THE PLAY, 

*MIES JULIE*, AND THE ISSUE OF LAND REDISTRIBUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE REVISIONIST WESTERN GENRE

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DECLARATION

I, David Emery, 206017669, hereby declare that the treatise for MA: Applied Media is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another University or for another qualification.

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Introduction

The play Miss Julie was published by playwright August Strindberg in 1888. It is a comment on the class issues in Sweden at the time (Leib, 2011). This commentary is achieved through telling the fictional tale of Julie, the daughter of a wealthy Swedish landowner, Jean, her father’s manservant, and Kristin, Jean’s betrothed who is also the house cook. During the course of a night and the next morning, Jean and Julie admit their feelings for one another, sleep together and plan to run away to start a hotel. In the morning, they ask Kristin to join them when they encounter her on her way to church. She refuses and vows to put an end to their plans. Seeing no way out, and fearing the wrath of Julie’s father, Jean hands Julie a razor and she walks outside, the inference being that she will commit suicide.

The play Mies Julie is a South African adaptation, by South African playwright Yael Farber, of the August Strindberg play Miss Julie set in a farming kitchen in the Eastern Cape Karoo that premiered at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in 2012. It has since been brought to London, the Edinburgh Festival and New York. Mies Julie presents a power struggle between Julie, the daughter of the white Afrikaans farm owner, and John, her father’s favourite farm worker and the son of Christine, the housekeeper who raised Julie.

By altering Christine’s role from that in Strindberg’s play, where she was John’s (there Jean’s) fiancé, to that of John’s mother and Julie’s nursemaid, playwright Yael Farber has brought to the fore an interesting irony of South Africa’s history, which has been observed by Ena Jansen (2011) – white children who are raised, both during and post-apartheid, by black women who become part of the household of the privileged white families they work for. This presents a paradox in Mies Julie – while
Christine is a servant, she is also more of a mother to Julie than her biological parent (who committed suicide when Julie was a child) ever was. This creates an interesting power dynamic, especially with John included, as he suspects that his mother may love Julie equally as, or more than, she does him. Anne McClintock (1995) reinforces this idea when she suggests that female servants in colonised nations (such as South Africa) exerted a great deal of influence over the lives of their young colonial charges.

While class is obviously an issue in Mies Julie, the topic of land ownership, and especially land redistribution, is the main theme running through the play, which brings the Revisionist Western genre to mind. The Script Lab (n.d.) provides the following explanation of the Revisionist Western:

[Revisionist Westerns] came about in the 1960s as a response to classic Westerns. These films took a different look at the West, often incorporating Native Americans as more than just “savages.” Revisionist Westerns called the audience to examine whether the use of violence is moral – even if the protagonist is justified.

Panay (2002) names land ownership as a major issue in Revisionist Westerns and it is on the issue of land redistribution that the violence in Mies Julie is centred. While the Revisionist Western is a film genre, it may also be applied to theatre, as noted by Juliano (2010) and Rich (1990). This indicates that the approach in Mies Julie to the issue of land redistribution, as well as its treatment of indigenous people, may class it as Revisionist Western theatre, which will be investigated further.

The issue of land redistribution is of current interest in South Africa, especially with the recent formation of Julius Malema’s political party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (SABC, 2013). Mies Julie challenges its audience to ask to whom land
rights in South Africa belong. Cordes (2013) states that the issue of land redistribution is “crucial” to an attempt to begin to heal the injustices of South Africa’s apartheid past. The play echoes the current situation in South Africa with the land redistribution debate in that it provides no easy answers, if any at all. South Africa is approaching twenty years as a democratic nation and the debate around land redistribution is still nowhere near reaching a solution (Ashton, 2012).

**Justification and Significance**

The play *Mies Julie* is a commentary on the current debates around land redistribution within post-apartheid South Africa. This play has received wide coverage internationally, is very current and deals with prevalent issues within South Africa, which is why it was chosen for this study.

**Research question**

How effective is the play *Mies Julie* as a commentary on land redistribution within the current political context of South Africa as a Revisionist Western play?

**Research Aim**

The aim of this study is to establish a link between the Revisionist Western genre, the play *Mies Julie* and its representation of the issue of land redistribution in South Africa.
Research Objectives

- To study the effectiveness of Mies Julie at commenting on land redistribution in South Africa by analysing national and international reviews of the play.
- Linking themes in the reviews to themes within Mies Julie and their link to land redistribution in South Africa.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

The first part of this study will focus primarily on the text, Mies Julie. It will make use of the guidelines used to identify a Revisionist Western play set out by Bordwell and Thompson (2010), as well as by Valdez Moses (2010), to analyse elements within the play in order to determine whether Mies Julie fits within these guidelines. Phenomenography is a qualitative research method that provides data for research based upon a subject’s experience of a phenomenon, such as watching (and then providing data by reviewing) a play (Ornek, 2008). This is the theoretical framework under which I will be conducting the second part of this study as reviewers’ experiences of watching the play Mies Julie will provide a measure of the effectiveness of Mies Julie at conveying messages concerning land redistribution in South Africa.

Delimitations of the Study

Owing to the limited scale of this study, no reviews beyond the fifteen selected were considered. Reviews with a strong focus on the theatrical elements of Mies Julie, as
opposed to its political message, were not included in the study owing to their lack of relevance to the purpose of the study.

**Review of Literature**

Before having read any reviews of *Mies Julie*, it was clear from a number of articles covering the touring production that the play has been a resounding success. Amongst these articles was one published by Emerson College, which referred to the play as “an international success, *Mies Julie* is the recipient of seven awards (including a Fringe First) and has received nearly 30 five-star reviews” (Emerson College, 2012). The Emerson College article is supported by an article on the website *The South African*, which calls *Mies Julie* “the undisputed smash hit of the 2012 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which amassed an unrivalled 10 five star reviews” (TheSouthAfrican.com, 2013), as well as by Andile Ndlovu of *Times Live*, who stated that “*Mies Julie* has been a huge success both locally and internationally” (Ndlovu, 2013). This evidence supports the notion that *Mies Julie* is a relevant South African work in the global context, and is therefore worthy of further study, especially considering the significance of its subject matter: land redistribution.

When addressing the importance of land redistribution in South Africa, Cordes (2013) states that “it will not be a panacea for all South Africa’s agricultural ills. Righting today’s wrongs will require more than just fixing yesterday’s”. It is this exact argument that is presented in *Mies Julie* – the fact that there are no quick solutions to South Africa’s economic inequalities to be found in implementing land reforms. Once again, the relevance of themes presented in *Mies Julie* is highlighted. This is particularly evident in the following extract from the play (Farber, 2012: 45):

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JOHN: [The land’s] not yours to love.

JULIE: Says who? What makes it less mine than yours? Your black skin?

JOHN: My people are buried here. Beneath this floor.

JULIE: So are mine. Out there beneath the willow trees. Three generations back. Where the fuck do I go?

JOHN: That’s not my problem. They stole it. Your people.

JULIE: Fok jou. So did yours. From the First here. How far back do you want to go?

This passage is the core of Mies Julie’s message: there is no ‘right side’ in the land redistribution debate. If one were to follow the ‘everyone whose ancestors took land away from those who came before them should renounce all ownership of said land’ argument, it is likely that the majority of the population of South Africa would fit into this category.

Another issue concerning land reform in South Africa is brought up in an article from Property24 (2013) that points out that, while South African land reform is of vital importance, “it shouldn’t come at the cost of food security or by breaking up economically efficient enterprises”. Farmland, for example, cannot simply be handed over without a basis of knowledge being created for new owners.

The struggle between John and Julie acts as a microcosm, not so much for the issue of race in South Africa (though the issue of race plays an integral part in the story) as it does for land ownership and redistribution. For an audience that is perhaps uninformed about the land issue in South Africa, or is seeking an objective
perspective on the issue, or is simply looking to be entertained, *Mies Julie* has provided a critically acclaimed lens through which to watch the drama unfold.

Augusto Boal, in both *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) and *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (2006) argues that a play can be used effectively to raise awareness about political issues (in this case, the issue of land redistribution in South Africa). Obuh (1992:138) reiterates Boal’s argument when he states that:

> One of the agents of socio-political change is drama/theatre. Drama is the most economical mode of experience, which conveys an idea that can be accepted as true. Drama’s impact is also direct and more immediate than other forms of expression.

This study must therefore determine whether or not *Mies Julie* has been effective in conveying its socio-political message by studying reviews of the play. The arguments of Boal (2006) and Obuh (1992), along with the proven success of the play, provide some indication, before a study has been conducted, that this measure will prove that the play has value as a socio-political agent.

**Research Methodology and Design**

This study takes an interpretivist approach, focusing primarily on qualitative data using a two-part analysis.

The play, *Mies Julie*, will be studied using the guidelines of Bordwell and Thompson (2010) and those of Valdez Moses (2010) in the context of the Revisionist Western genre and the issue of land redistribution in South Africa, in order to determine whether it fits within the guidelines. A content analysis will then be performed on
selected reviews of the international touring production of *Mies Julie* to better understand the perceptions of reviewers of the effectiveness of *Mies Julie* at conveying themes within the play. Fifteen reviews (eight international and seven national) will be used, as this will show an even distribution of opinions concerning the effectiveness of the production at presenting the themes identified in the semiotic analysis.

**Analysis**

**Mies Julie as a Revisionist Western**

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2010) provide the following list of characteristics of a Revisionist Western, which developed as a response to Traditional Westerns:

1. Protagonists are far more complex than the ‘hero on a white horse’ of more traditional Westerns

2. The uncivilised characteristics of the hero are emphasised, with heroes often shown to be “perilously out of control” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2010: 339).

3. Conventional thematic values of the Traditional Western are inverted, with indigenous cultures now being portrayed as being civilised, while white society is shown to be violent.

4. Indigenous cultures are treated with far more respect than are the ‘savages’ of Traditional Westerns.
Michael Valdez Moses (2010) adds a further major characteristic of the Revisionist Western to the above list:

5. Land ownership and restitution are a major theme.

As the name of the play suggests, Julie is the protagonist. She presents as more of an anti-hero than as a traditional heroic main character. She both professes love and demonstrates extreme cruelty to John through the course of the play. She is, at various times, both emotionally strong and fragile, affectionate, seething with anger, a vicious racist, and a white woman desperate to express her love for the black man whom she has loved for a long time. This is where the complexity of Julie’s character can be seen clearly.

As stated above, she runs through a gamut of emotions as the play progresses, and the motivations for her responses to John are just as complex. She fights an inner battle between her upbringing and loyalty to her father and her love for the son of the woman who raised her in the role that her own mother utterly neglected (until her suicide). Her father has left her feeling unwanted since childhood, as the following extract from *Mies Julie* (Farber, 2012: 15) demonstrates:

JULIE

Niemand sal aan my raak nie¹. My pa will shoot the black man in the head that puts his hands on me. Then he’ll shoot me. Told me that once when I was little. That was my bedtime story.

(laughs)

Come. Dance with me.

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¹ No one will touch me. *(Afrikaans)*
JOHN

You drunk, Mies Julie. Go to bed.

JULIE

Scared? Don't worry. My father wouldn't touch you. You're his favourite. Likes you more than he's ever liked me. Always wanted a boy.

Here, one of the most crucial aspects of the relationship between John and Julie is raised – each feels that their living biological parent loves the other child more than the parent loves them. John’s belief that Christine favours Julie over him (which has already been mentioned) becomes clear when he tells her (Farber, 2012: 27):

I remember the love on my mother’s face when she first unwrapped that blanket [with you in it]. She never looked at me like that. Before you could walk you were always in her arms or tied to her back.

This is emphasized later when they have the following exchange (Farber, 2012: 46):

JOHN

You hate yourself, Julie.

JULIE

No, John. I hate you.

JOHN

Why? You have everything of mine.

JULIE

I have nothing. Don't you see?
These are not only complex characters, but it is evident from the above extracts that incredibly complex dynamics exist between them. Yael Farber has satisfied the first criterion of Bordwell and Thompson (2010) for a Revisionist Western in representing what is – as has already been pointed out by En Jansen (2011) – a paradox in the present and past of South Africa. The audience may sympathise with Julie’s pain and loss, but these characteristics are not the only ones that define her, and her relationship with John in the play brings out her (and his) complexity.

As Julie goes through a myriad of emotions during the play, her fear of the wrath of her father directed at the consummation of her love for John, as well as her racist upbringing bring out a brutal side of her personality. Julie admits her love to John, but when she is faced by the realisation that everything she has shared with John, and the chance of a happy future with the man she loves, may be nothing more than an illusion, she breaks down and both verbally and physically retaliates (Farber, 2012: 42):

    JOHN

    You're not a snake. You're the past. A sad, empty-handed boer² still trying to be powerful.

² Farmer (Afrikaans)
JULIE

And you are just a KAFFIR³! STAAN OP WANEER JY MET MY PRAAT, JOU FOKKEN PLAAS KAFFIR!⁴ You'll never be anything but a kaffir. Good for cleaning boots.

There is no denying that John has been cruel to Julie. After he has told her he loves her, after they have made love, he enters her roughly, urging her to tell him she wants him to (which she does), and then discards her in an attempt to distance himself from what he has done. He has allowed himself to be vulnerable with Julie and the potential violent repercussions of that decision terrify him. He scrambles for the only power he has over her, the act they have just committed, and breaks her down emotionally by professing to have lied about his feelings for her. Julie, in response, debases him, reducing him to the word ‘kaffir’. She beats herself (the play describes this as being done “savagely” (Farber, 2012: 43)), drinks excessively, begs John to hit her, begs him to love her, to hold her, and ultimately threatens to accuse him falsely of rape when he tries to leave her. Julie has lost all control in her life, and her grasping at trying to regain it is utterly savage, regardless of how she has been treated. Here, the uncivilised side of the hero, as outlined by Bordwell and Thompson (2010), has been brought to the fore.

Mies Julie starkly contrasts the behaviour of white and black society in the microcosm it presents of South Africa. John, despite the oppression he has suffered throughout his life, proves to Julie that he is well read; he refuses to run away and

³ An offensive South African term for a black person.

⁴ Stand up when you are talking to me, you fucking farm kaffir! (Afrikaans)
abandon his mother; he attends church every Sunday and takes care of both his family and Julie’s. Christine has spent her entire life in the service of Julie’s family. She has raised Julie in place of her biological parents and treats her as her own child. She has given all of herself in order to care for the family she serves so dutifully (Farber, 2012: 50):

[Christine] holds her hand up in front of [John] – palm and fingertips facing toward him. She is silent.

JOHN

What is it, Ma?

CHRISTINE

No fingerprints.

JOHN

What?

CHRISTINE

When I went to vote for the first time – 18 years ago – they needed fingerprints for identification. But they’re gone. I lost them. Rubbed them smooth, cleaning this floor! These walls! That child!

...

CHRISTINE

Now get dressed for church. And when we come back, there is work to be done.
In *Mies Julie* the indigenous inhabitants of the land, John and Christine, are shown to be God-fearing, dutiful, caring people.

Julie and her father are shown on numerous occasions throughout the play to be cruel and uncivilised. Julie’s father punishes John and Christine for the fact that squatters have set up residence on his land, despite the fact that they have no connection beyond the colour of their skin. Meneer\(^5\) (Julie’s father) – as John and Christine refer to him – and his friends came across John as a child after he had fallen out of a tree and landed in dog excrement. The men all laughed and took turns kicking John. John explains his view to Julie of Meneer’s approach to life as follows (Farber, 2012: 41): “Since I was a boy – going hunting with your father at dawn, carrying his gun, being his ‘best boy’ – I’ve watched him take what he wants and still behave like he’s owed.”

When Julie does not get her way, when John resists her advances, she becomes aggressive and childish, taunting and threatening him. She has spent her entire life being waited on by people she views as less than herself, and this has resulted in her being completely unable to look after herself, as John tells her (Farber, 2012: 39): “You – can’t even cook yourself a meal. You depend on [black people] for everything. We clean up your shit. Run your kitchens. Raise your children. Plough your fields. But still – like a child – you want.”

John and his mother perform their duties without any complaint. Christine even cooks a meal for Julie’s dog, Diana that causes her to abort her puppies, all because Julie objected to the fact that the farm workers’ dog impregnated Diana. After the abortion is complete, Christine tends to Diana and buries the puppies. This all

\(^5\) **Mister** (Afrikaans; a title indicating subservience towards the subject on the part of the speaker.)
indicates that John and Christine, from whose ancestors Julie’s great grandfather claimed the land they now live on, are civilised, dutiful caretakers. Julie and her father, the descendants of the colonisers who stole the land, behave like unruly, vicious children by comparison, which fits Bordwell and Thompson’s (2010) third characteristic of a Revisionist Western.

This representation of the indigenous people of the region leads to Bordwell and Thompson’s (2010) final characteristic of Revisionist Westerns: the positive representation of indigenous cultures. Christine’s patience, generosity, sense of duty and caring nature have already been established, as have John’s many admirable qualities. The play, Mies Julie, looks deeper at the characters of Christine and John and focuses on them as a representation of the Xhosa culture in South Africa. It is made very clear, by bringing up the subject time and again throughout the play, that family – both living and deceased – is what is most important to Christine and John. Family in this case includes the family that they take care of, and not only their biological family.

Christine has in the past broken the tiles in the kitchen in an attempt to free the spirit of her ancestor buried in the ground on which the house was built. No matter what she and her son have to endure, she refuses to leave the land while the bones of her ancestor remain beneath the kitchen. Christine’s connection to the land of her ancestors (and to her ancestors themselves) is best summarised in the following exchange with John as he tries to convince her to help him take back what he feels rightfully belongs to him and his mother (Farber, 2012: 53-54):
JOHN

(brutally)

You are going to keep scrubbing that floor until you die.

CHRISTINE

I will wait. Until this house turns to dust. Until this floor turns to sand. Until the waters rise and it all floats away. I can't break it open and set them free. I have tried. So I wait. These roots are my hands. And beneath these stones, my blood is warm.

JOHN

We take it back ourselves. Or we leave.

CHRISTINE

Get ready for church.

JOHN

They took our land and handed us the Bible. I'm not going to Church. Ever again.

He grabs her Bible and throws it brutally. Christine drops to her knees, broken. She holds the Bible. She rises and tries to compose herself.

CHRISTINE

I will meet you there when you are finished with this mess. I trust you, my boy.

Christine and John, as representations of the Xhosa people, are honest, hardworking and dedicated. The indigenous people of the Eastern Cape Karoo where Mies Julie is set are clearly treated with respect within the play and are well-developed characters, not merely mindless ‘savages’.
This leaves the final characteristic of the Revisionist Western, as identified by Michael Valdez Moses (2010): Land ownership and restitution. Of all of the issues raised in *Mies Julie*, land is the most discussed. Land is what keeps Christine and John on Veneen Plaas\(^6\). Land is also a major cause of conflict between the squatters who have settled on the farm and the farm workers (including John and Christine) who have lived there their whole lives and are now being punished for the presence of the squatters (Farber, 2012: 13):

**JOHN**

The new boys were asking how come you can cook for me in here – and they're out there with no electricity or water.

**CHRISTINE**

This is *my* kitchen. They will never understand how things work around here. They come to Veneen Plaas and want to take what we've been working for all our lives.

**JOHN**

When winter comes – our children will freeze. Meneer refuses to turn the heat and water back on until we chase the squatters away. It's a brutal way. Punishing us to get them off the land.

**CHRISTINE**

They must build their shacks somewhere else. Meneer doesn't want them living here.

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\(^6\) *Weeping Farm* *(Afrikaans)*
JOHN

He's a hard boer. By law they have the right to live here if their parents did. A storm is coming to this farm. The workers are celebrating Freedom Day tonight, but there is anger on the wind out there.

It is interesting to see that, despite the squatters having the legal right to inhabit the land, Christine still feels that they should earn the right. This gives insight into the complexity of the land ownership debate within South Africa. Here we see not only a disagreement between black and white people over the land, but also one between separate groups within the black community on Vaneen Plaat.

Christine and John's family connection to the land has already been established. Christine, while supporting Julie's father in his desire to clear the squatters off the farmland, has not forgotten the injustices her ancestors suffered at the hands of Meneer's forebears. She tells John the tale of the tree that is breaking through the floor of the farm kitchen, under which the bones of her great grandmother are buried:

CHRISTINE

That tree was here before any of us. We planted it over your great grandmother's grave. And under the roots, lies Ukhokho. This tree saps from her bones. Your great grandmother won't let me sleep until I free them from beneath.

*She grabs a large garden fork nearby and attempts to attack the stones with the fork.*

*John wrestles the implement from her hands.*

JOHN

Don't break the floor again, Mama! I'm still paying for damages.

---

7 Ancestor (isiXhosa)
CHRISTINE

They can cover what they've done but the roots keep breaking through. These roots will never go away. Never. Never. Go away.

This is directly connected to the conflict that arises between John and Julie after they have had intercourse and before all the insecurity and cruelty is fully unleashed from both sides. She tries to convince him to go, but the land and his ancestors prevent him from leaving (Farber, 2012: 36):

JULIE

What are we staying for? A pair of boots to polish and an ancestor beneath the floor? My father’s already got his grave marked out next to my ma. And his parents. And theirs. All the way back to the Voortrekkers⁸. There’s a spot reserved for me too – but they can give that red dust to someone else. What are we staying for? Graves and soil?

JOHN

My mother wants to be buried here. She will never go.

Once the conflict between them has started, however, the discussion becomes much darker. The act of consummating his love with Julie gives John the chance to take terrible advantage of the situation to get the upper hand on Julie and her father. (Farber, 2012: 41-42):

JOHN

Tell me, Mies Julie. What if you're carrying my child?

⁸ Pioneers (Afrikaans for ‘those who go ahead’). Emigrants during the 1830s and 1840s who left the British Cape Colony, migrating into the interior Highveld, north of the Orange River in South Africa.
She drops to her knees in horror.

Then this land will return to the rightful owners.

JULIE

So this... This is your revenge?

JOHN

No! This is restitution. Of body and soil.

JULIE

My God. Wat is jy?°

JOHN

A man. With a plan.

John has spent his entire life treated like a lesser being by Julie and her father. His resentment for the past humiliation and degradation he has suffered at their hands is all released in a fit of rage. He is further angry at Julie for receiving love and care from his mother, love he feels he should have received. Julie has stolen his mother from him, her family has stolen the land of his ancestors and he is determined to set Julie straight about his rights to the land. This expands on his argument presented earlier concerning the ownership of the land by past generations of his family (Farber, 2012: 44-45):

JOHN

My mother was always with you.

° My God. What are you? (Afrikaans)
JULIE

I know. I love this farm. It’s all I know.

JOHN

What do you love?

JULIE

Everything. The space. The silence. When I was sent to boarding school – I thought I would die.

JOHN

It’s not yours to love.

JULIE

Says who? What makes it less mine than yours? Your black skin?

JOHN

My people are buried here. Beneath this floor.

JULIE

So are mine. Out there beneath the willow trees. Three generations back. Where the fuck do I go?

JOHN

That’s not my problem. They stole it. Your people.
JULIE

Fok jou\textsuperscript{10}. So did yours. From the First here. How far back do you want to go?

JOHN

Let's just say your people did things to keep it that can never be excused.

_They are both silent_

Love me, Mies Julie. Love the land. Love that old windmill out there. But we will never be yours.

JULIE

A boere tannie\textsuperscript{11} once threw hot soup at her for saying we don't belong here. She just laughed. Said when people turn violent – you know you've told the truth. There's something to be said for violence. Lets you know where you stand.

Julie’s final statement here recalls *The Script Lab*’s (n.d.) explanation that Revisionist Westerns encourage an audience to question the morality of violence. The irony of these words within *Mies Julie* is that John and Julie never really know where the other stands, as they change their minds repeatedly throughout the play, through guilt and the desire to manipulate and hurt the other, as well as through their love for one another. This raises another conflict within the same race – this time between white farmers. It appears that while black and white people are fighting each other over land in *Mies Julie*, there is also a fair amount of conflict going on within each separate racial group. The conflict is no longer about race; it is about class. None of the sides in this debate in the play has come close to finding a peaceful solution to the issue of land ownership and redistribution in South Africa. As Julie points out,

\textsuperscript{10} **Fuck you.** *(Afrikaans)*

\textsuperscript{11} **Farmer’s wife** *(Afrikaans).*
none of the sides in the debate actually has any true claim to the land as there were always residents on the land before the time of their ancestors. John, in part, agrees with her in that he points out that Julie’s family are punishing the new dwellers on their land for the same apparent crime that their (Julie’s family) ancestors committed (Farber, 2012: 47):

JOHN

You boere. You take and take. But when something is taken – you want to burn the house down. You complain what a mess everything is out there. Who made the fucking mess? The party is over. We’ll clean up your shit as usual. Just go.

JULIE

Where? This is my home. My great grandfather built it with his bare hands.

JOHN

Your great grandfather was a squatter. Take this shack and build it somewhere else.

JULIE

A squatter? Is that what you just said?

JOHN

He who moves onto open land to gain title. I read. Remember?

JULIE

Tell that to my father.

JOHN

\[12\text{ Farmers (Afrikaans).}\]
He cries war on those doing exactly what your ancestors did.

JULIE

We own the deeds to this land.

JOHN

From whom? The man who first took what never belonged to him?

The land issue is, understandably then, a major topic in *Mies Julie* and fits the final characteristic of a Revisionist Western provided by Michael Valdez Moses (2010).

**Land redistribution in reviews of *Mies Julie***

Every review analysed brought up *Mies Julie*’s representation of the land issue in South Africa. An analysis of an extract from each review, demonstrating this, will follow.

Clifford Graham (2013) makes clear note of the disparity between John and Julie, in the context of the history that both unites and separates them. This history, he concludes, is directly linked to the struggle over land (in which race is an important issue):

But here, it is not just the relationship between a master and servant that acts as catalyst, race enters into the equation. Questions arise over just who owns the land, and who historically has right of title? In their coming of age, the children who once played together on the farm are forced to confront their differences and attitudes to each other.
Marilu Snyders (2013) echoes this, but also brings up the fact that, as much as debate may be a worthwhile exercise in attempting to find a solution to the land issue of South Africa, action will have to be taken at some point:

Alongside personal and domestic issues, *Mies Julie* is unequivocally political and claws at raw questions about land ownership, past injustices and racial roles without providing solutions, all the while prodding at the fact that growth does not take place when we are in a state of complacency.

Sarah Roberson (2012), in stating that “[Farber introduces] local current issues of land claims, and the continuing socioeconomic distance between poor and rich after 18 years of democracy” furthers Snyders’ argument – in nineteen years since the start of a South African democracy, no real progress has been made in developing a solution to the issue of land redistribution in South Africa. This is corroborated by David Balcombe (2013), who echoes Julie’s words in the play:

Eighteen years is but the bat of an eye in which to try and overturn historical imbalances, particularly where land ownership is concerned – and anyway, how far back do you want to go to determine who really has the moral if not the legal right to ownership?

The moral right to land ownership, mentioned above, for which Julie and John use the bones of their ancestors to debate over, is also explored by Maddy Costa (2013):

What's fascinating about Farber's caustic story is the extent to which Julie and John feel impelled to re-enact the brutality of the generations that came before them: with awful inevitability, they return to the epithets of the old world, reducing him to a "grovelling kaffir boy", and her to a thieving Boer. John's ancestors stalk the stage, murmuring, growling, clamouring for the land that was once theirs – but Julie claims
her own family, buried beneath the willow tree, are no less present, no less demanding.

The incredibly direct approach of Farber to the issue of land ownership is noted as a positive aspect by Zoë Mahopo (2013) when she states:

Farber has refused to shy away from the insecurities of a democratic South Africa. While John confesses that he has loved Julie since the day her mother brought her home from the hospital, he makes it clear that he wants to take back the land of his ancestors. Julie is also torn between loving John, getting her father’s approval and protecting the land from the squatters who have occupied it. The play also shows that power inevitably changes hands and that the line between oppressor and victim is not as clear as we think.

This direct approach is appealing, according to Peter Marks (2012), as it:

Thrillingly conveys a contemporary power struggle over post-apartheid claims to the land by blacks and whites. That conflict as a complex ancestral issue is brought powerfully to flesh here in the ethereal countenance of Tandiwe Nofirst Lungisa, playing a ghost of the black South African past, a grunting and chanting one-woman chorus of doom.

Theresa Edlmann (2012) brings up another important aspect of the representation in Mies Julie of the land issue in South Africa when she states that: “Restitution in post-1994 South Africa has a sense of something being restored or transformed. This is completely at odds with what unfolds in the production”. This reviewer clearly understands the message of the play that there is no current solution for the land debate in South Africa. The issue of equality, especially when it comes to the land debate, is brought up in an article in Cape Town Magazine (2013):
Apart from the themes of identity, sexuality and the body as a battleground, the most powerful issues that the play tackles are those of land ownership and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa. Eighteen years into democracy, the dream of real freedom and equality for all has long-since faded.

Christina Kennedy (2013), after pointing out that the issue of land and ownership of land is the main issue in Mies Julie, makes it clear that much more needs to be done to address the many inequalities in current South African society:

Farber also explores unresolved issues in a "post-traumatic" society that arguably needs far more than a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address its painful past — a fact evident at the moment as simmering discontentment sweeps the country.

The 'New South Africa', as Michael Coveney (2013) points out, quoting the play, is still very far from equal:

While Strindberg deals with notions of class and sexual repression, Farber's play rolls in issues of caste, rape, rights of ownership, abortion and political pessimism:
"Welcome to the new South Africa, Mies Julie, where miracles leave us exactly where we began."

Charles Spencer (2013) echoes him:

The brutal sex seems to encapsulate all the anger, frustration and violence that still simmer in South Africa, where the black population feel like squatters on the land they believe to be their own. “Welcome to the new South Africa,” John tells Miss Julie after the sexual act. “Where miracles happen and leave things exactly the same.”
Molly Grogan (2012) goes so far as to suggest that the land debate in South Africa will never achieve any solution at all:

Setting her story against the unresolvable question of land ownership in democratic South Africa, and the ignored demands of the black underclass for full economic equality, Farber finds a previously unfathomable power in the old Swede while striking a raw nerve at home.

The use of the supernatural by Farber (the ghost of Christine’s grandmother) was noted by reviewers to strengthen the message of connectedness to the land. This was mentioned by Dominic Cavendish (2012):

Farber, who comes from Johannesburg, though is now partially resident in Canada, makes land and the restititution of land – currently a burning issue in her home country – the beating heart of the show, entwining physical yearning with the body politic, ancestral cries with corporeal demands.

Noah Millman (2012) also highlights the importance of ancestors in the play:

Farber’s Christine still stands for patience – and for Christianity – but it is patience waiting for resolution of an literal earthly conflict, a conflict over land, between black and white, between a suppressed past and a decaying present. Christine’s ancestors are buried under Julie’s kitchen floor, and it is this tie that binds her to the land, and that makes it impossible for Julie and John to run away together to Cape Town and start a new life, free from the conflicts of the past and of her father’s tyranny.

With Mies Julie highlighting the land issue in South Africa and the fact that this problem has no easy solution, Dominic Cavendish (2012) remarks upon the reaction of the audience to both John and Julie – both suffer throughout the course of the
play and both wholeheartedly believe that they have full right to the land on which they are living. What makes *Mies Julie* so effective in getting this message across, according to Cavendish is the fact that “each is trapped, contending with the legacy of history. [The audience’s] sympathies are perfectly weighed”.

**Findings**

*Mies Julie* was analysed according to the following five characteristics in order to determine whether or not it matched the criteria of a Revisionist Western:

1. Protagonists are far more complex than the ‘hero on a white horse’ of more traditional Westerns
2. The uncivilised characteristics of the hero are emphasised, with heroes often shown to be “perilously out of control” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2010: 339).
3. Conventional thematic values of the Traditional Western are inverted, with indigenous cultures now being portrayed as being civilised, while white society is shown to be violent.
4. Indigenous cultures are treated with far more respect than are the ‘savages’ of Traditional Westerns.
5. Land ownership and restitution are a major theme.

Analysis of extracts from the play clearly showed that *Mies Julie* fulfilled all of the above criteria, thus classing it as a Revisionist Western. The effectiveness of the play (as a Revisionist Western and as socio-economic and political commentary) was assessed by compiling reviews of the play (both national and international) and analysing their content. In doing so, it was noted that every review analysed...
focussed on the representation in Mies Julie of the land debate in South Africa. The reviewers spoke of how the play showed the complexity of the issue, represented the many parties involved in the debate and of how engaging this was to an audience. This unanimous clear understanding of the major message of the play is a strong indicator that it was effective in conveying the theme of land redistribution to audiences around the world.

Conclusion

Mies Julie was clearly a resounding critical success, based on the above study. The global touring production of the play brought with it a clear message wherever it was performed. Theatre is a powerful and effective tool for bringing complex political issues to a wide audience, many of whom may not be well informed about the socio-economic and political issues contained within a play. One such type of play is the Revisionist Western, as which Mies Julie has been identified. From analysing reviews of the play, it has been made clear that the current issue of land redistribution in South Africa has been presented in an objective and clear manner by the production, which has proved to be very effective as an informative tool with regard to its main message – the never-ending debate over land ownership in South Africa.
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Mies Julie

By

David Emery

Based on Yael Farber’s adaptation of August Strindberg’s ‘Miss Julie’

We enter through main gate of Veneen Plaas as if we were a wanderer, moving casually along, ignored by everyone we pass.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- We pass several shacks erected from scrapyard items, wood, corrugated roofing and other such materials.

-- Children chase each other in front of the shacks, laughing and playing.

-- Adults stand in front of barbecues constructed from barrel halves, cooking meat.

-- Other adults stand around chatting and drinking from large green glass bottles of Crackling, an extremely cheap, poor quality wine. Others are drinking beer.

-- We pass through a stable. Most of the stalls are occupied by horses. They are still awake and restless due to the noise coming from elsewhere on the farm. Loud Kwaito music can be heard playing.

-- We approach a group of low-cost houses. In front of them the farm’s resident workers and their families are gathered. The music is coming from an old-style boombox in front of one of the houses.

-- Many people are dancing to the music.

-- Others are cooking meat over fires, chatting, laughing and drinking.

-- Several people suddenly stop what they are doing and grow quiet, all looking in the same direction - towards the farmhouse.

-- We turn to look with them and see JULIE (25), the farm-owner’s daughter, approaching. She has a wild, determined look in her eyes and is walking like a big cat stalking its prey.

-- Julie walks up to one of the men holding a bottle of beer and looks at him expectantly.

-- He reaches into a bucket filled with ice and bottles and takes out a beer. He opens it and offers it to Julie.

-- She takes the beer and chugs it down. Some of the farm-workers cheer encouragingly.
-- She hands the man the empty bottle and joins the dancers, her eyes wide with excitement as she moves her body in time with the music.

-- Several people continue to cheer her on.

-- Other look utterly scandalised.

-- Others angry.

-- She begins to dance with some of the young men.

-- Playfully teasing some.

-- Dancing suggestively with others.

-- As she dances, her eyes search the crowd.

-- Her eyes settle on someone and she stops dancing.

-- She walks over to a group of young men gathered in front of one of the last houses.

-- She stops in front of JOHN (28), a strapping man a good head taller than her, and puts her arms around his neck.

-- John’s friends look at him, shocked, waiting for his reaction.

-- John politely removes her arms from around his neck and backs away.

-- Julie takes his hand and tries pulling him towards the people dancing.

-- He pulls his hand out of her grasp and walks back to his friends.

-- She laughs and heads back towards the farmhouse.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM KITCHEN - NIGHT

CHRISTINE (55), John’s mother, is on all fours, scrubbing the stone floor. She is sweating profusely.

She sings a circular phrase -- a soft atonal moan from a church spiritual.

She periodically scrapes an enamel bucket along the floor so that it remains by her as she cleans.

Julie enters and walks circles. She sits at the table, her feet up.

She rises and walks to the door -- leaving footprints.
Christine follows behind and erases them without a change of expression.

Julie walks out into the night.

John enters and stands at the door, watching his mother, who continues her work unawares. He has a large ‘throw’ about his neck and shoulders.

JOHN
Sy is vanaand weer mal, ma.
Getoor.

SUBTITLE: She’s mad again tonight, Ma. Bewitched.

CHRISTINE
Die swaeltjies vlieg laag. Ons gaan reën kry na middernag, as die hitte breek.

SUBTITLE: The swallows are flying low. We’ll have rain after midnight, when this heat breaks.

JOHN
(to himself)
Ja... Gevaarlik. Om so na ons partytjie toe te kom.

SUBTITLE: Ja... Dangerous. Coming to our party like that.

CHRISTINE
Arme kind. Sy is nog steeds wild na Baas Jan die verlowing verbreek het.

SUBTITLE: Poor baby. She’s been wild since Baas Jan broke off the engagement.

Christine goes to the stove and brings John a plate of food.

They bow their heads and pray.

JOHN
Sout?

SUBTITLE: Salt?

CHRISTINE
Hayi kaloku!

SUBTITLE: Taste first!

John tastes his food and indicates for the salt. Christine hands it to him with playful annoyance.

He adds generously.
She snatches it away.

He moves to his bench and sits. He eats.

CHRISTINE
(indicating a chair at the kitchen table)

Jy kan maar sit om te eet. Meneer is weg.

SUBTITLE: You can sit to eat. Meneer is away.

John glances about, then moves to the table, sits and eats.

Christine begins peeling potatoes.

JOHN
(looking at the stove)
Wat stink so?

SUBTITLE: What’s that stink?

CHRISTINE
Dis vir Diana.

SUBTITLE: It’s for Diana.

JOHN
Moet jy nou vir haar hond ook kook?

SUBTITLE: You have to cook for her dog now too?

CHRISTINE
Sy is dragtig. Miesie wil hé ek moet dit doen. Die teef was laasmaand op hitte en al die opregte honde van hier rond was lus vir haar.

SUBTITLE: She’s pregnant. Miesie wants me to take care of it. The bitch was in heat last month and all the pedigree dogs from around here wanted her.

JOHN
Ek het hulle hoor tjank. Ek dog dis net die maan.

SUBTITLE: I heard them howling. I thought it was just the moon.

CHRISTINE
Maar ons Swartkop het haar gekry. Klein Mies is woedend. Sy sê die hond het haar verraai. Sy het vir my gevra om iets voor te berei

(MORE)
CHRISTINE (cont’d)
wat die klein hondjies in die
maag sal doodmaak.

SUBTITLE: But our Swartkop got her. Little Mies was furious. She says the dog betrayed her. She asked me to prepare something that will kill the puppies in the womb.

JOHN
(to himself)
Mies Julie... Sy dans wild daar
buite met ons manne, maar sy sal
nie laat haar teef aan ons s’n
raak nie. Sy is net soos al die
wit vrouens. Te trots. Maar nie
trots genoeg nie. Miskien sal sy
ook soos haar ma opeindig.

SUBTITLE: Mies Julie... She’s dancing wild out there with our boys, but she won’t let her bitch touch ours. She’s like all white women. Too proud. But not proud enough. Maybe she’ll end up like her mama.

CHRISTINE
Haai! Ek soek nie sulke praatjies
in my kombuis nie. Ek wil hé jy
moet haar gaan haal en terug
bring.

SUBTITLE: Haai! I don’t want such talk in my kitchen. I want you to go get her and bring her back here.

JOHN
Ek eet nog, ma.

SUBTITLE: I’m still eating, ma.

Christine folds her arms and stares at John.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Die nuwe manne het gevra hoekom
jy hierbinne vir my kook, terwyl
hulle daar buite is sonder
elektrisiteit of water.

SUBTITLE: The new boys were asking how come you can cook for me in here, and they’re out there with no electricity or water.

CHRISTINE
Dit is my kombuis. Hulle sal
nooit verstaan hoe dinge hier
rond werk nie. Hulle kom na
Veneen Plaas en wil vat waaarvoor
ons al ons hele lewe werk.
SUBTITLE: This is my kitchen. They will never understand how things work around here. They come to Veneen Plaas and want to take what we’ve been working for all our lives.

JOHN
As die winter kom gaan ons kinders verkluis. Meneer weier om die hitte en water weer aan te skakel totdat ons die plakkers weggejaag het. Dis dierlik. Straf ons om hulle van die grond af te kry.

SUBTITLE: When winter comes our children will freeze. Meneer refuses to turn the heat and water back on until we chase the squatters away. It’s a brutal way. Punishing us to get them off the land.

CHRISTINE
Hulle moet hulle hutjies elders gaan opslaan. Meneer wil nie hê hulle moet hier bly nie.

SUBTITLE: They must build their shacks somewhere else. Meneer doesn’t want them living here.

JOHN
Hy is ’n harde boer. Volgens die wet het hulle die reg om hier te bly as hulle ouers hier gebly het. ’n Storm kom nog na hierdie plaas toe. Die werkers vier vanaand Vryheidsdag, maar die wind ruik na woede daar buite.

SUBTITLE: He’s a hard boer. By law they have the right to live here if their parents did. A storm is coming to this farm. The workers are celebrating Freedom Day tonight, but there is anger on the wind out there.

CHRISTINE
Dit is Meneer se grond. Hy besluit. Finish en klaar. Finish en klaar.

SUBTITLE: This is Meneer’s land. He decides. Finished and done.

Julie enters the kitchen.

John stands immediately, caught in the forbidden act of sitting at the family table, but Julie paces, preoccupied.

John finishes eating on his feet, and then goes to the bench to polish the Meneer’s boots.

Christine stirs the concoction on the stove.
Christine and John surreptitiously watch Julie, who is unaware of their gaze.

CHRISTINE
Daar kom reën vanaand,
Miesie. Ek kan dit ruik. Die miere beweeg vinniger; die wolke pak laag saam.

SUBTITLE: Rain coming tonight, Miesie. I can smell it. The ants are moving faster, the clouds gathering low.

Julie lies back, full length, on the kitchen table.

CHRISTINE (CONT’D)
Ek gaan dit vir Diana gee. Dit gaan nie maklik wees op haar nie. Die dragtigheid is al te ver. Maar ek sal my beste doen.

SUBTITLE: I’ll go give this to Diana. It won’t be easy on her. The pregnancy’s too far already. But I’ll do my best.

Christine strokes Julie’s hair and takes the pot from the stove outside.

John removes the ’throw’ from his shoulders and drops it on the floor.

Julie rises and paces.

John continues to polish the boots, but he watches Julie when she cannot see him. When she can, he is inscrutable in servitude.

JULIE
Ek het vir jou gesoek...

SUBTITLE: I was looking for you...

JOHN
(stands)
Het jy my nodig, Mies?

SUBTITLE: Do you need me, Mies?

JULIE
Kom na die partytjie toe en kom dans.

SUBTITLE: Come to the party and dance.

JOHN
Moenie terug soontoe gaan en vir moeilikheid soek nie, Mies.

SUBTITLE: Don’t go back there looking for trouble, Mies.
JULIE
Niemand sal aan my raak nie. My pa sal die swartman wat aan my raak in die kop skiet. Dan sal hy vir my skiet. Hy het vir my dit eens op ‘n tyd vertel toe ek klein was. Dit was my slaaptydstorie.
(laughs)
Kom. Dans met my.

SUBTITLE: No one will touch me. My pa will shoot the black man in the head that puts his hands on me. Then he’ll shoot me. Told me that once when I was little. That was my bedtime story. Come. Dance with me.

JOHN
Jy’s dronk, Mies Julie. Gaan bed toe.

SUBTITLE: You’re drunk, Mies Julie. Go to bed.

JULIE

SUBTITLE: Scared? Don’t worry. My father wouldn’t touch you. You’re his favourite. Likes you more than he’s ever liked me. Always wanted a boy.

Julie walks to the doorway and looks out into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. VENEEN PLAAS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

JULIE’S MOTHER (33), dressed only in her nightie, walks through the open veldt towards the farmhouse.

There is a veldt fire blazing near the path she is walking and smoke billows past her as she walks.

Her eyes are unfocussed and she doesn’t appear to notice her surroundings.

Sparks from the fire drift past her face.

Others touch her clothing and leave tiny singe marks.

JULIE (V.O.)
Dis droog daar buite. Geel-wit verbleik. Hierdie tyd van die jaar laat my altyd dink aan my
(MORE)
JULIE (V.O.) (cont’d)  

SUBTITLE: It’s dry out there. Bleached yellow white. This time of year always reminds me of when I was a kid. You know. After my ma. The open veldt fires. She used to come home from her midnight walks, her hair smelling like wood smoke and burnt leaves. Smells like my ma out there.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM KITCHEN - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT DAY)  
John continues polishing the boots in silence.

JULIE  
wat is jou probleem? Dis net ’n dans.


JOHN  
Moenie vanaand probeer om een van ons te wees nie, Mies. Hulle vier met woede daar buite. Ek kan jou nie soos voorheen beskerm nie. Gaan bed toe.

SUBTITLE: Don’t try to be one of us tonight, Mies. They’re celebrating with anger out there. I can’t protect you like before. Go to bed.

JULIE  
Ons kan nie toelaat dat die plakkers hulle hutjies op ons grond bou nie... Maar ek stem nie saam met hoe my pa dit doen nie. Jy weet, ek is nie soos hy nie.

SUBTITLE: We cannot have the squatters build their shacks on our land... But I don’t agree with how my father is doing it. I’m not like him, you know.

John doesn’t respond.

JULIE (CONT’D)  
Christine sal jou nooit vergewe nie as iets daar buite met my gebeur nie. Jou ma sal jou straf as ek seerkry. Net soos sy gedoen het toe ons klein was.
SUBTITLE: Christine will never forgive you if something happens to me out there. Your mama will punish you if I get hurt. Just like she used to when we were small.

Julie backs out the door, daring John.

He continues cleaning the boots.

The sound of Kwaito music drifts in and out on the wind.

When Julie is out of sight, John stops and stares straight ahead, then rises and walks out into the night, towards the music.

The kitchen stands empty.

From the shadows in the far corner of the room, UKHOKHO (60’s), the ghost of Christine’s grandmother, emerges as if from out of the air.

Christine, humming to herself, returns with the empty pot.

She drops the pot in fright and stares trance-like at the ghost of her ancestor.

John enters the kitchen and moves swiftly to his mother.

JOHN
Ma, is jy orrait?

SUBTITLE: Ma, you alright?

CHRISTINE
Ndiyamva.

SUBTITLE: She is here again, son.

JOHN
Wie, Ma?

SUBTITLE: Who, Ma?

CHRISTINE
As sy rusteloos is kan ek haar ruik. Ek kan die vochtigheid ruik. Ek het al vir haar gesê: Ndimxelele Ukhokho! Jy moet nou rus. Eet grond en bly stil. Meneer sal vir my van Veneen PLAAS afsmyt as ek weer die vloer opkap. Moenie met my kop lol nie. Sy lag net en wys vir my waar die boom se wortels deur die stene breek.

SUBTITLE: When she’s restless I can smell her. I can smell the damp. I’ve told her: Rest, Ancestor! You must rest
now. Eat soil and be quiet. Meneer will throw me off Veen Plaas if I break the floor again. Don’t disturb my head. She just laughs and shows me where the roots of the tree are cracking through these stones.

JOHN
Het jy weer flou geval, Ma?

SUBTITLE: Did you faint again, Ma?

CHRISTINE
Ek het in die boom gespeel toe ek jonger was. Voor die plaashuis gebou is. Toe hier niks behalwe oop veld was nie.

SUBTITLE: I used to play in this tree when I was a girl. Before the farmhouse was built. When there was nothing here but open veldt.

JOHN
Dit was nie jy nie, Ma. Dit was jou ouma. Onthou? Toe jy gebore is, was die huis al reeds hier.

SUBTITLE: That wasn’t you, Ma. That was your grandmother. Remember? When you were born, this house was already here.

CHRISTINE
Kuthe Thabalala. En hierdie boom het net aan die wind behoort.

SUBTITLE: Just open land. And this tree belonged only to the wind.

JOHN
Moenie voor Meneer daaroor praat nie, Ma.

SUBTITLE: Don’t talk about this in front of Meneer, Ma.

CHRISTINE
Na die Ounooi oorlede is het hulle die kombuisvloer opgetel. Die wortels het nog gelewe in die beton. Vet en nat en nog vol van die aarde se bloed onder daai teëls.

SUBTITLE: After the madam died, they tore up the kitchen floor. The roots were still alive in the concrete. Fat and wet and full of the earth’s blood under those old tiles.

JOHN
Ma, sukuthetha ngezizinto.

SUBTITLE: Ma, better not talk of such things.
CHRISTINE
Daai boom was hier voor enigeen van ons. Ons het dit op jou oumagrootjie se graf geplant. Die boom tap uit haar bene uit. Jou oumagrootjie sal nie laat ek rus totdat ek hulle hier onder uit vrygelaat het nie.

SUBTITLE: That tree was here before any of us. We planted it over your great grandmother’s grave. This tree saps from her bones. Your great grandmother won’t let me sleep until I free them from beneath.

Christine goes to the far end of the kitchen and grabs a garden fork from a rack against the wall.

She returns and begins to attack the stones with the fork.

John wrestles the implement from her hands.

JOHN
Moenie weer die vloer breek nie Mama! Ek betaal nog steeds skadevergoeding.

SUBTITLE: Don’t break the floor again, Mama! I’m still paying for damages.

CHRISTINE
Hulle kan bedek wat hulle gedoen het, maar die wortels bly deurbreek. Hierdie wortels sal nooit weggaan nie.

SUBTITLE: They can cover what they’ve done, but the roots keep breaking through. These roots will never go away.

Christine begins weeping. John helps her to the bench. Ukhokho slowly withdraws.

Christine cannot tear her eyes from the apparition. John brings her water, which she gulps.

Julie walks in, goes to the cupboard and takes down a bottle of red wine and a wine glass.

She sits, feet up on the table.

CHRISTINE
(hiding her distress)
Is jy orrait, Miesie?

SUBTITLE: You okay, Miesie?
JULIE
Ek is in die steek gelaat, Christine. Die verlowing is af. Almal weet. Dit was in elk geval my pa se idee om met hom te trou. Hy het ’n man nodig om die plek oor te vat. Ek het nie...’n man nodig nie. Het jy vir Diana die moenie gegee?

SUBTITLE: I was dumped, Christine. The engagement is off. Everyone knows. Marrying him was my father’s idea anyway. He needs a man to take over this place. I don’t...need a man. Did you give Diana the medicine?

CHRISTINE
Ja, Mies. Ek gaan kyk nou hoe dit met haar gaan.

SUBTITLE: Yes, Mies. I’ll check on her now.

Christine stands.

JOHN
Dis orrait, Ma. Ek sal dit doen.

SUBTITLE: It’s okay, Ma. I’ll do it.

John helps his exhausted mother to a chair in the corner. Christine sits heavily. John helps her settle. She closes her eyes.

Julie watches them suspiciously.

JULIE
Wat makeer haar?

SUBTITLE: What’s wrong with her?

JOHN
Sy is net moeg, Mies.

SUBTITLE: She’s just tired, Mies.

John walks over to the rack on the other side of the kitchen and takes down a sickle and a whetstone. He walks to his bench, sits and begins sharpening the sickle.

JULIE
Ek het vir jou gevra om skoon klere aan te trek.

SUBTITLE: I asked you to change.
JOHN
Wat wil my madam hé moet ek aantrek?

SUBTITLE: What does my madam want me to wear?

JULIE
Wat ook al jy dra as jy nie die hulp is nie. Wees vanaand ‘n man, John. Nie ‘n ‘boy’ nie.


Julie has her back to John. He watches her.

She turns to face him.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Waarna staar jy?

SUBTITLE: What are you staring at?

JOHN
Ek onthou net...

SUBTITLE: Just remembering...

JULIE
Wat?

SUBTITLE: What?

JOHN
Jy as kind.

SUBTITLE: You as a child.

JULIE
Wat onthou jy?

SUBTITLE: What do you remember?

JOHN
Dinge.

SUBTITLE: Things.

JULIE
Vertel vir my.

SUBTITLE: Tell me.

JOHN
My moeder probeer slaap, Mies.

SUBTITLE: My mother’s trying to sleep, Mies.
JULIE
Dan behoort sy na haar kamer toe te gaan.

SUBTITLE: Then she should go to her room.

Christine has fallen asleep in her chair.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Kom. Sit.

SUBTITLE: Come. Sit.

JOHN
Meneer hou nie daarvan nie.

SUBTITLE: Meneer doesn’t like it.

JULIE
Dis my tafel ook en ek sê: sit!

SUBTITLE: It’s my table too, and I say: sit!

John doesn’t move.

JULIE (CONT’D)
En as ek jou beveel?

SUBTITLE: And if I order you?

JOHN
(shrugging)
Ek sal dit doen.

SUBTITLE: I’ll do it.

JULIE
So sit.

SUBTITLE: So sit.

Wary, John puts down his tools, moves slowly to the table and sits.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Iets om te drink?

SUBTITLE: Drink?

JOHN
Ek moet vroeg opstaan.

SUBTITLE: I have to get up early.

JULIE
Moenie my alleen laat drink nie, John.
SUBTITLE: Don’t make me drink alone, John.

Julie pours a glass of wine for John.

    JULIE (CONT’D)
    Niks van die Crackling-gif wat julle drink nie. Die beste uit my pa se wynkelder. Op vryheid!

SUBTITLE: None of this Crackling poison you guys drink. The best from my father’s cellar. To Freedom.

John raises his glass.

    JULIE (CONT’D)
    Voel jy vry?

SUBTITLE: Do you feel free?

    JOHN
    Seker.

SUBTITLE: Sure.

    JULIE
    Goed. Soen nou my voet.

SUBTITLE: Good. Now kiss my foot.

John rises and steps away from the table.

    JULIE (CONT’D)
    Om te wys net hoe ver ons in twintig jaar gekom het!

SUBTITLE: To show just how far we’ve come in almost twenty years!

John moves back to his bench.

    JULIE
    (viciously)
    Fokken. Doen. Dit.


Slightly enraged, he stands and moves to her.

He kneels and reaches for her foot. She slips it away from his grasp.

In a flash, he grabs her foot and puts it on his shoulder.

He runs his hand up her thigh towards her crotch.

He runs his open mouth over the top of her foot.

She is stunned. And aroused.
He moves away.

JOHN
Maak dat jy wegkom, Mies Julie.

SUBTITLE: Get out of here, Mies Julie!

JULIE
(flustered)
Is jy bang?

SUBTITLE: You afraid?

JOHN
Gaan net, asseblief.

SUBTITLE: Just go, please.

John is glancing at the windows.

JULIE
(realizing)
Jy is bekommerd oor wat die ander werkers gaan sê...

SUBTITLE: You’re worried what the other workers will say...

JOHN
Almal praat alreeds, Mies.

SUBTITLE: Everyone is already talking, Mies.

JULIE
Hoekom gee jy om?

SUBTITLE: Why do you care?

JOHN
Ek bly saam met hulle.

SUBTITLE: I live with them.

JULIE
Ek bly ook saam met hulle.

SUBTITLE: I live with them too.

JOHN
Nee, jy doen nie. Jy bly in hierdie huis. Ek bly daar buite.

SUBTITLE: No, you don’t. You live in this house. I live out there.
JULIE
Moet ek nou vir jou jammer voel?

SUBTITLE: Am I supposed to feel sorry for you?

JOHN
Jy is nie veronderstel om enigiets vir my te voel nie, Mies. Jy weet nie hoveel bitterheid is daar buite nie. Moet net nie dat ons alleen wees nie, orralt?

SUBTITLE: You’re not supposed to feel anything for me, Mies. You don’t know how much bitterness is out there. Let’s just not be alone, okay?

JULIE
Ons is nie. Jou moeder is hier.

SUBTITLE: We’re not. Your mother’s here.

JOHN
Sy slaap.

SUBTITLE: Sleeping.

JULIE
Dan sal ek haar wakker maak. Christine. Christine!

SUBTITLE: Then I’ll wake her. Christine. Christine!

Christine mumbles in her sleep.

JULIE (CONT’D)
(roughly)
Hey wena! Christine!

SUBTITLE: Hey you! Christine!

JOHN
Los haar uit, Mies. Sy werk al vandat die son op is.

SUBTITLE: Leave her alone, Mies. She’s been working since sunrise.

JULIE
Ek het julle hoor praat oor my ma. Ek onthou die dag toe sy oorlede is. Jy...

SUBTITLE: I heard you talking about my ma. I remember the day she died. You...
JOHN

Wat?

SUBTITLE: What?

JULIE

SUBTITLE: Cried. I came out of the church and everyone was watching me, hungry eyes. You were the only one not looking. You cried for her.

JOHN
Nee. Oor jou.

SUBTITLE: No. For you.

JULIE
Kom saam met my. Ek wil vir jou wys waar ek party aande gaan.

SUBTITLE: Come with me. I want to show you where I go some nights.

JOHN
Nee.

SUBTITLE: No.

JULIE
Ek sal my pa se geweer saamvat.

SUBTITLE: I’ll bring my dad’s gun.

JOHN
Dis nie dit nie. Ek kan jou beskerm.

SUBTITLE: It’s not that. I can protect you.

JULIE
Jy wil nie gesien wees nie.

SUBTITLE: You don’t want to be seen.

JOHN
Hulle is simpel van woede, Mies. Hulle sal nie verstaan nie.

SUBTITLE: They’re stupid with anger, Mies. They won’t understand.
JULIE
Ek respekter hulle meer as jy.

SUBTITLE: I respect them more than you do.

JOHN
Tye het verander. Hulle gee nie om nie.

SUBTITLE: Times have changed. They don’t care if you do.

JULIE
Maar hulle respekter my.

SUBTITLE: But they do. Respect me.

JOHN

SUBTITLE: No. They don’t. They need you. And your father. They need a job. They eat your bread, but they laugh at you behind your back.

JULIE
Dis wreed.

SUBTITLE: That’s cruel.

JOHN
En as ek daar buite saam met jou loop gaan hulle vir my ook lag. Nou moet ek saam met jou loop en, en dan daarna saam met hulle lag oor jou. Ek gaan nie dit doen nie.

SUBTITLE: And if I walk out there with you they will laugh at me too. Now I have to walk with you and, and laugh with them about you afterwards. I’m not going to do that.

JULIE

(MORE)
JULIE (cont’d)
Skielik gee die grond mee en ek val. En dit is wat ek wil he. Om te val. Droom Jy?

SUBTITLE: Some nights I just want to walk out into the Karoo. Like that poet who walked into the sea. Beneath the pylon like huge, arms folded, watching me. Out into the veldt until I reach the power station. She used to go there at night. She liked to stand beside it. Listen to it sing. And in my dream I’m there. I start to dig. My fingers are bleeding. Suddenly the ground gives way and I am falling. And I want this. To be falling. Do you dream?

JOHN
Elke aand. Ek is weer ’n seun. Ek steek my hand in ’n witkruisarend se nes om die eiers te steel.
Maar hulle bly uit my hand gly, so klewerig en souterig. Ek gryp een. Dis nog warm. Ek kom nie agter dat dit ’n swartmamba se nes is wat ek in my hand het nie.
Ek voel die byt soos ’n mes in die been. Ek weet ek het net minute voor ek aan die swartslaap val. Ek word altyd wakker as ek verdrink, sonder lug.

SUBTITLE: Every night. I’m a boy again. Reaching into a black eagle’s nest to steal eggs. But they keep slipping, covered with salt and stickiness. I manage to get my hand around one. It’s still warm. I don’t realise it’s a black mamba’s nest I have my hand in. I feel the bite like a stab into the bone. I know I have minutes before I fall into the black sleep. I always wake up drowning, without air.

JULIE
Kom saam met my. Ons kan agter uitgaan. Niemand sal ons sien nie.

SUBTITLE: Come with me. We can go out the back. No one will see us.

John suddenly holds his hand over his eye.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Wat is dit?

SUBTITLE: What is it?

JOHN
Muskiet in my oog.

SUBTITLE: Mosquito in my eye.
JULIE
Laat ek sien.

SUBTITLE: Let me see.

JOHN
Ek is orrait.

SUBTITLE: I’m okay.

JULIE
Laat ek sien!

SUBTITLE: Let me see!

Julie leads John to sit on the bench and steps between his legs to look into his eye. She blows gently into the eye.

Christine wakes and yawns.

CHRISTINE
Kuqhube ka ntoni?

SUBTITLE: What is it?

JULIE
Muskiet in sy oog, Christine.

SUBTITLE: Mosquito in his eye, Christine.

CHRISTINE
Yithi ndibone.

SUBTITLE: Come here.

JOHN
Ndiright Ma.

SUBTITLE: I’m okay, Ma.

CHRISTINE
Laat ek sien.

SUBTITLE: Let me see.

JOHN
Dis orrait, Ma. Gaan bed toe.

SUBTITLE: It’s okay, Ma. Go to bed.

CHRISTINE
Ek moet gaan kyk hoe dit met Diana gaan. Die storm is amper hier. Die dak lek ook nog. Moenie vergeet om emmers onder die lekplekke te sit nie.
SUBTITLE: I have to check on Diana. The storm is almost here. The roof is still leaking. Don’t forget to put buckets out.

JOHN
Ndizakuzenza ngoku.

SUBTITLE: I’ll do it now.

Christine leaves. Julie steps back between John’s legs.

JULIE
Ek het dit amper gekry... Sit net weer en ek sal jou help om dit uit te kry.

SUBTITLE: I almost had it... Just sit down again and I’ll help you get it out.

Julie takes him by the arm and makes him sit back down on the bench.

She then takes his head and presses it down, and tries to get the dust out with the corner of a cloth she takes off the table.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Sit stil. Sit stil!

SUBTITLE: Be still! Be still!

Julie hits him on the hand.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Daar! Sal jy nou luister? Hoekom bewe die groot sterk man so?

SUBTITLE: There! Will you listen now? Is the big, strong man shaking?

Julie feels John’s arm.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Met sulke arms!

SUBTITLE: With arms like that!

JOHN
Mies Julie

SUBTITLE: Mies Julie

JULIE
Ja, John?

SUBTITLE: Yes, John?
JOHN
Asseblief, hou net op.

SUBTITLE: Please, just stop.

JULIE
Hoekom sit jy nie stil nie? Sien!
Daar is dit nou uit! Jy behoort
my te bedank.

SUBTITLE: Why won’t you sit still? See! It’s out now! You
should be thanking me.

JOHN
(Stands up)
Mies Julie, luister na my, nou
dat my ma bed toe is. Sal jy na
my luister?

SUBTITLE: Mies Julie, listen to me, now that my Ma has
gone to bed. Won’t you listen to me?

JULIE
Soen eers my hand.

SUBTITLE: Kiss my hand first.

JOHN
Luister na my.

SUBTITLE: Listen to me.

JULIE
Soen eers my hand.

SUBTITLE: Kiss my hand first.

JOHN
Orrait, maar jy moet die
verantwoordelijkheid dra vir die
gevolge.

SUBTITLE: All right, but you must be responsible for the
consequences.

JULIE
Watse gevolge?

SUBTITLE: What consequences?

JOHN
Watse gevolge? Weet jy nie dat
dit gevaarlik is om met vuur te
speel nie?

SUBTITLE: What consequences? Don’t you know it’s dangerous
to play with fire?
JULIE
Nie vir my nie. En jy? Gevaarlik?
Vuur? Dis waarvoor ek versekering het.

SUBTITLE: Not for me it isn’t. And you? Dangerous? Fire?
That’s what I’ve got insurance for.

JOHN
Nee, jy het nie! En, al het jy,
wat jy hier doen is moeilikheid soek.

SUBTITLE: No, you don’t! And even if you did, what you’re doing here is asking for trouble.

JULIE
Bedoel jy jouself?

SUBTITLE: Do you mean yourself?

JOHN
Ja. Nie omdat ek juis gevaarlik is nie, ek is net ’n jong man!
Wat verwag jy van my?

SUBTITLE: Yes. Not that I’m particularly dangerous, but I’m just a young man! What do you expect from me?

JULIE
(teasing)
Sjoe, wat ’n groot, sterk, vreesaanjaende man! Dink jy ek is bang vir jou? Dink jy jy is so heilig dat jy nie aan my sal raak nie?

SUBTITLE: Oh, what a big, strong, scary man! You think I’m afraid of you? You think you’re such a saint that you won’t touch me?

JOHN
Glo jy my?

SUBTITLE: Do you believe that?

JULIE
Ek is amper bang daarvoor.

SUBTITLE: I almost fear it.

John moves towards Julie and tries to embrace her. She dodges out his way.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Hou jou hande tuis.

SUBTITLE: Hands off.
JOHN
Is jy ernstig of maak jy ’n grap?

SUBTITLE: Are you serious or joking?

JULIE
Ernstig.

SUBTITLE: Serious.

JOHN
In daai geval is wat vroeër gebeur het ook ernstig. Sal jy my asseblief verskoon sodat ek kan teruggaan werk toe? Jy neem die speletjie te ernstig op, en dit is gevaarlik. Maar ek is moeg daarvan om jou speletjies te speel Mies Julie.

SUBTITLE: In that case, what happened before was also serious. Would you please excuse me so that I can go back to my work? You’re taking the game much too seriously, and that’s dangerous. But I’m tired of playing your games Mies Julie.

John turns to go back to the bench.

JOHN
Jou pa sal sy stewels reg wil hê as hy terugkom, en ek moet môre vroeg opstaan.

JULIE
Los die stewels.

SUBTITLE: Leave the boots alone.

JOHN
Nee. Dis my plig, en ek gaan dit doen, maar ek het nie die werk aanvaar om hierdie speletjies saam met jou te speel nie. Wat jy my vra om te doen is buite die kwessie, en ek wil nie iemand seermaak omdat ek na jou geluister het nie.

SUBTITLE: No. It’s my duty, and I’m got to do it, but I didn’t take on the job of playing these games with you. What you’re asking me to do is out of the question, and I don’t want to hurt anyone just because I listened to you.

John moves to go.

Julie steps in his path, her body against his.
JOHN
Moenie my toets nie, Mies Julie.
Ek is net ’n man.

SUBTITLE: Don’t test me, Mies Julie. I’m only a man.
John moves to kiss Julie’s mouth.
She slaps him brutally across the face.
He is stunned. He turns away in rage.

JULIE
Ag kom nou. Moenie dikbek wees nie.

SUBTITLE: Ah come on now. Don’t sulk.
John picks up a boot and starts to polish it.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Sit neer die stewel.

SUBTITLE: Put the boot down.
John ignores her, seething.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Sit dit neer! Jy is te trots.

SUBTITLE: Put it down! You’re too proud.

JOHN
Nee, ek is nie! Ek is net ’n kruipende kaffer-boy, dankbaar vir sy werk.

SUBTITLE: No, I’m not! I’m just a groveling kaffir boy, grateful for my job.

JULIE
Ek’s jammer...

SUBTITLE: I’m sorry...
John continues polishing.

JULIE (CONT’D)
(close to tears)
Ek’s jammer.

SUBTITLE: I’m sorry.
John and Julie are both silent.
John puts the boot down, goes to the back of the kitchen and brings out buckets, which he begins to place around the kitchen.
When he has finished, he returns to the bench.

JULIE (CONT’D)
(after some time)
Was jy al ooit lief gewees vir ’n vrou? Was jy? Ek bedoel so erg dat jy nie kon eet nie. Nie slaap nie.

SUBTITLE: Have you ever loved a woman? Have you? I mean like you couldn’t eat. Couldn’t sleep.

John looks at Julie.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Wie was sy?

SUBTITLE: Who was she?

John looks away in shame.

JULIE (CONT’D)
(realising)
Wat? Van wanneer af?

SUBTITLE: What? Since when?

JOHN

SUBTITLE: Your mother came home from the hospital with you wrapped in a blanket. We were all waiting to welcome you. Your mother got out the car. Her face empty. No one behind her eyes. She put you in my mother’s open hands and didn’t look back once. Just walked into the shade of the dark house. My mother put you on the kitchen table. I stood on a chair to see. I remember the love on my mother’s face when she first unwrapped that blanket. She never looked at
me like that. Before you could walk you were always in her arms or tied to her back.

JULIE
My ma was altyd vuur en vlam oor iets. Nooit regtig oor my nie.

SUBTITLE: My ma was always on fire about something. Never really about me.

JOHN
Ons is lief vir dit waarvoor ons moeders lief is.

SUBTITLE: We love what our mothers love.

JULIE
En ons haat dit wat hulle wegvat van ons af.

SUBTITLE: And we hate what takes them away.

JOHN
Toe jy oud genoeg was om saam met ons te speel, die kafferkinders, kon jou pa jou nie weghou van my af nie. Hy het jou probeer 'n pak slae gee. Maar niks het jou skaam gemaak nie.

SUBTITLE: When you were old enough to play with us, the kaffir kids, your father couldn’t keep you away from me. Tried beating you. But nothing made you ashamed.

JULIE
Skool. Graaff-Reniet het vir my dit geleer.

SUBTITLE: School. Graaff Reniet taught me that.

JOHN
En jou nefies van Leeu-Gamka.

SUBTITLE: And your cousins from Leeu-Gamka.

JULIE
Hannes and Dirk?

SUBTITLE: Hannes and Dirk?

JOHN
Elke Kersfees het hulle vir my geroep om te kom speel.

SUBTITLE: Every Christmas they would call me to play.
JULIE
(laughing)
Jy was...

SUBTITLE: You were...

JOHN
Die ’slim kaffer’. Ek weet.

SUBTITLE: The ’clever kaffir’. I know.

CUT TO:

EXT. VENEEN PLAAS - EVENING (FLASHBACK)
Julie (11) stands on the front stoep of the farmhouse.
In front of the stoep stand HANNES (15) and John (14).
In the distance stands DIRK (12), next to a tyre swing
hanging from a large willow tree.

JULIE
Op julle merke. Gereed. Weg!

SUBTITLE: On your marks. Get set. Go!

Hannes and John start racing towards the tire swing. John
is faster than Hannes.

John reaches the tire before Hannes and jumps in.

John swings hard.

High.

Julie watches them from the stoep.

Something wet hits John’s back.

He turns.

Hannes has his penis out is and urinating on John’s back.
He and DIRK (12) are laughing.

John looks up at the stoep. Julie is laughing too. Then
she is gone. Into the house.

CUT TO:
INT. FARM KITCHEN – NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT DAY) 6

JULIE
Kindertyd is wreed.

SUBTITLE: Childhood is brutal.

JOHN
Net vir kafferseuns.

SUBTITLE: Only for kaffir boys.

JULIE
Nee. Vir almal.

SUBTITLE: No. For everyone.

JOHN
Jy weet nie...

SUBTITLE: You don’t know...

JULIE
Ek weet.

SUBTITLE: I know.

CUT TO:

EXT. VENEEN PLAAS – EVENING (FLASHBACK) 7

John (14) climbs a tall tree next to the farmhouse.

He leans outwards, trying to peer in through one of the second floor windows.

He falls and lands in dog turd.

Julie’s FATHER (40) and UNCLE (30’s) come out of the house with dogs and guns.

When they see it’s John, they start laughing and kicking John.

Julie’s mother (30’s) is watching from behind a window, dark circles around her eyes. Christine (30’s) stands behind her, nothing she can do but watch.

John gets up and runs, crying.

The men don’t run after him, but stand, laughing. They let the dogs loose and they run after John.

CUT TO:
INT. STABLE - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

John runs through the stable, the dogs close behind him.

One of the horses rears up as John passes and he jumps back into the door of the stall opposite.

He grabs his shoulder and keeps on running.

CUT TO:

EXT. VENEEN PLAAS - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

John runs past his house. The dogs are still chasing him.

Several people outside the houses next to John’s look up, but back away when they see the dogs coming.

John carries on running.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAROO VELDT - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

John stops running near an old windmill and lies flat on the ground, looking in the direction he’s been running from.

The sound of Julie (11) playing next to the windmill makes him turn his head.

She squats behind an aloe to urinate.

Her dress gets wet.

She takes it off and hangs it in a tree.

John lies there watching her.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM KITCHEN - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT DAY)

JULIE
Ek kon jou altyd voel.

SUBTITLE: I always felt you.

JOHN
’n Hond kan jou troeteldier wees.
’n Perd jou maat. Maar ’n kafferseun... Wat is hy?

SUBTITLE: A dog can be your pet. A horse can be your companion. But a kaffir boy... What is he?
EXT. VENEEN PLAAS DAM - EVENING (FLASHBACK) 12

John (14) throws himself into the dam, trying to drown himself.

He holds himself under water...

...until a hand reaches in and pulls him out. The hand belongs to his UNCLE (30’s).

John’s uncle beats him.

He takes John’s arm, and drags him in the direction of the farmhouse.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINE’S HOUSE - EVENING (FLASHBACK) 13

John (14) sits in the bath as Christine (30’s) washes him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH - EVENING (FLASHBACK) 14

John (14) and Christine (30’s), dressed in their Sunday best, walk into the church.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM KITCHEN - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT DAY) 15

JULIE

En toe?

SUBTITLE: And then?

JOHN

As ek jou nie kon kry nie, wou ek in die dorsland verdwyn. Asof ek nooit gebore is nie.

SUBTITLE: If I couldn’t have you, I wanted to disappear into the harvest. Like I was never born.

CUT TO:
EXT. VENEEN PLAAS - DAWN (FLASHBACK)

The moon is full. John (14) climbs the corn silo and clambers inside.

John’s uncle (30’s) walks up to the silo as John is climbing in.

He stops and watches John, unseen, and walks away once John has climbed inside.

CUT TO:

INT. CORN SILO - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

John digs at the corn beneath him, slowly working his way into it as he tries to bury himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. VENEEN PLAAS - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

John’s uncle and another one of the farmworkers arrive at the silo with the corn.

John’s uncle climbs the silo and begins pouring the corn in on top of a mostly buried John.

When John has been completely covered, he starts to struggle, the corn moving with his body.

The struggles start to weaken.

When John has almost stopped moving completely, his uncle digs through the corn and pulls him out.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM KITCHEN - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT DAY)

JOHN
Om vir my ’n les te leer. Ek het vir weke stof en bloed opgegooi.

SUBTITLE: To teach me a lesson. I vomited dust and blood for weeks.

JULIE
Jussis.

SUBTITLE: Jesus.
JOHN
Was iemand al ooit so lief vir jou?

SUBTITLE: Have you ever been loved like that?

JULIE
Jy was lief vir my? Of het jy net jouself gehaat?

SUBTITLE: You loved me? Or you just hated yourself?

JOHN
Dis een en dieselfde ding.

SUBTITLE: Same thing.

They both smile.

JULIE
Jy’s anders.

SUBTITLE: You’re different.

JOHN
Ek lees.

SUBTITLE: I read.

JULIE
Wat lees jy?

SUBTITLE: What do you read?

JOHN
Alles wat ek in die hande kan kry. Ek gaan nie my hele lewe jou pa se stewels skoonmaak nie.

SUBTITLE: Whatever I get my hands on. I’m not going to spend my life cleaning your father’s boots.

JULIE
So wat is jou plan? Dis ’n vry land.

SUBTITLE: So what’s the plan? It’s a free country.

JOHN
Ek het ’n plan.

SUBTITLE: I have a plan.

JULIE
Hoop jy vir ’n pasella? Stukkie grond?

SUBTITLE: Hoping for a hand out? Some land?
JOHN
Miskien.

SUBTITLE: Maybe.

JULIE
Boerdery is ’n besigheid, John.
En ’n taai een.

SUBTITLE: Farming is a business, John. And a tough one.

JOHN
Moenie jou oor my bekommer nie,
Mies.

SUBTITLE: Don’t worry about me, Mies.

JULIE
Ek bekommer my oor myself. En my pa. Hierso. Het jy nie die honde gisteraand hoor blaf nie? Want dan weet jy iemand wat nie hier hoort is nie, is naby. Ek slaap met my geweer onder my kussing.

SUBTITLE: I worry about me. And my father. Here. Didn’t you hear the dogs barking last night? And you know someone who shouldn’t be is near. I sleep with my gun under my pillow.

JOHN
Jy moet trou, Mies Julie.

SUBTITLE: You need to get married, Mies Julie.

JULIE
Vir wat? As iemand hier inkom om ons te vermoor gaan ons altwee ’n panga in die kop kry. Hoekom moet ek ’n huwelik verduur as hy my nie eers kan red nie?

SUBTITLE: What for? Someone comes in here to kill us, we’re both going to get a panga in the head. Why suffer marriage if he can’t even save me?

JOHN
Hoekom het jy hom so weggestoot?

SUBTITLE: Why did you push him away like that?

JULIE
Hy was bang.

SUBTITLE: He was afraid.
JOHN
Vrouens sê altyd dit, as ’n man nie vir hulle lief is nie. Hoekom kan hulle nie net sê: Hy is nie lief vir my nie?

SUBTITLE: Women always say that, when a man doesn’t love them. Why can’t they just say: He doesn’t love me?

JULIE
Hoekom kan mans nie net sê: Ek is bang nie?

SUBTITLE: Why can’t men just say: I’m afraid?

JOHN
Bang vir wat?

SUBTITLE: Of what?

JULIE
Alles. Meestal vir vrouens vir wie hulle lief is. Julle is sulke lafaarde.

SUBTITLE: Everything. Mostly of women who love them. You’re such cowards.

JOHN
Ek is nie bang nie.

SUBTITLE: I’m not afraid.

JULIE
Hoeveel vrouens het jy?

SUBTITLE: How many women do you have?

JOHN
Genoeg.

SUBTITLE: Enough.

JULIE
As jy nie bang was nie, sou jy nie meer as een nodig gehad het nie.

SUBTITLE: If you weren’t afraid, you wouldn’t need more than one.

JOHN
Ek het vir jou gesien in die stalle saam met hom.

SUBTITLE: I saw you in the stables with him.
JULIE
Het jy ons afgeloer?

SUBTITLE: Spying on us?

JOHN
Dit was reeds te laat vir my om te probeer wegkom.

SUBTITLE: It was too late for me to leave.

John and Julie are so close, their bodies are touching.

JOHN (CONT’D)
(pulling away)
Ek gaan slaap.

SUBTITLE: I’m going to bed.

Julie catches John’s hand as he turns to, go and pushes him into a chair.

JULIE
Dis Vryheidsdag daar buite, John.

SUBTITLE: It’s Freedom Day out there, John.

Julie lifts her skirt slowly.

John watches.

She straddles him.

He grasps her to him, overcome with desire.

Suddenly, he pushes her off.

JOHN
Dit is net ’n speletjie vir jou.
Maar my ma en ek, ons het nêrens anders om heen te gaan nie. Nou moet ek alles in gevaar stel.
Omdat jy vanaand dronk en verveeld is.

SUBTITLE: This is just a game to you. But my mom and I, we have nowhere else to go. Now I must risk everything. Because you’re drunk and bored tonight.

JULIE
Ek vra jou nie om te trou nie.

SUBTITLE: I’m not asking you to marry me.

JOHN
Ek sou nie, al het jy my gevra.

SUBTITLE: I wouldn’t, even if you asked!
Julie moves to strike him again. John grabs her wrists.

   JOHN (CONT’D)
   Probeer weer om my te klap, en jy
   beter reg wees.

SUBTITLE: Slap me again, you’d better be ready.

   JULIE
   Vir wat?

SUBTITLE: For what?

John shoves Julie at the table and tears her dress away.

   JULIE (CONT’D)
   Wat as die ander inkom?

SUBTITLE: What if the others come in?

   JOHN
   Ek vermoor enigiemand wat deur
   daai deur kom.

SUBTITLE: I’ll kill anyone who comes through that door.

John pushes Julie flat onto her back on the kitchen table, pulls down his overalls and penetrates her. She cries out.

Realising the gravity of what he is doing, he stumbles away from the table overwhelmed. He cannot stay away from her.

He jumps onto the table.

He lies on her and she embraces him.

He fucks her hard.

She weeps, overcome with emotion.

He climaxes.

They kiss passionately. Then tenderly.

He whispers to her.

John falls asleep in Julie’s embrace.

Light moves across the kitchen floor, as the hours pass.

Thunder rumbles.

Water drips through the roof into the buckets.

Julie wakes abruptly. It is still dark out.

She sees John sleeping beside her.
She looks between her legs. There is blood on her thighs. Breathless with realisation, her eyes scan the room. She gets off the table and walks the kitchen, looking at everything as though new. She sees her father’s boots and buckles with fear. She squats over a bucket and cleans her inner thighs. John wakes and watches her.

JOHN
(gently)
Is jy orraait?

SUBTITLE: You okay?

Julie turns her naked body away and, finding John’s ‘throw’ nearby on the floor, she hangs it around her neck, covering her breasts.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Was ek jou eerste?

SUBTITLE: I was your first?

Julie nods. John pulls her into his embrace.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Jy is nou myne.

SUBTITLE: You’re mine now.

JULIE
Is jy lief vir my?

SUBTITLE: You love me?

John is silent, but not unloving.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Sê dit.

SUBTITLE: Say it.

JOHN
Nie in hierdie huis nie. Terwyl daai stewels vir my wag nie,
Mies.

SUBTITLE: Not in this house. While those boots wait for me, Mies.
JULIE
Jy noem my steeds 'Mies'. Na laasnag?

SUBTITLE: You call me 'Mies'. After last night?

Julie laughs softly through her tears.

JOHN
Gewoonte.

SUBTITLE: Habit.

JULIE
Sien af daarvan.

SUBTITLE: Break it.

JOHN
Terwyl ons nog in hierdie huis is, behoort my vel, my hande aan hom. My maag draai as ek net na daai stewels kyk.

SUBTITLE: While we’re still in this house, my skin, my hands belong to him. Just looking at those boots makes my stomach hurt.

JULIE
Jy is nou myne. Nie syne nie.

SUBTITLE: You’re mine now. Not his.

JOHN
Nie hier nie.

SUBTITLE: Not here.

JULIE
Kom ons gaan dan weg.

SUBTITLE: So let’s leave.

JOHN
Nou?

SUBTITLE: Now?

JULIE
Ek kan nie bly nie.

SUBTITLE: I can’t stay.

JOHN
Ek kan nie gaan nie.

SUBTITLE: I can’t go.
JULIE
Hoekom nie?

SUBTITLE: Why not?

JOHN
Ek kan nie my moeder los nie.

SUBTITLE: I can’t leave my mother.

JULIE
Jy verdien ’n lewe van jou eie.

SUBTITLE: You deserve your own life.

JOHN
Dit werk nie so vir ons nie.

SUBTITLE: That’s not how it works for us.

JULIE
Dit werk nie vir enigiemand so nie. Maar ons moet ons eie lewe maak!

SUBTITLE: It’s not how it works for any of us. But we have to make our own lives!

JOHN
Waar sou ons gaan?

SUBTITLE: Where would we go?

JULIE
Dit maak nie saak nie, John? Kom ons gaan net.


JOHN
Ons behoort altwee aan Veneen Plaas. Ons gaan nog daar sterf.

SUBTITLE: We both belong to Veneen Plaas. We’ll drown out there.

JULIE
Jy het gesê jy het ’n plan.

SUBTITLE: You said you had a plan.

JOHN
Ek het. Maar ek kan nie my ma hier los nie.

SUBTITLE: I do. But I can’t leave my ma here.
JULIE

SUBTITLE: Okay. So we take Christine with us. To the city. We, I don’t know, start a hotel. Buy an old house and fix it up. I always wanted to do that. Make something old and ugly new. I’ll deal with the guests. You can fix things. Christine runs the kitchen and makes the beds. We could be a place with a story. The couple that ran away from Veneen Plaas.

JOHN
Dit is ’n pragtige storie.

SUBTITLE: It’s a beautiful story.

John indicates the sign over the door.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Die Wenende Plaas.

SUBTITLE: The Weeping Farm.

John and Julie laugh.

JULIE
Waarvoor wil bly hier jy? ’n Paar stewels om op te vryf en ’n voorouer onder die vloer? My pa se graf is klaar bestem langs my ma s’n. En sy ouers s’n. En hulle s’n. Al die pad terug na die Voortrekkers toe. Daar is ’n plek vir my ook bespreek, maar hulle kan daai rooi stuk aarde vir iemand anders gee. Waarvoor bly ons hier? Grafte en grond?

SUBTITLE: What are we staying for? A pair of boots to polish and an ancestor beneath the floor? My father’s already got his grave marked out next to my ma. And his parents. And theirs. All the way back to the Voortrekkers. There’s a spot reserved for me too, but they can give that red dust to someone else. What are we staying for? Graves and soil?
JOHN
My moeder wil hier begrawe wees.
Sy sal nooit weggaan nie.

SUBTITLE: My mother wants to be buried here. She will never go.

JULIE
Dan moet jy sonder haar gaan. Jy is nou ’n man, John. Nie meer ’n seun nie.

SUBTITLE: Then you must go without her. You’re a man now, John. Not a boy.

JOHN
(possibility is growing for him)
Hoeveel kos ’n ou huis?

SUBTITLE: How much for an old house?

JULIE
Hoeveel het jy?

SUBTITLE: How much do you have?

JOHN
Ek?
(laughs, stunned that she can even ask)
Ek skuld jou pa nog my volgende drie lone. Oor ma wat die kombuisvloer destyds opgekap het.

SUBTITLE: Me? I still owe your father my next three wages. From when my ma broke the kitchen floor.

JULIE
John, ek het niks nie. Tot my pa sterf. Selfs die grond behoort nie eers aan my nie.

SUBTITLE: John, I don’t have anything. Until my father dies, I don’t even own this land.

Christine enters the kitchen with a spade over her shoulder and a bucket in hand, filled with blood.

John and Julie scatter, scrambling for clothes.

She watches John and Julie silently as they fumble with buttons and zips.

When they are still, she puts down the bucket of blood.
CHRISTINE
Diana is nou klaar, Missie. Ek het die klein hondjies ver in die veld gaan begrawe. By die windmeul. Ek het voor sonop opgestaan om dit te gaan doen. Met hierdie hitte, sal hulle vinning daar buite vrot.Probeer om ’n bietjie slaap te kry, Mies. Ek sal jou wakker maak as jou pa terug is.
(to John)
Wena! Ek sal jou kerkpak pars.

SUBTITLE: Diana is finished now, Miesie. I buried the puppies out beyond the field. By the windmill. I got up to do it before sunrise. With this heat, they’ll rot fast out there. Try to get some sleep, Mies. I’ll wake you when your father gets here. You! I’ll press your suit for church.

Christine leaves.

Julie watches John, who is pacing, mortified.

JULIE
John, waaraan dink jy?

SUBTITLE: John, what are you thinking?

JOHN
Ek het stewels om skoon te maak.

SUBTITLE: I have boots to clean.

John picks up the boots and begins to polish.

JULIE
Ons moet gaan. My pa is binnekort terug.

SUBTITLE: We have to go. My father will be home soon.

JOHN
Ons bly.

SUBTITLE: We’re staying.

JULIE
Ons kan nie bly nie. Alles het verander.

SUBTITLE: We can’t stay. Everything has changed.

JOHN
Niks het verander nie. Welkom in Mzantsi, Mies Julie. Waar

(MORE)
JOHN (cont’d)

wonderwerke ons presies los waar
ons begin het.

SUBTITLE: Nothing has changed. Welcome to South Africa, Mies Julie. Where miracles leave us exactly where we began.

JULIE
Maar...jy is lief vir my.

SUBTITLE: But...you love me.

JOHN
(cold)
En dan?

SUBTITLE: So what?

JULIE
Vanaf ek ’n dogtertjie was. My rok in die boom. Ek in ’n kombers. Jy wat in die graan verdrink.

SUBTITLE: Since I was a girl. My dress in the tree. Me in a blanket. You drowning in the grain.

JOHN
Jy het daarvan gehou. Dat ek bereid was om vir jou te sterf?

SUBTITLE: You liked that. That I wanted to die for you?

JULIE
Ja.

SUBTITLE: Yes.

JOHN
Hoekom?

SUBTITLE: Why?

JULIE
Omdat ek ’n vrou is.

SUBTITLE: Because I’m a woman.

JOHN
’n Boer, wat my swart vel teen sy muur wil hé.

SUBTITLE: A boer, who wants my black skin on a wall.
JULIE
Moenie dit doen nie.

SUBTITLE: Don’t do this.

JOHN
Ek kan myself nie help nie.

SUBTITLE: I can’t help myself.

JULIE
Moenie so wreed wees nie.

SUBTITLE: Don’t be cruel.

JOHN
Jy hou daarvan.

SUBTITLE: You like it.

JULIE
Jy haat my.

SUBTITLE: You hate me.

John stops polishing the boots.

JOHN
Nee, Mies Julie. Ek haat jou nie.
Jy is ’n kleinigheid.

SUBTITLE: No, Mies Julie. I don’t hate you. You’re a detail.

JULIE
Jy is lief vir my.

SUBTITLE: You love me.

JOHN
Ek het gelieg.

SUBTITLE: I lied.

JULIE
Die graansilo?

SUBTITLE: The grain silo?

JOHN
Ek het dit in a boek gelees deur ’n Afrikaanse digter. Julle mense hou van opofferings. So lank as dit in iemand anders se bloed is. Wat anders het jy verwag? Jy dog ek sou jou vlei, jou komplimenteer, vir jou vertel hoe pragtig jy is?
SUBTITLE: Read it in a book by an Afrikaans poet. You people like sacrifice. As long as it’s in someone else’s blood. What else where you expecting? You thought I was going to flatter you, compliment you, tell you how beautiful you are?

JULIE
Jou gedrog!

SUBTITLE: You monster!

JOHN
Jou hoer!

SUBTITLE: You whore!

JULIE
Hoe kan enigiets so walglik soos jy wees?

SUBTITLE: How can anything be as filthy as you are?

JOHN
Gaan was jouself dan skoon, as jy kan.

John resumes polishing the boots.

SUBTITLE: Go wash yourself clean, then, if you can.

JULIE
Jou vuil ondier! Kyk vir my! Kyk vir my as jy met my praat!

SUBTITLE: You filthy creature! Look at me! Look at me when you speak to me!

John looks up at Julie.

JOHN
Ek, die vuil ondier? Jy is die vuil, stinkende ondier! Maak toe jou bek en luister na my! Hoe kan jy vir my vuil noem na wat jy gedoen het? Nie een van daai vrouens daar buite sal hulle so goedkoop gedra of lyk soos jy nie. En ook so vanaand so te kere gegaan het soos jy nie, Mies. Dink jy ’n onskuldige meisie maak mans opgewonder soos jy vanaand gedoen het? Het jy al ooit een van hulle haarself vir ’n man sien gee op die manier waarop jy dit gedoen het?
SUBTITLE: Me, the filthy creature? You are the dirty, stinking creature! Shut your mouth and listen to me! How can you call me dirty after what you’ve done? Not one of those women out there could have acted and looked as cheap as you and the way you carried on tonight, Mies. Do you think that an innocent girl excites men in the way that you want to? Have you ever seen one of them offer herself to a man in the way you did?

John puts the boots down and stands up.

JULIE
(humiliated)
_toe, doen dit! Slaan my! Skop my! Ek verdien niks beter nie. Ek is ’n vuil hoer. Maar help my, John! Help my om weg te kom, as daar enigsins ’n kans is.

SUBTITLE: Go on, then! Hit me! Kick me! I don’t deserve anything better. I’m a filthy whore. But help me, John! Help me to get away, if there’s any chance of it.

JOHN
(more gently)
_Ek gaan nie wat gebeur het, ontken nie, maar dink jy dat ’n ’boy’ soos ek sou gedoen het wat ek gedoen het as jy my nie uitgelok het om dit te doen nie? Ek is nog steeds verstom dat jy dit gedoen het.

SUBTITLE: I’m not going to deny what happened, but do you think a boy like me would have done what I did if you yourself hadn’t invited him to do it? I’m still quite amazed you did.

JULIE
En trots.

SUBTITLE: And proud.

JOHN
Hoekom nie? Alhoevel ek moet herken dat jy dit hopeloos te maklik vir my gemaak het om dit as ’n prestasie te beskou.

SUBTITLE: Why not? Although I must admit you made it far too easy for me to make it some sort of achievement.

JULIE
Probeer dit weer! Slaan my!

SUBTITLE: Try it again! Hit me!
Julie grabs John by the arms. He shrugs her off and steps back.

JOHN
(stands)
Nee, ek sou dat jy vir my vergewe vir wat ek alreeds gesê het. Ek sal nie 'n weerloose persoon slaan nie, en nog minder 'n vroumens. En jy het niks oor om jou mee te verdedig nie. Ek moet erken dat ek dit geniet het om 'n kant van jou te sien wat die ander nog nooit gesien het nie; jy op jou knieë voor my, op die tafel, dat daai gemanikuurde naels vuil word. Maar dit het terseifdertyd seergemaak om te besef dat as ek nog wil hê van wat jy het, is dit wat ek sal word. Om jou so laag te sien val dat jy laer as jou bediende se seun is. Dit maak amper seer om jou so vuil te sien.

SUBTITLE: No, I’d rather ask you to forgive me for what I’ve already said. I won’t hit a defenceless person, and least of all a girl. And you have nothing left to defend with. I will admit I enjoyed seeing a side of you none of the others has seen before; you on your knees in front of me, on the table, those manicured nails actually getting dirty. But it hurt at the same time to realise that if I want more, to have what you have, that is what I could become. To see you sink so low that you’re beneath the son of your maid. It almost hurts to see you so dirty.

JULIE
Jy praat asof jy beter is as ek.

SUBTITLE: You’re talking as though you’re somehow better than me.

JOHN
Ek is; kyk hier, ek gee vir jou die plaas, dit kan alles joune wees. Dit is nie iets wat jy ooit vir my sou kon doen nie! Die enigste manier waarop ek hierdie grond sou kon kry sou wees om dit te vat.

SUBTITLE: I am; look here, I give you this farm, this could all be yours. That’s not something you could ever do for me! The only way for me to have this land would be to take it.
JULIE
Maar dis omdat jy ’n dief is, en ek nie.

SUBTITLE: But that’s because you’re a thief, and I’m not.

JOHN
Daar is erger dinge as om ’n dief te wees. Dit is nie die ergste ding wat ek kan wees nie. In elk geval, my moeder en ek dien jou familie, en tog reken jy my moeder as jou eie. Hoe is dit steel as die seun van die vrou wie jy moeder noem ook ’n stuk van die grond wil hé? Mies Julie, ja, jy is pragtig, jy is hopeloos te goed vir ’n klong soos ek. Jy was dronk en jags en nou wil jy jou fout toesmeer, en dit is hoekom jy dit in jou kop gekry het dat jy vir my lief is, maar jy is nie. Dit kan ook wees dat jy my aantreklik vind omdat ek groot en sterk en vreesanjaend is en in daai geval is jou liefde glad nie beter as myne nie. Jy sal my nooit as ’n man kan liefhê nie, daar is geen manier wat ek ooit vir jou kan lief wees nie.

SUBTITLE: There are worse things than being a thief. That’s not the worst thing I could be. Besides, my mother and I are the ones serving your family, and you still see my mother as yours too. How is it stealing if the son of the woman you call mother wants a piece of this land? Mies Julie, yes, you are beautiful, you’re far too good for a boy like me. You were drunk and horny and now you want to cover up your mistake, and that’s why you’ve got it into your head you love me, but you don’t. Of course, it may be that I’m big and strong and scary that attracts you and in that case your love is not at all better than mine. You’ll never be able to love me as a man, there’s no way I can ever love you.

JULIE
Bedoel jy dit regtig? Is dit wat jy glo?

SUBTITLE: Do you really mean that? Is that what you believe?

JOHN
Jy bedoel dit sal daal regtig gebeur? Hierdie wonderwerk waarvan jy droom? Miskien is ek lief vir jou? Ja, geen twyfel

(MORE)
JOHN (cont’d)
daaroor nie, jy’s mooi, jy’s sterk.

SUBTITLE: You mean it might actually happen? This miracle you’re dreaming about? I might love you? Yes, no doubt about it, you’re pretty, you’re strong.

John approaches Julie and takes her hand.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Jy kan aanloklik wees, wanneer jy wil wees, en as jy ’n man na jou laat smag het, is die kans dat hy altyd so oor jou gaan voel.

SUBTITLE: You can be appealing, when you want to be, and when you have made a man want you, the chances are that he will always feel that way for you.

John puts his arms around Julie’s waist and pulls her closer to him.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Jy kan opwindend wees en ’n soen van jou is soos om dronk te word op goeie wyn.

He tries to pull her towards the table, but she struggles free.

JULIE
Los my! Dit gaan nie met my werk nie!

SUBTITLE: Let me go! That’s not going to work with me!

JOHN
Wat sal dan? Wat wil jy hê? Wat gaan nie werk nie? Eers is ek ’n gedrog, maar as ek vir jou sê hoe ek regtig voel, jou pragtig noem en die gevolge ignoreer, verwerp jy my? Wat moet ek doen? Wat wil jy van my hê?

SUBTITLE: What is then? What do you want? That’s not going to work? First I’m a monster, but when I tell you how I really feel, call you beautiful and ignore all the consequences, you reject me? What must I do? What do you want from me?

JULIE
Wat wil ek van jou hê? Wat wil ek van jou hê? Ek weet nie! Ek het geen idee nie! Ek wil jou haat soos ’n gedrog, maar ek kan nie sonder jou lewe nie.
SUBTITLE: What do I want from you? What do I want from you? I don’t know! I have no idea! I want to hate you like a monster, but I can’t live without you.

JOHN
Dink jy dit sal vir ons maklik wees? Dat ons net kan wegloop?

SUBTITLE: You think it’ll be easy for us? That we can just run away?

JULIE
Wegloop? Ja, natuurlik kan ons wegloop. Ons sal ’n manier vind. Maar ek is so moeg. Skink vir my nog ’n glas wyn.

SUBTITLE: Run away? Yes, of course we can run away. We’ll find a way to make it work. But I’m so tired. Pour me another glass of wine.

John pours Julie a glass of wine. She looks up at the clock on the kitchen wall.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Maar ons moet eers nog beplan. Ons het nog ’n bietjie tyd oor.

SUBTITLE: But we need to plan more first. We still have a little time to spare.

Julie tilts the glass back and chugs down the wine. She holds the glass out to John for some more.

JOHN
Moenie te veel drink nie, Julie.

SUBTITLE: Don’t drink too much, Julie.

JULIE
Wat maak dit saak?

SUBTITLE: What does it matter?

JOHN
Wat maak dit saak? Om dronk te word is goedkoop. Wat wil jy dan hé ek moet sê?

SUBTITLE: What does it matter? Getting drunk is cheap. What do you want to say to me then?

JULIE
Dis nie te laat nie. Ons kan nog steeds weghardloop, maar kom ons praat eers. Ek sal praat, want tot nou toe het jy hopeloos te (MORE)
JULIE (cont’d)
veel van die praatwerk self
gedoen. Jy het vir my vertel van
jou lewe. Ek dink nie jy het
gelig nie, maar dit maak nie
saak nie. Ek gaan vir jou van
myne vertel. Dinge wat niemand
anders weet nie. En as jy my dan
ken, werklik ken, sal jy weet
hoekom ons nog saam kan wegloop.

SUBTITLE: It’s not too late. We can still run away, but
we’ll talk first. By that I mean I will talk, because up
to now you’ve done way too much of the talking yourself.
You’ve told me about your life. I don’t think you were
lying, but it doesn’t matter. I’m going to tell you about
mine. Things that no one else knows. Then when you know
me, truly know me, you’ll know why we can still run away
together, that we can make this work.

JOHN
Voor jy aangaan, wag net en dink
hieroor na. Is jy seker jy gaan
nie na die tyd spyt wees nie? Om
vir my al die geheime van jou
lewe te vertel nie?

SUBTITLE: Before you continue, stop and think about this.
Are you sure you aren’t going to regret this afterwards?
Telling me all the secrets of your life?

JULIE
Wil jy nie saam met my wees nie?
Is jy nie lief vir my nie?

SUBTITLE: Don’t you want to be with me? Don’t you love me?

JOHN
Ja, ten minste wil ek nou saam
met jou wees. Moenie my vertrou
nie, Mies Julie.

SUBTITLE: Yes, for now, at least. Don’t trust me, Mies
Julie.

JULIE
Jy bedoel nie wat jy sê nie. En
in elk geval, almal hier rond ken
alreeds die helfte van die
geheime wat ek vir jou gaan
vertel. Jy weet my moeder was nie
soos die ander boeretannies nie.
Nie een van hulle kon verstaan
hoekom hy met ’n soutie getrou
het nie. Sy was te vreemd; sy was
universiteit toe en het vir hulle
gesê net wat sy gedink het; oor

(MORE)
JULIE (cont’d)


SUBTITLE: You don’t mean what you’re saying. And besides, everyone around here knows half the secrets I’m going to tell you, anyway. You know my mother wasn’t like the other farmers’ wives. None of them could understand why my
father married an English woman. She was too strange, she went to university and said whatever she thought to them; about women’s rights, even about blacks’ rights. I still don’t understand why she married my pa. He says she was a feminist, never wanted to get married. When he proposed to her, she told him she’d never marry him, but she did. You know she didn’t want me either? From what my pa’s told me, she didn’t ever want children. Then when she was stuck with me, she tried, when she could be bothered, to get me to lead what she called a child’s natural life, and to do that, I had to learn everything that a boy has to learn, so that I could be a living example of her theory that a woman is as good as a man. She let me run around in boys’ clothes. I learned to groom horses, but I wasn’t allowed to go into the dairy. I had to scrub and harness horses and go hunting with my father. So I tried to learn some farm-work, and at home my father was given the little bit of women’s work that Christine didn’t do and my mother insisted on doing men’s work. Some of the other farmers heard rumours about this and my father became the laughing-stock of the whole neighbourhood. I think that’s what woke him up and that’s when they really started fighting. After that, everything she did has to be changed so that it would make him happy. That’s when she started showing symptoms. No one really knew what was wrong with her, and that’s when she started taking her walks. My father left her to it because it kept her quiet most of the time. Then came those huge veld fires. You remember those? Some of the other farm houses almost burnt down. They thought it was arson, but no one could ever prove it. After all that, they still stayed together.

Julie fills her glass and drinks.

JULIE

Jy het geen idee wat liefde is nie, John.

SUBTITLE: You have no idea what love is.

JOHN


SUBTITLE: And you do? Listen to what you’ve been saying. Your own mother couldn’t stand looking at you. Your father knows only the fist and the boot. The only love you’ve ever known is from the tired black hands of my mother.

JULIE

Jaloers?

SUBTITLE: Jealous?
JOHN
Nee. Ek is kwaad. Daar is ’n verskil.

SUBTITLE: No. I’m angry. There’s a difference.

JULIE
Wel word fokken groot,

SUBTITLE: Well grow the fuck up, John.

JOHN

SUBTITLE: You can’t even cook yourself a meal. You depend on us for everything. We clean up your shit. Run your kitchens. Raise your children. Plough your fields. But still, like a child, you want.

JULIE


John turns to leave.

Julie runs after him.

She drops to her knees, arms around him.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Asseblief. Asseblief.

SUBTITLE: Please. Please.

John shakes Julie off. She grabs him.

JOHN
Wat wil jy van my hê?

SUBTITLE: What do you want from me?

John kisses Julie violently. She responds.

He throws her to the floor and sits.
JOHN (CONT’D)
Sê dit! Wat wil jy hê?

SUBTITLE: Say it! What do you want?

Julie crawls to John, weeping, grasping at him.
He lifts her to him and kisses her again.
He throws her to the ground and stands.
He kicks open her legs.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Wil jy dit hê?

SUBTITLE: You want this?

John pulls Julie to her feet and shoves her, face first, over the table.
He pulls her dress up, pushing himself into her brutally from behind.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Dit? Wil jy dit hê?

SUBTITLE: This? You want this?

JULIE
(weeping)
Ja! Ek wil dit hê.

SUBTITLE: Yes! I want it.

John zips up and walks away. Julie continues weeping.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Jou fokken vark!

SUBTITLE: You fucking pig!

JOHN
Jy kry nie meer wat jy wil hê nie. Dis wat verander het. Dit is die vryheid vir altwee van ons.

SUBTITLE: You don’t get what you want anymore. That’s what has changed. There’s freedom in that for both of us.

JULIE
Ek verstaan nie.

SUBTITLE: I don’t understand.
JOHN
Vanaf ek ’n seun was, moes ek met sonsopkoms saam met jou pa gaan jag, sy geweer dra, ek was sy handlanger; en ek het gesien hoe hy vat wat hy wil hê en dan nog steeds gemaak het asof iemand hom iets geskuld het SUBTITLE: Since I was a boy, going hunting with your father at dawn, carrying his gun, being his ‘best boy’, I’ve watched him take what he wants and still behave like he’s owed.

JOHN
John, ek is net ’n boer...

SUBTITLE: John, I’m just a boer...

JOHN
...met niks op die tafel nie wat nou ’n ooreenkoms wil aangaan.

SUBTITLE: ...with nothing on the table, who now wants to cut a deal.

Julie spits in John’s face.

JULIE
’n Kaffer! Wat enigiets sal doen om sy hand in die pot te kry.

SUBTITLE: A kaffir! Who will do anything to get his hand in the jar.

JOHN
En ek het dit geniet om my hand in die pot te kry. Vir jou te laat bloei. Dis my bloedgelofte, Voortrekkernooi. Al druppende teen jou bene af. (shoving his hand between her legs)

SUBTITLE: And I liked getting my hand in the jar. Making you bleed. This is my blood covenant, Voortrekker Girl. Running down your thigh.

John grabs the wine and drinks straight from the bottle.

JULIE
Dit is my vader se beste wyn. As hy uitvind...

SUBTITLE: That is my father’s best wine. When he finds out...
JOHN
Wat? Dat ek sy dogter genaai het?
Of sy wyn gedrink het?

SUBTITLE: What? That I fucked his daughter? Or drank his wine?

JULIE
’n Kaffer bly net ’n kaffer.

SUBTITLE: A kaffir will always be a kaffir.

JOHN
En ’n teef bly ’n teef.

SUBTITLE: And a bitch will always be a bitch.

JULIE
Ek kan nie glo dat ek jou
toegelaat het om aan my te vat
nie.

SUBTITLE: I can’t believe I let you touch me.

JOHN
Ek het nie aan jou gevat nie. Ek
het jou genaai! Jy is vol van my
saad. ’n Oes wat ek gisteraand
vir die toekoms geplant het.

SUBTITLE: I didn’t touch you. I fucked you! You’re full of my seed. A harvest I planted for the future last night.

John sits at the table with his feet up.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Vertel vir my, Mies Julie. Wat as
jy my kind verwag?

SUBTITLE: Tell me, Mies Julie. What if you’re carrying my child?

Julie drops to her knees in horror.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Dan sal hierdie grond terugkeer
na die regmatige eienaars.

SUBTITLE: Then this land will return to the rightful owners.

JULIE
So dit... dis jou wraak?

SUBTITLE: So this... This is your revenge?
JOHN
Nee! Dit is restitusie. Van liggaam en grond.

SUBTITLE: No! This is restitution. Of body and soil.

JULIE
My God. Wat is jy?

SUBTITLE: My God. What are you?

JOHN

SUBTITLE: A man. With a plan.

JULIE
Pasop. Die nes wat jy jou hand in het is ‘n swartmamba s’n.

SUBTITLE: Be careful. The nest you have your hand in is a black mamba’s.

JOHN
Jy is nie ‘n slang nie. Jy is die verlede. ‘n Hartseer boer met leë hande wat nog probeer om aan jou mag te klou.

SUBTITLE: You’re not a snake. You’re the past. A sad, empty-handed boer still trying to be powerful.

JULIE
En jy is net ‘n kaffer! Staan op wanneer jy met my praat, jou fokken plaaskaffer! Jy sal nooit enigiets behalwe ‘n kaffer wees nie. Net goed om stewels skoon te maak.

SUBTITLE: And you are just a kaffir! Stand up when you are talking to me, you fucking farm kaffir! You’ll never be anything but a kaffir. Good for cleaning boots.

Julie begins weeping. John watches her.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Ek kon vir jou lief gewees het.

SUBTITLE: I could have loved you.

JOHN
Jy is nie lief vir my nie. Jy sal ook nooit wees nie.

SUBTITLE: You don’t love me. You never will.
JULIE
Hoekom nie?

SUBTITLE: Why not?

JOHN
Omdat liefde nie moontlik is in hierdie gemors nie.

SUBTITLE: Because love is not possible in this mess.

JULIE
En as ekis? Wat as ek al vanaf ek ‘n dogtertjie was vir jou lief was?

SUBTITLE: What if I do? What if I have since I was a girl?

Julie holds John.
He yields.
They hold one another.
He pulls away.

JOHN
Hou op!

SUBTITLE: Stop it!

JULIE
Hoekom?

SUBTITLE: Why?

JOHN
Jy soek my dood. Ek sal nie vir jou sterf nie.

SUBTITLE: You want me dead. I will not die for you.

JULIE
Ek is lief vir jou. Ek het jou geglo toe jy so gesê het.

SUBTITLE: I love you. I believed you when you said you do.

JOHN
Ek het.

SUBTITLE: I did.

JULIE
Wanneer het jy opgehou?

SUBTITLE: When did you stop?
JOHN
Toe jy jouself vir my gegee het.
Vanoggend, toe ek my moeder se
hande sien bewe het.

SUBTITLE: When you gave yourself to me. This morning, when
I saw my mother’s hands trembling.

JULIE
Hoekom? Hoekom moet dit so wees?

SUBTITLE: Why? Why does it have to be like this?

JOHN
Ek weet nie, Julie.

SUBTITLE: I don’t know, Julie.

JULIE
Ons is almal bang.

SUBTITLE: We’re all so scared.

JOHN
Ja.

SUBTITLE: Yes.

JULIE
Slaan my.

SUBTITLE: Hit me.

JOHN
Wat?

SUBTITLE: What?

JULIE
Maak my seer. Asseblief.

SUBTITLE: Hurt me. Please.

JOHN
Nee.

SUBTITLE: No.

JULIE
Slaan my!

SUBTITLE: Hit me!

Julie beats her own arms, her face, savagely. John grabs
her.
JOHN
Hou op! Julie hou op!

SUBTITLE: Stop! Julie stop!

Julie weeps. John holds her.

JOHN (CONT’D)
(whispers)
Ek is jammer. Ek is jammer.

SUBTITLE: I’m sorry. I’m sorry.

JULIE
(pushing him away)
Gooi vir my ’n drankie.

SUBTITLE: Pour me a drink.

John pours Julie a glass of wine.

She grabs the bottle from his hand and chugs. She sits at the table.

JULIE (CONT’D)
My ma het altyd probeer inpas by
die ander boeretannies. Maar
hulle was altyd harder, wreder.
Hulle het Vrydae hulle hare en
naels laat doen asof hulle oorlog
toe gaan. As jy sensitief is in
hierdie onvrugbare land, dan
oorleef jy dit nie.

SUBTITLE: My ma always tried to fit in here with the other farmers’ wives. But they were always harder, crueler. Having their hair and nails done on Fridays like they were going to battle. If you are sensitive out here in this arid land, you don’t make it.

CUT TO:

EXT. POWER STATION - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) 20

Julie’s mother (30’s), dressed in her nightie, walks up to the power station.

She stops, staring at it with her arms slightly outstretched. She sways, as if dancing to music only she can hear.

Car lights illuminate her back.

A bakkie approaches her.

It stops and Julie’s father (30’s) gets out, leaving the passenger’s side door open.
He walks to her, picks her up and carries her to the car.

She fights him, struggling against his grasp, but cannot take her eyes off the power station.

He manages to drag her to the car and lifts her into the passenger’s seat.

He gets into the car and pulls off.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM KITCHEN - DAWN (BACK TO PRESENT DAY)

JULIE
My vader het vir my een keer vertel dat dit is wat haar doodgemaak het. Sy het geluister. Na wat onder aangaan. As jy hier rond sag is, verdrink jy maklik.

SUBTITLE: My father told me once that’s what killed her. She listened. To what’s beneath. If you’re tender out here, you drown.

Julie gulps more wine from the bottle.

John pulls it away gently.

JOHN
Moenie nog drink nie, Julie.

SUBTITLE: Don’t drink anymore, Julie.

JULIE
Hy het sy geduld verloor. Sy het hom geslaan. En partykeer het hy teruggeslaan. Op sulke oggende was sy kalm as sy ontbyt toe gekom het. Met kneusplekke van sy vuiste. My ma was altyd iewers anders.

SUBTITLE: He lost patience. She would hit him. And sometimes he would hit her back. Those were the mornings she would come to breakfast looking calm. With bruises from his fists. My ma was always elsewhere.

JOHN
My moeder was altyd saam met jou.

SUBTITLE: My mother was always with you.

John sits next to Julie.
JULIE
Ek weet. Ek is lief vir die plaas.

SUBTITLE: I know. I love this farm.

JOHN
Waarvoor is jy lief?

SUBTITLE: What do you love?

JULIE
Alles. Die ruimte. Die stilte. Toe ek kosskool toe gestuur is, het ek gedog ek gaan dood.

SUBTITLE: Everything. The space. The silence. When I was sent to boarding school, I thought I would die.

JOHN
Dit is nie joune om lief te hê nie.

SUBTITLE: It’s not yours to love.

JULIE
Sê wie? Wat maak dit minder myne as joune? Jou swart vel?

SUBTITLE: Says who? What makes it less mine than yours? Your black skin?

JOHN
My mense is hier begrawe. Onder hierdie vloer.

SUBTITLE: My people are buried here. Beneath this floor.

JULIE
Myne ook. Daar buite onder die wilgeboom. Drie generasies. Waar de fok moet ek gaan?

SUBTITLE: So are mine. Out there beneath the willow trees. Three generations back. Where the fuck do I go?

JOHN
Dit is nie my probleem nie. Hulle het dit gesteel. Jou mense.

SUBTITLE: That’s not my problem. They stole it. Your people.

JULIE
Fok jou. Joune ook. Van die eerstes hier. Hoe ver in die verlede wil jy teruggaan?
SUBTITLE: Fuck you. So did yours. From the First here. How far back do you want to go?

JOHN
Kom ons sê net dat jou mense goed gedoen het sodat hulle dit kan behou; goed waarvoor hulle nooit verskoon kan word nie.
(a pause)
Wees lief vir my, Mies Julie.
Wees lief vir die grond. Wees lief vir die ou windmeul daar buite. Maar ons sal nooit joune wees nie.

SUBTITLE: Let’s just say your people did things to keep it that can never be excused. Love me, Mies Julie. Love the land. Love that old windmill out there. But we will never be yours.

JULIE
’n Boeretannie het haar een keer met warm sop gegooi omdat sy gesê het dat ons nie hier hoort nie. Gesê as mense gewelddadig word, het jy die waarheid gepraat. Daar is iets te sê vir gewelddadigheid. Dan weet jy waar jy staan.

SUBTITLE: A farmer’s wife once threw hot soup at her for saying we don’t belong here. She just laughed. Said when people turn violent, you know you’ve told the truth. There’s something to be said for violence. Lets you know where you stand.

JOHN
Dis hoekom jy vir Baas Jan met die sambok geslaan het?

SUBTITLE: That’s why you hit Baas Jan with the sjambok?

JULIE
Wat presies het jy daardie dag gesien?

SUBTITLE: What exactly did you see that day?

CUT TO:

INT. STABLE - DAY (FLASHBACK) 22

JAN (27), Julie’s fiancé, pushes Julie (25) to her knees, crying, her nose bleeding.

He unzips his pants and forces himself into her mouth.
She struggles, strong and determined behind her tears.
He grips the back of her neck and squeezes.
She stops fighting, taking him into her mouth.
John (28) watches, unseen, from one of the horse stalls.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM KITCHEN - DAWN (BACK TO PRESENT DAY) 23

JOHN
Het dit opreg gevoel?

SUBTITLE: Did that feel honest?

JULIE
Dit was sy grootste oomblik.

SUBTITLE: It was his finest moment.

JOHN
Hoekom?

SUBTITLE: Why?

JULIE
Hy was getrou aan sy aard.

SUBTITLE: He was being true.

JOHN
Jy haat seker jouself, Julie?

SUBTITLE: You must hate yourself, Julie.

JULIE
Nee, John. Ek haat jou.

SUBTITLE: No, John. I hate you.

JOHN
Hoekom? Jy het dan alles van my.

SUBTITLE: Why? You have everything of mine.

JULIE
Ek het niks nie. Sien jy nie?

SUBTITLE: I have nothing. Don’t you see?

JOHN

JULIE
Gaan dan saam met my dood.

SUBTITLE: Die with me.

JOHN
Dood?

SUBTITLE: Die?

JULIE
Kom ons begin.

SUBTITLE: Let’s start new.

JOHN
Ek gaan slaap. Skakel die lig af as jy loop.

SUBTITLE: I’m going to bed. Turn the light off when you leave.

John stands and turns to go.

JULIE
Nie so haastig nie, jou fokker! Jy skuld my.

SUBTITLE: Not so fast, fucker! You owe me.

JOHN
Skuld jou?

SUBTITLE: Owe you?

JULIE
Jy gebruik nie vir my en gooi my dan so weg nie.

SUBTITLE: You don’t use me and throw me away like that.

JOHN

SUBTITLE: You boere. You take and take. But when something is taken, you want to burn the house down. You complain what a mess everything is out there. Who made the fucking mess? The party is over. We’ll clean up your shit as usual. Just go.
JULIE
Waar? Dit is my huis. My oupagrootjie het dit met sy kaal hande gebou.

SUBTITLE: Where? This is my home. My great grandfather built it with his bare hands.

JOHN
Jou oupagrootjie was ’n plakker. Vat hierdie hutjie en gaan bou dit iewers anders.

SUBTITLE: Your great grandfather was a squatter. Take this shack and build it somewhere else.

JULIE
’n Plakker? Is dit wat jy nou net gesê het?

SUBTITLE: A squatter? Is that what you just said?

JOHN
Iemand wat oop grond beset om eiendomsreg te kry. Ek lees. Onthou?

SUBTITLE: He who moves onto open land to gain title. I read. Remember?

JULIE
Vertel dit vir my pa.

SUBTITLE: Tell that to my father.

JOHN
Hy verklaar oorlog teen diegene wat presies doen wat sy voorvaders gedoen het.

SUBTITLE: He cries war on those doing exactly what your ancestors did.

JULIE
Ons besit die eiendomsbewys vir hierdie grond.

SUBTITLE: We own the deeds to this land.

JOHN
Van wie? Die man wat eerste gevat het wat nie aan hom behoort het nie?

SUBTITLE: From whom? The man who first took what never belonged to him?

John makes for the door.
JULIE
Loop en ek sal gil dat jy my
verkrág het.

SUBTITLE: Walk away and I will scream rape.

John stops dead in his tracks.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Ek is vol van jou saad. Ek het
die bewyse. Ek het gebloei.

SUBTITLE: I am full of your seed. I have evidence. I bled.

JOHN
Natuurlik, dit is waar begeerte
eindig. Die wit dogter gil dat sy
deur die swartman verkrág is.
Sodeoende kan haar pa dan haar
genaaier aanvaar.

SUBTITLE: Of course, this is where desire ends. The white
daughter crying rape on the black man. So that her father
can accept her fucking him.

JULIE
Jy sal vanaand in die tronk wees
as hy nie voort dit reeds jou
deur die kop skiet nie.

SUBTITLE: You will be in jail tonight if he doesn’t put a
bullet in your head first.

JOHN
Onthou, jou vader het jou ook ’n
skoot in die kop belowe. So hier
sit ons dan: twee kaffers. Die
dood is ons lot.

SUBTITLE: Remember, your father promised you a bullet in
the head too. So here we are: two kaffirs. Doomed to die.

JULIE
Ek weet nie meer hoe om te wees
nie.

SUBTITLE: I don’t know how to be anymore.

JOHN
Ek weet.

SUBTITLE: I know.

JULIE
Ek het jou nodig, John.

SUBTITLE: I need you, John.
JOHN
Ek het nie jou nodig nie, Julie.

SUBTITLE: I don’t need you, Julie.

JULIE
Ja, jy het. Ek is dalk swanger met jou kind. As ek verdwyn, moet jy maar weer gaan stewels poets.
(pause)
My vader het geld in die kluis.

SUBTITLE: Yes, you do. I may be carrying your child. If I disappear, you are back to cleaning boots. My father has money in his safe.

JOHN
En ’n geweer. Ek weet.

SUBTITLE: And a gun. I know.

JULIE
Ek ken die kode vir die kluis.

SUBTITLE: I know the code to the lock.

John stares at Julie. She puts a hand to her belly.

JULIE (CONT’D)
Kom ons gaan weg totdat die storm oor is. Miskien kan ons eendag terugkom met ’n kind wat kan aanspraak maak op Veneen Plaas.

SUBTITLE: Let’s go until the storm passes. Maybe we can return someday with a child who can lay claim to Veneen Plaas.

JOHN
Gaan. Gaan kry wat ons nodig het.

SUBTITLE: Go. Get what we need.

Julie turns to go.

JULIE
Sal jy saam met my gaan?

SUBTITLE: You’ll come with me?

JOHN
Bly stil. Gaan kry wat ons nodig het en kom dan terug hiernatoe.

SUBTITLE: Be quiet. Get what we need and come back here.
JULIE
Praat jy nog steeds so met my? Is dit wat ek kry nadat ek my hart vir jou oopgemaak het, nadat ek my vader se eer weggegee het?

SUBTITLE: Is that how you still speak to me? This is what I get for opening my heart to you, for giving away my father’s honour.

JOHN
Jy bedoel seker jou vader se oneer? Maar kyk hier, ek het vir jou gesê jy moenie so baie drink nie, want toe het jy begin onsin praat en hierdie gemors veroorsaak.

SUBTITLE: Your father’s shame, you mean. But, look here, I told you you shouldn’t drink so much, because then you started speaking nonsense and caused this mess.

JULIE
Ai, ek wens ek het nie. Glo vir my, ek wens ek het nooit aan jou gevat nie. Of ten minste wens ek jy wou my behandel asof jy lief is vir my!

SUBTITLE: Oh, I wish I hadn’t. Believe me, I wish I’d never touched you. Or at least I wish you’d treat me like you love me!

JOHN
Vir die laaste keer: wat wil jy hé? Wil jy hé ek moet huil, wil jy hé ek moet jou behandel soos Baas Jan jou behandel het? Wil jy hé ek moet jou soen, of vir jou vat na een of ander wonderlike plek waar ons vry kan wees? En dan? Wat gaan ons doen? Wat wil jy hé? Mies Julie, ek weet hoe ongelukkig jy is, ek weet dat jy ook ly, maar ek kan jou nie verstaan nie. Mense soos ek en my ma, ons glo nie in sulke sprokies nie. Ons haat ook nie mekaar nie. Ons is liefdevol wanneer ons kan, as ons werk vir ons tyd afgee, maar ons kan nie die hele dag en die hele nag daaraan dink nie. Kyk hoe lyk jy, jy is mal.

SUBTITLE: For the last time what do you want? Do you want me to cry, do you want me to treat you the way Baas Jan did, do you want me to kiss you, or take you to some
miraculous place where we can be free? And then? What are we going to do? What do you want? Mies Julie, I know how unhappy you are, I know that you’re also suffering, but I can’t understand you. People like me and my ma don’t go believe in these fairy tales. We don’t hate each other either. We love when we can, when our work gives us time off, but we haven’t got the whole day and the whole night to devote to it. Look at you, you’re mad.

JULIE
Jy moet goed wees vir my, John,
en nou met my praat soos met ’n man. Help my! Help my! Vertel vir my wat ons veronderstel is om te doen. Waarheen moet ons gaan?

SUBTITLE: You must be kind to me, John, and now speak to me like a man. Help me! Help me! Tell me what we’re supposed to do, where should we go?

JOHN
Ek weet nie!

SUBTITLE: I don’t know!

Julie walks back to John.

JULIE
Ek mag miskien mal wees, maar daar moet ’n manier wees dat ons dit kan doen. Ons kan nog wegkom. Ons kan nog saam wees.

SUBTITLE: Maybe I am mad. But there has to be a way we can do this. We can still get away. We can still be together.

JOHN
Kom ons bly net hier en bly stil. Niemand sal ooit iets weet nie.

SUBTITLE: Let’s just stay here and keep quiet. No one will ever know anything.

JULIE
Is jy gek! Jou moeder weet! Die ander daar buite, hulle weet ook seker.

SUBTITLE: Are you insane! Your mother knows! The others out there, they probably know too.

JOHN
Hulle weet nie en hulle sou my nooit glo nie as ek iets sou sê nie. My moeder sal niks sê nie.

SUBTITLE: They don’t know and they would never believe it if you told them. My mother won’t say anything.
JULIE
(slowly)
Dit kan miskien weer gebeur.

SUBTITLE: It might happen again.

JOHN
Dis waar.

SUBTITLE: That’s true.

JULIE
En as ek swanger word?

SUBTITLE: And if I get pregnant?

JOHN
Ek weet nie... Miskien is die beste ding as jy alleen wegaan.
As ek nie saam met jou gaan nie, sal jou vader nie weet dat dit ek was nie. Dan kan jy gaan net waar jy wil.

SUBTITLE: I don’t know... Maybe the best thing to do is if you leave by yourself. If I don’t go with you, your father won’t know it was me, but then you can go anywhere you want to.

JULIE
Ek kan nie alleen gaan nie, John.

SUBTITLE: I can’t leave on my own, John.

JOHN
Jy moet. En voor jou vader terugkom. As jy bly, weet ons wat hy aan ons sal doen. As jy alreeds my kind dra, dan moet jy gaan. As jy sterk genoeg is om nou te gaan, dan sal jy nog sterker word as jy die plaas verlaat het, en op ’n plek is waar hy jou nie kan seermaak nie. Eendag kan jy vir hom ’n brief skryf en vir hom alles vertel, behalwe natuurlik wie die baba se pa is. Hy sal nooit raai dat dit myne is nie. Jy weet wat met my sal gebeur as hy uitvind, as jy vir hom vertel.

SUBTITLE: You must. And before your father comes back. If you stay, we know what he will do to both of us. If you are already carrying my child, then you have to leave. if you’re strong enough to go now, then you’ll get stronger when you’ve left this farm, gone to a place where he can’t
hurt you. One day you can write him a letter and tell him everything, except of course who the baby’s father it. He’ll never guess it is mine. You know what will happen to me if he finds out, if you tell him.

**JULIE**

Ek sal gaan, maar net as jy saam met my sal gaan. .

**SUBTITLE:** I’ll leave, but only if you’ll come with me.

**JOHN**

Is jy mal, Mies? Wil jy weghardloop met jou vader se gunsteling ‘boy’? Die slim kaffer? Dit sal alles in die koerant wees môreoggend, en jou vader sal nooit daaroor kom nie.

**SUBTITLE:** Are you mad, Mies? Do you want to elope with your father’s favourite boy? The clever kaffir? It’ll all be in the paper in the morning, and your father would never get over it.

**JULIE**

Ek kan nie gaan nie, ek kan nie bly nie. Help my, John! Ek is uitgeput. Sê net vir my wat om te doen. Ek kan nie meer dink nie; en ek kan niks meer doen nie.

**SUBTITLE:** I can’t leave, I can’t stay. Help me, John! I am exhausted. Just tell me what we should do. I can’t think any more, and I can’t do any more.

**JOHN**

Julle boere, kyk net hoe pateties is julle! Goed, gaan haal dan die geld en die geweer en kom weer hiernatoe.

**SUBTITLE:** You boere, look at how pathetic you are! Fine then, go and get the money and the gun and come back down here.

**JULIE**

(softly)

Kom saam met my op.

**SUBTITLE:** Come up with me.

**JOHN**

Na jou kamer? Is jy nou heeltemal mal?

**SUBTITLE:** To your room? Are you completely mad?

John hesitates for a moment.
JOHN (CONT’D)
Nee, gaan jy alleen. Nou.

SUBTITLE: No, you go on your own. Now.

John takes Julie by the hand and leads her to the door that leads to the rest of the house.

JULIE
Praat mooi met my.

SUBTITLE: Speak kindly to me.

JOHN
Dit is hoe bevele proe. Wat ons elke dag sluk. Gaan.

SUBTITLE: This is what orders taste like. What we swallow every day. Go.

Julie exits the kitchen.

John sits with his head in his hands.

Christine enters. She is immaculately dressed in her church uniform. She holds a bible in her left hand, and John’s suit on a hanger in her right.

She lays the suit flat on the table.

CHRISTINE
Maak gereed vir kerk.

SUBTITLE: Get ready for church.

JOHN
Ek is moeg.

SUBTITLE: I’m tired.

CHRISTINE
Te moeg vir God? Kyk vir my. Kyk vir my!

SUBTITLE: Too tired for God? Look at me. Look at me!

Christine slaps John brutally in the face.

CHRISTINE (CONT’D)
Wat het jy gedoen? Ons het niks nie. Nêrens anders om te gaan nie!

SUBTITLE: What have you done? We have nothing. Nowhere else to go!
JOHN
Mama, die lewe bestaan uit meer.
Meer as net 'n slaaf se loon en om vloere te skrop.

SUBTITLE: Mama, there is more! More to life than slave wages and scrubbing a floor!

CHRISTINE
Is dit so?

SUBTITLE: Is that so?

JOHN
Hoekom net aanvaar? Hoekom aanvaar dat jy vir die res van jou lewe daardie vloer gaan skrop? Vryheid is nie kak werd nie! So lank as ons eer moet gee aan voorvaders wat ons tot hierdie dooie grond bind waar niks groei nie.

SUBTITLE: Why just accept? Why accept scrubbing that floor for the rest of your life? Freedom is not worth shit! As long as we must pay honour to ancestors that bind us to this dead land where nothing grows.

Christine holds her hand up in front of John, her palm and fingertips facing towards him. She is silent.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Wat is dit, Ma?

SUBTITLE: What is it, Ma?

CHRISTINE
Geen vingerafdrukke nie.

SUBTITLE: No fingerprints.

JOHN
Wat?

SUBTITLE: What?

CHRISTINE
Toe ek vir die eerste keer gaan stem het, agtien jaar gelede, het hulle vingerafdrukke gesoek vir identifikasie. Maar hulle is weg. Ek het hulle verloor. Glad gevryf deur hierdie vloer skoon te maak! Hierdie mure! Daai kind!
SUBTITLE: When I went to vote for the first time, eighteen years ago, they needed fingerprints for identification. But they’re gone. I lost them. Rubbed them smooth, cleaning this floor! These walls! That child!

JOHN

Ma...

SUBTITLE: Ma...

CHRISTINE

Hulle het vir my gesê hulle sal ’n plan maak met my. Gesê daar was ander bediendes met dieselfde probleem. Geen identiteit nie. Maar ek het nooit teruggegaan nie. Wat weg is, is weg, en kan nooit weer herwin word nie.

SUBTITLE: They told me they would make a plan for me. Said there were other maids with the same problem. No identity. But I never went back. What is gone is gone, and can never be reclaimed.

John is silent. He covers his face with his hands.

CHRISTINE (CONT’D)

Trek nou aan vir kerk. En as ons terugkom, is daar werk om te doen.

SUBTITLE: Now get dressed for church. And when we come back, there is work to be done.

JOHN

Ek soek meer, Ma. Ek wil hê wat aan ons behoort.

SUBTITLE: I want more, Ma. I want what belongs to us.

CHRISTINE

Ons werk behoort aan ons. Dit is meer as wat die meeste mense het. Maak die stewels skoon. Wees dankbaar. Trek aan. Gaan Sondae kerk toe. Solank as wat daai bene onder die vloer lê, dis hoe ons naby aan ons voorvaders op hierdie grond kan bly. Ek wag buite.

SUBTITLE: Our jobs belong to us. It’s more than most people have. Do the boots. Be grateful. Get dressed. Go to church on Sundays. As long as those bones lie beneath this floor, that’s how we get to stay near our ancestors on this land. I’ll be waiting outside.

Christine exits the kitchen.
John sits, agonising over this decision.

He removes his gumboots and puts the jacket from the suit on.

CUT TO:

EXT. VENEEN PLAAS - SAME

Julie takes down the birdcage hanging outside the kitchen and covers it with fabric.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Julie walks into the kitchen holding a small bag, a shotgun strapped to her back, and the birdcage.

    JULIE
Ek’s reg.

SUBTITLE: I’m ready.

    JOHN
Jy lyk soos ’n voëlverskrikker.

SUBTITLE: You’re a mess.

    JULIE
Hoe?

SUBTITLE: How?

    JOHN
Jou gesig is vuil.

SUBTITLE: Your face is dirty.

    JULIE
(rubbing her face)
Die son is op.

SUBTITLE: The sun is up.

    JOHN
Hoeveel het ons?

SUBTITLE: How much do you have?

    JULIE
Genoeg.

SUBTITLE: Enough.

Julie puts the rifle and the birdcage on the table.
JOHN
Wat is dit?

SUBTITLE: What is that?

JULIE
My voël. Ek kan nie vir haar hier los nie.

SUBTITLE: My bird. I can’t leave her behind.

JOHN
Ons kan dit nie vat nie. Is jy mal?

SUBTITLE: We can’t take it. Are you mad?

JULIE
Ek sou haar eerder dood sien as sonder my.

SUBTITLE: I’d rather she were dead than alone.

JOHN
Gee dit vir my. Ek sal dit doen.

SUBTITLE: Give it to me. I’ll do it.

Julie takes the bird out of the cage and kisses it tenderly.

John grabs it and crushes it in his hands. Julie screams. He throws it in the nearby bucket.

JULIE
(devastated)
Ek sou graag jou bloed en brein teen ’n muur wou sien spat.

SUBTITLE: I’d like to see your blood and brains on a wall.

Christine enters, bible in hand.

JULIE
Hou my vas, Christine. Soos toe ek klein was.

SUBTITLE: Hold me, Christine. Like when I was small.

CHRISTINE
(cradling Julie)
Sssh.

JULIE
Ons moet weghardloop voor my vader terugkom.

SUBTITLE: We must run away before my father gets home.
INT. FARM KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)  

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Julie’s mother (30’s) stands barefoot at the kitchen table, staring out of the window.
-- She picks up a rifle resting on the table and cocks it.
-- She sits at the table, her back facing the wall.
-- She places the end of the barrel in her mouth.
-- She hooks a toe around the trigger.
-- She clenches the toe holding the trigger.
-- The rifle fires.
-- Her brains splatter over the wall behind her.
-- Julie (7) runs into the kitchen through the door leading outside the house. She stops just inside the doorway.
-- She looks at her mother’s corpse in the chair.
-- She looks at the rifle.
-- She looks at her mother’s blood and brains dripping down the kitchen wall.
-- She begins to hyperventilate.
-- Tears stream down her cheeks.
-- She turns and runs out of the door she came through.
-- She runs through the veldt.
-- She runs straight into Christine (30’s) who is walking towards the house.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)  

Christine stands in the doorway to the kitchen, staring in horror at Julie’s mother’s corpse.

Julie is facing Christine and has her arms wrapped around Christine’s legs, her face buried in the folds of Christine’s clothes.
JULIE
(helplessly repeating)
Wat het ek verkeerd gedoen, Christine? Wat het ek verkeerd gedoen? Wat het ek...

SUBTITLE: What did I do wrong, Christine? What did I do wrong? What did I...

CHRISTINE

SUBTITLE: Nothing, little one. It’s not your fault. It’s not your fault.

INT. FARM KITCHEN - MORNING (BACK TO PRESENT DAY) 28

CHRISTINE
Ek het self die bloed van hierdie mure afgewas.

SUBTITLE: I cleaned the blood off these walls myself.

JULIE
Christine, John en ek gaan weg om ’n hotel iewers te begin. Sal jy saam met ons kom, Ma?

SUBTITLE: Christine, John and I are going away to open a hotel. Will you come with us, Ma?

Christine looks at John stunned.

CHRISTINE
Ek gaan nêrens nie. Behalwe kerk toe. En dan terug huistoe om hierdie huis skoon te maak.

SUBTITLE: I’m going nowhere. Except to church. And then home to clean this house.

JULIE
Christine, ons kan ’n familie wees.

SUBTITLE: Christine, we could be a family.

CHRISTINE
’n Familie? Glo jy dit, Mies?

SUBTITLE: A family? You believe that, Mies?

JULIE
Ek weet nie, Christine. Ek weet nie meer wat om te glo nie.
SUBTITLE: I don’t know, Christine. I don’t know what I believe anymore.

JOHN
Ma, ek was nooit van plan om jou te los nie.

SUBTITLE: Ma, I was never going to leave you.

CHRISTINE
Wat sou jy gedoen het?

SUBTITLE: What were you going to do?

JOHN
Terugvat wat aan ons behoort.

SUBTITLE: Take back what belongs to us.

CHRISTINE
Jy oneer jou voorvaders.

SUBTITLE: You disgrace your ancestors.

JOHN
(agonised)
Mama, ek is moeg van wag!

SUBTITLE: Mama, I’m tired of waiting!

CHRISTINE
Wat weet jy van wag? Jy is maar tien minute terug gebore.

SUBTITLE: What do you know about waiting? You were born ten minutes ago.

JOHN
(brutally)
Jy gaan daai vloer aanhou skrop tot jou dood.

SUBTITLE: You are going to keep scrubbing that floor until you die.

CHRISTINE
SUBTITLE: I will wait. Until this house turns to dust. Until this floor turns to sand. Until the waters rise and it all floats away. I can’t break it open and set them free. I have tried. So I wait. These roots are my hands. And beneath these stones, my blood is warm.

JOHN
Ons vat dit self terug. Of ons gaan.

SUBTITLE: We take it back ourselves. Or we leave.

CHRISTINE
Maak reg vir kerk.

SUBTITLE: Get ready for church.

JOHN
Hulle het ons grond gevat en vir ons die Bybel gegee. Ek gaan nie kerk toe nie. Nooit weer nie.

SUBTITLE: They took our land and handed us the Bible. I’m not going to church. Ever again.

John grabs Christine’s Bible and throws it brutally to the ground.

Christine drops to her knees, broken. She clutches the Bible to herself.

She rises and tries to compose herself.

CHRISTINE
(to John)
Ek sal jou daar ontmoet as jy klaar is met hierdie gemors. Ek vertrou jou, my seun.

SUBTITLE: I will meet you there when you are finished with this mess. I trust you, my boy.

Christine leaves. John is sitting on the floor, devastated.

JULIE
Sien jy vir ons ’n uitweg?’n Einde aan die hele ding?

SUBTITLE: Can you see a way out of all of this? An end for the whole thing?

JOHN
.he can barely speak).
Loop. Daar is geen ander manier nie.

SUBTITLE: Go. There’s no other way.
JULIE
Ek het nêrens heen om te gaan nie.

SUBTITLE: I’ve nowhere to go.

JOHN
Bly dan en baklei. Jy sal verloor. As jy gelukkig is, is my kind in jou baarmoeder en jou kinders sal dan ’n plek op Veneen Plaas hê.

SUBTITLE: Then stay and fight. You will lose. If you are lucky, my child is in your womb and your children will have a place on Veneen Plaas.

In one move, Julie grabs the rifle and has it pointed at John’s head.

JULIE
Dink jy ek is lief vir jou, kaffer-boy? Dat ek jou swart kind onder my hart gaan dra? Dit gaan voed met my bloed? Dit jou naam gaan gee? Jou sokkies en onderbroeke was; jou kos kook; jou kinders grootmaak? Jou kaffer wees? En as my vader sterf, erf jou swart kind hierdie grond? Is dit wat jy dink?

SUBTITLE: You think I love you, kaffir boy? That I’m going to carry your black child under my heart. Feed it with my blood? Give it your name? Wash your socks and underpants; cook your food; raise your children? Be your kaffir! And when my father dies, your black child inherits this land? Is that what you had in mind?

JOHN
Dit is ’n goeie ooreenkoms. Meer as wat jou kinders verdien.

SUBTITLE: It’s a good deal. More than your children deserve.

JULIE
Jy het niks kapitaal nie. Geen vaardighede nie. Jy is ’n slaaf.

SUBTITLE: You have no capital. No skills. You’re a slave.

JOHN
Ja, ek het niks nie. Dit is die erfenis wat jou mense nalaat. ’n Nasie van volwasse mans en vrouens, wat net goed genoeg is om stewels skoon te maak.
SUBTITLE: Yes, I have nothing. That’s the legacy your people leave. A nation of grown men and women, good for nothing but cleaning boots.

John seizes the rifle from Julie.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Maar dit sal ons eie stewels wees wat ons skoonmaak. Op ons eie grond.

SUBTITLE: But it will be our boots we clean. On our own land.

Julie scrambles for the sickle John was sharpening the night before.

JULIE
Ek sterf eerdervoordat ek jou toelaat om hierdie plaas te vat.

SUBTITLE: I will die before I let you take this farm.

John and Julie square up. Rifle and sickle.

JOHN

SUBTITLE: So here we are. Free at last. No master. No slave. Just two people in a kitchen. Fighting for our lives.

Julie drops to her knees. John has the rifle aimed at her head.

JULIE
Die Vallei van Verlatenheid. Dit is waarheen ek soggens geharloop het. Na haar dood. Ek het gestaan aan die voet van al daardie rotse. Vulkane en erosie het dit oor miljoene jare gevorm. Voor enigeen van ons hier was.

SUBTITLE: The Valley of Desolation. That’s where I would run to in the mornings. After she died. Standing at the foot of all that rock. Volcanoes and erosion made it over millions of years. Before any of us were here.

Julie raises the sickle.

JULIE
Ek is ’n boer, John. Ons gaan nie so maklik lê nie; nie sonder om te baklei nie.
SUBTITLE: I’m a boer, John. We don’t go down without a fight.

JOHN
Ek kan jou nie van jouself red nie, Julie.

SUBTITLE: I can’t save you from yourself, Julie.

JULIE
Ek het nie ’n self nie. Sien jy nie dit nie? Ek het nie ’n enkele gedagte wat ek nie van my vader gekry het nie. Ek het nie ’n enkele passie wat ek nie van my moeder gekry het nie. So hoe kan dit my skuld wees? Wie is verantwoordelik vir die onreg? Wat maak dit vir ons saak wie is?

SUBTITLE: I haven’t got a self. Don’t you see that? I haven’t got a thought I don’t get from my father. I haven’t a passion I didn’t get from my mother. So how can it be my fault? Who is responsible for the wrong? What does it matter to us who is?

JOHN
Julie...

SUBTITLE: Julie...

JULIE
Jy dink my liggaam is jou restitusie? My baarmoeder deel van jou grondroof?

SUBTITLE: You think that my body is your restitution? My womb your land grab?

JOHN
Jy weet nog nie eers of die kind bestaan nie.

SUBTITLE: You don’t even know if that child exists.

JULIE
Maar as ek weer vir jou lief is, John, sal dit so wees. En ek vat nie enige kansie nie. Hier is my gelofte van bloed.

SUBTITLE: But if I love you again, John, it will. And I’m not taking any chances. Here is my blood vow.

Julie pushes the sickle between her legs, and thrusts the blade upwards into her womb.

There is a gush of blood.
John grabs her.

JOHN

Julie!

SUBTITLE: Julie!

John cradles Julie and carries her to the table. He continues to hold her. She is bleeding profusely.

JULIE

Daar is soggens mis oor die vallei as ek wakker word. Dit ruik soos vuur. En ek besef dis die rook.

SUBTITLE: There is mist over the valley in the morning when I wake. It smells like fire. And I realise it’s smoke.

JOHN

Julie...

SUBTITLE: Julie...

JULIE


SUBTITLE: Everyone is crying. They are going farm to farm. Burning our fields. Our homes. Scorched the earth. We stand. In silence. Ash in our hair as the farms burn.

JOHN

Hierdie herinneringe is nie joune nie, Julie.

SUBTITLE: These memories are not yours, Julie.

JULIE


SUBTITLE: In the camps, I watch my children fade and fly away. I bury them at night when no one can see me cry. They sing. The dead children. Welcoming each other to the night.
JOHN
Hierdie herinneringe...

SUBTITLE: These memories...

JULIE

SUBTITLE: Are buried out there beneath the willows. Bury me with them. In the red earth. Ssh! He’s here. Outside.

Julie is dead.

John holds her.

He weeps into her breasts.

He falls to his knees.

He sits at the table, head in hands.

He stands suddenly, panicked.

He covers Julie with his ‘throw’.

He moves to the boots he has been polishing.

He puts them on.

He picks up the gun in his right hand and the sickle in his left.

He lowers his head for a moment, overcome.

JOHN
Dis maklik.

SUBTITLE: It’s easy.

John steels himself.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Maak net asof jy hy is.

SUBTITLE: Just pretend you’re him.

CUT TO BLACK.