

To replace
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36

add

"Van Hunks & the Devil"
OR

"The Tablecloth"

Script by Vera de Villiers.

Idea by Albert Coates.

Note: The story is taken from an old legend about Table Mountain, so-called on account of its flat appearance on top - and it becomes even more table-like when the south-Easter blows...then the clouds lie over the mountain like a white table-cloth, evenly placed over the sides as well. Sometimes this table-cloth is anything but smooth for the clouds and mists swirl high up above, and so low down, that the Mountain is almost lost to view. When this happens it becomes difficult for the people to walk in the streets for the great Wind carries all and everyone along with it and one is hard-pressed to keep one's feet on the ground! Seafaring folk dread the South-Easter for if they do not return to Harbour before it reaches this fury, they will be blown far out to sea and then, maybe, never heard of again....The great ships cannot enter the Docks for they too, are unable to get to their safe anchorage until this fury dies away....great trees are uprooted, roofs fly away....everything bows before it....The people say, that is, the ones who really know...."Van Hunks is smoking his pipe with the Devil..."

And now for our story, which opens on the High Seas in the year 1750.

Film. Two ships are individually visible - the one an English Frigate, fully armed- the other, a Pirate ship of the roughest kind.

The officers of the Frigate are hard-pressed rallying their men.

As the Music proceeds we see the Frigate manoeuvre for position. Big guns are firing from both ships. The Frigate is badly hit. There are preparations for boarding the Frigate by the Pirate crew. We hear the sound of small arms and the rattle of swords.

Suddenly, a third Ship appears. It also carries the emblem of its trade, undoubtedly another Pirate...Then a strange thing happens. The first attacking Pirate slowly moves away and passes out of sight and the great "Isahendrik" (for that seems to be the name of the ship) draws near to the Frigate.....

and we slowly fade-in to the Cabin of the great Privateer.

Stage. Act.1. Scene one. Prologue

The Captain of the "Isahendrik" and his officers are in conversation with Captain Fitzroy and his officers, of the Frigate, whom he has just saved from capture by "Bob, the Renegade".....

..."And where-to Captain, were you bound for, when I so fortunately stepped in?..."asks the Captain of the "Isahendrik"; who, as you have probably guessed is no other than Van Hunks, around whom our story centres, to which Fitzroy replies:

"Fortunately indeed, Sir, for if it had not been for you, our tale would have had a different ending and we would never have made the Cape of Good Hope, our final destination.."

"The Cape, Aye...aye," says Van Hunks, "when I saw it was "Bob, the Renegade, who was attacking, I was afeered it might go badly with you - he is a terrible scourge."

"Bob, the Renegade"...What, an Englishman?"...

"Oh, no"...says Van Hunks, "we call him "Bob", for his real name is quite unpronouncable...But he listens to me...I flagged him as soon as I was within reasonable distance."



4. Stage, continued.

But young Hendrik refuses to be friends and gradually drawing his mother away, says to her.....

"Mother, this is all too sudden...let us consult together alone.."

Isabella, quite bewildered, is gently drawn away by her son, meanwhile gazing at her husband until the Cabin door closes between them.

Van Hunks calls for wine, and,

"Fill our pipes to the brim"...but, it appears ther is not even a pipe-ful of Tobacco left on his ship....as one of the Stewards tell him...since he gave orders for everyone to enjoy as much of his Tobacco as they wished since the Battle....Where-upon Fitzroy tells him thathe has plenty of Tobacco on the Frigate, if it could be fetched....and Van Hunks is just about to give the order, when a commotion is heard and an officercomes in with the message....

"Sir, the glass is falling fast...we will have to make preparation to meet all emergencies.."

Van Hunks invites Fitzroy to take some of his own men with him to the Frigate as he will need all available helpers..."And only those who are still too ill to attend, will remain in my and the Lady Isabella's charge

The sounds of "All aboard for the Frigate " is heard and the two Captains take leave of each other with firm handshakes and Van Hunks parting words to Fitzroy.....

"Follow me, whatever happens....Good Luck...Good sailing... and a safe landing".

PREPARE STAGE FOR SCENE TWO

Film.

The Storm gains in strength. Lightening flashes. Thunder coming nearer and nearer. The Wind begins to howl.....

Dialogue. on Screen (Film) with Orchestra.

This terrifying Cape of Tempests...quelling the stoutest heart...and is it indeed brooded over by that monster Adamastor already told to us by Camoens as he went his long voyage with his master Vasco da Gama. ~~xxxx~~ Did the phantom ship of the Dutchman fall into his power and then cursed for evermore to carry its crew of evil spirits?....Will the "Isahendrik" suffer a like fate and no man hear of it?....

~~Film in~~ Stage. "At the Wheel" (HOUSE?) OR

Van Hunks and his officer Bradley at the Wheel. Van Hunks asks Bradley...

"How are our friends in the Frigate faring Bradley?"

(sounds of voices calling.."help us....help us..." and dying away) Bradley replies...

"Not too well I fear, Sir".

Van Hunks takes up the telescope and tries to penetrate the darkness, and in a flash of lightening s ees the Frigate struggling in the angry sea, but still afloat ...(again we hgear the voices..."help us...help us...oh, help us")....Van Hunks also hears them and says to Bradley....

"Yes, Bradley, you are right....I would gladly smoke a pipe with the Devil himself, if I could get both shipe safely into port..."

Suddenly a stranger seems to appear out of the shadows of the mast and a voice close at hand says....

5.

"Would you indeed?"...

Van Hunks is taken completely by surprise and asks:

"Who are you? - I hav'nt seen you before - are you one of the Frigate's officers?"...

To which comes the reply:

"I'm here to help"...

"Thanks" says Van Hunks... "We can do with a lot of that, I fear"...

To which the Stranger replies, as the ship heaves dangerously:

"It's only a slight matter of adjustment... a slight matter... a slight matter, indeed it is!"

Van Hunks is almost indignant... However the Stranger seems to want an answer and persists with... "Well? - well - ?" And Van Hunks, almost impatiently, asks:

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

But the Stranger just says:

"Oh - nothing at all, at all.... we can arrange all that to our complete satisfaction, another time"....

Then Van Hunks replies:

"Very well, go ahead"... giving his whole-hearted consent.

(Drop back-cloth of Table Mountain)

Almost immediately there is a change; the light seems to return, the sea begins to calm down. Voices of sailors are heard calling out... "Land....land...land.."

towards the wheel.

An officer enters/~~the officer~~ and says...

"Wind abating, Sir... all bouncy and gay again.. good work, sir, good work"...

He helps van Hunks take off his oil-skins and exits. Van Hunks is very thoughtful, and as if speaking to himself, murmurs...

"Good work, eh?... good work... I wonder?..."

But there is no time for reflection, for the Sailors are busy with their various tasks handling ropes etc., ~~far~~ in the distance we see Table Mountain Sun-lit, rising out of the Sea, in the early Dawn, and everyone is happy and excited. At the side of the ship gazing at this wonderful picture, is Isabella and her son Hendrik, who, on hearing his approach, turn their faces towards him, smiling and both with love and understanding in their gaze. Van Hunks opens his arms and in turn, embraces them both. They then, all turn towards this great promised land of their dreams.

End of Act 1. Scene two.

6. Act. 11. Scene one.

Act 1 Scene 1

The Cape Colony. A few years later...about three years.Film.

Shots of old dwellings in sunny surroundings....some of which show the inhabitants preparing to leave for a Wedding which is to take place at the home of Van Hunks, called after his ship, the "Isahendrik". The different views are accompanied by the old Folk-song, "Sarie Marais".. The camera is focussed on Van Hunks' home where we see the Wedding-(Stage Breakfast) being prepared just below the "stoep". Colored Servants come and go and we see Isabella arranging places for the various expected guests, arranging the flowers and meanwhile singing while she is working. The Song comes to an end and Van Hunks appears at the Front-door of the house. He calls to her and just then the Minister appears with the Bride (Johanna de Villiers) leaning on his arm. Then Hendrik enters along with his parents. The Minister asks for a Blessing on this, the Marriage-day of the young people and a beautiful Septette is sung, beginning with the words.."Give us thy Blessing, Lord.." After which they re-enter the house

Film.

Shots of an old Church and the Wedding Party returning in their various conveyances. Back to Stage and the Wedding Breakfast in progress.

A Boer-Orkes is playing some old Folk-songs, such as "Afrikaanse Pop" (The world is very, very big") "Tanta Mina kook die Mebos Stroop", (Aunti Mina is cooking the Syrup") and the famous old marching folk-song, "Klaap julle handjies alle Bobbejantjies" (Marching to Pretoria).

Young Hendrik then sings his Speech-song and Johanna, his Bride, on being invited by the Minister, sings her song (Coloratura). There is much feasting and jollity and Captain Fitzroy, on his return from the East Indies, enters with presents for the family, which he presents to each one during his song. Some stately dances now take place accompanied by singing from the Chorus, dancing and singing at the same time... "Jan Pierrewit"...", "Bobbejaan klim die Berg..", followed by "Siembamba".

The Wedding-Breakfast ends with two of the Sailors, who have accompanied Captain Fitzroy, dancing an old English, "Sailor's Hornpipe" . The Minister then descends from the Stoep and everyone sings, joining with the Minister..."Give us Thy Blessing, Lord".

Stage. The same Scene a few hours later....The same day.

It is evening time and after the Wedding. Scene 11 All the guests have departed. All is once more quiet and tidy. The lights have gradually been put out except for a light burning in Isabella's room and also where Van Hunks is working on his model of a ship, the "Isahendrik" at the end of the Stoep. He is in his shirt-sleeves and meanwhile lighting his pipe... He begins to think of old times and putting his pipe down begins one of his well-loved old songs, which goes like this....

"Good ship, what joy to mould thee once again,
With these my hands,
Which loved thee so sincerely...
We've sailed and roamed the seven seas together,
And ne'er a fault to be found in thy bearing,..
Ship of remembrance,
Memory benign...
Wake to life again in my hands,
Let us then sail the seven seas...
Let us then roam just once again...
And rally all that did play their part
In making thee great,
A credit to Justice,
Peace and goodwill.....

And at this very moment the Stranger enters...He wishes Van Hunks a "Good evening" and as Van Hunks rises, he begs him "not to disarrange him self but asks to be seated....he takes a chair but rises immediately and this is not to be wondered at for the Minister had occupied that very chair that afternoon. However he seats himself again and reminds Van Hunks of their last meeting..."a rather different kind of day, was'nt it

7.

..."not nearly so cosy and friendly and what weather?..."

Van Hunks asks him....

"Why choose today?..."

and the Stranger replies...

"Is there not an old saying.. "The better the day, the better the deed?" and besides, "after the Wedding a little exercise will not come amiss.."

Van Hunks is completely baffled and asks...

"What do you mean?"

And the Stranger replies

"What would you say, that we meet tonight at the top of Table Mountain and enjoy a pipe together in the Moonlight?..."

Van Hunks, completely mystified, answers:

"To-night?...Moonlight?... on the top of Table Mountain?..."

He can hardly believe the Stranger to be serious...But the Stranger is quite serious and goes on to say:

"Why Yes, we could at least see which one of us is the stronger smoker.."

And Van Hunks replies...

"Ho...ho...this sounds like a contest..."

And the Stranger continues...

"Yes, indeed, why not?... A smoking Contest..a most "glad" and friendly Contest...just we two, perched up there, like two large birds, about to fly away....."

To this Van Hunks laughingly says...

"Ha...ha...ha...but I am a very ordinary human being. How can I contend with you in a smoking contest, when you have all....."

"Please don't say it", begs the Stranger.."it is of course my affair...But I am sure I will do my best, for there are, naturally, reasons.."

"Indeed? -"

Asks Van Hunks and to which the Stranger answers with these cryptic words.....

"Yes! - "And which-so ever to the other then shall yield the victory...at the victor's best must needs accept his hospitality..."

Here the Stranger makes a low bow and disappears as suddenly as he appeared leaving Van Hunks greatly puzzled. However there is not much time to be lost for the Stranger is expecting him to be at their place of meeting and time is getting on, so he quietly proceeds to collect his pipes and gazing at the pipe his friend Fitzroy gave him that very afternoon...he places it along with his other pipes in the pocket of his Great-coat, which he fetches from just inside his Front-door. ...along with two silver pistols which he carefully looks at, to see whether they are well-loaded...and then places in his

8.

belt. He turns towards the lighted window of his wife's room...she is humming softly to herself. He tells her "he has never had a happier day, since they found each other again, after these, so many empty years"; Isabella tells him "this is only the beginning of their happiness" but he sighs...where-upon she laughs gently at his sadness!...where-he too, needs must laugh, meanwhile telling her he "will smoke one more pipe, before retiring"...

On hearing his retreating footsteps Isabella gently closes the curtains and we see Van Hunks slowly wending his way towards the ascent of the mountain, very quietly....and before passing from our view he turns his again towards her room as if saying a silent farewell.

Act 3. The summit of Table Mountain. Act 2.

Stage.

The time is nearly mid-night and everything looks very weird....very lonely.... Then we see Van Hunks arriving at the summit and looking around him. He takes out his pipe and begins a song to cheer himself.. for the gloom is depressing, to say the least of it....here is his song.

"Yo - ho - for the pipe with the 'baccy to boot...
The pipe to which all good sea-farers are prone,
Pull it heavy...let's beat the slick devil's own soot,
And show imps of Satan how that makes him groan! -"

"Then pull on the pipes altogether my hearties,
No slacking you Lubbers, for gentleman Nick
Ai'nt going to be good, if you bungle your parties,
Look well to your honours and squelch him, Hendrik.."

There is an answering echo from somewhere of that word...."Hendrik".... and the Stranger suddenly appears. They greet each other cheerfully but , on the part of Van Hunks, somewhat warily, who is prepared for anything that may happen suddenly and who does not wish to be taken off his guard....As if by magic two chairs of antique design are brought in by two imps...a table follows and is placed between the two chairs...the imps disappear and the Stranger invites Van Hunks to be seated, which he does in silence...

The Stranger is the first to speak and says:

"Right glad am I that you have kept our tryst..."

To which Van Hunks replies:

"Surely...I had no option but to comply with your demand?..."

The Stranger seems quite shocked at such frankness and hastily answers...

"Not so quick - not so quick, my friend...this contest must go on until I win according to the rules and regulations laid down by our Inscrutable One. This may take some time....it may take all eternity...who can tell...I am not a great smoker and as all our 'baccy has a most acrid flavour, it is anything but certain how the contest will "fall out.."

At this Van Hunks heaves a great sigh of relief for indeed, he thought he would never see his loved ones again...he says to the Stranger:

"You make me happy, Sir...I had thought never to see wife and son again...my thanks indeed..."

This is too much for the Stranger who is anxious to "stick to the point", and he replies...

"Not so fast, not so fast my friend...Each contest

9.

.....will begin at midnight and will end with the early Dawn - we may say at Cock-crow?...Win I must or I shall be banned to yonder Peak (pointing towards the Devil's Peak) every time I lose.....a dismal outlook and so frustrating..."

Van Hunks is happily surprised at all this, for he thought until now, that his contest would be with the head of the Department where-as, his present opponent was not apparently so important.....and perhaps, after all, the contest might not be so unequal - for up to now, Van Hunks had never met anyone who could out-smoke him....Perhaps after all, he could give the fellow "a run for his money" and who knows, it would be fun to see whether he could get the Stranger to the Peak for a bit... so Van Hunks says audibly..."

"Then...you are not...?"

"No -" says the Stranger, "I am only....."

But a short clap of thunder warns him that he best get on with the job so, after a short pause and bowing towards the the sound of the thunder, he asks most affably:

"Shall we begin?"

To which Van Hunks replies...

"With pleasure..."

They lean back in their chairs. Van Hunks lights his own pipe, and imp lights that of the Stranger. (Music begins and the wind gradually increases)

The Stage is gradually veiled with smoke coming up from the wings.

Shots of Table Mountain showing the first clouds forming the Table-cloth. also shots of different views of Table Mountain at different stages of being covered until the Mountain is almost invisible....probably 3 or 4 different views of the Mountain.

Stage.

Into the Stranger's mind comes the thought of trying to distract Van Hunk from smoking his pipe, so he conjures up, out of the wirling mists, strange, creeping beasts and various phenomena. Van Hunks glances in their direction, but remains undisturbed. The Stranger then changes the scene to a more alluring one, in which the wild creatures disappear and in a soft and beautiful light, the loveliest women appear, singing and dancing to the sound of ~~XENXENS~~ music....Van Hunks, for the first time, seems interested, for among the wonderful creatures before him, he fancies he sees his Isabella, lovely as she was, as a Bride and yes, she seems to beckon to him....he cannot be sure and lays down his pipe to take up his telescope....but...on looking through the telescope he looks into the grinning, triumphant face....of the Stranger!- Van Hunks wipes his forehead at his narrow escape - he must certainly not be taken off his guard again...he drops the telescope and taking up his pipe, goes on smoking as if he has just begun the contest.....

This is too much for the Stranger who now loses his head, the result being that all Hell seems to be "let loose"....many different kinds of Demons appear...more and more horrible...all mixed up with the beauties who have now become horrible old hags, grinning and twisting around him and all dancing a kind of furious Bacchanalia and at last closing in upon him as if to harm him with threatening gesture...

Van Hunks suddenly rises and taking one of his pistols from his belt he fires it into the mad hoarde of demons....in a flash the Stranger throws himself into the midst of the wirling mob, who suddenly disappear... leaving the Stranger alone, in a state of collapse on the ground.... The Stranger cries out for help....to whom?....It is immaterial, for no help comes...in spite of his supplications, which sound like this....

10.

"Help me, oh, help me, my wits are all bubbled!...
I'm gasping for breath...
Who would have thought that a pipe or two...
Would have such dire effect on me.."

"Help me, oh, help me, I'm shattered and battered..
I'm gasping for breath...
Oh...how they'll laugh at me, laugh at me...
Cruel, derisive, hilarious laughter....."

"Derisive laughter pointed at me...
Help me, oh, help me, confusion is rampant...
I'm near falling down....
Disintegrating, I'm disintegrating from sheer desperation...."

A crowd of imps gather around the Stranger and dance with merriment and pointing at him they sing...

"Ha...ha....ha..haya...Shagraya...goodbye-ya....
Look at him quaking and panting....
Sweating and paling....paling..."

The Stranger, having tried to keep "a stiff upper lip" in spite of the laughter, is now rocking himself backwards and forwards and finally falls to the ground, writing and moaning. The imps now change their tone at once and cry....

"Shagrya...Goodbye-ya...off to the Peak now"....and with more derisive and devilish laughter and dancing they suddenly disappear completely.

The mists now disappear and the Stage becomes lighter. There is a tinge of rose red over everything. Table Mountain...the Devil's Peak and the Lion's Head. The Dawn is here. There seems to be a great silence everywhere. Far down below a Cock crows. A new day...The first round is over and the Victory goes to Van Hunks. Nearby something is lying very silently, on the ground...is it?- Can it be the Stranger? - Van Hunks is just about to go and investigate when, suddenly, he hear a Voice. It seems to come from the Lion's Head and it says....

"Touch him not...let him lie...he deserves his ~~fxkx~~ discomfort for having tried to distract you from your victory. He will be ill for weeks, but remember, there are more contests coming....I will be here to see "fair play"...fair play...(voice dying away) fair play..."

And when Van Hunks looks at the spot he thought he saw something lying on the ground....there is nothing there, everything has disappeared... the table and the chairs too, have vanished....

From below come the sounds of voices calling..."Hendrik"...."Father"... and Van Hunks answers in nautical language...."Hendrik ahoy"...."Father.. ahoy.." Master"...ahoy.....

The first to arrive at the top are the two servants, their lanterns still ~~xxxx~~ alight...then Isabella, young Hendrik and his Johanna and along with them Captain Fitzroy. Isabella throws herself in her husband's arms. saying through her tears...

"Oh Hendrik, thank Heaven you are safe...What happened? We were afraid you had lost your way in this fearful fog and terrifying wind...and that you were hurt and alone on the mountain..."

Van Hunks embraces her fondly and then puts his arm round his son and finally clasps Fitzroy firmly by the hand...promising to "tell them all about it, later..." but now "Home"...what a lovely word.."home".

Everyone understands and they begin the downward journey...Fitzroy helping Isabella..Young Hendrik his Johanna and Van Hunks finds himself alone for a moment after the servants have gathered up the pipes, the remains

11.

of the Tobacco and the telescope. Involuntarily he glances towards the Devil's Peak where he sees a red glow and he seems to hear a voice from the distance saying....

"When the ~~new~~ crescent moon shows itself in the evening sky, our next contest will begin... be prepared.. be prepared....(voice dying away) be prepared...."

Then as if in answer, comes the reply from the opposite side...It comes from the Lion's Head...which is now bright with the Sun-light, full upon it....

"Fear nothing, I will be here to see fair play... fair play....(dying away) fair play...."

As the full ray of the Sun is now visible over everything...Van Hunks waves his hat smiling gaily towards the Lion's Head and then to the Peak, as if in acknowledgment of his readiness to comply with the Stranger's demand...He begins his descent....we hear the music of his breezy song gradually echoing around and taken up by the others lower down the mountain and we gradually Fade-in to the

Film Views of Table Mountain in Bright Sunlight and without a single cloud.

.....

Now you know the Legend of "The Table Cloth" And you will also know that although there have been many contests since the one you have just heard about....Van Hunks has always won and we know that he always will.. otherwise there would be no Legend and we could never say, when the South Easter blows loud and strong and the clouds lie thick over Table Mountain making it look like a "Table-cloth"....

"Yes...it is Van Hunks smoking his pipe with the Devil..."

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All the characters are fictitious. The Music and the Lyrics are original. The Folk songs are South African and not original to Albert Coates.

