

The Hughes Chronicles



Old Joseph's Last Secret

Book Four

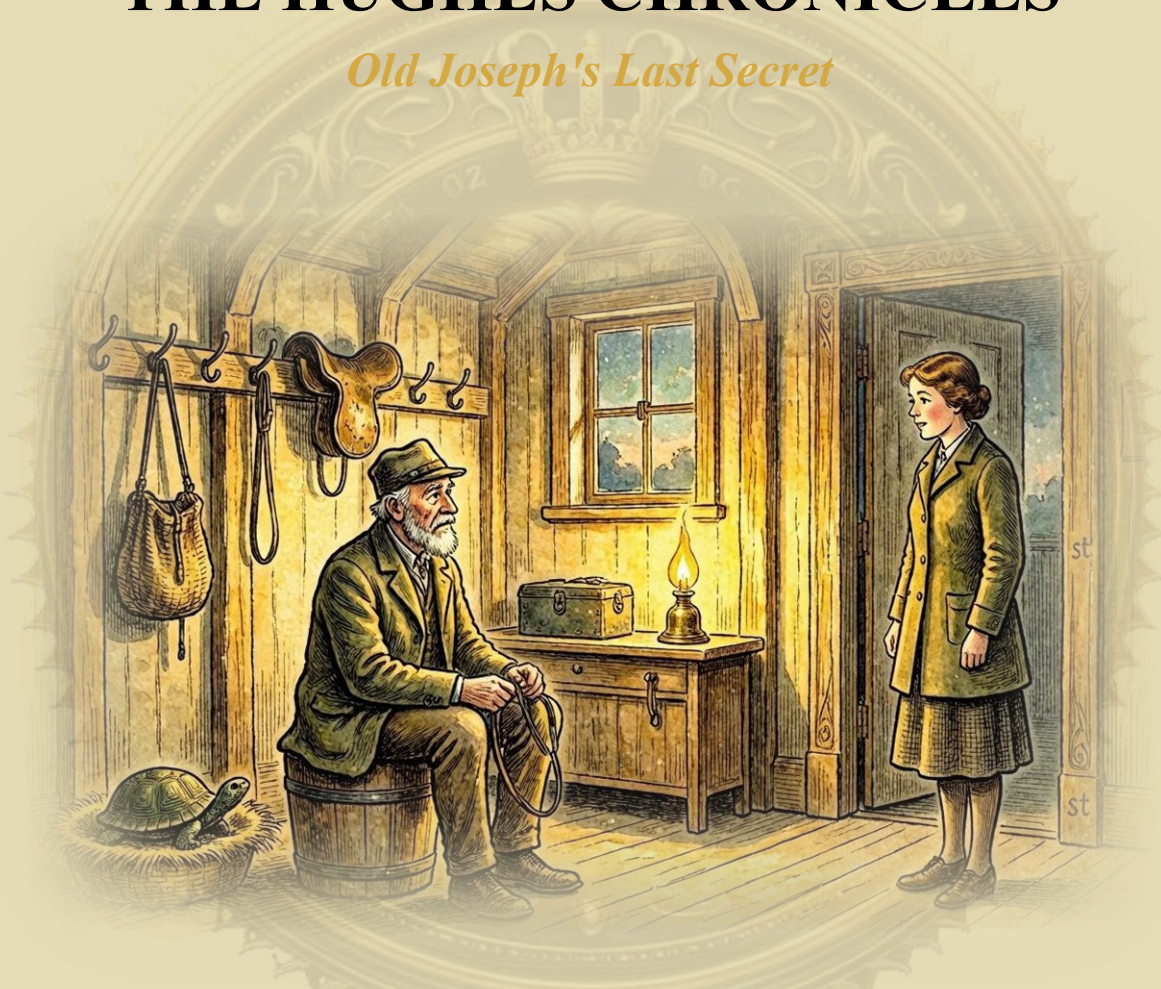
DuGallan

THE DUGALLAN CHRONICLES

Book Four

THE HUGHES CHRONICLES

Old Joseph's Last Secret



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 FOUR
Old Joseph's Last Secret

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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.

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For permissions: doug@dugallan.com



For

Old Joseph

Stable hand, Shannon, Orange Free State

Who stayed when everyone else left.

Who kept what he was given.

Who knew that the right moment would come.

The horses always knew first.

So did you.

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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 disappeared in the Congo when I was young. He left Wales, crossed an ocean, bred racehorses in Shannon in the Orange Free State, created an 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 — and something happened that stopped him coming home.

But he did not disappear without preparation. He built a network — different clues with different people, so that no single person could be made to give up the whole picture. Old Joseph in the tack room. My sister Peggy in the Bloemfontein sanatorium. Charlie Mokoena at the Rialto Hotel in Johannesburg. Emrys in the DuGall valley in Wales.

I have found the complete map — both halves together — showing the river and the boot-shaped island where the orange flower grows. I have found the Welsh word DuGall on that map, identifying a valley in Wales that lost its medicinal plants two hundred years ago — the same plants, adapted, that grow on the Congo island. Together they form a formula that ST understood and that a man called CJ Barnard has been trying to steal for years.

Barnard has been threatening us. The same typewriter, the same cold single sentence, for years. He threatened ST before the Congo. He threatened me after Johannesburg. I am not frightened. But I am careful.

At the Shannon post office, Hendrika Heyneke gave me four letters that had arrived for ST after he disappeared. The most important came from Wales. From Emrys. It said: the valley is still there. The family is still there. The knowledge was kept. And at the very bottom, in different ink and different handwriting that I know with absolute certainty — ST's handwriting: 'Croeso adref, Daffodil. Welcome home.'

He was alive when those words were written. He may still be alive now.

And now Old Joseph has sent word. He is very old and not well. He says he has one more thing to tell me — something ST said on that last visit that he was told to hold until the right moment. Old Joseph says the right moment has come.

I am going to the tack room. One last time, perhaps. One last thing.

The canary is still singing.

Come with me.

CHAPTER ONE

The Last Visit

SHANNON — FEBRUARY 1941



Old Joseph had been in the tack room for as long as anyone in Shannon could remember.

He had been there when ST arrived from Wales with his two daughters and his plans for horses and herbal tea. He had been there when the horses were good and the tea was selling and ST was the most talked-about man in the district. He had been there when things went wrong — when the money disappeared and the woman came and went and ST grew quieter and more purposeful and then left for Johannesburg and then the Congo.

He had stayed because ST had asked him to. And because Old Joseph, who had understood horses for seventy years, had understood that ST would either come back or leave enough for someone to follow. Either way, the tack room needed to be kept.

Daphne found him as she always found him — on the upturned bucket, something in his hands, the tortoise in its corner, the lamp doing what it had always done. But he was thinner. The hands were more translucent. The patience in his eyes had deepened from the patience of waiting to the patience of someone who knows they are nearly finished.

"You came," he said.

"Your letter said the right moment had come."

"It has."

He looked at her for a moment with those steady eyes.

"You found the letters. And the second half of the map. And the Welsh word."

"Yes."

"And Wales wrote back."

It was not a question. He knew.

"How do you know?"

"Because you are here asking me for the last piece. If Wales had not written back, you would not yet be ready for the last piece."

Daphne looked at him.

"How many pieces are there?"

"I only know my own," he said simply. "That is how he designed it. Each person knows their own piece and nothing else. So that no one person can be made to give up the whole."

He set down the bridle. He looked at his hands.

"I have been waiting fifteen years to say this. I want to say it correctly."

Daphne did not speak. She waited the way he had taught her to wait — with the whole body, without hurry, the way you wait with a horse that is deciding whether to trust you.

~ ~ ~

He was quiet for a long time. Long enough that the tortoise shifted in its corner and the windmill outside made three slow revolutions. The lamp flickered once and steadied.

Then Old Joseph spoke.

"The last time ST came here," he said, "before the Congo — the second time, the last time — he sat where you are sitting and he smoked his pipe and he was quieter than usual. Which for ST was very quiet indeed."

"I remember you told me this."

"I told you part of it. I told you he carved his initials in the door frame and said the answer was in the orange. Those were the things I was asked to give you when you first came."

"And the other part?"

"The other part he said to give you when you had found everything else. When you were ready for Wales. When you understood what the formula was — not the details, but the shape of it. Two halves. Two parts of one thing."

He looked at her.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes," said Daphne.

Old Joseph nodded slowly. He reached into the pocket of his old jacket and produced a small folded piece of paper, brown with age, soft at the creases from years of careful folding and refolding.

He held it out.

"He wrote it down. He said some things are too important to trust to memory alone."

Daphne took it.

CHAPTER TWO

What ST Wrote

THE TACK ROOM — THE SAME EVENING



The paper was covered on both sides.

ST's handwriting — she knew it now as well as she knew her own. Cramped and precise, the hand of a man who wrote quickly but thought carefully. This was slower than usual. Each letter fully formed. Each word chosen.

She read it twice before she looked up.

~ ~ ~

What I am about to write I have told to no one. Not Peggy, not the man in Wales, not Charlie. Each of them has a piece. This piece is for Daphne, because Daphne will understand it in a way the others cannot — not because she is cleverer, but because she has my eyes.

The flower on the island is not unique. There is one other place in the world where it grows. Not the Congo. Not Wales. Closer than Wales. Much closer than the Congo.

On the West Coast of this country — in the Namaqualand — there is a species that the old people there have used for generations. A flower. Orange. When it blooms, the whole hillside turns the colour of a sunset. I saw it once from a distance and thought I was dreaming.

I did not understand what I was seeing until I was on the island and found the Congo flower and held it in my hands and smelled it. Then I knew. The West Coast flower and the Congo flower are cousins. Not identical. But from the same original family.

And the Welsh valley plant — the DuGall cultivar — is the grandmother of them both. The original, from which the others descended when they were carried by traders across continents two hundred years ago.

Three flowers. Three parts of one thing. I had two — the island and Wales. The third is on the West Coast, in the Namaqualand hills, where no one has yet understood what it is.

I am writing this because I may not come back. If I do not come back, Daphne will find this when she is ready, and she will understand that the formula is not complete with two parts. It requires three. And the third is here, in this country, in a hillside of orange flowers that turns the colour of the sunset every August.

Tell her: the man who knows the West Coast flowers — whoever that man is when the time comes — is the last key. He does not know what he knows. But he knows where to look.

— ST

Daphne sat very still for a long time.

Three flowers. Not two. Three.

She had been thinking in two halves — the Congo island and the Welsh valley. But ST had understood from the beginning that there was a third. Right here. In South Africa. On the West Coast. In the Namaqualand hills where orange flowers covered the hillsides every August like a second sunset.

And the man who knew the West Coast flowers —

She thought of Hendrika at the post office. Of the yellow flower Hendrika kept on her windowsill. Of the way Hendrika had said, when she first arrived at Shannon, that she had come from somewhere else and needed a place to think.

And of the man Hendrika had mentioned — her husband, Jan. Who drove the Spoornet luxury buses across the whole of South Africa and South West Africa. Who was particularly known for the flowers of the West Coast. Who knew every species on every hillside between Cape Town and the Namibian border.

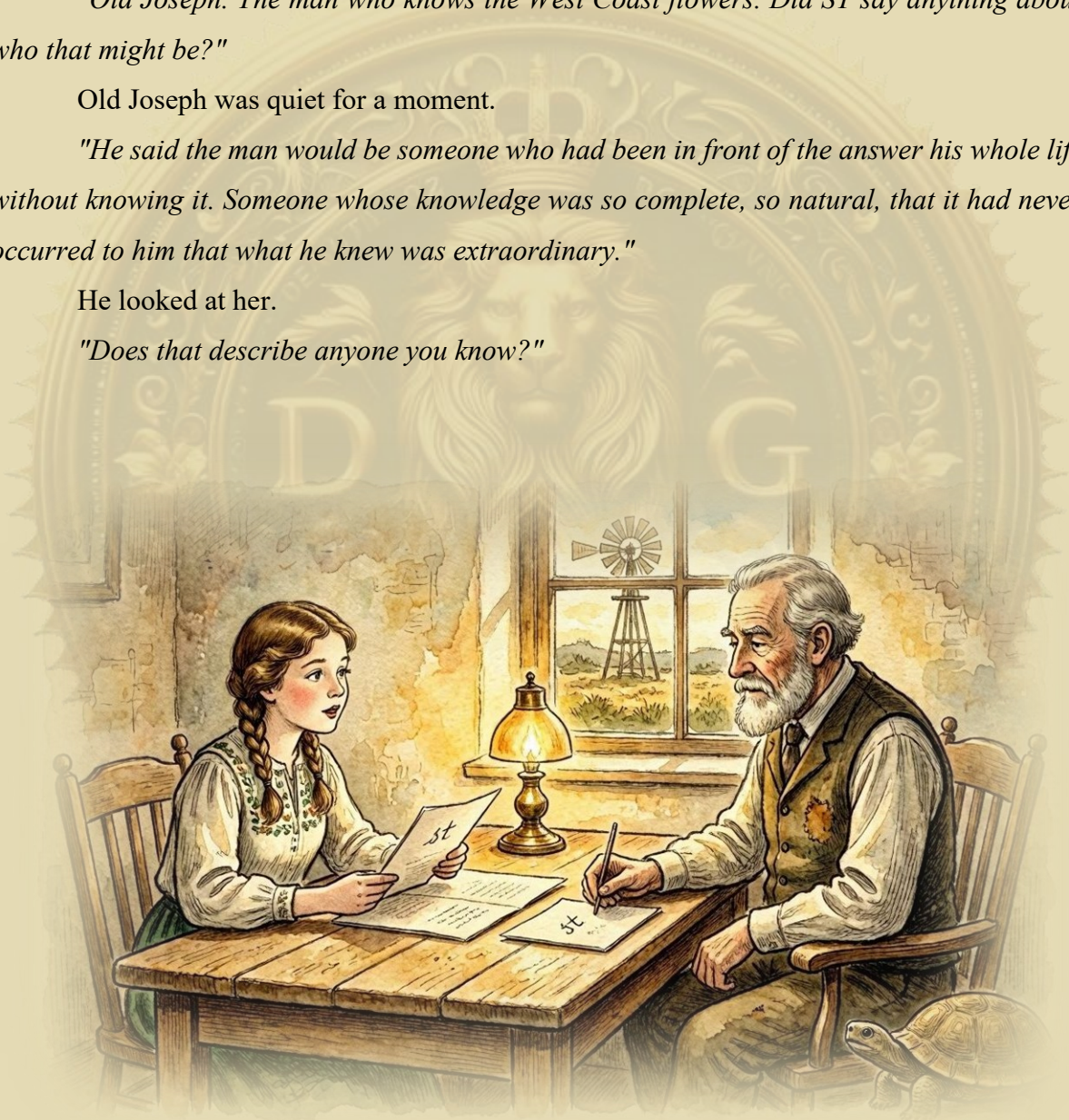
"Old Joseph. The man who knows the West Coast flowers. Did ST say anything about who that might be?"

Old Joseph was quiet for a moment.

"He said the man would be someone who had been in front of the answer his whole life without knowing it. Someone whose knowledge was so complete, so natural, that it had never occurred to him that what he knew was extraordinary."

He looked at her.

"Does that describe anyone you know?"



CHAPTER THREE

Jan Heyneke

SHANNON POST OFFICE — THE NEXT MORNING



Jan Heyneke was a large man who moved carefully.

This was the first thing Daphne noticed — that someone his size, who could have taken up a room entirely, chose instead to occupy only the space he needed. He stood when Hendrika introduced them, took Daphne's hand with a grip that was firm but brief, and sat back down with the economy of a man who had learned, in years of confined bus driving, not to make unnecessary movements.

He had kind eyes. The kind that had seen a great deal of country and found most of it worth looking at.

"Miss Hughes," he said. "Hendrika has told me about you."

"What has she told you?"

He smiled — a slow, wide smile.

"That you ask the right questions and do not stop until you get the right answers. That you have your father's eyes. And that whatever you are doing, the right people seem to be helping you do it."

He looked at her directly.

"She also told me about the letters. About ST. About Wales."

"She told you everything?"

"Hendrika and I have no secrets from each other," he said simply. "What I know, she knows. What she knows, I know. It is the only way to live with someone in a small town."

~ ~ ~

They sat at the kitchen table — Jan, Hendrika, Daphne — with tea that Hendrika made without asking and a plate of rusks that Jan produced from a tin in the pantry. Outside, Shannon was doing what Shannon did on a Wednesday morning: not very much, slowly.

Daphne put ST's note on the table.

Jan read it carefully. He read it once quickly and then again slowly. When he finished, he set it down and looked at it for a moment.

"Three flowers," he said.

"Yes."

"And the third one is in the Namaqualand."

"ST believed so. He said the man who knew the West Coast flowers would be the last key. That he would not know what he knew."

Jan was quiet. He picked up his tea. He looked out of the window at the Shannon main road for a long moment.

"I have driven that coast forty times," he said. "In August, when the flowers come. I have shown those hillsides to a thousand tourists. I know every species by name — the Afrikaans name, the English name, the scientific name when I could learn it. I know which ones the Khoikhoi used, which ones the farmers use, which ones the botanists from Cape Town come every year to study."

He looked at the note.

"I have never thought of them as anything except beautiful."

"But you know them. All of them."

"Every one."

He looked at her.

"Your father wrote this note fifteen years ago. He said the man who knew the West Coast flowers. He did not know who that man would be."

"No."

"But it is me."

It was not pride. It was simple recognition — the way you recognise your name being called.

"Yes," said Daphne. "I think it is you."



~ ~ ~

Jan stood up and went to the pantry. He came back with a small tin. He opened it on the table.

Inside, pressed flat between two pieces of card, were flowers. Dozens of them, carefully preserved, labelled in his neat handwriting. Forty years of the West Coast, dried and catalogued.

He leafed through them slowly, with the confidence of someone who knows every item in a collection intimately. And then he stopped.

He held one up to the window light.

It was orange. Papery-thin. The colour of the sunset over the veld.

Daphne reached into her own notebook and produced the pressed flower from ST's tin trunk — the one that had been there since the beginning, the one Old Joseph had identified as the Congo flower.

She set it beside Jan's flower on the table.

They were not identical. But they were unmistakably from the same family. The same shape. The same particular shade of orange-gold. The same papery texture. Like two people who share a great-grandmother — different faces, but the same bones underneath.

"Where did you find this one?" Daphne asked.

"On the hillside above Kamieskroon. In the Namaqualand. I have pressed one every year for twenty years. It blooms in August. The old Nama people there call it —"

He said a word in a language Daphne did not know.

"What does it mean?"

Jan looked at the two flowers side by side for a moment.

"It means: the one that remembers where it came from," he said quietly.

CHAPTER FOUR

What Jan Heard On The Road

SHANNON — THE SAME DAY



Jan Heyneke had been driving tourists across South Africa since before the war.

In those years, the Spoornet luxury buses carried a particular kind of passenger — people with money and time and the desire to see their country slowly, with explanations. Politicians' wives. Mining executives on leave. Retired professors. Businessmen from Johannesburg who wanted to show their overseas guests something beyond the city.

Jan had learned to listen to them all without seeming to.

"People talk on buses," he said. "They forget about the driver. Or they decide the driver does not matter. Either way, they talk."

"What have you heard?"

He was quiet for a moment, organising years of overheard conversations.

"I heard a man — this was perhaps five years ago, 1936 — talking to his companion about a Welshman in the Free State who had found something extraordinary in the Congo. He said the Welshman had been very careful about it. That certain interests were very annoyed about how careful he had been."

Daphne went very still.

"What interests?"

"He did not say directly. But he mentioned a company name. A pharmaceutical company. European. I did not write it down because at the time it meant nothing to me."

"Can you remember it?"

Jan closed his eyes. He had the memory of a man who had spent decades absorbing information that needed to be retrieved accurately — species names, historical dates, place names in three languages.

"Hartmann," he said. "Hartmann something. A German name. The company had offices in Johannesburg."

Daphne wrote it down.

"And CJ Barnard? Does that name mean anything to you?"

Jan opened his eyes.

"Barnard. Yes. I heard that name once, on a route through Kimberley. Two men — one said to the other: Barnard has been at it again. The other said: Barnard will never let it go. He has too much of his own money in it now."

He looked at Daphne.

"This was two years ago. 1939."

"Barnard is still connected to a European pharmaceutical company."

"It seems so. He is the local agent, I think. The man on the ground who does the difficult work."

Daphne looked at the two flowers side by side on the table. The Congo flower and the West Coast flower. Two parts of the three-part formula. CJ Barnard representing European pharmaceutical interests who had been trying to get the formula for years.

ST had known about the third flower. He had hidden that knowledge separately from everything else — given only to Old Joseph, to be delivered only when Daphne was ready. Which meant he had known that the third flower was the most important piece. The one that completed the formula. The one that, without it, the other two were valuable but not extraordinary.

"Jan. The flower from Kamieskroon. Does Barnard know about it?"

Jan thought carefully.

"The man on the bus in Kimberley said: Barnard has two of the three pieces. He knows there is a third but does not know where."

Daphne felt the significance of this settle.

Barnard had the Congo island location — or believed he did. He had the Welsh valley — or access to information about it. But he did not have the West Coast flower. Because ST had told nobody about it except Old Joseph. And Old Joseph had told nobody for fifteen years.

The third piece was still safe. And now it was in Daphne's notebook.

"We have something Barnard does not," she said.

"Yes," said Jan. "And I think your father knew that keeping it that way was the most important thing."

~ ~ ~

They sat together for another hour. Jan told her more — fragments of overheard conversations from years of routes, names and places and connections that were beginning to form a picture of what exactly CJ Barnard and the Hartmann company had been trying to do, and for how long.

It was longer than Daphne had understood. It went back before ST. It went back before the Congo. It connected — in ways she could see the shape of but not yet the details — to what ST's grandfather had begun, to whatever had been lost from the DuGall valley in Wales two hundred years ago.

When she finally stood to leave, Jan walked her to the door.

"Miss Hughes."

"Yes?"

"The Namaqualand flowers bloom in August. Every year, without fail. The hillside above Kamieskroon — there is a particular spot, about two kilometres from the road, where the orange ones grow thickest. It is one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen."

He looked at her steadily.

"When you are ready to go there — when it is time — I will take you."

"Why?"

"Because your father said the man who knew the West Coast flowers would be the last key. A key is not just knowledge. A key opens something. I think I need to be there when it opens."

Daphne thought about this.

"Thank you, Jan," she said.

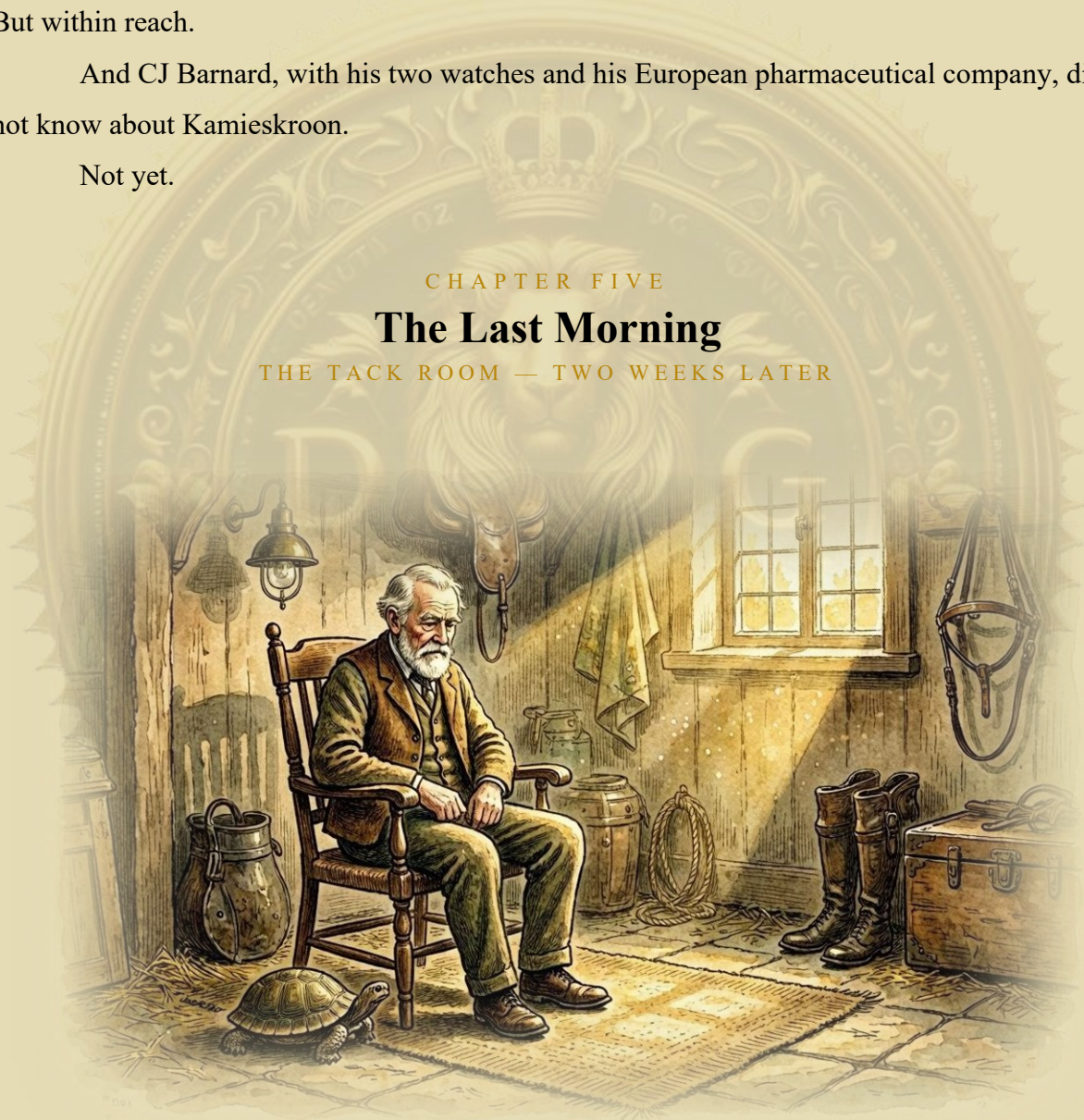
He nodded. Went back inside. The Spoornet bus on the main road had long since passed.

Daphne walked back toward the farmhouse with her notebook and the two pressed flowers and the knowledge of the third.

Three flowers. Three parts. The formula was within reach — not yet, not for years, not until Wales and the island and the Namaqualand hillside could be brought together somehow. But within reach.

And CJ Barnard, with his two watches and his European pharmaceutical company, did not know about Kamieskroon.

Not yet.



CHAPTER FIVE

The Last Morning

THE TACK ROOM — TWO WEEKS LATER

Old Joseph sent for her on a Tuesday morning.

The note came via her mother, via Mrs van Rensburg next door, via the farm boy who did odd jobs at the tack room: Old Joseph says come today.

She came.

He was in the chair — the actual chair, not the bucket. This told her everything she needed to know about the morning before she saw his face.

"You came quickly," he said.

"You said today."

"I did not know if you would have time."

"I always have time for you."

He smiled. The warmth of it was enormous.

"Sit down, Daphne."

She sat on the feed crate. The tortoise moved slightly and settled against her ankle with the easy confidence of an animal that has long ago decided she is trustworthy.

~ ~ ~

"I want to tell you something," Old Joseph said, "that is not a clue. It is not part of the arrangement. It is just something I want to say."

"All right."

"I have worked for many people in my life. Good people and difficult people and people who were both. ST was the best of them. Not because he was always right or always kind — he was not always either. But because he understood that the world was worth more than he could see from where he was standing. And because he acted on that understanding."

He paused.

"He acted on it at great cost. He left you and Peggy and your mother. That was wrong, even if he had reasons. I want you to know that I know it was wrong. And I think he knew it too."

Daphne did not speak.

"But I also want you to know this: in all the years I kept this tack room and waited and watched you grow up and follow the trail he left — I have never once thought he was gone. I have always known he was somewhere. The horses always know. And I know."

He looked at her with those steady eyes.

"Find him, Daphne. Or find what he found. Either way, finish it. Whatever it costs, finish it. He deserves to be found."

Daphne reached across and put her hand over his.

"I will," she said. "I promise."

They sat together in the morning light for a while. The tortoise was warm against her ankle. Outside, the windmill turned. The veld was gold and still.

~ ~ ~

When she left, she paused at the door and looked down at the carved initials in the door frame.

ST. Two letters. Fifteen years old.

She crouched down and looked at them the way she had looked at everything since the beginning — carefully, completely, without assuming she already knew what she was seeing.

And this time she noticed something she had not noticed before.

Below the ST — very faint, as if carved at a different time, with a different tool, not by the same hand — two more letters.

She held the door open so the morning light fell directly on the wood.

DJ

Not ST's initials. Different. Smaller. Newer — or older, she couldn't be certain which.

She looked at them for a long time.

Then she went back to Old Joseph.

"The initials below ST's. In the door frame. Do you know what they mean?"

Old Joseph looked at her with the expression she had come to know — the expression of a man who has one more thing.

"His grandfather," he said. "DJ Hughes. He was here before ST. Long before. He came from Wales the first time — not ST, his grandfather. He started it. ST continued it."

He smiled.

"The grandfather came. The grandson followed. And now the granddaughter is here. It has been going on for a very long time, Daphne. Longer than you think."

Daphne looked at the two sets of initials. DJ above. ST below. And one day — she understood this now — another set would be added. The next person who came.



She stood up. She put her hand briefly against the door frame, over both sets of initials.

"Thank you, Old Joseph," she said.

He was already looking at the window. At the veld. At something beyond the veld that she couldn't yet see.

"Go," he said softly. "Wales is waiting."

CHAPTER SIX

Wales

SHANNON — MARCH 1941



The war made everything complicated.

Travelling from South Africa to Britain in 1941 was not simply a matter of booking a passage. The Atlantic was dangerous. Ships were routed through neutral waters where possible. The journey took weeks, sometimes months. People were doing it — the post was still moving, clearly — but it required planning and patience and the acceptance of risk.

Daphne had been planning for three months.

She had written to Emrys twice more. She had written to a shipping company in Cape Town. She had spoken to the headmaster about taking time away from school — he had looked at her over his spectacles with the expression of a man who had long ago accepted that some students were going to do what they were going to do regardless of what he said.

She was fifteen years old. She was going to Wales. And she was not going alone.

~ ~ ~

"I am coming with you," her mother said. For the third time that morning. With slightly more resolution each time.

"I know," said Daphne. "I assumed you would."

Her mother looked at her.

"You assumed?"

"You have been researching the ship routes for two weeks. I can see the shipping company letters on your desk."

Her mother was quiet for a moment.

"It is dangerous."

"Yes."

"We could wait until the war ends."

"Emrys is old. And Old Joseph said Wales is waiting. And —"

she looked at the canary,

"the canary is still singing."

Her mother looked at the canary for a long moment.

"That is still not a logical argument."

"No. But ST left it for a reason. It has never once stopped singing since I collected it from the Rialto. Not when Barnard followed us in Johannesburg. Not when the threatening letter came. Not on any morning of any day in the eighteen months since I found the tin trunk."

She looked at her mother.

"I think that is the point. The canary is not telling us there is no danger. It is telling us that the danger is survivable. That we are going the right way."

Her mother sat with this.

~ ~ ~

They talked for a long time that morning. About the route. About Emrys and what he might know. About DJ Hughes — ST's grandfather, the first one, who had come from Wales and started something that three generations had been following.

About ST. About whether he was somewhere, watching. About whether the Welsh valley would yield something that would finally explain what had happened to him and why he had not come home.

About Barnard, who had two of the three pieces and would eventually realise the third existed.

About Jan Heyneke and the orange hillside above Kamieskroon and the flower that the old Nama people called the one that remembers where it came from.

And about what it meant that a man like ST — who laughed at yellow shoes and called his daughter Daffodil and left a canary in a Johannesburg hotel bar for twelve years — had been part of something that went back two hundred years and three generations and two continents.

"He was not just a man who went to the Congo," her mother said finally.

"No," said Daphne. "He was the third person in a story that started long before him.

DJ Hughes started it. ST continued it. And now —"

She looked at her mother. At the maps. At the canary on the windowsill.

"And now it is our turn."

Her mother was quiet for a long moment. Then she reached across and took Daphne's hand.

"Then we had better not keep Wales waiting," she said.

Outside the window, the Shannon veld stretched away in every direction, gold and patient under the autumn sky. Somewhere in the tack room, the tortoise was making its slow and certain way to wherever it had decided to go. And on the windowsill, in his handmade cage with the initials scratched inside, the canary sang on.

Three flowers. Three generations. Three continents.

And the trail leading, at last, toward home.



Daphne's Clue Keeper

Everything we know — Books One through Four

New clues from Book Four are marked NEW!



From Books One, Two and Three:

THE COMPLETE MAP:

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

DUGALL:

Welsh valley. Historical herbs. Connected to the Congo island.

THE ARRANGEMENT:

ST's network — Peggy, Old Joseph, Charlie Mokoena, Emrys in Wales.

CJ BARNARD:

Two watches. European pharmaceutical interests — company name Hartmann.

THE FORMULA:

Welsh plant + Congo plant = something extraordinary. Barnard wants it.

ST'S HANDWRITING:

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

THE CANARY:

Still singing. Still the right way.

New in Book Four:

NEW THE THIRD FLOWER:

There are **THREE** parts to the formula, not two. Congo. Wales. **AND** the West Coast of South Africa — Namaqualand, near Kamieskroon.

NEW JAN HEYNEKE:

Hendrika's husband. Spoornet bus driver. Knows the West Coast flowers completely. The man ST said would be the last key.

NEW THE NAMAQUALAND FLOWER:

Orange, papery-thin. Same family as the Congo flower and the DuGall cultivar. Jan has pressed specimens. The old Nama name: 'the one that remembers where it came from.'

NEW BARNARD HAS TWO OF THREE:

Jan overheard: Barnard has two pieces. He knows there is a third but does not know where. The West Coast flower is still safe.

NEW THE HARTMANN COMPANY:

European pharmaceutical company. German name. Offices in Johannesburg. Barnard is their local agent.

NEW DJ HUGHES:

ST's grandfather. His initials are carved in the tack room door frame **ABOVE** ST's. He came from Wales first. He started this search. Three generations.

NEW NEXT STEP:

Wales. The DuGall valley. Emrys. The original Welsh cultivar. The grandmother of all three flowers.

Big Question: What will Daphne find in the DuGall valley — and will ST be there when she arrives?

What Would YOU Do?

The ship is booked. Wales is waiting.

Daphne and her mother are sailing to Britain in three weeks. The night before they leave, a visitor arrives at the Shannon farmhouse. It is Charlie Mokoena from the Rialto Hotel in Johannesburg. He has made the journey to Shannon by train — an old man, tired from travelling. He says he has heard they are going to Wales. He says there is one more thing Daphne needs to know before she goes. Something ST told him on the last night before he went back to the Congo. Something he was told to hold until this moment.

Charlie sits down at the kitchen table. He says:

"When you get to Wales — ask Emrys about the name. Not DuGall. The other name. The one that connects it all."

Then he stands up, thanks Daphne for the tea, and leaves. He does not explain what the other name is.

What would YOU do?

- A) Write immediately to Emrys in Wales telling him about Charlie's message — so Emrys can prepare the answer before Daphne arrives
- B) Go to Johannesburg before sailing and ask Charlie directly what the other name is — if it is that important, she needs it before Wales
- C) Hold it until she is in the DuGall valley and ask Emrys face to face — some questions need to be asked in the right place

*Find out what Daphne decides in Book Five:
The Hughes Chronicles, Book Five:*

"The DuGall Valley"

Available at DuGallan.com

Fun Facts For Curious Readers

The Namaqualand Flowers

Every year, usually in August and September, something extraordinary happens in the Namaqualand region of the Northern Cape in South Africa. After winter rains, the arid landscape transforms into one of the largest wildflower displays on earth — hundreds of kilometres of hillsides covered in orange, yellow, white and purple flowers that seem to appear overnight. Scientists have counted over 3,500 plant species in this small area, many of which grow nowhere else in the world. The flowers open only when the sun shines directly on them, and close at night or on cloudy days.

The Khoikhoi and Plant Knowledge

The Khoikhoi people have lived in southern Africa for thousands of years and developed deep knowledge of the plants of the region — which ones were edible, which were medicinal, which were poisonous, and how to prepare and use them. This knowledge was passed down through generations through oral tradition. The Nama people — a Khoikhoi group of the Northern Cape — had names for every flower in the Namaqualand, and those names often described the plant's properties or history in ways that scientific names did not.

Spoornet And South African Railways

Spoornet was the South African state railway company that operated for most of the twentieth century, later becoming part of Transnet. Its luxury bus services offered a way to reach parts of the country that trains could not. A Spoornet bus driver in the 1940s through 1970s would have covered tens of thousands of kilometres of South African road, from the lush Garden Route to the dry Karoo, from the West Coast flower fields to the border of South West Africa. These drivers were not just transport — they were guides, historians and storytellers, carrying the knowledge of the landscape in their heads.

Travelling During The Second World War

The Second World War, which lasted from 1939 to 1945, made sea travel between South Africa and Britain genuinely dangerous. German submarines patrolled the Atlantic and the waters around Britain, targeting Allied shipping. However, the postal service and civilian passenger traffic never completely stopped — ships were routed through safer waters when possible. A

determined fifteen-year-old with good reasons and a careful mother could make the journey, if she was prepared for it to take much longer than normal.

Wales and Medicinal Herb Cultivation

Wales has a long history of herbal medicine, going back to the medieval physicians of Myddfai — a famous school of Welsh healers who recorded their plant knowledge in manuscripts that survive to this day. The Welsh valleys and hill farms cultivated specific plants for centuries, with the knowledge passed from generation to generation. When Welsh people emigrated — to South Africa, to America, to Australia — they often took seeds and cuttings with them, along with the knowledge of how to use the plants they grew.



Three generations. Three flowers. Three continents.

The trail leads home.



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