

Towerwater

It must have been sometime after the smallpox epidemic when /nkwe felt the first faint feathery feelings in the pit of his stomach. He knew that his beloved peoples future as a living culture was nearly over – his great grandfathers prophecy was coming true.

The elephant dance is reserved for only the most powerful shamans in that it is both taxing and dangerous. The great bull elephant of the kouga was supreme in the spiritual world of the elephant people. Narouga (from the place of plentiful matjiesgoed) was the revered san patriarch whose powers allowed him fleeting entrance into that world, saw his peoples destiny on that fateful day through the eyes of q/uap. Narouga gave an impassioned translation of the vision he was given, to his clan, while lying in a fragile state post trance. The nosebleed was still flowing and caused difficulty in the delivery of the vision. This is what he saw 'the elephants had come together in a huge communal herd numbering thousands. It was as if they were driven by a force so much greater that they and resulted in a kind of milling madness that left even the birds and insects quiet. A feeling of impending drama was tangible, further exacerbated by the building of a huge thunderstorm. Like a pressure release valve a huge bolt of lightening struck the earth following by a deafening burst of thunder. Great gusts of wind appeared out of nowhere and pulled and shook the trees in a violent and unearthly manner before the heavens opened with he-rain so heavy it was almost like a great river flowing directly from the sky. In this great river a vortex or whirling pool formed and like sheep to the slaughter the elephants as if guided entered the strong flowing water to be sucked into the vortex centre and disappear. The next morning a beautiful African dawn was born and the colourful skirt of the rain hung lightly in the sky. A deep cavern was obvious at the point the elephants had disappeared in the river now subsided and thousands of rock hyrax were clambering out.' Narouga heaved his last sigh and left for the other world. He was given a burial worthy of his status and his foetal body preserved with poison bulbs and a specially painted stone that represented his calling placed on top of his body.

Although overwhelmed by the sadness of this reality the knowledge that his people would live on in the realm of the animal spirit realm and would haunt and inspire the future of Africa, made his spirit fly like a swift just before the rain. His people would guide all nations back into the fold and heal the festering madness throbbing interminably in the tusk nerve of the great Elephant bull.

/nkwe, father, son, hunter, healer and great shaman of the elephant people of the kouga now lived alone in his shrinking mountain wilderness where he could converse with the gods and ancestors. This was a moody place of magnificent contrast, blessed with abundant water and honey, hanging in the deafening silence of the great teacher- who was neither human nor animal yet very tangible and approachable. She emanated from somewhere within us yet not, she was everywhere and right here, she was he and then it. /nkwe knew the mother intimately and was comforted in the knowledge she was watching out for him and all the peoples on this earth and beyond. She was calling him to his destiny and intuitively /nkwe headed towards the pool of life just below the highest mountain where the sun sets. Leaving the place he was born for the last time as a man he paid his respects to his father, grandfather and great grandfather by spilling a small offering of his congealed nose blood carefully stored in rhebok horn around his neck.

Water from the nearby stream diluted this powerful omen that linked /nkwe to the past and contained the essence of the great elephant bull which would determine his and the future of his people.

Following the well-known course up to the neck of the great rainmaker kloof, /nkwe was greeted by the nasal alarms of a klipspringer pair. He greeted them fondly and warned them of the great spotted cat signs he had found along the way. It was the last of winter and light snow was evident on the high peaks in the tsitsi//amma. The honey smelling tea bushes were adorned with a beautiful flush of yellow flowers emanating the luscious honey aroma for which they were so revered. Looking seawards he recognised the narrow kloof of hoeras where the elephant people had gathered yearly with song and dance. The sweetness of the honey beer and hyrax meat and the nervous tingling in his stomach before entering the world of the elephants in their dance became tangible. He remembered his son /kagodi (goshawk) and his capture by the white people and their smoking sticks that made thunder. He wondered where he was now and with a heavy heart he started up the steep incline to 'the pool of life', his bones feeling the cold bite of wind sent by the setting sun.

He reached the plateau just as it was getting dark and settled for the night in a bulky sandstone fortress just short of the natural impoundment uncharacteristically in the alpine zone. Quickly the weather deteriorated with wet and blustery conditions that eventually released a good sprinkling of snow. It was an extremely difficult night and /nkwe battled to keep warm without a fire. Dawn broke with clear skies and bright sunshine. The wip wip, wip wip warnings of the small herd of mountain zebra carried crisply and /nkwe moved awkwardly over the whitened ground to the pool.

His spirits lifted when he reached the pool and he drank readily. The almost surreal world he found himself in oozed magical. Imagine this alpine dam of crystal clean fountain water, blanketed in a light sprinkling of snow. A view that never seemed to end made /nkwe feel rather small and insignificant yet at the same time he felt that same prickle in his stomach that catalysed a nosebleed. The contrast of the red life source dripping onto the snow moved /nkwe and made him give thanks to the mighty bull elephant. /nkwe was overcome by a great tiredness and the soft rays of the mid morning sun was warming his body in a comforting manner. He made for the large boulders on the edge of the pool and found a dry, soft lay in the sun and drifted off to sleep.

He dreamed vividly being greeted by a large male leopard who introduced himself as his great grandfather Narouga and he wept with joy. He knew then that his people were safe, as they had become animals again.