

Uganda

by Lavie Tidhar

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11,000 Words.*

The following account is woven from a collection of documents found in the archives of the Wiener Library, London .

#

The first two fragments are diary entries in what appears to be Theodore Herzl's handwriting. In the first the paper is brittle and badly smudged, almost as if it had been in a fire. The edges are roughly torn. It is dated five months before Herzl's death. The second is the most well-known of his diary entries.

January 15th, 1904

He is known as the Rabbi, though if he had ever been one that fact is lost in the distant past. He is a noted criminal, a man of arcane learning and appetites, who evokes unsavoury stories from those who knew him. He is not one of us, yet he could be sympathetic to our cause... I would... with my life, but can I trust him with all of our lives?

I shall... tomorrow.

#

September 3rd, 1897.

Were I to sum up the Basle Congress in one word – which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly – it would be this: at Basle I have founded the Jewish state. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, certainly in fifty, everyone will know it. The foundation of a State lies in the will of the people for a State.

#

From a transcript of an interview conducted by A. (a scrawled footnote in blue ink indicates he is a possible member of Mossad, Israel's secret service) with a man identified as The Rabbi (R). Some lines are unintelligible due to water damage.

A: How did it start?

R: I was living in Paris at the time. (pauses). You know what I was doing there.

A: I'm not sure I do. I understood you were running some sort of a gambling scheme to do with illegal ring fights?

R: That's essentially correct.

A: There were wild stories at the time that you were using golems. (laughs).

R: (laughs).

A: Did you know him?

R: We've met before.

A: I was not aware of that. Under what circumstances?

R: (unintelligible)

A: So he trusted you.

R: I wouldn't say that. (pauses). No, he didn't trust me. But he had no choice.

#

The Following comes from a microfilm of a notebook marked Rabbi's Journal.

January 16th, 1904

A cold, clear day. I walked along the left bank in the early morning fog, watching the Seine. Notre Dame looks monstrous in the morning, like an ogre in the process of turning into stone. The place has a slimy, organic feel to it. I've often wondered if it could be reanimated. Or perhaps it was constructed as a sort of uncompleted golem, left disused at the last moment before the placing of the *shem*.

By the time I arrived at the bookshop the sun was fully formed in the sky and some of the fog had dispersed. I was about to open the door when I noticed a coach had drawn to a halt a little further from me. Steam rose from the horses' nostrils as though they had been driven hard to come here.

I recognised him as soon as he stepped off the coach. He stepped briskly, though his eyes were tired and there was a gauntness about him. I said nothing. We didn't speak, then.

I opened the door and he followed me inside. I sat him down and prepared tea. The shop is cold in the mornings. I lit the oven and waited for the warmth to spread.

"You have been to Africa before," he said, breaking the silence at last. He was always a direct man.

"Your information is always reliable," I said.

"What were you doing there?"

'do you not know?

"Tell me."

I put cinnamon and honey into the teapot and stirred slowly, the way you stir old memories. "I followed that ass, Stanley," I said, reluctantly.

"That was, what, in 1871?"

"I don't remember exactly."

"That was quite a journey. I recall reading about it. Seven hundred miles into the interior, and back?"

“I was younger then.” And Stanley had his porters, all two hundred of them, while I walked behind, unseen and with nothing but myself to keep me alive. Stanley even had porters to carry his big brass bath for him. I washed in streams and in the rain, or didn’t wash at all.

“Were you there since?”

“A few times.”

“Where?”

“Zanzibar, the east coast.” I poured the steaming tea into two mugs and added sugar. “I was with the Zulus in the Second Boer War.”

“What were you doing?”

“I was studying with an *Inyanga*. Look, is this leading somewhere? I have a business to run.”

He laughed. “Not many book buyers this time of the morning, by the looks of it.”

“What do you want?”

“I hear the shop has a basement connected to the catacombs,” he said.

“You heard wrong.”

‘so you’re out of the fights?’

I sipped my tea. I didn’t like him coming to find me. I had not expected to see him again. I kept quiet, and I waited.

“I want you to go back to Africa,” he said.

“Why?”

And then he told me.

#

The goal of our present endeavours must not be the “Holy Land” but a land of our own. We need nothing but a large piece of land for our poor brothers; a piece of land which shall remain our property from which no foreign master can expel us.

Leo Pinsker, Auto-Emancipation, 1882

#

A: He mentioned Africa.

R: Yes. He seemed well-informed regarding my history there. But then, he was always well-informed.

A: Did he say what he wanted?

R: Not straight away. He led up to it. He talked a lot about politics.

A: What did he say?

R: He talked about the Russian pogroms. He felt there was a desperate need to find a place for the Jews of Russia as they were under threat. (pauses). He wanted a home land for the Jews.

A: But not Palestine?

R: I understood it wasn't feasible at the time. He mentioned negotiating with the Turkish Sultan. There was mention of land in Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia, but Palestine was excluded.

A: What else?

R: Cyprus. South Africa. America. He had given up on the Sultan. He was looking to the English for help. They were also talking about El Arish, in Egypt. (unintelligible). He was working his way to it slowly.

A: Uganda?

R: It never was Uganda. That was a misconception from the start.

January 16th, 1904 – Continued

"They're offering British East Africa," he said. "I had meetings with Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary. They're willing to grant us land there."

My tea had cooled on the table. The room felt warmer. Ancient books piled up on the floor and leaned against the wall. The sun scraped weakly against the grimy windows. I thought about Africa, about the heat that becomes a part of you, the smell it has, and of watching that endless blue sky, and the smoke rising from distant human dwellings. I didn't want to admit to him I missed it.

"He told me the part he mentioned was on very high ground, with fine climate and every possibility for a great colony, one that could support at least a million souls."

"Where, exactly?"

He shrugged. "The Uasin Gishu Plateau."

He saw my look. Returned it. "It's on the border with Uganda, in the Kenya Province. I don't really know more than that." He paused and put his hands palms down on the table. "It's why I came to you."

"I don't know anything about it either," I said.

"But you could find out. You could go there."

I laughed. He looked at me with eyes whose calmness hid behind it a storm. "This is threatening to divide the Congress," he said quietly. "In fact, it *has* divided the congress. There are those who will settle for nothing less than Palestine. But, for now at least, this is a real possibility. An opportunity. I won't let it go past. Not lightly."

"Send your own people," I said. "I am not a surveyor."

He smiled. His fingers drummed a little on the tabletop. "We will be sending out a small expedition. An *official* expedition. To survey the land, to evaluate its suitability. To bring back a detailed and public report."

I waited.

“Then there’s you.”

“What do you want me to do?”

And he grinned, at that, because he knew he had successfully hooked me.

#

A: So he wanted you to go to East Africa.

R: Yes.

A: And you agreed.

R: Not at first. I told him to (unintelligible).

A: You didn’t say that.

R: What did you expect? He came out of nowhere, out of the past, to ask me for a favour I didn’t want to give. He had a lot of nerve.

A: But you agreed to do it. (pause). You agreed to go.

R: (a long silence). Yes.

A: Did he tell you who else will be going?

R: No. He didn’t know at that point. I was not to deal with him directly any more. All he gave me was one name.

A: Who was that?

R: Leopold Greenberg.

#

[The proposal to settle Jews in East Africa] is monstrous, extravagant, and unconstitutional, and opposed not only to the best interests of Christendom but of civilization at large.

E. Haviland Burke, M.P., parliamentary debate, 1904

#

January 16th, 1904 – Continued

I watched him go. He walked with his shoulders straight and his head high, poised like a man looking further ahead than anyone else I had ever known. But he moved slowly, and he looked tired as he climbed into the coach. I watched him disappear into the traffic. He had given me one name.

“What do you need me for?” I had said.

“Think of it as backup,” he said. “Of a... *spiritual* kind.”

He was not a man given to talk of spirituality. He had a practical mind-set.

So did I.

“Leopold Greenberg will be organising the expedition. He is a British Jew. He was instrumental in our talks with the Colonial Office. You will communicate with him. He will make the official arrangements and pick the men. He will be your contact.”

“Where will I find him?”

His fingers were splayed on the table. His skin looked brittle, like a page from an old bible.

“In Basle,” he said. “It all comes back to Basle. He will contact you once he has made the preparations.”

“The Congress,” I said. He nodded. “This is splitting us up,” he admitted. “But it might be our only option. When the time comes, you will know what to do.”

When he was gone I returned to the shop. Now, as I sit at the table writing this, I am filled with premonition. I am wary of his plans. And yet... I would be glad to see Africa again, and hear the elephant herds calling in the distance, and feel the warmth of a fire against my palms, and taste the smell of wood smoke. There are mysteries enough in Africa for a man’s lifetime.

#

A: When did you get the call?

R: It came in November. It was snowing in Paris.

A: What did it say?

R: It was a summons. He was already dead by then. But Greenberg (unintelligible).

A: So what did you do?

R: I went to Basle.

#

From the Rabbi’s Journal, 25th December 1904.

Basle was wrapped in a cold blanket of snow, and all the windows were lit from inside. Christmas Day, and I thought of red blood on white snow and hoped it was too cold for pogroms.

The death of the king. That is what it was about. Renewal. As the year closes and the new year needs to be brought in, to be teased and tempted and conjured out of the ashes of the old year, until the sun reappears and warmth and life return. He was dead now, since July, when he contracted pneumonia, swiftly, unexpectedly, and forever. But his essence still lived on, and I was still compelled by him, by ties I could not easily shake, and so I walked the cold streets of Basle and thought of him, and of a life that comes from death.

Greenberg was younger than I expected. He looked tired but pleased, like a man whose hard work was finally done. We sat in his small office. A map was spread on the table before us.

“I just got out of the committee meeting,” he said. “We signed the contract. The expedition is leaving tomorrow.” He fiddled with a pen. On the map mountains and valleys, rivers and lakes were reduced to lines of ink. “I want you to leave with them.”

I nodded. I had brought a small bag with me, and was ready to leave. I had closed off my operations in Paris for the time being. The shop, too. It never had too many customers. The basement was full of the immobile statues of mythical creatures, designed to fight, now peaceful.

“There are three men,” he said. “Major Alfred St. Hill Gibbons will lead the expedition. He’s an old Africa hand.”

I nodded. I had read his *Through the heart of Africa from South to North*. He was a well-known explorer. I dimly wondered if we’d met before, but decided we hadn’t.

“The second man is Professor Alfred Kaiser, a Swiss. He’s also had some experience in East Africa, and was a scientific advisor to the *North West Cameroons Co.*”

I waited.

“The third man is the only one of our own. We felt it was judicious to include at least one Jew in the expedition.” He smiled. “Young Wilbusch. He’s Russian, an engineer – comes from a family of Zionists. Never been to Africa before, though.”

“There’s always a first time,” I said.

“Quite.” He fell silent. Then, “This is important, Rabbi. More than you perhaps realise. The Russian Jews are being slaughtered. No one knows how long we have left in Europe before another wave of repression attempts to sweep us away. We’re aliens here.”

“You could say the same for wherever Jews go,” I said. “You will be no less of an alien in East Africa.”

“Perhaps,” he said. “But to have one’s own land – the way the French do, the way the Germans and the British and the Swiss do – that makes all the difference. A place to call your own. This place – this Uasin Gishu Plateau – it could become a Jewish homeland, the first in two thousand years. We need to know.” He laughed; it was a tired sound. “What we *really* need is a good report back. Anything else will kill the Uganda Plan.” He saw my expression and shrugged. “I know it’s not Uganda, but that’s what everyone is calling it. The Uganda Plan. I don’t care. Let them call it what they will, as long as the report is favourable and the British carry it through. We need a miracle.”

“I don’t do miracles,” I said. He laughed. “I’ve arranged tickets for you, money and as much as I know of Gibbons’ itinerary, which is bound to change in response to circumstances.”

I nodded. I took the documents and the money from him.

“There is a lot of hostility to the idea of a Jewish colony in East Africa,” he said. “Particularly amongst the white farmers already there. They’re calling it Jewganda. You might have to watch out in case they try anything.”

“You want me to act as a bodyguard to the expedition?”

“Oh, no,” he said hurriedly. “I’m sure Gibbons is capable of taking care of things. Nevertheless...”

“Yes.”

‘spiritual backup.’

“Right.”

When we bid each other farewell with a handshake he smiled again, wistfully, and said, “I wish I could go

with them. With you.”

“I will see you in two months,” I said, and stepped into the cold outside. He closed the door behind me without speaking further.

I’m sitting in my hotel room writing this, while the snow beats against the window and it seems as though the new year would never come, that the old year’s corpse will remain frozen on the ground until there is nothing left alive. Morbid thoughts: I would be glad to leave Europe again.

#

To read of this beautiful land of perennial streams and no fevers, being reserved for foreign Jewish paupers is enough to make one wish for a big nose and a name like Ikey Moses.

Letter to the African Standard, November 19th, 1904.

#

A: So then you left Basle.

R: In the morning. I went to Trieste.

A: That’s where the ship left from.

R: Right. The S.S. Africa.

A: Did you meet the others?

R: I saw them. Greenberg showed me photographs so I could recognise them. Gibbons, Kaiser and Wilbusch. But I didn’t make any contact with them. Not then.

A: How long did the journey take?

R: You know all this. Why do you keep asking me these questions?

A: Humour me.

R: (a long pause). Two and a half weeks.

A: To Mombassa?

R: To Mombassa.

A: Tell me about Wilbusch.

R: (unintelligible).

The following extract is from Wilbusch’s diary, which is found, with Kaiser’s and Gibbons’ reports, in a microfilm version of the book: Report on the work of the commission sent out to examine the territory offered by H.M. Government to the Zionist Organization for the purposes of a Jewish settlement in British East Africa, published by Wertheimer, Lea and Co., of London, in 1905.

1904.

December

24 Berlin. Started by Basle express.

25 Basle. Arrived. Present at Committee Meeting. Contract signed.

26 Milan. Left Basle, at 7 o'clock in the morning, by express. Arrived at Milan 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Saw sights of the town. Left by Venice express in the evening.

27 Venice. Saw the sights. Left in the evening by Trieste express.

28 Trieste. Received Theodolite through the post. Embarked on board s.s. "Africa" at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

29-31 Adriatic Sea. Continuation of voyage on board s.s. "Africa".

1905.

January

1 Mediterranean. Continuation of voyage.

2 Port Said. Voltmeter, etc., received through post. Passed through Suez Canal.

3 Suez and Gulf of Suez. Continued voyage from Port Said to Aden. 1,397 knots.

4-5 Red Sea. Continuation of Voyage.

7 Aden. Arrived in the morning. Re-embarked in the evening.

8-12 Indian Ocean. Continuation of Voyage.

12 Kilindini. Arrived in Kilindini in the afternoon (the port before Mombasa – from Aden to Mombasa, 1,611 nautical miles)

13 Mombasa. Day – 86° F. Hot and sultry. Left the boat in the morning.

#

From the Rabbi's Journal, January 14th, 1905

The heat was like an old, comfortable hat, misplaced for some time but not lost. The old year had departed, the new year had come, and the sun did rise again. Here, it had never set.

Low European houses stretched inland from the harbour. In the distance you could hear the whistle of a train, the voices of porters from the harbour and of sellers in the market. Yet, compared to Europe, it is quiet: there is a stillness in the air, and a sense of massive distances, of a gulf that had been growing as we crossed the ocean until it stretched across half the world and now separates us from everything we know. I observed Wilbusch this morning, following behind as he and Kaiser strolled through the market and Gibbons was kept busy elsewhere, engaging a headman, personal servants and porters for the journey ahead. Wilbusch has been quiet, and seems a little overawed by his experience, though he tries to hide it. I do not think he and Gibbons get along very well.

I am writing this on the train. The expedition had boarded what they call the Uganda Railway – the train to Nairobi – and I followed them. They have ten porters with them. We are passing the Kaptu and Athi

plains as I write this. There are numerous herds of antelopes and zebra outside.

#

From Wilbusch's diary.

16 Nairobi. Day 85° F. 9 p.m. 72° . Bearable heat. Went with Mr. Kaiser to see Mr. Marcus. In the afternoon saw town and market with Mr. Kaiser and Mr. Marcus, and had a long conversation.

#

From Major A. St. H. Gibbons' report (Wertheimer, Lea and Co., 1905)

Caravans composed entirely of up-country boys frequently proved unreliable, and by desertion or perversity might subject the Commission to serious delays, a risk which, having a view to the limited time at our disposal, I did not feel disposed to take. At Nairobi I engaged a further thirty-five porters, and all arrangements were completed in time to catch the first train westwards, leaving on the morning of the second day after our arrival.

#

Following them, I am struck by how different the three men are. First there is Gibbons, a bluff, hearty man, used to command, British to his core, a man at the apex of humanity, for whom all others are by default subordinate. Not a bad choice for leader, but I can see he and Wilbusch, if they hadn't done so, would clash. Wilbusch, pale (though his skin will soon tan in this African sun), a little frightened. There is little he recognises here, and once we are past Nakuru and the farmlands...

Kaiser, the Swiss, is cool and composed. He gets along well with both, but seems more interested in his instruments. They are surrounded by porters and servants until it sometimes seem they are going not on a voyage of exploration but one of colonization: they could start a nation of their own, or one each and fight amongst themselves.

The thought makes me smile as I observe them. We are waiting in Nakuru, a small town with a railway station and not much else. There appears to have been a delay with some of their equipment. Meanwhile Gibbons had sent the porters ahead, to prepare their base camp. From here on, we will be entering the Uasin Gishu territory.

#

From Wilbusch's Diary.

17 Nairobi-Nakuru. Conversation in the morning with Mr. Marcus and the Jewish farmers – Messrs. Solsky and Bloch. Started 11 a.m on the Uganda Railway; passed the Kikuyu territory; the only locality where we saw a numerous population and fertile agricultural land. Reached Nakuru at 7.30 p.m. Our luggage left behind in Nairobi.

18 Nakuru (448 miles). Day 75° F. Evening and mornings about 52° F. 5 p.m., Moderate rain. Kept waiting because of the absence of luggage and scarcity of porters. Visited the mountains with Mr. Kaiser in the morning, and the Njoro River, where the water fluctuations could be observed in the afternoon.

19 Nakuru. 4-7 p.m., Rain. Again kept waiting on account of absence of luggage and scarcity of porters. Visited Njoro River with Mr. Kaiser in the afternoon.

20 Nakuru. Kept waiting on account of scarcity of porters. Luggage received and tent pitched.

21 Nakuru. Kept waiting on account of scarcity of porters.

#

A: Tell me about the journey into the territory.

R: I knew where their base camp was, so I didn't follow directly. It was forty-one miles from Nakuru to the Eldoma Ravine. There were some Jewish farmers there, mainly South Africans who heard of the plan and were eager for it to succeed. I stayed with one of them, London, after they had stayed with him. I... ran some tests.

A: What sort of tests?

R: I'm not sure you'd understand.

A: Try me.

R: I took a measurement of the – the *feeling*, you could say, of the place. There is a way to (unintelligible) the vibrations of the *sephirot*.

A: What did you find?

R: Nothing I could put my finger on, at the time. Something odd. Like a place that is familiar though you've never been there before? But also, like a place that was *more* than once place, as if the sephirot somehow overlapped there. Reminds you a little of Safed. We call it a place close to the skies. (laughs). You can call it mumbo-jumbo.

A: Did you speak to this farmer? London?

R: A little. I understood Wilbusch had a long conversation with him the night before. London said he got the impression Wilbusch was a little out of his depth – also that he did not get along with the Major.

A: Did he say what their mood was? Regarding the expedition?

R: It was still early days. We hadn't even reached the territory proper yet. I'd say they were cautiously optimistic, but there were some concerns.

A: What were they?

R: Wilbusch was worried about water. Kaiser about arable land. I think Gibbons was mainly worried about more practical aspects – namely being attacked by a local tribe. I know he arranged for some guns – some Snider rifles – and also some Masai guides through Foaker, the Collector of the district.

A: Tell me about the approach to the territory.

R: (unintelligible).

#

From Gibbons' report.

The ravine station, which stands on top of a small steep hill four miles north of the Equator, has an altitude of some 7,000 feet above sea level, and commands a magnificent view of the Kamasia range of mountains, over which we were about to travel *en route* for the plateau beyond. These mountains are almost entirely covered with dense primeval forest, and extend from the south-eastern corner of the

prospective territory first in an easterly, then in a northerly direction. A well-cut path, suitable for pedestrian traffic only, leads for the first day's journey through a belt of undulating and rapidly rising forest land similar in character to that surmounting the Elgeyo escarpment, which forms the eastern boundary line of the suggested settlement. Amid the great entanglement of rope-like vines, creepers, giant thistles and other underscrub, huge trees, some of them many feet in diameter, rise to a height of eighty feet and upwards.

#

From Wilbusch's Diary.

January 28. Camp in territory between Nesoi and Kinjuno (about 0°7' N. lat. 35°35' E. long.) 5.30 a.m. 43° F. 3 p.m. 72° F. 9 p.m. 54° F. 8 p.m. Rain. Marched about 10 miles NNW: almost the whole of the road through dry and desert plains. Traces of small trees and bamboo. No timber, no pastorage, no game, no people. Only one spring, at the fourth mile.

29 In the territory.

From the Rabbi's Journal, January 29th

The land changes as I move through it, over it. In the distance I can see smoke rising from camp fires, but otherwise there is no sign of humanity. I am camped in the forest, while they are camped nearby, near the sources of the Samabula River.

It is a beautiful land. A man could become lost here, and live the rest of his life as a nomad, and not see enough of this place. The forest spreads away from me, dark and full of secrets. The undergrowth whispers in a language I can almost understand. Some of these trees are ancient, their spirits slumbering inside the vast trunks. I do not dare awake them. There was fog in the morning – Africa is at its most beautiful in the morning, when the fog wreaths the hills in crowns and the sun begins to open, like a flower, across the horizon. The place is teeming with invisible life. Animals live a secret life in the forest, and I have seen the prints of elephants and zebra and lion. It is like coming home.

I feel as if Paris had never existed. Basle, London, all the cold and dreary cities of Europe disappear and all that remains is this vast expanse of land, open to the skies, the trees its arms and the rivers its arteries. I fear for this place, I realise: if we came here we would cut the trees for timber and houses, and we would chain up the rivers to power our factories, and we would hunt down the lions and keep the zebras in a zoo. Something of this already lies, superimposed, on the land beyond my eyes. when I close them I think I can see it, this old-new land of Herzl's, this *Altneuland*.

I have hunted for hare and, having eaten, I write this in the light of the fire. They won't see me from their camp, though I think the Masai suspect my presence. Tomorrow, I think, the expedition would split up, and each would go in a different direction.

So would I.

#

From Wilbusch's diary.

January 30. Dispatched the mail in the morning. 22 men went to the ravine. Took surveys of the mountains with the Theodolite in the forenoon. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon I separated with 10 men for 6 days. I have drawn up this small itinerary at the request of Major Gibbons, for the latter said that we ought to meet at the end of that time on the Sirgoi to proceed from there to the Elgon. Went 4 miles N.N.W., saw a few antelope in a valley. Nothing but dry grass plains all round. No water.

#

A: Which way did you go?

R: I skirted the forest, searching for open land. I was looking for the Moguan.

A: The Moguan?

#

From Dr. Alfred Kaiser's Report (Wertheimer, Lea and Co., 1905)

If we consider the Guas Ngishu [Uasin Gishu] Plateau with regard to its native population we must point out, as already remarked, that the greater portion of the territory is at present without any population. It has, however, been populated ... we find unmistakable traces of population; that is to say, circular stone walls with an inner diameter of 2 to 40 metres, which partly represent ruins of huts, but partially also fortifications in the shape of circular walls. In many places the Masai of to-day call these stone erections "Moguan"; they are 2 metres in height and 1 metre in thickness. They are built of quarry stones, carefully fitted into each other ... Not infrequently the roughly wattled huts of of Wandorobo hunters, who consumed their booty there and heaped up enormous quantities of bones, are found in these depressions. In many cases these Moguan are also made of large rocks placed in a circle, and must then be considered as the defences or so-called "Bomas" of the vanished population. I have seen similar stone erections in Southern Kavirondo and on the heights of the Mau Mountains, and I know that they are found in Nandi also. It may, therefore, be supposed that all those Moguan have their origin in an ancient population...

#

A: Why were you looking for these Moguan?

R: (unintelligible).

#

From the Rabbi's Journal.

February 4th

As I close my eyes the landscape is still visible to me – *more* visible to me – but it is no longer singular. It is like watching a picture through lenses that refract and overlap the image, until it resembles a hazy mosaic. Yet it *is* becoming clearer to me – the source of the interference, of the overlap, as if time has been piled on to time, and I see one layer as the present and another as the future, or the past. Or perhaps I am only watching two different presents...

Today I walked through open grass plains. There were herds of antelopes in the distance, and I thought I had heard a lion, though I couldn't see it. My skin is turning brown in this sun: I have discarded most of my European clothing and now walk with my upper body bare, as well as my feet, the soles of which are gradually growing hard again. during my short time in the forest I had gathered several rare herbs and tree

barks. At midday I stopped in the shade of an acacia and built a small fire, and made a tea with some of the herbs I had gathered.

When I drank it the world became clearer, the picture I had been carrying in my head since arriving had been focused. The Moguan shine in this mental landscape like pinpricks of light, like the points on the Tree of Life. They seem to form a pattern whose meaning I cannot yet see. Later, when it cools down, I will continue my journey. I am near to one of them, can feel it, its vibrations – it is a source of power. I think they are like the holes made by a needle in a cloth: the points the thread passes through when it binds one material to another.

February 5th

I have come across a Nandi hunting party this morning, camped in the Moguan I was seeking yesterday. The Moguan is a large circular structure made of great stone walls, somewhat resembling an eye planted in the earth. I walked through an opening into the confines of this eye, which is like an imposing courtyard open to the sky. The Nandi hunters surrounded me, looking wary. They were armed with spears and some European guns, which they levelled at me.

I spoke to them in Swahili, which several of them spoke. They had with them an old *Inyanga* – I am using the Zulu word here, and I think their word for, for what we may call *tzaddik*, is *Orkoiyot*, though I cannot be sure – who came forwards and put his hand on my forehead. I could feel the power in him, and for a moment we stood in perfect stillness: once more I could feel the dual nature of this land swim against the back of my eyes, growing clearer all the while. Then the *Inyanga* released me and smiled, and the rest of the Nandi removed their weapons.

“You are far from home, *mzungu*,” he said. *Mzungu* means “white man” in Swahili. There was a puzzled look in his eyes when he spoke.

“What is home?” I said, and he laughed. He invited me to their fire and I shared in their food. Antelope meat was cooking on the coals. I am convinced that the Nandi are connected to this mystery I can feel here. They are remarkably Semitic in appearance, and when I spoke to their healer by the fire he said their forefathers – who he called Kalenjini – have travelled South over the centuries, coming from a place by a great river in a hot and arid desert, which I take to mean Egypt. They practice circumcision – as I found out when several of us relieved ourselves after sharing water – and believe in God, who they call *Asis*. I spoke for long with the healer, but it is what we did not speak of – the shades that walk over this earth as if they were real – that underlined our conversation.

At last, he offered me to join them. He is as curious about me as I am about him, I think. I had given him some of the herbs I had collected, receiving in return a small store of dried powder that he says contains the power of vision. We shall travel together – both here and, I hope, in that other place.

I have not lost sight of the others, but they have all gone in different directions. I have a feeling Wilbusch will become lost...

#

A: What do you mean they are Semitic?

R: What didn't you understand?

A: They're black.

R: So are the Ethiopian Jews. The Falash Mura. You could argue they, and not European Jews, are the

true descendants of Israel. King Solomon –

A: If you're talking about the Queen of Sheba –

R: I don't rightly know if you have any idea what I'm talking about.

A: (pauses.) I'm trying to understand.

R: What is the purpose of all this questioning? This all took place a long time ago. It's barely a footnote to history. The Uganda Plan. A barely-remembered story. Why do you suddenly care?

A: (unintelligible).

#

From Wilbusch's diary.

February

6 Camp on the Sirgoi. 6 a.m. 52° F. 4 p.m. 80° F. 9 p.m. 60° F. During the day strong east winds. Evening calm. Wait for main caravan. Make map of the route. Went about 3 miles south during the afternoon, but found no one. Territory: the same moderately good pasture grass, but a little more dry; no water or wood anywhere; many antelopes.

7 On the Sirgoi. 6 a.m. 42° F. 12 noon 84° F. 5 p.m. 79° F. 9 p.m. 52° F. Strong east wind during the day. Clear. Evening calm. Waited for main caravan and wrote preliminary report. Went about 2 miles south in the afternoon, then about 2 miles east, saw no one. The porters' rice came to an end today.

8 On the Sirgoi. 6.30 a.m. 54° F. 2 p.m. 78° F. 9 p.m. 56° F. Strong east wind during the day. Evening quiet. Waited for main caravan, but no one came.

#

From Gibbons' report.

On February 8th I spent another tedious day in the forest. It took ten hours to make as many miles. Fortunately in the late afternoon we emerged on to a narrow open strip about a mile in length, and here camp was pitched for the night. By noon the following day the forest was cleared, and about a mile further we passed the farm of three South Africans, the brothers Van Breda. Their oxen and donkeys were a living proof of the excellence of the pasture in their district. One of the brothers informed me that a few nights previously three oxen had been stolen from the "kraal" adjoining the house. About a fortnight later we heard that first the remaining cattle were stolen, and finally ten savages approached the boy who tended the donkeys within half a mile of the house, told him to go home, and proceeded to drive the donkeys into the forest. By the time the boy could apprise his masters of the robbery, the thieves had made good their escape, and an attempt to overtake them proved futile.

From the Rabbi's Journal.

February 10th

I did not take part in the raid on the farm. The Nandi hunters, who had been to the place several days previously, now returned to complete their acquisitions, as it were. We went deep into the forest with the animals. Their village, they informed me, was at the foothills of the Chipchangwane mountains to the north. As we walked through the darkening forest strange howls could be heard in the distance, of a kind I had not heard before, being neither lion nor elephant nor any other animal I could recognise. The Nandi seemed worried, casting glances at the thick underbrush of the forest, and kept their weapons at the ready. I asked the Inyanga what it was.

“*Kerit*,” he said. He did not elaborate.

The others did not look happy at his mentioning the name. “Probably a lion,” one of them, Wambua, said in Swahili. He did not look as though he believed it.

The animals, too, were frightened, and the hunters had considerable problems getting them to move along. At last we stopped on a rocky outcrop that overlooked the entire valley below, spread open like a map. The Nandi were easier here, and built a fire. That night we were not disturbed, though the howls of the *Kerit* continued to be heard in the distance.

February 11th

I woke up in the night and, going to relieve myself beyond the boundaries of the camp, heard the howl of a *Kerit* close by. I saw a large animal sitting up on its haunches no more than thirty yards away. It was nearly five feet high, and moved with a shambling gait. I shouted, and it stopped and turned its head to look at me. It was larger than a bear, and as heavily built. The fore quarters were very thickly furred, as were all four legs, and the head was long and pointed and resembled a bear’s. Somehow, there was a sense of the primate about it, too, and its eyes held mine for a long moment before it disappeared into the forest. It had not harmed me.

I returned to the camp and found the Inyanga waiting by the fire, looking grave. “What is a *Kerit*?” I said. He made a sign with his hand, as if warding off evil, but then seemed to relax. “Our people say it is a devil which prowls on the darkest nights, seeking people, especially children, to devour. It is half like a man and half like a huge, ape-faced bird, and you may know it at once from its fearful howling roar, and because in the dark of night its mouth glows red like the embers of a log.”

I waited, recognising some of what he said in the animal I saw, but doubting its evil. “And what do *you* say?” I asked at last.

He smiled. He had many teeth missing. “It is an animal,” he said. “I have heard the European settlers call it the Nandi Bear, but I have never seen a bear, and the Nandi do not claim this animal as ours.”

“I have never seen such an animal,” I said, but then a dim memory rose in my mind, of a visit to a museum, a long time ago, on another continent, under another name. There was a skeleton on display. The Inyanga nodded as if reading my mind. “Tomorrow my people will return to their village,” he said. “But, if you are willing, not you and I.” He stirred the embers with a stick and sighed. The night was very still. “This land is both old and new,” he said, and I was again reminded of Herzl’s words, of *Altneuland*. “What we call the past and the future are, perhaps, not as firmly fixed in their positions as they should. I will show you.”

“Show me what?” I said.

“The place where the *Kerit* live,” he said.

He said no more, and shortly returned to his sleep, though I find myself unable to follow. I sit and write

by the dying light of the fire.

Tomorrow, then.

#

A: What is this Kerit?

R: I had thought it a – what is the term we use today? – an endangered species. (laughs). The creature I saw that night looked powerful, but not malevolent. I think it is only humans who can be evil, while animals only follow their nature. Is that old fashioned?

A: But what is it? There are no bears in Africa.

R: When I returned I went back to the museum I remembered. I saw the same skeleton. It was... similar. It could have been the same animal, or at least is forefather.

A: What was it?

R: a Chalicothere. (pauses.) A species of perissodactyl mammals that evolved in the mid-Eocene, around forty million years ago (pauses). They died out three and a half million years ago.

#

From Gibbons' Report.

On the morning of the 11th I climbed the hill to the west, on the lower slopes of which my camp stood, and from the summit commanded a comprehensive view of the country around me. To the north a bold, rough country presented itself to my view. A great group of mountains lay back for many miles, many of these appearing to attain an altitude of 10,000 to 12,000 feet. Some are abrupt and rugged, some of gentler gradient. A few are covered, or partially covered, with dense forest, though the majority grow grass, except where the rock bed is exposed. To the north-east and east there appeared to be an interminable stretch of primeval forest, interspersed at rare intervals with small patches of grass land. I saw at once that any attempt to make my way in that direction was out of the question. It would have required much more time than I had at my disposal. I determined, therefore, to skirt the range on its western boundary. A very rough commencement led us for some 700 feet down the steep slopes of the hill into a rugged valley below. Tracing a stream with clear mountain water, we finally entered a narrow valley girt on all sides by mountains, and extending upwards of fifteen miles to the north. This valley might well be called the "Valley of the Lions". I never heard so many of these animals in any one place as I did during the two nights I was encamped here.

#

From the Rabbi's Journal.

February 12th

This morning the Nandi departed with their loot, heading for lower ground, and the Inyanga and I headed north and up the mountains. We came across what appeared to be Gibbons' camp. There were signs there of much movement, and the Inyanga, upon examining the ground, chuckled. "His guide is Masai," he said, "and ignorant of this land. There has been a mutiny, of sorts. No doubt the porters were afraid to head further north, for fear of the Nandi. But I can see the *Mzungu* chief overruled them, for they have continued on their way."

We reached a stream and I washed myself in its cool water, and swam. The water was sweet and, standing still in the water, I caught fish with my fingers. The Inyanga put sharpened stakes through them and we grilled them on a small fire. It seems Gibbons is heading in the same direction as us, and the Inyanga thinks it prudent not to follow too quickly. At night I heard the Kerit again, far in the distance. When I raised my head the stars filled the entire sky, and the Milky Way was exposed like a rich vein of diamonds revealed in the wall of a dark mine.

The Inyanga and I prepared a tea with the dark bark of a tall, evergreen tree that grows here on the mountain. The tea made me drowsy but behind my eyes the lands, their disparity, grew closer, and I began to imagine I could see streets, wide avenues lined with trees, and unknown automobiles moving along the paved roads, as slow as snails since there were so many of them. Globes of electrical lights hung high above the street, and the air was full of an unfamiliar stench, like that of chemical smoke pouring out of an invisible factory. I saw the stream, but in my dream it was no longer filled with water but with a sort of inky greyness in which nothing lived. Somewhere in the distance I heard an explosion, and a car with a red Star of David painted on its side sped past me but was soon halted by the traffic. I heard people scream.

I shook myself with difficulty away from the dream. For a long time I sat by the brook and stared into the water, and listened to the silence.

#

From Wilbusch's Diary.

February

13 Base camp. Waiting on account of scarcity of porters. At 6 o'clock in the morning 19 men went to the ravine for rice. About 5 in the afternoon Mr. Kaiser went N.W. to the Nzoia with 14 men. I remained with 8 men in the camp. Made sketch of the route.

14 Base camp. Kept waiting for want of porters. Made excursion of about 3½ miles to Karuna with Masia and one porter. On the third mile I took specimens of the soil and mineral specimens from Karuna, which consist of quartz rock and stone. Ascended to the summit. The view was little pleasing, except the Elgeyo escarpment, which is wooded. There is inferior and dried-up pasture grass everywhere. No water and no trees. To the north there are the Akkabrie Mountains, the slopes of which are dotted with isolated bushes. No trace of life or of people. On the road the grass is short and drying. Several antelope, water-bucks and hares. At the second mile, and on the top of Karuna, stone kraals which have been abandoned a long time.

15 Base camp. Read "The Uganda Protectorate" by Sir. H. Johnson. Delayed owing to want of porters.

16 Base camp. Waiting owing to want of porters.

#

From the Rabbi's Journal.

February 17th

The Chipehangwane Mountains make for a slow ascent, yet from their height the whole of the Uasin Gishu Plateau can be seen below, and it is a magnificent sight. When I look at it normally it is a land of wide savannahs and green mountains, rolling brooks and flowing streams, of herds of elephants and darting hare. Yet when I close my eyes it metamorphoses, and it is a land of white stone and paved

roads, of factories and smoke. Small, black dirigibles float in the air where, when my eyes were open, only clouds have been. Electric light brings day to the Plateau even in a moonless night, and the silence is replaced with a constant din, of engines and people, construction and occasional, unexplained bursts of gunfire and distant explosions that send clouds of smoke into the sky. I am disturbed by it, but when I ask the Inyanga he smiles serenely and talks of the past being the future and the future the past.

We have began our descent today, and the plateau, not entirely to my regret, is disappearing from view. We seem to still be following in Gibbons' steps, though he is long gone from here. In the course of our journey we had several times stopped and spent the night in abandoned Moguan. There, the power of the vision is strongest, and when I drank from the tea and closed my eyes I could see the stone walls grow and reach up to the skies, and close above my head. There are vast buildings made entirely of white stone, a whole new Jerusalem, and the Moguan are only their worn-down remains, like the bleached bone skeleton of a dinosaur.

I can hear the Kerit in the distance, howling at the night sky. I saw one last night moving away. It is almost as if they are following us.

February 19th

A narrow valley, with mountains rising on either side of it, as imposing and constrictive as the walls of a synagogue. What are we doing here? I have seen a herd of Kerit move down below. The Inyanga led me further down. We followed a small river to a rocky enclave, where it disappeared underground. The Inyanga entered the water and motioned for me to do the same. I felt like a fish, with nothing but my skin, no possessions and no burdens, a dark fish swimming in a clear calm world.

We went through the fissure in the rock and tumbled down a waterfall into a cave. The water continues to flow onwards and disappears into the earth. The cave is small and dark, but the Inyanga motioned for me to follow him and we went through a crack in the rock and...

#

A: Did they Kerit try to harm you?

R: No. But I noticed several of them sit still on their haunches and stare at us. I had a feeling then that they can communicate if they want to. A feeling of intelligence. However, I never found out for sure. I also felt... (pauses). I suspect they were there for a reason. Almost as if they were guarding that hidden valley, or rather, guarding what was inside it. But I don't know.

A: What was in the cave?

From the Rabbi's Journal.

February 20th

I had to stop writing rather abruptly yesterday. We are in a giant cavern deep under the earth. Yesterday, leaving the cave, we traversed a long way through tunnels of hard rock. There is a whole maze of caves down here, and had it not been for the Inyanga I would have been lost within minutes. The darkness was pure but, as we descended further and the air grew warm, the walls began to glow with a faint light that

came from a kind of moss or fungus growing on them. No doubt Kaiser would have been most interested to examine them, had he been here.

I began to find debris littering the floors. Curious things: a burnt toy automobile, of a shape and material I had never seen before; a broken disc made of a material slightly resembling Parkesine, that even in the faint light reflected, when turned, the whole rainbow of colours; an elongated gun with a button instead of a trigger. Here and there, too, I saw rusting plaques on those cold stone walls, the script adorning them all but faded away. It was as if the place had suffered some instantaneous, unexpected holocaust, that had removed all persons but left some of their effects behind. Yet there was also the sense of a kind of timelessness, or of some distant age buried under aeons.

At last our route came to an end. We stood in a small cave, deep within the earth. The walls, covered in moss, seemed to breathe. They cast an eerie glow over a small pool of water that rested in the middle of the cave, and which we approached.

The Inyanga knelt down by the pool, and I followed him. ‘do not drink from it,’ he warned. ‘Look only.’

I looked into the water. I...

#

February 22nd

I did something foolish. Let me tell it from the beginning.

The Inyanga and I were in the cave. I looked into the water.

Uasin Gishu was spread before me.

The whole of the plateau appeared to me in the water, as if I were a bird looking down from up high. Ringed by mountains, the terrain was otherwise changed beyond recognition.

Roads criss-crossed the plateau. They were two- and three-lane roads, and yet they were chockfull with traffic. It consisted entirely of motorcars, of type and makes I have never seen. One resembled the toy car I had seen in the tunnels. The rivers were polluted and dead, each harnessed to fantastic factories that sat squarely on the banks. Beyond them, from Chipchangwane to the peaks of Nandi and Kavirondo, the land was a maze of architecture. Tall buildings, taller than anything save perhaps the towers in America, reached silver pinnacles towards the sun. It was a land of chrome and silver and glass, and amongst those constructions lay white-stone houses, whole towns of stones, like the numerous neighbourhoods of Jerusalem.

The view in the pool changed, became a hot, dusty street of pale stone. There were few people afoot, yet my attention was not on the few travellers but on the shop signs: they were all in Hebrew.

I moved without thinking. ‘No!’ the Inyanga said.

I shook him off; though he was old, he was still strong. ‘It is an illusion,’ he said, trying to dissuade me.

‘It’s real,’ I said, and I reached down to the water and cupped some in my hand, and drank it.

The Inyanga looked at me for a long moment, sadness etched into his lined face. ‘What will be, has been,’ he said, and those were the last words I heard. The drink of water had taken its effect on me, and I felt my body freeze, my muscles contracting, causing me to lose my purchase on the ground. I fell towards the pool.

My head hit water, and then the rest of my body followed. I felt a momentary sensation of drowning.

Then I was in the white-stone street, walking along towards one of the high-rising silver buildings. Overheard aircraft flew, strange great things like silver bullets with wings, and here and there I could discern the colourful bubbles of floating dirigibles. A car approached me at speed, the driver honking his horn and making me jump.

There were trees planted along the road, providing welcome shade, and the shops were all open and selling a variety of products that nearly spilled onto the pavement. I passed a greengrocer selling pineapples and bananas, fresh ripe corn and golden apples. It was followed by a bakery with magnificent cakes in the windows, and then by a shop selling brides' dresses, and another that sold spices. Café houses were dotted along the road and people sat at tables outside and drank small glasses of coffee, and ate cakes and smoked. The company was mixed, men and women together. All the shop signs were in Hebrew.

I saw a shop selling newspapers. They, too, were mostly in Hebrew, though there were newspapers there in English and French and Russian, too. I looked at some of the headlines but could make little sense of them, though they filled me with unease.

Uprising will Be Crushed, Vows Chief-of-Staff.

Sources at the Weizmann Institute Report Successful Cloning of Saurian DNA.

President Einstein To Resign: Says War Immoral.

My feet led me to a large square. Beyond it lay a quarter of silver-and-glass high-rising buildings.

I turned at the sound of many marching feet.

Through that hot, dusty haze a platoon of soldiers came marching in true English style, legs rising and falling in rhythm, uniforms immaculate and on display. Their guns were long, sleek machines, that seemed to purr as they were carried.

Behind the soldiers came huge vehicles, armour-plated, with moving tracks for wheels, and the long barrel of a cannon emerging from their turrets.

I heard a voice beside me and turned to see an elderly gentleman in a chequered shirt opened at the neck, a pair of ridiculous-looking trousers cut short at the knee, and a pair of biblical-looking sandals. "Beautiful, aren't they?" he said, and there was a gleam in his eye. He spoke Hebrew to me, but with a strange, heavy accent, that was a little that of the Dutch *Afrikaaners* and a little of Russian, too, perhaps. "I used to drive one of these when I was still in the army."

I became conscious of my nakedness then, afraid to draw attention to myself, but, upon a cursory examination, realised I was dressed in a similar way to my new friend, with the addition of a hat.

"The army?" I said. He chuckled as if I had said something funny. "Best army in the world," he said. "Everyone knows that. Ask the British, even."

He must have misinterpreted my expression. "don't worry," he said reassuringly, laying his hand on my arm. "The Mau Mau are not a serious threat. We can deal with them."

I was about to speak when I felt someone was observing me. Yet I could see no one but for my companion. I bid him goodbye and walked away. The feeling persisted.

I came to a crowded place. Large, double-decker omnibuses stopped here, picking and letting off passengers. I watched, saw an old *chasid*, dressed in black despite the heat, get onto one of the buses. Someone shouted. I turned, saw two men fight with the man in black. A scream.

The man exploded.

It must have been strapped to his body, under his clothes. The bomb ripped his body apart and blew out the windows of the bus. More screams filled the air. I saw a wounded woman crawl out of the bus with her left hand missing. I heard sirens. I smelled the mixed stench of smoke and blood.

It was like being in a dream, I thought, that had turned bad. I felt myself pulled away from the scene of carnage, into a feeling of insubstantiality as I wandered through the streets in a haze that grew the more I walked, until I saw nothing but white walls, a white space turning dark-blue as I fell into it, all the while feeling the unseen eyes burning into me...

I surfaced in the pool, inside the cave. The Inyanga was squatting above me, looking into the pool with the same expression of sadness on his face. I pulled myself out. When I looked into the water again the vision was gone, and with it the feeling I was being observed.

We didn't speak on our way out. I can't get over the feeling I had done something profoundly wrong.

#

From Gibbons' Report.

On the 24th camp was pitched immediately to the west of the mountains, near a small spring of good water. The following day I sent boys out in different directions to try and find the base camp, which, according to my instructions, was to have been pitched as close to the mountain as water would allow. They returned without success, and a climb to the top of the mountain, though it offered an extensive view of the surrounding country, disclosed no sign of any tent. On the following day I myself set off in a N.N.E. direction, and after travelling five miles struck a small river, on which, by tracing it a short distance, I discovered the camp hidden away in a hollow.

A: Tell me about your journey back.

R: There is not much to tell. We left the tunnels and made our way up the mountain. I did not see any more Kerit. The whole place had an abandoned feel, as if I had merely imagined it filled with life. (pauses) I parted with the Inyanga. He looked troubled, almost hostile to me, as if I had awoken something that should have been left sleeping. I made my way south, towards the others' base camp. It took several days of hard hiking.

A: (unintelligible).

R: Yes. I occasionally felt I was being followed. But as immediate events had shown, it had a simple explanation.

#

From Wilbusch's Diary.

February

28 Last Camp in the Territory. 5 a.m. 53° F. 9 p.m. 57° F. Cloudy, rain in the afternoon. Long march of about 16 miles along the Elgeyo boundary. The rear of the caravan was attacked by a Nandi tribe, and as the porters had no good guns, the loads were stolen and the head man was wounded. Gibbons, I and some porters pursued the Nandi about 5 miles, but could not find them in the wood and returned to the caravan.

#

From Gibbons' Report.

In the affray Feraji received a blow on the top of his head with what must have been a spiked instrument, for it left a round hole which by its depth seemed to have penetrated the skull. This blow, which in my opinion would have killed a white man, gave him something in the nature of pain for the first two days, after which he seemed to derive pleasure from it, for it served to illustrate his story from the Ravine as far as Mombassa. Had it not been for his plucky conduct and that of Tanganiko, the boy who came to his rescue, my impression is we would have lost nine loads instead of two. Unfortunately we were all out of hearing when the episode occurred. Accompanied by Mr. Wilbusch, I returned as rapidly as possible as soon as information of the attack was brought me: but to track the thieves in the forest proved as hopeless as I expected it would be, for Swahili porters, through generations of civilization, have lost all the instincts for tracking so marvellously developed in the natural savage. The porters, like the proverbial donkey on his return journey, travelled back so quickly that we were able to catch the train leaving for Nairobi on March 6th, two days earlier than anticipated.

#

A: What did you think of Gibbons?

R: (laughs). You could call him a man of his time. Do you know that Kipling poem? *The White Man's Burden*?

A: I don't recall.

R: Look it up.

#

The following – the first stanza of the Kipling poem – was attached to this document.

Take up the White Man's burden –
Send forth the best ye breed –
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild –
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

#

A: Were you a witness to the attack?

R: From afar only. I could not discern the faces of the raiders. Yet I was sure of their intent.

A: Which was?

R: What will be, was, the Inyanga had said to me. I think they knew the nature of the expedition, and tried to curtail it. That way, the future would remain only in the realm of possibility, and the past... the past would remain safely dead.

A: So they were successful.

R: I do not know. (pauses). The expedition came to nought. Their report was negative. There was no Jewish settlement in East Africa. And yet...

A: (unintelligible).

R: Did I awaken something, in that lost valley in the Chipchangwane mountains? Did I, by foolishness, allow an opening to form between the two worlds I could see? And did something follow me through it, even now seeking a way back, or a way to... no, I'd rather not indulge in hopeless speculation.

A: It could have been magnificent. A new Jerusalem rising in the mountains of East Africa, a shiny new civilization, dominating all around it, a home of peace and prosperity for all Jews...

R: I saw no peace.

A: (unintelligible).

R: (shouting). How did you find me? Who do you work for?

A: Please calm down.

R: Why do you wear those dark glasses?

A: (unintelligible).

R: I apologise. (pauses, frightened). Old memories sometimes ache like old bones.

A: I quite understand.

#

From Wilbusch's Diary.

March

6 Uganda Railway. Travelled all day, felt rather ill.

7 Mombassa. Arrived in the morning. Waiting for steamer in Hotel Cecil.

8 Mombassa. Steamer arrived today. Went on board later in the afternoon.

9-16 Indian Ocean. Continued my journey to Palestine.

16 Aden. Arrived early in the day. Started at mid-day.

16-21 Red Sea. Continued Voyage.

22-26 Port Said. Waiting for steamer to Palestine.

27 Jaffa. Arrived in Palestine.

About the Author

Lavie Tidhar writes weird fiction. He grew up on a kibbutz in Israel and since lived in South Africa, the UK, and the remote Banks islands of Vanuatu, in the South Pacific. He currently lives in South East Asia. His short stories appeared in Sci Fiction, Strange Horizons, the World Fantasy Award winning anthology Salon Fantastique and many others. "Uganda" is taken from his linked stories collection [HebrewPunk](#), which you should buy. Really.

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