

# NO FORGIVENESS



DEWALD BRINK  
AND  
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# **NO FORGIVENESS**

*by*

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## Untamed Lowveld Series

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### NO FORGIVENESS

by Dewald Brink and Braam Le Roux

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## SUMMARY

In *No Forgiveness*, South Africa's rugged Lowveld serves as a dramatic stage for a tale of betrayal, vengeance, and redemption. At the heart of the story is Helena de Vos, a courageous young woman striving to protect her family and her reputation in a hostile world. Abandoned by her lover and scorned by society, Helena fights valiantly to save her father from a ruthless adversary bent on ruining their lives. Her father's enemy is more than just a cunning businessman, he is the leader of a gang of outlaws committed to derailing progress by sabotaging a new railway line.

When Len van Staden, a determined special agent of the South African Republic, is sent to investigate the crimes, he uncovers a tangled web of corruption and conspiracy. As Len delves deeper into the chaos, his path crosses with Helena's, forging an alliance bound by peril and shared goals. Together, they face relentless threats, from cold-blooded criminals to devastating betrayals, while uncovering secrets that challenge their resolve.

As tensions rise and bullets fly, *No Forgiveness* takes readers on a gripping journey through the dusty streets of Waterval, the dangerous wilderness, and the fiery hearts of its characters. Will Helena find justice for her family? Will Len triumph over those who wield power for evil? With every twist, the stakes climb higher, drawing readers into a narrative packed with suspense, romance, and unforgettable moments.

## EXTRACT

“Stop or I’ll shoot!” Len suddenly shouts, and throws the bedding off him.

Len had expected the fellow to drop the bag and try to jump out the window. He is, therefore, completely unprepared when the man suddenly turns around and storms straight at him.

The man dives straight at Len’s waist at full speed, and it happens so suddenly that he knocks the revolver clean out of Len’s hand.

The next moment he throws his arms around Len’s waist and they roll around and around on the floor, struggling.

When the burglar is once on top, Len sees him quickly pull something shiny from the leather belt around his waist.

It is a knife, and the blade is already coming down quickly and with murderous force towards Len.

Just in time, he jerks himself halfway from under the man and swings his head away, otherwise, the knife would have slit his throat open.

Len uses all his strength and throws the man off him. Stumbling, he grabs for his revolver, which is lying on the floor to one side. In the same movement, he kicks the man a few steps away from him. But the next moment the burglar storms again.

## 6. NO FORGIVENESS

### CHAPTER 1

“You must marry old De Vos’s daughter... That’s a nice joke! I told you the other day that I don’t want you to have anything to do with that girl anymore. And I don’t want to hear any more stories about you two!”

Paul Bakkes looks at his son, Schalk, with flashing eyes. He snaps the knife with which he is busy trimming the grape trellis, shut and puts it in his pocket. Then he pushes his hands deep into his jacket pockets and stands and looks at his son from head to toe for a while.

The handsome, blond young man standing in front of him looks upset, and his lips are pale with the anger that is rising within him. There is defiance and smoldering rebelliousness in his eyes as he looks at the large, bulky figure of his father.

“I don’t know what right Pa has to take such an attitude. I’m telling Pa I love Helena, and we two have decided to get married.”

“Decided to get married! Already decided to get married, you say... Look here, Schalk,” and the old man walks threateningly towards his son. He takes his hands out of his jacket pockets. His fingers clench spasmodically open and closed, as if he intends to crush the young man in front of him with his bare hands.

Schalk Bakkes, a slightly delicate but nevertheless athletically built young man, with a thin moustache over his upper lip and two narrow streaks of side beard, as was customary for the best-dressed men in this year, 1886, takes a step or two back, but his eyes remain defiantly on his father’s hard face.

“Yes, Pa, that’s right. And there’s something else...” He breaks off, as if he wants to say something else, but now hesitates because of the old man’s anger. “At least,” he continues falteringly after a moment, “Helena is coming here soon, and... Pa, I can’t see why I should be satisfied with another woman when Helena and I love each other... in fact, we are...”

“You scum! You cheeky scum... Do you realize who you are talking to! Let me hear one more insolent word from you...! You are spoiled and pampered. That’s what’s wrong with you. It’s because I’ve let you have too much of your own way all these years. I don’t want to hear

anything more about this wedding! I'm telling you, it's just a trick of the De Vos girl... Not another word!"

Schalk Bakkes stares at his father's furious face. It took the utmost courage for him to start this conversation, and now it had gone this way. Like a raging giant, the old man stands before him with his face red with anger, his shaggy, white eyebrows, his white, short-cropped hair. Hate and anger shoot out of Schalk's eyes. He looks at the old man for a while without a word. The realization flashes through his brain that this quarrel will be a final break between him and his father. His throat is hoarse as he protests again with the words.

"Pa, but I'm not a child anymore..."

"That's all you are! All you are! And you will stay that way your whole life. No longer a child! Imagine...! Now go on then, go your own way, go find your own living. Get out of my house! I never want to see you again."

"Alright, Pa. I'm even willing to do that..."

"You..!" The old man seems to choke on his words. He makes a rattling throat sound and storms forward. His heavy walking stick is hanging to one side on a wire that holds up the trellis, and he grabs it in passing, swinging it wildly through the air. The attack is so unexpected that Schalk cannot fend off the blow, and it hits him on the side of his head and leaves him staggering half-dazed against the wall. Then the old man storms forward, bellowing and aims another blow at his head.

Schalk Bakkes had a round-topped hat on his head, which is now lying to one side on the ground. He is dressed in a suit of clothes as neat as one could find in this year, 1886. Around his waist, however, half-hidden under his jacket, a revolver bandolier is buckled, with a single heavy revolver on the right side.

He quickly pulls this revolver out, and when he has rolled away nimbly to avoid the sweeping stick blow, he jumps to his feet and points the firearm at his father.

His handsome face, with the thin moustache on his upper lip, is now even paler than before, and his lips twitch so that his teeth show like those of a furious animal.

"Stand where you are, or I'll blow your brains out!" he says in a raw, hoarse voice.

The old man stops suddenly and stares at the revolver in his son's hand. His eyes narrow into slits and his lips barely move as he says softly, almost inaudibly.

"So, that's the kind you are! You will use your revolver against your own father... that's what I taught you to handle a firearm for, that's what I raised you for, that's what I worked myself into sickness for..."

"No, Pa taught me to handle a revolver because I had to commit and organize crimes on occasion to help Pa with his dirty work..." Schalk says disdainfully as he puts the revolver back in the bandolier pouch. "Coincidentally, I learned how to use it to defend my own life, even if it's against my own Pa."

These words from Schalk make his Pa stare at him as if paralyzed. In the twenty-five years that he has known his son, he has never experienced so much insolence. It is almost as if it is not his own son that he hears talking there. His breathing comes hard and halting, almost like that of an animal that has been hurt.

"I see, I see," he finally gasps. For another while, he stands and stares at the young man in front of him, then he turns around and walks slowly, with his broad shoulders half-bent, to the back door of his house. It is a large, massive house of stone, with many windows and a stoep that stretches almost all the way around with neat pillars of carved stone. The yard is spacious and planted with well-maintained gardens.

Schalk Bakkes shakes the dust off him, stands frowning thoughtfully looking at the garden for a while. He has arranged with Helena de Vos that she will be here at three o'clock. He will talk to his father in the meantime. Then she must come and help, but now he wonders whether he dares to talk to his father again. There is almost a lifetime of animosity between Helena's people and his father, and apparently, there is no hope that it will ever change.

Schalk wonders if he should go and tell Helena that she shouldn't come. But she is so stubborn and opinionated, she will come anyway, no matter what he says.

Schalk Bakkes now wonders whether the step he has taken was ever worth the trouble. Helena is a very attractive and nice girl, but is she now worth it that he had to bring down the animosity of the hard old man who is his father, on his head like that? The old man has always



provided him very well with money, although it is also completely true what he said that he often had to carry out the old man's dangerous dirty work.

Isn't a man perhaps a fool to make such a fuss about love? he wonders as he walks to his room on the stoep to freshen up a bit before he makes his way to the town, because he has decided at once that he will not wait for Helena or tell her what happened. Let her come and sort the matter out with the old man herself if she wants to.

Schalk Bakkes has to admit to himself that he is just as afraid to tell Helena de Vos that he would rather withdraw from his undertaking as he was to talk to his father about it. He would rather plunge himself into a bloody gunfight than dare to face one of them face to face. It is a great pity that things have now come to such a point, he thinks.

The love affair with Helena, especially the stolen passionate moments, was so extremely pleasant and satisfying that he would have preferred to continue with it for an indefinite period. A degree of resentment towards Helena for being so keen on getting married rises in him as he straightens his necktie in front of the mirror and carefully pushes his hair straight over the painful swelling on the side of his head where the stick caught him.

He finishes his grooming and walks out. His neatly groomed black horse, with a saddle and bridle with silver decorations, is tied up in front of the gate.

Schalk swings himself into the saddle and rides down to the town. He feels bloody annoyed at the way his father treated him, but his thoughts are already busy with other things, with a large social gathering and party that is already starting in the town this afternoon.

In the large room on one side of the lavish house that is used as an office, the white-haired old man paces up and down, up and down, with his hands clasped behind his back. He feels as annoyed as never before in his life. This son of his, on whom he has built all his hopes and ideals, is a weakling. Of that, he is now convinced.

A man who can become so crazy about a girl and gossip so much about "falling in love" and such things, is nothing but a weakling.

All these years he had hoped and dreamed that Schalk would one day follow in his footsteps, just as strong, just as hard, and just as successful

in life as he would be.

He, Schalk, would finally carry out and complete the process of bringing the hated De Vos family to the ground and destroying them. Hendrik de Vos, who had had him, Paul Bakkes, locked up in prison thirty years ago for a trifle, where he had to do hard labor like a black man for two months... to think that Schalk now wants to marry his daughter! It is simply an impossibility.

The old man stops pacing suddenly and comes to a halt in front of the window. His face with the hard lines, the protruding, "bulldog"-like lower jaw, is pale, and he clenches his teeth.

"As surely as there is a heaven, I would rather see him in his grave!" With his fists clenched, he stands blankly staring ahead. There in front of him, below his showpiece of a house, lies the town stretched out, the town that he planted and grew, and of which more than half is his property.

All these things, and the large businesses that he will leave behind when the day comes for him to die, will be controlled and governed by the De Vos girl if Schalk marries her. Paul Bakkes knows women well enough, and he knows that the proud, attractive daughter of old Hendrik de Vos is a stronger person than his son Schalk, and she will undoubtedly control and govern Schalk.

She is an unusually attractive girl, and he now wonders, with a cancer of fear in his heart, whether Schalk can ever do without her, but he will have to, he will have to! No power on earth will be able to restrain him from tearing Schalk and this girl apart. He will not refrain from anything to bring this about.

Schalk Bakkes sits upright and comfortably on his horse. As he now rides down the street, he looks an imposing, self-assured young man, almost the opposite person to the Schalk Bakkes who just now stood in fear and trembling with a pale face before his father. His lips are pressed tightly together, and his dark eyes, below the finely cut, straight eyebrows, look with a slightly somber expression first this way then that way as he rides.

The dusty street of the town is lined with wild trees, only here and there a house stands hidden among the foliage. Schalk rides down the hill and comes down into the town where there is more life. There are a few

people with carts and horses and a number of horsemen. Two old prospectors chase their pack donkeys, laden with supplies, into the street from Ronski's shop.

Schalk knows that they are on their way to Groenkloof, where they have been washing out tiny specks of gold for years. When he comes to them, he stops for a moment to chat with them.

"What's the hurry?" he asks while smiling kindly at the two elderly old miners from his horse. "Aren't you staying for Koos Swemmer's party then? He invited the whole town, everyone is welcome..."

Old Lukas Stolz, an old miner with a long face and a prominent red nose and small unfriendly eyes, looks at Schalk Bakkes from head to toe for a moment. Slowly he shakes his head and says emphatically.

"Schalk, we don't mix with the chaff, understand? We may be two ordinary old "diggers", but we still distinguish between good and bad people. I can't understand that a young man like you, who doesn't need it, mixes with such people."

"Nonsense, Uncle Lukas! What do you have against Koos Swemmer? He was before the court on a charge that he shot a scoundrel of a policeman. But they can't prove anything against him and had to acquit him... and now he is celebrating his freedom with an invitation to everyone in the town to come and enjoy a few drinks with him..."

"Look here, Schalk, you're still young and you may not know everything that's going on. But don't think we are children. Koos Swemmer is the ringleader of the wild bunch there in Tierboskloof. You yourself have heard of the things that that bunch of scoundrels are suspected of. And that should be enough reason for a young man like you to stay away from Koos Swemmer. I wonder if your father knows that you are on your way to take part in the drinking spree?"

Schalk Bakkes gives a loud, sneering laugh and waves his hand at the old man, as if to indicate that the old man is only wasting his breath, and then he rides on.

"Well, good journey, Omies," he wishes them over his shoulder.

Half an hour later, Schalk Bakkes is the center of a group of young men who have gathered, talking loudly, at a bar counter. Without hesitation, their glasses are filled repeatedly by the two bartenders, and every time they are raised, a toast is drunk to the health of Koos Swemmer. The

men have been informed that Swemmer is a little late, but that they should continue with the drinking in the meantime at his expense.

The drinking is quite advanced when Swemmer finally arrives. He is a broad-built man of about forty-five years of age. His small grey eyes under bare, almost hairless eyebrows and a flat nose that grew crooked years ago after it was broken in a fight, together with a few thick lips, give him almost a cruel appearance. However, he looks very neat in his floral waistcoat, stiff collar and necktie, with a new hard-topped hat on his head.

“Hello, my friends!” he greets loudly as he holds his hand in the air when he appears in the door of the pub. “I am glad that you have already started with the celebration. Today it must go wild here at Waterval. The world must know that Koos Swemmer is a free man again. Hello, fellows, hello!” and he reaches out his hand to one and all as he walks among the people.

It doesn't take long for a loud singing to start in welcome to Swemmer, and then when a speech has to be made to welcome him, it is Schalk Bakkes who speaks. Amid laughter and joking, Schalk is lifted up to stand on top of the counter while he speaks.

An elderly old man who is walking past the hotel to the post coach station and glances into the pub door, shakes his head thoughtfully as he walks on. The wild Schalk Bakkes, he thinks... that's how it goes with a rich man's son...

The old man would have had reason for even more misgivings if he could have seen an hour or so later that Schalk is in a small room next to the drinking room in close conversation with Swemmer and another man. They are sitting around a small table with a bottle of liquor in front of them and they talk seriously in hushed tones for a long time.

“Alright, Koos,” Schalk finally says. “I'll make sure we get the money from the old man. At the moment the old man is a bit too upset, but leave that to me. If it comes to the worst, we can always arrange such a business with the post coach again. The old rascal makes enough money with his post coaches. He can also occasionally spare a little money in that direction for other people who need it.”

“I knew you would be interested, Schalk,” says Swemmer, and Schalk feels pride swelling in him because Koos Swemmer treats him as his

equal in manhood. The undertaking that Swemmer wants to start and of which he has discussed and worked out the details during his imprisonment for trial in Middelburg, suddenly gets a new appeal for Schalk because of the important role that he will play in it. He will practically be Swemmer's partner.

"Well, fellows," when he fills their glasses with the bottle, "let's drink to the future. And keep your revolvers oiled, hear!"

At his house, Paul Bakkes has fallen into a bittersweet reverie as he stares out of the window of his office. There are sweet memories as he relives the hard, successful struggle he has fought since the days when he arrived here, more than thirty years ago. Here there was only a wilderness, and there on the other side at the foot of that ridge, he had unsaddled his pack donkeys. And today he, Paul Bakkes, is the richest and most influential man in this entire vast stretch of world.

Out of nothing, he has wrested this position of power for himself.

He had Hendrik de Vos come here, pretended friendship towards him to lure him here and to bring his money with him. He had extracted all the money he needed for his plans from him, and today he stands far above De Vos. Indeed, Hendrik de Vos owns almost nothing more than just his arrogance and conceitedness and his beautiful daughter.

It is this triumph that today brings sweet memories to Paul Bakkes. The bitterness only comes when he thinks of Schalk. Why has God given him such a weakling of a son? Wouldn't it be better if Schalk would rather... rather have an accident or something, before he brings too much dishonor to his name?

Paul Bakkes startles in shock when he is suddenly awakened from his reverie by a knock on the front door. He listens to try to determine who it might be and whether his house servant is not going to open the door. The servant is not in the house, however, and when the knocking is repeated, he walks through to the front hall himself and opens the door. In front of him stands a young girl, beautiful and slenderly built, with an elegant long robe on and a fashionable hat on her head. Her dark brown hair, which makes a graceful little curl at the forehead, hangs far down her back, in an almost still schoolgirl style. Also the face with the blue eyes, straight, dark eyebrows and graceful little nose with just such a hint of perkiness, looks very much like that of a girl who is still little

more than a schoolgirl.

And yet Paul Bakkes knows that this girl, however young she may be, is by no means just a schoolgirl anymore. It is she who has been managing her father's business in the past year and who has, as it were, saved him from bankruptcy.

"Good afternoon, Uncle Paul," she greets kindly, although anxiety and a touch of fear can be read in her eyes. There is a bright red flush on her cheeks.

Paul Bakkes looks at her for a long while before he says anything.

"What do you want?" he finally asks without answering her greeting.

"Uncle Paul knows me. I am Helena de Vos and I would like to chat with Uncle Paul for a few words if I may."

"About what? I have no time..."

"I know that Uncle Paul is very busy and that Uncle Paul has no time for my Pa or any of his people. But this matter is very important, and if it is at all possible..."

"Very important! Imagine... No, look here, the only thing I will talk to you about, woman, is to tell you this. You stay away from Schalk in the future. Do you understand? There is nothing more to talk about..."

He walks back and wants to slam the door in her face.

"Alright, I am willing to stay away from him, Uncle Paul," Helena de Vos says suddenly quickly, "provided Uncle can convince me that there is a good reason, provided Uncle allows me to chat about the matter for a while. If Uncle still insists that I must stay away from him then..."

Helena speaks so quickly that she is almost out of breath. However, she does succeed in preventing the old man from closing the door. He looks at her attentively for a moment. The thick, loose skin on his neck moves nervously as the muscles beneath it contract. From under his shaggy, snow-white eyebrows, he glares at her. Finally, he almost barks it out at her.

"Alright then, woman, say what you have to say!"

"Thank you very much, Uncle Paul, may I come in?" However, she doesn't wait for permission from him but walks straight past him to the living room. She takes a seat on an arm chair and takes off her hand gloves.

In the doorway of the room, the large, bulky old man stands waiting.

“I don’t have much time,” he says.

“Uncle Paul, Schalk told me that Uncle Paul will not be well-disposed towards me. Of course, I also know about the animosity between you and Father, but I don’t know what the reason is. If I could know what it is, I might be able to reconcile myself better to your animosity. Don’t you think that I might have the right to know that?”

The old man looks at her for a while with somber, smoldering eyes, then he makes a scornful sound through his nose and he walks into the living room as if he intends to walk straight through to the other door without answering her request. However, with his hands clasped behind his back, he stops halfway and suddenly turns to her.

“Do you want to tell me that Hendrik de Vos has never informed you... ? Or maybe he won’t either, because he’s a low, despicable scoundrel...!”

“Unfortunately, that’s all the answer I get from him when I talk about Uncle Paul,” Helena answers calmly. “I thought Uncle Paul was perhaps a more reasonable person and might be able to tell me something more.”

“Alright, I will!” he barks at her suddenly and walks closer. “Your father is a coward and a scoundrel. Forty years ago, when he and I were both still youths, we worked together in a shop in Paarl. I will tell you the story in detail, since you want to know it now. We worked there together in the shop and money went missing. What happened to it, I don’t know to this day. They said I took it, but before Heaven, as I stand here... but, in any case, you have nothing to do with that. I tell you they accused me of the theft and your father is the one who is responsible for me being sent to prison. Yes, now you know this if your father hasn’t already told you. But I don’t care, everyone can know it. I was innocent and your father was responsible for me being punished. It was only five pounds, but I worked like a black man with a shovel and pick for two months. Do you understand? That’s the kind of man your father is...!” Helena does not answer this. She has already heard this same story from her father. However, he told her that he had nothing more to do with the whole matter than to report the loss of the money. He did not know who had taken it and he had no suspicion against anyone. He and Paul Bakkes and three other boys worked together in the large shop and the