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Sommario/riassunto	"A haunting, wildly imagined novel by the acclaimed author of History of a Pleasure Seeker ("the best new work of fiction... in many moons; a classic" --The Washington Post); set in the first decades of twentieth-century colonial Cape Town and in a spirit-filled forest of secrets and magic powers. It is 1914. Germany has just declared war on France. Piet Barol, the handsome, irresistible figure of Mason's much-admired, sensuous History of a Pleasure Seeker, is once again at the center of this ambitious, lush new novel. Barol, a European adventurer living as a poseur in South Africa's Cape Colony, navigates the turbulence and opportunities of this strange land in his blind quest for comfort and riches as thousands of black families have been turned out of their homes by a white government bent on confiscating 90% of the country for the exclusive use of Europeans. Piet and his wife have successfully, grandly lived a life for the past five years as colonials impersonating French aristocrats (the dazzling Vicomte and Vicomtesse Pierre de Barol of the Chateau de Barol on the banks of the Loire River), though in truth, he is Dutch and far from aristocratic and she is American and hardly of the railroad fortune family she so often and casually invokes. Both are wily, and both have large dreams. After years of supremely decadent living, Fortune, which has always favored Piet, has grown tired of him and the Barols' luck is about to run out. They are short of cash

and on the verge of ruin. As one last grand effort they have embarked on a furniture business full of possibility. They need wood for the enterprise, and through Piet's charm and guile have come upon the source for their inventory that will make all of them rich. The wood is in a forbidden forest filled with sacred, untouchable trees of fine mahogany which Piet is sure he will be able to extract in exchange for beads and glass tricketts. His pursuit of the bewitched trees of the fabled forest of Gwadana takes him deep into the Xhosa [pron. KO-sa] homelands, where unflinching charm, wit and the friendship of two black men are his only allies as he attempts an act of supreme audacity: to steal a forest from its rightful owners--a Xhosa clan who know to be true that the spirits of their ancestors reside in their magical, ageless trees"--
