

That summer landed with a meaty thwack upon the unfortunate residents of Pleasant Hill. The ghastly heat hung itself about the shoulders of that rocky outcrop and did not stir until the first autumn storm swept the peninsula, whisking it away on the howling Cape Doctor winds. That summer came to be known, by those who dared whisper of it, as the Witch's Summer. Men who had remained faithful through long years of marriage were caught rutting in pigpens, in the beds of their children, in the scant shade of Pleasant Hill's lone scrubby pine. Good women who were known to be house proud abandoned their duties to gamble at cards, leaving dishes to crust in the sink and flies to gather until the collective beat of their wings brought the only breeze to that godforsaken hill. Drunks found the taste of alcohol unbearable, prostitutes gave up their trade to wed God, regular churchgoers dropped their bibles into the dust behind their beds, and Isaac the village madman turned prophet and spoke sense for the first time in years but the summer heat blanketed the ears of Pleasant Hill's residents and no one listened.

A week into this madness, a lonely white car climbed out of the valley and travelled the gravel road round and round until it reached the very top of that dusty red hill. The car didn't stop outside Talkmore Chirenga's tiny spaza shop with its red and white Coca-Cola sign or at the crumbling brick room that was Pleasant Hill's only school or at the church with its glistening white wooden cross set atop the square cinder block building. It rolled past the throng of tin shacks that were home to the village's residents and came to a halt outside the shebeen. When a weary white man unfolded himself from the front seat, the loose-gathered crowd assumed he had come to hire help. The men, young and old, squared their shoulders and flexed their muscles. The women hand-ironed their dresses and softened their faces, trying to project the image of

maternal warmth that white families so longed for in a nanny. The children cupped their hands in front of them and in erratic chorus called for sweets. But the white man did not see them.