that Ben has his father's face and body, but that he actually reminds him more of his mother. Sakkie looks very emotional when he says this.

Tannie Liefie, the owner of the Rose and Crown in Hoopvol, is the next guest to arrive. She stops on the farm with her black Mercedes. Ben sees her beautiful legs and appealing appearance. She's very dramatic and it's clear that she loves to get attention.

When everyone is seated in the lapa with a drink, oom Frans asks Ben to start the braai fire. Later Sakkie tells Ben that he heard about Nathalie's tragic death. He says that Nathalie was a beautiful person and that he liked her. Ben wants to know what Sakkie thought about his father. Sakkie tells

him that Bobby was only in Hoopvol for a little while, but Nathalie felt attracted to him immediately. She thought that Bobby was the man for her. Unfortunately, things turned out differently and that it is water under the bridge. Sakkie invites Ben to go to Bloemfontein and hunt and watch rugby with him and oom Frans in the winter. According to him it is a great feeling to hunt and he would like Ben to have the experience. Ben quite likes the idea, but he does not know whether he will still be in Hoopvol by that time. He is considering going back to Johannesburg. After dinner tannie Liefie joins Ben in the living room while he is watching TV. She tells Ben that she and Nathalie were close friends, but she did not know that Nathalie was pregnant when she left Hoopvol. Ben wants to know why Nathalie did not marry if they were so in love. Sakkie joins them and he and Liefie tell Ben about how Bobby was falsely accused of sexual abuse and how he left Hoopvol as a result. Shortly after, Nathalie also left Hoopvol and went to live in Johannesburg. She often contacted Hoopvol to find out if people might have heard something of Bobby, but she later gave up and stopped calling.

When Bobby came back to Hoopvol looking for Nathalie years later everyone had lost contact with her. They had heard that she was married to an Englishman in Johannesburg. Bobby went out with other girls and gave up on reuniting with Nathalie – he never coped with his loss and no relationships worked.

Ben wants to know why his father had waited so long to come looking for Nathalie, but Liefie says that Bobby did try to contact Nathalie earlier. She says that Lettie, the old cow that was the owner of the hotel, never gave Nathalie the message that Bobby sent when he was trying to find her. This information only came out after Lettie's death when Olivia, the person who heard the conversation, could not keep the secret any longer and told everyone. Sakkie confirms everything that Liefie has just said.

Tannie Nonnie calls from the kitchen, saying that the guests should come and get desert and go sit down in the lapa again. Ben tries to be social, but all that he thinks about is how an awful person robbed his parents of their only chance at happiness and robbed him of the opportunity to have a father standing next to the rugby field screaming for him.

Hoofstuk 11

Characters

No characters

Summary

Ben is with tannie Nonnie in Hoopvol visiting his mother's house in Winnie Mandelastraat (previously Olive Schreinerstraat). The house has been uninhabited and is looking very neglected and is in a terrible state. Tannie Nonnie thinks that the house has great potential to be converted into a guest house. The house is small and sits right on the street, but the rooms are spacious. In the hallway there is framed picture that tannie Nonnie vaguely recognises with Liefie, Olivia and Pastoor Chalmers. She says that Nathalie lived with the Pastoor and his wife in the house. Pastoor Chalmers just seemingly disappeared one day with Hoopvol's mayor and nobody heard of them again.

Ben looks at the picture that looks like it was taken at a picnic. He recognises his mother in the picture. She is still very young and beautiful and looks very happy. Next to her sits a person that Ben cannot make out. This part of the photo is out of focus and the person's arm hides his face. It looks like a boy, but Ben is sure that it must be his father Bobby.

Ben and them see how neglected the house and backyard is. Tannie Nonnie suggests that Ben makes the property available and then oom Frans will pay for the rest in order to turn it into a first-class guest house. Ben can start thinking about a suitable name for the place. Tannie Nonnie really wants Ben to remain on the farm, because there is nothing left for him in Johannesburg. Before they leave, Ben looks at the photo on the wall again. He takes the photo back to the farm and that evening he cuts out the part of his mother and Bobby and puts it in his wallet.

Ben goes back to Bobby's grave and on the way back he sees oom Frans sitting on a rock near the cemetery. Oom Frans tells him that he also visits Charl's grave from time to time. He tells Ben

about how scared he was when had to identify Charl's body. Fortunately there was no serious injury to his body and he looked peaceful. It made it easier for oom Frans to accept the death of Charl. He often misses him, because he was very close to his son. He would therefore like Ben to stay on the farm. It sounds tempting, but Ben will need some time before he can finally decide on what to do. Ben is awoken by a loud knock on his bedroom door in the middle of the night. It is Helena who has come to say that Rebekka is going to give birth and that Ben must come help her. They hurry and go to the barn. The days are hot, but the Karoo nights can be quite cold. A lamp is burning in the barn and Rebekka is lying on a pile of hay. Helena's sleeping bag is also lying there. She assures the old ewe that they will help her give birth successfully. Helena looks vulnerable and there is no sign of the confidence that she usually emits.

Helena tells Ben to carefully pull out the lamb by its front legs while she will try and keep Rebekka calm. Ben has seen how ewes give birth, but this is the first time that he has had to help with a birth. Ben and Helena are both afraid that the lamb will die if he is not delivered immediately. Ben starts pulling while Rebekka loudly bleats. He puts his hand in and carefully wiggles the lamb's body loose. The lamb begins to move forward and slips out after a while. Ben and Helena are extremely relieved and grateful as shortly thereafter the lamb gets up and starts bleating.

After the difficult delivery Ben and Helena enjoy coffee. Helena sits huddled against Ben and he could feel her trembling. He puts his arms around her and pulls her closer to him. She is very grateful for Ben's help on the farm, but according to Ben he is paid to ensure that oom Frans' lambs are okay, including Helena. Helena is very pleased that Ben is "die nuwe boetie op die plaas."

After Ben and Helena's experience of the night, Ben goes to the cemetery. He knows that he will not be able to sleep, because it is almost time to get up already. Everything around him is quiet so early in the morning. He sits on a stone outside of the cemetery and sees how it is slowly getting lighter. He thinks of his life in Johannesburg and about Kleynhans, who has never been on a farm and will never have the experiences that Ben has had. Ben considers staying. Life on the farm is like a new birth for Ben, and he decides to stay. He decides to call the new guest house in the town Bonalie in honour of Bobby and Nathalie.

Afterthoughts

In his room Ben carefully opens the package that tannie Pop sent him. Inside he finds a small box in between bundles of toilet paper. The box contains his mother and sister's ashes. He walks with it to the family cemetery on the ridge. Julies had helped Ben to build a small stone wall in front of Bobby's tombstone. A small niche is built into the wall. Ben places the small box of ash into the cavity and then places on top the Karoo-stone that his father once gave to his mother that she had kept all the years in her handbag. Ben then closes the cavity with a stone that Julies had neatly chopped to fit over the opening.

When he's finished he unscrews the nameplate that oom Frans put on the stone. He replaces it with a new plaque that he's had made at the undertaker in town. His father's, mother's and sister's names appear on the plaque.

Helena arrives on her horse to call Ben so that he can come braai for them. According to Ben she can go and braai herself since she can do anything better than a man. She gets annoyed and races back home. Ben smiles and decides: tonight is the night that he's going to hug her in the backyard and kiss her like she's never been kissed before.