

The Adventure of Tim

Lengthening shadows walk beside me,
As the sun goes down to slumber,
How often have I seen this drama?
Am I losing track of Time and number?

The moon now out in all its splendour,
The stars too many to count,
A relieved sigh is what I hear,
As my horse I prepare to dismount.

An arduous journey in sweltering heat,
For both man and beast,
A deep desire to rest our heads,
And gently fall asleep.

To dream perchance of a better tomorrow,
Different from today,
Cooler climes and mountain rides,
I heard my horse say.

Travelling now for o'er a week,
With never a stop for the night,
Keeping pace with all that moved,
Felt like the speed of light.

A date to be kept with destiny,
Was the driving force for the ride,
I had to get to the king of Zulu,
With the horse by my side.

'Twas a devilish ride all the way,
Through the heart of the African sands,
Trampled woods and jungle drums,
We had plenty on our hands.

The king he was called Iguana,
But a lizard he was not,
A genial, gentle, giant,
A battle he'd never fought.

He loved his people he loved the country,
He loved the flavour of the land,
He loved all that came his way,
He loved to take a stand.

The stand he took was getting us there,
Would we ever get out?
Would he help at the end of the day
If he faced total rout?

That was then the question in mind,
As my eyes began dreamily to droop,
I needed to think thus needed sleep,
In order to quietly regroup.

Dreams came fast and furious,
As sleep eluded me,
My mate had no such issues,
As I could hear and see.

Dead to the world for all he could care,
He was snoring away,
His dreams if any must have been good,
At the end of this weary day.

My plan laid to get there and out,
I now felt a whole lot better,
Up at five to beat the heat,
I wrote the king a letter.

Your Majesty , I said,
With due deference and respect,
We're both a little tired,
What else could we expect?

We still have a long way to go,
To get to Zululand,
We're not even sure where we are,
By looking at the blooming sand.

Sure its the African desert,
But we're without a map,
And we've just woken up,
From a much- needed wonderful nap.

I'm writing this note to tell you, Your Majesty,
That we are on our way,
I'll have the pigeons deliver it to you,
For they seem to know where Zulu lay.

Somewhere by the bay they said,
And have asked us to follow them
We will do that and surely get lost,
Then so will your super gem.

That was indiscreet, I admit,
For that was our mission's aim,
To help the king find his stone,
And for us to earn money and fame.

A pigeon found with homing instincts,
And we tied the note to its leg,
We looked at the skies and the clouds above,
And earnestly began to beg.

For the clouds to clear so we could follow,
The path of the pigeon on a mission,
'Cos with rain and thunder,
We'd be left with little or no vision.

I asked the horse if he could fly,
And true to his horsy self,
The wag of the tail and a shake of the head,
No, said he, he was a horse not an elf.

That's not what I asked ,
I said angrily, I asked if you could fly,
I'm unaware of how elves move,
And whether they laugh or cry.

This tete-a- tete going nowhere,
I decided to take the plunge,
And while he was struggling with the saddle,
I was on his back with a lunge.

The pigeon away we galloped along,
My eyes glued to the sky,
Couldn't afford to look away,
'Cos to the pigeon we'd then say goodbye.

The worst of my fears now seemingly true,
For the rain began to fall,
For even before I said, I knew,
Looked like we'd lost it all.

We'd lost the pigeon and all are hopes,
We might as well take to skipping ropes,
And hope from here to Zulu,
To find the king and his wife Lulu.

But losers we weren't and faith we had,
In the good things to follow the gem,
For we knew we'd find that piece of rock,
And then we'd be well, rich, ahem!

Spurred on by hope but frankly more,
We raced at frenetic pace,
The ground we hoofed and simply tore,
No sight of the pigeons face.

I hoped the pigeon would find the king,
And deliver the message to him,
Or tell some blessed underling,
The plight of me and Tim.

Tim was my so far unnamed mate,
But i never called him by his name,
Horses have names and I know that ,
But we played another game.

The language we spoke didn't need names,
So they were never used,
And if ever I called him by his name,
He simply refused (to answer).

Nights and days just lost their place,
In the general scheme of things,
We were flying all the time,
With the happiness that flying brings.

There were moments of truth when all looked lost,
Then hope appeared from somewhere,
Burnt by the sun and bitten by frost,
We engaged in earnest prayer.

Horses pray ! Do they really?
The answer I didn't know,
Didn't matter, did it? I thought,
For horses are mostly for show.

I saw the look on Tim's face,
And knew that he felt hurt,
By the doubt I'd cast on his hope and faith,
But how did he know I'd flung dirt?

Tim was altogether special you see,
A magical wonderful fellow,
He wasn't the usual brown or black,
He was a golden yellow.

Yellow horses, come on man,
You'd say in irony,
Tell it the marines if you will,
Your cock and bull story.

To get back now to the story main,
We still hadn't a clue,
We'd lost the pigeon we could see,
Where now was Zulu?

Tim was thirsty and I was hungry,
Famished to the core,
He got lucky when it rained,
I kept looking for a store.

Where would I find a store now,
At this unearthly hour?
In the middle of the jungle,
When I spied a turret tower.

Pangs of hunger overtaken by fear,
What lay in store ahead?
Who would want to shoot Tim and I,
And who who want us dead.

Two harmless, happy-go-lucky mercenaries,
Fortune-seekers to the fore,
Roped in by a greedy king,
Gold-diggers to the core.

Little did I know then the strange ways of fate,
Of things not being what they seem,
Of illusions, conundrums and the like,
Of reality that seems like a dream.

Of Time when it hangs still,
Resistant to calls from the future,
Immune to the past,
Like wounds that need no suture.

Was that just a masquerade?
Someone trying to marmelise,
In jest, in fun, or who knows?
Did I really the enormity of this weird exercise?

Softly, softly, gently tread,
Careful horse this place I dread,
Who knows who's other side?
Let's give them a berth that's really wide.

Come hither, hearken said a voice gruff,
Where art thought headed gentle man?
Gentle you appear for sure, portly too,
How come your horse is not like you?

How would my horse be like me?
For starters we are different, can't you see,
I have two and he's got four,
I'm talking legs but I wouldn't want more.

If it's color that you'd speaking of,
I wouldn't comment not on my life,
Horses run races of a different kind,
No blacks, no browns, just run without strife,

Come in man, said the castle-owner,
Who now was this tell me tim?
Someone you know that I don't, I asked
Then introduce me to him.

Insouciance personified,
No idea, he calmly replied,
If the ring to you is a warning bell,
Let's beat it friend, this could be hell.

The tremors I felt now passed to Tim,
His veil of bravado wore thin,
Kindred souls think alike,
Save life and let the other win.

I looked at him, he looked at me,
I thought rather saucily ,
Comeuppance of another kind,
Come on Tim, a way we have to find.

I'm going back, says he,
"You're doing what", was my anxious ask,
I'm just the village hack,
And if you don't know that, you deserve the sack.

Fear breeds emotions of varying kinds,
Insolence, arrogance, cowardice all,
Tim I knew was not this kind,
All he had was a mare on his mind.

Wouldn't blame Tim really you know,
I wasn't far from thinking alike,
It was dark , it was night,
There was candle light,
Romantic but for the damned turret in sight.

However intrepid you may be friend,
Cautioned Tim as we took the bend,
Discretion always better than valour,
Better rejoice than later holler.

Words of wisdom from a pony's mouth,
Must cut him down to size ,
To big for his hoofs I began to think,
He might walk away with the prize.

Its then that I saw that melting tear,
The one reserved for undiluted fear,
A new resolve then took shape,
As Isocanthus stood agape.

This then was the rival king,
The one who knew no law,
Looking for the same bit of little rock,
Like Clinton from Arkansas.

Isocanthus was a generous ruler,
Who loved his people much,
Just so long as their was arm's distance,
And on one got within touch.

He welcomed me and also Tim,
With the same degree of affection,
For he obviously knew why we were here,
Thanks to the pigeon's slight deflection.

We can all go off course,
As golfers are wont to do,
But a trusted bird betraying word,
Was something I hadn't heard.

The look on the face of dear old Tim,
I shan't ever forget,
He looked as though he'd staked his life,
And was about to lose the bet,

Now the homing bird had found a home,
But one of a different kind,
She'd found instead a rival castle,
With riches on her mind.

An awful double-crossed feeling,
Surged within us both,
We'd been had used and sold,
By a pigeon we began to loathe.

Of the two of us, Tim and I,
He was the volatile one,
His ups and downs and swings of mood,
Added to the fun.

Thoughts of danger flew out of the window,
As he settled for revenge,
That two-timing little good for nothing.
Don't worry he said, she'll 'sing.

Worrying I was but not for the bird,
Who'd badly let us down,
Isocanthus was the man of the moment,
The king with the golden crown.

Hobson's choice now stared at me,
But with no threat to Tim,
Of course, for Hobson it was nearest the door,
Or none at all for a horse.

I wasn't about to trade my horse,
And pay ransom to the king,
I had larger issues on the screen,
Like my phone that refused to ring.

Gorblimey, I thought, that is disaster,
For now I have no choice,
I'll simply have to 'nego' with 'Iso' ,
When I heard his booming voice.

Come hither you , he said,
To no one in particular,
Did he wan't Tim or me,
I wasn't particularly sure.

Your Majesty, I dared to speak,
At your service we are,
What is it you want of us?
For we come from places afar.

Nothing greater than the humble truth,
When faced with a fait accompli,
Tongue- in- cheek, I said to no one,
Lets see, maybe, he'll set us free.

Ofcourse we weren't captured yet,
At least not technically,
Not 'Pows' as of now,
No calls for clemency,

I mustered courage to an encouraging snort,
From the one I loved so dearly,
Iso, old chap, lets cut out the crap,
I didn't say , but nearly (did) .

O, gracious king, O great benefactor,
O, ruler of this universe,
Tell us, master, what you desire of us,
We will do it in beautiful verse,

Tim, a poet, I thought to myself,
What will he compose?
And I can't write to save my life,
What will I write in prose?

Banish these facetious thoughts, Ashok,
I finally said to myself,
Come up with a solid plan,
To extricate yourself, and Tim too,
(an after thought, shame on you,)

That's when the sun finally shone,
And clarity dawned on me,
The stars left a dark night,
And I saw eternity,

Tim looked scared and bemused,
For he hadn't the foggiest clue,
Off what there was in my head,
Or the mischief I was up to,

Plan A was there and so was a B ,
But there was also one in the bonnet,
You know the adage of the little bee,
That stings but not in sonnet.

Your Majesty, I humbly said,
With all the gravity I could command,
Newton was not there, thank, god,
Now tell us what you demand?

The sternest expression I ever saw,
On a regal human face,
Now turned disarmingly demure,
I thought I had won the race.

'I know', pronounced the solemn king,
What brings you to these parts,
The ignoble purpose of your journey,
Let's get that clear for starts.

We are a very large continent,
And very proud of that,
But we are also small, close and cohesive,
And cricket we play with a straight bat.

Polices pursued are beneficial to Africa,
Home to all of us,
The sermon continued uninterrupted,
No minuses just plus.

Duly reverent we waited,
For this tripe to finish,
Wondering where the pigeon was,
And how we'd whack it and relish.

But how could we be sure,
That she had let us down,
And that this ugly burly fellow,
Wasn't the real clown.

To find the pigeon was our prime task,
To get to the bottom of it all,
We'd tackle the king and his cronies,
And ensure an ignominious fall.

I know, he said, you'r bound for Zulu,
To help locate the 'stone',
And so I need to warn you,
That 'stone's' no ordinary 'stone'.

It's magical powers are known to all,
Who live on this planet,
It's a healer, a wheeler and also a dealer,
The stone's an artful gadget.

Fire it spews from every pore,
The flames reach the sky,
All who get within a mile of it,
Will sooner than later die.

Why on earth is he telling us this,
Tim's eyes seemed to say,
I wondered too, I must confess,
At the unravelling of this play.

Let him put his foot in his mouth,
As the idiom goes, I thought,
Nothing is ever ever sold,
Until its actually bought,

The tirade on, the storm full blast,
His hand he'd over-played,
Braggadacio, friends, never pays,
And Tim and I were made.

We'd seen through the scheming dodger,
And his sordid game,
Fear dissipated, hope re-ignited,
Isocanthus was all but lame.

What silent rejoicing does the heart feel,
When freed from the shackle of the chains
Of anxiety , apprehension and fear,
And relief from the torture of pains.

I tell you what, says Isocanthus,
I know you guys must be good,
For never would that Zulu despot,
Have invited you unless he understood,
That the two of you were truly good?

The dangers of your expedition ,
I have now clearly explained,
And I hope you understand,
My relations with Zulu are grand.

That roly-poly zulu guy,
Is a jolly good friend of mine,
We fish, we hunt, we move together,
Games we play are simply divine,

Like the Arabs who have their falcons,
We also have our birds,
No prettier sight than pigeons,
And these, fellows, are not empty words.

Thus spake the mighty one,
Of the games that he played,
And in doing so,
His shenanigans he displayed

Innocence and a king hardly make a pair,
Courtcraft by its very nature, demands political flair ,
Inflated egos ,over-sized ambition and more,
Politics round the world is likened to a whore,
Tim swore.

The harsh warning now replaced,
By gentle , mellow advice,
'ISO' seemed to have realised,
It always pays to be nice.

What followed then was a sumptuous meal,
With all his friends in tow,
In shock and awe we finally saw,
The pigeon, that so and so.

Man and beast have lived together,
All their blooming lives,
So Tim with me and the ' pig' with 'Iso',
Should be no surprise.

The audacity of the move,
Was gigantic to say the least,
All this can wait, thought wise ol' Tim,
Let's first partake of the feast.

How right he was, was borne out by
The ticking of the clock,
So absorbed were we in the business of eating,
No one thought of the 'rock'.

The mind too needs respite,
From the snares of its own creations,
The interruption the king welcomed,
Giving him time for machinations.

Be my guests, said he,
Stay for as long as you wish,
The pigeon will be your guardian,
And my lake has abundant fish.

Yes, we'd come ' fishing',
Of that that we were sure,
But Zulu was the place,
And the pigeon rottten to the core.

We were now searching for an opportune moment,
To catch and nail the traitor,
That dirty little rat called a pigeon,
For whom we'd found a crater.

To charge her with treason,
And after the trial,
Bury here alive,
If we had good reason.

She's cost us our freedom,
Says a grim- looking Tim,
And looking at the scenario,
I couldn't agree more with him.

It would buy us some time,
If we played our cards well,
Iso seemed dangerous,
That we could tell.

Your Majesty, I said,
You are wise and sagacious,
Your wisdom unparalleled,
That Zuhu guy must be rapacious.

Why else would he want to mess with that stone?
And ensnare us in the process,
Take the flesh off our bone,

The twinkle in his devious eyes,
Too obvious to ignore,
We played the game of charades,
Hoping to find out more.

What had he in mind?
For the stone and for us,
We needed to know,
With a minimum of fuss.

We are at your service,
Tonge- in - cheek, I said,
You have been so magnanimous,
We'll stay here till we're dead.

You must be tired, he said,
Time you took some rest,
I have a cottage by the lake,
So you go have a 'fest'.

We need to sleep, Kind Sir,
And fest another day,
Maybe this dear pigeon,
Would kindly show us the way.

A master stroke thought I,
But Tim disagreed,
For he knew better,
The non-human breed.

The pigeon took us there,
But took the aeriell route,
We could only walk,
In hoof and heavy boot.

Dilemma, despair and what have you,
Is the fate of those who don't think,
She'd go us where she wanted ,
With little more than a blink.

Beaten brains need restful nights,
For batteries to recharge,
Sleep and hope and dream,
Of better things at large.

'Leave it to me', Said Tim,
To no one in particular,
I thought he was asleep,
Till I saw the jugular.

The subconscious is a big,
Giveaway, we all know that,
And if you talk in your sleep,
That settles that.

I'll do as I please,
Is what I heard next,
I felt the sneeze,
As he began reading a text.

Holy cow, wonder of wonders,
What on earth was this?
Where was I, wake me up,
Something was amiss.

Reading, speaking human horses,
What next should I expect?
Writing to complete the triad,
And horses would command respect.

Overtaken by fear and trepidation,
Wake up Tim, I said,
You know not what you sleeping state,
Nor what you just read.

I do said he,
I've know it all along,
Text is fairly boring,
I even break into song.

This was now much too much,
For I felt like a fool,
That sobbing little cry baby,
On the first day in school.

He'd kept his little secret,
Quietly interred somewhere,
And now I also knew,
The secret that lay bare.

The next, few hours,
Spent in debate,
There is the inextricable link,
Between love and some hate.

With so much at stake,
And so little time,
We decided to bury the hatchet,
And play out this pantomime.

Tim of the changed views,
Unfoisted from outside,
Can the inside also ever foist,
I wondered?

Does the ego take you for a ride?

Philosophy is best left to empty minds,
While we had plenty on ours,
We had to get a move on,
And precious were the hours.

Bury the hatchet, having been said,
The pigeon was now secure,
We needed it to get us out and then to do some more.

For Zulu we had to find,
An act of ardent faith,
We weren't promise breakers,
And so would Tim sayeth.

The cuckoo bird, the crowing cock,
And sunrise was announced,
Now where the devil was the good old' pig'?
Tim haughtily pronounced.

Right beside our pretty cottage,
Was its pretty home,
Where it lived in isolation,
As spies do in Rome.

With ginger steps we craftily moved,
Crawling on all fours,
Normal that for Tim,
Ofcourse, but my elbows had sores.

We got the 'pig' by the scruff,
But gently shook her awake,
The look was consternation,
'Spare me for god's sake'

Mercy is the prerogative of the Almighty above,
Usurped occasionally by Man,
Frugally dispensed from time to time,
As only he undecorously can,
And does.

Listen, you two-timing bird,
Tell us why you did it?
We'll forgive you if your'e honest,
And from now you do your bit.

Temptation was my folly,
Solemnly said she,
He promised me a home in the sky,
And that was too much for me,
To ignore.

We were generous beings,
Kind and sympathetic,
Worry not, I said,
her countenance pathetic.

Tears I cannot bear,
Hankies to the fore,
Just tell us you'll help us,
We don't want stories no more.

Time now for breakfast,
And a bit of repast,
Needed to hurry,
Needed to move fast.

Gobbledygook, what a load of rubbish,
How could you call that food,
If it wasn't for the enemies around,
We could have been horribly rude.

The 'pig' told us what happend to her,
How she was trapped by Iso's men,
There were two she said and then there were ten,
But she was captured by the flying hen.

This really now was getting entangled,
Too much magic and patience thin,
Lets leave the hen out of this,
Else we'll never get out of this dustbin.

'Lets hatch a plan minus the hen'
Says Tim now at his wisest,
We have the 'pig' with us,
And she'll surely do her best.

What followed now was a secret,
A meeting of two desperate souls,
Too many cooks was an old story,
So we left the 'pig' out of the folds.

Strategy is the essence of war,
As we huddled for serious session,
Discreet we simply had to be,
To not leave Iso with any impression.

Good ol' Tim,
He with the whim,
Fancy was his thing,
Let's change verse
Cant get worse,
Three lines may good luck bring.

We went about,
Without a shout,
Our plan for escape,
And hoped and prayed,
With tempers frayed
The hen now wouldn't turn ape.

In secret hush,
In gardens lush,
The designs for freedom were laid,
Between Tim and I,
No ointment, no fly,
Nothing would get put paid.

The ' pig' would fly,
Quietly by Iso and his guards,
And we would look in every corner and nook,
Innocently looking for shards.

All hell would break loose,
The hen might turn goose
God knows what 'Iso' would do,
In the melee to come,
In turmoil we'd hum,
Who was that, but who?

Tim would say, 'D 'pigs' gone'
Flew over the lawn,
Towards the west,
There's many a land
Over desert sand,
But Zulu that side's the best.

Ears would perk up,
A sudden end to ' gupshup'
And he would order the arrest,
Of the miserable renegade,
Whom he had waylaid,
And who now had flown west.

What now took place,
Brought glee to my face
For not in my wildest dreams,
Could I have imagined let alone planned
How sometimes fortune gleams.

Art follows life like a husband does a wife
As peace does after strife,
The plan we laid the one ,
Tim and I made went perfect including the maid.

She was the one looking out for fun
And she made Iso run,
And while he frolicked around with the maid and the hound,
A corner we carefully found.

From here to Zulu to meet the king
And his queen Lulu.
Led by the pigeon, I reverted to old form,
Four lines were better said a Zulu norm.

And the king we must obey,
To Iso we said goodbye,
From afar of course,
With no more than a sigh.

For tears are reserved,
For those you love,
And rain in summer,
Is like manna from above.

Led by the 'pig',
On the right path we hoped,
We followed our leader,
As with heat coped.

Tim galloped for all he was worth,
With the weight of me on his back,
O'er streams, hills and strips of sand,
Remember he was the village hack.

Forests we passed,
And dams we crossed journey's end was near,
The Zulu king wore a diamond ring and the queen
Was a mermaid with no fear.

One more nap was on the cards,
And the sun would then greet us,
Close someplace to Zululand,
With Tim and I on a bus.

The element of surprise is an essential part,
of the principles of a fight,
Incognito by bus was genius at work,
The 'pig' at last was right.

A shut eye we took,
And Tim read his book,
While the bird reconnoitered the place,
And the bus stand she found was the local football ground,
So we boarded having said grace.

At last, at last, we had arrived,
Without achieving much,
Modern times don't allow that,
Such is life, truly such.

Only standing room for poor ol' Tim,
In that ramshackled thing called a bus,
Cramped we were one on the other,
But the 'pig' was flying along with us.

To the palace, please,
Tickets for two, I said,
Keep your mouth shut, Tim,
Or else we'll both be dead.

For Zulu is the back of beyond,
And speaking horses, holy Moses,
You might as well try,
Grow apples in roses.

We finally got there,
From god knows where,
It didn't seem to matter no more,
Was this the White House?
Was the king a louse?
Was it Obama or Al Gore.

I'd got it wrong,
The boss - man had a funny name,
He was called Oblong,
And, unfortunately , he was lame.

We now knew why
He needed Tim and I
To help him with the stone,
If you can't walk
And your lingo's funny talk
You will have plenty to moan, (about).

So we were one up with the full race to go
No obstacles seen so far,
Oblong we hadn't met did he have a pet?
Would there be a limo or just a car?

The men at the gate said we were late,
The king was bristling with anger,
Look, I said, we did the best we could,
You can take the 'pig' and hang her.

You can make amends but if you fiddle with friends,
You will pay for it , no doubt,
This is genial advice
For all who eat rice
Speak softly why shout.

The story of treachery,
Of no interest to the guards,
They opened the pearly gates,
To the castle and its shady innards.

In we went escorted inside,
The hall a thousand foot wide,
The king it seemed was fully honest,
With nothing but nudity to hide.

My lines now were getting mixed up,
The 3's and 4's and the 5's
Does it really ever matter ,
I wonder,
What we do with our god- given lives.

An Oblong table with an Oblong king!
Had a nice melodic ring,
I thought Tim might want to sing,
Your Majesty,
I said, Tim here is well read,
And choirs he has led.

The silence was deafening,
The Kings eyes glistening,
I wondered if anyone was listening.
Like little Jack Horner
I coverd in a corner,
Biting my nails as I could,
Help me, O lord,
I'm going to get gored,
And Tim's just knocking on wood.

Next was a guffaw,
When the king he saw,
The pitiable state I was in,
Bring breakfast , he said,
Bring marmalade and bread,
And follow that with tonic and gin.

There were smiles all around,
For his Majesty had found,
The key to achieving success,
There's no better way,
Than to say what you have to say,
And say it during breakfast recess.

There's nothing like a meal ,
It's really a steal,
When you see what you get at the end ,
A happy lot of people,
Ready to climb a steeple,
Never mind the nefarious bend.

So meal complete,
Oblong at his seat,
And the cabinet about to meet,
We were asked to stay,
Since we were privy all the way,
And Tim was waiting for the hay.

The 'pig' she sat,
After a meal she was fat,
As the king rose to speak,
His ministers stood up,
In their hands a cup ,
As the toast to the king was proposed.

Love live his Majesty ,
What we do without his sagacity?
It's wisdom that get's you anywhere,
Where? thought Tim,
His wisdom's just whim,
And no one in the room,
Seemed to care.

The voice boomed out,
Almost a shout,
His Majesty about to reveal,
Secrets of state,
The politics of hate,
The 'burp' after that jolly good meal.

Marmalade and toast,
It wasn't chicken roast,
Murmured the speaking horse,
What was the ' burp' for,
Unless he'd had more,
On the quiet and that was worse.

Be quiet, Tim, I tremblingly said,
Before you know we'll be dead,
And it won't help that you're well-read,
The king is wise,
He'll tell no lies,
And if he does we'll see it in his eyes.

For eyes they are,
The windows to the soul,
No matter half-opened or whole,
You can lie with the tongue,
Whether Freud or Jung,
But the eyes will expose your role.

"Gentlemen and Horse",
I am here to announce the grave danger
That faces our motherland, Zulu,
Only recently exacerbated,
and I have had to call on the experience of this gentleman and one
horse . The ' Pig' seems an extra.

Both, I am advised, are the best in the business of fighting and
over powering demonic forces.

We are all aware that Zulu has recently been prey to ' attacks ' from alien
forces,
represented by the "stone"
Thus spoke Oblong

Prose is boring,
You get the book for whoring
You'll sound nice in verse,
Your Majesty, ,
This from the 'Pig'
And Tim did the gig,
And I was pleading for amnesty.

But the king was master,
The reaction was faster,
And delightful verse was to follow,
I think I'll lie down,
Get me a gown,
And don't forget the pillow.

Commotion around,
The gown couldn't be found,
So the king continued in verse,
Time is of essence,
In everyone's presence,
Proclaimed His Majesty, with a curse.

We have five days in which,
To get over the hitch,
And neutralize the demon within,
That demonic stone,
For we need a loan,
From the World Bank and that's a bitch.

We're going bankrupt,
Not because we're corrupt,
But the gods have looked away,
There's been no rain,
And awful pain,
Even though all we did was pray .

Five days he thundered,
Starting tomorrow,
For today is Sabbath you see,
Thus ended the speech,,
Little short on marrow,
But good homily.

To the barracks we went,
'Cos that's where we were sent,
'Pig', Tim and I ,
To plan for attack ,
With a 'pig' and a hack,
I wish I had Nelson's eye.

The Zulu Prime Minister,
Looked all too sinister,
But promised us all help,
What's the role of the bird?
And the horse with the word?
He asked, and we thought we heard a yelp.

Yes, that yelp was true,
And a pup that was blue,
Appeared from out of nowhere,
He was the queen's guard,
She fed it with lard,
And he seemed forever there.

He was her snooper,
Her storm -trooper,
But Nazi he was not,
He kept a close tab,
(on the cabinet)
He travelled by cab,
To meeting's that were hot.

For the king depended on his queen,
For advice on the Zulu scene,
And she was more than willing,
With the pup by her side,
She took them for a ride,
For she was in charge of the billing,

The sun went down,
On the local town,
Its name was rather funny,
It didn't really matter,
For the king was a mad -hatter,
And the town was called 'No Money'.

We now got the hang,
Of the local bang,
And what this was all about,
He'd robbed the place,
What a disgrace,
That Zulu was facing a drought.

We thought we might try,
Perhaps, on the sly,
To get the local charlatan,
And call the priest,
Organise a feast,
And pray like hell for rain.

We might get away,
Tim seemed to say,
From the ravages of the 'stone',
For if it really really rained,
(The emphasis for praying hard)
We might escape being caned .

The end of dry weather,
Rejoicing together,
The king and the queen at the reception ,
The 'stone' would be forgotten,

The whole idea was rotten,
We might get away with deception.

'Cos to go fight the 'stone',
Supernatural powers known,
Wasn't even game for a mug,
I'd rather have peace,
On an Island in Greece,
Lolling on a rug.

A new story in town,
I worried with a frown,
The saviour would likely be,
A foreigner on horse-back
The horse a village hack
The legend suggesting it was me.

Hero, I was not ,
And didn't want to be,
And a martyr now stared me in the eye.
Zulu be damned,
I shan't be hanged,
For the love of the 'stone' or a lie.

He made me the boss,
And I now at a loss,
To figure what to do,
The army at my call,
Zulu could fall,
But to my conscience I had to be true.

The stone, he said,
In a tone heavy as lead,
Was embedded in a golden rock,
Many had tried,
Many had died,
But no one could open the lock.

A lock on stone?
Tim let out a goan,
Stranger the story by the minute,
Fiction was truer,
The king wasn't poor,
And we had put our feet in it.

**NO way out,
Wouldn't help to complete the task,
The 'stone' breathes fire,
The queen looking for a buyer,
And our task was a difficult ask.**

**We'd be working at night,
With a torch and no-light,
So that the town is kept in the dark,
Nefarious designs,
Ominous signs,
And we were kids in the park.**

**Five days we had,
Of that we were glad,
For it could have been an awful lot worse,
What if he'd said,
Tomorrow or you're dead,
There'd be no time for song or verse.**

**Now face to face ,
In a dangerous race,
With a 'stone' for an enemy,
How do you fight,
When you don't even sight?
The lock that has no key.**

**A 'recce' we'd do,
Wearing no shoe,
For stealth was the need of the hour,
The queen would oversee,
This operation called 'Get me'
from the precincts of her boudoir.**

**We were summoned at once,
By the queen and her dunce,
For clowns were every where,
Zulu was a circus,
The clown was called Marcus,
And he couldn't tell stone from silver ware.**

Gentleman, said she
The horse, where's he?
Came the sweet voice of the queen,
I have summoned you here,
To lend you my ear,
And review with you the 'scene'.

I would like to see,
In the greatest detail,
What you have for me to okay,
Her Majesty said,
As she softly tread,
And a plan in my head was under way.

We'll be back very soon,
By the time you see the moon,
With a plan by night fall,
For your Majesty to read,
And amend if you need,
And we'll then take the final call.

The stars came out,
The moon was lost,
Nowhere to be seen,
Our plan was ready,
Intoxicating and heady,
And so it seemed was the queen.

Revelry in the air ,
Intentions were bare,
Merry-making to the fore,
Good times were coming,
People were humming,
And the 'stone' would give them more.

Don't count the chickers,
Before they're hatched,
The Zulus had never heard,
They'd also not seen,
Nor met yet,
The 'pig' our clever bird.

Where was the recession?
In this crazy join session,
Zulu was dancing like mad,
A right royal feast,
For all and beast ,
The drought must be a fad.

The night wore on,
All fears were gone,
The 'stone' a faint memory,
In the haze all around,
New clarity was found,
Everyone in joyful reverie.

And then it struck,
The 'stone' ran amuck,
Flashes of lightning everywhere.
Quite unprepared,
We trembled and shared the terror,
At the sight of a bear.

Had the 'stone' turned bear?
Or was the bear hiding there?
The question on everyone's mind.
All hell broke loose,
Helter- skelter went the goose,
The answer was for us to find.

That fateful night went quickly by,
As did the stars that flew,
All I did was look at the sky,
And Zulu rue.

Where had I landed?
What grief heaped on Tim?
Both of us now surely stranded,
No rigour left, no vim.

And yet escape we must,
From the clutches of the queen,
All she ever wore was blue,
And the look a constant green.

The king seemed a better sort,
Despite the name Oblong,
He didn't seem like 'Iso',
And he didn't look like doing wrong,

But who said looks are believable,
The many faces of men,
One for the world to see,
And then the nine out of ten

Vengeance thy name is woman,
Careful then, "ashok" ,
This is serious stuff,
Don't treat it like a joke.

Tim I said, and come here 'Pg'
No time for lullabies,
No time for song, no time for gig,
No time for alibis.

The tools of war were with us,
The torch prime among them,
For if we couldn't see,
What would we do with the gem?

So off we went,
Crawling out of our tent,
On all fours, if you please,
For Tim that was true,
For he had four not two,
I'm talking legs, not trees.

'Pig' and I,
Managed a sigh,
And did what we had to,
As simple as that ,
On the back a little pat,
And then hublaboo.

While taking the nap,
We'd managed a map,
That gave us a direction we knew,
A tunnel we found,
That was long and round,
And the safest for our rendezvous.

This discovery of ours,
Fortuitous in part,
Saved us some hours,
And gave us a headstart.

It was dark inside,
But with the torch in hand,
We stumbled cautiously
So when the morning arrived,
And the sun shone through,
We were under a tree.

The 'stone' we knew,
Was embedded in rock,
And the rock lay by a stream,
The stream was gentle,
It had plenty of fish,
And most of it was bream.

Thank god, we were well equipped ,
For wars are unpredictable things,
You never know when you might be gypped,
And the terror that danger brings.

Pick-axe and spade,
We were ready for the raid,
On the 'stone' we knew nothing about,
Adrenaline pumping,
We were almost jumping,
And thank god we didn't shout.

For just as we struck,
The first gentle blow,
Came the wheels of a moving truck,
And we had to slow.
We heard great commotion,
With no idea , no notion,
of the happenings in the world above,

Looked like the ' stone'
Was stepping on the truck,
With all its attendant muck,
We'd been warned of ferocity,
Of demonic powers
But the 'stone' becoming a duck?

For we heard a little quack
As the duck got on the truck,
And then an almighty whack,
Some one had been hit,
By lightning lit,

We could see through a little crack.
That we'd make in the ground,
There was thunder & sound,
And the ' stone' was raging black.

Black ducks we've seen,
Even seen them preen,
But anger of this magnitude,
Listen, Tim, my friend,
Looks like the end,
I'm losing my cool, dude.

Now Tim was all animal,
So ducks he understood,
Though ducks are really birds,
But Tim knew me,
And my facility,
And I wasn't too bad with words.

Listen, he said,
The choice is simple
We'll either, survive or we're dead,
Logical analysis,
The brain in paralysis,
When someone above saw red.

For the next thing we knew,
The duck had turned blue,
And the diamond now resembled sapphire,
One hell of a 'stone',
Said Tim, with a groan,
Belching streams of fire.

Dragons, God forbid,
In China they hid,
What on earth were they doing in Zulu,
That 'Jungle Book' guy,
My, O, my,
Wish the dragon was 'Baloo'.

And suddenly then,
In flew a wren,
To calm the 'stone' down,
With a light song,
Almost too long,
The wren sounded like a clown.

Nothing more profound,
Than the end of empty sound,
And words best left unsaid,
If you've nothing to say,
Just leave it that way,
Empty words best left in the head.

We were all rather shook,
Tim minus his look
And the 'Pig' with an unhealthy look,
We'd got our first taste
We needed to cut and paste,
And the plan to revise in haste.

Back to the board,
Ideas restored,
After the harrowing experience of the day,
The 'stone' was dramatic,
moving from rock to attic,
With hardly a pause on the way.

But its wrath we had seen,
Like the shenanigans of the queen,
And a battle was on our hands,
Care was a must,
No one can you trust,
When walking the slippery sands.

When the truck took off,
To God knows where,
We were left with a hole in the rock,
Investigate we'd sure,
And finger prints take ,
But what about the lock.

For the next hour or two,
We dug like crazy,
Until a hole we'd made,
Through which we crawled,
up on to the street
And prepared for our quiet raid.

Around the rock,
Was a gigantic stream
That we would have to cross,
How would we?
What looked like a river,
We were at a loss.

Would we need a raft?
Or maybe a craft?
To negotiate the dangers ahead,
How deep were these waters?
Could we swim like otters,
Would we survive or be dead?

Questions galore
And then we heard the snore,
Tim had fallen asleep,
What was he dreaming.
What plans were brewing
What secrets did he keep?

Wake up Tim,
Said the ' Pig' in disgust,
Everyone in danger strives,
We're here for a job
To survive if we can
No one's going to pay us to save our lives.

" We must look casual"
Said a refreshed Tim
For sleep is the great energizer,
Lets walk around the rock
Like a stroll in the park
As he put on his visor.

For a horse with a visor
And no one would be wiser,
To the games that we were playing,
Except the ass round the corner,
Took one look at Tim
Are then couldn't stop braying.

But Tim heard things
From the asses rings,
That we were not privy to,
A look of delight,
Fleeting though it was
And hope came out of the blue.

Asses and horses may not look alike,
But there's much in common you see,
For one they don't ride a bike,
And two, they have two more legs than me.

There's the matter of the tail
Which Man had too
Or so we are told,
But I wouldn't ask
Why the silly task?
You don't always have to be bold.

Asinine though it was
'Twas the best we could do,
So we left the two do together,
And the ' Pig' and I,
Found a field of rye
And some beautiful sunny weather.

So I stretched out,
Not much for the 'pig' to-do,
For she was a foot end to end,
And not straight enough,
Her colour was buff,
And there was just too much bend.

An hour went by
And peace reigned supreme
Not a shout, a scream or a cry,
Forty winks and more
Without a companion's snore
And little white clouds in the sky.

What more could you want?
What more will you get?
Than serenity at the end of a rope,
For me hadn't given up
On our very precious lives
Desperately clinging to hope.

When we saw Tim running,
His canter we knew
But what a wonderful trot,
Something told us the brew's good
And the barman knows what he's got.

In hushed silence
Was there such a thing?
We wondered as Tim finally spoke,
The ass he said
Was an old chum from the village
And a jolly nice old bloke.

Sounded re-assuring ,
Their meeting wasn't boring,
As old friends play__ catch up,
They talked of mates
And the increasing rates,
Of everything including ketchup.

Patience they say
Is a virtue of sorts,
When hurry is on your mind,
But its a bit of a joke
When ways to live
You have to desperately find.

The ass became
the focus again
But this time with a manner solemn,
For he grunted and snorted
And chortled too.

He looked around
And when no one was found
He told us what the ass had said,
Can't all be foolish
Though asses we know,
And this one, like Tim, was well-read.

The ' Stone' was a witch
But that wasn't the hitch
Said master good old Tim.
The voice was gentle
But under it all
was a demeanor all too grim.

Convolved for sure
The story a story no more
Circles now in a square,
We were happy
In those good old days
In the rush at the village fair.

There were days on which,
This extraordinary 'witch',
Changed form and disguise,
From or ' stone' to ' duck'
And with a little of luck
We might just grab her by the eyes.

The ass had a calendar
Something of a mind-bender
If you saw the degree of subterfuge,
Every second day
Or so it seemed
The ' stone' underwent camouflage.

How did it matter
For in essence it was the same,
We asked of Tim, in dismay,
Aha! said he
There is divinity at play,
For there are days benign in May.

On those special days
The dreaded ' stone'
Is devoid of all venom and power,
Just a nice big ' stone',
Would look nice on the throne,
And on the queen in her bower.

The ass will consult
With a soothsayer of repute.
Who's stuff you read in the papers,
He's the guy who predicts
Issues gullible edicts.
Which you follow while he capers.

April it was
And May was to come
So time was seemingly limited ,
A month and a half
And a day or two,
On which the ' stone' could be spirited (away).

With hope in heart
We came back
To report to the Majesties,
The results of our endeavors
Which had us through shivers,
And now we confronted the ' nastiest'.

The king as we said,
Was a nice enough guy,
As long as he was alone,
But with the queen around
He had no sound
Dry as he was like a bone.

"Your Royal Highnesses"
And we described the scenes
of turmoil, turbulence and confusion,
We didn't tell them
We'd rested in the sun
And between Tim and the ass there
was fusion(of thought)

But we did indicate
That we'd found a new mate
So we were now four not three,
Tim and the ass
And 'Pig'
And me.

They seemed glad,
We were gratified
That they were satisfied,
For were it otherwise,
There'd be danger to lives
And we'd be the ones to be fried.

We know what is done
To rotten eggs in fun,
But this was another cup of tea,
The eggs were us
We'd seen ' Tim in a bus
And a glance from the queen would fry me.

As the sun went down
To our dens we returned
And night took a hold of the day,
To give us time to sleep,
Recoup and regroup
And hopefully show us the way.

A knock on the door
Sleep no more
For I am hear to help,
Hearts in our mouths
In disbelief and doubts
Was the voice of the pulp with the yelp.

Fortune has a funny knack,
OF fooling one and all,
And when you think
You've got it made,
Is when she plans your fall.

But this was not the case here,
For the pup, gentle and sincere,
Had taken a liking for the bird,
And its word we had to take.

Art imitates life they say,
And truth is stranger than fiction,
Nights can never turn to day.
And the problem might just be diction.

We opened the door suspense fully
Lurking dangers outside,
You never know what's outside the door,
As the pup came striding in. .

Was the pup Royal ?,
Loyal he was, we thought we knew,
Did we need to formally address?
We really hadn't a clue.

Could we say
O, Prince the pup
You with the golden ears,
We are delighted
You're in our midst
Dissipating our fears.

We weren't sure.
When in doubt do nothing,
At least that's what grandfather said,
So we just followed old advice,
And pretended we were making the bed.

The pup she spoke
And nicely too,
Well - educated she seemed,
Then why the yelping
I carefully considered
But didn't wish to be creamed.

O, golden silence
Please speak up
For nerves are getting frayed,
The pup by now
Had surveyed the scene
And knew we were afraid.

But she was a good one
A helpful soul,
And kindness we could see,
Bird, she said
For the name she didn't know,
'Come down from the tree.

Disarming,
Comforting to the core,
She'd made us feel at home you know,
And even so much more.

I'll help you out of your predicaments
If you help me out of mine
Fair exchange is no robbery,
So with us the offer was fine.

And what would we have to do,
In return for your help,
I'll tell you when the time is ripe.
She said with a yelp.

We took her at her honest word,
And listened carefully,
The night flew like a crazy bird,
And we got up restfully.

With the ass and the pup
Now both on our side,
We had reason to believe,
That we were in for a nice
And comfortable ride.

Two heads are better than one we know,
And we knew who the one was,
Let's leave it there came a chirp,
Why name the twirp.

I bristled with anger
And raging mad
I swallowed my shallow pride,
For it was true
That I had brought
On them this whole nasty ride.

But I didn't know
Said my silent eyes
To the eyes around the room,
And then she heard, the urgent command,
And the pup she was gone, vroom.

Now all we needed
Was a date from the ass,
With the soothsayers consent,
And the input from the pup,
Who wasn't 'blue' we knew,
And with whom we still had to sup.

On days benign
The 'stone' was a gem,
Brilliant but harmless
We'd dig it out,
The lazy lout
And do it with great finesse,

We'd be told what to do,
By the ass and his crew
With the soothsayer in tow,
But with 'stone' in hand
And danger around
Where would we go?

That is all part of strategy, said a voice in disgust,
We learnt from the ass,
Wars are fought by soldiers,
Not by the top brass.

You are wanted by the king,
Came the messenger,
Had the pup played dirty rat?
We wondered in apparent danger.

Escorted to the hall,
Oblong we espied,
One look at the Oblong table,
And we nearly died.

Sitting next to the mighty King,
Was the rascal ' Iso' ,
A loaded grin on his ugly face,
We'd no place to go.

Your Majesties, at your service we
And we're delighted to see king ' Iso',
If only we knew
It was the two of you,
But we really didn't know

The guffaw that filled
That Oblong room,
Would have done justice to a rectangle,
' You're passed the test, yes, you have"
God, what a tangle.

Who was who in this
Goddamned room,
We wondered in consternation,
Was the pup now a textile loom?
Were the kings a constellation?

We needed to find,
Friend from foe,
To put an end to this,
So with whom do we go
Was the question in mind,
Who will promise freedom and bliss?

I was out - numbered was I,
By animals and birds in my friendly troupe,
The choice then obvious
Trust animals not humans,
Bring the pup into the group.

The minds is at ease
When a decision is made
Right or wrong for time to say,
Dither, if you will
or just stand still
Now at least you're on your way.

We're told by the queen,
You've surveyed the scene,
And what have you to tell us
Your Majesties said Tim,
Looking very grim,
We saw a duck climb a bus.

' A bus' my dear fellow
said the king wearing yellow
Is only used by royalty,
You mean a truck don't you?

The distinction too fine,
For a member of the equine
The truck won the battle,
When in walked another
Four legs and an udder
Holy Cow! we now have Royal Cattle.

The 'moos' were royalty greeted,
By royal boos,
For the cow was late,
Just coming off a cruise.

Her tales regaled the audience,
And we dutifully laughed,
As I said somewhere earlier,
Better to be whole than halved.

We'd chosen the pup
And the ass of course,
Basic ingredients in place,
Time of the essence,
For we were running
a dangerous one-horse race.

We finishing reporting what we had seen
Leaving out the fields of rye,
For the pup through envy,
Might have let out a yelp
And, perhaps, begun to cry.

Royalty was happy
As they're wont to be
For they have little to worry about,
It's us guys, folks
Who carry with them their hopes,
And to be heard have sometimes to shout.

So they'd all ganged -up
Against the poor little stone,
Defenseless in Zululand,
No wonder it acquired
Extraordinary powers
Courtesy the mercy of the Unknown Hand.

Who now was the victim
And who the perpetrator?
As the story now unfolded,
We learnt the tricks of the dictator.

The ' stone' it's said,
Has been always there,
Embedded in the rock,
Centuries old
Even before gold
And long before that lock.

So what went wrong?
Was the refrain of a song,
That the people of Zulu sang,
If the stone was mal-treated
And for no reason unseated
Then somebody had to hang.

But in places where there are kings,
Things move in circles and rings,
And rules are given the go by,
For a Majesty's words
Are a law into themselves
From the earth to the blue of the sky.

Local gossip never to be trusted
Could also be untrue,
So we asked the pup deferentially
What is it the pup knew

Oblong's wife,
Is Iso's sister
Did you know that,
How would I pup ?
I'm the stranger hear,
My brain overtaken by fear.

All in the family,
Are of a kind,
Say the geneticians,
If monkeys are your brood
They'll want bananas for food
And they won't need expensive beauticians

We'd now got the facts
Details of acts,
Of the case called 'King vs, 'Stone",
Oblong, you scoundrel
Thank god for your mongrel,
You're no better than Al Capone.

Battle lines now drawn
The enemy, my exposed
We still had to tag along,
Until the and his ass man,
Come up with the date
We could not afford to go wrong.

Sweet no things we uttered
To the queen who felt flattered
And to the king we were rightly obedient,
You have sometimes to do
Even things you don't like
Just because they're expedient.

We were surrounded again
His Majesty in pain,
His patience now wearing thin,
When will I get
That on which my heart is set,
When will I win?

Gods we were not
And thank God for that
For Oblong and Iso would have had to run,
Smitten by the heavens
Felled to earth
O, that would have been fun.

We've tested the waters
And things look bright
All in favour, kind Sire,
But you will appreciate,
the need for care,
When the object of desire is fire.

We kept up the charade
And were dined and wired,
In manner magnificently royal,
For days & nights,
We the outsiders,
With those Oblong thought loyal.

The 1st of June
The clock had struck
And now the target set,
With the ass our friend
And the astrologer
The 'stone' we had to get.

Some secrets must secrets remain,
Some things in private domain,
So the soothsayer was not informed,
That the 'stone' was to be rescued,
From the clutches of the gang,
Whose leader was mentally deformed.

We faced the ire of the public at large
'Cos they thought we were in shady league,
With the kings & the queen, out to demean,
The 'stone' in a palace intrigue

We were two days
From fate as it were
And nervous as little kittens
The pup smirked,
For he was irked
And asked us to wear mittens

We were waiting for the pup
To give us the 'gupshup,'
And the latest inside dope,
When to Tim she announced
That though 1st of June was benign
We'd still need a very strong rope.

'Cos the stone when benign
Slept all day till nine,
And then didn't get up,
Odd as it seemed
We nodded agreement,
For the boss in these matters was the pup.

A heave and a ho and we'd be ready to go
With the stone wherever we wanted,
Of course, we said we'd rather be dead
Than have the queen disappointed.

Never take chances,
Always play safe
Is a wise but seldom used motto?
As we considered our options
Post operations,
And the choice fell on a grotto.

The park was secluded on the outskirts of town
And that's where we would hide it,
Until we were able with help from the stable
To surreptitiously ride with it.

From where has this stable now emerged?
Asked the 'pig' somewhat enraged
Its eyes almost popping out,
We'll tell you in due course
Just hold your horses,
And please, softly, don't shout.

For walls have ears
We all know that
And hence the need for care,
Poor little 'stone'
Honest was our tone
'Cos the stakes were laid now bare.

For if we failed on the first,,
All hell would burst
When the 'stone' again turned vicious,
The next lucky date was a long way away
And that was not auspicious

In whispers, we said,
The stable we need,
for Tim alone would be a sitting duck,
Ducks again, said the 'pig',
Are you talking 'stone',
No, but we need more than luck.

In detail we explained Tim must have mates,
So that horses create good delusion,
Then no one will know which horse it is,
With the 'stone' and we'll have sown confusion.

The plan was approved,
By a show of hands,
Paws & feet included,
And the ass knew the stable,
Whose owner was called Clark Gable
But from the details had to be excluded.

Horses arranged,
All in order
And just a day to go,
Freedom for all,
Can't afford a fall
But surely the 'stone' must also know.

A minor lapse, said Tim, wryly,
Who will bell the cat?
The pup was ready to pounce,
Until he was told
Not to be too bold
For this cat weighed a million ounce.

Nuances explained,
The pup understood
And the ass was chosen by majority,
For he was the local
And knew the terrain.
And there's something remarkable,
About mediocrity.

Time to disperse
Energies to conserve
For an assault now hours away,
The ass on a mission
Wore glasses for vision
Couldn't see beyond his nose, they say.

Modus operandi left to the ass,
We prayed that he would pass,
The test and convince the 'rock',
We were all on one side
No divisions, no tribes,
And the others needed a sock.

He was asked to report on the progress he made
And we hoped there'd be no eruptions,
For the 'stone' had been horrid not long ago,
With the truck and a million contraptions.

The ass was a sport,
A jolly good chap,
Always game for trouble,
How lucky we were,
To have befriended an ass,
And that too on the double.

There's no love lost,
Between an ass and a horse,
And Tim looked full of remorse,
He'd hoped to be,
The chosen one
For he was the one with force.

The next few hours,
Were tension- filled
With news in short supply,
The ass they believed,
Had contact made,
And was waiting for a reply.

The 'stone' was hard,
As stones normally are,
And care was his forte,
He'd extract his price
No matter the rice
He was no giveaway.

From the barracks,
We were called,
By Iso the bold,
For he was now calling the shots,
Oblong was lost
And the queen confused in the midst of kitchen pots.

Yes, Sir, we said,
In our throats pure dread,
And a lump that wouldn't go away,
A member of our gang
The one without the fang,
Is working seriously on the play.

'Fang', did you say,
Is there a make at play,
And who would that be?
Why haven't we seen
This reptile coloured green
Why this secret from me.

No snake, sir,
Just a manner of speech,
What would we do with a snake,
He'd only just hiss,
And slithering noises make,

Besides, cobras aren't easy to catch,
They're far more than a match,
For the likes of those around here,
Your Majesty's the exception
Imagine the reception
For the cobra who knows no fear.

Though, said the king,
His voice a hollow ring,
For his hands I could see shake,
Let's widen the base,
We might win the race,
So why not a snake?

Great minds think alike they say
On three faces shone a common ray
Of understanding and delight,
Now was the time to silently strike,
If only our snake could ride a bike
The king would die of fright.

But the seed was sown
And underneath the throne,
We found what we were now looking for,
All black with the hood
He was up to no good
All mischief and an awful lot more.

The snake was dumb
The 'pig' was numb
Paralysed now with fright,
How would we negotiate?
Settle terms and a date
With a cobra who had no sight.

The only thing right
Was that he could hear
All things when he was near,
And the hissing snake
Could noises make
And engender enormous fear.

The signs he made
Tim seemed to know
For his eyes were now aglow,
The 'cob' looked up,
From under the throne,
And seemed all but ready to go.

Credentials must always be presented you know,
And then carefully checked,
Can't trust anyone not anymore,
We didn't want our plans wrecked.

A background check now quickly done,
Showed spots all over the body,
But spots don't matter if they're done for you,
And the presenter is a known body.

Royalty has its snakes we know,
Harmless, useless, fellows,
They're there for moral support and show,
And listen to the Monarch's bellows.

With some higgie and haggie
And from the pup a waggle,
The 'cob' was now on our side,
He wasn't docile,
His fangs were intact
Ready for a venomous ride.

How easy it is
Some times we thought
To befriend complete strangers,
When those you're known
All your life
Wouldn't be there for your dangers.

True, said Tim
As he read my mind
You're right, Ashok, my friend,
Nothing's ever straight,
Rivers run to sea
But they also sometimes bend.

Too much philosophy for good ol' 'cob'
Practical as ol' 'cobs' are
Eat and sleep and let man think
Is policy best by far.

No word from the ass
And ISO getting cross
The 'pig' would have to fly,
Not get too near
For the 'stone' might fear
So best keep a distant eye.

Instructions clear the 'pig' without fear
Vanished into the blue,
Moments later
The news we heard
The 'stone' had attacked a bird.

We didn't know more
And ISO was sore
Why had the 'pig' been sent alone,
Your Majesty we said
No one else can fly
But Tim, if u like, can try.

If looks could kill
I'd be no more
or climbing the Everest hill,
He glowered, he puckered
His lips were blue
I thought he was dead motionless and still.

Wishes and horses
And we'd all be riding,
As I went back to nursery rhyme,
In the days of old
When winds were cold
My memories frozen in time,

Action was needed
And pronto too
so Tim volunteered,
Part canter, part gallop
He'd trot as well
And to the king himself endeared.

Be careful of snakes,
At the best of times,
And I was now alone,
For ' pig ' and Tim,
Were in the throes of war,
Without even a telephone.

Gathering now my wits about,
For the king knew of the ' cob '
I begged leave to join my friends,
And rest my aching gob.

To the ' cob ' I winked but slyly
For ISO was terribly wily
And we'd seen evidence of that,
I sat on the grass
An act of class
As the ' cob ' came chasing a rat.

A quiet hurddle,
For he couldn't speak,
And the language i knew
To him was Greek.

But he'd heard Tim
And so he knew
A crisis was ready to brew,
He somehow explained
That at five in the afternoon,
The ' stone ' went totally blue.

And that was the time
You could revive him with lime
And then discuss your business,
Did you want to buy or sell ?
Were you a trader from hell ?
And then came the revelation of a weakness.

Tomorrow was the Day
But we might strike at night
And walk away with the prize today,
For we now had the ' ammo '
The lime in a gizmo
The one we found on the way.

Having said what he did
He went and happily hid,
Beneath the loving throne,
Leaving me to worry
To plan to hurry,
Knowing not what to do with the 'stone'.

It never rains it pours
said my granny with sores
For she was now getting old,
When 'Tim' and the 'Pig'
Came running , came flying
And the news was real good.

The ' stone ' had agreed
And accordingly decreed
That ISO be assassinated
If we wished co-operation
Then Oblong too,
Must be decimated.

As for the queen
We'd take her along
For she'd taken the ' stone's ' fancy,
He'd even nick - named her
The lady with the fur
And lovingly called her Nancy.

We now knew
The story true
Of Nancy and the ' stone '
Local gossip and grapevine
Always right nine on nine
She was the snake behind the throne.

But horror of horrors
Assassination and us
We were the amiable kind,
Simple folks
No airs no hoax
Just one thing on our mind.

There wasn't much hope
Without some kind of rope,
To declinate two kings with one stone,
Not killing the birds,
Phrases and words
Lets get a book on Capone.

There was no choice
For the ultimatum clear,
The ' stone' with the queen,
Or else
Save your lives
And run from the scene.

Our fanged- friend put his hood on,
And scratching the back of his head,
Thought hard and very long,
And then with gravity said
I'll do it for you,
These two are rascals I knew,
And I am the queen's pet,
But a Roland for an Oliver
A tit for a tat
And we'll succeed, I bet.

Sweeter words,
I hadn't heard
Ever since we came,
We were ready,
Come what may,
We were really game.

Right, said he
You'll have to take me too,
And I don't care if its Timbuktu,
So long as the queen is there
Looking pretty & fair,
For I care for her, I do.

Curiouser, said Alice,
And so this tale too,
Would there be a happy ending?
Or would there be just rue?

Beggars are no choosers,
So the ' baggage' now one up,
The ' cob' would ride on Tim's back,
Was it yes and I said ' Yup'.

I will choose the time and place,
For that's my job, you see,
I'm in charge of cleaning up this mess,
So just a leave it to me.

Words of wisdom spoken well,
Or was he premature?
Only time would really tell
Did he have the imprimatur?

Dark deeds and dark nights,
Have much in common we know,
Shadows lurk in dangerous lanes,
And poison runneth slow.

The night was young
So was the snake,
Ready and eager to pounce,
He slithered around,
With a hissing sound
And a movement that resembled a flounce.

. He'd had enough
Of the kind who was gruff
And now his time had come,
A choice to be made
Between ISO and Oblong,
Who would first succumb.

Snakes are good learners,
Quiet workers too
As any Corporate will tell you,
So he chose to attack
In simultaneous mode
And reduce on himself useless load.

Sound policy
I totally agree,
Lets get the two together,
I'd be tickled to death
Though they'll be dying
I hope we have decent weather.

Will you attack while they sleep,
Or is that a secret you'll keep?
I asked the 'cob' in jest,
I'm no back stabber
I'll kill them and grab her
I'll do it in cold -blood with zest.

Their routine I know
I know where they go
When with dinner they're both done,
A stroll in the park,
All in the dark,
For that is the best colour for fun .

. It all looked hunky - dory
Like the end of the story
And I hoped that might be true,
But we'd never know,
Till the end of the show,
'Cos we hadn't a blooming clue.

A word was sent
For the 'stone' to know
That all was in order,
And with luck on our side,
We might well be on a ride
To the other side of the border.

There was nothing to do,
Suspense I knew
But the waiting was agony,
Tim went for a walk
The 'pig' wouldn't talk,
And the ass was coloured ebony.

Chameleons change colours
But that's them for you,
But an ass with a different hue,
What have you done?
Where have you been?
Why not choose the colour blue.

The ass was upset,
His importance diminished,
With the arrival of the 'cob'
His scheme gone awry,
How would he multiply
His stock of 'stones' on the sly.

Stories within stories
But we'll leave this one out
So we told the ass, go have stout,
Stout I don't like
Said the ass in dislike,
I'd rather eat fresh trout.

So off he went
Looking for trout
Somewhere up the stream,
You'll never get anything, granny said,
If you don't try hard enough
And it's important to dream.

He wasn't coming with us
He made no fuss
Just went his merry way,
We never saw him again,
For he never came back,
And nothing did he ever say.

. The next thing we heard
Were two screams and a thud,
And we knew the 'cob' had struck,
But such stealth and guile,
Would even make 'godfather' smile,
And two duds went down like a truck.

The guards rushed in with guns in hand,
As the band played ' The Last Post',
Tim , The ' pig' and I in line,
No signs of ' Cob' the host.

For he was the insider ,
The ' man' with the tricks up his sleeve,
And he now the decider,
Or so he had us believe.

. The queen now crying profusely,
As the known unfaithful are known to do,
The enactment done very nicely,
All this is honest and true.

The ' stone' now duly informed,
Was happy on the inside,
But showed apparent concern,
For the queen and the impending ride.

For she would wear him round her neck,
Where he wanted to be,
From where he would but carefully watch
Her moves of infidelity.

The snake had a change of heart,
And decided to stay back,
What will I do riding 'he' said,
On the back of a village hack.

So me on Tim
And the queen with the stone,
On a horse from the king's stable,
The ' pig' flew ahead
And feathers she shed,
So as to arrive alive not dead.

Adventures are fun
When on the run
And you have a nice little gun,
But with a ' stone' around,
And thunderous 'sound',
Pleasure can still be found.

A strange loss of excitement emerged
As Tim and I to quietness returned
The intervening period a dream,
From the time we'd left our beloved land
We felt the presence an Unseen Hand,
The invisible member of our team.

A ghost remained of the inward ride
Its madness and the turmoil inside
As we plotted now the journey back home,
The queen the stone, Tim and I
A peculiar' foursome that meets the eye,
Would the next stop be Rome?
Who knows?

Who knows what lies ahead?
When you're head is laid to rest,
Who does the future know?
Will you transmigrate?
Perhaps, find another mate?
Or to heaven finally go.

We'll leave that for another story
Another day, some greater glory,
Tim and I thought in quiet reflection,
Or maybe let the Queen and her friend,
Their tale tell and decide their end,
For who is good at tomorrow's projection.