

THERE IS A TIDE

by Brian W. Aldiss

How SOOTHING to the heart it was to be home. I began that evening with nothing but peace in me: and the evening itself jellied down over Africa with a mild mother's touch: so that even now I must refuse myself the luxury of claiming any premonition of the disaster for which the scene was already set. My half-brother, K-Jubal (we had the same father), was in a talkative mood. As we sat at the table on the veranda of his house, his was the major part of the conversation: and this was unusual, for I am a poet, and poets are generally articulate enough.

"... because the new dam is now complete," he was saying, "and I shall take my days more easily. I am going to write my life story, Rog. G-Williams on the World Weekly has been pressing me for it for some time; it'll be serialized, and then turned into audibook form. I should make a lot of money, eh?"

He smiled as he asked this; in my company he always enjoyed playing the heavy materialist. Generally I encouraged him; this time I said: "Jubal, no man in Congo States, no man in the world possibly, has done more for people than you. I am the idle singer of an idle day, but you why, your good works lie about you."

I swept my hand out over the still bright land.

Mokulgu is a rising town on the western fringes of Lake Tanganyika's nothern end. Before Jubal and his engineers came here, it was a sleepy market town, and its natives lived in the indolent fashion of their countless forefathers. In ten years, that ancient pattern was awry; in fifteen, shattered completely. If you lived in Mokulgu now, you slept in a bed in a towering nest of flats, you ate food unfouled by flies, and you moved to the sound of whistles and machinery. You had at your black fingertips, in fact, the benefits of what we persist in calling "Western civilization". If you were more hygienic and healthy so ran the theory you were happier. But I begin to sound sceptical. That is my error. I happen to have little love for my fellow men; the thought of the Massacre is always with me, even after all this time. I could not deny that the trend of things at Mokulgu and elsewhere, the constant urbanization, was almost unavoidable. But as

a man of sensibility, I regretted that human advance should always be over the corpse of Nature.

From where we sat over our southern wines, both lake and town were partially visible, the forests in the immediate area having been demolished long ago. The town was already blazing with light, the lake looked already dark, a thing preparing for night. And to our left, standing out with a clarity which suggested yet more rain to come, stretched the rolling jungles of the Congo tributaries.

For at least three hundred miles in that direction, man had not invaded: there lived the pygmies, flourishing without despoiling. That area, the Congo Source land, would be the next to go; Jubal, indeed, was the spearhead of the attack. But for my generation at least that vast tract of primitive beauty would stand, and I was selfishly glad of it. I always gained more pleasure from trees than population increase statistics.

Jubal caught something of the expression on my face. "The power we are releasing here will last for ever," he said. "It's already changingimprovingthe entire economy of the area. At last, at long last, Africa is realizing her potentialities."

His voice held almost a tremor, and I thought that this passion for Progress was the secret of his strength.

"You cling too much to the past, Rog," he added.

"Why all this digging and tunnelling and wrenching up of riverbeds?" I asked. "Would not atomics have been a cheaper and easier answer?"

"No," he said decisively. "This system puts to use idle water; once in operation, everything is entirely self-servicing. Besides, uranium is none too plentiful, water is. Venus has no radioactive materials, I believe?"

This sounded to me like an invitation to change the subject. I accepted it.

"They've found none yet," I assented. "But I can speak with no authority. I went purely as a touristand a glorious trip it was."

"It must be wonderful to be so many million miles nearer the sun," he said. It was the sort of plain remark I had often heard him make. On others' lips it might have sounded platitudinous; in his quiet tones I caught a note of sublimity.

"I shall never get to Venus," he said. "There's too much work to be done here. You must have seen some marvels

there, Rog!"

"Yes . . . Yet nothing so strange as an elephant."

"And they'll have a breathable atmosphere in a decade, I hear?"

"So they say. They are certainly doing wonders . . . You know, Jubal, I shall have to go back then. You see, there's a feeling, ersomething, a sort of expectancy. No, not quite that; it's hard to explain" I don't converse well. I ramble and mumble when I have something real to say. I could say it to a woman, or I could write it on paper; but Jubal is a man of action, and when I did say it, I deliberately omitted emotional overtones and lost interest in what I said. "It's like courting a woman in armour with the visor closed, on Venus now. You can see it, but you can't touch or smell or breathe it. Always an airtight dome er a space suit between you and actuality. But in ten years' time, you'll be able to run your bare fingers through the sand, feel the breezes on your cheek... Well, you know what I mean, er sort of feel her undressed."

He was thinking I saw it in his eyes "Rog's going to go all poetic on me." He said: "And you approve of that-the change-over of atmospheres?"

"Yes."

"Yet you don't approve of what we're doing here, which is just the same sort of thing?"

He had a point. "You're upsetting a delicate balance here," I said gingerly. "A thousand ecological factors are swept by the board just so that you can grind these waters through your turbines. And the same thing's happened at Owen Falls over on Lake Victoria... But on Venus there's no such balance. It's just a clean page waiting for man to write what he will on it. Under that CO blanket, there's been no spark of life: the mountains are bare of moss, the valleys lie innocent of grass; in the geological strata, no fossils sleep; no arncebae move in the sea. But what you're doing here. . ." "People!" he exclaimed. "I've got people to consider. Babies need to be born, mouths must be fed. A man must live. Your sort of feelings are all very wellthey make good poemsbut I consider the people. I love the people. For them I work. . ."

He waved his hands, overcome by his own grandiose visions. If the passion for Progress was his strength, the fallacy inherent in the idea was his secret weakness. I began to grow

warm.

"You get good conditions for these people, they procreate forthwith. Next generation, another benefactor will have to step forward and get good conditions for the children. That's Progress, eh?" I asked maliciously.

"I see you so rarely, Rog; don't let's quarrel," he said meekly. "I just do what I can. I'm only an engineer."

That was how he always won an altercation. Before meekness I have no defence. But hostility ran like a sewer below the level of our conversation.

The sun had finished another day. With the sudden darkness came chill. Jubal pressed a button, and glass slid round the veranda, enclosing us. Like Venus, I thought; but here you could still smell that spicy, bosomy scent which is the breath of dear Africa herself. On Venus, the smells are imported.

We poured some more wine and talked of family matters. In a short while his wife, Sloe, joined us. I began to feel at home. The feeling was only partly psychological; my glands were now beginning to readjust fully to normal conditions after their long days in space travel.

J-Casta also appeared. Him I was less pleased to see.

He was the boss type, the strong-arm man: as Jubal's underling, he pandered wretchedly to him and bullied everyone else on the project. He (and there were many others like him, unfortunately) thought of the Massacre as man's greatest achievement. This evening, in the presence of his superiors, after a preliminary burst of showing off, he was quiet enough.

When they pressed me to, I talked of Venus. As I spoke, back rushed that humbling but intoxicating sense of awe to think I had actually lived to stand in full possession of my many faculties on that startling planet. The same feeling had often possessed me on Mars. And (as justifiably) on Earth. The vision chimed, and an amber light blinked drowsily off and on in Jubal's tank. Even then, no premonition of catastrophe; since then, I can never see that amber heartbeat without anxiety.

Jubal answered it, and a man's face swam up in the tank to greet him. They talked; I could catch no words, but the sudden tension was apparent. Sloe went over and put her arm round Jubal's shoulder.

"Something up," J-Casta commented.

"Yes," I said.

"That's Chief M-Shawn on the vision from Owenstown, over on Lake Victoria."

Then Jubal flashed off and came slowly back to where we were sitting.

"That was M-Shawn," he said. "The level of Lake Victoria has just dropped three inches." He lit a cheroot with clumsy fingers, his eyes staring in mystification far beyond the flame.

"Dam okay, boss?" J-Casta asked.

"Perfectly. They're going to phone us if they find anything ..."

"Has this happened before?" I asked, not quite able to understand their worried looks.

"Of course not," my half-brother said scornfully. "Surely you must see the implications of it? Something highly unprecedented has occurred."

"But surely a mere three inches of water. . ."

At that he laughed briefly. Even J-Casta permitted himself a snort.

"Lake Victoria is an inland sea," Jubal said grimly. "It's as big as Tasmania. Three inches all over that area means many thousands of tons of water. Casta, I think we'll get down to Mokulgu; it won't do any harm to alert the first aid services, just in case they're needed. Got your tracer?"

"Yes, boss. I'm coming."

Jubal patted Sloe's arm, nodded to me and left without relaxing his worried look. He and J-Casta shortly appeared outside. They bundled into a float, soared dangerously close to a giant walnut tree and vanished into the night.

Nervously, Sloe put down her cheroot and did not resume it. She fingered a dial and the windows opaqued.

"There's an ominous waiting quality out there I don't like," she said, to explain our sudden privacy.

"Should I be feeling alarmed?" I asked.

She flashed me a smile. "Quite honestly, yes. You don't live in our world, Rog, or you would guess at once what was happening at Lake Victoria. They've just finished raising the level again; for a long time they've been on about more pressure, and the recent heavy rains gave them their chance to build it up. It seems to have been the last straw."

"And what does this three-inch drop mean? Is there a breach in the dam somewhere?"

"No. They'd have found that. I'm afraid it means the bed of the lake has collapsed somewhere. The water's pouring into

subterranean reservoirs."

The extreme seriousness of the matter was now obvious even to me. Lake Victoria is the source of the White Nile; if it ceased to feed the river, millions of people in Uganda and the Sudan would die of drought. And not only people: birds, beasts, fish, insects, plants.

We both grew restless. We took a turn outside in the cool night air, and then decided we too would go down to the town.

All the way there a picture filled my head; the image of that great dark lake emptying like a wash-basin. Did it drain in sinister silence, or did it gargle as it went? Men of action forget to tell you vital details like that.

That night was an anticlimax, apart from the sight of the full moon sailing over Mount Kangosi. We joined Jubal and his henchman and hung about uneasily until midnight. As if an unknown god had been propitiated by the sacrifice of an hour's sleep, we then felt easier and retired to bed.

The news was bad the next morning. By the time I was dressed Jubal was already back in town; Sloe and I breakfasted alone together. She told me they had been informed that Victoria had now dropped thirteen and a half inches; the rate of fall seemed to be increasing.

I flew into Mokulgu and found Jubal without difficulty. He was just embarking on one of the Dam Authority's survey floats with J-Casta.

"You'd better come, too, Rog," he shouted. "You'll probably enjoy the flight more than we shall."

I did enjoy the flight, despite the circumstances. A disturbance on Lake Tanganyika's eastern fringes had been observed on an earlier survey and we were going to investigate it.

"You're not afraid the bed will collapse here, too, are you?" I asked.

"It's not that," Jubal said. "The two hundred miles between us and Victoria is a faulty region, geologically speaking. I'll show you a map of the strata when we get back. It's more than likely that all that runaway subterranean water may be heading in our direction; that's what I'm afraid of. The possibility has been known for a long while."

"And no precautions taken?"

"What could we do but cross our fingers? The possibility exists that the Moon will spiral to Earth, but we don't all live in shelters because of it."

"Justifying yourself, Jubal?"

"Possibly," he replied, looking away. Again that stupid antagonism.

We flew through a heavy rain shower, which dappled the grey surface of the lake. Then we were over the reported disturbance. A dull brown stain, a blot on a bright new garment, spread over the water, from the steep eastern shore to about half a mile out.

"Put us down, pilot," Jubal ordered.

We sank, and kissed the lake. Several hundred yards away rose the base of Mount Kangosi. I looked with admiration up the slope; great slabs of rock stood out from the verdure; crouching at the bottom of this colossus was a village, part of it forced by the steepness of the incline to stand out on piles into the lake.

"Leave everything to me, boss," J-Casta said, grabbing a hand asdic from the port locker and climbing out on to the float. We followed. It seemed likely that the disturbance was due to a slight subsidence in the side of the lake basin. Such subsidences, Jubal said, were not uncommon, but in this case it might provide a link with Lake Victoria. If they could pinpoint the position of the new fault, frogmen would be sent down to investigate.

"We're going to have company," Jubal remarked to me, waving a hand over the water.

A dozen or so dugouts lay between us and the shore. Each bore two or three shining-skinned fishermen. The two canoes nearest us had swung round and were now being paddled towards our float.

I watched them with more interest than I gave to the asdic sweep. Men like these sturdy fishermen had existed here for countless generations, unchanged: before white men had known of them, before Rome's legions had destroyed the vineyards of Carthage, before who knows if not before the heady uprush of civilization elsewhere? such men had fished quietly in this great lake. They seemed not to have advanced at all, so rapidly does the world move; but perhaps when all other races have fallen away, burnt out and exhausted, these steady villagers will come into a kingdom of their own. I would elect to live in that realm.

A man in the leading canoe stood up, raising his hand in greeting. I replied, glancing over his shoulder at the curtain of green behind him. Something caught my eye.

Above some yards of bare rock, a hundred feet up the slope of the mountain, two magnificent Mvules African teak trees grew. A china-blue bird dipped suddenly from one of the trees and sped far and fast away over the water, fighting to outpace its reflection. And the tree itself began to cant slowly from the vertical into a horizontal position. Jubal had binoculars round his neck. My curiosity aroused, I reached to borrow them. Even as I did so, I saw a spring of water start from the base of the Mvules. A rock was dislodged. I saw it hurtle down into the bush below, starting in turn a trail of earth and stones which fell down almost on to the thatched roofs of the village. The spring began to spurt more freely now. It gleamed in the sun: it looked beautiful but I was alarmed.

"Look!" I pointed.

Both Jubal and the fisherman followed the line of my outstretched arm. J-Casta continued to bend over his metal box. Even as I pointed, the cliff shuddered. The other Mvule went down. Like an envelope being torn, the rock split horizontally and a tongue of water burst from it. The split widened, the water became a wall, pouring out and down.

The sound of the splitting came clear and hard to our startled ears. Then came the roar of the water, bursting down the hillside. It washed everything before it. I saw trees, bushes and boulders hurried down in it. I saw the original fissure lengthen and lengthen like a cruel smile, cutting through the ground as fast as fire. Other cracks started, running uphill and across: every one of them began to spout water.

The fishermen stood up, shouting as their homes were swept away by the first fury of the flood.

And then the entire lower mountainside began to slip. With a cumulative roar, mud, water and rock rolled down into the lake. Where they had been, a solid torrent cascaded out, one mighty wall of angry water. The escaping 'flow from Lake Victoria had found its outlet!

Next moment, our calm surface was a furious sea. Jubal slipped and fell on to one knee. I grabbed him, and almost went overboard myself. A series of giant waves plunged outwards from the shore. "The first one rocked us, the second one overturned our flimsy craft completely.

I came to the surface coughing and snorting. J-Casta rose at my side. We were just in time to see the float slip completely under; it sank in no time, carrying the pilot with it. I had

not even seen his face, poor fellow.

Jubal came up by the fisherman, who had also overturned.

But dugouts do not sink. We owed our lives to those hollowed tree trunks. They were righted, and Jubal and his henchman climbed into one, while I climbed into the other. The waves were still fierce, but had attained a sort of regularity which allowed us to cope with them.

The breakthrough was now a quarter of a mile long. Water poured from it with unabated force, a mighty waterfall where land had been before. We skirted it painfully, making a landing as near to it as we dared.

The rest of that day, under its blinding arch of sky, passed in various stages of confusion and fear.

It was two and a half hours before we were taken off the strip of shore. We were not idle in that time, although every few minutes Jubal paused to curse the fact that he was stranded and powerless. Miraculous as it seems, there were some survivors from the obliterated village, women mostly; we helped to get them ashore and built fires for them.

Meanwhile, Dam Authority planes began to circle the area. We managed to attract the attention of one, which landed by our party. Jubal's manner changed at once; now that he had a machine and men who, unlike the villagers, were in his command, he worked with a silent purpose allowing of no question.

Over the vision, he ordered the rest of the floats to attend to the villagers' needs. We sped back to Mokulgu.

On the way, Jubal spoke to Owenstown. They took his news almost without comment. They reported that Victoria was still sinking, although the rate had now steadied. A twenty-four-hour a day airlift was about to go into operation, dropping solid blocks of marble on to the lake bed. "There, a fault about three miles square had been located; four frogmen had been lost, drowned.

"It's like tossing pennies into the ocean," Jubal said.

I was thinking of the frogmen, sucked irresistibly down the fault. They would be swept through underground waterways, battered and pulped, to be spat out eventually into our lake.

Vision from Mokulgu, coming on just before we landed there, reported a breach in the lake banks, some twenty miles north of the town. At a word from Jubal, we switched plans and veered north at once to see just how extensive the damage was.

The break was at a tiny cluster of huts, dignified by the name of Ulatuama, growing like a wart on the edge of Lake Tanganyika. Several men, the crew of a Dam Authority patrol boat, were working furiously at a widening gap. The damage had been caused by the very waves which had swamped us, and I learnt that a small, disused lock had stood here, relic of an earlier irrigation scheme; so the weakness had been of man's making. Beyond the lock had been a dried-up channel some twenty yards wide; this was now a swollen, plunging river.

"Is this serious?" I asked Jubal. "Isn't there a good way of getting rid of surplus water?"

He gave me a withering look. "Where are we if we lose control?" he demanded. "If this thing here runs away with us, the combined waters of Victoria and Tanganyika will flood down into the Congo."

Even as he spoke, the bank to the south of the escaping waters crumbled; several yards were swept away, their places instantly taken by the current.

We flew back to Mokolgu. Jubal visioned the mayor and got permission to broadcast to the city. I did not hear him speak; reaction had set in, and I had to go and sit quietly at home with Sloe fussing daintily round me. Although you "know" from a child that Earth is a planet, it is only when you drift towards it from space, seeing it hang round and finite ahead, that you can realize the fact. And so, although I had always "known" man was puny, it was the sight of that vast collapsing slab of mountain which had driven the fact into my marrow.

To guess the sort of sentiments Jubal broadcast to the city was easy. He would talk of "rallying round in this our time of crisis". He would speak of the need for "all hands uniting against our ancient enemy, Nature". He would come over big on the tanks; he would be big, his fists clenched, his eyes ablaze. He was in touch with the people. And they would do what he said, for Jubal carried conviction. Perhaps I envied my half-brother.

Labour and supplies began to pour north to mend the damaged bank. Jubal, meanwhile, thought up a typically flamboyant scheme. Tilly, one of the lake steamers, was pressed into service and loaded full of rock and clay by steam shovel. With Jubal standing on the bridge, it was maneuvered into the centre of the danger area and scuttled. Half in

and half out of the rushing water, it now former a base from which a new dam could be built to stem the flood. Watched by a cheering crowd, Jubal and crew skimmed to safety in a motor boat.

"We shall conquer if we have to dam the water with our bodies," he cried. A thousand cheering throats told him how much they liked this idea.

The pitch of crisis which had then been engendered was maintained all through the next two days. For most of that time it rained, and men fought to erect their barrier on clinging mud. Jubal's popularity and consequently his influence underwent a rapid diminution. The reason for this was two-fold. He quarrelled with J-Casta, whose suggestion to throw open the new dam to relieve pressure elsewhere was refused, and he ran into stiff opposition from Mokulgu Town Council.

This august body, composed of the avariciously successful and the successfully avaricious, was annoyed about Tilly. Tilly belonged to the local government, and Jubal had, in effect, stolen it. The men from the factories who had downed tools to fight the water were summoned back to work; the Dam Authority must tend its own affairs.

Jubal merely sneered at this dangerous pique and visioned LeopoldviUe. In the briefest possible time, he had the army helping him.

It was at dawn on the morning of the third day that he visioned me to go down and see him. I said adieu to Sloe and took a float over to Ulatuama.

Jubal stood alone by the water's edge. The sun was still swathed in mist, and he looked cold and pinched. Behind him, dimly outlined figures moved to and fro, like allegorical figures on a frieze. He surveyed me curiously before speaking.

"The work's nearly done, Rog," he said. He looked as if he needed sleep, but he added energetically, pointing across the lake: "Then we tackle the main job of plugging that waterfall."

I looked across the silent lake. The far shore was invisible, but out of the layers of mist rose Mount Kangosi. Even at this distance, in the early morning hush, came the faint roar of the new waterfall. And there was another sound, intermittent but persistent: beyond the mountain, they were bombing fault lines. That way they hoped to cause a collapse which would plug Victoria's escape routes. So far, they had had no success, but the bombing went on, making a battfield of

what had once been glorious country.

"Sorry I haven't seen anything of you and Sloe," Jubal said. "suppose?"

"You've been busy. Sloe called you on the vision."

"Oh that. Come on into my hut, Rog."

We walked over to a temporary structure; the grass was overloaded with dew. In Jubal's hut, J-Casta was dressing, smoking a cheroot as he dexterously pulled on a shirt. He gave me a surly greeting, whose antagonism I sensed was directed through me at Jubal.

As soon as the latter closed the door, he said: "Rog, promise me something."

"Tell me what."

"If anything happens to me, I want you to marry Sloe. She's your sort."

Concealing my irritation, I said: "That's hardly a reasonable request."

"You and she get on well together, don't you?"

"Certainly. But you see my outlook on life is. . . well, for one thing I like to stay detached. An observer, you know, observing. I just want to sample the landscapes and the food and the women of the solar system. I don't want to marry, just move on at the right time. Sloe's very nice but"

My ghastly inability to express the pressure of inner feeling was upon me. In women I like flamboyance, wit, and a high spirit, but I tire quickly of them and then have to seek their manifestation elsewhere. Besides, Sloe frankly had had her sensibilities blunted from living with Jubal. He now chose to misunderstand my hesitations.

"Are you standing there trying to tell me that you've already tired of whatever you've been doing behind my back?" he demanded. "Youyou" He called me a dirty name; I forgot to make allowances for the strain he had been undergoing, and lost my temper.

"Oh, calm down," I snapped. "You're overtired and overwrought, and probably over-sexed too. I've not touched your little woman I like to drink from pure streams. So you can put the entire notion out of your head."

Trouble came to us as suddenly as it had done to the lake, although nobody afterwards could have said there had been no warning.

He rushed at me with his shoulders hunched and fists swinging. It was an embarrassing moment. I am against violence,

and believe in the power of words, but I did the only possible thing: spring to one side and catch him a heavy blow over the heart.

Poor Jubal! No doubt, in his frustration against the forces of nature, he was using me only as a safety valve. But with shame, I will now confess what savage pleasure that blow gave me; I was filled with lust to strike him again. I can perceive dimly how atrocities such as the Massacre came about. As Jubal turned on me, I flung myself at him, breaking down his defences, piling blows into his chest. It was, I suppose, a form of self-expression.

J-Casta stopped it, breaking in between us and thrusting his ugly face into mine, his hand like a clamp round my wrist. "Pack it up," he said. "I'd gladly do the job myself, but this is not the time."

As he spoke, the hut trembled. We were hard pressed to keep our feet, staggering together like drunken men.

"Now what" Jubal said, and flung open the door. I caught a rectangular view of trees and mist, men running, and the emergency dam sailing away on a smooth black slide of escaping water. The banks were collapsing!

Glimpsing the scene, Jubal instantly attempted to slam the door shut again. The wave struck us, battering the cabin off its flimsy foundations. Jubal cried sharply as he was tossed against a wall. Next moment we were floundering in a hell of flying furniture and water.

Swept along on a giant sluice, the cabin turned over and over like a dice. That I was preserved was the merest accident. Through a maze of foam, I saw a heavy bunk crashing towards me, and managed to flounder aside in time. It missed me by a finger's width and broke through the boarding wall. I was swept helplessly after it.

When I surfaced, the cabin was out of sight and I was being borne along at a great rate; and the ugly scene in the cabin was something fruitless that happened a million years ago. Nearly wrenching my arm off in the process, I seized a tree which was still standing, and clung on. Once I had recovered my breath, I was able to climb out of the water entirely, wedge myself between two branches and regain my breath. The scene was one of awesome desolation. I had what in less calamitous circumstances might have been called "a good view" of it all.

A lake spread all round me, its surface moving smartly

and with apparent purpose. Its forward line, already far away, was marked by a high yellow cascade. In its wake stretched a miscellany of objects, of which only the trees stood out clearly. Most of the trees were eucalyptus: this area had probably been reclaimed marsh.

To the north, the old shore-line of the lake still stood. The ground was higher there and solid rock jutted stolidly into the flood. To the south, the shore-line was being joyously chewed away. Mokulgu had about half an hour left before it was swamped and obliterated. I wondered how the Mokulgu Town Council were coping with the situation.

Overhead, the sun now was shining clear, bars of pink, wispy cloud flecked the blue sky. The pink and the blue were of the exact vulgar tints found in two-colour prints of the early twentieth century A.D. that is, a hundred years before the Massacre. I was almost happy to see this lack of taste in the sky matching the lack of stability elsewhere. I was almost happy: but I was weeping.

"They visioned me that one of the floats had picked you up and not Jubal. Is there any hope for him, Rog, or is that a foolish question?"

"I can't give you a sensible answer. He was a strong swimmer, don't forget. They may find him yet."

I spoke to Sloe over the heads of a crowd of people. Mokulgu, surely enough, had been washed away. The survivors, homeless and bereaved, crowded on to high ground. Sloe had generously thrown open most of her house as a sort of rest-camp-cum-soup-kitchen. She superintended everything with a cool authority which suitably concealed her personal feelings. For that I was grateful: Sloe's feelings must be no affair of mine.

She smiled at me before turning to address someone behind her. Already the light was taking on the intensity of early evening. Above the babble of voices round me came the deep song of speeding water. It would continue for months yet: Africa was ruptured at her very heart, beyond man's mending.

Instead of flowing northward, fertilizing its old valley, Victoria crashed into our lake, adding its burden to the weight of water rolling west. While twenty-one million people perished of drought in Egypt, as many perished of flood and typhoid in the Congo.

I seemed to know what was coming as I stood in the crowd-

ed room, knowing Jubal dead, knowing the nation of Africa to be bleeding to death. We were dying of our own wounds. The ten years to follow would be as terrible as the ten years of the Massacre, when every member of the white race had been slain. Now we Negroes, in our turn, stood at the bar of history.