

# DOUBLE FUNERAL

ELEANOR ANDERSON

Characters: White. Porter. Simon. Fellow-Traveller.

Scene: At the Gate.

As the curtain rises, White is knocking at the Gate.

White : Knock knock.

Porter : Who's there?

White : It's me. White.

Porter : Oh. Er . . . good morning. I'm afraid I didn't quite catch your christian name, Mr. White. Could you tell me what it is, please?

White : Haven't got one. Never needed one. What's it matter to you, anyway? I've been known as White all my life and it's suited me just fine. And even though I died last week, I still didn't need another name. So let me in and stop wasting my time.

Porter : (slowly opening door) Well, I'm damned! You mean you *want* to come in here?

White : Sure I do. It's my right. (Entering and looking around) Hmm, not much of a place you have here, is it? Where's everybody? And who in hell are you? I don't like your face. It's a bit darker than it should be, seems to me. Step aside, there.

Porter : Certainly. As for my face, it gets a bit red from stoking the fire.

White : (relieved) Oh, that's all right then. You're a labourer. Quite right too. For a minute there you had me worried.

Porter : Sorry, I'm sure. Can't have you getting worried, now can we? But tell me, Mr. White, why have you come here? Who sent you?

White : What d'you mean, who sent me. Let me tell you nobody sends ME anywhere. I go where I like.

Porter : (muttering) How extraordinary. Well well, there's no accounting for tastes. But as for liking it here . . . (his voice trails off)

White : I tell you, I've always done what I liked, and now I've come for my due and just reward. I've kept myself to myself, and I've seen to it that the Kaffirs and Indians and Coloureds have done the same. Separate development's the thing I've lived by, and I have never knowingly shared a bus, or a door, or a school, or a job, or hope, with anyone who was not my colour. I'm very proud of this.

Porter : Yes, I can see you are. But haven't you ever felt a bit lonely, or even, forgive the question, a bit silly?

White : Lonely? Me? Of course not. What is there to be lonely about? I have my own people, and my own ideas, to keep me company, haven't I? And the coloured and all the rest of them have theirs. They develop separately in their homelands and (giggles) on their own benches and buses too for all I know.

Porter : Very sensible. And has the rest of the world understood your point of view?

White : What do you mean 'understood my point of view'? There isn't any other. In any case, I don't care. All I know is, if people don't agree with me, they're wrong. I've lived knowing this, and last week I died, knowing this. Simple.

Porter : Yes indeed. (Politely) Did you have a nice funeral, Mr. White?

White : Sure did. All the best people were *there and the thing went off very smoothly*. Except for one little hitch, some fool of a kaffir tried to come into the church during the ceremony. But the officials soon fixed that, I can tell you. Fined him and sent him packing. I believe it was my cook or someone, Simon I think his name was. Cheeky devil.

- Porter** : (interrupting) Nothing else to do on his day off maybe.
- White** : Huh? Mind you, I will say this for him, he wasn't a bad servant. He was paid for it of course, and he got his room and food. No gratitude of course, and he used to get sulky sometimes. Come to think of it, I don't think I ever heard that kaffir laugh.
- Porter** : Pity. Still, it doesn't matter, as you yourself would be the first to agree. Well, come along, Mr. White. As you're here, I'll fix you up right away, just like it's always been. This way, please. (Opens inner door and immediately there is a blast of heat).
- White** : Hey, wait a minute. Where's you taking me? Where in hell are we, anyway?
- Porter** : Where in hell . . . ? You mean, you don't know? Where you're standing now is the first layer, but you'll be going a bit further down, because it's our policy not to mix your sort with the first offenders, if you see what I mean. And you did say 'due and just reward, you know.
- White** : (alarmed) Did you say this is hell? I thought, naturally, I'd come to heaven. There's been some mistake.
- Porter** : (good humouredly) No, there hasn't. Like you, we never make mistakes. Hurry, please, I've a lot to do today.
- White** : (screaming) Help! For god's sake, help! Please won't someone, even a kaffir, help me? (Sees someone in the distance) Oh, there's Simon. Good old Simon. Simon! Hey Simon! Come and get me out of this.
- Simon** : (in the distance) Master? Coming, Baas. Oh. The man here says it would be a waste of time, because you're going down and I'm going up. He's saying something else now about separate development. Sorry, Master, maybe he'll let me come just now.
- White** : (being dragged away by Porter) Blasted kaffirs. Always let you down when you need them. Help! Simon! I'm sorry they wouldn't let you in to my funeral, but it wasn't my fault. I didn't know. Why didn't you see to it that your pass was in order? (angrily to Porter). Let go of me, you. I tell you, you're making a mistake. I've never done anyone any harm.
- Porter** : Splendid. But, if you will again forgive the question, have you ever done anyone any good?
- White** : You fool. O course I have. I'm white, aren't I? (Groans) Hell, I don't like this. Simon, come and turn this heat off. Blasted kaffirs. Never there when you want them.
- Porter** : (grimly) This is nothing. Just you wait. It'll get a lot worse before it gets better — that's if it ever does get better.
- White** : Oh oh oh. This is terrible. And who's that laughing? How dare anybody laugh when I'm in trouble?
- Porter** : Now now, Mr. White. Don't you worry, Mr. White. Everything's going to be quite all right, Mr. White. That wasn't anyone laughing. It was Simon. And he wasn't laughing at you. I gather he was glad to get away from you and, yes, look there, he's met a friend and they're walking away together.
- White** : But why should Simon be glad to get away from me? I don't understand. I may not have treated him like a human being, because he isn't. He's a kaffir.
- Porter** : Oh dear. If this weren't so funny, it'd be serious. Ah well, looks like I'll have to take you down to the lowest layer. I was hoping I wouldn't have to. (Calls in Simon's direction) Cheerio, Simon. Have a good trip. See you later after work, O.K.?
- Simon** : (in the distance) Cheerio Porter. Stay well, and have a nice day. (Cheekily) And don't let that Mr. White do anything I'd do. (As the curtain falls, poor old

White can hear Simon trying to explain something to Fellow Traveller:)

You see, Fellow Traveller, it's all a matter of purity. You, too, can learn to be pure. No previous experience necessary. Let me give you an example: I can wait *on* Mr. White, but I mustn't wait *for* him. Not as a person, I mean. It dirties him. See? Sounds queer, but you'll get the hang of it when you've had more separate development.

Fellow

Traveller: Yes, I s'pose I will. Anyhow, to hell with it. It's his funeral right now, not yours.

Simon : I guess it is. Poor old sod. He's always felt he had the right to twice as much as anyone else because of . . . what's the word? . . . of pig . . . pig . . . pigmentation. That's it. But imagine even him wanting *two* funerals. Maybe it's his way of making sure that I don't have *one* . . .

## IKWEZI LOKUSA SCHOOL TRANSKEI

*(A report from Port Elizabeth)*

**T**HIS IS A SCHOOL for Cerebral Palsied and Crippled Xhosa children — at Glen Avent, not far from Umtata.

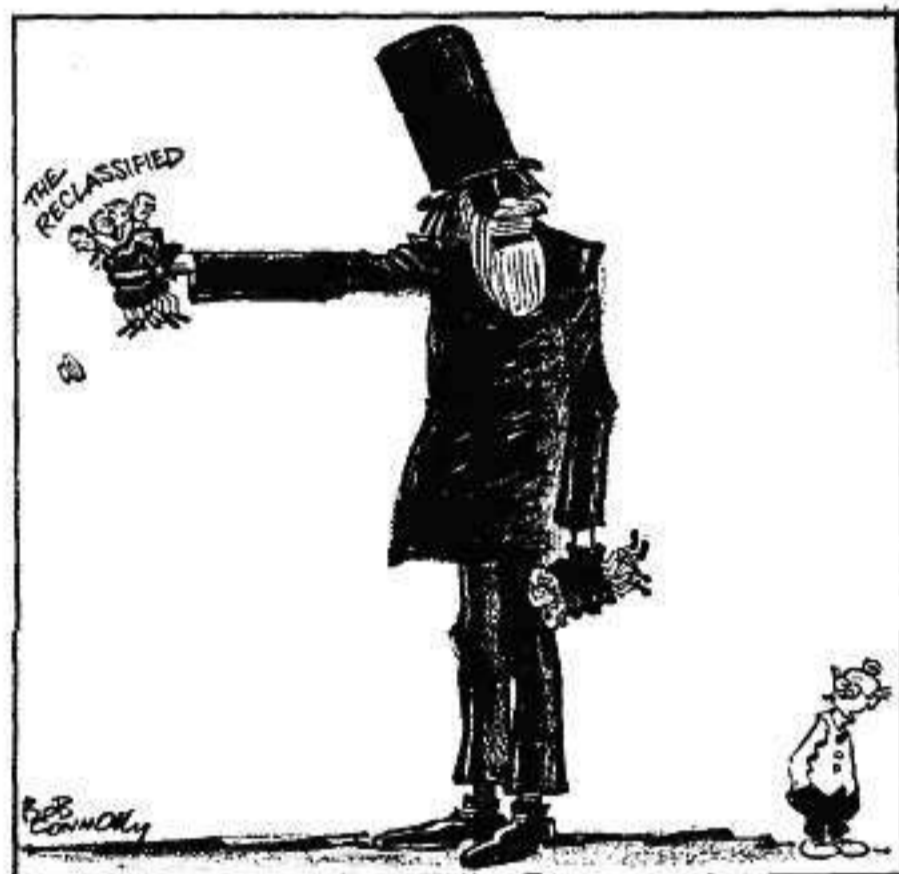
It was opened officially on the 15th April, 1964. It is a spacious and modern school and hostel accommodating 100 children, is run by the Roman Catholic Precious Blood Sisters and is now subsidised by the Transkeian Department of Education which pays a grant to provide food and clothing for all the children as well as transport to their homes twice a year for the holidays, the teachers' salaries, two-thirds of the salaries of the non-teaching personnel and 75% of all other expenses.

Sister M. Martin who is in charge writes: "Our primary aim is to help crippled children to become as physically independent as each can possibly become. This entails teaching many how to walk, how to toilet themselves, how to wash and dress themselves — tasks which seem sometimes almost impossible to a handicapped person. The children are encouraged to acquire good habits of hygiene. The more perfectly these aims can be achieved, the better will the handicapped children be able to adjust their lives to normal standards and be accepted by society. Thus the help offered by this school for crippled children may not only be regarded as aid given to the individual suffering children, but to human society by which these children have to be supported."

Molly Grey, who was invited to visit the school says:

"We arrived in time for tea and then we

THEY'RE ONLY PEOPLE by Bob Connolly



were shown round. There were happy noises and smiling faces all around us, but the day took on a nightmare quality. These horribly contorted bodies were chosen from all the rest as being most likely to respond to help and education — what were the rest like?

One hundred and twenty cripples seemed almost too much to confront and yet this was a mere drop in the ocean. We saw them taking part in all the normal activities, with such joy and enthusiasm it made your heart contract.

I had to keep reminding myself to look at all that was being done and not to think of how much remained undone. The Sisters are the epitome of serenity and loving tenderness.