

TOE ONS JONK WAS (WHEN WE WERE YOUNG)

Treatment by

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Eighties music. A high school assembly hall is decorated to match the music, in eighties style. A banner welcomes the matrices of 1987. Enlarged photographs of high school PUPILS adorn the walls - school photos. It's a high school reunion.

MEN and WOMEN in their late forties, each wearing a name tag, all dressed in smart to smart-casual clothing, stand around with drinks in their hands, mingling. A friendly environment. They talk about the day's (school) rugby match that some attended, others did not. They compare it to the "dream team" they had when they were in school. Names like 'Lourens', 'Jean' and 'Hardu' are mentioned.

The largest crowd seems to be gathered around JEAN and his wife, LOUNA. Jean's name tag states that he was "Onderhoofseun" (deputy head boy). Jean seems happy to be the centre of attention with Louna at his side, proudly talking about his career as an accountant and their two children, Jean and Tanya. "No, he does not regret giving up his rugby career."

In the foyer, DALEEN, or as her name tag suggests, Daleen Hoofmeisie (head girl) stands behind a table filled with yet-to-be-collected name tags. She welcomes arriving former Pupils with an unfaded head girl smile.

HARDU, a tall, sullen man arrives. Daleen's smile fades just a touch as she recognises him. She hands Hardu his name tag. Without a word, Hardu strides towards the hall. Daleen shouts after him that Jean is already there.

Hardu strides straight to Jean. A path clears before the tall man as he is recognised, almost fearfully. Hardu and Jean give each other a warm hand shake, happy to see each other. They haven't seen each other since Hardu's wedding almost twenty years ago. Hardu is a Colonel in the army. He never left after conscription. "His wife, Estelle, is with family. No, he didn't watch the game. No, he doesn't have children, but he would like to meet Jean's some time."

A beat up old car comes to a smoking halt outside. Dressed in a cheap suit, a slightly overweight LOURENS limps into the foyer. Daleen greets him warmly, strategically leaving out his name in the greeting. She doesn't recognise him. Daleen falls silent when she sees Lourens pick out his "Lourens Hoofseun" (head boy) name tag.

MARGRITE "Onderhoofmeisie" walks into the foyer to check on Daleen. She bumps into Lourens. They are not surprised to see each other. Nor are they happy about it. Lourens works for Johannes as a car salesman and tells Daleen "Your dad says hi." Lourens wants to know how the children are. Margrite tells him he would know if he called them every once in a while. Lourens does not feel like arguing.

The bar area clears, only GEORGE (pronounced "Jorsie") is left behind, surprised by everyone suddenly leaving. He notices someone looming over him. It's Hardu. George is frozen to the spot. Hardu gives George a formal handshake. Hardu says he's sorry. George is left speechless.

Lourens and Jean recognise each other. They give each other a warm embrace. It's been too long. Lourens tells Jean that "It's going really well", but is quick to shift the topic of conversation to Jean and his life (Lourens is quietly jealous of Jean - Jean is living the life that Lourens should have had). Louna wants to know if it's weird with Margrite there. Lourens waves away the question.

Old clicks quickly come together. A familiar rhythm settles over the hall. Lourens is already slightly drunk, boisterously talking to Jean about the good old days. "Of course he watched the game." He can't believe Jean gave up his rugby career and if it wasn't for his leg they would have played together. Hardu joins the talk. Lourens, Jean and Hardu made a mean trio for the school rugby team back in the day. "Today's kids would have cowered before their might on the field." NICOLA asks if they've seen Rob. "No, he's probably not coming."

A luxury sedan parks outside. The welcoming table is unmanned. Only a few name tags remain. ROB, dressed in a fine suit, searches out his name tag. An old year book lies on the table. Rob pages through it. He smiles at an old photo of five BOYS in their school uniforms. Rob studies the seating arrangements. He finds his name. Then scans further until he sees Nicola's name.

The crowd move towards their assigned tables. Lourens opens a complimentary bottle of wine. Rob takes a seat next to Lourens. Recognition, followed by warm handshakes across the table from Hardu and Jean. Lourens slaps Rob on the back, then pours Rob a stiff glass of wine. Before anyone can ask about Rob's life a hush falls. Daleen takes the stage.

Daleen welcomes everyone. She points out some of the achievements by their matric class, including former Western Province rugby player, Jean and founder of RobIT Tech and one of the wealthiest men in South Africa, Rob. Sadness falls over their table as Daleen dedicates the evening to Scheepers who tragically passed away the night of their matric dance. Scheepers was obviously a friend of Rob, Lourens, Jean and Hardu. Daleen tells everyone to enjoy the night.

Meals have been eaten, tables have been cleared, music is playing again and everyone has gone back to mingling. Whispers of admiration follow Rob as he approaches Nicola who is chatting with some FRIENDS.

Rob and Nicola have a slightly awkward/formal conversation. Their conversation is cut short when Nicola is called to the bar by her Friends.

Rob sits on the floor in the boys' bathroom, crying. Jean and Hardu enter. They've been looking for him. They see that he's been crying. They understand why when they remember that this is where Scheepers hanged himself. Lourens enters, drunk. He has their old year book with him. The four of them reminisce, paging through the year book. They wish they could go back and stop Scheepers from committing suicide. They share a group hug. The year book falls open to the picture of the five Boys. A flash of light...

Younger versions of ROB, HARDU, JEAN and LOURENS stand hugging each other in the boys' bathroom. Strapping young lads, except for Rob who looks like the typical smart one of the group, glasses and all. There is a big "what the hell just happened?" moment. They have been transported to a "sokkie", but thirty years ago. They have no idea how it happened but it's certain. They are all thirty years younger.

SCHEEPERS, a handsome young man, comes running into the bathroom. He warns them that Pottie is on his way. Rob, Hardu, Jean and Lourens are all dumbstruck at seeing their friend alive. To his confusion, Scheepers is hugged from all sides.

Their tender moment is interrupted when POTTIE (Mr. Potgieter) burst into the bathroom under the suspicion that they might be smoking. He tells them that it's time to go. They are the only ones left and their parents are there to pick them up. They agree to talk in the morning, because something very strange is going on.

They all get in with their respective PARENTS. Except Hardu who stands waiting. Lourens' MOTHER asks if Hardu forgot that he is sleeping over. His father said it would be fine. Hardu remembers that his father is still alive.

The next day at school and everyone is eager to talk about what it was like to be back home. Lourens is especially talkative. He is in the best shape of his life. No limp. Lourens and Hardu even had a competition to see who could do the most pushups. Their conversation is cut short when they are herded into class. They agree to meet at break time to discuss what the hell is going on.

In class test results are handed out (not that any of the four boys can even remember writing a test since it happened thirty years ago). Rob did the best. Scheepers did really well. Lourens and Jean did okay and Hardu failed. YOUNG GEORGE sniggers at Hardu's results. Hardu silences him with a look.

Between classes the four boys are in awe of their eighties surroundings. YOUNG LOUNA catches up to Jean. They walk hand in hand to the next class. Lourens feels especially chuffed with himself when YOUNG MARGRITE wraps herself around him and kisses him. He remembers taht they are still together.

At break time Scheepers is whisked away by a group of doting GIRLS who want to hear him play guitar. This gives the four boys a chance to talk. They believe, by whatever miracle, they were sent back in time to save Scheepers. The matric dance is two weekends away. That's when Scheepers is supposed to commit suicide. They have to make sure that it doesn't happen this time around. They fall silent when Scheepers joins them. He feels disappointed at being excluded.

They have their plan. But it quickly becomes apparent that everyone has his own agenda. After all, if given the opportunity to do high school all over again, wouldn't anyone do things differently?

- The big interschools rugby game is next weekend. The same game in which Lourens broke his leg and was subsequently never able to play again. He wants to give everything in that game and go on to become the next Naas Botha, as was his destiny. Since he knows what's coming, he'll be able to avoid it.

- Hardu is helped first at the tuck shop, even though he is standing at the back of the line. Hardu realises that everyone is afraid of him. This is a good opportunity to make amends for all the people that he bullied. Especially Jorsie Worsie (a nickname he gave to George).

- Rob remembers that he too was a victim of Hardu's bullying ("all in the name of friendship"). Rob wants to use his confidence of the present to avoid this. More importantly, he wants to use his confidence to woo Nicola, the one thing missing in his life.

- Jean seems nervous about something. Besides that, he is the one that suggests that they don't change too much (the rest believe that it's because his life turned out great). He even hints at NOT saving Scheepers. But the rest make it clear that saving Scheepers is their main goal. At least that's what they are telling themselves.

It doesn't take long for everyone to settle into their old rhythm. They enjoy their time back at school. Lourens, the head boy and rugby captain, enjoys being the centre of attention once more. Jean, his vice captain and deputy head boy at his side. Hardu spends the day being nice to everyone he comes across (confusing everyone in the process).

Rob's hand is first to go up in every class - partly trying to impress YOUNG NICOLA. The handsome and charming Scheepers has every Girl in the school dotting on him.

It's the end of their first day back at school. A note passes secretly from Jean to Scheepers. Rob sees this and wonders about it.

Jean walks Louna home. Lourens does the same with Margrite. Hardu walks home by himself in the opposite direction. Rob and Scheepers walk home together. Scheepers seems awfully cheery for someone on the verge of committing suicide.

Rob wants to know if he can hang out with Scheepers for the day. Scheepers tells Rob he has to help Jean with homework after Jean finishes with rugby practice. Rob believes that this must be what was in the note. Scheepers asks if Rob asked Nicola to the dance yet. Rob can't remember. "How can't you remember if you asked a girl out?!"

JOHANNES, Margrite's father and Lourens' future boss/ex father-in-law, is proud to have Lourens dating his daughter. He can't wait to see Lourens in action in the upcoming interschools game.

Hardu arrives home. He is ecstatic to see his single FATHER again. But his Father has his belt out. A beating is in order for Hardu failing his test...

At rugby practice Lourens is in his element. Jean and Hardu aren't too bad themselves. COACH is impressed with his star player and captain.

Life is simpler in the eighties. But the boys' relationship with each other slowly becomes strained. Especially since communication is so hard, since "here are no bloody cellphones!"

Nevertheless, the rest of the week passes quickly as an old routine is rekindled. The SCHOOL is abuzz with "gees" with the upcoming interschools. The RUGBY TEAM are treated like gods. Lourens and Jean bask in the praise. Rob is in high spirits as it turns out he had, in fact, (successfully) asked Nicola to the dance. Hardu, on the other hand, finds it harder to be nice to everyone each day. Each day comes with fresh bruises, and not from rugby practice...

It's the day before interschools. Hardly any class as even the TEACHERS have been swept up by interschools fever. Hardu is in the bathroom, staring at his fresh black eye in the mirror. George enters. Buoyed by Hardu's recent geniality towards him, George works up the courage to wish Hardu good luck with the game.

Hardu has a flashback of *giving George a wedgie*. Hardu storms out of the bathroom without saying a word.

All four boys are back to who they were in high school. Lourens is mister popular. Jean, with the help of Scheepers' tutoring, got news that he has been accepted to Stellenbosch University. Rob is first in his class, Nicola is his date to the matric dance. Hardu is his sullen self that he was in high school.

Interschools has arrived. Lourens leads the Players onto the field. He has the game of his life. Lourens has a flashback of a *hulking PROP from the opposing team falling on his leg, breaking it*. Lourens sidesteps just in time, scoring a beautiful try in the process. They win the game.

Johannes is so proud that he lends a car to Lourens (from his dealership). Everyone goes out for the night, Lourens their chauffeur. None of the Parents even care that their children are drinking. The entire TOWN is proud of Lourens and his team.

It seems that Hardu's Father is the only Parent concerned that his victorious son had been drinking. Hardu finds this out when he gets home, way too late according to his Father...

Lourens is the only one keen for more partying after everyone has gone home for the night. He races no one in particular up and down the town's main road. A tree appears "out of nowhere". Lourens folds his borrowed car around it. His leg is crushed.

Rob, Scheepers, Jean and Hardu visit Lourens in the hospital the next day. Lourens' crushed leg is in a cast. There is no cast for his crushed dreams. Rob, Scheepers, Jean and Hardu enjoy a semi-empty ward as only teenage boys know how. Hardu seems to be picking on Rob more than anything.

That night Hardu's Father gives him a pre-emptive beating. A lesson not to act as stupidly as Lourens.

Back at school Margrite is distraught. But she is assured that Lourens will be able to go to the dance with a cast and crutches. George wants to congratulate Hardu on a fine game. Hardu's emotions boil over. He hoists George up a flagpole.

The rest of the week flies by. Jean and Scheepers have tutoring sessions every day after school in preparation for the final exam. Rob spends all his time with Nicola, who seems slightly annoyed by it all. Hardu goes on a bullying spree, picking on any PUPIL that crosses his path.

It's the night of the matric dance. All five boys are dressed up in high eighties fashion. They take pictures with their dates (YOUNG DALEEN with Scheepers). Johannes assures Lourens that he has a job waiting for him at the dealership, convinced that Lourens will be back on the field in no time.

Spirits aren't as high as they were when they first arrived back in the eighties. Only Jean and Rob are left in a happy state. Rob, because tonight is the first night of the rest of his life with Nicola. And Jean, because everything seems to be working out as it should.

At the dance Lourens and Hardu sit like a couple of well-built wall flowers, sulking. Hardu's DATE is on the dance floor, enjoying her night without Hardu. Margrite sits next to Lourens, comforting him, but eyeing the dance floor. Rob dances with Nicola. Scheepers and Jean dance in a circle, whispering who-knows-what in each other's ears.

Rob is sweating, having the time of his life. He goes to the bathroom. He finds Hardu there, crying. Hardu confesses to Rob that he blocked his Father's true nature from memory all these years. That he now remembers his Father being the reason why he never had children. He was afraid of becoming his Father. Rob assures Hardu that he is a better man than his Father ever was. This comforts Hardu a bit.

On their way out Hardu is so grateful for Rob's friendship that he grabs Rob in order to give him a "well-natured" noogie. Rob has a flashback of *Hardu giving him a noogie, crushing his glasses. Nicola sees this, giggles, and walks away.* This time Rob pushes Hardu away before Hardu can embarrass him in front of Nicola. Nicola sees this happening.

Rob runs after Nicola. He kisses her. Nicola pulls away. She tells Rob that she never liked him in that way. She always had a thing for Scheepers. Nicola leaves Rob frozen to the spot as she turns and walks away. Rob notices Jean and Scheepers standing face to face where no one is supposed to be able to see them.

At the same time: Scheepers drags Jean away from the dance circle. He leads Jean backstage, where no one is supposed to be able to see them. Scheepers leans in. He kisses Jean. Jean kisses him back. Jean has a flashback: *As they are kissing, Jean opens his eyes. He sees a group of Rugby Players, hiding backstage having a smoke. They notice Jean and Scheepers kissing. Jean pushes Scheepers away, calling him a "moffie". The group of Rugby Players join in, chanting "moffie, moffie, moffie."* Scheepers turns away. Jean leads the Rugby Players after Scheepers, chanting all the way. Back to the present and Jean pulls away from Scheepers before they are noticed by the Rugby Players. Scheepers is hurt by Jean's reaction. He turns away. Rob sees this.

Rob walks over to Jean. He asks "what the hell just happened?!" Jean admits that something similar happened the last time. Hardu helps Lourens over to Jean and Rob. They saw the two arguing and wondered what was going on. Rob doesn't tell Hardu and Lourens what happened, but they all suddenly realise that they were so busy trying to make their own lives better that they forgot about saving Scheepers. They argue among themselves, then remember that this was the night that Scheepers committed suicide.

Rob, Jean, Hardu and Lourens rush to the boys' bathroom, slowed down by Lourens' crutches. They reach the bathroom.

Too late. Scheepers has hanged himself. Scheepers was in love with Jean. Jean, trying this time not to humiliate Scheepers, humiliated him all the same by making Scheepers believe that Jean didn't feel the same.

Rob, Jean, Hardu and Lourens hug each other. Everything seems to slow down. "You better not be smoking in there!" Pottie walks into the bathroom. He screams at the sight of Scheepers hanging from the ceiling. A flash of light...

Pottie's scream turns into a classic eighties song that echoes inside the bathroom. They are back in the present. They step back from each other, this time not surprised by the transition.

Nothing has changed. In trying to make their lives better, they were fated to end up where they are now.

It's time to go home. Rob, Lourens and Hardu back to their imperfect lives. But at least their lives are honest. Jean gives Rob an apologetic/knowing glance as he kisses Louna. Jean has to return to his perfect lie. A lie that he's had to live with for thirty years...