

# The Hughes Chronicles



# The Bloemfontein Letters

**Book Three**

**DuGallan**

THE DUGALLAN CHRONICLES

Book Three

# THE HUGHES CHRONICLES

## *The Bloemfontein Letters*

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

*Based on a true family story*

DuGallan

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POST OFFICE

THE HUGHES CHRONICLES — BOOK THREE

*The Bloemfontein Letters*

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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

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*For*

**Hendrika Heyneke**

*Postmaster, Shannon, Orange Free State*

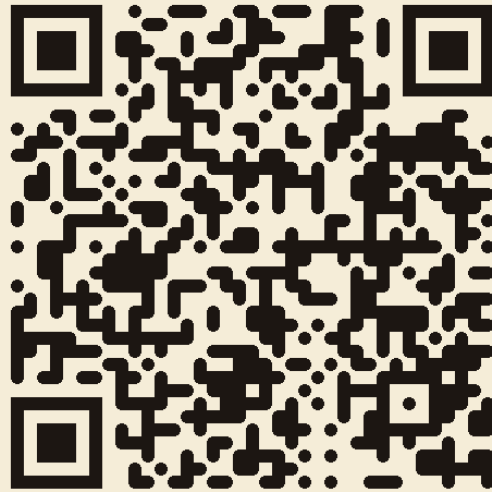
*Who kept the letters.*

*Who understood that some things must be held until the right person comes.*

*Whose daughter came to us across sixty years and a family mystery.*

**We did not know, when we began looking, that you had been watching all along.**

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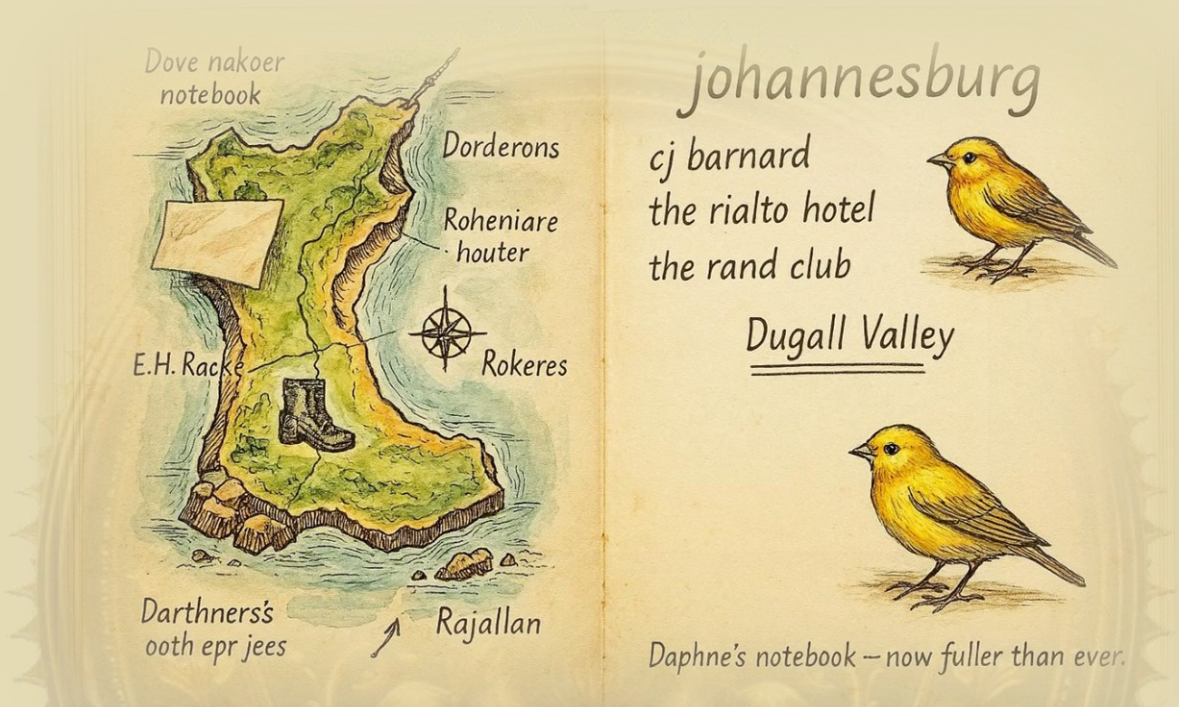


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BEFORE WE BEGIN

## What I Know So Far



Before we go any further, let me tell you what I know.

My father's name is ST — Samuel Thomas Isaac Hughes — and he has been missing since I was young. He left Wales, crossed an ocean, settled in Shannon in the Orange Free State, bred racehorses, created a remarkable herbal tea called Black Forest Tea, and was swindled out of everything by a woman I still cannot name. Then he went to the Belgian Congo to find the source of the flower that made his tea extraordinary.

He left me a partial map, a pressed orange flower, and a note: 'Start where the horses ran — ST.' Old Joseph in the Shannon tack room gave me a glass bottle with the same flower inside and a message: the answer is in the orange. Not the province. The flower.

My sister Peggy, in her institution in Bloemfontein, drew me a picture of a river with a boot-shaped island. That is where the flower grows. That is where ST found it. And she warned me: don't trust the man with two watches.

In Johannesburg I found the man with two watches. His name is CJ Barnard — a bookmaker who knew what ST's flower was worth before ST fully understood it himself. I saw his face in a photograph at Turffontein Racecourse. I saw him following us through the streets of Johannesburg. He is real. He is still looking. He has not found what ST hid.

At the Rialto Hotel, a barman called Charlie Mokoena gave me a key ST had left twelve years earlier. Key number 7. At the Rand Club, it opened a locker. Inside: the second half of the map. Complete. The full river route. The boot-shaped island marked with a cross and these words in ST's handwriting: 'Here. The flower grows here. Nov 1938 — ST.'

He was there in November 1938. He was alive. He left a trail complete enough for his fourteen-year-old daughter to follow across half the country.

And beside the island cross, a Welsh word: DuGall. A valley in Wales where medicinal herbs were cultivated for centuries. The Congo flower and the Welsh valley are connected. ST knew. Barnard wants that knowledge.

I have the complete map. I have the canary ST built and left at the Rialto — still singing, which means we are safe, which means we are going the right way. I have a threatening letter that arrived from Johannesburg after I got home, telling me to stop looking.

I did not stop. I am going back to Shannon. There is a postmaster at the post office — a woman called Hendrika. She has been holding letters that arrived for ST after he disappeared. Letters that were never collected. Letters that nobody knew to ask for.

Until now.

**Come with me.**

CHAPTER ONE

## The Letter From Nowhere

SHANNON — AUGUST 1940



The letter arrived on a Tuesday.

Daphne was in the kitchen helping her mother with the bread when she heard the post van on the road. She had been back in Shannon for two weeks — two weeks of going through her notes, organising everything she had found in Johannesburg, drawing the complete map cleanly in a fresh notebook so she could study it without the creases and the wear of travel.

She had not been frightened. She had been methodical. There was too much to do to be frightened.

The letter changed that, slightly.

It was a plain white envelope, her name on the front in careful typewritten letters. No return address. Johannesburg postmark dated twelve days ago.

Inside, one line:

***Stop looking, Miss Hughes. Or what happened to your father will happen to you.***

Daphne read it twice. Then she put it on the kitchen table and looked at it for a long time.

Then she went to the windowsill and looked at the canary.

It was singing. A small, elaborate, entirely contented series of notes, the same as it sang every morning when the light came through the window.

Daphne looked at the letter. Looked at the canary. Looked at the letter again.

*"You could show that to the police," her mother said from the doorway.*

*"They would tell me to stop looking. Which is what whoever sent it wants."*

*"Daphne —"*

*"The canary is still singing, Mama."*

Her mother looked at the bird for a long moment.

*"That is not a logical argument."*

*"No," Daphne agreed. "But ST left it for a reason. And it has not stopped singing. Not once. Not even when I saw Barnard in the street."*

Her mother came and sat down. She looked at the letter on the table.

*"What happened to your father could mean anything. It could mean he made a mistake. It could mean someone stopped him."*

*"I know."*

*"It could be a direct threat."*

*"I know."*

Her mother was quiet.

*"What are you going to do?"*

Daphne folded the letter carefully and put it in the back of her notebook, behind the complete map, where it would be available as evidence if she ever needed it.

*"I am going to the post office," she said. "The postmaster. She has been holding letters for ST. I want to see them."*

Her mother looked at her for a long moment with the expression she had worn since the tin trunk — a mixture of fear and pride and something that had no simple name.

*"I will come with you," she said.*

~ ~ ~



The Shannon post office was a modest building on the main road, with a painted wooden sign above the door and a bulletin board in the window where notices about missing livestock and church bring-and-buy sales were pinned in cheerful disorder.

Behind the counter was a young woman in her mid-twenties, with dark hair and careful eyes and the particular attentiveness of someone who has recently arrived somewhere and is still learning its patterns.

Her name, according to the small sign on the counter, was H. Heyneke.

She looked at Daphne with immediate recognition.

*"Miss Hughes," she said.*

*"You know who I am?"*

*"I have been expecting you. Or someone like you. Eventually."*

She reached under the counter without further preamble and produced a small bundle of envelopes, bound with a piece of string. She set them on the counter between them.

*"These arrived for your father after he stopped writing. I have been holding them."*

Daphne looked at the bundle. Three envelopes. Different handwriting on each. Different postmarks.

*"How long have you been holding them?"*

*"Since I started here. The previous person left them in the drawer marked uncollected with a note: these belong to ST Hughes. Hold until he returns or someone comes asking."*

She looked at Daphne steadily.

*"No one came asking for a long time."*

*"I am asking now."*

*"I know," said Hendrika Heyneke. "I have been waiting."*

## CHAPTER TWO

# Three Letters

SHANNON POST OFFICE — THE SAME MORNING



Daphne looked at each envelope in turn before opening any of them.

This was something she had learned from the tin trunk — from ST himself, perhaps, since she seemed to have inherited the habit without being taught it. Look at the outside first. The outside tells you something before the inside tells you everything.

The first envelope: a Welsh postmark, 1939. The return address was a place she didn't recognise — a village name in mid-Wales, too small to appear on any map she had seen. The handwriting was neat and old-fashioned, the kind that belonged to someone who had learned to write with great care and maintained it as a matter of personal dignity.

The second envelope: a Léopoldville postmark, 1939. No return address. The handwriting was hurried — angular, compressed, the writing of someone with not enough time or not enough space or both.

The third envelope: a Johannesburg postmark, 1939. No return address. Typed, not handwritten. The same careful typeface as the threatening letter she had received two weeks ago.

The same typeface.

She looked at it for a moment longer than the others.

Then she opened the Welsh letter first.

~ ~ ~

It was written in English with occasional Welsh phrases that she couldn't read — short, careful phrases that appeared to be names of places or plants.

The writer addressed ST as an old friend. He — she felt certain it was a man, though she couldn't have said why — wrote about a valley. About something that had been lost from that valley many generations ago. About a connection he had always suspected between the valley and something further east, much further east, that the old records mentioned but never explained.

He wrote that he had received ST's last letter and understood what it meant. That the connection was real. That ST was right about DuGall. That the valley and the island were not coincidence — they were two parts of something that had been separated a very long time ago.

And then, near the end of the letter, a single sentence that Daphne read three times:



***What you found on the island is what we lost from the valley two hundred years ago. It was taken. It was not given. If you have found the way to bring it back together, then what your grandfather began is finally within reach.***

What your grandfather began.

ST's grandfather. Not ST. His grandfather.

This had been going on for longer than ST's lifetime.

~ ~ ~

The second letter — from Léopoldville — was short.

It was written in the hand of someone frightened, or cold, or both. The sentences were incomplete in places, as if the writer had stopped and started several times.

***The arrangement is complicated. B. knows more than we thought. The item remains where you left it — no one has been to the island. I cannot stay in L. much longer. If you do not hear from me again it means what you think it means. The map is the only way. Trust the flower. Trust the valley. Trust nothing else.***

No signature. Just a date. November 1939.

One year after ST had marked the island on the map.

Someone had been with him, or near him, or in contact with him. Someone who knew about the arrangement, about B — Barnard, she was almost certain — about the island and the item left there.

And then nothing. If you do not hear from me again.

She did not hear again. The letters stopped.

~ ~ ~

The third letter she opened slowly.

One line. Typewritten. The same typeface as the letter that had arrived at the Shannon farmhouse two weeks ago:

***Tell him to stop. Or we will stop him ourselves.***

It was addressed to ST. Written in 1939. But the typeface was identical to the letter written to Daphne in 1940.

The same machine. The same person. Or someone using the same machine across two years and two targets.

CJ Barnard had been threatening ST. And now he was threatening ST's daughter.

The threats had been going on for years. The trail had been going on for longer.

*"Miss Hughes," said Hendrika Heyneke quietly.*

Daphne looked up.

*"Are you all right?"*

*"Yes," said Daphne. "I am absolutely all right."*

She looked at the three letters spread on the counter before her. The Welsh letter with its two-hundred-year reference. The Léopoldville letter with its frightened sentences. The typed threat.

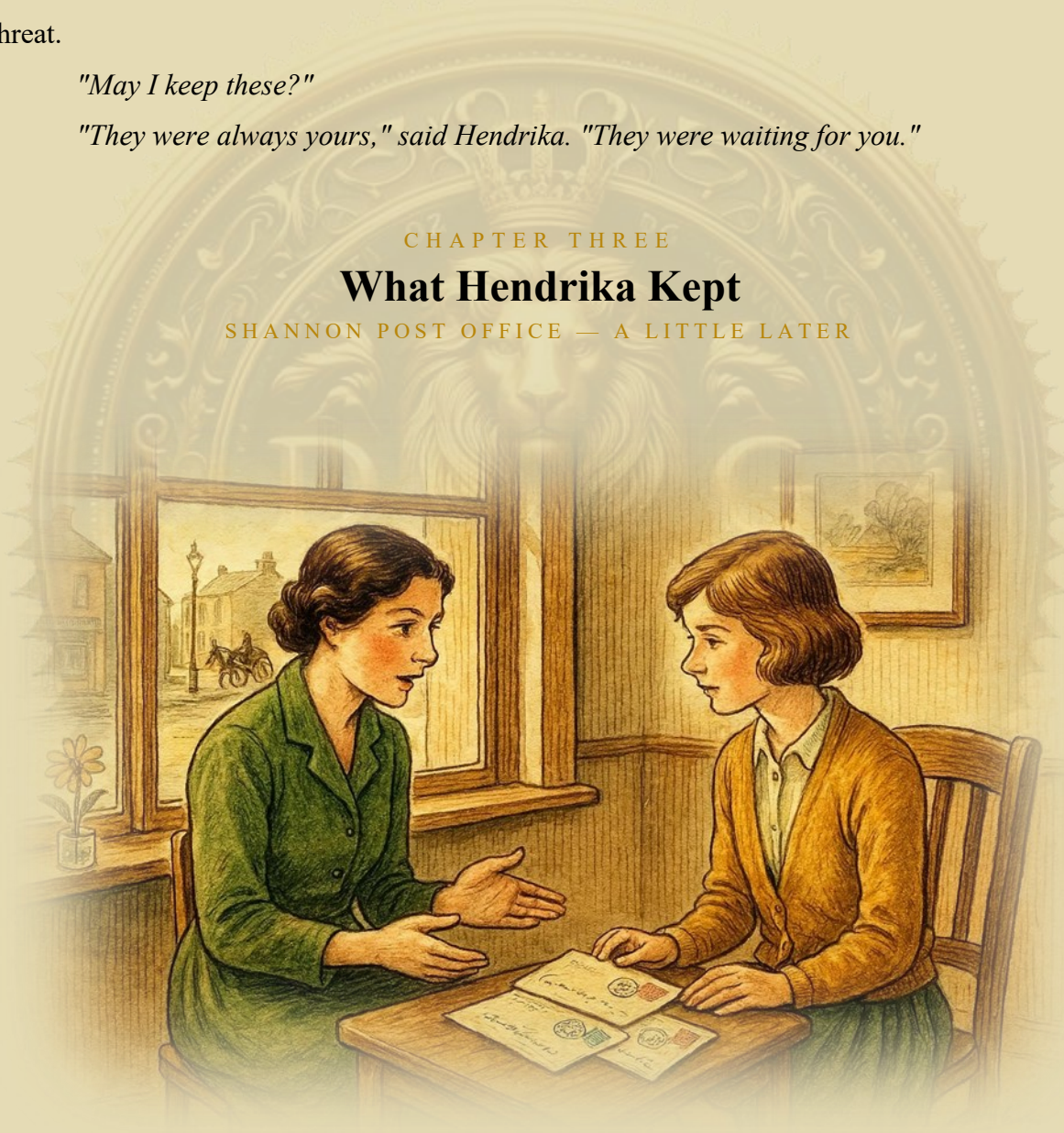
*"May I keep these?"*

*"They were always yours," said Hendrika. "They were waiting for you."*

CHAPTER THREE

## What Hendrika Kept

SHANNON POST OFFICE — A LITTLE LATER



Hendrika Heyneke had come to Shannon from Bloemfontein less than a year ago.

She had taken the post office job because it was available and because she had needed to leave the city for reasons she didn't explain, and because a small town in the Free State seemed like a place where she could think.

What she hadn't expected was to inherit a mystery.

*"When I found the uncollected letters in the drawer," she said, "I asked around. Everyone knew who ST Hughes was. The Welshman. The horse breeder. The man with the extraordinary tea. The man who went to the Congo."*

She paused.

*"The man who didn't come back."*

*"What did people say about him?"*

*"Different things. Some said he was foolish to go. Some said something must have happened to him — the Congo was not a safe place. Some said —"*

She stopped.

*"Some said what?"*

*"Some said he had enemies. That he had been involved in something complicated. That the man who left Shannon in such a hurry — the bookmaker — had something to do with it."*

*"CJ Barnard."*

*"I didn't know his name then. I do now."*

Daphne looked at her.

*"How?"*

Hendrika reached into her apron pocket and produced a fourth envelope. This one she did not hand over immediately.

*"This one I kept back," she said. "I am sorry. I should have given it to you with the others. But I read it when it arrived and I — I wasn't sure. I didn't know who to trust."*

*"When did it arrive?"*

*"Last month. August 1940."*

Daphne went very still.

*"Last month. After I went to Johannesburg."*

*"Yes."*

Hendrika held out the fourth envelope.

It was addressed not to ST but to his daughter.

In handwriting Daphne didn't recognise.

She opened it.



Inside was a single folded page. The handwriting was old — not ancient, but old — the careful cursive of someone who had learned to write in another era, another language perhaps. There were Welsh phrases mixed through it, more than in the letter from Wales, as if the writer had stopped caring whether the reader understood Welsh and was writing in whatever came naturally.

But in English, clearly, in the middle of the page:

***She will come to Shannon. She will find the letters. When she does, tell her this: the valley is still there. The family is still there. The knowledge was kept. It was waiting for him to return. Now it waits for her. Tell her: Daffodil means coming home.***

No date. No signature.

Just those words.

And at the bottom of the page, very small, in different ink — as if added after the rest was written:



***The canary knows the way.***

Daphne sat very still for a long time.

The canary. Nobody knew about the canary. Nobody in Shannon knew she had collected it from the Rialto Hotel. Nobody knew ST had left it with Charlie Mokoena. It was not something she had told anyone.

But this letter, written by someone she had never met, addressed to her — referred to the canary.

Which meant the writer knew ST. Knew the canary. Knew the trail.

Which meant someone, somewhere, had been watching. Not with threat — the tone was not threatening. It was the tone of someone who had been waiting a long time for something to move.

*"This letter arrived last month," Daphne said carefully. "After I went to Johannesburg. After I collected the canary."*

*"Yes."*

*"Someone told whoever wrote this that I had been to Johannesburg. That I had found the canary."*

Hendrika was quiet.

*"Charlie Mokoena," Daphne said. Not an accusation. A realisation. "He told someone. Someone on the same side as ST. Someone who has been watching for the trail to be picked up."*

She looked at the letter.

*"They didn't tell Barnard. They told this person. And this person wrote to me."*

She folded the letter carefully.

*"**There is a family in Wales,**" she said, half to herself. "In the DuGall valley. They have been keeping something. And they have been waiting for ST — or someone who came after him — to come."*

CHAPTER FOUR

## Back To Peggy

BLOEMFONTEIN SANATORIUM — SEPTEMBER 1940



Peggy knew something had happened before Daphne said a word.

She looked at her sister the way Old Joseph had looked at Daphne on that first evening in the tack room — with the recognition of someone who has been waiting and knows the wait is over.

*"You found the letters," she said.*

*"Yes. How did you know there were letters?"*

*"He told me. Before he went back. He said there would be letters waiting. He said the post office would hold them."*

Daphne sat down. She looked at her sister — at the drawings of horses covering every surface, at the two tiny letters in the corner of each one.

*"Peggy. Did he tell you everything?"*

Peggy was quiet for a moment. She picked up a pencil and turned it in her fingers.

*"He told me what he thought I could carry. He said some things were too heavy for one person and needed to be shared. He said he was sharing different pieces with different people so that if something happened to one of them, the others would still have their piece."*

"He was building a network," Daphne said slowly. "Before he left. Deliberately. Different clues with different people, different letters to different addresses. So that no single person could be made to give up the whole picture."

"Yes," said Peggy. "**He called it the arrangement.**"

The word from the Léopoldville letter. The arrangement.

"**Who else is part of it? Besides you and Old Joseph and Charlie Mokoena?**"

Peggy looked at the window for a moment.

"There is a man in Wales. In the valley. He has part of the knowledge that ST could not carry safely."

"DuGall valley."

Peggy looked at her sharply.

"You know the name."

"It was on the map. And I found it in a dictionary."

Peggy was quiet. Then she smiled — the quick, bright smile that was so like ST that it always caught Daphne off guard.

"He said you'd find it. He said you'd be the one who would look in the dictionary instead of walking past it."

~ ~ ~

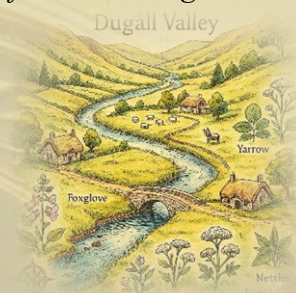
They talked for two hours. It was the longest, clearest conversation Daphne had ever had with Peggy — the longest stretch of sharpness, of presence, of real exchange. Later, thinking about it on the drive back to Shannon, Daphne wondered if Peggy's condition was not what the nurses believed. Whether the fog that sometimes descended was not illness but choice — a way of protecting what she knew by making herself appear not to know it.

But that was a thought for later.

For now, she had what Peggy had given her.

The man in Wales was named Emrys. Just that — Peggy either didn't know his surname or chose not to say. He was old. He had been old when ST knew him. He was the keeper of the valley's knowledge.

The connection between DuGall valley and the Congo island was this: centuries ago, an explorer — possibly Dutch, possibly Portuguese, the records were confused — had taken plants from the DuGall valley to Central Africa as part of a trading expedition. The plants had adapted. Grown. Changed slightly in the new soil and climate. Become something related to but different from the Welsh original.



ST had been the first person to understand that the Congo flower and the Welsh plants were the same family. That together — the original Welsh cultivar and the adapted African version — they produced something neither could produce alone.

**That was what Barnard wanted. Not just the island. Not just the valley. The formula that combined them.**

ST had worked it out. And then he had hidden it — split across the map, the letters, Peggy's knowledge, Emrys in Wales — so that no single person could take it.

*"Peggy," Daphne said, near the end, "do you think he's alive?"*



Peggy looked at the drawing on the table in front of her — a horse, mid-gallop, the lines fast and certain. In the corner: ST.

*"I think," she said carefully, "that he is somewhere where it is not safe to come home. And I think he knows we are looking. And I think —"*

She stopped.

*"What?"*

*"I think the canary is still singing," she said.*

Daphne stared at her.

*"You know about the canary?"*

Peggy smiled.

*"He told me about the canary. He said: when the right person collects it, the trail will have begun. The canary will tell you if you're going the right way."*

She looked at Daphne.

*"Is it singing?"*

*"Every morning."*

*"Then you are going the right way," said Peggy, with complete certainty. "Keep going."*



CHAPTER FIVE

## The Letter Back

SHANNON — OCTOBER 1940



She wrote three drafts before she was satisfied.

The first was too long — she put everything in it, all the clues, all the connections, and then realised that was exactly what ST had been careful not to do. No single letter. No single person with the whole picture.

The second was too short — just a request for information, formal and careful, that could have been written by anyone and would have told Emrys in Wales nothing about whether she was the right person to write it.

The third was right.

She wrote to the address on the Welsh envelope. She wrote in English, because she had no Welsh, but she included one phrase she had looked up in the library dictionary — the phrase for coming home. She wrote it at the end, the way a password might be used, the way ST might have used it.

She said she was Daphne. That she had found the map and the letters. That she had collected the canary and it was still singing. That she understood about the valley and the island

and the connection between them. That she did not yet know how to bring them together but that she intended to find out.

And she asked one question, simply, at the end:

***What did ST's grandfather begin?***

She posted it the next morning at Shannon post office.

Hendrika took the envelope with the Welsh address and looked at it for a moment.

***"You are writing to Wales," she said.***

*"Yes."*

*"Then you are further along than most people get."*

***"What do you mean?"***

Hendrika set the envelope carefully in the outgoing tray.

*"I mean that in nearly a year here, you are the first person who has come asking the right questions. The letters sat in that drawer for years. Your father left Shannon — what, three years ago? And in all that time, nobody came asking."*

She looked at Daphne.

*"Until you."*

Daphne thought about this.

*"Did you read the Welsh letter? When it arrived?"*

A pause. Honest.

*"Yes. I know I should not have. But in a small town, the postmaster knows everything eventually. I thought — I thought if I understood what was in it, I would know better what to do with it."*

*"What did you think when you read it?"*

Hendrika was quiet for a moment.

*"I thought whoever wrote it had been waiting a very long time. I thought the waiting was almost over. And I thought: when the daughter comes, I will give her everything. Because the daughter is the one it was all waiting for."*

She looked at Daphne directly.

*"Was I right?"*

*"I don't know yet," Daphne said honestly. "But I intend to find out."*

~ ~ ~

Three weeks later, a letter arrived from Wales.

Hendrika telephoned the farmhouse — the party line, four rings for the Hughes farm — and Daphne walked to the post office in the winter sunshine to collect it.

It was thin. One page. Careful handwriting, the same as the first letter.

It began in Welsh and then switched to English, as if the writer had started in his natural language and then remembered who he was writing to.

It said: yes. She was the one. The canary confirmed it.

It said: what ST's grandfather began was a search that had been going for three generations. That the Hughes family and the DuGall valley had been connected since before ST was born. That the knowledge of how to bring the two halves together had been kept in the valley, waiting for the day someone reached the island and came home to claim it.

It said: when you are ready to come to Wales, we will be here.

And at the very bottom, in different ink, three words in Welsh that she looked up carefully that same evening in the library dictionary:



*Croeso adref, Daffodil.*

— ST

Welcome home, Daffodil.

Not Emrys's handwriting. Different ink, different hand.

ST's handwriting.

She sat in the library for a very long time.

CHAPTER SIX

## What Comes Next

SHANNON — NOVEMBER 1940



Her mother held the Welsh letter for a long time.

She looked at the three words at the bottom — the handwriting she knew better than her own — and she did not speak for several minutes.

Daphne waited.

Outside the window, the Shannon veld was dark and still, the winter stars sharp and close, the windmill making its slow sound.

*"He wrote this," her mother said finally.*

*"The handwriting is his," Daphne said carefully. "Yes."*

*"Which means he was in contact with Emrys in Wales at some point after — after the letters stopped coming from Léopoldville."*

Her mother set the letter down very carefully on the table. She straightened it. She looked at it.

*"He is alive."*

*"The handwriting suggests he was alive when this was written. I can't tell you when that was — Emrys didn't date his letter and the addition at the bottom has no date either."*

*"But after 1939. After the Léopoldville letters stopped."*

"Yes."

Her mother sat down. Daphne watched her process this — watched the years of grief and uncertainty move through her face like weather.

**"Why didn't he come home?"**

It was the question. The only question that mattered.

*"I don't know," Daphne said. "Not yet. But I think Peggy is right — I think he is somewhere where it isn't safe to come back. Where coming back would put us in danger. Barnard's threats have been going for years. The typed letters. He sent one to ST. He sent one to me. ST may have gone to ground specifically to keep us safe."*

Her mother was quiet.

*"That would be —"*

*"Like him," Daphne said gently.*

*"Yes," her mother said. "That would be exactly like him."*

~ ~ ~

They laid everything out together — all of it, for the first time, the complete picture as Daphne now understood it.

The flower that grew on the boot-shaped island in the Congo. The valley in Wales that had lost its plants two hundred years ago. ST who had been the first to understand the connection. The formula that combined them — the formula that Barnard wanted and ST had hidden across six different places and people.

The threatening letters. The arrangement. Emrys in Wales. Charlie Mokoena in Johannesburg. Old Joseph in the tack room. Peggy in Bloemfontein.

And now Hendrika at the Shannon post office, who had kept the letters without being asked because she understood, somehow, that this was what the job required.

*"There is a network," her mother said slowly, looking at the spread evidence. "He built a network. Before he went. People who each hold a piece."*

*"Yes. And whoever is on the right side of this knows when the trail is being followed. Charlie Mokoena told someone I had been to the Rialto, collected the canary. That person told Emrys in Wales. Emrys told ST — or whoever holds ST's pen at this point."*

**"And they are watching,"** her mother said. *"Not to threaten. To protect. To know when it's time."*

*"Time for what?"*

Daphne looked at the complete map. The river. The island. The Welsh word in ST's tiny handwriting.

*"Time for someone to go to Wales and hear what Emrys has been keeping. And eventually — not now, not for years, not until it is safe — time for someone to go to the island."*

The canary sang. Just three notes. Clear and certain, in the quiet kitchen.

Daphne looked at it.

*"Still singing," she said. "Still going the right way."*

Her mother looked at the canary for a long time. Then she looked at her daughter — this fourteen-year-old girl with her father's eyes and her father's instincts and her father's impossible, necessary certainty.

*"Then we keep going," she said. "Together."*

Outside the window, Shannon was dark and still and patient. The veld stretched away in every direction under a sky full of stars.

And somewhere, in a valley in Wales whose name was written on a Congo map, someone was waiting.

And possibly, somewhere closer than any of them knew, so was ST.

## Daphne's Clue Keeper

Everything we know — Books One, Two and Three

New clues from Book Three are marked NEW!



### From Books One and Two:

#### ST'S MESSAGE:

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

#### THE COMPLETE MAP:

Both halves. River route. Boot-shaped island. 'Here. Nov 1938 — ST'

#### THE ORANGE FLOWER:

Grows on the boot-shaped island. Source of Black Forest Tea.

#### DUGALLAN:

A Welsh valley. Historical cultivation of medicinal herbs. Connected to the island.

#### CJ BARNARD:

Two watches. Still in Johannesburg. Still looking.

#### THE CANARY:

Still singing. Going the right way.

**New in Book Three:**

**NEW THE THREATENING LETTER:**

Same typeface as the letter sent to ST in 1939. Barnard has been threatening the Hughes family for years.

**NEW HENDRIKA HEYNEKE:**

Shannon postmaster. Kept three uncollected letters for ST. Gave them all to Daphne. Trustworthy.

**NEW LETTER ONE — WALES:**

From DuGall valley. 'What you found on the island is what we lost from the valley 200 years ago.' ST's grandfather began this search.

**NEW LETTER TWO — LÉOPOLDVILLE:**

'The arrangement is complicated. The item remains where you left it.' Someone was with ST. They may be gone now.

**NEW LETTER THREE — JOHANNESBURG:**

Same typeface as Daphne's threatening letter. Barnard threatened ST too. Same machine. Same person.

**NEW THE FOURTH LETTER:**

Arrived after Daphne went to Johannesburg. 'The valley is still there. The family is still there. Daffodil means coming home.'

**NEW EMRYS:**

A man in DuGall valley, Wales. Keeper of the valley's knowledge. Old. Has been waiting.

**NEW THE ARRANGEMENT:**

ST built a network before he disappeared. Different clues with different people. No single person holds the whole picture.

**NEW ST'S GRANDFATHER:**

The search has been going for three generations. This is older than ST.

**NEW THE FORMULA:**

The Welsh plant and the Congo plant combined produce something neither can alone. That is what Barnard wants. That is what ST hid.

**NEW ST'S HANDWRITING IN THE REPLY:**

'Croeso adref, Daffodil.' Welcome home. He was alive when this was written.

**NEW PEGGY'S KNOWLEDGE:**

ST told her different things than he told the others. She is one of the keepers. She knows about Emrys.

**Big Question:** When will it be safe to go to Wales — and will ST be there when Daphne arrives?

## What Would YOU Do?

The trail leads to Wales. But Wales is very far away.

Daphne is fifteen years old. She cannot go to Wales alone. The war in Europe has begun — travelling across the ocean is dangerous. Emrys is waiting in the DuGall valley. The formula is split between Wales and the Congo island. Barnard is still in Johannesburg, still threatening, still looking.

Daphne has a choice about what to do next. She can wait — build the case, gather more evidence, stay safe in Shannon until the war ends and travel is possible again. Or she can act — find out more about Barnard, track the Johannesburg connection, follow the money trail that connects him to whatever happened to ST.

Then a letter arrives from Old Joseph. He is very old and not well. He says he has one more thing to tell Daphne — something ST said on that last visit that he has been holding back. Something he was told not to say until the right moment.

Old Joseph says the right moment has come.

What would YOU do first?

- A) Go immediately to Old Joseph in the tack room — whatever he held back could change everything
- B) Write again to Emrys in Wales — tell him about the threatening letters and ask if it is safe to come
- C) Go back to Peggy in Bloemfontein — she knows more than she said, and now you know the right questions to ask

*Find out what Daphne decides in Book Four:*

*The Hughes Chronicles, Book Four:*

***"Old Joseph's Last Secret"***

Available at [DuGallan.com](http://DuGallan.com)

## **Fun Facts For Curious Readers**

### **Post Offices In Small Towns**

In the 1940s, the post office was the communication centre of every small town and farming community in South Africa. Telephones were rare and expensive, and the postal service was how people connected across distances. A postmaster knew everything — who was writing to whom, what businesses were operating, who was receiving letters from foreign countries, and crucially, whose letters had stopped coming. In a mystery like Daphne's, the post office was not just useful. It was essential.

### **Wales And Its Valleys**

Wales is a country in the west of Britain, about the size of the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal. Its landscape is famous for its green hills, ancient castles, and deep valleys carved by rivers and glaciers. The Welsh valleys were historically centres of both coal mining and farming, with small communities that maintained their own traditions, language and knowledge across many generations. A valley community in mid-Wales in the 1940s would have been close-knit, long-remembered, and deeply rooted — exactly the kind of place where old knowledge would have been kept and passed down carefully.

### **The Belgian Congo In The 1940s**

During the 1940s, the Belgian Congo was still under Belgian colonial rule. It was one of the largest territories in Africa — roughly the size of Western Europe — and contained some of the world's most extraordinary biodiversity. Scientists and explorers were still discovering new plant and animal species. A man who understood plants and knew what to look for could have found something remarkable there — something that had been growing undisturbed for centuries, known only to the communities who lived nearby, completely unknown to the wider world.

### **Letters In Wartime**

By 1940 the Second World War had begun in Europe, which made travelling between South Africa and Britain — including Wales — much more difficult and dangerous. Ships crossing the Atlantic and the waters around Britain were at risk. Letters, however, still moved — slowly, sometimes circuitously, routed through neutral countries or via air mail when it was available.

A letter posted from Shannon in 1940 to a valley in Wales might take weeks or months to arrive, but it would eventually get there. People during the war maintained contact across enormous distances through the persistence of the postal service.

## Medicinal Plants And Old Knowledge

For thousands of years, communities around the world have cultivated specific plants for their medicinal properties, passing the knowledge of how to grow, harvest and prepare them from generation to generation. When European explorers moved plants between continents — taking African plants to Europe, or European plants to Africa and Asia — they sometimes created new varieties that had properties neither the original plant nor its new environment had alone. This is called hybridisation, and it is one of the reasons modern medicine is so interested in studying traditional plant knowledge. ST understood this before most scientists of his era did. That understanding was worth a great deal to people who knew what they were looking at.



*He left clues. We're still following them.*



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**Follow the clues.**