

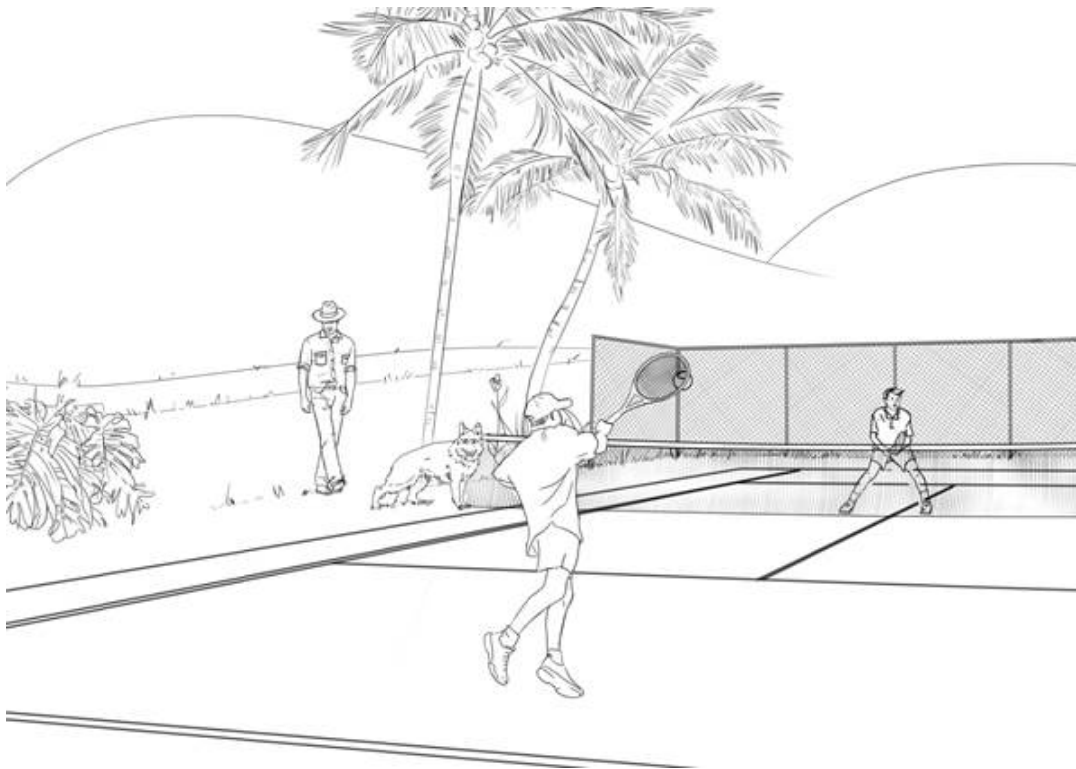
Part 2: Lieutenant Johannes Andre' Alexander Pietersen of Camperdown

"Len, I see you haven't lost your argumentative nature." JP said as he strolled past the Camperdown tennis courts with his police dog Bruno, an Alsatian colleague at his side.

This was said while Brian and I, playing a hard fought game of tennis, argued a line decision:

"It was out!"

"It was in!"



That was how JP and I met again.

"Gee, is that you JP? What are you doing here? What a lovely dog you have."

"Yes, his name's Bruno. I belong to the special police branch that has been assigned to sort out illegal crop growing in the valley. I'll be stationed in Camperdown for 3 months."

"That's great. What are you going to be doing?"

"We need to find out who's involved with the growing and production of dagga - the name used for cannabis in South Africa - in the Valley of a Thousand Hills. Bruno and I only arrived two days ago, and we're going for a walk down into the Valley. I assume you have just finished your Matric year - did you pass?"

Bruno to Jakkals

"I hope so. These are my friends Brain, Peter and Marilyn, who also have just finished their Matric. Friends, this is JP, my Newcastle school friend. His real name is Johannes Andre' Alexander Pietersen, but his school friends and I call him JP for short.

JP, may we come with you because I can show you the way? We can follow the many footpaths used by the local Africans."

As expected, Brain, Peter and Marilyn simultaneously said, "I can't go". I expected this, since both boys don't like going down the steep inclines into the valley, and Marylyn's father will not allow her to go — although I know she'd love to.

This pleased me since I wasn't keen on sharing JP's company.

"You are welcome Len. But you must come now because Bruno needs a long walk every day, and we'd like to get back before dark. I trust your parents don't mind it if you go down into the valley, like in the old days when we were children, but it would be nice if one of your friends would let your mother know."

"Good idea, JP. Will one of you please do that for me?"

"No problem," they said in unison.

"We'll be gone for about 4 hours," he told them.

So the others continued with their tennis while I went off with JP. That's when the real adventures of JP and his animal detectives began.

Camperdown borders the upper part of the Valley of a Thousand Hills, and it wasn't long before JP, Bruno, and I were on the steep dirt road and paths leading down into the Valley.

On the way, JP said, "Bruno's specially trained to locate areas where dagga is grown."

"While my friends were away I had nobody with whom to play, so I often went down into the valley by myself. I gathered clay from the eroded dongas to make models of animals." With a grin I added, "I often sneaked into the mealie (corn) fields to pick raw cobs that I cooked over a fire in the dongas. It was then that I saw dagga growing in-between the rows of mealies."

Noticing a questioning look on JP's face I added, "Well, I think it was dagga."

"Do you still know where this was?" said JP. "Do you think you could find the area again?"

"Yes, we need to get on that road down there, because most of it was near the bottom of the first valley. There are some sheds down there too."

"Growl..." said Bruno, pointing his nose and ears at a maize field.

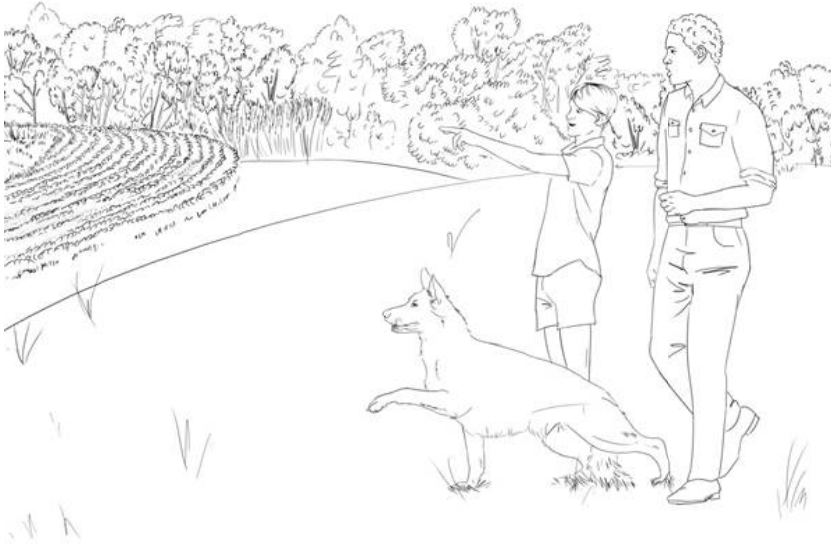
JP and his Animal Detectives

AFRICAN SERIES - BOOK ONE

Bruno to Jakkals

JP & HIS ANIMAL DETECTIVES

WRITTEN BY LEN NOURSE



“Bruno can smell dagga in that field over there. We need to hurry. We’ll deal with that later because, as you know, we are primarily after the dealers and not the small growers.”

“JP, it seems to me you can understand what Bruno is saying, and he you. From your comment I take it he told you that that field contains dagga. I remember thinking you could do this when we were just kids – wow, that’s awesome!”

“Yes, I can speak to Bruno, as well as some other animals and birds. Please don’t let anyone else know or I’ll be confined to a circus act.”

“It’s our secret, JP.”

Just as we were about to move onto the road JP put up his hand, and said, “Wait, Bruno’s ears are pricking, and I hear a truck coming. Let’s hide behind this bush because I don’t want the driver to see me, and especially Bruno. If the driver is a wrongdoer he’ll immediately recognise Bruno as a police dog and thus me, even though I don’t wear a police uniform.”

Bruno to Jakkals



About a minute later a red truck with a large canvas covered carrier passed us, and I said to JP, “I’ve seen this truck come down here many times before.”

“Growl ...” said Bruno very softly.

“Bruno says the truck smells of cannabis, so let’s get down there quickly.”

When I showed JP where the shed at the bottom of the valley was, he said, “Len, this looks like it’s going to be more than just an investigational trip into the valley to give Bruno some exercise. It’s now police business, so I want you to return home now before it’s too dark. I don’t want your parents worrying about where you are. If they send the local police down into the valley looking for you they will make a noise and disturb my investigation.”

“I want to stay, because I can help you.”

“No, you’ll probably get in our way or betray our presence through ignorance of procedure. It could also be dangerous for you. On your way back please don’t let anyone see you, but thanks for your help. I’ll let you know the outcome. Now go, and be careful.”

I slowly walked a little way back along the track and then crept off the track and into the bushes and hid. I would stay here quietly and watch. But JP and Bruno were out of sight. I couldn’t see what was happening. If I went any closer someone might see me. After some time I gave up and went home. JP would tell me what happened.

Some weeks later, I was about to take up a job in Ixopo, Natal, when JP arrived at our home with Bruno at his side, and said, “Please come with me to my sleeping quarters at the Camperdown Police Station. If you recollect, I promised I’d tell you what happened in the valley.”