

General Certificate of Education
June 2007
Advanced Subsidiary Examination



**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
(SPECIFICATION B)
Unit 2 The Changing Language of Literature**

NTB2

Tuesday 22 May 2007 9.00 am to 10.30 am

For this paper you must have:

- an 8-page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

Instructions

- Use blue or black ink or ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is NTB2.
- **Answer the compulsory question on the pair of extracts from the texts you have studied.**
- Do all rough work in the answer book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.

Information

- The texts prescribed for this paper **may not** be taken into the examination room.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 50.
- You will be marked on your ability to use good English, to organise information clearly and to use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

Answer the compulsory question on **the pair of extracts from the texts you have studied.**

Robinson Crusoe and The Coral Island

Discuss these two extracts, commenting on:

- the ideas in **each extract** and the ways in which they are presented, **including each writer's presentation of the castaways' attitudes to the animals on the islands**
- how the writers' language choices in **each extract** help to reveal attitudes and values
- what the language of the **two extracts** shows us about the changes in language and style over time
- how far you think the ideas, attitudes and values in **each extract** are characteristic of those found in the **whole text**.

The Scarlet Letter and The Color Purple

Discuss these two extracts, commenting on:

- the ideas in **each extract** and the ways in which they are presented, **including each writer's presentation of the death of an important character**
- how the writers' language choices in **each extract** help to reveal attitudes and values
- what the language of the **two extracts** shows us about the changes in language and style over time
- how far you think the ideas, attitudes and values in **each extract** are characteristic of those found in the **whole text**.

Tom Brown's Schooldays and Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

Discuss these two extracts, commenting on:

- the ideas in **each extract** and the ways in which they are presented, **including each writer's presentation of a decisive moment in the life of the main character**
- how the writers' language choices in **each extract** help to reveal attitudes and values
- what the language of the **two extracts** shows us about the changes in language and style over time
- how far you think the ideas, attitudes and values in **each extract** are characteristic of those found in the **whole text**.

Black Beauty and Watership Down

Discuss these two extracts, commenting on:

- the ideas in **each extract** and the ways in which they are presented, **including each writer's presentation of strong characters who have faced difficulties**
- how the writers' language choices in **each extract** help to reveal attitudes and values
- what the language of the **two extracts** shows us about the changes in language and style over time
- how far you think the ideas, attitudes and values in **each extract** are characteristic of those found in the **whole text**.

The Hound of the Baskervilles and The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency

Discuss these two extracts, commenting on:

- the ideas in **each extract** and the ways in which they are presented, **including each writer's presentation of the detectives' abilities to uncover the truth**
- how the writers' language choices in **each extract** help to reveal attitudes and values
- what the language of the **two extracts** shows us about the changes in language and style over time
- how far you think the ideas, attitudes and values in **each extract** are characteristic of those found in the **whole text**.

END OF QUESTIONS

**TURN TO THE RELEVANT PAGES FOR THE EXTRACTS
FROM THE TEXTS YOU HAVE STUDIED**

Turn over ►

Extract 1

In this Season I was much surpriz'd with the Increase of my Family; I had been concern'd for the Loss of one of my Cats, who run away from me, or as I thought had been dead, and I heard no more Tale or Tidings of her, till to my Astonishment she came Home about the End of *August*, with three *Kitters*; this was the more strange to me, because tho' I had kill'd a wild Cat, as I call'd it, with my Gun; yet I thought it was a quite differing Kind from our *European* Cats; yet the young Cats were the same Kind of House breed like the old one; and both my Cats being Females, I thought it very strange: But from these three Cats, I afterwards came to be so pester'd with Cats, that I was forc'd to kill them like Vermine, or wild Beasts, and to drive them from my House as much as possible.

From the fourteenth of *August* to the twenty sixth, incessant Rain, so that I could not stir, and was now very careful not to be much wet. In this Confinement I began to be straitned for Food, but venturing out twice, I one Day kill'd a Goat, and the last Day, which was the twenty sixth, found a very large Tortoise, which was a Treat to me, and my Food was regulated thus; I eat a Bunch of Raisins for my Breakfast, a Piece of the Goat's Flesh, or of the Turtle for my Dinner broil'd; for to my great Misfortune, I had no Vessel to boil or stew any Thing; and two or three of the Turtle's Eggs for my Supper.

During this Confinement in my Cover, by the Rain, I work'd daily two or three Hours at enlarging my Cave, and by Degrees work'd it on towards one Side, till I came to the Out-Side of the Hill, and made a Door or Way out, which came beyond my Fence or Wall, and so I came in and out this Way; but I was not perfectly easy at lying so open; for as I had manag'd my self before, I was in a perfect Enclosure, whereas now I thought I lay expos'd, and open for any Thing to come in upon me; and yet I could not perceive that there was any living Thing to fear, the biggest Creature that I had yet seen upon the Island being a Goat.

September the thirtieth, I was now come to the unhappy Anniversary of my Landing. I cast up the Notches on my Post, and found I had been on Shore three hundred and sixty five Days. I kept this Day as a Solemn Fast, setting it apart to Religious Exercise, prostrating my self on the Ground with the most serious Humiliation, confessing my Sins to God, acknowledging his Righteous Judgments upon me, and praying to him to have Mercy on me, through Jesus Christ; and having not tasted the least Refreshment for twelve Hours, even till the going down of the Sun, I then eat a Bisket Cake, and a Bunch of Grapes, and went to Bed, finishing the Day as I began it.

from **Daniel Defoe**, *Robinson Crusoe*

Extract 2

‘Very good,’ said Peterkin, tossing a lump of pork to the cat, who received it with a mew of satisfaction. ‘I’ll help you, if I can.’

‘Afterwards,’ continued Jack, ‘we will make a sail out of the coconut cloth, and rig up a mast, and then we shall be able to sail to some of the other islands, and visit our old friends the penguins.’

The prospect of being so soon in a position to extend our observations to the other islands, and enjoy a sail over the beautiful sea, afforded us much delight, and, after dinner, we set about making the oars in good earnest. Jack went into the woods and blocked them roughly out with the axe, and I smoothed them down with the knife, while Peterkin remained in the bower, spinning, or rather, twisting some strong thick cordage with which to fasten them to the boat.

We worked hard and rapidly, so that, when the sun went down, Jack and I returned to the bower with four stout oars, which required little to be done to them save a slight degree of polishing with the knife. As we drew near we were suddenly arrested by the sound of a voice! We were not a little surprised at this – indeed I may almost say alarmed – for, although Peterkin was undoubtedly fond of talking, we had never, up to this time, found him talking to himself. We listened intently, and still heard the sound of a voice as if in conversation. Jack motioned me to be silent, and, advancing to the bower on tiptoe, we peeped in.

The sight that met our gaze was certainly not a little amusing. On the top of a log which we sometimes used as a table, sat the black cat, with a very demure expression on its countenance; and in front of it, sitting on the ground, with his legs extended on either side of the log, was Peterkin. At the moment we saw him he was gazing intently into the cat’s face, with his nose about four inches from it – his hands being thrust into his breeches pockets. ‘Cat,’ said Peterkin, turning his head a little on one side, ‘I love you!’

There was a pause, as if Peterkin awaited a reply to this affectionate declaration. But the cat said nothing.

‘Do you hear me?’ cried Peterkin, sharply. ‘I love you – I do. Don’t you love me?’

To this touching appeal the cat said ‘Mew,’ faintly.

‘Ah! that’s right. You’re a jolly old rascal. Why did you not speak at once – eh?’ and Peterkin put forward his mouth and kissed the cat on the nose!

‘Yes,’ continued Peterkin, after a pause, ‘I love you. D’you think I’d say so if I didn’t, you black villain? I love you because I’ve got to take care of you, and to look after you, and to think about you, and to see that you don’t die –’

‘Mew, me-a-w!’ said the cat.

‘Very good,’ continued Peterkin, ‘quite true, I have no doubt; but you’ve no right to interrupt me, sir. Hold your tongue till I have done speaking. Moreover, cat, I love you because you came to me the first time you ever saw me, and didn’t seem to be afraid, and appeared to be fond of me, though you didn’t know that I wasn’t going to kill you. Now, that was brave, that was bold, and very jolly, old boy, and I love you for it – I do!’

Again there was a pause of a few minutes, during which the cat looked placid, and Peterkin dropped his eyes upon its toes as if in contemplation. Suddenly he looked up.

‘Well, cat, what are you thinking about now? Won’t speak, eh? Now, tell me; don’t you think it’s a monstrous shame that these two scoundrels, Jack and Ralph, should keep us waiting for our supper so long?’

Here the cat arose, put up its back and stretched itself; yawned slightly, and licked the point of Peterkin’s nose!

‘Just so, old boy, you’re a clever fellow – I really do believe the brute understands me!’ said Peterkin, while a broad grin overspread his face, as he drew back and surveyed the cat.

from **R.M. Ballantyne**, *The Coral Island*

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE *THE SCARLET LETTER* and
ALICE WALKER *THE COLOR PURPLE*

Extract 3

It seemed, at this point, as if the minister must leave the remainder of his secret undisclosed. But he fought back the bodily weakness, – and, still more, the faintness of heart, – that was striving for the mastery with him. He threw off all assistance, and stepped passionately forward a pace before the woman and the child.

“It was on him!” he continued, with a kind of fierceness; so determined was he to speak out the whole. “God’s eye beheld it! The angels were for ever pointing at it! The Devil knew it well, and fretted it continually with the touch of his burning finger! But he hid it cunningly from men, and walked among you with the mien of a spirit, mournful, because so pure in a sinful world! – and sad, because he missed his heavenly kindred! Now, at the death-hour, he stands up before you! He bids you look again at Hester’s scarlet letter! He tells you, that, with all its mysterious horror, it is but the shadow of what he bears on his own breast, and that even this, his own red stigma, is no more than the type of what has seared his inmost heart! Stand any here that question God’s judgement on a sinner? Behold! Behold a dreadful witness of it!”

With a convulsive motion he tore away the ministerial band from before his breast. It was revealed! But it were irreverent to describe that revelation. For an instant the gaze of the horror-stricken multitude was concentrated on the ghastly miracle; while the minister stood with a flush of triumph in his face, as one who, in the crisis of acutest pain, had won a victory. Then, down he sank upon the scaffold! Hester partly raised him, and supported his head against her bosom. Old Roger Chillingworth knelt down beside him, with a blank, dull countenance, out of which the life seemed to have departed.

“Thou hast escaped me!” he repeated more than once.
“Thou hast escaped me!”

“My God forgive thee!” said the minister. “Thou, too, hast deeply sinned!”

He withdrew his dying eyes from the old man, and fixed them on the woman and the child.

“My little Pearl,” said he feebly, – and there was a sweet and gentle smile over his face, as of a spirit sinking into deep repose; nay, now that the burden was removed, it seemed almost as if he would be sportive with the child, – “dear little Pearl, wilt thou kiss me now? Thou wouldst not yonder, in the forest! But now thou wilt?”

Pearl kissed his lips. A spell was broken. The great scene of grief, in which the wild infant bore a part, had developed all her sympathies; and as her tears fell upon her father’s cheek, they were the pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor for ever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it. Towards her mother, too, Pearl’s errand as a messenger of anguish was all fulfilled.

“Hester,” said the clergyman, “farewell!”

“Shall we not meet again?” whispered she, bending her face down close to his. “Shall we not spend our immortal life together? Surely, surely, we have ransomed one another, with all this woe! Thou lookest far into eternity, with those bright dying eyes! Then tell me what thou seest?”

“Hush, Hester, hush!” said he, with tremulous solemnity.

“The law we broke! – the sin here so awfully revealed! – let these alone be in thy thoughts! I fear! I fear!”

from **Nathaniel Hawthorne**, *The Scarlet Letter*

Extract 4

Don't be a fool, Shug say, nudging me with her foot. You got your own house now. Your daddy and mama left it for you. That dog of a stepdaddy just a bad odor passing through.

But I never had no house, I say. Just to think about having my own house enough to scare me. Plus, this house I'm gitting is bigger than Shug's, got more land around it. And, it come with a store.

My God, I say to Shug. Me and Nettie own a drygood store. What us gon sell?

How bout pants? she say.

So us hung up the phone and rush down home again to look at the property.

About a mile before us got to town us come up on the entrance to the colored cemetery. Shug was sound asleep, but something told me I ought to drive in. Pretty soon I see something look like a short skyscraper and I stop the car and go up to it. Sure enough it's got Alphonso's name on it. Got a lot of other stuff on it too. Member of this and that. Leading businessman and farmer. Upright husband and father. Kind to the poor and helpless. He been dead two weeks but fresh flowers still blooming on his grave.

Shug git out the car and come stand by me.

Finally she yawn loud and stretch herself. The son of a bitch still dead, she say.

from **Alice Walker**, *The Color Purple*

Dearest Nettie,

The man us knowed as Pa is dead.

How come you still call him Pa? Shug ast me the other day.

But, too late to call him Alphonso. I never even remember Ma calling him by his name. She always said, Your Pa. I reckon to make us believe it better. Anyhow, his little wife, Daisy, call me up on the telephone in the middle of the night.

Miss Celie, she say, I got bad news. Alphonso dead.

Who? I ast

Alphonso, she say. Your stepdaddy.

How he die? I ast. I think of killing, being hit by a truck, struck by lightening, lingering disease. But she say, Naw, he died in his sleep. Well, not quite in his sleep, she say. Us was spending a little time in bed together, you know, before us drop off.

Well, I say, you have my sympathy.

Yes ma'am, she say, and I thought I had this house too, but look like it belong to your sister Nettie and you.

Say what? I ast.

Your stepdaddy been dead over a week, she say. When us went to town to hear the will read yesterday, you could have knock me over with a feather. Your real daddy owned the land and the house and the store. He left it to your mama. When your mama died, it passed on to you and your sister Nettie. I don't know why Alphonso never told you that.

Well, I say, anything coming from him, I don't want it.

I hear Daisy suck in her breath. How about your sister Nettie, she say. You think she feel the same way?

I wake up a little bit then. By the time Shug roll over and ast me who it is, I'm beginning to see the light.

THOMAS HUGHES *TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS* and
J.K. ROWLING *HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE*

Extract 5

Poor Tom! the first and bitterest feeling which was like to break his heart, was the sense of his own cowardice. The vice of all others which he loathed was brought in and burned in on his own soul. He had lied to his mother, to his conscience, to his God. How could he bear it? And then the poor little weak boy, whom he had pitied and almost scorned for his weakness, had done that which he, braggart as he was, dared not do. The first dawn of comfort came to him in swearing to himself that he would stand by that boy through thick and thin, and cheer him, and help him, and bear his burdens, for the good deed done that night. Then he resolved to write home next day and tell his mother all, and what a coward her son had been. And then peace came to him as he resolved, lastly, to bear his testimony next morning. The morning would be harder than the night to begin with, but he felt that he could not afford to let one chance slip. Several times he faltered, for the devil showed him first, all his old friends calling him "Saint" and "Square-toes," and a dozen hard names, and whispered to him that his motives would be misunderstood, and he would only be left alone with the new boy; whereas it was his duty to keep all means of influence, that he might do good to the largest number. And then came the more subtle temptation, "Shall I not be showing myself braver than others by doing this? Have I any right to begin it now? Ought I not rather to pray in my own study, letting other boys know that I do so, and trying to lead them to it, while in public at least I should go on as I have done?" However, his good angel was too strong that night, and he turned on his side and slept, tired of trying to reason, but resolved to follow the impulse which had been so strong, and in which he had found peace.

Next morning he was up and washed and dressed, all but his jacket and waistcoat, just as the ten minutes' bell began to ring, and then in the face of the whole room knelt down to pray. Not five words could he say – the bell mocked him; he was listening for every whisper in the room – what were they all thinking of him? He was ashamed to go on kneeling, ashamed to rise from his knees. At last, as it were from his inmost heart, a still small voice seemed to breathe forth the words of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" He repeated them over and over, clinging to them as for his life, and rose from his knees comforted and humbled, and ready to face the whole world. It was not needed: two other boys besides Arthur had already followed his example, and he went down to the great School with a glimmering of another lesson in his heart – the lesson that he who has conquered his own coward spirit has conquered the whole outward world.

from **Thomas Hughes**, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*

Extract 6

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Turn over ►

Extract 7

“Well,” said he, “I hardly know; we always liked to hear the trumpet sound, and to be called out, and were impatient to start off, though sometimes we had to stand for hours, waiting for the word of command; and when the word was given, we used to spring forward as gaily and eagerly as if there were no cannon balls, bayonets, or bullets. I believe so long as we felt our rider firm in the saddle, and his hand steady on the bridle, not one of us gave way to fear, not even when the terrible bombshells whirled through the air and burst into a thousand pieces.

“I, with my noble master, went into many actions together without a wound; and though I saw horses shot down with bullets, pierced through with lances, and gashed with fearful saber-cuts; though we left them dead on the field, or dying in the agony of their wounds, I don’t think I feared for myself. My master’s cheery voice, as he encouraged his men, made me feel as if he and I could not be killed. I had such perfect trust in him that whilst he was guiding me, I was ready to charge up to the very cannon’s mouth. I saw many brave men cut down, many fall mortally wounded from their saddles. I had heard the cries and groans of the dying, I had cantered over ground slippery with blood, and frequently had to turn aside to avoid trampling on wounded man or horse, but, until one dreadful day, I had never felt terror; that day I shall never forget.”

Here old Captain paused for a while and drew a long breath. I waited, and he went on.

“It was one autumn morning, and as usual, an hour before daybreak our cavalry had turned out, ready caparisoned for the day’s work, whether it might be fighting or waiting. The men stood by their horses waiting, ready for orders.

from **Anna Sewell**, *Black Beauty*

CAPTAIN had been broken in and trained for an army horse; his first owner was an officer of cavalry going out to the Crimean War. He said he quite enjoyed the training with all the other horses, trotting together, turning together, to the right hand or to the left, halting at the word of command, or dashing forward at full speed at the sound of the trumpet, or signal of the officer. He was, when young, a dark, dappled lion grey, and considered very handsome. His master, a young, high-spirited gentleman, was very fond of him, and treated him from the first with the greatest care and kindness. He told me he thought the life of an army horse was very pleasant; but when it came to being sent abroad, over the sea in a great ship, he almost changed his mind.

“That part of it,” said he, “was dreadful! Of course we could not walk off the land into the ship; so they were obliged to put strong straps under our bodies, and then we were lifted off our legs in spite of our struggles, and were swung through the air over the water, to the deck of the great vessel. There we were placed in small close stalls, and never for a long time saw the sky, or were able to stretch our legs. The ship sometimes rolled about in high winds, and we were knocked about, and felt bad enough. However, at last it came to an end, and we were hauled up, and swung over again to the land; we were very glad, and snorted, and neighed for joy, when we once more felt firm ground under our feet.

“We soon found that the country we had come to was very different from our own and that we had many hardships to endure besides the fighting; but many of the men were so fond of their horses that they did everything they could to make them comfortable, in spite of the snow, wet, and all things out of order.”

“But what about the fighting?” said I; “was not that worse than anything else?”

Extract 8

General Woundwort was a singular rabbit. Some three years before, he had been born – the strongest of a litter of five – in a burrow outside a cottage garden near Cole Henley. His father, a happy-go-lucky and reckless buck, had thought nothing of living close to human beings, except that he would be able to forage in their garden in the early morning. He had paid dearly for his rashness. After two or three weeks of spoiled lettuces and nibbled cabbage-plants, the cottager had lain in wait and shot him as he came through the potato-patch at dawn. The same morning, the man set to work to dig out the doe and her growing litter. Woundwort's mother escaped, racing across the kale-field towards the downs, her kittens doing their best to follow her. None but Woundwort succeeded. His mother, bleeding from a shot-gun pellet, made her way along the hedges in broad daylight, with Woundwort limping beside her.

It was not long before a weasel picked up the scent of the blood and followed it. The little rabbit covered in the grass while his mother was killed before his eyes. He made no attempt to run, but the weasel, its hunger satisfied, left him alone and made off through the bushes. Several hours later a kind old schoolmaster from Overton, walking through the fields, came upon Woundwort nuzzling the cold, still body and crying. He carried him home to his own kitchen and saved his life, feeding him with milk from a nasal dropper until he was old enough to eat bran and greenstuff. But Woundwort grew up very wild and, like Cowper's hare, would bite when he could. In a month he was big and strong and had become savage. He nearly killed the schoolmaster's cat, which had found him at liberty in the kitchen and tried to torment him. One night, a week later, he tore the wire from the front of his hutch and escaped to the open country.

Most rabbits in his situation, lacking almost all experience of wild life, would have fallen victim at once to the elil: but not Woundwort. After a few days' wandering, he came upon a small warren and, snarling and clawing, forced them to accept him. Soon he had become Chief Rabbit, having killed both the previous Chief and a rival named Fiorin. In combat he was terrifying, fighting entirely to kill, indifferent to any wounds he received himself and closing with his adversaries until his weight overbore and exhausted them. Those who had no heart to oppose him were not long in feeling that here was a leader indeed.

Woundwort was ready to fight anything except a fox.

from **Richard Adams**, *Watership Down*

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* and
ALEXANDER McCALL SMITH *THE No. 1 LADIES' DETECTIVE AGENCY*

Extract 9

“Mr and Mrs Vandeleur,” but you will have no difficulty in recognizing him, and her also, if you know her by sight. Here are three written descriptions by trustworthy witnesses of Mr and Mrs Vandeleur, who at that time kept St Oliver’s private school. Read them, and see if you can doubt the identity of these people.’

She glanced at them, and then looked up at us with the set, rigid face of a desperate woman.

‘Mr Holmes,’ she said, ‘this man had offered me marriage on condition that I could get a divorce from my husband. He has lied to me, the villain, in every conceivable way. Not one word of truth has he ever told me. And why – why? I imagined that all was for my own sake. But now I see that I was never anything but a tool in his hands. Why should I preserve faith with him who never kept any with me? Why should I try to shield him from the consequences of his own wicked acts? Ask me what you like, and there is nothing which I shall hold back. One thing I swear to you, and that is, that when I wrote the letter I never dreamed of any harm to the old gentleman, who had been my kindest friend.’

‘I entirely believe you, madam,’ said Sherlock Holmes. ‘The recital of these events must be very painful to you, and perhaps it will make it easier if I tell you what occurred, and you can check me if I make any material mistake.’

from **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

Mrs Laura Lyons was in her office, and Sherlock Holmes opened his interview with a frankness and directness which considerably amazed her.

‘I am investigating the circumstances which attended the death of the late Sir Charles Baskerville,’ said he. ‘My friend here, Dr Watson, has informed me of what you have communicated, and also of what you have withheld in connection with that matter.’

‘What have I withheld?’ she asked defiantly.

‘You have confessed that you asked Sir Charles to be at the gate at ten o’clock. We know that that was the place and hour of his death. You have withheld what the connection is between these events.’

‘There is no connection.’

‘In that case the coincidence must indeed be an extraordinary one. But I think that we shall succeed in establishing a connection after all. I wish to be perfectly frank with you, Mrs Lyons. We regard this case as one of murder, and the evidence may implicate not only your friend, Mr Stapleton, but his wife as well.’

The lady sprang from her chair. ‘His wife!’ she cried.

‘The fact is no longer a secret. The person who has passed for his sister is really his wife.’

Mrs Lyons had resumed her seat. Her hands were grasping the arms of her chair, and I saw that the pink nails had turned white with the pressure of her grip.

‘His wife!’ she said, again. ‘His wife! He was not a married man.’

Sherlock Holmes shrugged his shoulders.

‘Prove it to me! Prove it to me! And if you can do so –!’ The fierce flash of her eyes said more than any words.

‘I have come prepared to do so,’ said Holmes, drawing several papers from his pocket. ‘Here is a photograph of the couple taken in York four years ago. It is endorsed

Extract 10

She bought a beer and looked about her, as if taking in the surroundings of the bar for the first time.

‘You’ve not been here before, my sister,’ said Kremlin Busang. ‘It’s a good bar, this one.’

She met his gaze. ‘I only come to bars on big occasions,’ she said. ‘Such as today.’

Kremlin Busang smiled. ‘Your birthday?’

‘Yes,’ she said. ‘Let me buy you a drink to celebrate.’

She bought him a beer, and he moved over to the stool beside her. She saw that he was a good-looking man, exactly as his photograph had revealed him, and his clothes were well chosen. They drank their beers together, and then she ordered him another one. He began to tell her about his job.

‘I sort diamonds,’ he said. ‘It’s a difficult job, you know. You need good eyesight.’

‘I like diamonds,’ she said. ‘I like diamonds a lot.’

‘We are very lucky to have so many diamonds in this country,’ he said. ‘My word! Those diamonds!’

She moved her left leg slightly, and it touched his. He noticed this, as she saw him glance down, but he did not move his leg away.

‘Are you married?’ she asked him quietly.

He did not hesitate. ‘No. I’ve never been married. It’s better to be single these days. Freedom, you know.’

She nodded. ‘I like to be free too,’ she said. ‘Then you can decide how to spend your own time.’

‘Exactly,’ he said. ‘Dead right.’

She drained her glass.

‘I must go,’ she said, and then, after a short pause:

‘Maybe you’d like to come back for a drink at my place. I’ve got some beer there.’

He smiled. ‘Yes. That’s a good idea. I had nothing to do either.’

He followed her home in his car and together they went into her house and turned on some music. She poured him

a beer, and he drank half of it in one gulp. Then he put his arm around her waist, and told her that he liked good, fat women. All this business about being thin was nonsense and was quite wrong for Africa.

‘Fat women like you are what men really want,’ he said.

She giggled. He was charming, she had to admit it, but this was work and she must be quite professional. She must remember that she needed evidence, and that might be more difficult to get.

‘Come and sit by me,’ she said. ‘You must be tired after standing up all day, sorting diamonds.’

She had her excuses ready, and he accepted them without protest. She had to be at work early the next morning and he could not stay. But it would be a pity to end such a good evening and have no memento of it.

‘I want to take a photograph of us, just for me to keep. So that I can look at it and remember tonight.’

He smiled at her and pinched her gently.

‘Good idea.’

So she set up her camera, with its delayed switch, and leapt back on the sofa to join him. He pinched her again and put his arm around her and kissed her passionately as the flash went off.

‘We can publish that in the newspapers if you like,’ he said. ‘Mr Handsome with his friend Miss Fatty.’

She laughed. ‘You’re a ladies’ man all right, Kremlin. You’re a real ladies’ man. I knew it first time I saw you.’

‘Well somebody has to look after the ladies,’ he said.

Alice Busang returned to the office that Friday and found Mma Ramotswa waiting for her.

‘I’m afraid that I can tell you that your husband is unfaithful,’ she said. ‘I’ve got proof.’

from **Alexander McCall Smith**,
The No.1 Ladies’ Detective Agency

END OF EXTRACTS

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