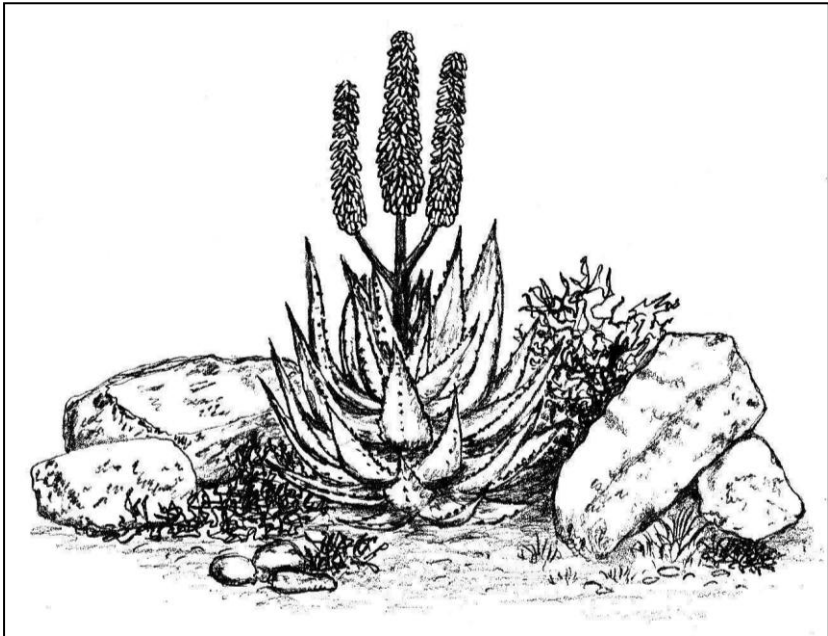


Ben and Boet

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Ben and Boet

4

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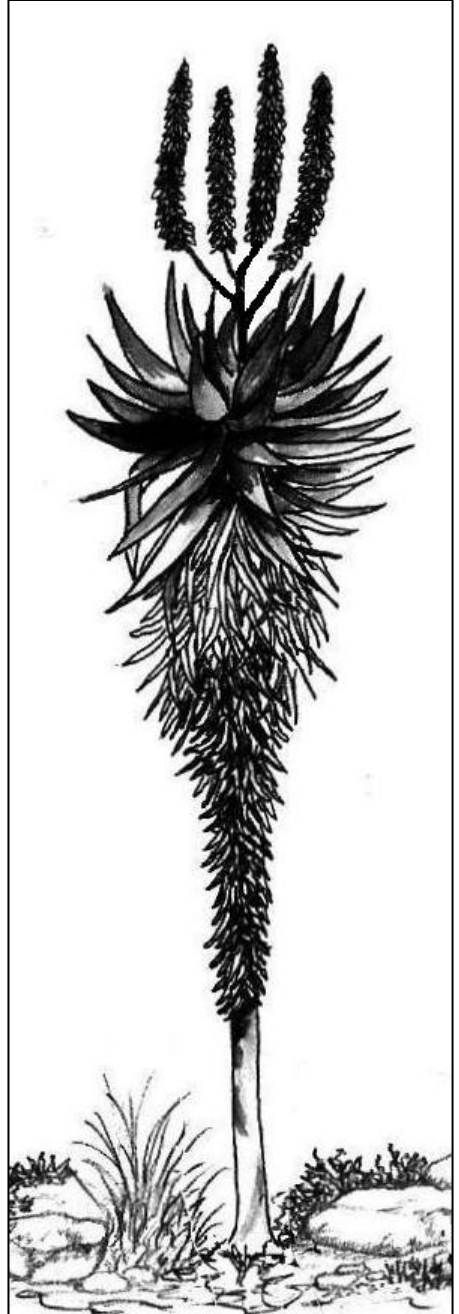
This book belongs to.....

Story by Fiona Hobson. Drawings by Heather Oberholzer. Pictures of dogs borrowed from 'Jock of the Bushveld'.

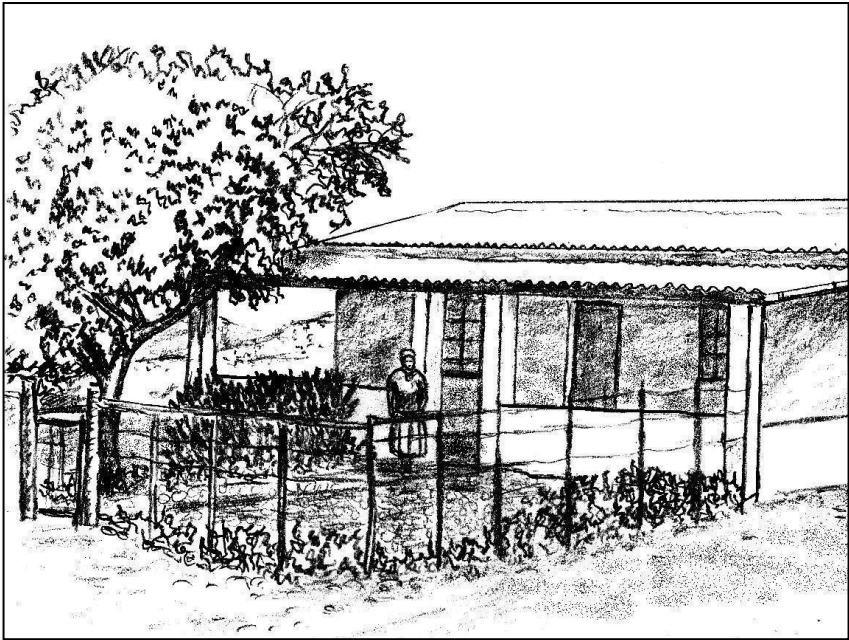
On the farm

School had broken up for the holidays, and Ben and Boet were happy because they were going to the farm together.

Boet's parents lived on a farm. During the school term he boarded with his mother's sister in town, but now he was going home, and Ben was going with him. Boet felt very excited. He always loved having Ben come home with him to the farm.



Boet's mother, Hester, was at home when they got there. She was glad to see them. Boet's father, David, was not there, as he was busy in the veld.



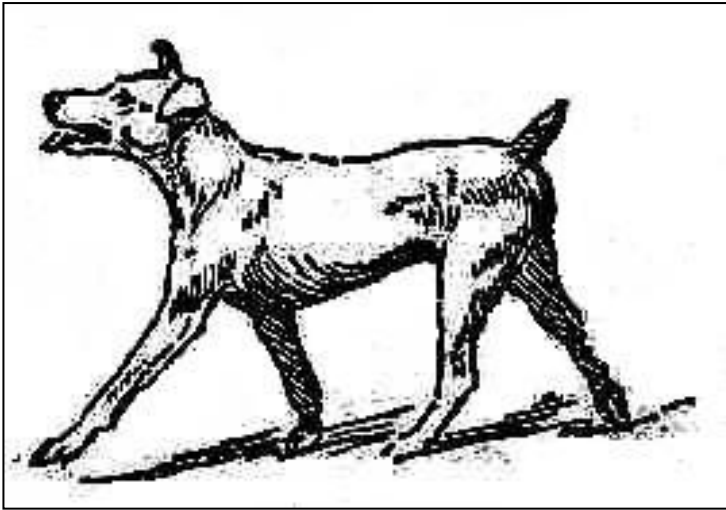
Boet's dog Bennie ran to meet them. He was a young light-brown dog that looked just like Ben's dog Witvoet, but without a white foot.

"Hello Bennie!" said Ben. "Look how big you have grown!"

"Yes," laughed Boet, "he was just a little puppy when you gave him to me. He has grown well."

Ben smiled en stroked the dog's head.

"Bennie!" he said. "You're nice and lively! And friendly too! If your ma could see you now she would be very proud of you!"



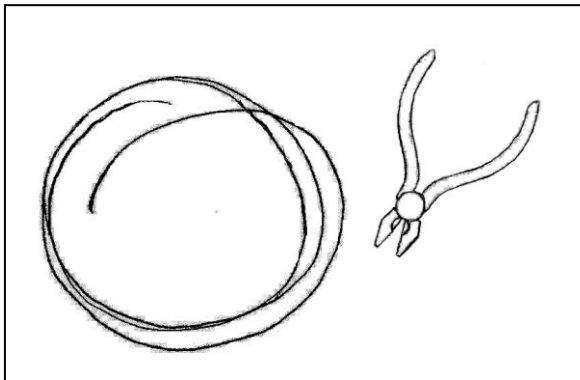
They laughed. Boet was really glad that Ben had given him one of Witvoet's puppies.

Hester gave them something to eat. It was

delicious, but they ate quickly, because there was something important that they wanted to do. They had made plans for this holiday.

Behind the shed there was a pile of old pieces of wire. Boet's father had said that they might go and look for bits of wire there.

Ben and Boet had big plans for this holiday. They wanted to make a new kind of wire car. A lorry, a big, long lorry, the best wire car that was ever made. And they wanted to start straight away.



The new wire car

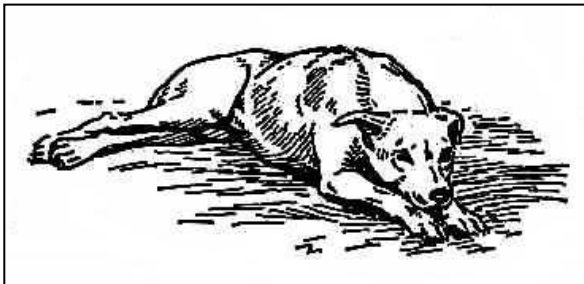


Ben and Boet were sitting on the grass under a tree near Boet's house. Next to them lay all the pieces of wire that they had collected for making the new wire car.

There are many different kinds of wire. Thick wire, thin wire, wire that can easily bend, and wire that is very stiff. To make a wire car you need many different kinds of wire.

Ben and Boet began to build their lorry, working slowly and carefully with the wire. They cut and bent the thick wire, and bound everything together with small pieces of thin wire that they wound round and round. Again they were using a pair of pliers. This time they were Boet's father's pliers.

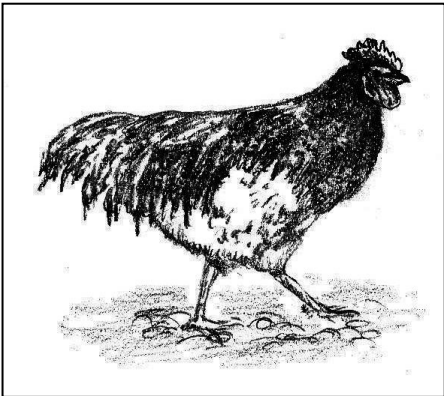
As before, a dog was sitting with them - this time it was Boet's dog, Bennie, sitting with them there under the tree.



For the long sides of the lorry they needed long pieces of thick wire that must be perfectly straight. First they straightened the wire by hand, and then they would use a hammer to make it even straighter. They would lay the piece of wire on a big flat stone and hammer it straight.



The dog lay watching them as they worked. Every now and then Boet would speak to Bennie, and pat his head.



In front of the house a few chickens were walking about looking for food. A big colourful cock strutted about amongst the hens.

Ben noticed that the chickens were not afraid of Bennie. They walked about quite near him, pecking at the ground.

"Why doesn't Bennie chase the chickens?" asked Ben.

Boet smiled. "My father is good with dogs," he said. "He has taught Bennie to be obedient. He's taught him that he mustn't chase the chickens. He wants to, but he knows he mustn't."

Ben and Boet used strong thick wire to make the back of their lorry. They wanted it to have a long deep back. It must be strong too. They knew exactly how this wire car must look. They felt excited about their big lorry.

The baby chicks

Ben was busy cutting a piece of wire when he heard a strange sound. He looked up. There next to the house he saw a hen. It was she who had made the funny noise. She looked very fat. Ben had never seen a hen as fat as that. She was sitting still, as fat and round as a big ball of feathers.

"Look at that chicken," Ben said to Boet. "She looks so funny."

Boet looked up. "I know that one," he said. "She is broody. She has a nest full of eggs there in the bushes behind the house."

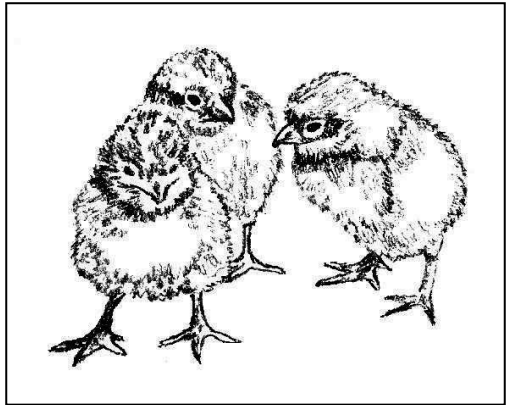
While they were watching her, suddenly her feathers moved a bit. It looked as if something was hiding in her feathers.

Ben and Boet sat watching. For a moment the wire car was forgotten. The pliers and hammer

lay still.

The fat hen made that strange sound in her throat again, and shuffled forward. Suddenly Ben could not believe his eyes. It looked as if the hen had exploded!

Out from under her feathers tiny things came running, a whole lot of small yellow creatures with short little legs, moving fast.



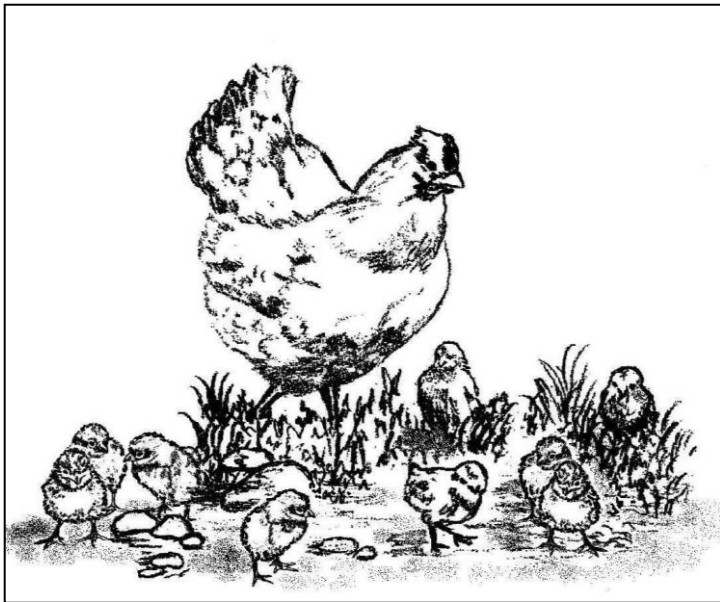
"Little chickens!" laughed Boet. "Her eggs have hatched!"

"There are so many!" said Ben, laughing too because he was so surprised.

The baby chicks were beautiful. Their legs moved so fast under their soft little bodies

that you could hardly see them.

The mother hen pecked at the ground, and scratched with her foot. Again she made that funny sound in her throat. The baby chicks came to see what she was pecking at. It looked as if she was teaching them to peck.



Bennie lifted his head and looked at them.

"They're cute, hey Bennie!" laughed Boet. "Their mom is talking to them. She's clucking to her

chicks."

The hen saw the dog looking at them. Again she made a noise in her throat, and straight away all the little yellow chicks ran to her. They dived in under her feathers and disappeared.

Ben and Boet laughed.

"Now she looks just like a fat hen sitting in the sun," said Ben. " You would never know that there were chickens under her feathers!"

They took up the pliers and the hammer again and worked in the shade under the tree, cutting and hammering, bending and winding the wire. Slowly and purposefully Ben and Boet worked on their new wire car.

Bennie and the monkeys

Ben and Boet were in the veld. They had been fetching wood for Hester, and were now ready to go home. But first they were resting a bit.



The sun was hot. They sat under a tree. Next to them lay the bundles of wood that they had collected.

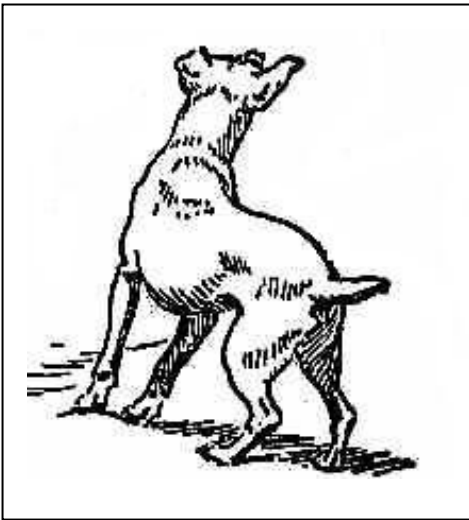
There was no wind at all. The day was hot and

still, but it was lovely and cool in the shade under the tree.

Bennie was there too. He had gone with them to the veld. Now he lay with his nose on his paws and waited.



Suddenly he lifted up his head. He had seen something. He was looking at a tree quite a distance away.



"What is it, Bennie?" asked Boet. "Can you see something?"

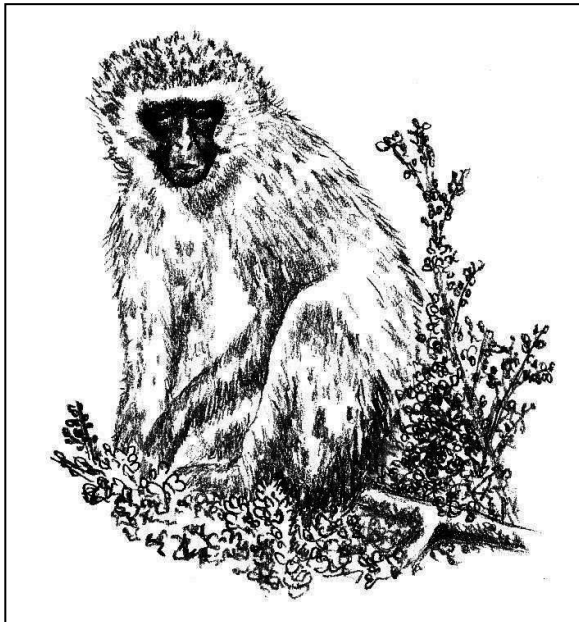
Bennie stood up, still looking at the tree.

Ben and Boet looked too.

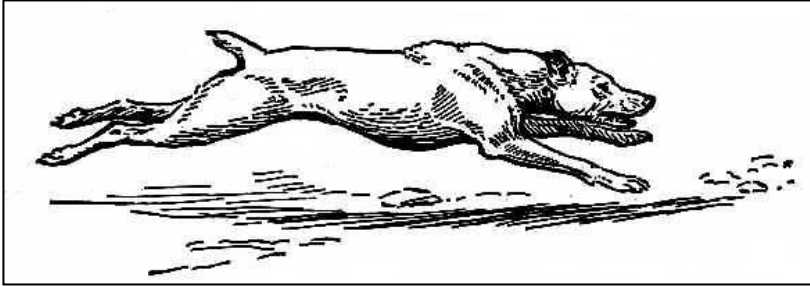
Far away in the veld stood a tree with small green leaves. High up in the tree one of its branches was shaking. There was something in the tree.

It was something small and round and grey, with a dark face. A monkey's face!

"It's a monkey, Bennie!" laughed Boet. "He's looking at us. Go chase him away!"



Bennie loved chasing monkeys. He took off like a shot.



The face in the tree disappeared. Then the whole tree was shaking. The tree was full of monkeys! Off they went!

Bennie was very fast, but the monkeys were too fast for him. He chased after them, barking and barking. Ben and Boet just saw clouds of dust as the monkeys ran away.

Soon they had all gone. Bennie came back.

"Was that fun, Bennie?" laughed Boet. "Was it fun to chase the monkeys?"

The dog stood panting with his tongue hanging out. He looked as if he was smiling.

He came and stood next to Boet in the shade under the tree.

Boet patted his head.

"You're a good dog, Bennie!" he said. "Just like your mom!"

Ben and Boet laughed together.



Paths in the veld

Ben and Boet walked home and put their bundles of wood down at the wood pile. Right away they looked for the pliers, because they wanted to finish their big lorry. But the pliers were gone.

Boet's mother explained to him that his father, David, had taken the pliers to fix a fence in the veld. Ben and Boet would have to wait until he came home before they could work further on their wire lorry.

They felt very disappointed. It is hard to be patient when you are in a hurry to finish something.

Luckily they had brought their old wire cars to the farm with them. They took the old cars and began to drive them up and down on the bare ground in front of the house.

The chickens did not like it, and ran away.

Bennie lay under the tree and watched.

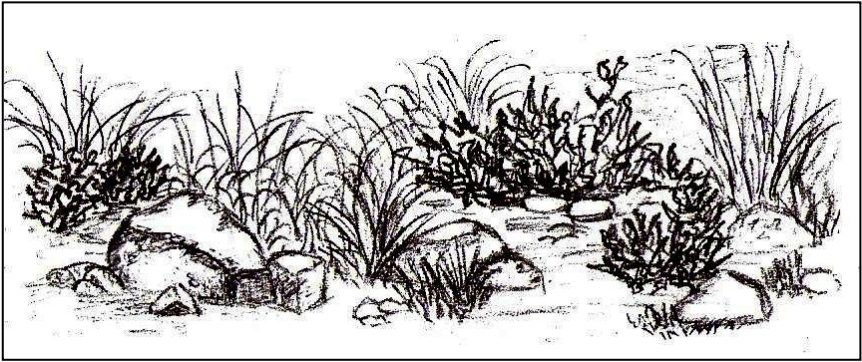


Ben and Boet quickly got bored with driving up and down like that.

"I've got a plan," said Boet. "Let's make roads in the veld for our wire cars."

Just behind the house was the veld. Small grey Karoo bushes, clumps of dry grass and a few thorn trees and pruin trees grew there on the rough stony ground.

Boet borrowed his mother's broom, and began to sweep a path between the little Karoo bushes. After a while, Hester came out of the house,



looking for her broom. She saw that the boys had taken it. She saw that they were using her good broom in the veld near the house.

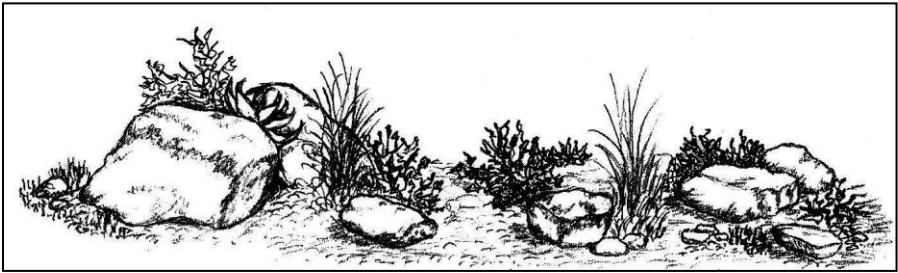
“Boet!” she called, “No! What are you doing with my broom?”

Boet brought it back and explained to his mother that they wanted to make roads for their wire cars.

Hester shook her head. “That broom of mine will be damaged. Find something else to make roads with. Something tougher.”

Ben and Boet wondered what to do. Then they

remembered that there was a pile of old corrugated iron sheets lying behind the shed. They knew that they would be allowed to use a few of them. Quickly they ran there, and chose for themselves each a small sheet of iron that was just the right width for making roads for the wire cars.



Between the Karoo bushes and clumps of dry grass there was just bare ground and stones. Ben and Boet took the old iron sheets and began to scrape paths for the wire cars.

Bennie walked along behind them. He did not understand what they were doing, but he wanted to be with them.

They made roads that curved, roads that were long and straight, and roads with turning places for the cars. The paths crossed over one another here and there, and Ben and Boet laughed a lot.

Between the little Karoo bushes and veld trees, between the aloes and the rocks, the new roads lay like long dusty snakes on the ground.



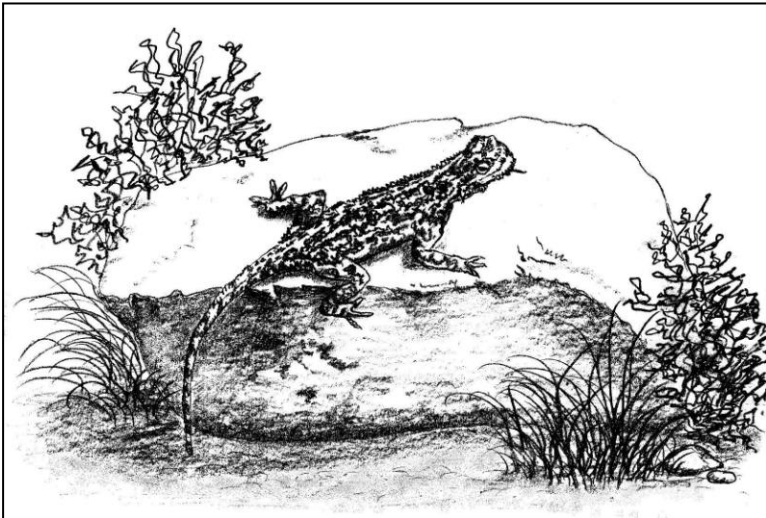
Ben and Boet swept all the stones out of the way with the pieces of iron. The new roads

looked nice with the neat rows of stones lining their edges.

It was a hot day. Boet was standing still, resting for a moment when he suddenly noticed a lizard sitting on a rock.

"Come and look here, Ben!" he called. Ben and Bennie both came.

The lizard sat dead still in the lovely warm sun. He was brown, the same colour as the stone he was sitting on.

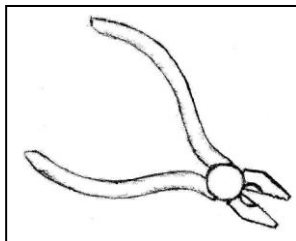


"He thinks he's invisible!" said Ben. "He thinks we can't see him because he's sitting so still."

Bennie came closer to sniff at the lizard, and immediately the little animal was gone, so quickly that it looked as if he was there one moment and had just disappeared the next.

Ben and Boet laughed and went on making their paths.

"Our roads must be wide enough for the big lorry," said Boet, while he was working. He kept thinking about that big lorry. He was very keen to finish it, but they had to wait for his father to come home first. You can't make a wire car if you don't have pliers.



The lorry

In the late afternoon, Ben and Boet went home. Ben saw right away that Uncle David was sitting on the stoep.

"Your dad has come home!" he said excitedly to Boet. They were happy because they knew that the pliers would also now be there.

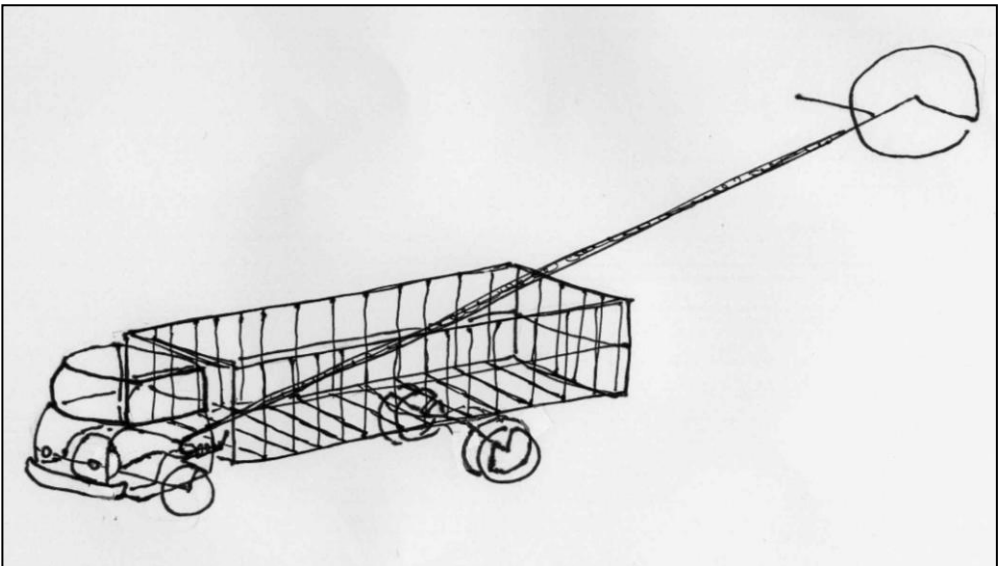
They greeted Boet's father, and he smiled as he gave them the pliers. He knew they were keen to use them.

Ben and Boet went to sit on the grass under the tree in front of the house. Many different pieces of wire were lying next to them, as well as a flat stone and the hammer. The dog was also there with them, and the chickens, but Ben and Boet saw nothing except their big lorry. The lorry was nearly finished.

They hammered and cut and bent the stiff

thick wire until their hands were sore. They fastened everything with small bits of thin wire that they wound round and round. They made sure that the wheels and axels could turn easily. They attached the steering wheel with its long wire to the lorry.

The lorry was finished at last. It had a long deep back that would not need cardboard to make it strong. Ben and Boet had strengthened it with wire. They would be able to load



anything into it.

Ben and Boet tested the new lorry on the yard near the house. The wheels turned beautifully. Everything worked well. They were now very keen to test the lorry on their new veld roads.

"You can drive the lorry first," said Boet. "I'll use my old car."

"We'll take turns," said Ben.

The sun was setting when Ben and Boet drove their wonderful lorry on the new veld roads for the first time. Ben held the steering wheel and set off. He felt very excited.

The new lorry went in front of the old wire car, so Ben and Boet could both see how good the lorry looked. They went faster and faster. The wire car and the great long lorry raced along the windy veld roads until dust was hanging in the air everywhere.

This new lorry was the best wire car that Ben and Boet had ever made. It was also the best wire car that they had ever seen.

They felt very proud and very happy.

