

The Hughes Chronicles



Start Where

The Horses Ran

Book One

DuGallan

The Hughes Chronicles · Start Where The Horses Ran

THE DUGALLAN CHRONICLES

Book One

THE HUGHES CHRONICLES

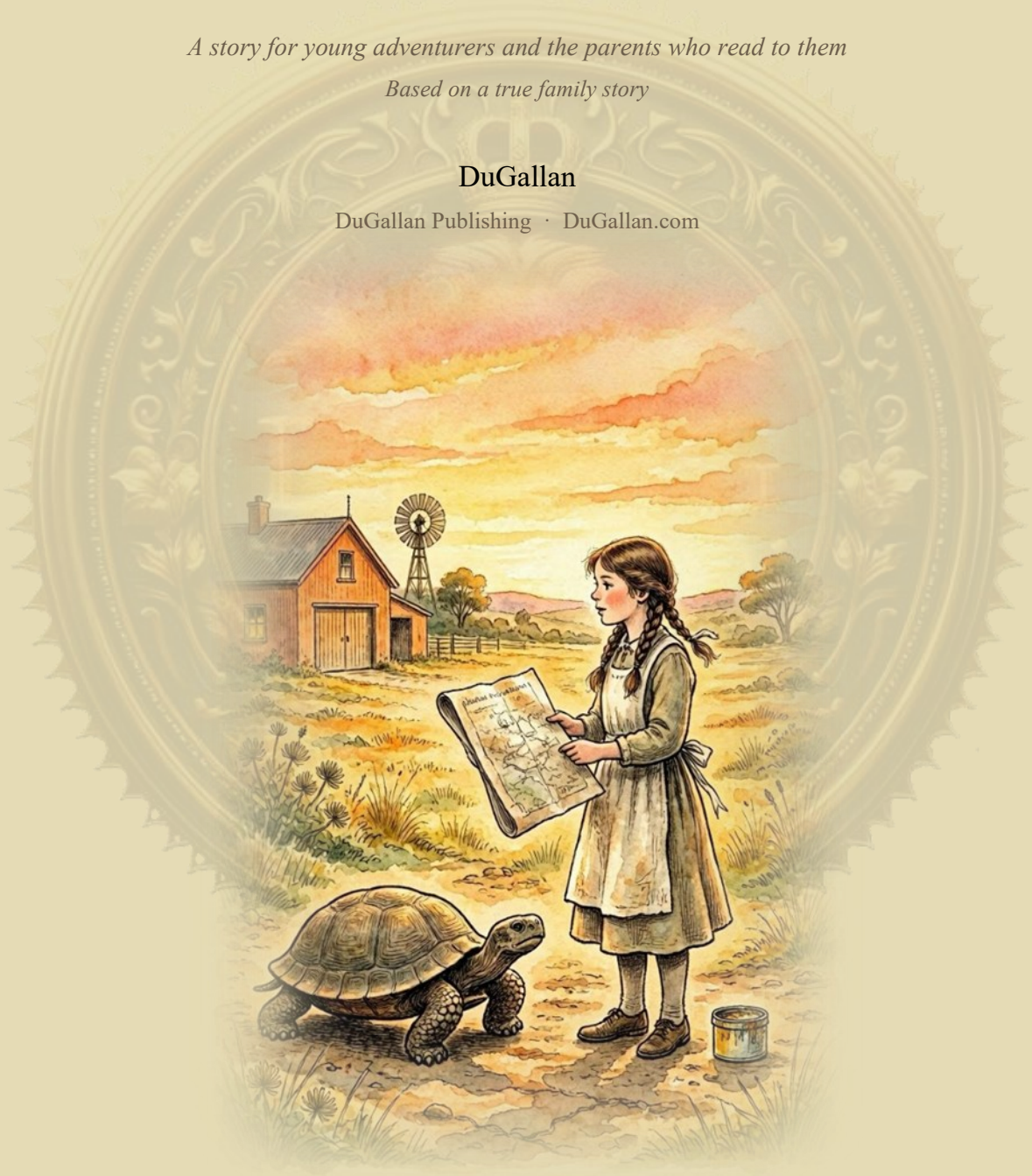
Start Where The Horses Ran

A story for young adventurers and the parents who read to them

Based on a true family story

DuGallan

DuGallan Publishing · DuGallan.com



THE HUGHES CHRONICLES — BOOK ONE

Start Where The Horses Ran

Copyright © 2026 by DuGallan

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise — without the prior written permission of the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

This book is a work of creative nonfiction based on the true story of Samuel Thomas Isaac Hughes and the Hughes family. The author has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the historical events and family recollections described. Some scenes, dialogue, and details have been reconstructed for narrative purposes, representing the author's honest interpretation of confirmed family history.

First published 2026

Published by DuGallan Publishing
Cape Town, South Africa
DuGallan.com

Written by DuGallan

For permissions: doug@dugallan.com



For

Daphne Rose Hughes-Warren

19 February 1926 — 2019

Who gave a lifetime to the search.

Who never stopped. Who never gave up.

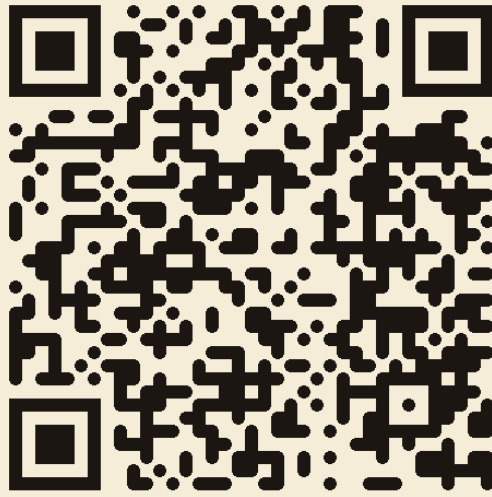
Who made sure the clues reached the right hands.

And for ST.

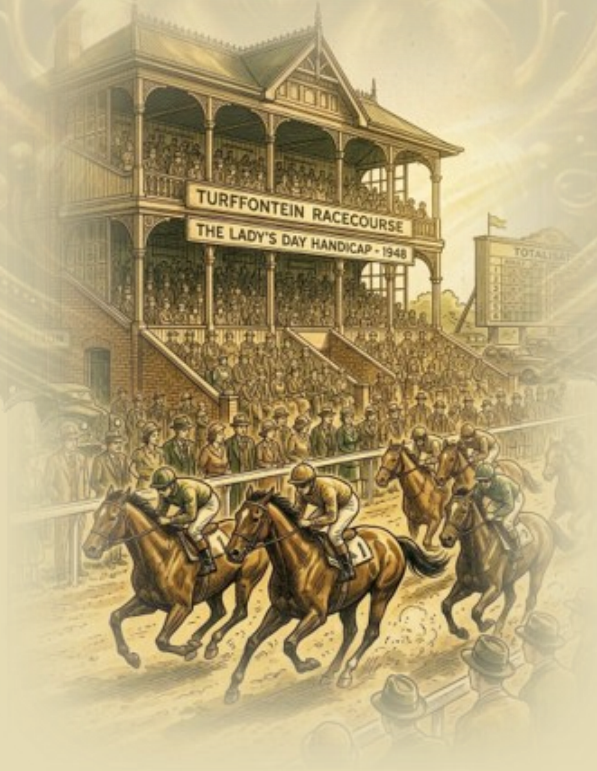
Whoever you truly were. Wherever you went.

We are still following.

Continue to read the book or
Read the Flipbook [HERE](#) or scan the QR CODE



The Hughes Chronicles — Book One
Scan to read · dugallan.com



A Note For Parents

The story you are about to read to your child is based on something true.

Samuel Thomas Isaac Hughes — known to everyone as ST — was a real man. He came from Wales, crossed an ocean, bred racehorses in the Orange Free State of South Africa, and created an herbal tea called Black Forest Tea that people travelled great distances to buy. In the late 1930s, he went to the Belgian Congo in search of the source of the herbs that made his tea so remarkable.

He was never seen again.

His daughter Daphne spent her life looking for him. She never found him. But she never stopped believing that the clues he left were enough — if only the right person followed them far enough.

The Hughes Chronicles tells the story of that search — from Daphne as a young girl in the Orange Free State, through her children, and through the grandchildren who are still following the trail today. The mystery is real. Some of the clues are real. The yellow shoes are absolutely real.

We hope you enjoy reading this together. Every chapter ends with a Clue Keeper — a record of what Daphne knows so far — and a question for your young reader to answer. The adventure continues in Book Two.

Follow the clues.

DuGallan

DuGallan Publishing

PROLOGUE

The Yellow Shoes



DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA — 1937

The SS Llandaff Castle had been at sea for three weeks when Daphne first smelled Africa.

It came through the porthole before the sun was even up — something warm and alive and green, nothing at all like the grey damp of England. She pressed her nose to the glass and breathed it in deeply.

Then she shook the bunk above her.

"Peggy. Peggy, wake up. We're here."

Her sister made a sound like a very small foghorn and pulled her blanket over her head.

"Peggy."

"Go away."

"Africa."

There was a pause. Then the blanket came down, and Peggy's head appeared — wild dark hair, wide eyes, and the expression she always wore when something interesting was about to happen.

"Africa," she said, as if tasting the word. Then she was out of the bunk in a single leap.

~ ~ ~

By the time the great steamliner groaned into Durban Harbour, every passenger was lined up on deck in their Sunday best. Hats straight. Shoes polished. The harbour master's rule had been announced at dinner the previous evening and again at breakfast that morning, because the harbour master was a man who believed that important rules should be said at least twice:

All shoes were to be left on the dock before disembarking. Something about cleanliness. Something about regulations.

What the harbour master had not announced — and truly could not have anticipated — was that somewhere in the bowels of Deck C, behind a stack of rope and a very surprised ship's cat, two girls had found a tin of yellow paint.

Nobody ever quite established how they got hold of it. Daphne always said it was Peggy's idea. Peggy always said it was Daphne's. The ship's cat, who had watched the whole thing, was not talking.



The first person to discover her shoes was Mrs Hartley-Browne from Cabin 14, who screamed so loudly that two seagulls fell off a post. Then Mr Pemberton found his. Then the Reverend Smythe found his, which produced language that was most surprising for a reverend.

Two hundred shoes. Yellow. Every single one.

~ ~ ~

ST — that was what people called Daphne's father, short for Samuel Thomas Isaac Hughes, which he considered far too long a name for everyday use — was taking his morning tea on the upper deck when the shouting started.

He was a tall man with a good moustache and the permanent expression of someone who was expecting things to go slightly wrong. He set his tea down very carefully. He leaned over the railing. He looked at the dock below, where passengers in their Sunday best were hopping about in yellow-painted fury.

He looked at his daughters.

Daphne and Peggy stood side by side, paint brushes behind their backs, attempting expressions of complete innocence. They were not very good at it. There was yellow paint on Daphne's nose. There was yellow paint on Peggy's ear.



"Well," said ST, in the quiet voice he always used just before things became expensive. "I suppose that's one way to arrive."

He paid for every pair. It took nearly everything in his coat pocket, which was most of what he had in the world just then.

But here is what she remembered most, years and years afterwards, when she was trying to explain her father to people who had never met him:

He paid for every shoe. And then he laughed.

Not at the passengers — he was very sorry about the passengers. He laughed the way people laugh when something is so absolutely ridiculous that there is simply no other possible response. He laughed until his eyes watered, and his moustache wobbled, and he pulled Daphne and Peggy to his sides and laughed some more.

"ST," said a stout woman nearby, in the voice of someone who had been personally offended, "this is NOT funny."

"No," said ST, wiping his eyes carefully. "Absolutely not. Dreadful business entirely."
And then he laughed again.

~ ~ ~

That was the day Daphne understood her father. Not everything — she would spend the rest of her life learning the rest — but the important part.

He was a man for whom life was simply too short and too strange to be taken entirely seriously. A man who could lose his last coins and still find something worth laughing about. A man who collected adventures the way other people collected stamps.

She just never imagined that one of those adventures would take him so far away that she could not follow.

Not then, anyway.

Not yet.

CHAPTER ONE

The Tin Trunk



SHANNON, ORANGE FREE STATE — 1940

There was a room in the farmhouse that Daphne was not allowed into.

This was, of course, the most interesting room in the house.

It was at the end of the upstairs corridor, behind a door that was kept locked with a key her mother wore around her neck. Daphne had been told — on three separate occasions and in no uncertain terms — that the room contained old things that were nothing to do with her and that she was not to go poking about.

Daphne was fourteen years old and extremely good at poking about.

The room had belonged to ST.

Three years had passed since he left for Johannesburg. Three years since the letter arrived saying he was going further — much further — into the Congo, following some business he couldn't explain in a letter but would explain in person when he returned.

He had not returned.

Daphne's mother had stopped talking about him in the particular way that adults stop talking about things when they are very frightened but cannot bring themselves to say so.

Daphne had not stopped thinking about him for a single day.

~ ~ ~

It was a Saturday in June — cold and bright, the way the Free State gets in winter — when Daphne's mother finally opened the door.

It happened without announcement. Daphne was in the kitchen eating bread and apricot jam when she heard the key turn in the lock at the end of the upstairs corridor. She set down her bread very quietly. She counted to twenty. Then she followed.



The room was smaller than she had imagined. There was a brass bed with no mattress. Three tea chests stacked against one wall. A photograph on the windowsill. And in the middle of the floor was the tin trunk.

It was olive-coloured, battered at the corners, with a leather strap around the middle and a small brass lock that had already been opened. Her mother was kneeling beside it with her back to the door, lifting things out one at a time and setting them carefully on the floor.

"Mama?"

"Come in then," she said, without turning around.

"Were you waiting for me to follow you?"

"I was waiting for you to be ready."

Daphne knelt beside her mother and looked into the trunk. It smelled of leather and old paper and something else she couldn't quite name — something that made her think of wide-open spaces and somewhere very far away.

"Do you think he's coming back?"

"Your father," she said at last, "was a man who loved secrets more than sense."

Which was not, Daphne noticed, an answer.

~ ~ ~

It was at the very bottom of the trunk, wrapped in a strip of old leather and tied with a piece of twine, that her mother went still.

Daphne saw her hands stop moving. She saw her mother look at the thing in her hands — an envelope, cream-coloured, with words written on the front in dark ink.

"What is it?"

Her mother held it out without a word. Daphne took it.

On the front, in her father's handwriting — she knew it from the letters she had kept — were seven words:

For Daphne. When she is ready.

Daphne stared at it for a long time.

"Open it, Daphne."

~ ~ ~

Inside the envelope were three things.

The first was a piece of paper, folded in quarters, that turned out to be a hand-drawn map. It was partial — half of something larger, the other half missing or perhaps never drawn. There were lines that might be roads or rivers, and one location marked with a small careful cross.

The second thing was a pressed flower. Orange, papery-thin, the colour of the sunset over the veld. She had never seen one quite like it.

The third thing was a smaller piece of paper, torn from a notebook, with a single line written on it in her father's hand:



"Start where the horses ran."

— ST

Daphne read it three times.

She knew this: he had left her a map and a message. For Daphne. When she is ready.

"Mama. What ran at the horses' paddock? Were there races nearby?"

"There's Old Joseph. Your father's stable hand. He's still in the tack room. He says he's staying until ST comes home."

"I'm going to talk to him," Daphne said.

"Be careful," her mother said quietly. "Of finding things out. Some things, once you know them, you can't unknow."

"I know," she said. "I'm going anyway."

She went down the corridor and down the stairs and out through the kitchen door into the cold, golden afternoon.

~ ~ ~

A tortoise. A very large, very slow tortoise, making its way with enormous dignity across the empty paddock, heading somewhere specific with the absolute confidence of an animal that has never once doubted where it is going.

"Do you know where the horses ran?"

The tortoise did not answer. But it kept walking, and its path led directly toward the tack room.

She decided to take this as a sign. She followed the tortoise.



CHAPTER TWO

Old Joseph

THE TACK ROOM — THE SAME EVENING

Old Joseph was sitting on an upturned bucket when Daphne found him, cleaning a bridle that had not held a horse's head in years.

"I wondered when you'd come," he said.

"Your father said you would. Eventually."

Old Joseph set down the bridle. He looked at his hands for a moment — large hands, the colour of old wood, patient hands that had held a thousand horses without fear.

"He said Peggy felt everything first. Like a horse does — before the storm, before the danger."

"And me?"

"He said you'd ask the right questions. He said the trick was making sure you asked them of the right people."

He was quiet for a long time. Long enough that the windmill outside made one slow, creaking revolution.

"He said the answer was in the orange."

Daphne's hand went to her pocket where the pressed flower sat.

"I thought he meant the province. The Orange Free State. But no. I don't think he did."

Old Joseph reached under the workbench and produced something small, wrapped in a piece of cloth. Inside was a small glass bottle, sealed with wax. Inside the bottle was a dried



flower — orange, papery-thin, exactly like the one in the envelope.

"He said, 'Give this to Daphne when she comes. Tell her the answer is in the orange. Not the province — the flower.'"

"Where did the flower come from?"

"That," he said carefully, "is what he went to find out."

~ ~ ~

"Did he leave anything else? Before Johannesburg?"

Old Joseph stood up slowly and moved to the door frame. He crouched down — not without difficulty — and pointed to something near the floor.

Daphne crouched beside him. There, carved into the wood of the door frame, so small and neat that you would only find it if you were looking:



ST

"He left his mark," Daphne said quietly.

"He always did. Wherever he went."

"Old Joseph. Do you think he's alive?"

"I think that if ST was dead, I would know it. The way a horse knows, before the rest of us. And I don't know it."

"I think he is somewhere. I think he left enough for you to find him. And I think he knew — he always knew — that you would be the one who came."

"Then I'll find him," she said.

"I know you will. That's why he left the clues for you."

~ ~ ~

Walking back to the house in the last of the light, Daphne thought about what she knew.

Tomorrow she would visit Peggy.

"You're very sure of yourself," she told the tortoise.

The tortoise did not reply. But it kept walking. Daphne went inside.

CHAPTER THREE

Don't Trust The Man With Two Watches



BLOEMFONTEIN — THE FOLLOWING DAY

The sanatorium was not what Daphne had expected.

She had imagined something dark and frightening. Instead it was pale and clean, with a garden that someone had planted with bright flowers and a corridor that smelled of lavender and floor polish.

Peggy's room was at the end of the corridor on the left. She was sitting at a table covered in paper — dozens of sheets, some finished, some half-done — and every one of them was a horse.

Then she saw Daphne. Something changed in her face. Something sharpened, like a lamp turned up.

"Daphne. You came."

"You have his eyes," she said.

"He loved horses. He said horses always knew first. The weather. Danger. Who was lying."

~ ~ ~

"You found the trunk."

"Did you find all three things? The map, the flower and the note?"

"Yes."

"Good."

Daphne brought out the glass bottle. Peggy looked at it for a long time without touching it.

"The flower is the key, Daphne. Not the map, not the note. The flower. Find where it grows and you'll find where he went."

Peggy reached for a fresh sheet of paper and drew quickly. She drew a river. Wide and slow. And in the middle of the river, an island — roughly the shape of a boot.



"It grows there. On the island. He found it there. He was very happy when he found it. And then he was afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Of what would happen if the wrong people found out about it."

~ ~ ~

"Was there a man? Someone who wanted what ST had found?"

"There was a man. A man who knew what the flower was worth. Who knew before your father did."

She leaned forward and gripped Daphne's wrist with surprising strength.

"Don't trust the man with two watches."

"Two watches?"

"He always wore two. One on each wrist. One for here. One for somewhere else."



Be careful, Daphne. The horses always know first. Remember that."

Daphne picked up the drawing, folded it carefully, and put it with the map and the envelope and the bottle.

"I'll find him, Peggy."

"I know. That's why he told me to wait."

CHAPTER FOUR

The Racing Ledger

SHANNON — TWO DAYS LATER



The tea chests had been there all along.

The third time Daphne climbed the stairs alone, she opened a tea chest. The smell hit her before she could see anything. Dried herbs. Dozens of small bundles of them, carefully wrapped in brown paper and tied with string. The flower on each bundle was orange, papery-thin.

The same as the flower in the envelope. The same as the flower in the bottle Old Joseph had kept.

Black Forest Tea.

~ ~ ~

Beneath the herb bundles, at the bottom of the second chest, she found the ledger.

It was large and heavy, with a battered leather cover and ST's initials stamped into the front. Most of it was horse names, race dates, track names. But near the back, the handwriting changed.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Dead End And The Door



SHANNON — THE NEXT MORNING

The Post Office Master Mrs. Hendricka Heyneke at the post office knew the name.

"Barnard. CJ Barnard. Yes, I remember him. A bookmaker. Had an office above the feed store. Left some years ago — must be 1934. Sudden departure. Didn't say goodbye to anyone."

"Do you know where he went?"

"Nobody knew. Just gone one morning."

~ ~ ~

The stairs up the side of the feed store were old and complained loudly about being used. The door at the top was unlocked — perhaps it had been unlocked for years.

Inside was a small, dusty office. A desk. A chair. On the walls, faded racing sheets. On the floor, a scattering of paper and the remains of a dead plant.

And on the floor, half under the desk, a photograph.

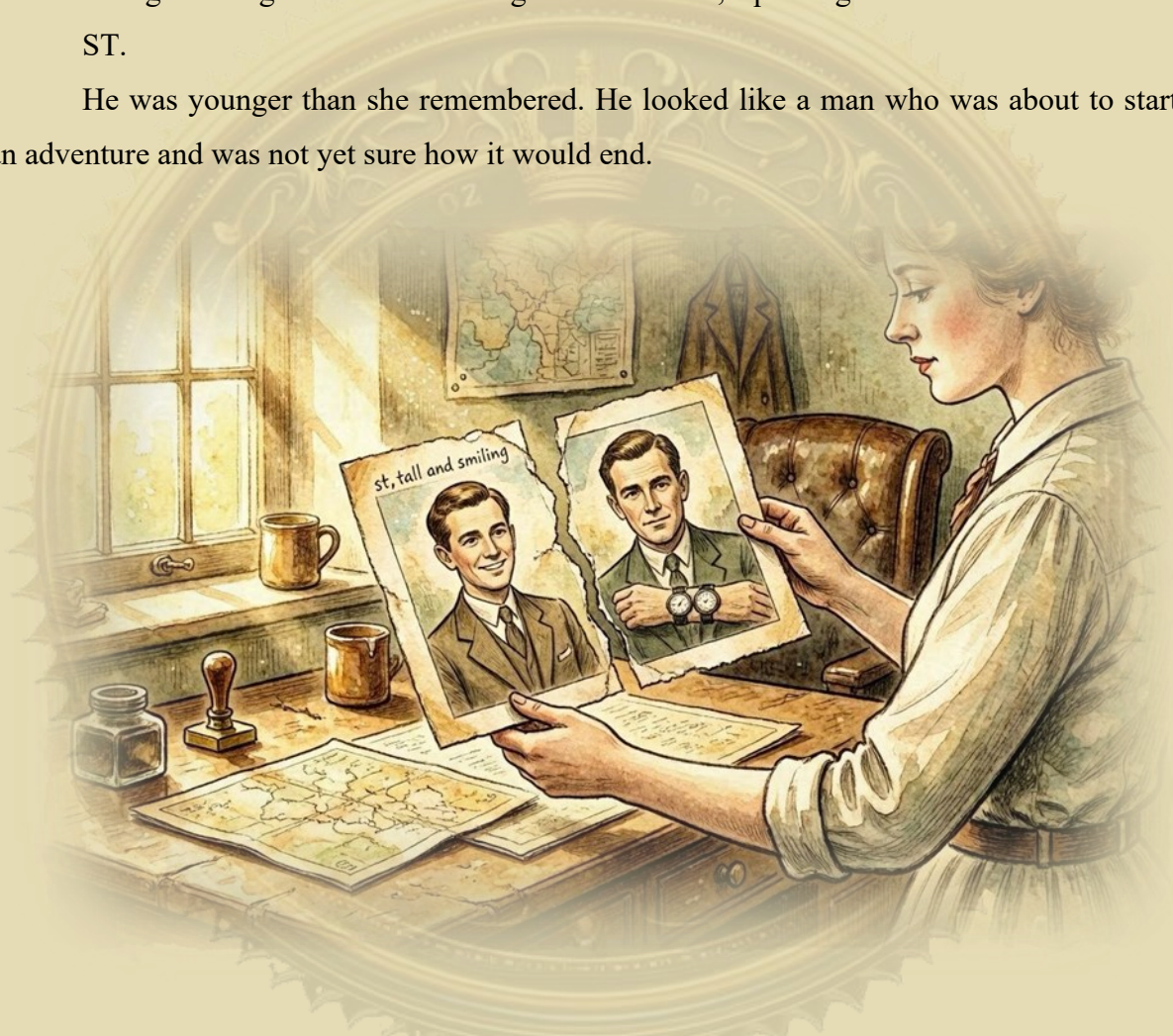
She almost didn't see it. She was turning to leave when the light caught the glossy surface.

It was the other half of the photograph from the tea chest.

And here, on the left half that had been missing, standing on the steps of that Johannesburg building: a tall man with a good moustache, squinting into the sun.

ST.

He was younger than she remembered. He looked like a man who was about to start an adventure and was not yet sure how it would end.



The photograph had been torn. Barnard had torn his own face out of a photograph that also contained ST.

Why would a man tear himself out of a photograph?

Because he didn't want to be recognised. Because he knew someone would come looking, eventually.

She put both halves of the photograph into her pocket.

The dead end had a door in it after all. The door led to Johannesburg.

CHAPTER SIX

Start Where The Horses Ran



SHANNON — THAT EVENING

Her mother was quiet for a very long time.

Daphne had laid everything on the kitchen table — the map, the pressed flower, the glass bottle, Peggy's drawing, the ledger open to CJ Barnard's name, the torn photograph, both halves together. Her mother looked at each thing in turn. She did not touch any of them.

"He looks happy. This was taken before everything went wrong."

"What went wrong, Mama?"

"There was a woman. Before the Congo. She took most of his money. Everything he'd saved. The tea business, the horses — all of it, gone."

"And then he went to the Congo. To find the flower. To start again."

"To find what he'd lost. And a good deal more. He was always looking for something more."

~ ~ ~

"Mama. The note says start where the horses ran. He means Johannesburg. Turffontein. That's where most of the racing entries are."

"You're fourteen years old."

"You could take me."

Her mother looked at the laid-out evidence on the table for a long time.

"One week. We go for one week. And if it leads somewhere dangerous, we come straight home."

Daphne reached across the table and covered her mother's hand with hers.

"Thank you," she said.

"He would have liked you so much. This determined, impossible, wonderful girl you've become."

"He's still out there. I know it. Old Joseph knows it."

Her mother picked up the pressed orange flower and held it very carefully.

"Then we'd better go and find out where," she said.

~ ~ ~

That night, Daphne lay in bed and looked at the ceiling and thought about Johannesburg — the addresses in the ledger and the man with two watches who had torn himself out of a photograph and run.

Daphne was going to find out what it was.

Even if nobody wanted her to.

Daphne's Clue Keeper

Everything we know so far
Keep this safe — these are your clues!



ST'S MESSAGE:

'Start where the horses ran.' — Turffontein Racecourse, Johannesburg

THE PARTIAL MAP:

Half a map. One location marked with a cross. The other half is missing.

THE ORANGE FLOWER:

'The answer is in the orange.' — not the province. The FLOWER.

THE FLOWER'S SECRET:

It grows on a boot-shaped island in a Congo river. ST found it there.

OLD JOSEPH'S WORDS:

'If ST was dead, I would know it. He is somewhere.'

PEGGY'S WARNING:

'Don't trust the man with two watches.'

THE TWO WATCHES:

One for local time. One for somewhere else. This man knew what the flower was worth.

THE RACING LEDGER:

CJ Barnard — circled three times. 'Congo — he knows.'

THE TORN PHOTOGRAPH:

Two men on Johannesburg steps. One is ST. The other tore his own face out.

THE INITIALS:

ST is carved into the tack room door frame. He always left his mark.

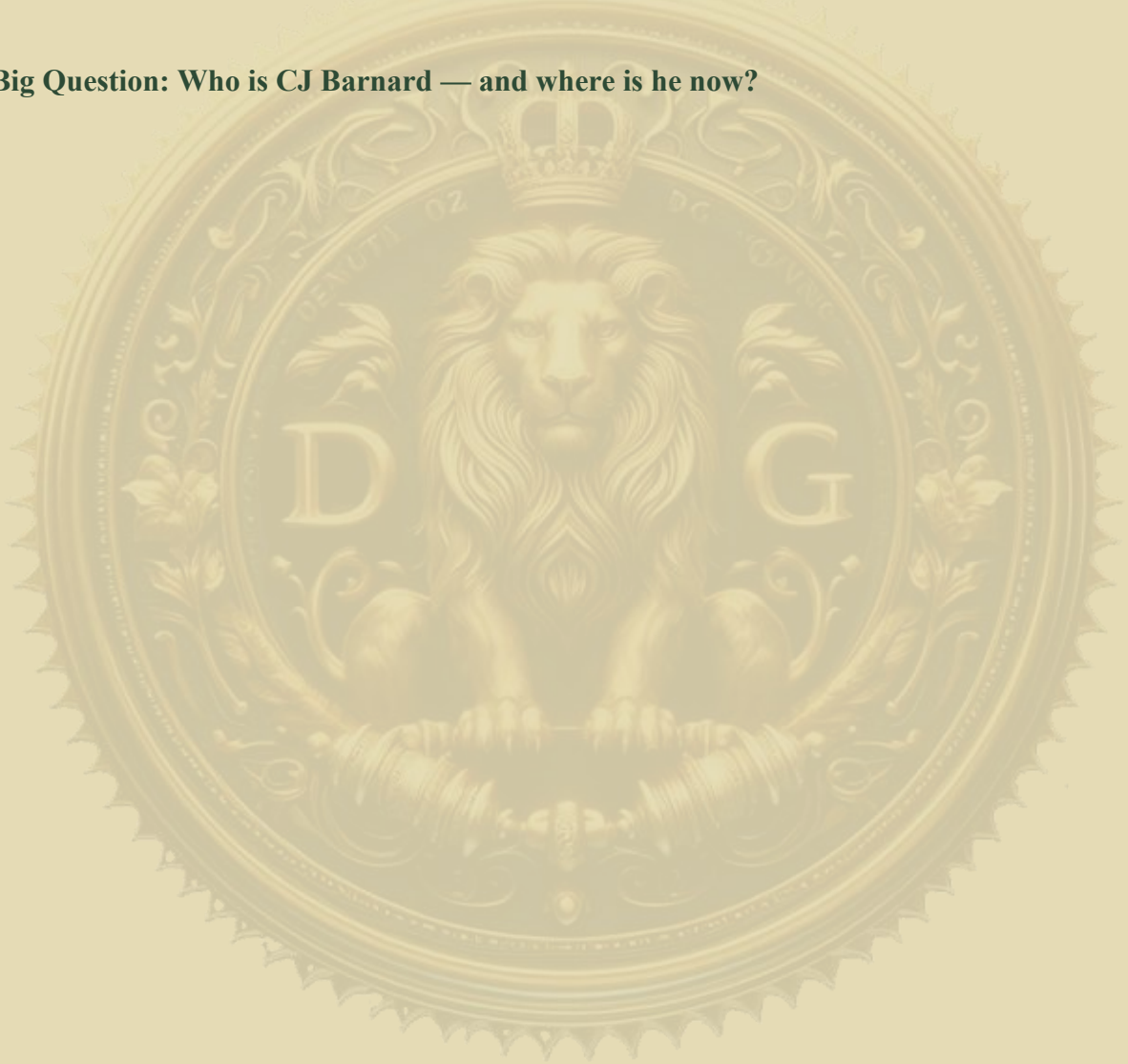
WHAT MAMA SAID:

A woman took ST's money before the Congo. He went to find what he'd lost — and more.

NEXT STOP:

Johannesburg. Turffontein Racecourse. Start where the horses ran.

Big Question: Who is CJ Barnard — and where is he now?



What Would YOU Do?

Daphne is on her way to Johannesburg. When she gets to Turffontein, she finds an old man who sharpens knives outside the gate. He knew ST. He says:

"Your father used to buy a paper from me every race day. He always said: follow the form, not the rumour. Whatever you're looking for — follow the form."

If you were Daphne, what would you do first?

- A) Go to the racing secretary's office and ask to see old race records — find out which days Barnard worked.
- B) Walk the racecourse and ask the oldest workers if they remember ST and Barnard.
- C) Go to the address on the back of the photograph — the Johannesburg building where the picture was taken.

Find out what Daphne chooses in Book Two:

"The Man With Two Watches"

Available at DuGallan.com

Fun Facts For Curious Readers

The Orange Free State

The Orange Free State gets its name from the Orange River, which flows through southern Africa. In ST's time — the 1920s and 1930s — it was a wide farming land of horse studs, small towns, and the last echoes of the old Boer Republics. Shannon was a real settlement there.

Turffontein Racecourse

Turffontein Racecourse in Johannesburg opened in 1887 and is still running races today — one of the oldest racecourses in South Africa. In ST's time, it was where fortunes were made and lost in an afternoon.

The Tortoise

The tortoise Daphne met in the paddock would have been an Angulate Tortoise — one of the most common tortoises in southern Africa, and one of the most confident. They live for up to a hundred years.

The Congo River

The Congo River is the second longest river in Africa and one of the deepest rivers in the world. It winds through the heart of Central Africa through dense jungle that, in ST's time in the 1930s, was still largely unmapped by outsiders.

Herbal Tea and Old Knowledge

For thousands of years, people across the world have used plants as medicine. In Wales — where ST came from — there was a long tradition of herbal knowledge passed down through families.



He left clues. We're still following them.



DuGallan Publishing · DuGallan.com

Follow the clues.