

## Introduction: The Detectives

JP: "I'm Johannes Andre' Alexander Pietersen, nicknamed Jaapie from my initials with the added 'ie', as is habit with us Boers of South Africa. This was shortened to JP in high school because Jaapie means small monkey, and no kid wants to be called Monkey. I grew up on a farm in the Newcastle district of South Africa. From hidden places I listened to and mimicked the voices and behaviour of animals and birds. Doing this I soon found I could talk to them, but only my school friend, Len, knew this. With this skill of talking to dogs during school holidays, I prevented a crime of sheep theft that tingled my interest in matters of crime. On leaving school I joined the police force, serving in the division that deals with the growing of illegal crops and the poaching of wild life. My trusted teammate was Bruno, an Alsatian police dog. Over the years many others joined our team. You will meet one here as we solve many local crimes of illegal cannabis growing. In later stories you will meet many more including an eagle, a baboon, and a gorilla."

"Growl...I'm the Alsatian police dog, Bruno assigned to work with JP, a novice police officer. I soon found that he could speak to us police dogs in our language. He is very smart for such a young human. We solve crimes. In one action packed adventure we put a gang of drug growers and dealers in jail. Later, we fell into a hoax investigation of animal and bird poaching in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, KwaZulu-Natal; a trap set by the same gang we had put in jail. Bad things happened in that adventure while I was saving JP's life. Before that I brought him a baby jackal. You will see he is such a wise animal."

"Yap...I'm very wise and my name is Jackals."

## Part 1: JP – The Kid who spoke to the Animals

"Chappie! Bingo! Get back inside the gate you naughty dogs!" shouted Len

"Too late," said Joe, as two boys jumped off the back of a truck. "I hope the dogs don't bite those boys. The dogs don't know who they are."

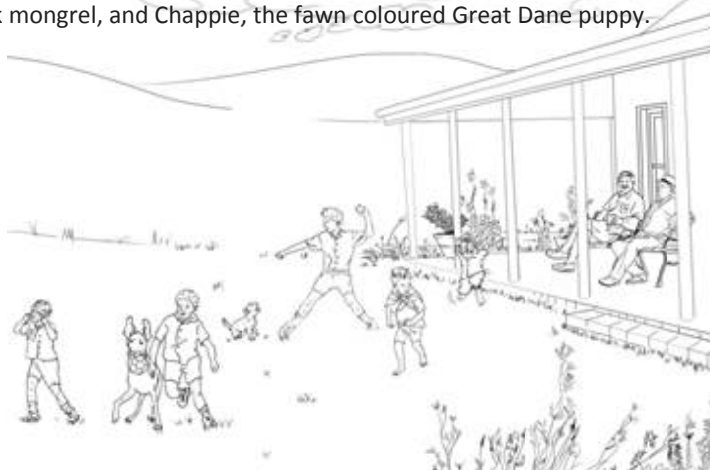
"Woof bark growl...," said the younger boy.

"Look Joe, the dogs have stopped barking viciously, and have fallen in behind the younger boy. And now, look, they are licking his hand." Gentle growling was being exchanged between them and the boy.

"It's almost as though he is talking to the dogs," said Joe.

The visitors settled on the front verandah of the house. The father of the boys said in Africans: *Engelsman! Ek neem aan dis jou kinders met daai twee honde wat rondwaal by die dongas op my plaas? Ek het duur stoetskape en hou nie daarvan dat vreemde honde op my plaas rondloop nie.*

Interpreted this says; "Englishman! Am I to understand that it's your children and two dogs I see roaming the dongas on my farm at various times? I have valuable stud sheep and I don't like strange dogs around." said Johannes Koubus Pietersen to Len's and Joe's Dad as he sat in a chair and pointed to our dogs, Bingo, the mischievous naughty black mongrel, and Chappie, the fawn coloured Great Dane puppy.



# Bruno to Jakkals

Dad, a bit red faced, replied, "My name is Joe Nourse." and continuing in Afrikaans, added, "*Ek sal met die kinders praat.*[I will talk to the children.] As you know, I'm new to the area so will you not come in and we can talk over a cuppa. *Tee of koffie?*"

Dad, replying half in Afrikaans and offering a cuppa, eased the tension implied by Johannes' harsh use of the word 'Engelsman'.

"Thank you Joe, I'll enjoy a cup of coffee." Then, addressing his two sons, he added, "Jacques and Jaapie go and play with Oom Joe's children. Maybe you should speak to them in English as it's unlikely they can speak Afrikaans."

"*Ons kan* [We can]" quipped my elder brother Joe walking away and saying. "Dad, may we go and play at the riverside."

"Sure, if Johannes doesn't mind."

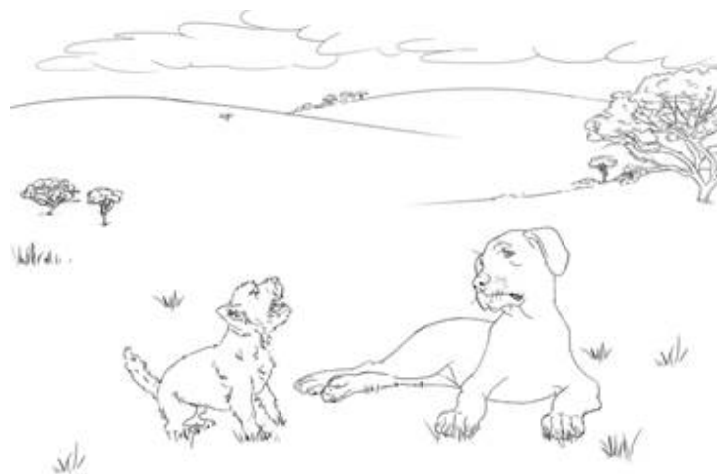
"That's fine with me too, but just keep the dogs away from my sheep," said Johannes.

That's how, in December, 1942; I met JP, then still known by his nickname Jaapie, and his older brother, Jacques. At that time Jacques and Jaapie were more proficient in English than Joe and I in Afrikaans, so conversation was predominantly in English. We practiced Klayaat and slingshot. We all became very proficient in these arts as do most kids growing up on farms.

JP was especially good in languages, and could speak all the local African tongues, even at the tender age of eight. On the weekends and school holidays during those initial years, we four new friends, and sometimes also my younger brother Phillip, only three years old at that time, wandered the two farms with our dogs playing in the streams and dongas. JP is about nine months older than my older brother Joe, but as things turned out, Joe and Jacques did things together, especially hunting pigeons, guinea fowl and quail. I spent more time with JP, because neither of us enjoyed hunting birds and animals. We instead just watched and listened to the voices of the birds and animals. This we did from tree tops, and luckily we both were very good at climbing trees.

JP watched and listened very intently with his lips moving continuously while mimicking the animal and bird sounds. On one particular day when out in the fields with the dogs barking very excitedly, JP said, "Bingo is urging Chappie to join him to chase sheep".

He said a bit more than this, but at that time I didn't listen to what he said, or ask why, other than silently note: "Hmm, it seems as though JP can understand what the dogs are saying."



Sadly, when in high school, we Nourse boys later found out that our dogs did chase sheep, but mistakenly did not tell Dad, as we knew that he would then get rid of them. Later this got Dad into trouble with the neighbours, all who had sheep on their farms. In one swoop Chappie killed thirty three sheep, including prime breeding stock, belonging to JP's father. Bingo was too small to pull down a sheep by himself, but he taught Chappie to do so. This cost Dad a lot of money so he gave Chappie to a friend who lived in the middle of the city of Pietermaritzburg – the capital of what was then Natal province.

## JP's first Case

The four of us at times went out into the dongas to practice *Clayaat*; an art whereby a flexible stick is used to hurl balls of clay at targets. One day while the four of us, now all in high school, were out practicing *Clayaat* we heard Bingo excitedly barking at Chappie.

On this JP said, "Bingo is saying there are some sheep across the river where two men with dogs are chasing them. Let's go and join them."

Jacques, giving JP a sidelong glance said in Afrikaans, "They are probably Pa's sheep, let's go and investigate."

As the dogs were running off Jaapie barked, telling them in dog language, "Wait dogs, it sounds like sheep theft so keep back behind us. We don't want the people to know we're here." Bingo and Chappie immediately obeyed.

I, at the time, made a mental note to ask Jaapie about the dogs and his barking, but this was not the time because action was needed, so said nothing. We crossed the river and came to the field where we saw two sheep dogs rounding up sheep. They were obeying the instructions of two men near a van. Jacques said, "Those are Pa's sheep and some are his breeding stock. We'll have to do something."

Jaapie said, "Len, from school sport, we know you are a fast runner so run back to your Dad's house and tell Pa and your Dad what's happening. The three of us, with the dogs, will divert the proceedings until they get here."

As I ran off I heard Jaapie again barking at Bingo and Chappie, and saw our two dogs run into the pack of sheep. At the same time I heard Jacques say, "We'll pepper the two men with our *Klayaats*, but this time we'll load our clay with stones."

My brother told me later: "The commotion caused by our dogs in the rounded up sheep distracted the two men enough to allow the three of us to get within twenty meters of them. We then let them have it with our *Klayaats*. As you know I'm pretty good, but Jacques and Jaapie are even better. The first stone laden clay missiles hit the men at the back of their heads, and stunned them. Unknown to Jacques and me, after the first shots, Jaapie had run to their truck. He saw their guns lying on the front seat, grabbed them and gave one each to Jacques and me. We two then held the two men at gunpoint until our parents arrived in Johannes's Jeep. They then dealt with the poachers. Jaapie had moved off to deal with the dogs and the sheep. Later we heard some barking, and a while later he returned with the four dogs at his heels."

When I was alone with Jaapie I asked him, "How were you able to get Chappie and Bingo to listen to you? They never listen to us, and why did the sheep dogs then also follow you?"

He said, "I just barked at Bingo and Chappie, and the sheep dogs saying, 'Stop chasing the sheep now. You two sheep dogs come here.' All the dogs immediately obeyed. In time you will learn that I have a special skill."

After that I didn't get much more time to spend with JP on the farm because our family moved house to the village of Camperdown, some 24 km outside Pietermaritzburg; about 300km from our farm near Newcastle. JP was 3 years ahead of me at school, so at school we spent little time together. There big boys did not mix with little boys!

Despite this social drawback, JP did seek me out at weekends or after school to spend time on the river-bank where we watched the birds and animals drinking water. He became very proficient in mimicking their voices. Although I did not realize it at the time, I later learnt he was actually practicing speaking to them.

JP and his Animal Detectives

*AFRICAN SERIES - BOOK ONE*

# Bruno to Jakkals

**JP & HIS ANIMAL DETECTIVES**

WRITTEN BY LEN NOURSE



During one such moment in his year 12, JP said, “Len, I don’t understand this indiscriminate killing of animals and birds, and nor can they. Our experience in capturing those two poachers with the help of your dogs was very motivating for me. So I’m going to study at the police college to become a police officer working with police dogs dealing with animal cruelty and poaching.”

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