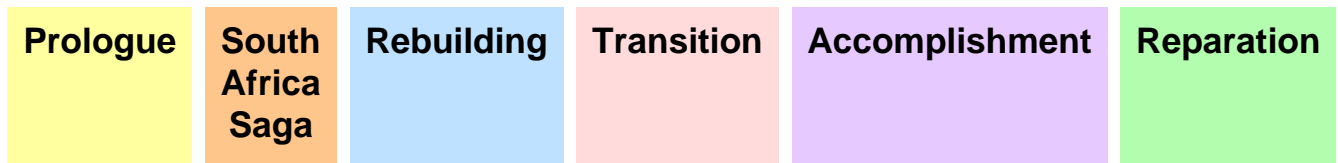


# Bury Me With Dignity by Russell Winje © 3/1/2007



## (I) PROLOGUE

### 1. Fevered Dream

- A disturbing dream conversation with a dignified dead man. "Don't pity me..."

### 2. Leaving Johannesburg

- Re-evaluating a month-long visit

### 3. The Diplomat

- Introduction to an important man

## (II) SOUTH AFRICA SAGA

### 4. Crossing The Atlantic

- New connections offering assistance

### 5. Breakdown

- Midlife crisis leads to personal changes

### 6. Lonely Traveler

- Thirty-nine hours to Africa through cultural changes

## 7. Unexpected Views On The Horizon

- From Cape Town to the lady's cage

## 8. Security?

- Learning to deal with thieves

## 9. Rands

- Street people, dark corners, new food and new money

## 10. Backward Moon Over Sailing Ships

- Southern hemisphere disorientation and mixed dreams

## 11. Café Crowd

- New world experience of South African movie threads and hijackers

## 12. Setup

- Tying the past to the future

## 13. Northcliff Meeting

- Unexpected changes related to business or pleasure

## 14. Finishing Off Duties

- Evening with the lady and a dream to forget

## 15. Breakfast For One

- Being your old self in a new world

## 16. Attacked In My Sleep

- Did not know when to leave

## 17. Time To Find A Friend

- Where do you plan to stay?

## 18. Location

- Plenty of life to share with the right people

## 19. New Plans

- Morning tea with a new friend

## 20. Starting To Pop

- Changing and arranging meetings

## 21. Ring Of Truth

- Mix of anticipation and trepidation

## 22. Braai

- A wealth of food and no booze

## 23. Shebeen

- Partying at the hermit's house

## 24. Editor's Eye

- Opportunity and kind observations

## 25. Lion's Cave

- Was I to die right here?

## 26. Names For The Future

- May I speak with Credo Mutwa?

## 27. Ghost

- The lion will give you two shots

## 28. Theme Park

- Miniature adventures and clouded dreams

## 29. Mr. Bones?

- Others knew him as they tried to look away

## 30. Just Desserts

- Maybe some healing will come from this

## 31. Family Day

- Different cultures with the same ties to family

## 32. African Drums

- Pushing each other to get louder and faster

### 33. Matsieng

- Don't look in the eyes of the blue tricksters

### 34. Bobotie

- Age showing on a once elegant frame

### 35. Corn Woman

- People's past and threads of normalcy

### 36. Fake Tusks

- The elephant is the most articulate one around here

### 37. Green Haze

- Only some saw the humor of the cannon-like explosion

### 38. Unpacking Again

- I really did have family in Africa

### 39. Swimming In The Crocodile River

- Botched rescues and near tragedy

### 40. Closing Out

- Expanding relationships but no romance

### 41. On The Air

- Am I going to dodge this bullet?

## (III) REBUILDING

### 42. Personal Shambles

- The Diplomat shows up again

### 43. Invisible Namibia

- The world chose to ignore death

### 44. Producer On The Make

- Africa was not through with me yet

#### 45. Bride And Groom

- Other people's lives show me how I feel inside

#### 46. Dreaming And Living The Nightmare

- The Chief's hopes for the future after justice is dismissed

### (IV) TRANSITION

#### 47. Reno Tahoe International Airport

- Busy and alone morphs to fun and exciting

#### 48. Cornucopia

- Journey's end, but only just begun

#### 49. Cultural? Shock

- Cowboys and Mexicans

#### 50. Cathedral Ceilings

- Honeymoon cottage, but why so jealous?

### (V) ACCOMPLISHMENT

#### 51. Dogs And Pickup Trucks, or A White African American

- A world apart with similar backgrounds

### (VI) REPARATION

#### 52. A Life Of Their Own

- Movie deals don't erase the mass graves

#### 53. Details But No Dignity

- Would meeting the Chief again resolve my haunted dreams?

## 1. Fevered Dream

A warm African wind blew across an island off the west coast of Southern Africa as I stood outside a simple white shack erected in a bleak open courtyard. In the harsh midday sunlight, what appeared to be an animal, perhaps a black dog, lay on the left side of the front porch. Unable to make it out from that distance, I moved closer. All was silent. There were no birds or even the sound of the wind that moved the dust across the courtyard as my feet kicked up the surface.

The animal stunk as if dead, but it moved with a nervous jerk, making a chill go up my spine. I threw my hand to my face to stop the odor and prevent the recoil of my stomach as I realized it was a man, a black man, burnt and mutilated. I wanted to turn away, but was so drawn to him out of pity and horror that I approached and could see his legs and arms had been chopped off, and his jaw destroyed, burnt skin hanging from his face. I wanted to cry out, but no one would have heard me. I wanted to kill him to end his pain, but my legs would not move. I stared at him. Then, as if magically, he rose from the porch floor, faced me and floated toward me saying, "Don't pity me! Bury me with dignity!"

The shock woke me from a fevered dream.

## 2. Leaving Johannesburg

It was a cold, overcast Wednesday afternoon up on the south face of Northcliff, overlooking Johannesburg, South Africa. The radio show I had produced, promoting my new movie, ended at 5:00 am in order to air live in the California evening timeslot. For two days I had been fighting off a cold, with an international flight looming to take me back to Reno, Nevada.

In the past, dreams had led me to solutions in my life; however, this dream came without a solution. My restlessness had always been used to help drive me on when I wanted to push through difficult times. Dreams had proved useful in showing me future projects, introducing me to my own interest, or simply reminding me to keep moving forward. This dream was different. It did not let go. It was hideous. No connections could be made between its details and my life. It had wakened me for a year now, while I tried in vain to surmount the hurdles of middle-aged loneliness a single father faces when his youngest child leaves home. Trying to push myself to a new life, I pursued my first movie project all the way to South Africa. Now it was time to return home without having satisfied my project, my solitude, or brought an end to the yearlong dream.

I stood outside the villa I had called home for a month, waiting for my ride to the airport. I watched the black women and men making their way to and from the

overloaded taxi

minivans, taking them through their daily lives. How Africa had touched me, haunted me, as well as my dream. I was simply an observer, and not a member of this society, with my luggage and backpack loudly noticeable.

Right on time, my ride drove up and pulled into the steep driveway of the production studio at the base of the villa, bringing my mind out of the haze of memories and back to the misty air. The family I had stayed with blessed my journey from where they stood on the second floor half way up the spiral stairs, and made their way back into the studio to finish work on the movie they were furnishing with special effects which lined the driveway where I stood.

"Good afternoon. Could we stop at a Chemist on our way?" I asked the driver.

"I don't know, we're short on time, and the commute through the city to the freeway and airport will be jammed in a half hour," she complained.

"Oh. This cold is going to be tough on the 18 hour flight, and I was told to get some Influedo. Do you know what that is?" I insisted.

"Sure. We can try. Hurry! " She said, unsympathetically.

I loaded into the car which leaped forward and frantically drove around the taxis at the intersection and down Ethel, a twisty rock-walled road winding its way through expensive homes set in lush gardens, making me feel like I was back on Laurel Canyon Drive outside Studio City, California, the



previous August, meeting with potential investors.

The Chemist was not busy. I ran in and looked up and down the aisles with confusion, the rush of intention and weight of the cold in my head. Seeing my dilemma, a young clerk satisfied my request quickly, and I was back in the car, moving through the streets of Northcliff, down D.F. Malan, past the Cresta Mall where I had shopped over the previous month, then through the artsy community of Melville and onto the freeway skirting the high rise downtown skyline of the Central Business District (CBD) of Johannesburg.

I looked around, remembering where I had been during my stay, seeing the 40-some story tall Carlton Center, the landmark towers belonging to the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation), and the black section of town, Hillbrow, or Gotham, as locals called it, all becoming a blur as we sped up to meet the flow of rush hour commute traffic. Tall artificial mountainous dunes of mine tailings lined the road marking the miles deep gold mines of South Africa.

"If I had made more headway with the movie I would not be leaving right now," I said to the driver.

"What do you mean?" she responded with disinterest in her voice. "You just spent a month on location, met crews and producers. What did you leave out? You even met that Zulu spiritual man." She looked over at me, rolling her eyes.

"I need a completion bond. Getting through the doors of

Alliance is not easy, and I need their involvement before anyone will work with me," was all I could add.

The driver brought us into the underground parking lot for the airport and found an open space as near the entrance as possible for safety. The Influedo was kicking in, and numbness from the head cold was hard to separate from the effects of the medication. Though I wanted to just sit down, I also wanted to make sure my flight was on schedule, so we approached the first information desk we encountered. My driver communicated with the lovely black woman behind the counter and then turned and told me I was on schedule to leave in two hours. All too soon this trip I had used to try and bring new adventures into my life would end, becoming a simple note in history, punctuated by 39 hours in the airline system.

Working our way through the multiracial crowd to the café, we sat and choked down a quick bite of dry hamburger with hot coffee, a combo tasting much like paper and dirty water. The clock ticked off a short time and my anxious driver was ready to leave. I asked for assistance through the next step at security and into the main lobby. We moved through the tightly packed crowd and soon were past the first guard station without even stopping to be checked. The swarm of bodies pushed us past the guard without being detained. The hurried guard briefly looked up toward us, without focusing, then the line divided into separate approaches to gated doorways. There the attendant questioned how we got in without seeing the previous check station, but the driver simply said, "I need to interpret for this man, then I will leave." After all, she only wanted to see me leave, not

say goodbye. As a driver she had proved to be somewhat adequate. As a friend, she would not be missed.

### 3. The Diplomat

With a bit of argument I was allowed past the gate on my own, into the huge waiting room where passengers waited at departure gates. Straining to clear my head and access the room I looked at my ticket and notes from the information desk, and started a search for departure gate number 27. Finding it across the room I discovered there was no plane. The next gate had a plane with my number. An older black man dressed in a fine suit sat watching as I approached the waiting area.

"Are you traveling to Atlanta USA?" he asked.

"Yes," I kept my answer short, trying to politely avoid contact.

"Is this our loading gate?" he continued. "I'm going to Washington DC."

"I'm not sure," I answered trying not to get involved. Having just been told by the driver to be cautious and not speak to black people, and to watch my luggage, I was too full of question and doubt to be open and communicative, as is my nature.

"Why don't you just go over there to that information desk

and ask, and I will watch your luggage," he politely suggested. All my red flags went up.

"No, I think we are just fine, I will wait and see if this is my flight," thinking to myself that I had just been targeted and had deflected the attempt at a deception.

"I'll go check then, you watch my luggage," he said, pushing his briefcase at my feet and briskly walking away toward the information counter clear across the football field sized open room filled with travelers mixing around massive pillars. He disappeared into the crowd, and then re-appeared at the counter just within view, turned from the desk, looked at me, pointed and turned back to the attendant. I wondered if I might be assisting a terrorist, or a diamond thief, looking down at the briefcase, then laughed off my paranoia.

On his return, as I tried to watch him through the crowd, he disappeared behind one of the pillars, then looked around the side to watch me standing with his and my bags between my legs, guarding them all like a bull dog. He smiled, came out from behind the pillar and walked straight back at me.

"This is the right gate," he said, "Let's sit here and wait." He sat down, putting his briefcase on his lap, opened it, and picked through it checking his lunch that sat with a few papers.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

"I'm working on a movie," I said as I studied his

appearance. He wore a fine expensive suit with a discreet flag on the lapel. A large handsome man in his 50's with very deep reflective black skin, his eye contact never wavered. His self-confidence was apparent.

Without knowing anything else about me at this point, he said, "I feel compelled to help you. I can give you an introduction to Alliance."

I just about fell off my chair! He did not know me. He did not know my project, and he had offered just what I needed. I did not know who he was, and he did not offer to tell me, so I just asked, "What is your name, Sir?"

"I am Riruako. I am a diplomat," he said. "I am on the way to an important meeting in Washington DC, representing my people on an issue that I have worked on for some 30 years. This may be my last need to go to the US as this issue is nearly resolved."

Again he said, "I can help you with your project."

I asked where he was from, and he said Namibia.

I had been fixated on trying to pronounce Namibia since I was on the way to South Africa on the plane the previous month, and had not figured out why. I had no knowledge of this country, other than seeing it through the plane window on my way to Cape Town. It had no connection to my trip to South Africa, as far as I could tell. Somehow the nagging familiar to me from the recurring dream tugged at me as my mind became numbed from the Influedo.

## 4. Crossing The Atlantic

As we spoke, the gate opened and the plane started to load. Riruako stepped into line, and kept looking back over his shoulder to see where I was. On the plane he looked to see where I sat. Throughout the flight, though I did not go to see him, he looked back my way from time to time, checking me out as I sat some five rows behind him. Through most of the flight I tried to sleep off the cold, intermittently watching movies for the interminable 18-hour leg of an endless flight. Somewhere outside Atlanta, I got up and went to Riruako's seat and asked if he really was interested in helping me.

"Yes, I can help you," he said, giving me his cell number, but not his important title. I wrote the information in my tattered aging notebook, next to the names of greensmen, producers and actors.

At the Atlanta Airport he disappeared into the crowd, and I rushed off for my connecting flight to Salt Lake City.

## 5. Breakdown

For years I had worked in the remote high desert regions of Nevada and California, having left a failing marriage in the late 1970's. Moving further and further from my hub of Reno, Nevada, I found a rundown 1860's farmstead in remote Northern Washoe County. For 13 years I occupied time raising my daughter, and sometimes my son, while hauling old farm garbage away from this new home and repairing buildings one by one on my own farm, and the farms of neighbors up and down the valley. I entertained my daughter and myself with hikes in the woods behind our home. Eventually that was not enough.

I wanted more from life, more from my entertainment, more information, more companionship. I wanted a woman in my life. In some unexplainable way I felt I would someday know a woman from overseas who would want to share my remote home. I also wanted to turn my 1960's business of promoting San Francisco rock bands into something of interest to me. I wanted to finish this homestead and fill my home with companionship and laughter.

My daughter was now grown up and on her own, hundreds of miles away. The year after she left I isolated myself in a project, rebuilding of the original 1860's house on my farm, pulling away from acquaintances and neighbors. I had learned to use my dreams to drive me on and encourage me with a glimpse into possible futures. A wider view of the world sought me out, trying to take on a life of its own through the recurring dream taking place on some distant African island.

The constant shock of the dream had made it uncomfortable to sleep at all. Lack of sleep, my self-imposed exile and the constant push to find some unknown satisfaction in my passing life, brought me to the point of a breakdown I was unwilling to accept. I rigged up a radio to keep me company in the old cabin as I deconstructed the building. The first song to greet me was "Africa" by Toto, a song I had not heard in years.

Fascination with the phenomenal world and the events in my life brought other people's stories to my home. One story in particular stood out as a true and verifiable event, and I was unable to leave it alone, or rather, it would not let me alone until I assisted its unfolding. It was an African story. I thought perhaps if I took it on as a project I would forget the ugly dream that plagued me, and get out of this breakdown loop.

Days after I first read the story, I contacted the people whose lives had been touched directly by these incredible events, which haunted me, instead of the recurring dream. I started presenting this new project on late night talks shows, calling on these people, from around the world, to participate. My days were spent remodeling the cabin, nights on the phone and radio circuits, thus avoiding dreaming at all. Dizzy from all of it, I seemed to be filling my life enough to let slip any concerns about solitude. The Internet had become a new tool in my life, and late night radio buffs contacted me about the shows I was producing.

A New Years Eve show ended as 2001 rolled in, and the music of "you've got mail" attracted my attention over the



sound of Toto singing "Africa" in the background. Just before the show I had written to Bruce, one of my guests on the recent radio interview, and what I thought would be a note from him turned out to be a flirting come-on from a woman I did not know. Bruce had been using the computer at a friend's house in Johannesburg, South Africa, leaving after the show, and this woman had decided to fire a letter off to me when he left.

Within a dozen letters, this woman and I were toying with the idea of a possible visit with me as her house guest in South Africa.

## 6. Lonely Traveler

I was lonely and naïve, and we both built up unreasonable expectations over the ensuing months of phone calls and emails. My new friend promised to come to me in California, but was unable to secure the needed visitors visa to enter the USA. Ten days later, I found myself with my first passport and three days after that I had arranged airfare to Johannesburg. Plans were made for us to spend a month together at her house.

The night before my departure, a huge spring storm closed the East Coast Reagan International Airport. Unaware of this, I woke at 4:00am from a welcome, different vivid dream in which a young man was waiting for a ride from the Johannesburg airport. In this dream, I stood unobserved next to him. His face stuck in my mind. The young man's ride came in the form of my radio show guest, Bruce, who

called out to the young traveler the name "Lonnie Traylor." In a matter of hours I would find and recognize Lonnie, without help, on the streets of Melville, South Africa.

Too awake to sleep now, and relived not to have had that nightmare dream of the African island, I turned on the computer and discovered the East Coast airport closures. Quick phone calls and unexpected flight changes pushed me out the door by the time the sun came up.

Arrangements were in place to leave my car for a month at the motel next to the airport in Reno.

I arrived at the motel with enough time to shower and grab a quick nap before a knock came at the door. My 27-year-old son had come to see me off and to find out what was going on with this uncharacteristic half-way-around-the-world trip I was making. He looked me in the eye for signs of my having lost my mind. Satisfied that I was not too nuts to get on the plane, he made arrangements to see me on my return, and we both left the motel, a short half-day after I arrived.

The airport shuttle dropped me off in front of the small Reno Tahoe International Airport.

With tickets in hand and luggage checked, I compared the tickets and flight schedule charts overhead, locating my departure gate. The waiting area past the simple security checks was filled with Nevada noises of slot machines and loud music. The only thing missing from any other casino was the smoke from cigarettes. Empty rows of seats greeted me at the departure gate. I pulled out the book my movie would be based on, and pretended to be busy .

The loading gate opened and I entered the plane, glancing around the empty seats, checking out the signs. Taking a seat, I pulled out a travel guide, looking for information about the Salt Lake Airport layout. The woman across the aisle from me looked over and said I could follow her through the airport and she would point out my next gate.

Somewhat more at ease, I leaned back and relaxed as much as the flight would allow, the windows now dark with early evening. When the seat belt sign came on, descent into Salt Lake City brought us rapidly to our departure point. The young woman motioned to me to follow and we set off through the automatic moving floors and deep into the airport. At an intersection she turned to me and said she would go one way, and I would go the other. It was late evening by now, and my flight would leave the empty room by midnight.

Other flights departed as midnight slowly approached. Pretending to be reading, I sat in the middle of the room as floods of humanity entered and left through gates to the north and south of me. With the first group, I nervously checked to see if it was my flight, only to find that I would have ended up in Los Angeles. I learned much about airports sitting there, mainly how to wait.

It would have been easier to continue waiting rather than board that never-ending leg of the flight from Salt Lake City to Atlanta, Georgia. The up side was the stewardess announcing, "Thank you for flying South African Airways," just before the roar of the engines took us out of

Utah. Chasing ever-later morning hours eastward over the Midwest and Deep South, nothing could be seen below in the darkness till the growing mass of development lit up the horizon with subdivisions and highways. The change of time made no sense to me, the long flight ending at 5:00am local East Coast time as we entered the almost empty Atlanta airport hub.

Three other passengers boarded the underground tramway bound for the center of the terminal and the departure gates. The tram doors opened into a long, wide corridor, empty, except for the handful of janitors dancing with mops and riding floor-waxing machines. Visitor Information booths and outgoing Customs and fast food restaurants surrounding the dining tables at the edge of the lobby were all empty. No coffee, no vendors, only empty booths. I selected a table close to the area the janitors were just entering and pulled my denim coat up around my neck to keep the damp cold out and fell asleep.

A bus cart loaded with glass plates and cups crashed into the door of a food outlet and woke me. My internal clock was still on West Coast time, hours behind the waking morning action of a handful of business travelers passing back and forth through the relatively empty intersection of shops and departure gates. With a carryon tote slung over my shoulder, I found the restrooms and washed up with cold water to bring my heart and mind to the shocking reality of being all the way diagonally across this huge country.

The coffee smelled much better than it tasted. The sticky

pastry dripped on my coat and tasted like yesterday's leftovers. Shops started to open as displays rolled out on the newly waxed floors.

I approached a janitor in the middle of the room and asked him about my flight. He politely took my ticket and looked around the lobby, then pointed down the "X" shaped corridor toward a seating area just within view, and said, "Just wait there, you will see others. You have 3 hours to wait." He looked at his wristwatch and showed me that it was only 7:00 AM.

The waiting area was much less interesting than the empty lobby. Sleepy travelers sprawled out on open seats with luggage around them. The morning light revealed waiting planes, one right outside the two-story-tall windows in front of my seat. A young window washer made his way through the room from left to right showing off tricky hand jive movements with a six-foot squeegee. The plane outside the window was huge, taller than the second floor elevation I was on. I moved to the clean windows with my tote and studied the transport that would take me across the Atlantic and to Cape Town, South Africa.

I was nose to nose with the plane, much of the cockpit above me, with gaping rotary teeth from the jet engines gleaming in the first rays of the sun. Palettes of cargo moved on the ground below and were elevated into the front of the plane. Workers crisscrossed on the tarmac around wheels as tall as themselves. Stainless steel food catering carts made their way on board. The loading chute booted up against the side of the plane shuddered slightly

as a load moved into the plane.

Our loading gate opened and a stewardess came from the plane to the information booth and announced that the first class passengers could load now. A man with an aluminum carryon camera case stood in front of me. We were both soon on the plane and seated next to each other right at the entry door and next to the galley. The entry door shut, the stewardess spoke with an English-sounding accent as the couple had, and I remembered now that it was the sound of my South African friends' voices, somewhat amazed by my own lack of knowledge.

The plane shook and we moved backwards, away from the glass windows I was now on the other side of, with an 18-hour nighttime flight ahead to cross the Atlantic to Cape Town. The man beside me buckled his seatbelt and drifted off before we hit the runway, our plane waiting its turn in the lineup for takeoff. The steep climb above Atlanta had not quite ended when the stewardess came down the aisle asking what we wanted for lunch, either beef or duck. LUNCH! I thought. Had that sticky pastry really been my only breakfast? The man beside me awakened during takeoff, placed his order and dozed off again till the meal arrived, our plane's altitude leveling out. Small bottles of South African red wine accompanied what was an amazingly fine presentation.

Many movies, more food, lots of bottled water, trips to the restroom, walks up and down the aisle to find places to stretch and do yoga, then it was night. A progress map showed how long we had been in the air, and where we

were in the world. Nowhere, and too long left to get anywhere, was all I could tell, as I tried unsuccessfully to sleep. The bright moon lit the banks of clouds indistinguishable from the ocean below.

Flying east we once again came to the sun. The moonlight faded, giving way to the ever-brightening morning sun rising over the breaking cloudbanks. Through the patches of open sky I could barely make out land. My first view of Africa greeted me.

My fellow passenger spoke for the first time, saying, "Namibia. That's the West Coast of Namibia."

"Nammbaia," I tried to say.

"NAMIBIA," he said.

"Namba," I said.

He shrugged his shoulders and said, "I work there this week. In Na-mib-I-a. I'm a contract specialist miniature cameraman, filming for a new reality TV series. This is my third trip through Africa. I'm heading to Johannesburg first, then Windhoek. Where are you going?"

"Johannesburg. I'm promoting a movie there."

"Is someone meeting you there? Have you ever been there? Do you know what you are in for?" he asked.

"Yes, a friend is meeting me there. What am I in for? What do you mean?" I questioned.

"Where are you from anyway?" he said studying my clothes.

"The high deserts of northern California," I answered.

"Well, don't get in any taxis. Don't leave your luggage with anyone. Don't speak to strangers. What are your plans?"

he insisted in a friendly but short manner.

"My friend will pick me up and I will stay at her house." I responded

"Girl friend?" he questioned.

"Yes," was all I could offer.

He looked away and fell asleep again. I wondered what I was really in for.

We started our descent into Cape Town. The pilot announced that those of us continuing on to Johannesburg would remain on the plane. When we landed, the departing passengers nearly emptied out the plane. First class passengers filed past from the staircase in front of us. New passengers loaded while fresh food and the daily newspapers were brought on. The stewardess offered me a newspaper and I choose "The Star" and sat back with it in my lap looking out the window at the small airport complex making up Cape Town's airport. In the distance I could see the 7:30am Cape Town commuter traffic crossing a bridge on a Wednesday morning.

I turned to the front page of the paper to read about farm families being killed by armed blacks, AIDS related rape of infants, corrupt politicians, and Zimbabwe land grabs. The man sitting next to me looked at the newspaper in my lap and commented, "You are in Africa now. How's it feel?"

"Lonely," I replied.

## 7. Unexpected Views On The Horizon



Could I now say I had been to Cape Town? I hadn't touched ground yet, nor would it seem that I had done so for more than another week. A short time later we were airborne again, circling over a wetland near the airport, then Hout Bay and Table Mountain, turning northwest into the interior of South Africa. It looked much like the Nevada deserts I had left days before. I looked out, fascinated, as we traced a course at over 400 miles per hour leading toward the Kimberley Diamond Fields, with round circles of irrigated farmland and kilometers of pipeline crisscrossed by electric lines.

On our descent, I saw Johannesburg in the distance with a ridge running behind it. I was heading to Northcliff and thought that ridge must be it. Suburbs of ten-acre looking plots lay below us along a north-south road. The overall sprawl of the city was much smaller than I expected, and the surroundings were bleak compared to what I had imagined. It really was like coming into Reno and I wondered why I had flown so far, only to get back where I came from. The pilot apologetically announced that because we were 45 minutes early, there was no place for us at the terminal and that he would land in the outlying part of the airport where ground transport would move us to the baggage area and security.

The terminal building was small in the distance compared to what I had expected. Two red buses pulled up and the black drivers opened the doors to the travelers coming down the portable stairs from our 747. My fellow traveler loaded onto the second bus, and kept looking back to see if

I had joined him. We drove under the back of the terminal and unloaded where luggage carts bustled to and fro.

Passport in hand, I tried in vain to understand the black security man asking me questions. Finally he grabbed my passport, looked it over, looked me over, stamped it and slowly handed it back watching me closely. "Business or pleasure?" I finally understood him to say, as he kept a grip on my passport, and I gripped the other side.

"Pleasure," I said and he released his grip. I could feel the flush of my red face as I passed him looking for the man with the aluminum camera box.

There he was, ahead of me at the baggage turntable. He gathered his bags and waved a goodbye as he saw me pick out my baggage and start toward him. He pointed ahead of him and down the passage, I nodded and he turned and disappeared around the bend. I continued down the passage to a large open waiting room filled with anxious faces watching the new arrivals.

As I entered the room, I wondered what my friend Mickey would look like. A dark haired woman waved and approached. I looked her in the eye, she looked past me, grabbed the man behind me and hugged him. I looked again into the crowd and now recognized my new friend, who looked disgusted that I had mistaken the other woman for her. Mickey walked over briskly and took the smaller of my bags and greeted me with, "You're early. I'm parked this way. Excuse me, I've been drinking with friends who thought it would be funny to bring wine around to get me pissed before I came to get you. Had I not phoned the

airport I wouldn't have been here on time to meet your early arrival." I kept pace with her as she quickly approached the stairs to the parking area. She led the way to underground parking and an empty parking space. "SHIT! It's gone! Where's my CAR!" she cried out. My heart dropped to my knees. She looked around and said, "SHIT! We're on the wrong level!" and laughed at her mistake.

We made our way back to the passenger areas and then to the correct level and found her small white car. "Put your luggage low in the back seat. Cover it with your coat. Take off your sunglasses and necklace. Get in and lock the door. Keep your windows nearly rolled up. Get in the other side; I'm driving, not you," Mickey commanded in an ill-tempered list of orders.

We jetted out of the parking lot and into the hot midday sun with no air-conditioning in her little car. Through the underpass and on down the "wrong" side of the road, for me, my disorientation starting at the airport and now mixed with my first case of jetlag.

Fifteen miles of highway passed without my absorbing any details. The first intersection was filled with black men approaching the stopped cars.

"Are your windows up? Doors locked?" she drilled as she looked over at me. The first man came by with wire-molded trinkets, the second with scarves. Ahead, another man held up handfuls of avocados. The light changed and we drove on through a city looking much like the edges of any city I had been in. Billboards and car lots scattered amongst small strip malls, liquor stores and even a McDonalds. Past

freeway onramps and through rolling hills, the city getting denser. The crowds increased at each intersection and the diversity became more eclectic. We turned up the hill to the right, and passed a small lake. "That's where two German tourists were killed the other night," she said. "They are not smart about this city, none of them."

I watched the lake, thinking how little I knew about any of this. We climbed a ridge through older homes and tree lined streets, intermixed with parks. Down more rolling patches, we entered an older part of town with low-rise brick businesses. Mickey stopped at a bottle store and asked if I wanted beer or wine, and instructed me to stay with the car and lock the doors. She disappeared into the shop through a crowd of black people. A bicycle shop sat along the row of shops. Out she came with a six-pack of beer and a box of red wine. "You look wiped out. Let's go home," she mumbled. The heat was putting me to sleep. I watched the streets, carefully trying to quickly orient myself correctly.

A blank spot in my ability to observe the world grew like an oil drop on water. Colors mixed on the surface of my mind, trees looked too tall, streets too long, pedestrians too black. Street signs in what looked like German marked progress past fruit stands and large malls and more expensive car lots. We turned off a main four-lane with the high-rise buildings of the downtown area looming ahead, and started to climb steeply up behind a blues club and parking structure into a quiet residential area with a house-lined ridge ahead of us. A couple of traffic circles and we pulled up to a security gate at a township tucked against the even steeper base of the place I would know as Northcliff.

Mickey pointed a device at the gate through the windscreen and the gate slid back between pillars topped with razor wire and electric high-tension wires as if I were entering a bad TV movie prison.

Mickey pulled in under a loose woven sun-screened carport next to an old red Austin Minor. "Lock your door behind you. I lost a radio here last week," she ordered, again snatching the smaller tote and some of the items from the liquor store, while I grabbed the rest in an awkward attempt to rise to the occasion. The incline of the parking lot curved between the set of three townhouses sitting mostly unoccupied on this midweek afternoon. A black man pushed a wheelbarrow of garden tools up under a set of bushes and a blue-gray parrot-looking bird flushed out and drifted past us on its descent toward the lower end of the complex. Above, in what looked like a truncated blue spruce, two loud, large black-brown birds squawked at us as we climbed the stairs to the upper level of the central complex. The prison impression was not complete yet.

## **8. Security?**

She pulled her keys back out of her purse and opened a barred security door protecting the sliding glass door entrance to the townhouse that was to be my month-long home. Black walls covered with cheap African art accented the living room with a bright white kitchen at the end of this tunnel, the window looking out on the high-rises of the Central Business District of Johannesburg, over the carport with the little red Austin. I heard the prison doors clang jarringly behind me and turned to see her dark form facing me, bags of booze in hand.

"Beer or wine?" Mickey asked, approaching my unaccustomed presence in her kitchen, setting the bags down with a clunk. Somehow we drank, ate warm cheese and chips. I fell asleep in a humid black bedroom as she slipped off to her office to pound computer keys in the background.

I woke to the sound of those dark loud birds squawking as they flew off for the night, the low sun setting to my left. I came out to the black hallway that separated the bedroom, bathroom and office from the living room. Mickey called out without looking up from her computer, "I'm nearly finished, both with work and this day. Come see. This is an ad work-up for one of my clients. We need to go get some pictures of sports fields tomorrow so I can insert them in a presentation page. Want another beer? Wine? I'm ready. Let's go get some dinner. Pasta?"

The barrage of questions and statements flew past me and out the barred windows of the bedroom behind me before I

could think to answer. I was still stuck on the sun moving the wrong direction, to the left, as it set. The full moon complicated the issue, rising from the wrong side of the complicated new skyline out the window. "Those dammed Hadidahs woke you, didn't they? Their song says 'GO AWAY!'"

"Pasta sounds great. Do we need to dress for dinner?" I asked.

"No. It's not a fancy place. Family dining," Mickey said as she got up, grabbed her bag and headed past me to the door.

Unlike her, I looked in the mirror and rearranged my long hair and pushed at my teeth, sticking my tongue out to see if I had one anymore, or just shoe leather in my mouth.

"Do I need to carry my passport? ID? Wallet?" I questioned.

"Don't be silly. Here, leave the passport here in this bookcase. Bring your money. Thieves don't steal books."

## 9. Rands

We loaded into her small car again and passed through the security gate. I felt anything but secure with any of this, the wrong-way sun and moon tugging at any remaining sense of reality still floating between my eyes and ears. Maybe food will help. A different-looking kind of black people mixed on the streets. Some of them, appearing to be working women, walked down the hill away from the fancy houses above us; others were dirt covered laborers bent from hard chores. Many were difficult to make eye contact with, as their gazes seemed to enter our car, searching the contents. I recognized my first repeated landmark as we came up on the older parking structure behind the blues club, and turned onto the four-lane, passing the malls and car lots.

Next to a McDonalds, we entered a parking lot with men, women and children passing closed shops and entering an outdoor raised dining wing of a second floor restaurant. A white parking attendant with a canvas change belt approached us, his crooked teeth in his fat round face spitting some indistinguishable words at us. "That white car's mine. Don't touch it! Don't let anyone else touch it either!" Mickey flicked a coin at him and passed without eye contact. I looked back at him as he tried to express some kind of dignity, approaching the next person who passed him, his pandering repeated, followed by another coin.

Dark corners of the shop sidewalks could have hidden eyes of their own as we climbed wooded stairs to the outside tables of the restaurant. A young white man seated us, sort



of recognizing Mickey, pulling her chair back. A bartender at the mirrored wall behind us poured two glasses of red wine, and pushed them our way as the waiter turned to grab them and set them at our places. "Our special tonight is ...." the waiter started. "Pasta. We'll both have pasta. Give us the Clam Linguini!" she demanded. The waiter nodded, turned and left, signaling the cook past the bar with hand gestures and a nod in our direction.

The smell of pizza and pasta filled the air. Young people played at pinball and table games at the other end of the restaurant while adults clanked glasses of beer and wine, the bartender and waiter crisscrossing their workstations. Quickly a young woman exited swinging doors from the kitchen, two plates of pasta en route to our table. Garlic filled my nostrils with the steam rising from my plate. "Enjoy!" Mickey said, and sloshed back some wine and stirred her pasta before downing the first mouthful. We shortly finished dinner, I grabbed the bill without thinking and put US dollars down. She took my cash and put Rand down, saying, "We'll go to the currency exchange on the way home." We left by way of the back staircase to the darker parking area where the round-faced man was trolling new arrivals and paying no attention to our leaving.

"What are your plans while I finish up my ad work? You know that your buddy Bruce has a car, too? He's coming around tomorrow, Thursday," Mickey explained and directed at the same time.

"Thursday?" I thought out loud.

"Ya? Thursday, where've you been? Your buddy said he wanted to take you to Melville. That's the artsy community near the CBD," she instructed.

"The what?" I asked, looking around as if I could answer my own question.

"What do you mean? Oh, CBD ... Central Business District. Or Melville. I'll meet you two there. We'll have drinks," as she continued the instruction and plans for the day ahead.

I sat back and looked out the window for landmarks, still trying to answer my own questions. Where's the airport? Which way's that ridge? The mall and fruit and vegetable store were closing for the night and a large number of black women, young and old, bustled back and forth with full bags. We pulled into a parking structure and entered a secured mall. A small glass door to an office alcove was marked "Foreign Exchange" where a young white woman sat behind a glass window much like an overly secured movie theater ticket booth. "How much should I exchange?" I asked. "I don't know, you're buying!" she answered. I picked out • USD and got a pile of some R1700 back in colors and shapes new to me with pictures of animals I had not seen before, except on TV. "Let's go shopping," she said as we turned to leave the mall.

I was trying to figure how to pocket my new money as I sat in the car. We pulled back on the four lane and crossed to a vegetable stand with black and brown women moving up and down the aisles. I picked through the vast mass of colors and shapes of fruits and vegetables so abundant and

diverse that I wanted them all, even if just to try. I loaded my cart and caught up with her at the milk case. Mickey looked my load over and huffed "Like fruit and vegetables, huh? Well, you have plenty now. Let's pay and go home." She put her stuff in the cart, moved past the cash register and waited for me. I pulled the strange currency out and listened in vain to the woman who owned the store as she told me what it cost. I fumbled with the animals and colors in my hands. My companion stepped back to me and grabbed the lot of them and paid the lady who was looking at me now like I had just come from another planet. Truth was, I had. We loaded the bags into the car, filling the small back seat, and headed off to the townhouse.

Bags of strange food and new cash surrounded me at the dining room table. Mickey moved the pile of food from the table to the small kitchen in an ordered manner that had limited opportunity to change. I patiently put the Rand notes in one order then another till I was satisfied that I could hide them in my money belt for the night in the bookcase, and turned to her outstretched hand offering some wine.

## **10. Backward Moon Over Sailing Ships**

Mickey said, "Let's sit and look at the night yard." I agreed and got up and headed to the front door, stopped at the prison bars and looked for the latch, realizing I needed an exit key. I was really locked in and she had the key! "I'll give you a key. We'll need to go to the security shop," she said, unlocking the barred exit, and moving to the swinging yard bench right outside the bedroom window. The night air was cooling and moist. A thunderstorm had passed while we were at the mall and the moon moved the wrong direction through the broken clouds. The wine knocked me out. A pleasant relaxing sit was traded in for a black bedroom lay down on the other side of the window.

I woke when Mickey was fast asleep near midnight, or what would have been my 10:00 AM California farmer time. Late! I thought. I should be awake! I pulled out of the bed and made my way in the dark around the bed and out to the fresh air moving though the locked, barred door, the glass sliding door open, finding an out of the way corner that I could call my own. There by the patio and still in the living room safety, I quietly watched the moon again, mesmerized by why it moved from right to left instead of left to right, putting my mind in space, watching the planet spin with apparent movement of the stars.

As I stood to leave my new space, clarity came into my head almost as if I had just come off a high mountain and my ears had popped. Sounds from unknown places entered my mind along with words that were not my own. I passed this off as jet lag and dragged myself back to bed.

It was as if some unnamed person narrated my dreams. I found myself flying over deserts without boundaries at a time that could have been 2,000 years ago, or could have been yesterday. Nearly naked hunters joined by herdsmen moved back and fourth in an inhospitable land. Some kind of cave paintings played across my mind's eye, made by primitive people as a view of the distant ocean revealed tall ships from Europe exploring the coastal regions. The ships seemed to be Portuguese, then maybe Dutch, but also British with captains laying claim to parts of the coast. A feeling of controversy caused by these land grabs mixed with a feeling of confusion coming from the native people in the dream that night. My relaxed desert dream now woke me as my own life confusions mixed with personal controversy, causing me to forget most of the dream by the time I rolled out of bed.

## 11. Café Crowd

The next morning Mickey had spent time at her computer by the time I was up and was drinking instant coffee to jump-start the day. Offering me a cup she announced that she would be joining my buddy and me so that she could get some shots of a sports field before the midday sun. When Bruce, the young man I had known from my radio shows, arrived, she directed us to load her car with camera equipment after our truncated introductions. We set out for Melville.

Making our way down to the four-lane, I noticed for the first time the street name, D.F. Malan, still working out where I

was and which way to go home if I were on foot. We wound around past a lushly landscaped graveyard and parades of black people in white robes heading into the wooded areas at the base of a large open field. We turned up a hill toward what I would find was Park Town, and found one sports field, then another, then yet another on the hill above Melville. We talked our way past a reluctant guard and onto the unoccupied field, looking at wall-mounted advertisements. With picture taking soon out of our way, it apparently was beer time and our driver announced that we should go to a sidewalk café in Melville. Bruce agreed; he wanted us to meet with an older actor that was waiting to meet the out of town producer, and I realized that meant me.

Melville was just a few blocks away. A narrow street rolled over a small ridge below the imposing SABC tower and office structures. Street cafés and bars mixed with small grocery stores and coffee shops. We found parking on the main street near a set of tables and behind a restored classic 1957 Chevy pickup with the name of the café painted on its doors. A waitress came from inside the shop and asked if we wanted beer or wine. The others at the table looked at me, and I realized no one was going for their pockets, so I put some Rand notes on the table and ordered beers for us.

That clarity sound was almost present in my head again and I knew that it was not just jet lag. Somehow I knew that the man I had seen in my dream of the airport a few days back was now coming down the street. I told my companions at the table that our guest was on his way, and

that I would point him out to them if they kept quiet. Looking up and down the street, I was stunned to see the man from my dream, except, he was not the young 35 year old I had seen, but a 75 year old in fine shape.

"There, that's him!" I pointed out.

"Yes, that's him," they both said, looking up from their drinks. He crossed the street and pulled up a chair with us. Seeing that we had drinks he reached for his pocket to place an order, and I assured him I was buying. He introduced himself as Lonnie, as he looked at the people at tables in the café down the street.

"There's Phillip," Lonnie said.

"I saw him on TV last night," replied my companion.

"He's a documentary film maker," my buddy offered.

"Do any of you know him well enough to introduce me?" I asked. No one answered, so I got up and left on my own for his table down the street.

"Hi there. I'm Russell Winje from California. I understand you are a documentary film maker."

The man politely turned from his table and introduced himself as Phillip Marlboro, and asked what my business was in South Africa. I quickly explained, pointing back at my table. Phillip gave a glance, and a nod to the people at my table then turned his attentions back to me. "I remember those folks from the days of SABC." Later I was to learn

that Johannesburg was a small community with cross ties and business incest going back decades, interconnecting people in the movie industry through the South African Broadcasting Company. This connection would continue to crop up till it ended up in my own home months later. I thanked Phillip for his time and returned to my table.

The drinks were all empty, and no efforts had been made to refill them. Lonnie stood up to leave as I walked up behind him

Back past chemists and fish markets, through familiar intersections and past the graveyard, making our way up the hill to the townhouse electric gate. "Look around, this is where hijackings take place while drivers wait for the gate," Mickey said peering over her dark glasses. I sat up with a half drunk and sleepy attempt to be attentive. This was not working. I had a month in this country and needed to get active with something other than drinking the days away.

## 12. Setup

That night Mickey worked at her computer late into the night as I fought my way through the huge map book of Johannesburg while trying in vain to get North and South straight in my mind, memorizing street names. Between fits of desperation over street names and a need to push forward with my exploration of this opportunity, I pulled my aging notebook out and made phone calls to people in the Johannesburg area whom I had put on radio shows over



the last couple of years, setting up possible meetings to learn more about their involvement with the subject of my current movie project. Occasional Mickey would make her way out of her office and mix with me and the coffee in the kitchen as I sat at the phone on the bar counter between the living room and kitchen.

Studying my notes over my shoulder, Mickey thoughtfully offered, "I know people from my days at SABC. I can introduce you to some of them if you like.

"I'm ready to fill every day with meetings. I don't know anything about those folks you mentioned. Let's open doors wherever we can," I said as I wrote the suggestions into my notebook as she talked.

The next day I made phone calls and set up some appointments. From her cell phone Mickey made a call to a man she had done set work for during her SABC days, working on commercials. "There we go. Right after we get out of here, we are on the way to Northcliff to meet Lou. He did some big work in Hollywood with Dream Works."

I perked up as she said this because I had meet Stephen Simon of Dream Works in an awkward way the summer before while I was in Hollywood.

"We should go now. I have set up an appointment for you before lunch," Mickey said.

## 13. Northcliff Meeting

Relatively quickly we were back at her car and higher up Northcliff. I watched as we climbed the mountainside that made the south face of Northcliff, passing ever more expensive houses, till we came to the address she had in mind. The driveway was filled with cars, so we parked across the street near another busy house, and walked up the steep brick-paved entry.

An older man with short thinning black hair greeted us at a front gate made from materials that looked like a rock bluff. "Welcome to my home. I'm Lou Guessler. Come in."

We entered through the rock face like entering a cave. Hidden behind the gate was a beautiful sprawling two-story brick home a floor above a production studio over a two-car garage. Teams of black and white workers moved pieces of sets around the parking lot. The late summer midday sun was warm in the protection of the courtyard created around the sets of stairs leading to the entry doors. We passed a mock Baobab tree that workers were decorating with three-foot tall fairies in various poses, amongst more fiberglass rock bluffs. Lou stopped and tapped on one rock, saying, "Geologists go nuts trying to tell the difference between the real ones and the ones I make," tapping the real rocks next to them. I touched the two surfaces; only the temperature in the sun told the difference.

Up the stairs, turning at the door to the studio, climbing

again through vines and shrubs to the open double wood doors to the home, we followed Lou into a plush living room with sculptured polished wood around a large round table covered with photographs and notebooks. Lou touched a silky deep red polished piece of wood larger than my leg. "Iron wood from a location shoot to the north of here," he said, gesturing to us to touch it. Lou offered us seats on the chairs surrounding a low table as another man entered the room.

"Howzit? I'm Jeremy Pond, Lou's production manager," said the red haired man who carried in another box to sit on the large round table behind us, pulling a couple more chairs to the table. "I'm Russell Winje, and this is my friend, Mickey."

Lou graciously asked me to join him outside, standing up to take leave. I followed him past an older black woman looking out at us from the kitchen, exiting through a double glass door onto a north facing courtyard against a massive rock bluff of the ridge of Northcliff. We passed the group of black workers gathered around the back door to the kitchen as the older black woman showed up again, offering plates of food to the workers. Lou quickly named the men in an introduction courtesy as we worked our way through them and up a nearly hidden stairway past an empty swimming pool and into a huge garden on the hillside above the courtyard overlooking the double glass doors. I was too busy watching my step, as we came to an opening in the garden, to notice the view. Lou stopped and looked at me, then pointed out over his home at the skyline of Johannesburg.

"You're a very visual man. Have you been able to see this far since you got here? That's the CBD over there, and those are the mine dumps, the zoo is hidden over there, that's Melville." A helicopter flew over as he said, "One airport is over there. Where do you live?" he asked. That clarity once again filled my head followed by voices this time that I could hear clearly saying, "This man will be very important in your life." As they spoke Lou stopped and turned and looked me directly in the eye as if he had heard the same thing.

"I live in the mountains of northern California, at the edges of the high deserts," I told him, the voices still ringing in my mind.

"I've been in northern California on location," Lou said, gazing out over the city. "San Francisco" he turned back to me. "You're a mountain man. I bet you need this much view to have a clear head. Let's head back to the house. I see that my investment manager has just arrived. I bet you can think again now." We descended past the swimming pool where the black workers sat around in the shade finishing their lunch. In through the double glass doors, Lou introduced me to Adam Rosenstein. "Adam, this is Russell Winje from the mountains of California."

We four men sat around the round table as Lou began a presentation showing us pictures and portfolios from various movies filmed in Africa and California. "This is a village I made for a movie here in South Africa. This is a cave for "Ghost", this is the library in "Dreams", and these are the faces in Hell from "Dreams". Did you see What

Dreams May Come"? I did the special effects. This is the rock quarry where I made the rock bluffs using my own procedure." A quick fifteen minutes later he said, "This is what I do. What do you do? What brings you to South Africa?"

"I'm promoting a movie." With little explanation needed, we moved ahead with more about Lou's business.

Jeremy left the room through the glass doors to the hidden courtyard; lighting a cigarette, he stood facing the sun with his eyes closed, taking a deep drag. Lou joined him as he motioned to Adam and me to come along. The black men were gone now, and the courtyard was ours.

"Adam and Dee, my former wife, are together now," Lou said, patting Adam on the shoulder. Adam's face was a bit red, though this was not the first time anyone had to explain this story. A quiet man in his forties, Adam simply said, "Dee and I live about fifteen minutes from here; she will explain things better than I could."

A car could be heard pulling up outside, and Lou led us back to the living room. The black woman had brought chicken sandwiches to the low table in the living room while we were out. Dee entered the room through the double doors as we all came back in past the round table. "Making a presentation Lou?" she asked. "Yes," Lou answered, offering us seats around the low table filled with food and juice.

"Hello, I'm Russell Winje, and this is ..."

"Mickey, I'm Mickey." She moved over to give Dee room next to her on the couch.

"Nice to meet you both. Mickey, I think we have met before."

"Yes, you and Lou worked with me at SABC years ago."

"Sure, I remember that," Dee responded.

Lou studied Mickey's face and slowly said "Commercials? Yes, I remember."

Adam approached Dee and greeted her, taking a seat next to me. Lou left for the kitchen, returning with a pack of cigarettes and headed for the front door, indicating to me to follow. I met him outside in the afternoon shade of the garden covering the entry stairs.

"What point is your project at now? Who have you found to work with you? I would like to work with you when you are to that point," Lou explained with a studied look on his face.

"Lou, I am not very well developed at this point. I must admit that other issues got me here before this movie did, though now that I'm here, I will push this movie forward," I revealed.

"Let's go back in then and let Adam explain his part of my business." Lou put his cigarette out and led the way back to the room. Adam had a small set of papers in his lap and began to explain business, as Jeremy added comments.

For a quick fifteen minutes I was brought up to speed on who funds projects, what projects, insurance Lou had worked with, time frames. So much information and it was only mid-afternoon.

Mickey stood up and announced that she needed to return to her office and started to put her things together to leave. I thanked Lou and Jeremy and Adam for their time and agreed to be in contact with them while I was in Joburg. My head was spinning as we left past the rock-faced gate and got into Mickey's car; heading down Ethel, the skyline I had just been shown had a new feel for me.

Just then a voice in my head spoke loudly. "Where do you live?" it asked. "California," I answered in my head. "You could live here," the voice continued. "I live in California," I said again. "YOU LIVE HERE!" it continued. I was shocked but knew I was being put on the spot for a reason. I figured I needed to act as if I lived here, so I said, "I live here, but I will go home to California." "YOU LIVE HERE!" "OK! I live here. I live here. This is now my home!" The voice in my head stopped, I looked at the mountain I was on. I really could live here. It was beautiful.

## **14. Finishing Off Duties**

A short drive later we were through the security gate at the townhouses. Mickey said, "Let me get some papers and we can go and get you a set of keys. I'll buy dinner." Moments later we were off again and headed back to the same mall where we exchanged my dollars. As we passed the foreign exchange I stopped and got some more Rand, not knowing what to expect with my finances.

We headed back across town to a sports bar packed with large young men loudly pushing and shoving each other while watching a rugby match on TV. We took a table outside as the afternoon cooled to an early evening. "Feel like a bit of a walk?" Mickey asked. "Sure. Some outdoor time sounds real nice," I agreed.

We drove to a wooded park along a pond en route to the townhouse. Rows of cars loading and unloading dogs filled the first two parking areas we entered. Finding an open parking stall we joined the dog owners, watching our step through the heavily used dog park to an open field climbing past smaller ponds toward a ridge at the back of the park. It was dusk by the time we reached the top of the park, and dog owners were quickly disappearing to the parking areas. We took to paved streets at the edge of the park and made our way at a half run through ever-darker streets and back to our car. I had just started to understand the need to move with intention and not be a target as we reached our car, the parking lot nearly empty by now. We quickly got in and locked the doors as Mickey left the parking lot for the streets, crossing the face of the dam. In the distance I could see the Cresta Mall where we had been earlier that



afternoon.

My days became so full of meetings and new experiences that I started a calendar for the upcoming week. It was Friday evening now, and most meetings would be on hold. Mickey offered to take me out to the countryside over the weekend, between finishing her office duties before starting a new job on Monday.

Saturday we packed up for the day and hit the roads around the edges of town. Looping through the spokes of streets connecting circular roads surrounding Joburg, we eventually came to a park referred to as the Black Eagle Park. A wonderful botanical garden path led through picnic tables and food vendors to a waterfall where some children, ignoring warning signs from the health department, played in pools of water. Black Eagles circled the bluffs at the top of the cliff. This was one of the most serene moments so far, almost like being back at my own home, where golden and bald eagles circled my own waterfall. The day was drawing to a close as we headed back to the townhouse.

With plenty of food at home we cooked dinner together as the phone rang.

"Mom! Nice to hear from you. How's Dad? No, nothing here, Just cooking dinner. Yes, Mom, I'm OK. Yes, I'm taking my meds. How's Dad? OK, I'll talk to him later then. Love you. 'Bye."

Returning from the hallway, Mickey said, " My Dad's been sick. I've been sick. He won't talk to me if it upsets him. I've

upset him recently. My mother suspects I'm still not well, but I won't tell her anything till Dad's better. Let's eat. Smells good. More wine anyone?"

Dinner was louder than days before, noises passing through the paper thin townhouse walls. Medleys of words and laughter filled the room. The dinner was good, but the wine better. The night drew to a close, as things eventually got quieter.

That night a dream began with the recognizable profile of English missionaries mixed with natives, followed by German missionaries in what appeared from their clothing to be the mid 1800's. More annexing of lands and bays along a coastline was giving way to even more controversy as trading companies protected by the German government pushed at the native life styles. The newcomers were looking at these new opportunities as a gateway to the interior of the African continent. The natives saw it as a death sentence. Conflicts between indigenous peoples and Europeans, mostly over control of land, brought outbreaks of violence, and then revolt by natives, and a feeling of impending doom as the stronger European military began preparing for what could only end as a genocidal campaign. Nervous from the restlessness my dreams was causing, I struggled to wake, and hope I would forget this dream and start my own daily life drama.

## **15. Breakfast For One**

Morning found me sitting by the open, barred sliding glass door with my granola and Tarot deck. The death card came up first. I did not need this. It was Sunday, and the house was asleep. I had my own set of keys and wireless gate controller and knew my way to town now. Usually I would take a Sunday at home to get away for breakfast somewhere. I had my own key. Why not, I thought.

Quietly I made my way out of the house and through the security gate, watching the slow movement of the supposed secure entry as it shook and clanged to a stop. The early morning air was great. Few people were out yet, mainly well-dressed black couples on foot like me. Guarded smiles passed between us. I came upon the main four lane highway from a back street, coming out next to the closed food market I had shopped at days before. An appliance repairman worked in the open air in front of his shop. No one else was walking the main street near me.

"Good morning. Where's a good place to eat breakfast?"

"He looked at me, then up and down the street. "Try going that way a block or two, then...." He paused and looked at me again, like he was still trying to get around to using his eyes this Sunday morning.

"I'm a repairman in California. Where do you like to eat breakfast?" He stepped out further into the sidewalk, and with purpose pointed and gave directions. "Go a block this way, turn right at the white building before the blues club. Go half a block and there's an open-air restaurant. Great

breakfast. California? Why are you here?"

"Oh, just visiting friends," I offered. He watched as I left down the street.

It was easy to find. The cook and waitress were arguing like a married couple, sorting out newspapers for the tables and turning lights on, then off, behind each other. I was the first customer of the day. "Take any table you like," the woman called out as she went for the menus at the counter. The cook hollered the special to her and I accepted before she put the menus down.

"Coffee?"

"Yes, please."

Two men came in with a young boy dressed for a sports event. They ordered the special as the waitress left for the kitchen, acknowledging them with a familiar smile. The boy circled the dining area checking me out before joining them at the table. A shop across the alley rattled as the heavily barred entry gate rolled back exposing an open shop door, the shopkeeper looking up and down the street before wiping his hands on his apron and disappearing back into his shop.

Breakfast was farmer's food. Sausage, eggs and toast. Filled comfortably, I paid and made my way past the two men talking sports while leafing through the newspaper. Back to the D.F Malan. I found more black people dressed in fine colorful garb. Large black women walked in twos and threes carrying small bundles. To explore my memory of

streets I assumed that I could follow this crowd of women a few block further before heading uphill to the townhouse. A beautiful sunny street lined with trees climbed toward my destination. Only a few lone black men came down the street as I saw my gate in the distance. With a look around to make sure I was by myself, I opened the security gate and waited for it to stop closing before going to the townhouse. I didn't need to be quiet any longer, though as Mickey could be heard in the living room.

"Where would he go?! His stuff is still all here."

I clicked the door with my key and she turned, a bit red-faced, and watched me enter. "Where have you been?" she demanded.

"Breakfast. Met another repairman, who showed me a ..." I almost got out of my mouth.

"What do you think you're doing? You can't just go out there on your own like that. Where would we look for you? Oh, forget it!" she scolded. "I'm going to take you to Hartebeestpoort today. We won't need much. We can eat there. I can't work today. I have too much on my mind anyway. We won't see much of each other the rest of the month, and I'm sick of this job before it starts."

Making her way to the shower, she dropped clothes in the hallway as she disappeared into the bathroom. I made some phone calls to set up a Monday meeting as the steam from the shower came down the hallway. Drying her hair with the towel and partly dressed in yesterday's clothes, she

announced on the way to the bedroom that she wouldn't be eating, it was too late now. By the time she had come back to the living room I had also finished in the shower, learning how to be out of her way in her small space. We closed the house and headed back out through the security gate, past the appliance repair shop, out on D.F Malan, past familiar places till we were a half hour out of town.

The pavement turned to dirt as we passed a two-story-tall mocked up creature standing in a yard. I didn't see any more of my landmarks. Looking over at Mickey I saw worry on her face. "We missed a turn somewhere," she said, coming to a full stop, looking around. "Back that way, I'm sure," she offered, turning around, and again passing the statue and back to the paved road. "This way. I'm sure," she insisted, still looking a bit worried. It was clouding up for afternoon rain as we picked up speed through a quiet back road. "There we go. That's the dam over there." We came up to a busy intersection with fruit vendors of a higher quality than I had been seeing in town. Crossing the main road we were back in Sunday traffic heading toward what looked like a flea market in the distance.

It was a busy mix of permanent and moveable shops with cheap African art nearly blocking an intersection. We got out and followed crowds through table displays of rugs, jewelry, magazines, shoes and leather coats, none of which looked worth the money at any cost. Restless with the crowd, she pointed at her car across the street. We moved ahead to a museum of sorts at a restaurant overlooking a canyon. Shrubs and low trees partially concealed the canyon and back of the building. We quickly made our way

through the museum, looking for an entry to the restaurant, only to find it was still closed. The dining area was outside under the low trees with canopies over the tables. Waiters moved around the partially set tables. Smell of barbeque fires filled the air. "We will be open in an hour," said a young man walking past us on the stairs with an armload of plates. "You can get a reservation upstairs in the museum."

We went upstairs and through the museum without making a reservation, and back to the parking lot. "There's another place down the road. Let's just head there," Mickey insisted. Somewhere in the distance a radio was playing Toto's 'Africa'.

## 16. Attacked In My Sleep

Back in the car the cell phone rang and Mickey answered while negotiating the parking lot bumps. "Yes. Howzit? Who did you say this is? Jeremy? Where are you? Why do you call me? Why now!" Mickey shook her head and said to me that she must pull over and take this call from an old boyfriend she had not heard from for some ten years.

Finding another shop with parking under a tree she got out and continued her phone conversation. "Where are you? Yes, I'm at Hartebeestpoort Dam, too. We're about to cross the dam. Why did you call me after all this time?

Braai? Sure. I'm with a friend though, could we both come? Well, some other time then," she said, hanging up and turning to see that I was still in earshot. "An old boyfriend. Why call me? Why now? I told him we would not join him. He's actually right on that ridge overlooking the dam. Let's

head on to the next restaurant," she explained as she sped off toward the dam.

Hartebeestpoort Dam's face was a two-lane road partially covered by an overflow control structure at the center of the dam just before a tunnel through the mountainside. Coming out the other end, we entered a busy parking area with Sunday tourists crossing the road from a snake park to a restaurant. We searched for parking through the crowd, finding a place at a distance from the entry to the open seating area. The inside tables were dark and closed off. A waiter approached us and said the power had just gone off due to an electric storm and they were not sure it would come on before dinner time. He offered us a seat at an outside table.

"We just want beer. Can you bring us beer?" she demanded. The man looked confused, and put us at a table near some Japanese couples finishing up a birthday party for their children, complete with party hats and balloons. A busboy passed with a tray of dirty dishes and Mickey again barked, "Can we have some beer?" The couples at the other table turned to see what had just interrupted their family time. The first waiter re-appeared with two cans of beer and two glasses. Mickey drank her beer quickly and looked at me while I slowly got to the bottom of my glass. "Let's go then. It will be too long till they get power again, and besides, it's too noisy here." She got up, passing the birthday group and leaving some money at the cash resistor on the way past the man who had seated us; he looked glad that we had left his place of business.



Mickey was again silent on the way home. We hit the main road back to Johannesburg without any back road detours this time. In a while I could begin to see the familiar water towers. It had started to rain when we left the dam and not let up by the time we got to town. Without much conversation we came through the security gate and back into the town house. Mickey ducked into her office and closed the door. I could hear her on the phone making apologizes for not making the braai.

I waited for the phone to be put down and started making phone calls myself. I called the airlines first to see if I could change my return time to an earlier date. The expense was nearly the same as the full price I had paid to get there. I thought I should just wait and see if things got better before I gave up on seeing this part of the world. Time dragged on till it was nearly midnight. I waited in the living room to see if Mickey would ever come out of the office again.

The door to the office exploded open and she raced out at me, shouting something about the phone bill. "You're going to break me! All these phone calls! And to who? How are you going to pay me back? Well, you can't stay here! Why don't you just GO HOME!" On and on she went, making little or no sense most of the time. Finally without a word from me in my defense, she disappeared back into the office. I gathered up all my things from around the house and put them behind the couch next to the piano, packing for my exit the next morning. I was not sure where I would go, but I was not staying here! I found a way to make my bed hidden behind the couch and pulled my coat up around my neck and fell asleep. Again I felt my old homeless habits

nag at me.

Around 3:00 AM I heard her come from her office and stop in the hallway where she would be able to see the living room. After a huff, I heard the bedroom door close, and soon after it was quiet. I slept lightly that night, expecting to be attacked in my sleep. Just before dawn she went from the bedroom to the bathroom, stopping in the hall where she could study the living room again. Another huff and I heard her say under her breath, "Maybe he's gone already."

Somehow I drifted off to sleep. Without any control over the process, the sequence of dreams once again began to unfold. A pleasant view over multicolored desert sand dunes quieted my fears at first as I flew over one dune after another enjoying the clean air and unobstructed view. I crossed another dune as below me a mass of some 30,000 or more people was seen being driven into the inhospitable desert at gunpoint, kept from food and water and prevented from returning to their former way of life. A smell of death already rose as women and children died alongside their husbands and fathers.

Seemingly on another part of the planet, whaling ships accessed deep harbors at the nearby coast. Successions of colonist exploited the coastal locations and its resources, setting up strategic settlements, seemingly unaware of the human disaster of the native people. World powers noticed the advantages of this colonization, but chose to ignore the complicated political status it caused. Competing seafaring nations attempted to forestall each others' ambitions as disputes arose over boundaries. No notice was made of the

concentration camps being occupied by the desert survivors. A sense of heroic efforts fought by these native people in which they had repeatedly defeated or humiliated European forces was lost in the misplaced trust of a peace treaty which ended with the killing of nearly a hundred encamped native women and children.

I woke an hour or so before the bedroom door opened again, confusing the dream with the history of my own country. I was awake for an hour by the time she came into the room again.

## 17. Time To Find A Friend

I was not one to stay where I was not welcome. I had some Rand notes on the counter next to the phone when she came to the kitchen, acting like nothing had happened the night before.

"Here, this should cover my phone bill. I'll let you know where I end up if you like." I started for the phone. "Mind if I use the phone? All local calls."

"Sure," she said while looking at the money I had given her. "What's this all about? I just got upset over other things. Where are you going anyway?" she asked somewhat sweetly.

"Thanks, I'll be off the phone shortly." I had eliminated people from my list of possible rooms to rent and had one name left, so I called.

"Hello, Lou here," the familiar voice said on the other end of the phone.

"Hello, Russ. Could I ask a favor and explain later?"

"Anything," Lou answered.

"Can I rent a room for a month?"

"Sure. Need a ride? Call Jeremy Pond. He's on the way over here right now. Still have his number, do you?" Lou asked.

"Thanks. Yes, I have the number. I'll explain later," I replied.

"Hurry up though, call Jeremy now. We have to leave the shop early today. We will take you with us," Lou said and signed off.

I called Jeremy and made arrangements for a ride. Mickey had already left the townhouse, giving me instructions to throw the keys deep inside through the security doors when I locked up. She thoroughly expected to see me that night, and it showed. This had only been a power struggle for her; however, I was finished with it, and left her townhouse, throwing my keys and gate remote deep into the kitchen from the glass and barred doors.

I waited in the parking area inside the security fence till a car left the compound, following it out to the street with my bags. There I sat on my backpacks waiting for Jeremy to show up.

Looking down the street I had walked up the morning before, I spotted a black man coming up the hill, some three blocks away. As soon as our eyes met he made a direct line toward me. I had no doubt he was heading right for me, and I had no idea why, so I stood up over my bags to let my imposing height show. This did not deter him as our eye contact continued and he came right up to me, speaking in a language still unknown to me. My first response in light of my previous night was to confront him. I stepped forward and growled, "This has not at all been a good day, and you don't want to fuck with me!" with all my newly learned skills at glaring brought into play, feeling my face go red.

The man jumped back and made a huge circle around me, continuing up the hill at a quicker pace, looking back over his shoulder at me. Maybe he just wanted a cigarette, or maybe my bags, but he got a full dose of the venom that had been building up for a week.

"What are you doing out there?" said a voice from behind me. "Come in here, please." Turning, I saw a short older woman with dark hair whom I had not met before. "Aren't you the young American staying with the woman upstairs?" she questioned as she opened the gate.

"Yes, but I'm leaving today," I replied.

"Please come in, let me make you some tea. I must put this in my car first," she said as she went to the little red Austin Minor that was parked next to Mickey's empty space.

"What a cute little car!" I said, looking it over more closely.

"Yes, I bought it new when I came here from Scotland to teach. It's been a wonderful car for me as a single woman."

We made our way to her front door, right under Mickey's apartment.

"Are you going back to the States today?"

"No, I'm going to another place for the rest of my stay."

Looking up toward her ceiling and the apartment above she said, "That poor girl's had problems. I am a retired school counselor and psychologist, along with having been a teacher. I have heard her episodes, though I would have liked to ignore them. Where do you plan to stay?"

"I have a ride coming to pick me up and take me up the hill to Ethel Drive where I will rent a room. Could I use your phone to contact the man who is to pick me up?"

"Sure. And here is some tea. Then I will show you how to get in and out of the security gate."

I finished the tea while making sure Jeremy knew where to find me in case I was in the apartment with my new friend. The woman then led me to the security switchboard and explained how to let myself out when my ride arrived.

"Please stay inside till he is here, then let yourself out using this pass code." She wished me luck and said I could knock on her door if I had any questions, announcing that she would keep an eye out from her kitchen till my ride came.

As I waited for Jeremy I thought about what this woman had just told me. She must have heard the awful noises from our apartment the night before, and was no stranger to them. "Problems with her relationships?" I had really walked into this one. A small blue car pulled up and cigarette smoke rolled out the window as Jeremy opened it to say good morning. "Is that all you have? Let's put it in the back here and get up the hill. Lou has a full day ahead of him."

I opened the gate and gave a glance back at the kitchen window to see the woman watching me leave, giving her a wave of thanks. Jeremy opened the door and I threw my bags on the back seat. His car was his office and home away from home strewn with empty coffee cups and blankets partly covering groups of papers scattered around on the floor and seat. "Push your way in and don't worry about what you sit on." I rolled the window down a bit to let the smoke out, and tried to get a fresh breath of air. We climbed the hill behind the townhouses and in no time were in Lou's driveway.

Lou greeted us and asked me to follow him with my bags, directing me to find a corner in his studio to stow them for the time being. A large man with dark hair turning white at the edges introduced himself as Paul Scott, and turned to put his briefcase in the front seat of Lou's green Three Series BMW. Lou told us all to load up, pointing Jeremy and me to the back seat. We rushed out of the gate as one of Lou's workingmen shut it behind us.

"We're on the way to location. It's going to be a full day. You two have enough room back there?" Lou explained as we

roared off the mountain at what I would come to know as Lou's average speed. Paul grabbed the handrail in front of him, his knuckles turning white, looking over at Lou saying, "We have time, man!"

"Oh, yea, man. And I'm making more," Lou said, lighting a cigarette.

We headed way out of my known tracks, out through roads lined with cosmos blooms and black people waiting for taxis. Smaller and smaller shops scattered along the roadside till there were none, and we were in the countryside. Without any explanation Jeremy started to tell me about the Boer War and how he did not agree with what the British had done. Then Lou joined in agreeing with him. Paul also. I was at a complete loss. What was the Boer War anyway? Wasn't that some historical end of the century thing somewhere else in Africa? Jeremy went on to say that though he sounded English, he was actually an Irishman from what used to be Zimbabwe.

"I first shot a gun in anger when I was 13," Jeremy added, looking out the window as if to look into the past.

Paul turned his large frame in his limited space and looked at me. "Why are you here?" he asked.

"I'm promoting a movie," I told him.

"About UFOs," Lou added, and then pulled off the road and into a large truck stop for petrol. Leaving to fuel up and pay inside, Paul and I were alone in the car as Lou disappeared into the shop.



"I've seen UFOs. Have you? Where are you from?" Paul asked.

"I'm from Northern California. I think I have seen UFOs. What is this place we are going to?"

"We are on the way to a location shoot near the Crocodile River. Lou is doing some set design there and I'm the Art Director of sorts," Paul explained.

Lou and Jeremy returned to the car and we sped off through the countryside, crossing ridges and canyons. At one point we rounded a corner where a road turned off to a private resort, the entry marked by a gateway covered with elephant skulls, a ghostly sight indeed. In the curves we swerved first to miss young girls dressed in school uniforms, making their way across the road, then nearly went off the road letting a taxi full of black faces go around us on a hill, as it fought to get up enough speed to get past as a truck came at us down the slope. Lou never slowed down, and Paul was fuming by the time we crossed the Crocodile River. "I know the artist who lives there. I make some of my rock bluffs there," Lou said, pointing out the window.

My head was spinning as we started down the dirt road to location at Bruker Farm. A guard let us through a metal gate, checking to see who was in the car. Watching out the window I was remembering that Bruce would be coming around to pick me up. I had set up meetings with Arleta and Burt Forbes, and Elizabeth's daughter, Marilyn Partridge, as

well as Elizabeth's long time friend Patricia Climentine, all requiring my keeping in touch with Bruce.

## 18. Location

I was nowhere to be found. No one I knew had a clue where I was, not even me. I had planned an international radio program and was to produce results that week, and didn't even have internet access to keep in contact with the engineer. Now, this whole new set of people and circumstances. Rows of trailers and an open dining area with kitchen set up under circus tents came into view and we found a place to park amongst vehicles with names of production teams and animal keepers. Costumes were going to and fro. Paul got out and headed right for the kitchen for a cup of coffee to carry around, with a cigarette in the other hand. Lou and Jeremy headed off to find Ronnie Van Wyk , a production designer who would show Lou where to locate his set for an animal shoot. We found Ronnie with line producer Paul Right and a woman I didn't catch the name of. We wandered around a set of bushes, everyone gesturing and talking at once.

Finally Ronnie selected a group of bushes and rocks saying, "Set up here, Lou. Where are the greensmen? Don't you need to speak with them about this?" Lou offered that they could come in later, and that he had what he needed to get started.

Paul had to be pried away from the kitchen as lunch was prepared. Lou had more places to go, and got us all back to

the car and left for Joburg. We literally flew back to town and dropped everyone off at Lou's before heading out again, this time to see the greensmen at Honeydew. Lou explained that both he and the greensmen made plant presentations for sets, and that they had a truck that he would use to get his set to location in a few days.

We made our way out of town and into the rural community of Honeydew, then a short distance out to a river, crossing an older metal bridge. Under the bridge Lou pointed out a twelve foot tall 'Mr. Peanut.' "These guys did a commercial for Planters Peanuts and built that guy. See those bushes? They're not real. And those rocks? I made them," Lou casually boasted.

We pulled up to a security gate and honked the horn. The slow moving gate pulled back and a fellow carrying a truck battery motioned us to follow him to a parking spot out of the way. "Hi Lou, who's this with you?" said Jimmy, one of the greensmen. "Excuse me, I have to hide the battery each night, we have lost two already this week. Damn, I don't know how they manage to get them out without us knowing, or without Mac knowing."

A huge mastiff came up to me and I couldn't believe my thoughts. He spoke to me in my head! I heard him say, "I'm Mac. People are afraid of me. I don't know why. You're not afraid are you? I'm Mac." Automatically I said aloud, "I'm Russ."

Both Jimmy and Lou looked at me, then greeted Manny who just came from the main house. "Hello, I'm Manny."

"Yes, I'm Jimmy, and you say you're Russ?"

"Yes, Russ."

"A Yank, huh?" they both said.

"Yes, California," I answered.

"He's here working on a movie about Elizabeth Klarer," said Lou.

"I'm Mac, I live with a lot of weird animals."

I looked at Mac as we walked toward the house, Lou making arrangements to borrow their truck.

"Sure, if the we still have one," said Jimmy.

"Come see our newest acquisition," said Manny.

"It's a turtle," Mac said, "I like the turtle. He's new here. Been hurt though."

"The turtle's been hurt," said Jimmy, "but he's OK now."

This mastiff really was talking to me. How many animals have been speaking throughout my life, and I simply was not listening?

After a cup of coffee with Jimmy and Manny, and some looks through their portfolios, came some advice on getting people to work with me in the South African film industry. Thanking them for their input, we made our way out of the

compound and back to Northcliff. "Dinner?" invited Lou, pulling into a small shopping center at the base of Northcliff in an area I had not visited yet.

We entered a smaller family restaurant looking like a sort of McDonalds. One adult sat reading a book as three teenagers played foosball. "The hamburgers are good here," Lou offered.

"Sure, sounds great." I replied.

Lou proceeded to order for us, pointing me to a table looking out at his car in the nearly empty parking area. It was about 8:00 PM by the time Lou joined me at the table. "Nice to stop for a bit. So, what's up with you, man?" he asked. I shook a bit and looked out the window for a second or two, then turned and looked at this man I was now trusting with my story. I told him the whole story, start to finish, except the nightmare dream, which seemed to have left me for the time.

Lou's only comment was, "I've known Mickey since the 1970's, and I'm not surprised. I'm glad you're out of there. You will stay with me now till you go home. My woman, Evan, and her children, will be moving in with me the end of the month. We'll make a plan at that time." Lou continued, "I've been through my things with women, too. Don't let it get to you. There's plenty of life to go, man, with the right people." I was relieved that it had taken all day for Lou to have the time to ask why I had asked for a room.

When we got home to his villa I gathered up my bags and

came back into the living room I had first come into a few days before. I had not been anywhere else inside the house. Lou headed up the stairs and motioned for me to follow. "This is my room. This is your room. It's my daughter, Bonnie's, room. She's off to school, so you can have this room for now. This is your bathroom. Keep that back door locked, please. This is our common sitting room, and check this view out! This patio is great for the morning coffee," Lou escorted me onto the eight foot by twelve foot patio with a table and chairs overlooking the lit up skyline of Johannesburg. It was a beautiful sight. I was nearly overcome with emotion at finally feeling safe and with a friend.

"I'm just an old man keeping my life filled with work and now a woman, after some 15 years of being single," he said, looking out at the skyline. "You met Evan in the shop this morning when you put your bags there. She was the tall brunette sitting at the window with that young woman." I remembered her, a beautiful woman who kept an eye on Lou as he led me through the studio. "She's just had our twins, and has two boys of her own. You'll see her farm soon as I need to go there to look into moving her home in with mine. We'll hire Manny's truck after we move the set to location." Lou filled me in, yawning and making his way to his bedroom. "Good night! Get up anytime you want. Use this sitting room and the patio as you like."

I was quite overwhelmed by this generosity as I opened my bags fully for the first time since I had arrived in Johannesburg, and looked at what made up my life. I had arrived in denim and tee shirts, with the cowboy boots I

wore to towns in California, just like I looked any other day of my life at home.

That night a black man spoke to me with a voice I had not heard before, saying,

"All our obedience and patience with the Germans is of little avail, for each day they shoot someone dead for no reason at all. Hence I appeal to you, my Brother, not to hold aloof from the uprising, but to make your voice heard so that all Africa may take up arms against the Germans. Let us die fighting rather than die as a result of maltreatment, imprisonment or some other form of calamity."

This dream was short and I had no idea of its source. Because it was so profound and clear I remembered it when I woke.

## 19. New Plans

The next morning I was up with the sun, feeling like I was at home. "I could live here," reiterated the voice in my head from a few days before. My single mattress lay on the floor next to an upstairs window, without bars for the first time since I had slept in this new country. I pulled the bed together and put my organized bags on the duvet to make the room presentable to anyone who might enter. Quietly using my own bathroom, realizing the luxury of a home at last along with the welcome I would have offered any guest at my home. I felt human again as I really studied my 51-year-old face in the mirror for the first time since I had arrived. It showed stress.

I made my way through the hallway to the common sitting area, then to the second floor balcony, my notes in my hand. The chairs were all lined up against the table to keep the dew from wetting the seats. I dried the tabletop with my hands and sat to look out over the sun rising on the city below. Lou was still asleep on the other side of the door leading from the balcony to his master bedroom.

Downstairs noises came from the kitchen, as Martha got ready for her day. I heard her on the stairs with a cup rattling on a saucer, heading toward Lou's room but instead entering the common sitting room, and balcony.

"Oh!" she said with some shock. "Good morning. Tea?" she offered, setting it on the table before giving me a studied look, turning and leaving the room, looking back over her shoulder, then glancing at Bonnie's room. Lou could be heard waking and yawning on the other side of the door. He appeared at the door in track pants and no shirt, cigarettes in his hand, wiping his eyes and stretching.

"Esh, what a beautiful morning!" he said. Martha was again coming up the stairs with another cup rattling, following Lou's voice to the balcony.

We both sat looking out over the city quietly for the length of tea, Lou finishing a cigarette.

"I'm going to Evan's first thing this morning. What do you have on your mind?" he asked.

"Can I use your phone and pay you for the calls?" I asked.



"Oh, sure you can," said Lou.

"Then I'll give Bruce a call and get to some people I have set up meetings with, and be back here before afternoon," I said while looking over my notes. Lou brought in a phone, putting it on the table, and excused himself to shower.

First on my list was Bruce who, when I reached him, was desperate with concern.

"Bruce? Russ here. Sorry to not reach you but I was on location without a phone all day yesterday."

"Location? How? With who? Where?" Bruce questioned, nearly scolding.

"I'm staying up on Northcliff with Lou Guessler of Dreamworks. I'm taking a room here for the rest of my stay. Get a pencil. Here's the address. 88 Ethel," I read to Bruce.

"But? Oh, never mind. I could see it coming. What's up? Meetings?" Bruce said shifting gears.

"Bruce, are you still willing to taxi me around? If so, I have meetings with several people, some of whom you may know. Would you like to take me around? Then I'll also make plans to see some people," I said relaying my notes as I flipped through the pages.

"I would love to. Can I pick you up about 9:00 AM?" Bruce asked.

"Yes, 9:00 is great. Looks like if you came right up

Nightingale from around D.F. Malan. you will come right into Ethel below Lou's house. Look for the rock bluffs in front of the ivy covered two-story brick house. Honk and I'll come out. I'll be in the studio over the driveway, and will hear you with ease."

## 20. Starting To Pop

As soon as I put the phone down from Bruce, I started down the list of people I had made contact with already and one by one reconnected with them, changing and arranging meetings. I was to have lunch with Marilyn Partridge on Wednesday, but had to cancel. Instead she offered that I come to her house in Park Town, with Bruce, for lunch on Sunday. Dee and Adam asked that I come for dessert on Wednesday. Arleta and Burt requested that I join them for lunch on Thursday. Patricia asked for Tuesday before lunch. Ronald Rubinstein would send a car around to pick me up on Thursday for dessert at his house, to meet screenwriter Molly O'Conner. Cecil Morrow wanted to show me his editing work at his office in Oak Park on Wednesday, then do lunch in Melville. Johnny Reese wanted me to produce the radio show from South Africa for his office in Oregon on my last day in Johannesburg. David Klarer was out of the country. My ear seemed stuck to the phone when Lou again came to the balcony, looking around the skyline and glancing at my list of people and meetings.

"Eash! Three meetings a day?" exclaimed Lou. "Later today I'm off to location again. Do you have time to join me?"

"I'd love too, but Bruce is on the way to take me to several places," I explained, studying my list.

"Well then, I see you can be here this evening. Why don't we go get some food this afternoon and have a braai here at my house? You can invite all these people and we can meet here?"

"That's a great idea, Lou. I'll phone now," I said, wondering how I would afford to feed the group, but figuring that it would come about. I called everyone I could and invited them to come around after dark. I walked downstairs and into the north back courtyard on my own to clear my head.

Instead the voices in my head said, "What do you notice?" I looked around at the rock wall covered with plants and old movie props. "What is different?" they said. A swirl of energy rushed at me, unseen but felt like an electric wind spinning in a counterclockwise direction. "Oh, that's going in the opposite direction than in California!" I said, startled that I felt anything and realizing that I had not felt that before, even though I knew instinctively that whatever it was, it was going in the opposite direction. These voices stopped, and I knew they would be back with a new lesson. Now a new voice came in with an accent I had come to know as a Southern African man. "I'm Paul," was all I could hear before it went away. I strained to hear more but all I could hear was the traffic in the street below.

A car pulled up and honked, and I could see it was Bruce at the front gate. As I joined him in the driveway he was studying the building and yard from a distance and started

to enter the gate. "Can I come in?" he asked.

"We are having a braai here tonight, and you are invited. Come back then, and I will introduce you and show you around," I offered as I passed him in the gate, nearly ready to run as the day had already started to pop.

## 21. Ring Of Truth

Wondering how this new voice from Paul would fit into my life I could only follow the course I had already set for myself, and hope that the new details would weave their way to the surface.

Patricia had given me directions, which landed us in an older subdivision and at the gate to an overgrown garden hiding an older unkempt yellow plastered house with the single garage door open. Patricia stood in the driveway near the open garage door and pointed the gate remote at us, letting us in. She had become a widow since I met her over the phone during the sequence of radio shows, having lost her husband, Carl, to a long illness, the day before our last show. She let us in through the open garage door, struggling with the gate remote and garage door. The state of disrepair of the house told the story of how long Carl had been sick. We were led through the modest kitchen and into a sitting room with a TV and outdated overstuffed furniture. A dog jumped on the couch and waited for us to sit with him before he jumped off and hit the floor, running excitedly through the kitchen to the door to greet Patricia's daughter, Andi.

"Hi Mom!" she said putting a bag of groceries down on the kitchen counter before greeting us. "Hello, I'm Patricia's daughter, Andi. You must be Russ. We met over the phone. And you must be Bruce. Nice to meet you. Please excuse me, I'm on my lunch break and must run. Mom, here are the groceries I promised. I'll call you from work later." A pleasant and pretty young woman, she bent to kiss her mom before making her way back through the kitchen and out the door.

Patricia started to tell us her connection to UFOs. How she had traveled internationally. How a friend had used her influence to help Patricia gain traveler's visas through Patricia's Romanian embassy. Photographs and newspaper accounts were arranged on the coffee table and she purposefully pulled items from the table as she told well-rehearsed stories from adventures years long past. Eventually she held her hand out, bringing our attention to the ring on her finger. "This ring was given to a friend of mine by her lover from space. This lady gave it to me when she passed. It's to be used for psychic communications. Please try it on." She pulled the ring off her finger with some difficulty, revealing a white depressed skin where it had been.

With a mix of anticipation and trepidation, I held the ring in my hand before putting it on my finger. Knowing how the voices in my head had been surprising me most days now, I hesitated and opened myself to the possibilities, then slipped my little finger into the ring. It was as if I had entered an empty room which echoed with

a dull vibration and a sense of back lighting. Nothing else. I waited a moment, then returned the ring to Patricia, thanking her, but knowing that the romantic connection she had with this object was hers and not mine. Patricia didn't ask what I felt, seeing the response on my face, and simply slipped the ring back in place on her hand.

I invited her to join us for the braai that night and she said she would try, noting that for her to travel at night was a bit of a concern. I asked her to join Bruce and me the next day in our journey to see Arleta and Burt Forbes, and she willingly accepted, offering to pick me up and take me to Bruce's rental cottage outside Melville. I excused us and said I had to meet with Lou and get ready for the braai. Patricia led us out the main door, not attempting to open the garage again. Standing in her open door, ready to disappear when we left, she opened the security gate with her remote. Her face was a bit distorted as she seemed to slip away in her mind, not quite seeing us as we left through the gate. The security gate squeaked and popped as it closed, and Patricia backed into her house, pulling the doors closed as she went.

## **22. Braai**

Back at Northcliff, I thanked Bruce for the day and reminded him to join us that evening for a braai. Lou had arrived home just before me and was with Jeremy in the studio trying to get the old fax machine to accept a note to the bank. Fighting their way through the cashing of a check from a client, Lou confided in me as Jeremy kept bent over the paper tray on the old machine, cussing in Afrikaans. "FOK JOU!" he said.

"I'm on the bones of my ass," Lou said, his cigarette ash nearly ready to drop in the unruly papers scattered around the fax machine. "We are trying to get some cash from this check so we can rent the truck to take the set to location this week. See what we are doing here? We are telling the bank that Jeremy is coming with this check, and that we want to put some in the bank, and get the rest in cash. This is not California, is it? When we are done here I'll be with you about tonight," he explained, not lifting his eyes from the fax machine.

"There we go, Lou. It went through, and now I can head to the bank. I will be back tomorrow with the money," Jeremy said, gathering up the bank bag.

"Jeremy, we're having a braai tonight, and you are invited. Will you be back?" I asked.

"Dinner? Sure, my sister is not that good a cook anyway," Jeremy laughed as he left the studio for his sister's car in the driveway.

"Sorry to be so broke right now, Russ, but what with my family life changing, and these damn bank problems, every Rand I have is spent before I see it," Lou said, looking at his cigarette pack, then pulling a fresh fag out, tapping it on his desk before lighting it.

"No problem, Lou. I kept enough cash back for food while in South Africa and am up to spending it on this braai. What is typical for this?" I asked.

"Let's head to the farmer's market, and I will explain. But we can really do anything," Lou said, grabbing his key ring from his desk.

Lou backed the BMW out of the double car garage. We sped off through the side of Northcliff to a small grocery store that smelled of fresh baked bread.

"I'll get some rolls and my cigarettes. Do you mind getting the other things?" he asked with some concern in his voice. "I have not had a dinner here at my place since Dee and I separated fifteen years ago, so this is your party. I really have not had any interest in entertaining here, but I bet this will be fun. I'm glad to share this with you," Lou said as he placed the fresh bread in the back seat, filling the car with a wonderful inviting scent.

"Oh, Lou, I had no idea that you had not been having guests. Are you sure this is going to be OK with you?" I asked.

"Sure. No problem," he assured me.



"I am quite ready to get the food for tonight. In fact, I'm going to get the food for your house for the time I'm here," I said, thinking I was overstaying my welcome early on.

"Russ, you live here with me and I'm happy to share my home with you. We will just make plans as we need to," his smile greeted my concerns as we headed further away from Northcliff.

The parking lot to the farmer's market was behind two large security gates. Mothers with children mixed through the lot with a large variety of vegetables and fresh meats going from carts into trunks. We entered a somewhat open market under the roof covering a loading deck, leading to rows of food displays. The vegetable stand was more diverse than I had seen yet. Lou scouted the meat counter while I gathered fresh food to cover the next two weeks. When I joined Lou at the meat counter he had located the best priced whole chicken, and pointed out the Boerewors and steak. "The chicken is the best price, and the other meats are too expensive. I'll get two chickens if you like, and we can build a Braai around them," he offered.

"Sure Lou, I have tons of vegetables along with coffee and peanut butter, rice and granola. We are set for weeks," I displayed the contents of my cart. "And the price is right! Let's go cook!" I said as we headed to the check out stand.

Women emptied their carts and inspected our loaded cart with interest. A large black woman asked what we had paid for the chicken and sent her daughter back to get one. I counted my Rand quickly as I pocketed the change before

leaving the checkout line, seeing that I had more money left for food, and was OK. Lou pushed the cart to the back of the BMW and loaded the small boot with our wealth of food.

"Oh, I didn't get any beer or wine!" I exclaimed, noting that I had seen a lot of consumption by others to date.

"Oh, let them bring their own. I hardly drink at all anymore. Water and tea and coffee do me just fine these days," Lou said with little concern expressed in his voice. I was relieved. I was not a big drinker either, and simply not ready to keep providing drinks for others. We left as the sun was setting, bathing Northcliff in the last light of day.

## 23. Shebeen

When we drove up to 59 Ethel, the driveway was blocked by the greensmen's truck, parked sideways in the top of the driveway. Jimmy and Manny crawled out from under the truck with greasy hands and faces, dragging an old starter motor behind them.

"Why couldn't they have taken the broken starter instead of all those batteries?" said Jimmy with a laugh, putting the old starter in the box that the new one had come in. Dropping back to the ground he started to fit the new starter in place, Manny pulling on it from above.

"Esh, I'm glad you guys fixed it before I ended up out in the middle of nowhere with it. I'm half the mechanic the two of you are," said Lou as we carried bags of food to the kitchen.

"We're having a braai! We'll call you when it's ready!" I shouted under the truck.

"Let's get the fire started. It's up here past the swimming pool," suggested Lou, leading the way. "I don't have fancy braai charcoal so we will use this scrap wood I've saved up here. You're a mountain man, you'll know what to do with this," he said as he pulled wood out from under a bench, and paper from a closet next to the homemade brick and rock Braai. As Lou turned the handle and lifted the mechanical grill high enough on its chain, attached to an overhead rotating bar, I built a campfire and blew the flame into a consuming blaze. Assured of our success, we headed back to the kitchen and assembled vegetable kebabs and cut chicken, building a salad at the center countertop sink, cleaning as we went to keep Martha's kitchen as we had found it. Coming back to the fire, we added the first round of food along with the next application of wood, and another car pulled up in the street below.

By the time I got to the front door Paul Scott had let himself in, bringing his friend, Steven, with him, both overdressed for the night. Another car arrived as I greeted the men, and offered that they help themselves to the fresh coffee that had just finished brewing. Another car behind that brought Patricia and Dee and Adam up the driveway. As I greeted them Bruce came, looking for a parking place closer to the driveway, turning around and coming back down the hill, parking across the street at another busy house.

"That looks like a Shebeen across the street by my car,"

Bruce observed, "Think my car will be safe there?"

"Shebeen? What's that?" I queried.

"Oh, an illegal booze shop of sorts. Check it out. See that guy going in the driveway? He's going to be let in the garage by that large lady. Look, cases of booze. That's a Shebeen for sure. Can I see my car from up at the house?" Bruce asked.

"We'll have to see. I have not been looking," I said as I greeted the others and led the way.

Dee brought her Chihuahua who was now nipping at Bruce's heels. Dee more or less ignored the dog, as well as Bruce's cussing. Adam called the dog that reluctantly left Bruce alone for the time being. Bruce wrestled with a briefcase while keeping an eye on the little dog. Lou's dogs now came out from the studio and greeted the Chihuahua who obviously knew them, and who ran the show. Manny and Jimmy had finished the truck repair and were cleaning up for dinner. Another car pulled up and Jeremy Pond joined us on the stairs to the house. I excused myself and headed to the braai to turn the food and stoke the fire. The Chihuahua took a stance at the entry door and let everyone through after a quick check at their heels. Bruce passed, looking back at the little guy, who followed Bruce all the way to the kitchen. As soon as Bruce had a cup of coffee in his hand, the Chihuahua barked at his heels, causing Bruce's coffee to jump in his cup, nearly burning his hand. Satisfied with that, the Chihuahua left the room, smelling each heel he passed.

The dinner was cooked and smelled like heaven. The small amount of chicken surrounded by vegetable kabobs and set alongside salad filled the center countertop abundantly. Rice beside the hot food finished the display.

Dee looked around and announced her approval. "Lou, this is great! You have not had a party for a while, have you?"

"Not for fifteen years," he said and left the room to have a smoke at the back door. Adam saw the significance of the interaction, knowing these two people maybe better than they knew themselves.

The last guest, Cecil Morrow, joined us as we prepared to eat. Bruce and I were to meet with Cecil the next morning at his studio.

The food disappeared onto plates and ended in conversation and cigarette smoke around the kitchen countertop. Lou and I bussed the food away and offered that we move to the sitting room. The conversation did not stop though, and no one left the room, satisfied to keep talking around the countertop in the kitchen. Only Patricia was in the sitting room, clutching a book she had brought, and covering her ring with her other hand. I encouraged her to come back and join us, but the cigarette smoke was driving her away. She apologized and said she would come Wednesday morning and pick me up to go to Arleta and Burt Forbes'. Bruce joined us, along with his new dog close to his heels. "Patricia, pick Russ up and bring him to my place in Melville and I will take us all to Arleta's in my car.

Call me that morning and I will tell you how to find me."

I took Patricia to her car and we set a time to meet Wednesday at 9:00 AM. The noise from Lou's kitchen window out-shouted the Shebeen across the street, a happy sound his house must have been ready for again. Dee and Adam greeted me as I left Patricia, announcing that they had an early morning, thanking me for the night's fun. "How did you get Lou to agree to such a wonderful night? He has been a real hermit," Dee said. "He offered," I explained. Adam just smiled and said good night and thanked me for the dinner.

Even with these people gone, the noise of voices in celebration of introductions filled the driveway and staircase as I came back to the group. Manny and Jimmy were worn out, and excused themselves. Jeremy Pond followed them out the drive saying he would find a driver the next day and bring him to the studio. Paul and Steven were difficult to pry loose from Bruce, each trying to impress the other with their work history, while I saw Bruce sneak rolls into his pocket when he thought no one was watching. Lou spent most of his time at the back door with his cigarette glowing in the dark. The food plates were mostly empty, and the bellies mostly full and the stories mostly told, as the night drew to a close.

As the last guest left, Lou and I finished cleaning up the kitchen behind them. Lou shook his cigarette pack and dropped the last fag into his hand. "Let's go to the store. I need some smokes. These are finished," Lou said as he gathered up his keys and headed out the door. The cars at

the Shebeen had thinned out, though the open garage door revealed an older man and woman restacking cases of booze after a busy night. Lou drove us through the sleeping community to a Spa grocery store still open. Few cars filled the parking spots closest to the entry door.

"Let's go quickly to the entry door. Look purposeful," Lou instructed as he locked the BMW behind us. "You don't know who's keeping an eye on the parking lot this time of night, and you don't look so much a target if you look like you have a plan," he explained. The store was nearly empty and we were quickly back in the car and on our way home. Lou didn't need to say much about his night, the stress had been on the surface even though politely concealed. The Shebeen was dark now. Our end of town was quieter than I would expect in a city. Off in the distance a car alarm went off and a dog started to bark. Somewhere else a gun went off and a woman screamed, then it was all quiet again. No sirens, no follow up emergency noises as I pulled into bed around midnight.

That night I walked through dreams mixed with the voices that had become familiar to me, along with Paul's new voice. I flew over the west coast of Southern Africa with vast sand deserts below. "We are a dignified people," Paul said. "We didn't ask to die like this," he continued. "We wanted our children to live with hope of a future filled with promise and families of their own."

Somewhat apprehensive, I wanted to wake and not have any more views of this unknown world unfolding in my mind. Instead, a warm summers day arrived with well-managed

native bands attacking one German farm and village after another. A leader dressed in a wide brim hat, denim pants, white shirt and vest, looking much like my familiar memory of a 1900's California farmer, led successful raids manned by similarly dressed natives with few if any hand guns or rifles. A large military opposition of over 2,000 crack German troops equipped with light artillery, machine guns and long range rifles is humiliated by the native's excellent marksmen. Ruthless counter measure by the organized German military arrived to shoot any native within their borders, including women and children.

A mixed group of some 25,000 native men, women and children are eventually driven into a sandy valley with steep bluffs on three sides with a dry sandveld desert behind them. The natives are forced into the desert by a larger well-armed military, locked in to die by the thousands. The military is seen poisoning wells, turning the tactics to genocide. A 150-mile line of guard posts set up along the edge of the desert kills the natives trying to escape the horror, while those trying to survive slit the throats of their cattle to drink the blood, or suckle the breast of new mothers, while infants wither and die. Escaping men are lynched, while women and children who survive are chained by their necks and worked to death. No escape for me either until I wake with the sound of something familiar that I remember from my own farm.

## 24. Editor's Eye



I woke to the sound of an owl not far away. It was in a tree on the bank overlooking the back courtyard, putting it nearly at my second floor window. It was not quite daylight, but I had slept soundly and if I had been home it would have been time to feed the animals. The luxury of my own bathroom seduced me to leave the bed and enjoy an extended hot bath before making my way to the patio to watch the morning sun change the appearance of Johannesburg as the largest manmade forest in the world woke to the new day. Hadidahs that I heard when I first got there flew in from the east and took up positions on various trees along the slopes shouting "Go away!" Studying my calendar, I wondered what I would learn today.

Over coffee and eggs on toast, Lou and I talked about the night before. He enjoyed the company, though he still had mixed feelings about entertaining. We discussed our plans and made arrangements to meet back at his Northcliff studio in the afternoon.

Bruce arrived by 9:30 AM and we crossed town on ever more familiar streets. I pointed out to Bruce that Lou and I had been to a farmer's market out that way, and that Dee and her mom lived on this street over here where they had rented a cottage to Elizabeth Klarer, showing off my ability to find my way around town. We passed the graveyard on D. F. Malan, turned past Cool Runnings and went past Ninos, then off toward Auckland Park. Near the base of the SABC building we pulled up to a security gate in a tall white cement textured wall.

The gates pulled back, and Cecil stood in the parking lot in front of his open triple garage doors. Greeting us, he lead us past his new SUV and classic Mercedes and white BMW and into the hallway. His house shared the complex that contained his editing equipment, private office and secretary's office, all surrounding an open courtyard. The secretary came in and introduced herself, then showed us around the complex as Cecil took phone calls waiting for him. As he hung up from the last call, the secretary led us back to his office where Cecil was at the computer finishing an email. Before we could start our meeting, a young lady who was his film editor entered and asked him to give his approval on her morning work.

"Follow me. We have a new editing setup and have been busy getting our current documentary moved into the new computers. This dockie is actually about the Drakensberg Mountains where some of your story takes place, Russ. Have you been there? If not, this should be of interest to you. This is about a fellow and his son who attempt to kayak from atop the Drakensberg to the ocean" Cecil explained, as we quickly came to the editing room.

"No, I have not been there, so this will be great!" I got out before the editor started showing Cecil what she had finished.

"Cecil, I moved these files, opened them here and couldn't save them as before. Here they are. How would you like to have me save them?" she questioned. With a bit of study and fussing Cecil showed her the new method and left to take another set of phone calls. The editor offered to show

us the short segments of the dockie along with other completed projects while we waited for Cecil to return. Nearly an hour went by and she had finished what she had to show us. Bruce tried to hit on her and she politely but purposefully said not this time and not the last time he had asked, nor the next time, would she be interested.

Again we followed Cecil to his office. He suggested that Bruce follow the secretary to the courtyard to see the new koi fish, and give Cecil and me some space for a moment. Cecil turned to me and announced that he was aware of what had transpired since I arrived. He was not prying, but it was a small community and he had worked with Mickey, who actually had wanted the job of running the new editing equipment, calling a day ago. I found out that Mickey's new job had not worked out, and that she was looking for work. Cecil had worked with Lou as well, and of course, Bruce. He knew most of the people I had met already, and wanted to know my goals while in South Africa. I told him the details that he had not heard yet, including the upcoming radio show. It came to pass that Cecil was working on a documentary that related directly to another show that had aired on the program I was producing. I asked if he would like to join us on the show, and he offered that I could use his computer to suggest that idea to the program engineer.

The secretary again came for Cecil, leaving Bruce in the courtyard, watching me through the window, recognizing that he had been moved out of everyone's way. I took to private opportunity and quickly caught up on my email communications before Cecil returned. It was nearly 11:30.

"Can I offer you lunch at Ninos?" I said as Bruce found his way back to the office.

"Sure!" Bruce said before Cecil could answer. "Can I invite the young lady to join us?" Bruce asked, looking down the hall.

"She brings her own lunch, and has much to do right now," Cecil dictated, as he accepted the lunch invitation. "Let's take my car," he continued, selecting the proper keys as he led us back out to the garage. Bruce hesitated at the editor's door, so Cecil took the opportunity to say, "I know about your being short of cash as well, and before we get to Ninos I want to discreetly say to you that I find your personal story the one that needs to be told, more so than the story you are here to sell. Also, I'm buying lunch. Please accept my offer."

"Cecil, thank you for your offer and understanding. I'll split the lunch bill with you." He smiled and agreed to the compromise. "It looks like a go for the radio show with you added in. I will give you the details of timing once I find out. It will be early morning. Like 3:00 AM. Will that be fine with you?" I asked as Bruce caught up with us.

"I'm sure it will be. My time is spent when it's office time, and I'm up early anyway," Cecil said, accepting the opportunity.

Cecil took us through Auckland Park to the upper side of Melville, then down back streets to parking in a side street half a block from Ninos. We walked down the middle of the

street avoiding alleys and parked service vehicles. Though I was surrounded by a modern city, the constant call to caution that pervaded everyone's daily life made me realize I was still living in a third world atmosphere. Nino was beside himself with trying to continue to impress me as the out-of-towner who showed up regularly with customers he knew. I didn't help his exhaustion by noticing his efforts and thanking him politely. I did not know I would be too busy to return for years to come, though his welcoming is a fond memory, right along with Cecil's kind observations through an editor's eye.

## 25. Lion's Cave

Lunch finished, we were delivered back to Cecil's studio. I thanked Cecil for his thoughts and company and asked Bruce to take me back to Lou's. We discussed the upcoming trip to Arleta and Burt's the next day, and agreed that Bruce would take Patricia and me there and that we should leave her car at his studio apartment. Agreeing to be there early, I bid him a good day and entered through the rock-faced gate with the full confidence of a resident. Lou said hello from the window of his studio over the driveway and said he would be right down when he got off the phone with the animal trainer in charge of a lion now on location.

Grabbing his cigarettes and keys, Lou joined me at the garage door. "I didn't get lunch but thought one of these would hold me till we get home. Want one?" he said dropping two cans of Red Bull in my lap. "Red Bull? What's this? Caffeine?" as I rolled the can in my hand to read the

label.

"I guess it's like coffee and coke, or something like that," he returned as I got out the car to close the gate behind us. I marveled at how light the gate made from "Lou Rocks" really was, almost as if it was not covered at all. Popping our cans open we sped off through Northcliff in the midday sun, Lou balancing a cigarette and a can of Red Bull while negotiating turns, down the slopes, through residential streets, past small malls then a small business district until we were again on open road near a township, then skirting a lion park.

I sat back looking at all this countryside, trying to find something new on each ride. We passed all the familiar sites as we picked up speed, the windows down and letting the fall afternoon air blow the smoke around the cab then out the other window. "I'm on the way to meet with Ronnie Van Wyk, the production designer you met, to talk about the cave and its location. Also, I wanted to be there in the late afternoon, I'll show you why," adding mystery to our visit with the playful tone in his voice and a wink.

We passed elephant skulls, the artist house on the river, a huge, fenced set of buildings to our right. "What's that complex Lou?"

"Oh, that's Pelindaba, the nuclear plant. That got us in shit in the past when the sanctions were in place. Remember? We were dealing with Communist China and our nuclear waste when no one else would talk to us. Pissed a lot of people off over that," Lou explained.

"Wow, that place is really something."

We turned at the stop street at the bottom of the hill and headed to Bruker Farm, turned on the dirt road, past young women in school uniforms and through the security gate.

Lou negotiated through the location trailers and past the parking lot and canteen. The BMW crept around holes in the road, down a small side farm road and through the groups of trees surrounding the rocks on the high ground where the lion cave was going.

No one was there to greet us, though we had been noticed driving into the area flagged off to keep traffic out. We had enough time to get out and walk around a bit, Lou studying the underbrush for some reason. Down the slope we saw a cage in the shade near the nearly dry creek.

"That's the lion. Want to meet him?" Lou asked.

"Sure, can we?" I questioned.

"Who's here to stop us?" he said with an impish smile.

The lion was busy pacing in his cage. Lou produced a small camera from his pocket and said, "Stand over there by him and I'll get your picture." I walked over to the lion, turned to look at Lou for the shot and heard in my head, very clearly, "FUCK OFF, I'm busy!" in a gruff voice. I turned and looked at the lion, who was looking right at me. He kind of smiled, and at the same time ignored me. I turned back to Lou who snapped the shot, catching me with a surprised expression.

"Did you hear that?" I asked.

"What?" Lou said.

"Hey, Lou," we heard Ronnie call out as he climbed the small hill behind us with his clipboard in hand. "Let's take another look at the place for you to set up. What are you doing down there anyway?"

"Oh, the Yank here needed a picture of the lion. We're done," Lou laughed. We met with Ronnie at the top of the hill under some trees as he studied his notes on his clipboard.

"Now, Lou, I need your cooperation here. Please put your set pieces here, and be prepared to move them when Bruce, the animal trainer, arrives to show us where to set up. You can be so full of shit that you have Paul worried, and we don't need that. You and I have known each other since the SABC days and I know we need your expertise. We also need to have you work with us. Please." he said, looking around at the site they were standing at.

"Lou, I'll see you in a minute. I'm going to walkabout. OK?" I suggested.

"Sure, see you in a bit," Lou nodded. Ronnie's voice could be heard making his case to Lou as I walked off through the grassy slopes toward another set of rocks and trees quite a ways from everyone else.

I stood for the first time since I had arrived, alone in the open air.. Bending down I touched the earth with both



hands and said to it, "I'm here. Here I am. Right here. Did you miss me? I missed you. This is where I live now. See me?" I imagined a blue spark running through me and out into the earth, which seemed to come back at me with a rush. For the first time since I had left California I was looking at myself as a person in Africa, on an adventure, losing a potential lover, running out of money, living with someone who had agreed to take me in without questioning me about my circumstance.

My heart started to beat too hard. I stood up, and then dropped to my knees with a sound of blood rushing in my head. At first I thought I was having a heart attack, and then remembered that this had happened to me months ago when I was remodeling my cabin back in California. At that time I felt like I was having a nervous breakdown, ignored the signs and kept working feverishly. This time there was no work to turn to. I was alone in my own world with the reality of the fool's journey I had put myself on. Tears welled up in my eyes and sweat on my neck. Was I to die right here? My breathing became difficult and the fear of passing out caused me to try and stand again and refocus.

With some difficulty I was on my feet, and my muffled hearing brought Lou's voice to the surface. "Hey, Man! You OK?" looking at me as he came up, grabbing me by the elbow and walking me away from where I had been on the ground. "Look around you. See that truck over there? They are loaded with hay and are about to feed the animals. Look, giraffe, and wildebeest, that's a kudu. There's an impala. See them?" he said as he studied my face.

"Yes, I feed animals, too. Looks about the same," I responded, much to Lou's relief.

"Here, sit on this limb and watch for awhile. See the giraffe take the lead following the buck? Those are gemsbok coming in from over there. Take a breath, man, relax. OK now?" Lou said as he watched my reactions.

"Yes, fine now, Lou. Thanks, man," I said, wiping my face. "Those giraffe sure know the routine don't they?" as I focused my eyes again, after rubbing my face like a child who had just been scared, and was trying to hide it.

"Let's head back to the car now. I have something to show you," he said.

In the bushes around the car Lou poked and pulled at a log, dragging it out in the fading sunlight. "This is a real hard wood. I always gather up something from each location I'm on around the world. I have wood from California, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana. Help me load this in the trunk. I'm not supposed to take anything off this place, but here goes," he grunted out as we picked the heavy piece up and laid it next to tools in the boot. Lou pulled some old coats over it and closed the lid. "You ready to go home?" He pulled his keys from his pocket.

"Sure, all set now," I ventured with a recomposed voice and a new level of self-confidence. A difference had come over me. I had faced a fear of panic and come through it without it taking me away in a breakdown, as I had worried about months before. I was ready to greet the rest of my life

without that hidden burnout plaguing me any longer.

When we returned to Northcliff that evening Jeremy Pond had found a driver for the next day and had been busy loading the truck with the rock wall which would go to location to construct the cave. Jeremy had picked up the driver, a Nigerian, at a street corner where day workers hung out. He was a well-dressed educated man with good command of the English language. Though he was willing to work for a few days, he made it clear that he was not a day laborer. I offered him food that night when we cooked and he politely accepted, not bringing much conversation about himself to the table. Lou showed him the room above the braai, and told him he could share that with the workers who used it to change into work clothes in the mornings. He accepted and left us for the night.

Lou and Jeremy discussed the next few busy days ahead. The rock wall would go out early the next day and be set down at location till the animal trainer could look it over. Then Lou would oversee the set up while Jeremy brought the second load out with an extra worker. Lou would paint the rock seams and locate the shrubs provided by the greensmen, after which Lou and the driver and workers would pick up Evan's house full of furniture and bring it to Lou's. I told them my schedule and they asked if I would be available to give a hand from time to time. With our heads full of plans we bid each other good night and prepared for the next set of busy days.

## 26. Names For The Future

What had become a normal start to a day was welcomed. Lou and I sat looking out over the city from the balcony with our hot coffee and eggs on toast. We made tentative plans to meet in the afternoon when I returned from my meeting and luncheon. The workers had arrived and were standing around in the sunny courtyard with the truck loaded with the first delivery ready to go to location. Jeremy threw ropes over the tall but feather light load of rocks to prevent the wind from unloading them before reaching location. Before Lou and I finished our coffee the truck was out the gate and heading down Ethel.

Shortly afterwards I was with my notebook waiting for Patricia outside the rock gate. Right on time she arrived fresh from a good night's sleep. With quick pleasant greetings I waved at Lou in the studio window and Patricia and I were dropping off the high streets of Northcliff to cross D.F. Malan and climb the side hill near Melville to find Bruce waiting in front of his landlord's driveway motioning to Patricia to enter and park in the landlord's carport. "Good morning, you two. You can leave your car here off the street. My landlord is gone for the day, and this space is available." With a quick shuffle of coats and notebooks we were loaded into Bruce's car and finding our way through the back streets toward a main road.

We passed between the SABC building and Auckland Park, with glimpses of Northcliff in the distance between freeway

overpasses and high rise buildings. Hitting a cloverleaf of freeway we passed the mine dumps and out onto a main freeway feeder taking us through industrial sections of town, with a growing squatter's camp across the street. The freeway turned to two lanes and rose over a ridge, then dropped into a canyon and climbed the other side. Near an animal rescue farm we found the long drive leading to Arleta and Burt Forbes. In a very rural setting we entered through a security gate into a five-acre estate overlooking the canyon, with the skyline of Joburg barely visible in front of us. Burt met us in the driveway and greeted us while showing us his landscaped yard on the way to the courtyard where a table was set for tea.

Arleta came from the house with a tray of cookies and tea, set them down and greeted us, hugging her old friend Patricia and shaking hands with Bruce and me. Arleta had a screenplay she and Patricia had been looking over and modifying, already on the table. Arleta had known Elizabeth Klarer, though not as well as Patricia. Burt had made a bronze casting for Elizabeth, and had pictures of it on the table. Bruce studied the food and started to help himself ahead of us being offered to join in. He pulled his hand back when Arleta gave him a disapproving glance, then she asked us all if we would like some tea and cookies.

Soon we started separate conversations around the table. Patricia and Arleta engaged Bruce while Burt motioned for me to follow him to see his new koi pond. Following Burt through his small garden surrounding the house and leading to a set of outbuildings, Burt asked me questions about my interest in my project. At one point he showed me

where he had completed a sculpture that had been psychically inspired. Burt led me around through the back door to the house, showing me the cottage the maid lived in, bringing us into the kitchen and dining room. Once we returned, Burt gave Arleta an approving smile and suggested that she share the names she connected to my project.

With the air of superiority about her, Arleta produced a notebook from her briefcase. Clearing her voice of the years of cigarette smoke and looking at me over her bifocals, she suggested I write these names down. Names and phone numbers of people I had not heard of before poured out of her notebook and into mine. I perked up as she told me how to contact Credo Mutwa, a spiritual leader of the Zulu who had known Elizabeth Klarer and who had delivered one of her eulogies. At the end of the list, Arleta offered that I could use her phone to contact anyone on that list if I wanted. Accepting her generous offer I took my notes to the living room; at a small phone desk I started with the contact information for Credo Mutwa.

"Hello, George here."

"Yes, George, may I speak with Credo Mutwa?"

"Please, who is this, and how did you get this number?" he asked.

"I'm Russell Winje from California, working on a movie about Elizabeth Klarer. Arleta Forbes gave me this number and suggested that I reach Mr. Mutwa at this number."

"You can come speak with him at 10:00am on Monday at his home. Come to the Hennops River. Come to the school, turn left and follow the river to his front gate. Honk and I will let you in."

My notebook was already fat with meetings, and now one of the first names I had learned when I got to Johannesburg sat in the lineup for Monday. With a half day ahead of me I came back to excuse myself from Arleta and Burt's table and asked Bruce and Patricia if we might leave for town. I wanted to make it to Lou's and accompany him back to location.

## 27. Ghost

It seemed to take less time to make our way back to Northcliff as I became more familiar with the area. New and old landmarks filled the view from Bruce's, then Patricia's, car windows as I spent more time as a passenger than I had since I was a kid. Much as a kid, though, every experience weighed heavy on my mind making impressions that extended into each other with a continuity I could not have planned. When Patricia dropped me off at the gate leading up to Lou's studio I held the gate open for Lou's BMW coming out of the garage.

"Let's go help them with the rock features. Jeremy just called and they have been delayed and will make it there by the time we get there. You had a call from a Marilyn

Partridge who wanted to move your Sunday dinner to Saturday so you could meet her husband. I took the liberty to accept for you. If that will not work, you can call her this evening, she said," Lou explained, watching me for a reaction as he maneuvered us out a different way from his Ethel studio/home.

Checking my notes I assured him, "I don't see any problem with that, thank you for taking the call. I will contact her to confirm this evening."

Then Lou continued, "You will need to also contact Ronald Rubinstein as he wants to pick you up on Friday after dinner for dessert at his home and introduce you to a screenplay writer. I also tentatively accepted that for you."

"Gee, Lou, I'll need to keep you on as a secretary, won't I?" I laughed at him, adding Ronald to my list.

"Ronald and I have worked on a project together for an entertainment park he has in mind. He will need to explain though. I did a mockup for him that takes up a two-car garage at his place. It has to do with ETs," Lou continued as we came around the back of Northcliff and headed toward the Lion Park on the way to location. ETs, entertainment parks, Dee Guess and her mom being abducted fifteen years ago, Elizabeth Klarer, and now Credo Mutwa. What would Credo have to offer to this mix, I had to wonder?

Again, less time seemed to be needed to make it out past the cosmos fields and squatter's camps. School kids in



uniforms now looked familiar as we passed dirt roads leading off the main road. The artist's house on the river, the nuclear plant, the guard at the entry, were all familiar now. We pulled past the outdoor restaurant and found the truckload of rock features precariously perched on the top of the ridge. One feature was about to fall as we ran to help the workers on the ground struggling to keep it balanced as the load started to join them on the ground under its own momentum. Being much taller than Lou, I reached over his head and pushed with all my strength till another tall black man's hand hit right alongside mine and together we took the load till the piece was resting safely on the ground. Smiling at each other with satisfaction, and no words, we turned to the next piece coming off the truck. Looking him in the face again and studying it, I remembered the day I stood outside Mickey's gate waiting for Jeremy Pond. This was the man who had approached me! I had been introduced to him that first day at Lou's. What must he have thought of my abruptness that morning, now that I was working right alongside him? I had so much to learn about living in Africa.

Soon the whole load was on the ground. Jeremy lit a cigarette and laughed as he walked around the fresh pile of artificial rocks. "You wouldn't believe it, but we got stopped by the police on the way here. They saw this huge load of rocks and thought they were real! The man who stopped us came up to the window looking the under side of the truck over with great interest expecting to see the springs on the axles, I'm sure. I had to get out and tap on them to show him they were fiberglass before he would believe me. I asked him what he had been smoking. He said nothing yet,

till he gets home that night, and then he would deserve some 'Dagga'."

Still laughing, Jeremy looked the black men over who were also laughing at the retelling of the story. "Now, Lou, I need to get these men back to make their taxi rides home. Are you set on your own here?" Jeremy asked as he motioned to the workers to load into the cab.

"Sure, Jeremy. Russ and I can go over the load from here. I'll check to see what else we may need from the studio. You guys head out," Lou said as he saw the animal trainer coming up the side hill toward us. Jeremy and the workers pulled out through the brush and rocks and back to the dirt road leading past Bruce who was studying the pile of fiberglass rocks.

"Lou, we will need to put the rock features over here in the open," Bruce said as he walked a short distance away and down the slope, meeting Ronnie and Paul Wright coming toward him. I stood back by the pile of fiberglass while the men talked, engrossed in their jobs. As they spoke, a small herd of wildebeest came around the brush on their way to meet with the feed truck. The lead animal spotted us while the others came closer without seeing us yet. The leader stopped and snorted, and did a mock stomp to spook us. No one heard him as they pointed and gestured at the location for the cave. The wildebeest stomped again and did a mock charge like a domestic sheep or goat would do to protect its baby. I looked at the men and wondered if this was a problem. No one looked back. I thought that I should do something, so I projected my thoughts at the

concerned animal, and said "leave us alone!" To that the wildebeest pulled back, shook its head and stared at me. I did the same thing again and the wildebeest jumped, did a little kick and spin and ran back at the others coming up the hill and now seeing me for the first time.

The group of animals ran off playfully and Bruce noticed them as I turned to see if anyone had seen this chance meeting. He smiled at me and turned back to Lou saying, "The lion will need to be let out in the open. He will need to see his own cage, even if just a little. I will initially walk him through the open area, into the cave and into his cage where his treat will be waiting for him. He can do this twice before he loses interest. We will have only two shots. If he does not see his cage, he will not feel safe and he will not cooperate. Then we have problems. The cave must be right here. My truck must be right over there. The cage in view." Lou agreed to the new placement and said he must bring his crew back the next day. Satisfied, the men all left, and Lou and I headed back to the pile of rock features.

"See these marks on this wall?" Lou asked.

"Sure," I said, looking in the fading light.

"That's my name. See the 'L'?" he said with an impish grin. "It's hard to see, but the camera will catch it. This is a rock feature from "Ghost and the Darkness." Paul Wright worked on that film with me. Did you see that movie? I'm reusing these features and Paul may be the only one who would know this, though he has not noticed yet. It's a good feature, and I'm going to mix it up. No one will notice," Lou

said as he walked away, lighting a cigarette, and getting in his BMW.

## 28. Theme Park

We got back to Lou's with the phone ringing. "Lou here. Sure, he's right here. It's Ronald Rubinstein for you, Russ. Sounds like he would like to pick you up this evening."

"Hello, Ronald. This is Russ. What's up? What time? Sure. We will be in the house."

"Yes, Lou, Ronald would like to come get me this evening. The screenplay writer can meet with us this evening only. He will fetch me in an hour. Let's have some leftovers," I responded while looking through the refrigerator. We talked about the day and made arrangements for me to let myself back in the house after Lou would have gone to bed. The next day we would get an early start for location with a crew and spend the day working on the cave. Lou called Jeremy to let him know about the changes and tell him to take all the men that he could fit in next truck load and meet us there mid morning. In no time at all Ronald was at the front door letting himself in, after a quick knock.

"Hi Lou. Hi Russ. You ready? I'm going to have to show you the job Lou did for me at my place. Quite impressive, don't you think, Lou?" Ronald said as he shook our hands and grabbed Lou's shoulder and tugged on him in a playful manner.

"Quite a set you ordered, Ronald. I'm sure Russ will want to see it," Lou said as he stretched and looked for his cigarette pack.

"Still smoking, Lou? I've quit now for good. I like that a lot. Try it! Well, we will be on our way now. Molly will be at my place soon. We'll have Russ back here before midnight," Ronald bid Lou a good night and led the way out the door and to his new blue coupe in the driveway.

Ronald asked how my stay had been with Lou. He had known Lou since the 70's and the days with SABC. Ronald was an investor who owned a nightclub in Joburg. He had a willingness to invest in projects that held his interest including extraterrestrials. Ronald knew of Elizabeth Klarer's story and hoped to offer some advice and assistance. Through his entertainment interest he had become involved with a working screenplay writer who was constantly taking her projects to film.

Ronald had a night of video and demonstrations planned. We arrived at his home in a forested draw downstream from the pond I had been to before where the dog park meandered through the same drainage. As we got out, the screenplay writer and a lady friend of Ronald's arrived in different cars. Molly drove a modest Nissan sedan. Ronald's lady friend drove a new BMW hardtop convertible coupe. Molly was a married woman who dressed in casual slacks and shirt. The lady friend was fashionable in a knee-length dress with waistcoat and bare feet. The contrast and contradictions stuck in my mind. Molly knew her way around Ronald's house as a

working friend. The lady was a guest who was trying hard to be more than a friend. Ronald was casually well dressed in fine clothes, but comfortable. His evening's attentions were on a presentation and the lady friend's attentions were on Ronald. We were three people and a guest, though the lady effectively sat herself outside the group, not vice versa.

Ronald was a fine host with a presentation ready, built around videos about UFOs and conspiracy subjects, most of which I had seen from my own research. Molly was patient as she waited to know what she was there to learn. The lady friend cuddled up against Ronald on the couch ignoring the conversations while Ronald attempted to keep enough elbowroom for moving, as he accessed videos and books from the shelf behind him.

Finally Ronald built up to telling Molly about the movie project I brought with me. Molly listened with interest while the story unfolded. She explained that in the future she would have some open time, though right now it was impossible for her to offer a date when she might be available. Her current clients had her held captive over a series of projects that lay ahead and she was too wise to spread herself too thin and become a writing machine. Ronald had not expected that response and the disappointment showed briefly before he asked me to join him in his garage/showroom.

Excusing ourselves from the women, Ronald led me through his well-appointed kitchen where he obviously cooked for his own entertainment and into a garden filled

with nightlights amongst shrubs. Hitting the lights as we entered the building, Ronald pulled out a mechanical control switch attached to a length of cord running into the side of a double ping pong table sized display mockup of an entertainment complex.

Lights began to glow along with motions of vehicles and searchlights. A four screened viewing center intended to be the size and shape of a football stadium sat surrounded by as many as four closed lecture halls, and theme park rides, further surrounded by circular parking lots. A main gate sat under a display of rockets and flying saucer shapes, along with two story tall representations of ET's welcoming the miniature people on moving walkways. Multiple cameras focused on multiple screens in the center of the open stadium, allowing a full view for each set of staircase-shaped seating areas. The motion picked up as the crowds were moved to the various sections and the entire seating complex moved in sequence to the actions on the screen, giving the audience the sensation of movement and complete involvement.

After a light show, the various screens started different presentations for each section, depending on what the visiting tourists had chosen to investigate. Different types of ET's were pictured on the screens explaining the presentations. After the initial show, fireworks would emphasize the mounting excitement before the public would be taken by yet another set of moving walkways leading to the lecture halls associated with the seating section they had chosen. Learning was to be mixed with entertainment in the form of music and light shows between

lectures and introductions. Afterwards various rides and games intended to give them the feel of space travel were available to the tourists. The whole idea behind this ambitious park was to put this complex on forty acres in the desert between Las Vegas and Los Angeles and to involve races of peoples from space giving a platform for social exchange and interaction mixed with theme park activities. Ronald intended to "process" as many as 30,000 people a day through this orientation program with a waiting list anticipated.

It was a stunning undertaking, even at just the mock up level I was shown, let alone the hoped-for future outcome. Ronald took me back to the women in the living room and thanked us for joining him. Ronald asked Molly if she could take me back to Lou's on her way home, and she agreed. The lady waiting on the couch perked up to bid us goodnight, holding Ronald by the arm.

Molly and I were let out through Ronald's security gate as he watched from his entry door, shutting the gate behind us. Molly asked me where I needed to be taken, and I called on my recently acquired, though limited, knowledge of my new home and directed her around the homes and drainages. We came into the back parking area of Cresta Mall, crossed the four-lane, passed the fruit and vegetable vendors, turned up the hill by the blues club, and climbed the side hill of Northcliff as I watched for street names. For the first time I realized that the street names were on the curbs, and not on street signs as we climbed further into the dark housing areas away from the well lit business districts.



Molly saw me straining to see street names and nervously asked me if I knew where we were going. Right on cue I saw the name "Nightingale" climbing to my right. "Yes, turn there!" I said. Molly had passed the street and after a quick turnaround and a bit of a panic at being stopped in the night street, she followed Nightingale to Ethel, and right to Lou's driveway. Molly was amazed that I had showed her the way in the dark on a virgin voyage, but felt assured that she could follow Nightingale all the way back to streets she was familiar with on her way home. Thanking her for the mini-adventure of a ride home, we agreed to stay in touch, and I bid her good night.

Lou's house was unusually dark and quiet except for the dogs locked in the studio who knew me by now and only danced and sang dog stories to me from behind the closed door, greeting my arrival home. The entry light was dim and difficult to use while locating the skeleton key lock hole. As quietly as I could, I made my way from the living room, up the wide winding stairs to my hallway and room on the second floor. It must have been midnight by the time I was in bed and going back over the day before. What could I expect to encounter the next day, I wondered, as once again I could hear the white eagle owl on the bank next to my window?

Strange visions of Nazis paraded through my dreams that night with a man looking like Hitler peering at the African natives with disdain as he approved of their maltreatment. Writing a book of his own, this Hitler man shared it with a doctor who was writing a book about the natives and their

mixed race children of German men and native women. They both laughed in the dream as they looked at men, women and children in concentration camps formed on desolate islands, just in view of the mainland. Skulls of prisoners were being scraped clean of meat by women prisoners as the one man handed the skulls to the Hitler man, who in turn photographed them, proclaiming the photos to be evidence of his own superiority. Then with a one-handed salute familiar of Nazi arrogance, the Hitler man walked away with the most disgusting display of supposed Aryan supremacy.

Confused as to how and why such a man would figure in the series of dreams, I had to wonder if my own drama might be clouding any dreams I was having.

## **29. Mr. Bones?**

It was already Friday morning when I rolled over wondering if I had slept that night. I must have, as dream visions of the new faces I had met paraded past my bed on their way out of the room with the coming of the morning light. Lou was already on the balcony when I got there, with his first cup of tea and a cigarette. Martha had already been up making breakfast, and I, the early-to-rise farmer, was still stumbling around with the taste of foot soldiers in my mouth, lots of them.

"Did you enjoy your evening with Ronald?" Lou asked as I rubbed my eyes to wake up.

"That was fascinating, Lou! What a production you made for Ronald's presentation. Has he actually had people looking at investing in that?" I tried to keep incredulity out of my question.

"Not really. Only some folks who wanted a theme park, but not one so focused on such a bizarre fringe. It sure was a challenge to create. Did you like all the motions and lights?"

"Lou, that was a piece of work, to say the least. What's our day look like?" I asked as the phone rang.

"Lou here. Howzit Jeremy? No, don't worry about lunch, these men work with me and are part of the crew who are provided for. Who do you have with you? You did what? You picked Bokkie up at the Hillbrow Towers? That must have been an adventure. I bet you were the only white face in the whole building! Glad you're on your way." Lou stopped to explain to me that Jeremy had gone into the heart of "Gotham" to get Bokkie because it was too early for the taxis. Continuing, Lou asked, "Then we will see all of you there? We'll be on our way soon, too."

Martha brought breakfast and more coffee by the time Lou was off the phone. We ate and made our way to the studio to let the dogs out. They pushed and played with each other as they made their way to the bushes for their private morning dog park experience.

Lou grabbed his toolbox and paint brushes on the way through to unlock the back door by Martha's house and working men's restroom. With a glance to check that all was as he had left it, he turned and handed some tools to me

and headed to the garage.

We made an early start with little traffic to deal with by the time we were out past the Lion Park and squatter's camp, speeding out on the two lane road through the highveld, passing school children in uniforms coming out from all the dirt roads to the paved road. Taxis loaded workers, stuffing up to twenty people at a time in battered and bruised minivans at every intersection. Groaning under the pressure and weight, the taxies passed us on the edges of the roads when we slowed for stop streets and curves. It was pandemonium on wheels everywhere I looked. We crossed the Crocodile River and made our way to the front gate of location. Paul Scott had beaten us there and was wiping his mustache before swigging down fresh morning coffee behind his pastry from the outside cafeteria. Jeremy and the workingmen came down the dirt road ahead of us, having parked the second truckload on the hill by the other cave materials.

"Jeremy, I guess you heard already that we will be moving the cave down the hill before we set up? Bruce has reasons that he can explain. At any rate, we will have to do our own greens work as Manny and Jimmy are not coming today, and tomorrow, early, is the scene with the lion. Let's hit it and you can get these men back to the studio by the end of the day."

It was a busy morning. Everyone was issued gloves from the boot of Lou's BMW, except Lou who ran out of gloves and chose to hand his to Steven, the last black man in line. The pieces of the cave wall moved like leaves in the jaws of

African Ants, angular and wobbly as they came down the hill. Jeremy was in charge of which piece went where, and Lou was in charge of the visual effect the camera would see. I pushed and pulled alongside Steven, who I knew was the man I had shunted around that morning. We worked through the morning break and up to lunch time. Finally Lou announced that it was time to eat, and led the way down the hill to the cafeteria.

Paul Scott was one of the first seated at the tables with a huge plate of food, cigarette in mouth, as he balanced coffee and juice while pushing his butt into the bench to get traction to go after his plate of food while talking to a man who was trying to ignore him from across the table. Lou motioned for me to get in line, and stood back with his men for a minute till I was taking a seat next to Bruce and his partner. Then, with the line moving freely, Lou stepped into line with his men. The food line stopped when the first black man picked up a plate. Other white men stepped around him and the other black men, and grabbed plates while the first black man looked down at the well-trodden ground and just waited. Lou pushed his way through the white men and demanded that his men be fed.

The Indian cook and black assistants looked around at the crowd and kept feeding the first to come, without joining into the mess. Lou was told to take a plate for himself and let the men wait. Instead he pulled out of line with his men in a show of solidarity and walked around looking for a fight with whoever had the bad timing to look back at him. Trying to make themselves invisible, the men with food sat under the shade of the tent tops. Lou stumbled across the pelvic

bone of an animal, and put it on his head like a mask, looking out through the leg joint holes as he walked around the tables checking everyone's plate. People tried in vain to ignore him.

I got up to go to him and he motioned me to sit again. The line was smaller now and the cook motioned to the black men with me to join in, seeing the tension growing in the crowd. Bruce smiled and said, "That's Lou for you. Good for him. Pompous asses, the lot of them. Let's get back to work." Bruce left, and Lou took the seat next to me, waving to the black men to join us. They were nervous, though, and simply stood around with their plates of food and ate in the sun. Lou looked around the crowd and said, "After all, this is Mr. Bones, isn't it?" holding up the pelvic bone again as others tried to look away, but watched him, not knowing what he might do next. Perhaps they too had known him since the days at SABC.

After lunch we all worked feverishly until all the heavy pieces were in place. Lou said he would take Steven home with us, and that Jeremy could leave now with the other men. The word was out that the production company had some checks to give out on a first come, first served basis. Lou instructed Jeremy to go past the office with his bill and get some money to pay the black men, and not tell anyone he was leaving. An hour after he left, Paul Scott came around and stood with a cigarette, not offering one to Lou, saying, "That was quite a show at lunch time, Lou, or should I say Mr. Bones? Hey, where's Jeremy?"

"Oh, I sent them to get a check. It's payday. Didn't you

hear?" Lou said with an impish grin.

"What? Payday? Where? Oh Shit!" Paul said, nearly running with his overweight frame jiggling as he made his way to his car and sped off through the security gate.

"That gets rid of him!" Lou laughed, and turned back to painting the joints of the cave wall, making them disappear. Paul Wright came around to check to see if the cave would be ready first thing in the morning. Looking the structure over and studying it a bit too much, he turned to Lou and said, "You aren't selling me the same feature again are you, Lou?"

"Oh, Paul, what makes you think that? Your lion will love it," Lou said, not looking up from his work. It was getting dark, and Paul was a busy man with places to go, so he huffed and walked away to the parking lot and drove off with a dust storm behind his car. Lou dusted the letters off that he had shown me before and kept painting the cracks in the rocks till it was too dark to continue. Getting his cell phone, he called Jeremy to see if he had the checks. Jeremy had paid the men and left cash for Steven at the studio. Jeremy was left with instructions to come back in the morning before the cameraman and put brush around the cave.

With that done and the sun gone down, Lou asked Steven to help load the trunk as Lou hid paint and brushes under a bush for Jeremy to use the next day. We drove out at a casual pace through security, where the guard was packing up to leave for the night as well. At a small grocery store on the paved road, Lou stopped for a soda for each of us. I

bought some fruit with the few Rand I had brought and passed the food around when we got back to the car. Steven hadn't bought anything, being out of money till we got back to the studio. Lou handed him a soda and I passed him some fruit. And so dinner went as we headed back to Joburg, the city lights glowing on the distant horizon.

### 30. Just Desserts

Again, when we entered Lou's studio, the phone was ringing.

"Get that will you, Russ, while I pay Steven?" Lou said with a quick look around the office for the money Jeremy left.

"Hello, Lou's," I answered.

"Well, hello Russ. This is Dee. Adam and I would like to ask you over for dessert and a visit. Are you available? We'll come pick you up!"

"Sure Dee, that sounds great. When?" I asked while looking at Lou to let him see what was up.

"In a few minutes if you're ready. Adam will come pick you up," she offered.

"I'll be here," I accepted.

"I guess you will be busy this evening again. You know where the keys are. Let yourself back in. I'm going to take



Steven home, as there are no taxis this time of night. See you in the morning." Lou headed out, reaching for his keys after paying Steven for his week's work.

"Good night, then, Lou. I'll see you in the morning. What's up tomorrow?" I asked.

"Evan and the boys are coming by with the twins. We need to make a trip to her father's farm to straighten out some last minute estate issues. You're coming with us. I want to show you a casino that has used rock features on a grand scale." Turning and waving goodbye, he and Steven headed down the stairs. "I'll lock the studio up when I get back and take care of the dogs. Just pull the door shut," Lou instructed as they got in the BMW. I made it past them and opened and closed the gate.

I had just enough time to freshen up and lock the front door on my way to the driveway when Adam met me on the steps by the studio. The night was warm but the air was becoming crisp and that made for fresh, soothing breaths of Highveld smells. A mix of city air with township cooking fires drifted across the sides of Northcliff. Adam brought a yellow sedan that was freshened and clean after a wash and vacuum for the weekend ahead. He quizzed me about what I had been up to and how I enjoyed being on location. It was a quick ride to their house, simply down Nightingale and past the shop where the wonderful bread was baked, then up the hill again to a place on Arizona Street looking back at Northcliff and Lou's place across a small draw. Adam hit his remote to the gate, then closed it again behind us, quickly, watching all the time. Dee met us at the

front door and led the way to the sitting room.

The Chihuahua sat on the coach and got off as soon as he saw Dee. An elderly but spunky white spaniel with brown ears woke from his bed in the corner and came to greet me. The chihuahua was excited and welcoming as well, and not at all the pest he had been with Bruce, not checking after my heels as he had done days before. Dee had coffee and tea ready and cake on a coffee table, completely safe from the dogs, who were not going to bother it.

"How have you been? Busy? How's location coming along? I hear they got the cave on location," Dee quizzed.

"Yes, busy. And having fun learning all I can. Yes, the cave is on site and complete, apart from shrubs," I explained.

"Coffee or tea?" Dee asked as we took our seats.

"Coffee please. Dee, I have a radio show coming up the 3rd of April, very early in the am. Are you available? Cecil Morrow will also be on."

"Sure, but what would you like to have me talk about?" Her face echoed the question.

"The interviewer will be very pleasant and inquisitive. He will ask you about your knowledge of Elizabeth, and about your own experiences," was all I could offer, not knowing what the interviewer might find interesting.

"I've done other radio shows in the past and have much to share. In fact, let me tell you a bit about my story, outside of

what I told you that day we met at Lou's," she said as she served up the cake.

"Sure Dee, I'd love to hear more."

With dessert and coffee balanced between the side table and my lap, I sat back to hear another version of her story unfold. "Let me start by saying as a result of all of this, Lou and I divorced some time ago. I bet he didn't say much in that regard," Dee started.

"Well, he did say that this story had not let him alone yet," I related to her.

"It all started one evening when my mother had not called to check in. I was working in the studio with Lou on a huge project finishing up in a couple of days. I excused myself and drove out to check on my mom, down where I told you I once lived. She owned a house and cottage there. I met her standing in her driveway, a bit worn down by her day, but all right. I offered to bring her back to Lou's and we got in the car to come up the hill. No sooner had we got back in the street than two people came up to the car, then suddenly were in the back seat. I figured we had just been carjacked, when the surrealism started," Dee recalled, and a lengthy version of her story unfolded with greater details than she had offered before.

Focused on each other, we sat on opposite sides of the coffee table while Adam poured more coffee or tea and occasionally left the room to get the phone. Dee told me a detailed story of her debilitating health issues which had

caused her to travel great distances seeking medical help; then they ended with the stunning meeting of those people in her car. Her health was completely reversed, and excellent to this day. Dee and her mother had left this planet with the people who came into her car, and met others from the Joburg area on board a space craft en route to another planet. The occupants of the craft performed health surveys on everyone, found Dee's illness and decided to correct it permanently.

The whole event took much more time than a trip from Lou's to Dee's mother's place could have taken. Once Dee and her mother returned and told their story, Lou and Dee went to the doctor to check her health issues again. She was unexplainably cured. Her life understandably changed, and so did her marriage. Lou and Dee broke up and Dee met and shared a home with Elizabeth at Dee's mother's place. The two hour long recitation over dessert included how Dee and her mother found the others they had seen on the ship, who lived in the Joburg area, and how these people were frightened when Dee looked them up and did not want to talk about any of it. Dee told how Shirley McClain came to South Africa to lecture and found out about Dee and her mother, seeking them out. There was certainly enough to tell on a radio show, and I now knew more about how gracious Lou had been allowing me to bring this story so very much back into his life.

While we spoke, Dee and Lou's daughter, Bonnie, came by. "Hi Mom. Can I stay in my room for the night?"

"Sure hon. This is Russ, the man staying at Lou's."

"Hello Russ. I was just at Dad's and he told me you were staying in my old room. Nice to meet you," she said as she reached out to shake my hand.

"Nice to meet you, too, Bonnie. Thank you for sharing your room. I hope it has not been a problem for you," I apologized as I greeted her.

"Not a problem at all. I spend weekends with Dad or Mom from time to time between school," she explained and picked up her bags to go down the hall to her room.

"Dee, I do think this has been a very informative night with a very busy day ahead of me. Thank you for sharing this. I would love to have you on the radio show and will contact you about the times." I thanked them and followed Adam back to his car. Dee waved goodbye as Adam closed the security gate behind us.

"A complicated life these two people have had. You kind of blindsided them bringing it back up. Maybe some healing will also come from this," Adam said with compassion in his voice.

When I got back to Lou's I again followed my new routine, which landed me in bed and deep in sleep until morning woke me, rested and ready to go.

## **31. Family Day**

Lou and I started our day in a routine manner, enjoying the time to relax and talk about the week before. Jeremy finished the cave just as the cameraman finished his setup. The lion had his thirteen seconds of fame as he ran from one cage to another, and the week's work completed on schedule. Evan was dealing with two infants and two young boys, working her way toward Lou's early in the day. Lou and I cleaned out the BMW and prepared for a ride to Evan's father's farm. An open dune buggy sat in the garage alongside the BMW.

"Use the dune buggy much, Lou?" I asked, while looking at the car filled with garage stuff and the remains of the trunk load of paint supplies from the BMW.

"Na, only when I want to go to Gotham. I love to take the open vehicle into the heart of the black areas and show that I'm not intimidated. Confuses people, and that's what I'm here for," he grinned in his impish way.

We had time to get the BMW out in the sun and washed off by the time Evan showed up with her boys and the two-month-old twins. Pandemonium started as the boys ran for the dogs and ended as Lou called out and told them he would have their asses if they didn't mind Maria all day. Two suddenly shy young boys stopped and hid beside Evan and looked at Lou for further guidance.

"You two are going to Maria's for the day, and you had better be on your best behavior, or I will know, and you will wish you had been good," Lou instructed sternly, as the

boys looked up at their mom and down at the ground. Kissing Evan good morning and taking the twins in both arms, Lou paraded around in the courtyard sun a short time while Evan and I moved things from her car to Lou's BMW. Loaded up, we all squeezed into the BMW for the first stretch of road. Dropping the boys at their daycare giver, Maria, we headed off through the Saturday morning streets of Joburg.

With a little more room now, Evan took up the back seat with the twins and their blankets. For the first time Lou didn't have a cigarette in his mouth as we sped off along D.F. Malan on our way out of town, away from the CBD. At the edge of town we turned right on a main road, then dropped off to surface streets and Saturday flea markets along many blocks of residential divided four lanes. Vendor after vendor displayed furniture, mirrors, rugs, clay pots, paintings, fruits and vegetables. Cars parked along the street as buyers moved through the displays and carried newly acquired goods back to cars. Our street became a rural road as we headed out into open areas broken by small stores and occasional houses.

"Look over this way. See this casino? Those are fake rocks. They asked me to bid that job, but it was too big for my company. They decided on that shape and type of rock feature to be applied over standard construction with major security included. Let's turn here and get a closer look." Lou turned into the parking lot and made his way to the front doors where a greeter waited for us to stop, but we continued on to the exit and back on the street. We circled the complex one full turn with Lou pointing out how

windows were placed and how the roof lines met, or what inside and outside corners were made of. In minutes we had a full explanation of what Lou would have done and what came to pass.

Back on the road, leaving the city behind us, we dropped into a canyon with a castle-looking structure coming up on the next ridge.

"That's where Michael Jackson wanted to live when he came here," Evan said.

"He didn't buy it though," Lou added.

"And that is a Leeuwkop Prison over there," Evan added in a short while.

By this time we were well out of town. We turned on a dirt road and passed one large entry gate and entered the second one. Three nice houses sat around a common drive in the midst of a well-maintained garden with ample trees and lawns. A group of men and women were in the courtyard of the largest house and the eldest woman came up to greet us at the car. Evan started the introductions with this woman, her mother, then quickly added three sisters and their husbands as they all came to join us in the brick-paved driveway. Evan had come to sign papers, as had the others. A braai was planned for the afternoon but Evan had already excused herself from involvement, having plans with Lou for the night.

Lou and I walked the garden for about half an hour while the women's voices could be heard going over old and new



issues. The husbands stood around the fire with beers in hand watching the door for the wives to return, signaling the start of the afternoon events outside. Eventually Lou and I joined them and there was an awkward attempt at conversation. Everyone was slightly overdressed compared to us, but the advent of the twins coming out in the arms of two of the sisters took the focus and made conversation a little easier. Evan went into one of the smaller houses with her mother to give instructions on what would be leaving for Lou's the next week.

All our business there had been completed. An additional invitation to the braai was turned down, and we made our way back to the BMW to leave. Evan's unmarried sister helped with the twins as we loaded into the car to depart. Lou's phone rang as we started out the driveway and Bonnie could be heard on the other end.

"Ya, we are leaving right now and heading your way. We will be there in about a half hour. 'Bye." Lou signed off.

As we left the driveway Evan pointed out how large her family farm had been. Since her father's death the farm was being divided up. The family at the braai would be living there in the houses, one of which had been Evan's. She was not too concerned, as that was another part of her life and she had left it years before in her own mind.

Back past the casino and around the city on a circular route to depart on a street taking us into a forested section of town. More fruit vendors crowded the cross streets as we pulled into a parking area for the school where Bonnie was

taking classes in massage therapy. She was watching the driveway for us and came out with a large box. Proudly greeting her father, she announced that she had just passed an aromatherapy class and received her sample case of essential oils. Lou congratulated her and expanded on the hard work she had done to get to that point. "You should come by and talk to Russ about massage and about his life in America while he is still around," he offered.

"Oh, that would be great. I will call some night next week and see if we can meet up," she graciously accepted.

With our family day coming to a close for me, Lou announced he would be spending the evening with Evan and the kids, and that I was in charge of the house. I was instructed on what to do with the dogs and doors and security. Most of it had already happened in front of me, though now I would be on my own in my new home. It was exciting and nerve wracking all at once. I was let out at the drive, Lou not even coming in to get me started. I felt like I was sixteen again, wondering if I really knew what to do.

When they were gone I checked the house and came out to look up and down the street. I walked up the road to look at an empty lot for sale, wondering if I might afford it.

I checked out the busy Shebeen from the road above it, wondering how people contacted the owners to make a purchase. As I turned to come back in the yard I saw Martha sitting with her daughter and grandson at the bank overlooking the road, her cabin behind them. We all were enjoying the cooling night together, each after a day with family.

## 32. African Drums

The night had been uneventful, though busy. I checked doors and dogs and gates regularly. I sat out overlooking the street from inside Lou's yard, hidden in the trees next to the artificial baobab tree as people came and went to the shebeen. The TV was uninteresting, to say the least, and after a dinner of leftover rice and cold veggies I went to bed.

The next morning I sat alone on the balcony, writing in my journal and drinking coffee in the quiet house. Marie was with her family on her day off, making the house mine for the time. I heard a car pull up to the gate and Lou's voice greeting the dogs. Evan's voice drifted up as she moved things from his car to hers.

"Lou, I'll be back on Monday to work. I have to go now to get the kids. I love you."

"Ja, I love you, too. Kiss the children for me," and they said their goodbyes.

Soon he made his way to the balcony with a cup of coffee and a fresh cigarette. "Have a fine evening did you?" he asked.

"Sure did. I guess I didn't know exactly where Martha's house was till last night when I saw her sitting outside," I answered.

"Well, it's Sunday, shall we go play? I have some things to show you," he offered.

"Sure, I'm with you," I said as I picked up the cups to take back to the kitchen.

Lou and I dropped off Northcliff and crossed D.F. Malan, heading back to Ronald's part of town. We crossed the face of the dam by the dog park and followed the drainage downstream, then turned at a liquor store, barred shut for Sunday, and proceeded up a tree-lined divided four-lane into the community of Rosebank. Pedestrians crowded the bottom floor of a parking structure that we circled and then entered, climbing to the top level through multiple ramps and around the already full third and fourth elevations. Even the top level was crowded; it was difficult to find an open space. The small BMW finally managed to fit between two tall pickups as Lou maneuvered into place. One last stab and then CRUNCH!

"Oh, damn it!"

"You OK?" a young lady called out. Leaving his car Lou bent down to look at his and her bumpers.

"You OK!" Lou echoed.

They both were out of the car now and looking around. No real damage occurred as Lou had backed out for his last alignment and the young lady tried to squeeze by. Both had not been looking, and both were red faced from embarrassment. "I'm OK," she said.

"I'm OK, too," Lou said.

"Shall we forget it?" the young lady asked.

"Sure, we're both OK," Lou agreed and we locked the car to leave.

The elevator was available but full, and the stairs were close by, so we headed for the staircase and descended to the second level. Coming around through the slightly busy corridor we came into another busy corridor with open and closed shops and window shoppers. Lou looked down the row of shops and saw one open which did security and headed for their door.

"I know this man and want to talk to him about some work at his house. He wants a water feature. This could take some time, so why don't you go downstairs to the flea market and wait for me at the coffee bar? Down those stairs half a flight, turn left, go to the open door to the courtyard and there you'll find a coffee bar. I'll meet you there."

Following Lou's directions I headed down the stairs. Looking both ways in a sea of black and white faces I saw Phillip Marlboro making his way to the stairs in the busy crowd. He passed me at the foot of the stairs and I called out to him, catching his attention. "Phillip! Russ Winje here."

"Oh, hi, Russ, meet my son. This is Billy. We are on our way to get ice cream before he goes back to his mom's place," Phillip explained. "I understand that you have moved on and are staying with Lou Guessler. Is that right? I saw

Cecil Morrow yesterday and he said he had spent the morning with you the other day. I know Lou. Be careful. He can be bad with business and worse with money," Phillip offered without explanation. It was nice to see him, but I was confused about the advice. Lou had been a trusted friend, and I had not found reasons to concern myself over the ethics of a man who had taken me in like a long lost friend.

"We must go. Ice cream waits for us," he bid me a good day and headed up the half flight of stairs.

I looked around as I stood at the bottom of the stairs in the moving crowd. Row after row of African artwork and clothes met the main flow of bodies and dispersed them to all corners of the second floor of the parking structure converted into a Sunday flea market. Some places were well lit and others depended on the light from outside. Displays and makeshift shelving units lined the floor. Masks and bright cloths mixed with cookery items and spices, some looking like the Muti shop in the CBD, and others like an Amway display with vitamins and crystals. A confusion of colors and smells crowned by the sounds of voices bargaining for best price followed me toward the coffee bar at a large open exit door, which led to a set of more permanent shops just outside the parking structure. Tables were crowded with Sunday joy seekers eating rolls from vendors with drinks from one of many busy displays. An open seat at the coffee bar caught my eye and I took it and ordered a cup of rich, dark coffee.

Secure in my stillness, I leaned my back into the countertop

and looked back at the parking level I shared with this group of buyers and lookie-loos pawing through various arts and crafts amongst practical products. One row of open tradesmen's displays extended to my left, parallel to another 20 rows in front of me. The common wide lobby stretched back past the stairway and on through the other half of the flea market. Another parking structure was linked with two pedestrian ramps at either end of the two large flat floors both filled with booths and moving crowds. Having seen one familiar face I searched for any other people I might know. So many possibilities from having already met so many people, but all I found were similar looking creatures from my recent time in Joburg and distant past in California. Without being noticed, the seat emptied next to me and Lou showed up and took it.

"Found the coffee bar, I see! Shall we walk around? I just saw Phillip Marlboro with his son. He said he saw you heading this way. Nice man, but he doesn't like me. I had a run in with him over business and he never let go of it. Maybe it's just his recent divorce. Those pressures cause people to react funny. I did," Lou said, not wanting to put too much on another's reactions, having had his own situations right in front of me, going back some fifteen years.

"Let's walk," I agreed.

We walked together looking at the displays without buying. Lou studied the products and mentioned how he loved to get ideas for his business. "I can make these things from my process, then duplicate them for mass displays for the

camera's eye. See those masks? I'll show you some at the shop. Have you seen the faces in the shrubs at my yard? Same things," he explained as we browsed the rows, one after another. Crossing over to the other structure, we looked over framed paintings on pivoting racks, many of them American Indian sorts of pieces depicting stereotypical poses and clothing styles, none of which I actually saw in the western cultures surrounding my farm back in California.

It was a bit hokey, I thought, as Lou led me through the rows of fancy shops. Fine work, though questionable subjects. "There are a lot of fine artists here in Joburg, but few get the chance to show and sell their works. A lot of competition. Dee is quite a good artist, too, but not much of a sales person. These people at least are getting exposure though the subjects may be a bit limited," Lou mused as I studied the displays, then the crowd, back and forth as we walked. A woman crossed in front of me and for the life of me, I thought it was Mickey. I stopped and watched her walk away looking through the shops as she went.

"Thought that was her, didn't you? It wasn't, but sure caught you out, didn't it!" Lou laughed.

"Yes, Lou. Guess I thought I had seen a ghost," I laughed at the mistaken identity.

We crossed back into the first section and traveled through to the more permanent shops. Lou showed me one shop after another, then led the way to a staircase going down to street level. The sounds of African drums filled the stairway



as we came around the bend in the stairs. A group of young black men competed with each other in rifts of drum beats from various sizes and shapes of colorful drums. Leaning away from us to make room, but not missing a beat, they smiled and sweated while joyfully pushing each other to get louder and faster. Carlos Santana would have been proud. Out to the street level we let the sounds of the drums fill us while we walked through open cafés and more shops. Taking a slow walk up the next set of stairs we followed a balcony above the street level crowd and back into the flea market.

The crowd was still growing as midday lunch crowds came out after church. Lou and I covered every display, some twice, and had already filled our Sunday.

"You have a meeting tomorrow?" he asked.

"Yes, with Credo Mutwa" I said.

"Need a driver? I'd love to take you. Do you have directions?" he asked as we climbed the stairs to the top of the parking structure.

"Sort of. I'll check my notes, but I remember it's along the Hennops River" I offered.

"Well then, we are set. I know that area. What time?" Lou said with confidence.

"10:00 am, I believe," I said, thinking back. "I'll call to make sure."

### 33. Matsieng

A much-anticipated day arrived with an uncommon normality. I really had learned that I lived in this place, with routine and intent as if it had been years of the same lifestyle. Lou and I met for coffee as we did any other morning, enjoying the sun bathing the mine dumps and sweeping across the forested city below us. We gathered up our daily support tools and moved ahead to the studio to make calls. Lou made arrangements with his distributors and salesmen and I set up my first meeting of the week at Credo Mutwa's, over the phone with George.

"Hello, George? Russell Winje here. Are we still on for meeting with Credo Mutwa today?" I asked, hoping all was still working out for a potentially very interesting day.

"Yes, I have you written in. Can you make it by 9:00 am?" George offered with a studied sound to his voice.

"I'm sure that's just fine. Could you verify directions for me again?" I asked as I checked back on our conversation from the call I placed at Arleta Forbes' home.

With the directions confirmed, we agreed to meet at that time. Lou and I finished our morning at the studio early enough to leave as the phone hit the cradle. Jeremy Pond had arrived early as well and was heading for the phone while it still slightly shuddered from being hung up.

"Good morning men. Busy day for you, too, I see," Jeremy

offered as he pulled his notes from his pocket and dialed his first chore of the week.

"Yes, I'm taking Russ to see Credo Mutwa this morning," Lou explained and we hit the door and were out in the early morning streets and heading toward D.F. Malan through waking crowds of workers.

The first four-lane through the familiar shopping centers was not too busy yet, but the first section of freeway was a nightmare. Traffic was thick and starting to slow. Lou observed that we would be held up and may be late for our meeting as cars stopped ahead of us. "Here, call your appointment and tell them we are stopped in traffic and will be late," Lou offered me his cell phone as he maneuvered for an exit and overpass that took us away from the traffic and onto a rural road.

"George? Russell Winje here. Looks like Monday morning traffic has us stopped and we will be late. Will that still be good for our meeting?" Hopefully we could reschedule.

"Yes, come to the gate and honk and I will let you in," he agreed.

No sooner had I hung up than Lou accelerated dramatically onto a narrow open road. Rows of eucalyptus trees lining ridges and then valleys one after another sped past the window as I looked out and noticed that we were on the same road Mickey had got lost on so many days before. Lou noticed the tall artificial structure that had caught my eye that infamous day with Mickey and

announced, "See that funky structure? That's my competition. They have not figured the process out, though. Not even a Mr. Peanut, is it?" He cranked the wheel the opposite direction than Mickey had taken, and stuck to the paved road, avoiding the dirt road at the backwoods intersection, picking up speed too quickly.

"We're gaining on the clock now," he said, gripping the steering wheel, coffee in control of the throttle. Much too soon we came up on the Hennops River and sped past the school before I could get a word out. Thinking Lou must know the way, I waited a short half mile before questioning his choice.

"Lou, was that the Hennops school? Shouldn't we have turned there? The directions said to follow the river past the school for a distance."

"Eish! You're right!" Lou said, slamming on the brakes and spinning and sliding into a turn on some loose gravel at a driveway on the more rural paved road. Accelerating again, we went back down the slope to the river canyon ahead. Sliding to a near stop, we turned on the dirt road and passed the school at a conventional speed, almost too calm after the last hurried stretch of road. Lou lit a cigarette and leaned his elbow on the open window trim as he relaxed back into his seat. I pulled my notes together and made sure my pen worked as we pulled up to a security gate George had described.

Lou relaxed further into his seat and announced he would wait here for me. Before he could honk his horn for entry, a

black man left his garden work and approached the gate, offering Lou to park inside the gate. I got out to meet the man and asked where I would find Credo Mutwa. The man looked at me, watching my mouth move as if he had no idea what I was asking, and said something to me that I also could not understand. He finally motioned for me to follow him, and led me through his garden work and toward a group of houses. Without following further, or answering my next group of questions, the gardener pointed at the buildings and returned to his morning chores. I walked toward the row of houses and buildings, hoping to see some clue.

I passed the first house and headed down the drive as a voice called out from behind an open door, "In here!" I stopped and looked around and the deep voice cleared and called out again, "Come in here!" I approached the building's open door and the voice again commanded, "No. The other door." Looking around on the porch of the house I was now standing on, I saw and opened a sliding glass door, leading into an art-filled living room where a large black man sat on a tall stool in front of an easel.

"Good morning. I'm Credo Mutwa. Who are you, and why are you here?" He pointed to a couch and indicated I should take a seat.

"I'm Russell Winje from California, and I'm here in South Africa promoting a movie about Elizabeth Klarer. I understand that you knew her. I am not sure why I'm here. I thought you might be able to tell me." I searched for words to give this very impressive man focused on his work and

taking time in a busy day to meet with a stranger.

"Yes, I knew Elizabeth. She was real, what happened to her was real," he said as he peered over thick bifocals.

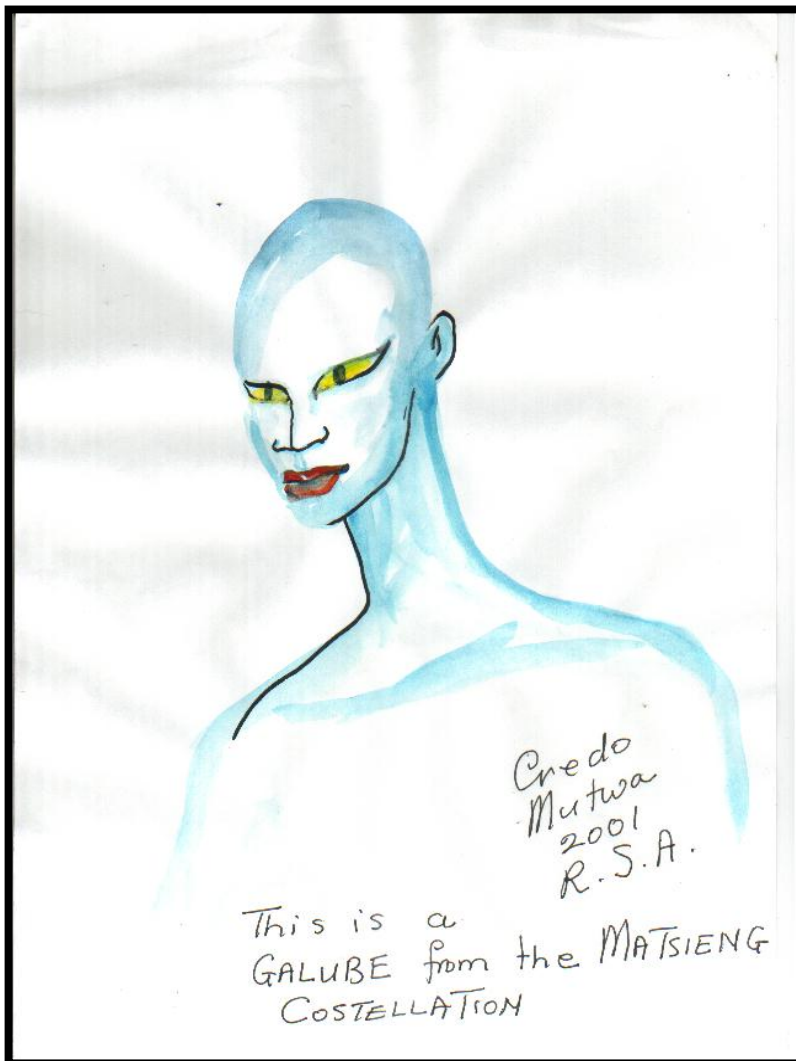
As I looked past Credo there were paintings created by him of aliens. I asked questions and answered questions. We spent some time just getting acquainted, then deeply and quickly talked about our space contacts.

"Some twelve races visit and interact on this planet of ours. Some are beneficial to deal with for various reasons, and some are downright selfish. Some are from our future," Credo explained from behind his thick lenses. He kept working with his painting as we talked, focused on our conversation and his paper on the easel.

He asked about the people I have met as he painted and then went on to say that I should go with a man named Sam and get a painting from his garage. Calling to Sam, Credo instructed us to dig deeply into the adjoining garage and pull out a mural sized painting and bring it into the sun. Sam and I pulled out a mural of space people over Joburg showing different races and spacecraft in flight. Two blue figures stood at the bottom front of the painting with familiar Joburg skyline features in the background. A scene of futuristic panic and destruction throughout the painting was being observed by the groups of space people, one of which was a reptilian-humanoid type. The painting was too large to bring into the house with Credo, so we leaned it up against the outside wall where we could study it in the morning light. Credo called out for me to join him again.

"Come have some tea with me," he offered.

When I came back in, Credo, still painting, asked if I had seen anything that I recognized. I said that I had seen races similar to those he portrayed, but that the one race I had met was not pictured there. Then he handed me the painting he had been working on saying, "Don't show this to anyone till you get back to the United States. This is a Matsieng.



They are teachers, traders, tall; they glow, and are tricksters. They gave us fire. Don't react when you see them, express humility. Don't look in their eyes. Do they look like the people you have met?"

"They do look like those I knew. Same skin color, though slightly different features."

Credo then went on to explain. "These races come to earth for reproduction purposes. It is common in Africa, and a problem for me as a spiritual leader as I have to deal with women who have broken families as a result of their having been made to feel special by these visitors, becoming pregnant, then losing the children. The visitors abandon the women. Jesus was from such an encounter." He watched my reactions. "The grays are servants. They work to instill fear of the sky dwellers. Akon met Elizabeth for reproduction purposes, then abandoned her. This type of action does not please me as it causes long lasting problems for everyone concerned. Sometimes these contacts have led to animal or human mutilations. Some of these individuals are from our future. Some come for trade," he continued over his tea.

"What are you doing here?" a short man with a large round face said as he rushed into Credo's room. "Who are you? How did you get in here?" he pressed me for an answer as I started to stand.

"This is Mr. Winje, George. Please leave us now. Thank you," Credo said without moving his focus from me, dismissing George with a wave of his hand. A bit red faced, George left the room. "You got here quicker than he expected; he, left to get things for me at the shops. He will be OK," Credo explained as he continued.

"You are wondering why the sky dwellers come here. Why



South Africa? Why with all the violence and disruption. It's because it all began here. Humans began here. This is the cradle of life," he finished. Our meeting was ending after an hour or more of private discussions.

Having been instructed by Lou to be sure and donate some money to Credo, I thanked him for his wonderful conversation and openly placed the Rand notes I brought on the coffee tray and left the room for Lou's car in the driveway. Lou was again parked outside the gate, having moved to let George back in the compound on his return with Credo's groceries. The gardener let me out and closed the gate before returning to his work.

Off in the distance a black woman ran for the gate. "Please, mister. Can you give me a ride to town?"

"Yes, Sussie, please take a seat in the back. Where do you need to go?" Lou asked as the woman, dressed for town, got in the backseat with a parcel in her arms.

"Fourways, please," she said with question in her voice.

"Sure, right on our way," Lou agreed and we now, more slowly, headed back to town.

## **34. Bobotie**

Following instructions, I hid away my picture from Credo Mutwa, only to bring it out months later in California. Not even Lou was allowed to see it. My Sunday lunch date with Elizabeth's daughter, Marilyn Partridge, had been postponed until the following Monday, and as Lou and I arrived back at his studio, Bruce sat nervously in his car waiting to take us to her house. Moving my small cache of notes to Bruce's car we again dropped down the streets from Northcliff and made our way across town. Down D.F. Malan toward Melville, past the small sports field, toward the zoo and into the older upscale community of Parktown. Streets lined with older tall trees led off the main four-lane and into expensive homes with tall security fences and guarded communities. A man stepped out of a guard shack and greeted us at a speed bump, pointing down the street a few driveways to a house on the left. We stopped, and I got out and pressed the entry button in a deteriorating cement wall and waited while Marilyn came to the gate.

A woman near retirement age, Marilyn was dressed in a fine but casual dress, and slightly made up. An anesthesiologist, she was on call that day, and carried a beeper on her dress belt. As we came to the door a large round white-haired man, her husband Tony Partridge, greeted us. He announced that he was in a hurry as his flight to Poland left that afternoon, and apologized for being a bit aloof as he continued to pack for his trip. Tony headed up the archeological work at Olduvai Gorge in the Great Rift Valley, and was going to a scientific meeting of international participants with the most recent findings. Marilyn shared

several books with us, which Tony had either written or edited on this subject. Tony had been involved in some recent flood rehabilitation work that led to the discovery of still-secret artifacts from linked World Heritage Sites. I had to wonder if this was not tied to Credo Mutwa's comments on how the ETs had first come here to Southern Africa.

Marilyn took us around her house showing us various things associated with her mother. In one room hung a painting by Credo Mutwa and other paintings by Aubrey Fielding, a personal friend of her mother's and patron of the arts. Marilyn pointed out the window to a cottage across the street where she and Tony kept an office, telling us that it was once her mother's cottage. Marilyn's home was like a venerable private museum of her and Tony's life and the life of her mother. The house had been quite fancy in its day, though past its prime now, and like Marilyn, revealed age showing on a once elegant frame. Proudly we were taken into the dining room, sat down for lunch with all the wine glasses present except Marilyn's, which was sitting on the sideboard with a half glass of wine remaining in it. The pressure of the unusual telling of her mother's story weighed on her, along with the busy life she and her husband led. Marilyn left for the kitchen, taking her glass with her, and returned with the first tray of our lunch.

Scents of curry followed the tray into the dining room and mixed with the turmeric rice and a meat dish called Bobotie. Green beans added color to the yellow/brown display. A milk tart dessert followed and finished the sideboard display. Instructing us where to sit, Marilyn then placed the lunch before us and started serving. Bruce was asked to

open the wine I brought, and a relaxed family lunch began, though the pressure of a flight lingered. Marilyn explained the dishes and told her English background version of the Afrikaans and British Boer War. Tony politely finished his lunch and announced that he would need to finish his packing and bid us goodbye before dessert.

Briefly we moved to the courtyard and finished our wine in the afternoon sun near the swimming pool at the edges of a slightly overgrown garden. Tony came into the courtyard, bid us goodbye and left for the airport, a car waiting for him in the drive. Bruce and I excused ourselves as well, seeing that our busy afternoon had already worn Marilyn down and our conversation had become circular.

Hoping for some coffee, and wanting to get back to thinking about my day at Credo Mutwa's, I borrowed Bruce's cell phone and called Dee to see what her plans were for the afternoon. Agreeing to meet at Lou's in an hour, I sat and watched the city move past my window as Bruce delivered me back to Northcliff.

## **35. Corn Woman**

Dee's car was in the drive when I got to Lou's. I said goodbye to Bruce and bent down to Dee's window and told her it was nice to see her. She was one of the few people who would know how it felt to be so immersed in this bizarre world at the edge of most people's reality.

"Credo huh?" she mused.

"Yea, Eish! as you say," I answered.

"Coffee?" she continued.

"At least!" I gave her a comical wink.

Back off the hill we went. Each time I dropped off the slopes, I built up momentum for the adventure ahead. Back past where Dee had lived, past the graveyard, into Melville and down the main street to an end of town I had not been to yet. Our street dead-ended into an older section of town with two story brick buildings and day shops with clothes and jewelry. Finding parking on the street within view of the shops was not easy, taking both of us looking for an opening. A well-dressed woman left a dress shop with a bag filled with hopes and loaded into a shiny sleek coupe, fired up the motor and pulled out as I watched her from Dee's rear window. "There! She's pulling out," I called out. Dee turned at an intersection, watching quickly to hit the hole in traffic. Nosing in, we beat the lady behind us, also watching the street for parking.

Leaving the locked car we walked with purpose past open

shops busy with afternoon customers. On the shady side of the street we entered a busy coffee shop and were greeted by a cheerful young lady saying, "Welcome to Perkup," who showed us a table with a window on the street and told us how to use the facility's self service dispensers. The alcove gave us a sense of privacy as we adjusted our coffee to taste and tested the aroma with a slow comfortable sniff and careful sip.

"Credo, hey?" Dee said again. "I have lived here all my life and have not had a private visit with that man," she added.

"Yes, I'm sure. I'm quite honored to have visited his home and enjoyed such quality time with him." I reflected on the visit that already seemed days behind me.

I shared my notes with Dee, but did not mention the picture Credo created for me. Dee told me again about Martha's experience and how that fit the situations that Credo said he dealt with in his community. This was such a big event, but still there was much quiet time as we both reflected on our own lives and where things had led us at this point of sitting in Melville. Dee's life would never be the same again. My life would not stop changing. How could either of us ever again accept 'normality' as an outcome?

"Do you have time to meet one other person today?" Dee asked. "Adam Oliver is an old friend who lectures worldwide on health issues. I must go to Cresta Mall on our way home, and he has an office there. I could call him and you two could meet while I shop?"

"Sure, Dee, I think we have agreed that the momentum of our lives carries us forward through much yet to be done. Let's fill the days!" I stood to pull her chair out for her.

Dee had her cell phone out and called Adam to see if he was available for an introduction.

"Adam, would you like to meet my friend from California? We are on the way to the mall and I could drop him by for a minute. Sure, the coffee shop by the west entry would be great. See you there."

"Adam is going for a coffee break, and I will take you to meet him there," she suggested while we approached her car on the still busy street.

Adam was a tall man with short gray hair, dressed in blue jeans and white polo shirt. We met him near the entry from the parking lot Molly and I passed when she had taken me home in the night. Adam stood to greet me, hugged Dee, then offered me a seat as he waved to the waiter to bring more coffee. Though Adam's conversation was stimulating, I found it a bit flat after my morning with Credo. Adam was more impressed with himself than necessary. He explained that he and Dee had lived together, and I remembered Lou having said something to that effect days before. I learned much about his travels and lectures. He learned little about me, having not asked, and I found no reason to offer. In time Dee came back with a shopping bag filled with colorful clothes showing at the top. Adam stood again and asked if she might give him a ride to the garage to pick up his car, and she agreed.

Stuffing Adam in the back seat with the shopping bag and sweaters, Dee navigated up the hill to Lou's. She got out and hurried ahead to the studio, saying she needed a bag of cloth to finish some dolls for a scene she was working on. Adam hung back, obviously not feeling welcome to enter, uninvited by Dee.

"Lou is a bit of a user, you know," Adam said. "Dee's father built this house," he continued, lighting a cigarette and looking the studio and house over from the street.

I watched Adam in amazement, wondering what his trip was that he thought I would even be interested in his opinions. Lou showed up at the gate and greeted us both. Adam reluctantly took Lou's extended hand and shook it with a quick grab and release. Lou's impish smile was familiar to me by now, and I greeted him and excused myself to head up to the house. Lou stood behind and I could see that he was the only one talking, and not for long, before he turned and headed back to the studio, meeting Dee on the way as she came back to her car.

"Howzit, Dee? Getting to the end of the dolls are you?"  
"Yes, Lou, nearly there. I'll bring them tomorrow. 'Bye," she said, to both of us, indicating to Adam to get in the front seat.

"Lou, what's Adam's problem?" I asked, watching them drive away. "Oh, he and Dee lived together when we divorced. I got this house in the settlement and paid it off while buying a house for Dee in return. It was a nice house,



but Adam always complained about everything, and thought he should have this place. Dee left him, though, and Adam ended up on his own in a studio near Cresta Mall. I always try to rub him the wrong way, figuring he enjoys the attention," Lou said as we entered the studio.

Jeremy was frantically on the phone making arrangements with someone and watching Lou for directions. Lou shrugged his shoulders, nodded a yes to him and turned to watch Dee and Adam pull away.

"Russ, look at this! Listen. Hear that? 'Mielies!' Hear that?" he mimicked.

In the street below, an older black woman was coming up the hill, turning at Lou's driveway, standing at the rock entry gate, calling out "Mielies!" to Lou in his second floor window.

"Yes, please! Six, please," he answered, looking at Jeremy for a response. Jeremy nodded a yes to him, and turned back to the animated conversation on the phone. "Here Russ, take this money to the corn woman and get our dinner!"

When I returned to the studio, Jeremy and Lou were laughing and going through files and notes. "We have a dental job on an elephant tomorrow," Lou laughed. "Did you know that working show elephants have implant tusks? Well, they are like dentures, and fitted to each elephant's cutoff tusk. When an elephant is transported and is waiting for a scene, his tusks are removed and stored. When it's

time for a shoot, the elephant is fitted with the dentures during the filming. We own a set of these tusks that I have made for another elephant. Bruce left his tusks in Natal, and Paul is desperate to get shots of the elephant tomorrow morning. Guess what you're doing tomorrow!"

"You and I have an early date with an Ellie tomorrow, Russ. You up for that?" Jeremy smiled over his glasses. "I'll need to have you carry the tusks and watch the tools while I run around and deal with other things," he explained, as he pulled out a paper he had been looking for. "Here we go, Lou. These are the papers for the tusks. They must be in that stack of building props at the top of the hill. I'll go find them. Come with me, Russ," Jeremy said with excitement as he headed up the hill behind the house.

Following him past the swimming pool and braai we came to a huge pile of fiberglass grass huts. Deep in the pile Jeremy tugged and pulled on a pair of fake ivory tusks, handing one at a time to me. "Here's our extra money for the week, treat them like gold bars," he said as he pushed the huts back into place. I carried the feather-light, realistic-looking ivory tusks back to the studio, preparing for my job the next day.

## **36. Fake Tusks**

It was still dark when a knock came on my bedroom window. "You ready Russ? It's 4:00am and we have to go. I'll load the car and meet you in the driveway! Let's hit it!" Jeremy called from outside, waiting to hear a response from me.

I had been up for awhile now, and was dressed and ready to go. Lou was still asleep as I quietly made my way through the dark house with only a bit of light coming from the kitchen where Jeremy had made a pot of coffee before calling me. I grabbed a cup and drank it on the way to the driveway. Jeremy had tools and tusks in his sister's car and was smoking a fresh cigarette as he slid into the driver's seat.

"We're off!" he said, as he motioned for me to get the gate.

That early, or that late if you were up all night, the city was mostly asleep. We circled through streets taking us out through a different set of shops and morning joggers.

"Jeremy, isn't that dangerous? Running in the dark like that?" I remarked with amazement.

"Not if you keep running," he said with a bit of cheek in his voice.

"I'm not ready to try it," I said, looking out at the dark city slowly waking up for the day.

We passed multi-story office buildings mixed between

heavy equipment lots. Communities all with the word "poort" came up one after another.

"Why all the 'Poorts' Jeremy?"

"A poort is a passage in the ridge. These are all passages from one place to another," he explained as he finished his coffee and lit the next cigarette.

Off in the distance the lights of the Pelindaba nuclear site could be seen in the distance as the sunlight barely touched the hilltops around it. I watched the lights like a beacon as we circled Bruka's farm location site, coming in through the already busy security gate. Jeremy pulled in between the location trailers housing costumes, actors and actresses. Extras and stuntmen and women crisscrossed in front and behind us as we carefully drove through the crowd and parked behind a trailer next to the generators humming away.

Pulling a grinding device from the toolbox and laying the tusk on the ground, Jeremy unplugged a cord and watched to see if anyone ran to plug it in again. A man in a costume came by and asked what was up, saying his lights had gone out.

"I need some power for a bit, OK?" Jeremy responded as he laid the tusk out alongside the car.

"No problem, I'm off anyway. Will you plug me back in when you're done?" the man asked.

"No problem," Jeremy said and started to grind on the tusk.

"I need to change the shape a bit to fit this elephant. I'm going to put some tape inside the hole to make for a tight fit, and need to get these burrs off the outside," Jeremy explained as he bent down to put pressure on the grinder.

Another man came up and looked over his shoulder. "You'll need to come with me, Jeremy. Bruce has the elephant over by the camerawoman and can't leave him right away. He needs to talk to you and you will need to move your car," the man said, walking away.

"Russ, stay here with the car and tools. I'll take the tusks with me," Jeremy said as he plugged the other cord back in. "Act like you're busy, and don't let anyone make you leave the car or tools," he directed as he got up to follow the man.

I wondered what was up, and thought if my animal communications were real, maybe I could use them to help today. I was mostly invisible as busy people quickly followed Jeremy and the other man toward the camerawoman about a quarter mile away. I tried to reach out and speak to the elephant from a distance, not knowing if I was actually reaching anyone. I explained to the elephant that Jeremy was coming with tusks that were not his, and that we needed some help from him while getting them to fit. As I sat there quietly in my own thoughts, a voice came from behind me. Surprised, I turned and saw a man about my age sitting on his trailer steps, in a woman's robe with slippers, hair pulled back under a white skull cap, his face washed clean and ready for makeup.

"Howzit?" he said, pulling some hot coffee from his cup with

an audible sip.

"Good morning. Are we in your way here?" I responded.

"Na, you're just fine. What are you up to?" he asked, leaning forward to rest his back with his elbows on his knees.

"We are here with the tusks for the elephant," I said.

"American, huh?" he observed, "How is it you are here?"

"I'm here promoting a movie about Elizabeth Klarer. Do you know about her?" I offered.

"Yes, I've heard about her. What is your name?"

"Russ. And yours?"

"Leo," he said, as a woman came to his trailer and asked him to follow her. "See you later," he said and walked off behind her, slippers slapping his feet as he walked, looking back at me with that same impish look I had learned to know from Lou, as he disappeared into another trailer.

"Let's move the car and get to work!" Jeremy called out as he came up behind me. "You take the tool box and meet me in the parking area," he said, while he placed a call on his cell phone. "Lou? It's going to work, but they are loose. I'll get it, though," Jeremy said, then hung up while backing out from between the trailers and into the parking area by the cafeteria.

"Want some coffee? I do!" he said, and walked up to the coffee pot and poured himself a cup, added sugar and cream, then more sugar.

"Sure," I said as I joined him with a styrofoam cup of black coffee.

"Here, you take the tusks, and I'll carry the tools. That way you'll be noticed as being with the elephant today. This is a busy day with the main actors and extras cranking out a full schedule, and we will be shunted around a lot and need to be right in the mix without getting in the way. Don't say much so they don't know you're a Yank. You probably shouldn't be here, but with the tusks no one will question you. Don't let anyone else have them. Don't put them down. They are worth about R3,000 today, and could disappear in a heartbeat," Jeremy instructed as we headed into the short fig tree stand along the creek.

Off in the distance I could hear Paul Scott working to impress someone. As we came closer I could see he was flirting up a woman with a camera slung around her neck, wrestling with a couple of camera bags as she moved between a 35mm camera and sound equipment. The extras and actors on site stood behind a viewing screen where Paul and the woman I had seen days before made sure the equipment was on line. Giving instructions and walking away into the crew, the extras and a stuntwoman followed the two bosses. Jeremy fell in behind them and motioned for me to follow.

Bruce stood beside his young elephant as another animal

keeper and a man, made up as a wild African jungle man, waited for the camerawoman and director of photography to get prepared. The elephant looked at everyone approaching, then looked me square in the eye and said, "Was that you? Were you just talking to me? I can't talk now. I'm busy. All these people's feet to watch." The young but full size elephant spoke in my head, sounding like a teenager, high voiced and enthusiastic. Jeremy reached out and took the tusks from me and handed them to Bruce who looked them over.

The elephant was used to this process. He watched as Bruce decided which tusk went where and presented the first one to him. He tilted his head a bit and pulled his gray lips back slightly. The first tusk went right on and the elephant stood still as the second one was lifted into place and pushed over his cut off tusk. Lowering his head, the second tusk fell off and the process started again. This time the elephant's mouth tightened up and his lips held the loose tusk in place. Quickly the director and camerawoman teamed up the jungle man and elephant and filming began.

All too soon it ended. The elephant relaxed and the second tusk fell off again. Bruce fit the tusk, the elephant held it in place, filming began, the scene ended, and the tusk hit the ground. And it almost all started again, but for a sound engineer with a set of headphones who stopped the whole thing.

"Airplane," he said, and everyone stopped and listened.

"Here's a second plane," he added, and everyone talked.



Paul got on his cell phone and everyone watched him.

"Put that phone away!" shouted the director.

"The plane's gone!" the sound engineer called out and Bruce picked up the tusk.

Several more similar passes by everyone and it was time to move the camera. The elephant was retired and I was left holding the tusk again and trying to find a place to stand out of everyone's way. Backing up to a bush and setting the toolbox down, I put the tusk between my legs, looking around at the hive of activity in front of me, when I was approached by Paul and the stills photographer.

"Hello Russ. Let me introduce you to Bleet, our stills photographer. Bleet, this is Russell Winje, a producer from California, here promoting his film. Would you be so good as to take our picture?" Paul asked as he put his arm around me and pulled me in close for a shot.

"Oh, sure, Paul, is that all it will take to get you away from me?" Bleet somewhat teased.

"There you go! Russell, huh? Want your picture by the camera?" she asked, walking away and motioning for me to follow.

Paul looked at the tusk and nodded at them and waved me away. The camera assistants were placing the reflectors for the next shoot and Bleet told me to sit by the film camera and wait. The motion of people swirled around me as she snapped the shot.



The director rushed up and she stepped in his way, motioning for me to slip away. "What's going on here? Why doesn't anyone tell me anything around here anymore?" "Oh, nothing, just taking my pictures, you know" backing away from the director and looking back to see that I was back by the tusk again.

All work for actors and extras came to a stop as the camerawoman and director arranged equipment with the crew for the next shoot. Where I stood, a group of chairs were put in front of me and the actors took seats and started to chat. Two black men started a conversation in front of me, including me as they went, then turning and introducing themselves.

"Hi, I'm David, and this is Faizon. And who are you?" a tall thin African American said. I explained in a simple manner who I was and why I was there. As we spoke the actor dressed as the Jungle Man caught my eye and signaled me

to be quiet as he crept up behind the largest black man with his back turned on the Jungle Man at the time. Running the last few steps to reach Faizon, the Jungle Man jumped at him and dropped short pieces of rope on his shoulders and yelled, "SNAKE!". Faizon jumped up and turned as he yelled, brushing his shoulders and faking a run at the Jungle Man shouting "LEON! DAMMIT! AAAHHH!" then sat back down to compose himself, looking over his shoulderS again and again, still brushing them as he turned back to me to try and ignore the Jungle Man. "Damn that Mr. Bones! I'll get him yet," Faizon said, and the director called them both to the new camera location for the next shot.

## 37. Green Haze

Once again I was on my own while all the crew and actors paraded through the last scene before lunch. With a quick gesture of completion, the director acknowledged the end of the scene and left for the cafeteria, the rest of the crew following suit. When Jeremy felt unnoticed he stuffed the tusk and toolbox under a bush and pulled some grass up over them. Satisfied that they were hidden, we headed back to the crowd. Two young women in a bakkie pulled up alongside us, the driver saying, "Hey, Yank, want a ride across the spruit?"

"Sure," Jeremy answered for both of us and we loaded in the back of the truck for the short ride across the creek to the parking area near the cafeteria.

Knowing the routine by now, I moved through the line and

once again took a seat by Bruce. "How old is your elephant, Bruce?" I asked as I sat down.

"Oh, he's just a kid still. 18 years old. Thinks he is an adult, though. Good kid. I've had him since he was a baby and he is one of my best. Loves to work," Bruce said as he sang the elephant's praises.

All too soon lunch was over and Jeremy and I started back to the set. Jeremy spotted a bakkie carrying some equipment pulling out to return as well, and flagged them down for a ride back across the spruit.

"Sure, hop in the back. Be careful with the tanks and hoses, they are for the next shots," the driver instructed. The back of the bakkie was filled with a six foot long by two foot diameter tank on wheels attached to a four inch RV septic tank hose and an air line. The black man in the back with us said they were going to charge the tank with air, then release it, as he pointed to a large valve on the four inch pipe. I studied the device, wondering what was coming up. We crossed the creek and pulled in by the fake elephant that had been set up during our lunch break. All the camera would be seeing was the back end of this fake elephant, which had no feet or front legs, just an ass and tail.

We got out of the truck as a set of men approached and pulled the tank to the ground and maneuvered it on its wheels until it was a hose length from the open front end of the fake elephant, which now looked like the back end of a two-person horse costume. The four-inch hose was stuffed with mud and plants from the creek while two other men

brought a compressor in and hooked it up to the tank. The camera was now located right behind the fake elephant's butt and jungle man was dancing around all perked up from the coffee at lunch. I stood back by my bush, out of the way with the tusk between my legs again.

A sudden unexpected movement of people and equipment picked up the digital viewing screen and its related table and director's chair and put it four feet in front of me in a whoosh of hands and wires. Actors and extras crowded around me looking over the shoulders of the people manning the screen, waiting for the instant gratification of watching the digital rushes for the last shot. The director came over and along with the producers started to view the pre lunch scene, then discussed the next scene with the fake elephant. Leon was instructed to pretend that the elephant had become constipated and to push his arm up its ass and pull out the mess of greenery put there by the crew as we watched. All eyes turned to the crew, busy stuffing the ass as the camerawoman fitted a white sheet around herself and the camera some six feet behind the elephant.

The compressor was running and charging the tank for the first shoot. A buzz of suppressed laughter washed back and forth across the onlookers as Leon in his amazing jungle man costume approached the rear of the elephant and looked over the shoulders of the crew busy stuffing the four inch hose under the elephant's tail. An extra had been brought in for Faizon and was being instructed where to stand. Faizon himself was arguing that he wanted to do this shot himself, and eventually the extra backed away as the

director was reluctantly won over. The air compressor came to a stop, the tank pressure gauge spiked at the highest numbers. A large white man in khaki shorts and floppy hat positioned himself on one knee beside the valve separating the tank from the hose, and proudly watched for a signal from the director.

The first part of the scene started with Leon pushing his arm alongside the elephant making it appear to the camera that he was full length inside the beast. Several times he re-enacted the scene, sometimes without the camera, but just to please the crowd that was trying to keep from laughing out loud. Satisfied that the scene was caught, and viewing it on the digital screen, the director agreed to move ahead, letting Faizon stand between the camerawoman and the fake elephant, and a bit to the side. The camera started with the woman under the white sheet looking like a turn of the century photographer with a portrait box camera. The director signaled the man at the valve, and action began.

An explosion followed which blew a green plug out of the elephant's ass like a cannon ball. The camerawoman was knocked back by the force and Faizon threw his arms up to cover his face as he fell to the ground alongside the camerawoman who lay under the 35 mm camera on her chest. A green hazy funk drifted over the camerawoman and slowly settled on the group of us at the digital screen. Stunned silence came over the crowd as the fluttering, feathered, exploded ass of the elephant came into view through the haze, and the camerawoman and Faizon lay moaning on the ground next to each other. Then uproarious laughter came across everyone as the crew rushed to pull

the camera off the woman. Extras and stunt people pulled Faizon to his feet as another set of people helped the camerawoman to her feet and started to wipe her face with the sheet that had once been there to protect her. No one was hurt seriously, but both were shocked and stunned for minutes to come, yawning to pop their ears. The laughter turned to belly laughs, then like school children when the teacher returned to the room, the laughter stopped when the director tried to say with a straight face, "Did we get that?"

The entire crowd pushed in around me now as I stood in what had become the center of activity as the director pushed his way to the digital screen and pulled up the last scene. The green funk was still in the air around us as the crowd became quiet waiting for the scene to replay.

"BANG" it started and the camera showed the chunk of green slime flying right at the lens, followed by a backward pan of trees and sky as the camera spun to the ground, Faizon's form falling with it. The laughter broke out uncontrollably again. The operator backed the scene up and ran it again. Silence, then another burst of laughter. Then the scene was backed up and run in slow motion. Some bent holding their stomachs as the unbelievable humor caught on tape was mixed with relief that no one had been hurt. Except the fake elephant, of course, who was being frantically patched with duct tape as the rest of the crew and actors wandered around trying to compose themselves, tears in eyes.

Air was bled off the tank for a long time till the pressure was low enough to barely push the green slime from the tube.

Reluctantly the camerawoman took a seat behind the fake beast and this time Faizon's extra stood beside her. An uneventful next scene was shot with everyone in attendance waiting with bated breath, and then laughing quietly and with relief when the green slime rushed out the rear of the elephant and simply deposited on the ground, this time between the camera and the elephant. Jeremy and I gathered up the tusk and left for the parking lot.

The place was abuzz with what had just happened. Jeremy had some papers to leave with the producer and asked me if I wanted to come with him once we locked the tusk and tools in the boot of his sister's car. Following him up the slopes to a large fancy complex overlooking the whole of Bruka's farm, we were left without a clue as to where to find the producer. The door to the kitchen was open, and a crew in white uniforms rushed back and forth from a catering truck with stainless steel tubs. I followed Jeremy through the maze of hallways and rooms set up as temporary offices, people looking up from desks as we passed.

Eventually we came to a large open auditorium overlooking the place where the crew was finishing another scene. At a set of windows facing the action, men and women argued loudly about what had just taken place. A woman looked up from the table near them and got up to greet us.

"You should not be here!" she said.

Jeremy held out the papers, which she looked at, and then looked at a door nearby. "Go out that door, please," she instructed and took the papers back to the people looking



out the window. The humor of the green haze was not in this room, and we left before we could be caught laughing at the sudden change in atmosphere.

## 38. Unpacking Again

The days before Evan would move in passed quickly. Lou and I picked up and moved his furniture from the house and out onto the patio. Heavy sculpted pieces of polished red ironwood were wrestled to the ground outside and propped up against the wall next to the faces from hell from salvaged props created for "What Dreams May Come". With each passage through the door, the house became emptier. The first truckload of her furniture could be heard in the driveway as we caught our breath from the rush of morning activity. This day we had coffee on the run, cups sitting in the kitchen by bowls of granola, eaten as we passed through the room. Unbeknown to Evan, Lou had been making plans for me to move in with a lady friend of his when Evan and the kids made the final move. My bags were packed by the door of the studio and I was waiting for my ride, my room empty and ready to be filled by her boys.

Evan's car was parked behind the truck and the group of black men moved to and fro with large pieces, soon finishing and pulling out for another load. Lou said his goodbyes to me and gathered up Evan who was studying my bags at the door. Without saying anything about them, she loaded in the car and they headed off behind the truck. I sat in the studio looking out the window remembering the corn woman as I waited for a ride with Joan to my new

home. A car pulled up just out of view and I heard the door slam. Quick footsteps came up the stairs as I gathered up my bags to greet my new housemate at the door, instead to see Lou.

"You're not going anywhere! Evan and I want you to stay with us till you leave next week. That's final! You can spend the day with Joan, but you're coming home! Here! OK!" he said, half trying to be serious, and half that impish look.

"Evan said that you and I have become family, and there is no way she will let you go down the road while she has anything to say about it," he continued as he turned and left the studio. I watched the car turn around in the driveway, head down Ethel and disappear.

Joan's car came right on the heels of his leaving, and I left my bags in the studio and met her at the gate. "Lou has just asked me to stay with him, and I guess I won't be needing the room after all. Thank you, though," I apologized.

"Oh, no problem. But we can still spend the day together if you like?" she offered.

"That would be great Joan. Thank you for understanding," I agreed.

"No problem. I'm running some errands and will end up at my shop on Northcliff, so come along and you'll meet my son," she explained.

Jeremy came out from the studio and looked at my bags. "What's up? You going or staying?" he asked.

"Yes," I mused.

"Joan, can you give me a ride to the garage? My sister's car is being worked on near Rosebank," Jeremy asked, knowing she was going that way.

"Sure Jeremy, let's go then."

Joburg seemed to grow smaller every time I left Northcliff. This was to be my last time there, but now I would be coming back to a new household filled with family. A sense of joy came over me as I felt the humanity of this place coming from my adopted family. Joan pulled into a garage across the street from the convenience store Lou and I passed on Sunday when we went to the flea market. Jeremy flirted with Joan, only to be waved off with a roll of her eyes as she watched him close the door.

"Right. Later, Jeremy."

"Let's go back to my office. We have some time before I pick up my son," Joan said, checking traffic then pulling out between cars. "So, you're going back to Lou's?" she asked.

"Yes, guess I'm there till I leave next week," I answered as I studied my own words.

"Well, good then, let's get some work done on each other. I hear you do massage. I do it professionally. Let's trade," Joan offered.

"Sounds great. I feel tight as a drum."

The parking lot for the upstairs mall and Joan's shop was behind the blues bar I had been using as a landmark for my street to climb Northcliff. A sleepy parking attendant didn't add any feeling of security as we pulled in unnoticed. Joan's shop was very "California" with essential oils and flute music on display in the window, books and message aids around the counter. Like a time-warp two hours spent as if in Santa Monica, it should have been a shock to come back to the world of South Africa if not for the security bars and alarms associated with locking the shop up to leave. The parking lot attendant only rolled another shoulder in the air as he attempted to complete his nap before leaving work.

"I'll get my son at Wits University and deliver him home, then take you back to Lou's," she suggested.

"Wonderful idea. Where is the college?" I wondered if I knew the way. "Near the CBD. Been there?" she explained.

"Oh yeah!" I answered.

We made our way to the front door of the school to find her early 20's son waiting for us.

"Hi Tom. This is Russ. He's a friend of Lou's and is here promoting a movie about Elizabeth Klarer."

"Glad to meet you, Russ. I have heard about that woman. UFOs right? Are you from the United States?"

"Right on both counts. I guess I'm surprised that a young college student would know about Elizabeth. How is it that

you have heard of her?" I put to him.

"Oh, you know, TV, radio, that kind of thing. I guess everyone has heard about her. A movie, hey?" he said with more interest in the movie idea than the subject.

"I hope so. It's all a long ways off, though," I offered, knowing more now about the difficulty of getting a project into the right hands.

Joan navigated through town, past railway lines, under radio towers, onto the freeway and past mine dumps, into a subdivision at the base of Northcliff. Dropping her son off in front of an older house in a marginal community, she made her way back to Lou's and let me out at the gate with thanks and best wishes for my projects and life. A relaxing day had brought me back to what had become my home, which I thought earlier in the morning was out of my life.

A buzz of activity could be heard in the room by the balcony as I greeted the dogs with a new, smaller Dachshund following them around an old two-man donkey cart belonging to Evan's father, recently placed in the driveway. The two boys came out of the house running for the Dachshund with Lou right behind them.

"Keep that doggie out of the house!" Lou yelled, picking the little dog up and giving him a smack on the butt while the two boys winced and put their arms up as if they had been spanked themselves. Watching the Dachshund run away with its tail between its legs, the boys nervously listened to Lou while being distracted by my arrival. Evan joined Lou

on the steps and handed him the twins while greeting me and asking me to follow her.

"You two mind Lou!" she said over her shoulder as we made our way into the living room filled with Evan's household of furniture and boxes, past the kitchen with the new smell of her cooking, and up the stairs toward what had been my room. Turning instead to the balcony room, Evan brought me to a room with a full sized vintage wrought iron bed with mosquito net, covered in a well-worn quilt, snug amongst stacks of boxes of clothes.

"This is your room now, Russ. You and Lou are family and that makes you my family, too. There is no way I was going to allow you to stay anywhere but with us till you left. Sorry about the boxes. Please make yourself at home, then join us in the kitchen," she said with a hug to welcome me home. This hospitality was the real South African Afrikaans way that I would come to know. It was the courtesy I had been raised with as a pioneer family member in the foothills of California. I found my bags in the room neatly placed alongside a table with chair set up in the stacks of boxes in the only space available for my private use, with a candle holder and matches, some writing paper and a pen. I had returned to a family house, after leaving a bachelor pad.

I joined Evan and Lou in the kitchen, as he held the twins and Evan cooked oxtail stew and made a salad for dinner. Lou moved his attentions from one twin to the other, then back to Evan for guidance. A blanket on each shoulder, he proudly smiled at me and included me in his new life. The phone rang and Evan asked me to get it. Following the

sound through the new furniture in the living room, I uncovered it from a coat and announced, "Lou and Evan's. Russ here."

"Russ? Just who I wanted to talk to. Mickey here! How are you? When do you leave?"

"Oh, Mickey. Fine. Real fine. I'm here with Lou's new family till April 5th" I said, looking for a indication of a calendar somewhere in the room.

"Well, then, I'll take you to the airport that day. I owe you that much. Can we get together for dinner before you go? Maybe tomorrow?" Her voice sounded softer and reassuring.

"Sure, I'd love to. And thank you for the offer for the ride to the airport. I'll take you up on that." It would be best to close out on a good note, and who knows what that could mean.

"Call me then and we'll make a plan," she said and signed off.

Returning to the kitchen, Evan's motherly ears had heard and understood what just happened without having to eavesdrop. "So, you're going to see that woman again? And she's offered to take you to the airport? You OK with that?"

Lou answered for me. "No! Don't trust her! She's trouble! I'll take you to the airport. Forget about her!"

Evan followed before I could get a word in. "You need an Afrikaans woman! I'll introduce you to a friend of mine.

Forget her!"

"I'd love to meet a friend of yours, Evan. However, I should at least say goodbye to this woman, don't you think?"

"Well, you take my cell phone when you go with her, and call me anytime at all if you want a ride home!" Lou said.

I really did have family here. They sounded like my cousins and sister in my own childhood making loving decisions for me, whether I asked or not. Thoughtfully Evan said, "I can't introduce you to any of my friends. You're too nice! You take the phone and call us if you need a ride," and she turned back to her cooking and started to serve up.

## **39. Swimming In The Crocodile River**

A weekend as a family was an unexpected and pleasurable much needed experience for us all. Lou and I shared responsibilities for the twins as Evan set up her new home. Martha's daughter and son were brought into the fray by Evan and became the young sons' companions. The older boy, at four years old, interpreted for me as his younger brother chattered at me in Afrikaans. The Dachshund sought me out and talked to me about its new plight, torn between pleasing Lou and avoiding trouble with the other dogs. Lou and I were called upon to move heavy furniture from room to room while adding Lou's sculptures back into the house. Too much activity with my family caused me to forget to contact Mickey on time, and soon it was Monday, and the last week of my stay.



Now, in the mornings, it was Lou, Evan and me on the balcony with coffee as the two young sons climbed on their mom and the twins slept. Jeremy stuffed himself into the group and talked to Lou about the prop needed for that day's unexpected call for set design. The crew had become used to Lou's ability to provide unusual items. A stunt setup needed to be disguised as a tree holding cables across the Crocodile River, and Jeremy was in charge of delivering something by afternoon for the next day's shoot. Lou scratched his head and looked out over the city view before smiling and turning back to Jeremy.

"Take the Baobab tree apart, Jeremy, and wrap it around the post! It will look like a thick vine in that small context," Lou laughed.

"Oh. Sure, Lou. That will work. I'll get right on it!" Jeremy agreed and headed down to the studio to get one of the black men to help him roll up the fiberglass replica of the tree's skin. Folded up, the whole tree fit in the trunk of Jeremy's sister's car, and he was out the gate.

"We'll need to go see how he's doing with that this afternoon, Russ. Let's get our day going around here and set Evan up for the day," Lou said as he watched Evan for direction.

More furniture and babysitting chores came up as Evan headed out to shop for baby supplies. I became the secretary answering phone calls and directing them to Lou or Evan.

"Hello, Lou and Evan's. Russ here," I became familiar with saying.

"Mickey here. Where have you been? Why didn't you call me?"

"Oh, Mickey! Sorry. Life has been crazy here. What's up?" I apologized.

"Well, I thought we were getting together before you left, and you never called back. What's up with that? How about tonight?" she asked a bit annoyed.

"Not tonight. Busy. How about Tuesday night?" I put to her as the two boys chatted at me, one in Afrikaans and one interpreting in broken English.

"Well, then, if that's how it is, tomorrow it is. I'll pick you up at 6:00 pm. Will you be ready?" she responded trying to be back in control of our time together, and realizing that she was not.

"6:00 pm it is, then. See you," I agreed and signed off.

Evan had returned and brought toys for her boys and Martha's grandson, who played with her boys on the rug in the front room. Martha was openly pleased to see her grandson included, and relaxed into a more helpful and family mood as her daughter picked up the slack and herded all three boys from the living room to the courtyard while Evan lined Lou and me up with jobs for the day.

Soon the activity was behind us and Lou and I headed off Northcliff in the BMW toward location. The now familiar roads took me up to twenty miles from Joburg as I knew where uniformed school girls could be expected, where taxies loaded and unloaded masses of passengers, where I could study the elephant's skulls over the entry gate, and where the nuclear plant would be in view. This time, though, we turned off into an older resort along a river and made our way down a narrow dirt road past fishing shacks.

"This is the Crocodile River, and these shacks are rented by fishermen. Jeremy should be along here somewhere, but I don't see him!" Lou explained as the road ended at a couple of houses. Two wild looking white men came out with guns and fishing poles and glared at us. "Sorry men," Lou said out the window as he turned around and headed back to the paved road. "I guess it's the next turnout," he said as we got back on the road and headed down stream before entering into yet another somewhat abandoned older resort.

Old junk cars and boarded up buildings were mixed between unattractive dwellings with poorly dressed and soiled white children playing amongst low trees and cars on jacks without tires. A large red-haired woman was joined by a larger white man at one of the doors and waved in a most friendly way as Lou searched for a dirt road that would lead us to the river and under the bridge to the nuclear plant. Following the road as far as he could in the BMW without getting stuck, he parked and we walked upstream looking for Jeremy. I tried to gain some elevation to see ahead as I entered the brush and headed for a rock outcropping. Thorn

bushes with lethal spikes turned me back, cutting through my heavy denim pants.

"Not a good plan, Russ," Lou laughed as he lit a cigarette. "I see Jeremy's car ahead," he added. Upstream Jeremy could be seen finishing the setup and preparing to take it down for the night. The whole tree had been rearranged into a stump of sorts, and now needed to be carted back to a safe place for the night. Lou inspected it and agreed that Jeremy could find a place to keep it, suggesting the friendly family back at the resort. Lou watched as Jeremy started his car and spun around to leave.

A whiz and whorl of wheels and the car spun in a circle with the tree on the top; one of Jeremy's hands stuck out the window to hold it in place as it balanced on the roof. Too much gas, and the car slipped one wheel into the Crocodile River.

"Oh, shit!" Jeremy yelled, hit the gas again, and swoosh the car went, slipping all the way into the river, only the front tires on bare ground.

Lou and I laughed, then tried to give Jeremy a hand by pushing on the car, as it now floated with two wheels suspended on the bank, slightly turning downstream with the current.

"Stuck are we, Jeremy?" Lou mused. "Oh, Ja, sure!" he smiled as he got out to light a cigarette.

"I think we need help," Lou observed, a bit of cheek in his voice.

"Sure, Lou. I'll wait here," Jeremy said; he was not going anywhere.

"I'll know where to find you," Lou agreed with more cheek. "Want to wait here with Jeremy?" he asked me.

"Sure. I'm ready for a swim, too," I answered.

Lou left for his BMW and we could hear him drive away. Soon another vehicle was heard coming up stream but the sound was much too loud to be the BMW.

The heads of the two children we had just seen came into view first, bouncing and balancing alongside each other. Then came the heads and shoulders of their two parents in front of them, driving an old VW dune buggy, the two kids holding onto their parents' shoulders and standing on the makeshift rear bumpers, straddling the chugging motor. Like two dogs on the back of a bakkie, the kids leaned in unison as the dune buggy jogged around the holes in the road. The rig and occupants looked like something from the Flintstones; I expected to see feet pounding the ground under the VW.

They raced up to our car, which looked much funnier to them, I'm sure, than they did to us. Getting off the dune buggy that sputtered to a stop as the engine died, the four of them circled the fake baobab tree trunk and then stood watching the car bob in the river. Speaking in Afrikaans, the father asked Jeremy some questions then motioned for the mother to load onto the dune buggy, and for the kids to

push it to a rolling start. Jumping on the back of the rig again, the whole crew drove off around the potholes and back down the river.

"They are going for a rope," Jeremy said. "They think they can pop us out with the dune buggy," he continued. We both stood there looking down the road behind them, then back at the car, on its own like a boat at a dock.

"Will you look at this light! This is the magic hour. The fading golden sunlight is really friendly to cameras," Jeremy said as he looked all around him. The southern light was different than the familiar, whiter end-of-day light in the north. The Crocodile River was nearly green in the last light of day, as the cliff banks across the river went from a white chalky color to a light golden brown. These were my last few hours in South Africa, and the adventure was far from ended.

Again the roar of the dune buggy came back up the river road. Leaning into the last turn, the kids helped the momentum of the VW to put it near Jeremy's sister's car at the edge of the river. Jeremy hooked his end of the rope under his car, while the father looked for a place to connect on his end, the mother feathering the throttle to keep the VW alive. Finally satisfied that a connection was made, father motioned for kids to hop on the back again. Bouncing to keep traction, and holding onto their parents' shoulders, the kids looked like bull riders at a bar as they tried to stay on the dune buggy as it jerked at the end of the rope. Jeremy's car only slipped further into the river, then followed the VW downstream a couple of feet. Backing up

to slack the rope, then leaping forward again, the VW popped the rope and flew forward, its motor cutting out.. They all got off and walked back to look at the car burbling in the river. Jeremy untied his end of the rope and thanked them for their attempts. They sweetly wished us luck, told us we could come to their house if we needed them, and pushed the dune buggy to a start again, bouncing back downstream, waving as they went.

Off in the distance a four by four pickup passed the VW and made its way up to us. It was the first aid and safety man from location with Lou behind him in the BMW. A thin red haired man got out and started to laugh as he looked through the back of his bakkie for a tow strap.

"What were you thinking Jeremy?" he laughed, hardly able to pass the end of the strap to Jeremy who was standing knee deep in the river, waiting to hook up to the car. Nearly disappearing under the sinking ship, Jeremy poked around till the tow strap was caught. The safetyman hooked his end up and jumped in the four by four to take up the slack. Getting back out from his idling rig, he watched Jeremy climb in and start his car, the exhaust pipe making bubbles in the river. A quick pop and roar of engines and the car was back on the bank, dripping mud and water like a Labrador puppy after retrieving a bird in the river.

It was nearly dark as Jeremy drove out ahead of both rigs, and right up to the house of the Afrikaans family who were waiting outside to greet him. When we pulled up in the BMW Jeremy announced that the father had offered to keep the baobab tree for the night. "Then, we'll see you

back in town," Lou said, and drove out through the old resort and back on to the road to Joburg.

There was not much traffic by the time we made it back past the lion park, and past the squatter's camp outside of town. Racing down the dark road, Lou slammed on his brakes and slid to a stop, both of us bracing for an impact. In front of us a man on a bicycle peddled away, almost invisible in the night, not even taking notice of us as we again picked up speed to overtake him.

"That was close Lou!"

"Eish, I didn't see him till I was right on him," Lou exclaimed, then lit a cigarette, approaching town at a more moderate pace.

## 40. Closing Out

Back at home, Evan had rounded the kids up for a trip to the store before it closed for the night. We all stuffed into the BMW and were off to a supermarket that Lou and I had visited a week before. Once again the smell of fresh bread and biltong greeted us as we entered the main lobby. It was refreshing to shop as a family, with the scattering of kids and carts making it real. With supplies for the week, we made our way home and enjoyed a fine dinner that the woman of the house made in anticipation of our full day. Evan asked about our adventures, told about her activities, and gave me a list of phone calls to return.



Cecil Morrow was to come by in the morning to share some of his work before the radio show. Mickey confirmed that she would pick me up for dinner at 6:00 PM. Bruce wondered if he would be on the radio show, and Dee had left a number for the radio engineer for Thursday morning. David Klarer would be away for Easter, but asked that I leave a message, and Paul Scott wanted to make arrangements to come visit me in California. I really was coming to the fast and furious end of a long stay, and would finish up my contacts in a courteous manor.

Tuesday morning Cecil made his way into the studio, greeting the dogs and black workers before turning his attentions on Lou and me. A salesman was back and trying to convince Lou to make fiberglass gravestones for the large number of blacks infected with HIV AIDS.

Uninterested, Lou turned to Cecil and greeted him, then asked the salesman to get back to the products Lou used for set design. Cecil greeted Evan and the boys as they entered the studio, then asked me if he could take me back to his studio for a few hours. Agreeing, we said our goodbyes and were off to Auckland Park.

Cecil used back streets I had only crossed, but not traveled down. I noticed sports fields from different angles, saw white robed blacks making their way to practice for Easter choirs, taking different paths into the same fields as before, looked down the main street of Melville as we crossed near Cool Runnings from behind, then under the SABC before pulling into Cecil's secured gate yard.

Cecil had cued up a documentary on Elizabeth Klarer

before coming to pick me up, and had another one of his own current projects waiting on the editing machine. He started the Klarer dockie for me watch as he turned his attentions to last minute changes on his own presentation.

"Have you heard about the coelacanth?" he asked. "It's a prehistoric fish that I am busy filming off the East coast of South Africa. This is what I will talk about Thursday morning on the radio show, as requested by the engineer you are working with. I thought you would like to be brought up to speed ahead of the show," Cecil explained, turning back to me as he brought his dockie up on the screen.

In a short lesson, I learned enough about the coelacanth to get me in trouble on the next radio show two days later. Cecil was a very busy man and once he was through he offered to take me home and we crisscrossed town again and arrived at Lou's.

"Then it's 4:00 AM Thursday? Right?" I said to Cecil, and he agreed to the early start to his day.

Evan greeted me on the steps and asked if I had been to Sun City yet.

"No, can't say that I have." I wondered what was up.

"Lou?" she called out. "Lou, didn't you take Russ to Sun City?"

Stepping out from the studio Lou had a question on his face. "Well, no I have not. We've been on location nearly every day. Sun City is over an hour away the other direction. You want to go to Sun City, Russ?" Lou asked,

looking like he hoped that I would turn him down.

"Oh, Lou, you know, I don't think you could get me in a car for another hour's drive right now. Thanks, but I think I should pass. Besides, I have a date tonight," I explained, and watched the disgust pass over Evan's face.

"I understand the time limit, Russ, but I must say I don't like the idea that this woman will get her hooks in you again," Evan said and excused herself to go to the house.

In a short time Mickey was coming up the drive. I was dressed for an evening out, with Lou's cell phone in my coat pocket. Evan stood like a teenager's mother at the top of the steps making Mickey come to her.

"Your twins are beautiful," Mickey greeted her.

"I remember you, Mickey. We met at SABC years ago. Be sure and return Russ safely." Somewhat cold, but sort of polite, Evan answered without dropping her gaze.

Mickey greeted me, looking back at Evan, then asked if I was ready for dinner.

"Hello Mickey. Let's go, then," I answered as I bid Evan good by. Lou looked out from the kitchen window and waved a goodbye. I was dying to try my new Afrikaans out on Mickey.

Dinner and a visit back to the townhouse was uneventful. I asked Mickey if it might not be a good time to say goodnight. She agreed and we started back to her car. I

sneezed and felt a bit chilled in the morning air.

"You OK?" Mickey asked.

"Sure, just tired I think," and I sneezed again and could feel the sting of the cold air.

By the time we got back to Lou's minutes later I was already under the weather.

"I'll take you to the airport Thursday afternoon then?" she said.

"Yes, please. My flight leaves in the early evening. Shall we leave here at about 3:00 pm?" I asked, and she agreed.

The light was on in Lou and Evan's room as I quietly tried to get to my room without waking them.

"How was your evening?" Evan asked as she carried one of the twins around who was not feeling well.

"OK, but no changes," I said.

"You OK? You sound a bit stuffed up," Evan observed.

"Sleep in before you get sick. Nothing worse than a cold on a plane," she mothered.

## 41. On The Air

By the time I woke on Wednesday, I felt hung over without having touched a drink the night before. Both the twins were crying and fussy. Lou sat on the balcony behind my drawn curtains as Evan walked the twins, one at a time, back and forth through the bedroom, trying to soothe them. I stepped out on the balcony with Lou, his cigarette smoke burning my nose and throat.

"How was your night? You look as well as the twins today," he observed.

"I'm sure I would be better off in bed," I said, and headed back into my room for most of the day.

Fevered dreams of my time in South Africa drifted in and out of the room like they were painted on the mosquito net drawn around me. Hours of scattered thoughts covered a month of memories in no particular order. Lunch passed. dinner passed. Night fell on the room as I began to approach an early morning wakeup for the radio program. About 3:00 am Lou came in and quietly woke me to prepare for the overseas radio show. Some fresh coffee could be smelled coming up from the kitchen as I followed him down the stairs.

"You can set yourself up at the phone in the studio. That way you won't be interrupted by the household during your show," he suggested and led me to the studio where the dogs had been let out for their unexpected early day.

"Here's Dee's number, and this is Cecil's. I'm going back to the house. See you when it's over," he said and made his

way in the dark back to the upstairs bedroom where the lights were still on. Soon after I got on the phone, the lights went out and the house grew quiet.

Calling the overseas engineer for directions I found that an overseas incident might hold our show up. In a flurry of calls I made sure my guests were ready and knew about the possible delay. Dee was awake, downing coffee while going over notes from previous shows she had done. Cecil was at his editing machine, taking advantage of the quiet office, the door to his residence open and the coffee pot in the kitchen perking away. Bruce had just arrived at Dee's, hoping to be put on the show. All I could do now was wait.

Right on time the engineer called back and announced that he couldn't reach Dee. We compared numbers and found that he was using David Klarer's number. Fortunately David's household was already away on vacation, so no early morning call reached him by mistake. With the numbers ready, and everyone's voices pulled up by the engineer, the interviewer came into our virtual room. Apologizing for the possible delay, and explaining the news to the international audience, the introduction music for the show began, and the host brought each of the guests on by name. The fog in my head made my part of the show seem unreal. Fortunately the host was up to speed about the new guests and carried the interviews forward over the hour and a half allotted to us.

Cecil's work with National Geographic had already caught the attention of the host a month before. Shirley McClain had published Dee's story in a book, and the host had

studied up ahead of time. The interviews were crisp and fresh. Bruce had no place to speak, and my contributions were not needed till all had been said. As a fresh news report came in, the host released us from the show, thanking everyone in a polite and interested manner, then our phones went dead. The engineer called back and thanked me for setting up yet another successful show. Cecil called and thanked me for the spot. I called Dee and thanked her, and Bruce announced that he was on the way over to Lou's to say goodbye. Dee's Chihuahua could be heard in the background barking at Bruce. I wasn't too ready to see anyone, but agreed to meet with him.

I waited for Bruce to reach the front gate and walked him to the studio. David had agreed to put me in charge of his movie project, and Bruce was dismayed by the news.

"Is this because of the Mickey thing?" he asked.

"No, not completely. It's because I'm the one who created this opportunity out of whole cloth, and can now move ahead unencumbered," I answered in the calmest manner I could dredge up.

"Then, I'm sure this is goodbye. Stay in touch," Bruce said, trying to pry a further response from me.

"Yes, I leave today. Mickey is taking me to the airport this afternoon," was all I offered in return.

As Bruce left I felt relieved to know that part of my life may be behind me, and that somehow I had dodged a bullet. The lights came back on in Lou's room as I locked up the

studio for the rest of the early morning. The fever was coming back on me and I needed to sleep before my flight left that night.

## 42. Personal Shambles

It was days before Easter when I came home from South Africa. Watching the news for Joburg during the busy Easter weekend I found that a large sports stadium had collapsed when the overcrowded structure gave way under the weight of a mass of humanity. Wondering if it was one of the stadiums I had seen, and if it housed any of the choir singers who used the open fields to practice, I contacted Mickey to see what she knew. What I found instead was that Bruce had been shot in the chest during a carjacking attempt. There was no mistaking that Joburg was fraught with incalculable dangers. Though Bruce would regain his health, it would take some time for him to rebuild. Nearly a half a world away now, I, too, had a life to rebuild.

My attention returned to the project I had taken on at my homestead before going to South Africa. I was months into restoration of an 1860's pioneer cabin behind my main 1870's home. New windows and doors I installed before leaving for South Africa now brought the fresh spring light in through the trees lining the creek as gusts of wind brought occasional snowflakes down the canyon. I pushed forward with new floors and open beam cathedral ceilings, allowing me time to reflect on my recent encounters in Johannesburg. Why had Riruako come into my life? What



else could I find out about the mission he was on?

I found his full name and title, "Herero Paramount Chief Kuaima Riruako." As the Paramount Chief of the Herero People, he headed up the Reparations Corporation accusing Germany and two companies, through an international court, of forming a "brutal alliance" to exterminate over 65 000 Ovaherero between 1904 and 1907.

When the building dust and tired muscles would bring me out of the cabin, I hit my office in the main house and studied the history of Namibia and the long thirty year struggle of Riruako as he attempted to assist the healing of his people.

Years of influx of Africans and Europeans crisscrossed in volumes of information filled with pain and suffering, recorded in unexpected detail and capturing a horrific atrocity in pictures and text, affecting the history of wars of the world. The inhumanity expressed and explored would unexpectedly encourage manic demonic leaders and scientists in distant countries. I waded through the extensive records of a genocide I had heard nothing about before now. Historical details piled up and covered each other like dust before a rain. The uncanny parallel of the historical data with my dreams made it a struggle for me to read further.

The complexity of discovery drove me out of the office and back to the dust of the remodel in a seven-days-a-week cycle starting at 6:00 am and not ending till after 11:30 pm for months on end. Evenings were a mix of sleep and

waking to send emails and phone calls to those I had met in South Africa, putting me back into a jet lag of sorts, much like I had been in while doing radio shows before the first of the year. A sense of detachment transported me from my desk into the story unfolding in front of me. Historic events back 2,000 years paraded through my mind in an attempt to explain why a Chief of a distant people could affect my life while I was caught up in my own personal drama. Would I find that there was a man named Paul in Namibian history, or was Paul only my own mind narrating to me?

I contacted the D.C. attorney representing the Chief's cause in international court to see if he would shed any light on the Herero. The legal firm could only say that a court date was set. Any other information I would need to find on my own.

### **43. Invisible Namibia**

In time I became my own narrator and third person observer flying in my mind over San hunters, the bushmen of some 2,000 years ago, and crossing the vast Namib Desert as I tried to understand the reams of data I was uncovering.

Watching a time line develop in my studies, nearly 500 years passed as Nama herders could be seen entering the region, leaving early records of their lives in cave paintings. Somewhere around 1600 Herero people came into view from the western and northern areas of Namibia, followed in the 1800s by the Ovambo. Crossing their historical paths, the Portuguese navigators Diogo Cam and Bartolomeu Dias

could be seen landing on the west Atlantic coast of Namibia early in the 15th century. Later in the 18th century, further Portuguese and Dutch expeditions came exploring the coastal regions. Dutch and British captains laid claim to parts of the coast, despite the fact that their governments would disallow such claims, thus establishing the controversy which continued through the mid 1900s.

English missionaries entered in the 18th century, followed by German missionaries in the 1840s. Britain would annex Walvis (whale-fish) Bay in 1878. The Bremen trading firm of F. A. E. Lüderitz then gained a cession of land at Angra Pequena (now Lüderitz) in 1883. In 1884, the German government, under Otto Von Bismarck, set the death sentence for native peoples by proclaiming a protectorate over the same area, soon adding the rest of southwest Africa (German Sud-West Afrika). This western edge of the African continent might open the rest of the region to Europe, and enhance the colonies at the Cape.

Conflicts between indigenous peoples and Europeans led to outbreaks of violence by the 1890s, worsening in the next two decades. In 1903 the Nama began a revolt, joined by the Herero in 1904. An uncompromising German genocidal military campaign in 1908 led to the deaths of as many as 54,000 Herero out of a population of about 70,000.

The shock of how this could happen or how it could enter my dreams stopped my mind as I had to look further into the issue and discovered the deaths of some 30,000 Herero driven into the Kalahari Desert, to be kept from food and water at gunpoint. How had the world chosen to ignore this

death on a mass scale? Was it just because it was Africa?

I revisited the early life of Namibia. Walvis Bay had been a haven for sea vessels early on because of its natural deep harbor. This bay was rich in plankton and marine life, attracting large numbers of whales, whalers and other fishing vessels. This was a valuable location on the sea route around the Cape of Good Hope.

The advent of the German Empire in colonizing southwestern Africa brought a fraudulent sales agreement with the German merchant Adolf Luderitz and the Namibian Nama Chief Joseph Fredericks. It was officially sanctioned by Germany on April 24, 1884 when Bismarck sent a telegram to German Consul Lippert based in Cape Town, instructing Lippert to inform the Cape government that "Luderitz Land" was now formally under the protection of the German Empire.

The Germans expanded their colony by annexing the "uninhabited regions," or "terra nullius," signing the so-called protection treaties with different Namibian communities in the far interior. Over the six years from 1884 to 1890 the huge area of "Schutzgebiet Deutsch-Sudwestafrika" grew out of the small private enterprise of Luderitz. As of December 30, 1886, the whole of the Namibian Atlantic coast from the Orange River to the Cunene River came under German authority. Confusion over Namibia circled the world, making it invisible in the late 1800s and early 1900s at its most vulnerable encounters with Germany.

## 44. Producer On The Make

Somehow I had to let all this new information sink in. I had never been much interested in such detailed history; however, I felt compelled to learn all I could between phone calls to the Chief and the bothersome dreams that had never let me alone. I needed to get into my own life, or at least another life for a time.

At the end of September, a late night phone call came from Paul Scott, the producer I met in South Africa. He was in Hollywood working on a movie and had a break before the next movie in Seattle, Washington. He asked if he could spend a week or so with me and help with any of my projects. I agreed to the visit, and asked him if he knew how to find me. Instead, he asked if I could meet him at the Reno Airport. We set a date, and I picked him up and brought him to my farm.

Tired from the drive, we pulled into my farm around midnight, nearly hitting a deer crossing the road just a mile from home. Paul was being introduced to remote wildlife right off the bat, much like I had learned about people on bicycles at night in Joburg.

I showed him to his room and introduced him to a woman who had been staying at the farm while I was in Africa. Though she was some fifteen years his senior, they both smoked like chimneys, and would come to spend a lot of time together outside on the porch. Two weeks turned into

17 days; Paul spent a lot of time in deep conversation with this woman. She began to attach herself to him, and because she had a steady supply of cigarettes, he didn't go far from her.

It was the day before he was to go back to Reno. I had not paid much attention to Paul in the past two weeks. Most of what he had to say was embellishment and repeated loudly. One day we were out in my meadow alongside the lake that touches the farm, cleaning the hot spring that had started to flow for the first time after dry season. Out of the blue he asked, "Do you remember that little car I had in South Africa? The one we stood at while I got my notes from the boot? I bought that from a lady you might have met while there. You're a single guy, she's a single gal, and you both like the same things. Maybe I should introduce you two?"

Based on the rest of my time around Paul I should have just blown this off, but something stuck in my head. It was as if I had already heard him bring this up. I asked him, "Why do you think we should meet?"

"You're the same age. You both love the outdoors. Her son is nearly grown. Find out for yourself! I have her email address."

I had noticed that when Paul used my computer to send his emails, he had been including this lady's name. When we got back to the office, I found the address and wrote her a letter, reaching her at her office that night.

Something just clicked. It was incredible. One would think

we had known each other for a lifetime. An attraction and interest in communicating built from that first letter. But, life was still filled with other people and their demands. Paul needed to get to the airport, and now the woman he had been visiting with wanted to go to Reno with him to "see him off" she said.

## 45. Bride And Groom

On October 18th, 2001, Paul, myself and the woman all loaded up in the old Chrysler and headed for Reno. Somewhere out near Pyramid Lake Paul and his new friend started comparing documents and finally announced that they wanted me to take them by a Reno wedding chapel on Virginia Street. With some shock in my voice I agreed and made my way through the downtown area, looking at the gamblers, and looking at my passengers, not seeing much difference between them and the desperate faces on the street.

"Here's your stop. What's the plan?" I asked.

"We want to get married so that Paul can get a green card!" the older woman announced.

"Will you be our witness?" Paul asked. "Best man! How about that!" He put his arm around me again like he had for the picture on location.

What could I say to such an offer? I rolled my eyes and got out and put money in the parking meter. Neither of them

offered to feed the meter as they got out, looking around like they owned downtown, and entered the first wedding chapel, complete with window manikins dressed in cheap suits.

Quickly they found out that they had to go across the street and get a marriage license at the 24-hour courthouse. I followed them in, curious as to what they would have to do, and what they would say. The courthouse was secured by guards and metal detectors and filled with odd couples shuffling toward tellers like a 1950's bank. Standing where I could hear them I watched as their act, well rehearsed, had them making eyes at each other while answering questions about previous marriages and divorces. A complicated explanation flowed out of each of them before the teller stopped them, and showing the simple form and simple answers required. Soon they were done and ready for the chapel once again. This time though they were not first in line, and Paul, looking at his watch and up and down the street said, "Let's try that place," in his most romantic smoky voice.

Entering the next street front vendor, I thought about the Mutie shop in the CBD in Joburg, and wondered if there was any similarity. "Do you want pictures? Do you want champagne?" Paul asked, half hoping she would say no, as he had just purchased a carton of cigarettes with his short supply of borrowed money. Looking at the Polaroid camera on the counter, and the twist top bottles of Champagne behind the glass door of the cooler, she said no, and they moved to the cashier.



"Do you have your wedding license? If not, you must go across the street and get it at the courthouse." The attendant announced in a mechanical singsong voice, with a practiced smile. I followed them across the street where they completed that part of the exercise and returned to the chapel.

I looked out the window and saw the Circus Circus casino, and thought we were certainly at the right place. In no time they were trying to act like honeymooners. Paul was beginning to look at his replica watch; the time until his departure was clicking away. A couple of quick minutes passed and a look of accomplishment passed over his face. The newly married couple, proud of their deed, stepped back on the streets of Reno and announced that they were ready to go to the airport. I could not have written the script that would have described this bizarre day.

"Let's go by the INS first," Paul proclaimed as he entered the car again, the Chrysler sinking to one side under his weight.

"Do either of you know where that is?" I asked.

His new wife produced an address from her bag and handed it to me. Obviously they had worked out details of this event to some extent ahead of time. I hoped they would get a room before the consummation started.

Finding the INS building on the outskirts of town, the two strolled in with papers in hand and expectations abounding. Minutes later they were back in the parking lot, a bit

dismayed, announcing, "We need an appointment! They didn't care that we had just gotten married! Can you believe that?" Paul said in a voice loud enough to be heard by the guard at the front door. "Take me to the Airport Inn!" he said, leaving the title "Driver" out of his request. I guess I had found out how he got around LA without a car.

These two people were focused on each other rather than on me, thus allowing me to return to my own thoughts. Did my own love interest look as bizarre to those watching me? How was I to know I was being true to my own heart? I guess I needed to know what I felt inside.

## **46. Dreaming And Living The Nightmare**

The four-hour return drive from Reno through the night was shared with the new Mrs. Scott. Paul had taken a room at the Airport Inn to rest up before his flight. His new bride chattered almost all the way home, telling me about the grand plans the two of them had made. I tuned her out as soon as we left Reno, and went into my own thoughts filled with the vast information I was finding on the Internet concerning Chief Riruako and the Herero.

This uncomplicated man spoke with such elegance on April 28, 2001, when I told him I had discovered how important he was to his people and their quest for reparation from the German government. His wife, Enishia, had directed my most recent phone call to him through the head office of his political party in Windhoek, and to the Namibian parliamentary office.

My research expanded quickly. The German government had kept remarkably complete records, with pictures and scientific papers tied together with lengthy written explanations. Much of what I saw in those haunting dreams could be found in Namibian history.

Before the turn of the century, the Herero fought a series of heroic wars against the German masters. Hendrik Witbooi, the main Hottentot leader, and Samuel Maharero, the Herero leader, repeatedly defeated or humiliated German forces fighting for their land and traditional life over a three-year period. The Hottentot and Herero signed a peace treaty in November 1892 which ended the Fourth Herero War (1880-1892). The Germans resumed the war, attacking the followers of Witbooi at their camp at Harukranz, killing 78 women and children. German commanders were ordered to annihilate the Witbooi tribe.

On Jan. 12, 1904, the Hereros launched attacks on almost every German farm and village. To overcome this, the Germans replaced their commander with the ruthless Gen. Lothar von Trotha, brought in from northeast Africa.

At the battle of Waterberg the horrors of my dreams were fleshed out in detail as fleeing Maharero gathered a mixed group of some 25,000 men, women and children in a sandy valley with steep bluffs on three sides and the 200-mile waterless Omaheke sandveld desert behind them. Von Trotha forced the people into the desert, where he poisoned the few water wells. His troops locked the Herero in the desert to die by the thousand. Trotha's genocidal tactics used a 150-mile line of German guard posts to keep the

Herero in the desert. Oral histories say men slit the throats of cattle to drink the blood. They suckled the breasts of new mothers. Infants withered and died in days. Some Herero cut open the bellies of the dead to drink the liquid from their stomachs. Men who escaped the desert were lynched. Women and children who survived were chained around their necks and worked to death.

When I contacted the Chief in June of 2001, I found that the Herero People's Reparations Corporation accused Germany and two companies of forming a "brutal alliance" to exterminate over 65 000 Ovaherero between 1904 and 1907. The companies asked the court to dismiss the case, while the German government countered by stating that the US-based lawyers had no jurisdiction to take them to the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

As we pulled into the farm after the drive from Reno, the new Mrs. Scott was asleep and the car was quiet, allowing me the last few moments to finish my thoughts. My connections to the Chief had moved to his family members as I met each of his daughters over the phone, one at a time. The Chief was busy pursuing the next avenue of appeal and, as I would find out later, pursuing the office of President of Namibia. His dreams to end a nightmare nearly one hundred years old had been an international effort and somehow had spilled over into my dreams. Unexpected changes in my life would also cross half a world again the next time I entered my office.

## **47. Reno Tahoe International Airport**

I learned from my experience in South Africa that I was not desperate and lonely, but rather busy and alone. I learned that self worth was owned, not acquired externally. If I wanted a good woman in my life, I had to be strong in my own right, and that had to be recognized by the right person. Maybe Paul had left me with an unexpected future. Time would tell.

Jan Parton responded to my email when she came to her IBM office the next day. Our half-a-day separation in time put her at her desk where she worked as an executive secretary at the same time I came into my office after the long ride home from Reno. We started a casual conversation around my having just left Paul in town. I did not tell her anything about his recent romantic escapades, figuring that was Paul's business. Jan told me that we were the same age. She had a 15-year-old son. She lived in a nice community called Thornhill. I had not been there, so it was unfamiliar to me. She explained that an old AECI dynamite factory had been turned into the gated community of Modderfontein, Lakeside, and Thornhill, the company housing from the 20's and 30's being restored and the complex landscaped around ponds, golf courses and wooded patches. She obviously had a decent life there. Our next month of communication was fun, exciting, and unexpectedly drawing us toward each other.

I was determined to not influence Jan beyond any conclusions she came to herself. We slowly found on our own that we wanted to know more about each other. Jan mailed an exposé in the form of an unconventional

scrapbook of pictures and memorabilia from her life. A sweet flow of African life flowed across pages of water buffalo, Egyptian goose feathers, Jan and her son at Pilgrim's Rest, and a history in pictures of her adventures and friends. I was quite touched. By the end of September we had shared phone calls and discussed events in her daily life and adventures in mine.

Few people in either of our lives knew much about our new friendship. Jan shared her stories with her son; no one on my end of the world was interested in my overseas stories. They simply wanted to show up for dinner parties and go home, acting as if they were friends until I started to talk about myself instead of asking about their lives. By the time Jan started to plan her yearly Christmas vacation with her son and friend, Pam, she was entertaining the idea of spending part of the time in California with me.

Coming to the USA from South Africa was not at all easy, as I had learned from Mickey's trials and errors. Jan, however, flew through the process of hoops and barriers, staying focused and honest and came out at the other end of the maze with a visitor's visa for two years, as well as two round trip tickets for her and her son. No small task, and at a huge expense. A time had been set, and the ball was in my court. We had learned much about each other since October, and the excitement over our meeting made it to the surface, even as we both approached each other as adults with lives half way around the world from each other, and not ready to give those up for any non event. Jan would go to the sunny summertime beaches of East London on the Indian Ocean coast of South Africa for the first half of

her vacation, then come back to Thornhill, change suitcases and head to Reno, Nevada.

Jan purchased a new cell phone with international roaming and we kept in touch as the day of departure arrived. Her son sent SMS' to me and Jan hit an internet bar in East London when Pam and Geoff were on the beach. Jan and Geoff would leave Joburg on the same flight I had taken the night I met the Chief, and arrive in Reno the afternoon of January 1st, 2002. This was to be an auspicious way to start the New Year. Once she was safe on her plane somewhere over the east Atlantic, and really on the way, I loaded into the old Chrysler and headed to Reno. Like so many other trips through the desert, I repeated dry lakes and sand dunes as if it was all still the same drive, each one ending at the Reno Tahoe International Airport.

## **48. Cornucopia**

Self employment can have its advantages as well as its controls over your life. I had been able to take a year away from my maintenance service and build my own cottage in addition to impulsively traveling internationally for over a month. As the boss I was able to take the day off midweek to travel on this Tuesday, January 1, 2002, to Reno Nevada and pick up a lady at the airport on her vacation.

The other side of that coin was that a long time customer of mine waited back in Cedarville with an electrical emergency looming in a rental house, and I would have to divide my time in a fair manner that satisfied everyone's needs. That

didn't have to be worked out right now, though, as I parked the Chrysler near the somewhat empty Reno-Tahoe International Airport entry door. This time my dog Muka had to wait at home so that I could spend the night in Reno with Jan and her son to give them the time out of a vehicle before the four hour drive home.

Reno had been my town since the late 60's when I graduated from the University of Nevada. I knew the streets, the businesses, and over this last year had learned a lot about the airport in particular. I booked lodging for us at Circus Circus, and laughed to myself as I sat at a café near the arrival gate, remembering Paul sinking into the Chrysler after his ill-fated attempt at a green card marriage. I had sat at this same café while waiting for my departure time, nearly a year before when my adventure to South Africa had taken me into an unknown future. I was quite prepared to make sure Jan's coming to America would be everything my trip had not been. I would welcome her with true friendship and hospitality supported by honesty to her and myself.

I pondered what our first meeting would be like, and got up to go to her entry gate, only to see on the announcement screen that her flight was delayed an hour. I knew why, as I ordered another cup of coffee and sat at the café table looking at the stairs she would come down, remembering my own descent at the same time of day last April.

I knew that when you come in to Atlanta from Isle De Sol you have to go through US customs. Mad cow scares around the world cause you to delay through foot cleaning



troughs before making your cumbersome way through customs and onto the airport tramway. The time needed is just enough to miss your flight, and you are put on the next flight to Salt Lake City. I called home to find that Jan had phoned from Atlanta while I was on the road and was waiting for her next flight, just as I thought. Now, she would be in the air over Utah, and an hour from Reno, after an hour and a half of uneventful airport time and shuffle at the Salt Lake City Airport.

I could feel the stress of the 39 hours of airplanes and airports it takes to get from Joburg to Reno and knew that when Jan and Geoff hit the ground they would be like sea-legged sailors trying to walk on solid ground, as they expected it to keep moving. I knew that I wished someone had been in Reno to meet me when I hopped an airport shuttle back to my Chrysler at the motel for my night's wait before going home. I remembered my son coming to the motel to take me to dinner, knowing that I had arrived back in Reno after an African adventure. I knew as Jan's airplane landed in Reno now that this would be different for both of us.

The crowds of weary travelers started down the stairs in front of the café. I moved to the foot of the stairs and watched for two people I would be guiding. First I saw a tall thin red haired young man's head above the crowd, then his mother's face, searching the crowd ahead of her. Our eyes met, and Jan and I started a future that would be filled with companionship and love. All the stress of wondering faded as we met in the crowd at the bottom of the stairs as if we had only been separated, not unknown to each other.

We embraced as I ran my hands over her thin shoulders and freshly cut short silver hair. Nearly my own height, we stood eye to eye studying our sudden recognition of what seemed like a lifelong relationship that was simply back on track. Her son, the man in her life, greeted me, and in his best business manner, looked around for the luggage carousel and went to collect their things.

Hand in hand, as if we had grown up that way, Jan and I followed him quickly, starting our adventure together with sudden enthusiasm masking her unavoidable jet lag. Geoff pulled off luggage that Jan had marked with colored ribbons at my suggestion, to detect them in the crowd. One suitcase, one night case, one more suitcase, and nothing, and nothing, and nothing. One suitcase was missing, Geoff reported. Jan left us for one of the few times she and I would be apart again, headed across the small airport to the Delta Airways counter to get instructions for missing luggage. Geoff and I caught up with her after a short trip to the Chrysler to unload the first group of luggage in time to be provided answers to questions as the attendant assured her that the luggage would meet up with her by evening at Circus Circus. We were given a paper and told to leave it with the front desk and they would take it from there. Now Jan would get the shock of the classic car that would take her to her new home.

Jan had told me about her visits to the "Piston Club" car club at Thornhill, so I knew she would enjoy this mode of transportation. It was not the Mercedes she left in South Africa, but it was a most unique ride. I had a tape player strapped to the dashboard with a bungee cord, and an well-

used car blanket protecting the seat. Geoff made a nest from the coats in the back seat, and Jan pulled in close to me as we started out across Reno to our room before dark. She had left long days, warm sunny summer beaches just a week before and now watched snow flakes melt on the warm windshield as the last sunrays of the short winters' day lit our way into the parking structure at Circus Circus in downtown Reno. I could see the place that the Scotts had tied the knot the previous October, and wondered if Paul ever told her. We found our room and I offered that maybe a dinner would be in order, thinking her teenage son might have a hollow leg. Agreeing that a sit at a restaurant would be nice, we made our way through the crowds to the buffet.

Jan and Geoff were both a contrast in the buffet as their thin, fit forms made their way through the hefty crowd of overfed Americans filling plates with masses of food. Geoff and Jan both looked at each other as they picked through the long rows of plenty, trying to get a dinner that looked like something from home. At the table we all looked around at the results of too much abundance sitting at the tables around us. Having been to South Africa, I understood the strangeness they must have felt as they picked through the cornucopia of food to find their satisfaction well before those around them were finished. Jan and I were filled with another abundance, though, as we were paged to get her luggage on the way back to our room where we would spend our first of many nights ahead in each other's arms.

## **49. Cultural? Shock**

Snow fell in the night and covered the rooftops we could see from our 12th floor window. A repeat of the buffet with the early morning crowd brought us to the Chrysler right after the working traffic settled down. Because Jan and Geoff were going to need farm attire to enjoy their stay at my home, I had lined up some places to shop before we left for the farm. Early morning midweek Reno malls were quiet and easy to navigate. Hand in hand, Jan and I explored shops looking for western wear appropriate for walking through the meadows to the hot springs, or up the Warner Mountains to snowy ridges. Geoff marveled at the small town Reno was, compared to Johannesburg. One shop down, and a couple of road supplies behind us, we left Reno through the Sierra Nevada valleys leading north to Susanville.

Into the short two-week stay Jan had set aside for her and Geoff, I wanted to pack as much of this part of the world as I could. The road I chose took us up Long Valley Creek in the valley made by the Diamond and Petersons ranges of the most eastern side of the northern extent of the Sierra Nevada mountains. We passed a little town where I had once owned a 1900's grocery store and hotel near the Fort Sage Mountains at the edge of Honey Lake, then on to the pioneer town of Susanville in the most southern end of the Cascade Mountains.

Our road narrowed as we climbed the steep, twisty road through mountains past Eagle Lake and on to the edge of Modoc County at Adin in Big Valley, where we got our first glimpse of Mount Shasta poking some 13,000 feet up

through the broken clouds. Antelope ran through the open plains as we crossed Adin summit and dropped into the Pit River Valley just before Alturas, with Cedar Pass in the Warner Mountains ahead. It was late afternoon, we had made good time as the warm couch the Chrysler made purred through the mountain roads, melting light snow flakes on the windshield.

The main street of Alturas offered a handful of restaurants for travelers coming out of the Pacific Northwest, and we picked one at our end of town to settle in for a rest from the road, parking with license plates from Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, Idaho and Montana, as Geoff read off the names. It was not the Reno Circus Circus crowd at our little Vietnamese restaurant. Neighbors at our table included an aquarium of tropical fish. Geoff quickly found out that the cactus in the window next to us was in fact real, pulling his hand back in sudden discovery, as the waitress placed his plate in front of him.

Jan and I marveled at how comfortable we were in each other's company even with the stress of jet lag still in control. Trying to put some sense into her disorientation, I pointed out which way Reno was, where north was, the ocean, the deserts. A woman in the booth next to us added some help, hearing our discussion, and told Jan that she lived in Redding, CA, pointing back down the road we had come in on. With some clarity from the rest and dinner, we again took to the road with the last couple hours of sunlight lighting up the Warner Mountains and Cedar Pass ahead of us.

The abrupt climb from the Pit River Plateau to the 6,500 foot pass put us in view of the Hays Range of Nevada, with mountains some 100 miles distant poking up with their tops slightly lit to the east and south. Not until we had wound our way four miles down Cedar Pass could Surprise Valley be seen, Cedarville only slightly visible on the valley floor through the last mouth of the canyon. The small town closes early on a mid week winter's day, and a quick cruise through town was all it would take to put us on the last leg of our journey toward snow covered Mount Bidwell, some 24 miles up the valley. Abundant deer herds crowded the fields and frequently pushed across the road in front of us all the way to our home at the middle of Upper Lake. The shadows cast by the Warner Mountains passed over our Miller Creek as the 1870's farmstead came into view. It was the first view of Jan's home for the next half a month.

Muka greeted us at the gate, checking out this woman and her son, then looking at me to ask in her own way if they were staying. The house was fuller than I expected. The new Mrs. Scott had cooked a dinner of spaghetti for us as a homecoming, while a middle aged hippy from Hollywood slept in a pile of his laundry on a spare bed off the living room, his old dog glaring out the door at the new arrivals. Having just eaten, we thanked her for her efforts, and I guided Jan and Geoff around their January home before Geoff disappeared out the back door and headed to the barn to play in the snow bank made by the avalanche on the north side of the 40-foot tall structure.

Jan and I loaded her things into my upstairs room. She asked me who the house guests were, and I told her that

one was Paul's wife. The shock and humor made her laugh out loud. Geoff, exhausted from trying to smash all the snow he could find, came back in wet and tired, and retreated to his own bedroom, prepared by his mom in his absence. Soon, Jan and I were also asleep and the house seemed to go quiet, though not empty, behind us.

There was no way out of my work the next day. Jan and Geoff and I loaded into the service truck and headed off to check some electrical problems at the rental in Cedarville. A Mexican family lived there in chaos, trying to work around one short after another as a cascade of problems nearly took their house out, the smell of dirty laundry mixed with the ozone of burning electrical connections. Though the wife was a cleaning woman at the local motel, her teenage sons overwhelmed her ability to keep up a home as the whole family tried to occupy one room after another, following the fading power supply.

Jan stood right next to me as we graciously looked past the mess while the woman of the house took us room to room, pushing boys' messes away to expose the inner workings of her electrical life. Geoff disappeared back up the canyon we had driven in on the day before, exploring caves he had seen along the creek. By lunchtime, he rejoined us, and I took them for their first introduction to the valley people.

All eyes seemed to be on us in the restaurant as I introduced Jan and Geoff to people who had known me for fifteen years. The owner greeted us and asked if Jan knew Paul, as he had sat in her establishment often in his 18-day stay while I worked in town. The size of farmer plates of

food even overwhelmed Geoff in spite of his hunger after an adventurous climb through caves and snake dens.

Ranchers warming up around the wood stove sipped the last of their coffee, listening to the sounds of the South African voices and watched me with questions on their faces. I didn't leave anyone out of the introductions, and the hardened faces of the overworked men and women softened as they each reached out to greet the newcomers with a handshake.

The next days were much the same as one rancher after another met us during the work schedule laid out ahead of me in my normal life. Even a walk in our remote meadow brought an introduction to our neighbor working the creek irrigation on the fields he leased from me. He spoke with muttered speech that confused Jan. As he walked away along the edge of the meadow with his rubber boots sloshing in the ankle deep flood waters, Jan asked what he had just said, and was that an accent, or what? I looked up at him and saw him spit before bending to push his shovel in the muddy ditch to reroute the water. "No, his mouth is full of chew," I explained. And she laughed as she suddenly realized that was also why the woman at the restaurant had slurred speech the day before.

Though the ranchers and Mexican working families were new to her, they were still the same as Jan had known in South Africa. They were all hard working, honest people with families and goals. She could see that there was no way to say no to their needs while she and I mixed our own time together with my maintenance service they had come to depend on.



The next week came to a close with more introductions and more struggling to solve problems for customers. My house cleared out of some guests, but filled with others, somewhat out of my control from my years as a bachelor and the expectations of others to use my home as a stopover for themselves. Jan and my most private moments came to be the time in the 40 mile drives between ranches on work days. It was apparent that she and I did not want to be apart, so one day, outside the community of Eagleville, I popped the question, and asked Jan to marry me. With only a moment's hesitation, to stretch the moment in a humorous manner, she adamantly said yes!

Then it was true. We did find each other from halfway around the world, having nearly met from the circle of mutual acquaintances in Joburg back in the spring of 2001. Our day off was the next day, and we agreed to secure a marriage license at the county seat in Alturas, and set a date for the weekend ahead.

## **50. Cathedral Ceilings**

About a year earlier, I had been in the county offices to get my passport in a hurried preparation for leaving for South Africa. The same ladies now helped us walk through the process of a marriage license, explaining that we could either take care of business right there, or have a licensed person conduct a ceremony of our choice.

Somehow I expected that the people I knew here would enjoy the fact that Jan and I would marry, judging from the enthusiasm generated by the women at the county office. The week before, I had invited members of our community to come to a potluck dinner and dance in the cottage to introduce them to Jan and Geoff, with what seemed like a welcoming at the time. A mix of customers, neighbors and friends from back in the 70's joined in by greeting the South Africans. Some had met Paul, and came out of curiosity, though none were told that the new Mrs. Scott was in the group. When it came to the Saturday we had chosen for the wedding, not as many were available. Caught up in our own moment, I was unaware of the undertow of tension building because of our decision to marry.

The cottage served well for the dance, and then was such a wonderful place to marry. The long hours of work had built toward a future that was now opening in front of us. As two adults in their fifties, both Jan and I had many lessons behind us, and a willingness to use those experiences to enhance our time together. The handful of people who witnessed our union celebrated our event with us, then left us to announce the news to our family and friends in our own way. Jan and I moved into the cottage as our

honeymoon getaway for a short three days before the next round of trouble came at us unexpectedly.

My first clue that trouble was in the air came as I contacted my mother and father to share our joy. Mother listened, then turned the phone to Dad who only said, "How Could YOU!" and hung up. Then the new Mrs. Scott insisted the cottage was hers and proceeded to move in, and asked Jan when she was leaving. Stunned, I contacted a lawyer for advice, only to find that an artist friend of Mrs. Scott's had already hired the lawyer and was also asking when Jan was leaving. The parade of friends from my past turned their backs on us and started an ugly battle in attempts to drive Jan away. Threats of turning us in to the INS came from one old hippie, then another "deeply spiritual" individual, and then another because they figured, in an uninformed manner, that Jan was an illegal alien.

We moved back into the main house in an attempt to allow the aging Mrs. Scott to clear her head, only to be attacked daily by "old friends" who now attached themselves to her, and started to sneak through our house and outbuildings, taking anything that they thought must be owed them from years of my having shared my life with them. After breaking and entering into our locked home on multiple opportunities while Jan and I were at work, we finally had to visit the sheriff and start the long process of unplugging these people from the little cathedral ceiling building that I alone had created, ironically, to get these people out of my life.

One of the few people to actually see the blessing in this union was the Chief. I had contacted him shortly after Jan

and I married to tell him that my adventures in South Africa had come around to introducing me to an Afrikaans woman who was now my wife. I put Jan on the phone with him to hopefully start a line of communication that would help me past some of the difficulty I had with phone conversations complicated by my lack of exposure to the Herero language. A gracious man, the Chief congratulated us, then told me that he would like to have me come to Namibia to see a mass grave recently discovered on what had been a prison island. I recalled the dream I had before leaving Johannesburg, the day I met the Chief, and knew the two were connected. But the battle Jan and I were thrown into would drain our ability to fund a trip to South Africa, and effectively cut us off from her family and friends. Even her son would choose to leave for his father's home in South Africa by Spring, wanting his teenage life in the city back.

It took over a year to clear the debris of unwanted old friends away, at great personal expense. In between, we hit each INS meeting and requirement right on time with success, staying focused on our love for each other, turning each dutiful trip out to San Francisco and Northern California into a mini vacation and extended honeymoon. Finally success came one day as we arrived home to find the aging hippy moving Mrs. Scott in the back of his broken down pickup. Her tracks were still warm in the driveway as Jan and I started swabbing the accumulation of cigarette smoke out of the cottage, and repainting the walls and ceilings. A week of smudging for a spiritual clean up, and gallons of paint later, we opened that cottage to new life as a Bed and Breakfast, and immediately attracted guests from around the world who enhanced our life on the

farm.

Paul knew nothing about what had happened, having given up on his green card efforts long before. Jan contacted him at one time to see if he would volunteer any information, only to find that he had not heard from his bride since he left. It was only after Jan and our life got back on track that I was able to return to my involvement with the movie I started in 1998, and to my interest in the Herero story pushing at my door.

## **51. Dogs And Pickup Trucks Or A White African American**

I learned much from Jan about a part of Africa that you only know from living there. In return Jan learned about California and farm life from me. Right off the bat Jan sold her Mercedes when our service truck was stolen by my erstwhile friends, and used the money to buy a pickup truck. In return I learned more about the source of respect between many South Africans of any race and color.

Jan grew up in the early days of apartheid. Her family of Afrikaners lived in Johannesburg and its Western suburbs. Her grandparents lived at Hartebeestpoort and she had gathered her family's mail at the post office in the building where Mickey and I looked at a restaurant and Afrikaans museum. She had climbed the rocky slopes of the mountains around the face of the dam that I looked at and played in the tunnel I traveled through. Like many young South African children she was lovingly cared for as a child

by a black women who loved her, and whom she loved in return.

Through the homes of several stepparents from her parents' different marriages, as well as the home of her grandparents, then into Capricorn High School in Pietersburg, by her own choice Jan traveled much of South Africa. After her matriculation from Capricorn, she moved to Durban, then Cape Town, a young unmarried mother-to-be, taking a job in a hotel much like many of such hotels she had lived in with her mother while a traveling family of a man who blasted ports for ocean going vessels, or tunnels for trains. Giving her daughter up to adoption, Jan moved to Johannesburg, where she would not meet her daughter again for nearly 30 years. A hard working, self reliant woman, Jan worked in the advertising industry, the film industry, and after a failed marriage, the adoption of Geoffrey and a foray into the startup IT industry as a single parent, she was with IBM when we met.

These travels and experiences took her as a young adult on her own through most corners of South Africa, Botswana, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and Namibia. She crossed the Makgadi Makgadi saltpan, canoed on the Okavango Swamp, and crossed the Drakensberg Mountains. She understood much of the official thirteen languages of South Africa and knew and loved the diverse peoples of her country with equal passion. She danced to the music at Hugh Masekela's J & B Junction as one of the few white faces, knew political leader Wally Serote, played football with the young men at the filling station near her home. She was working on the 44th floor of the Carlton

Center as masses of black people came from the townships protesting and toi toi dancing down Commissioner street in the mid 1970s. She listened to blues music with black colleagues in her home while BOSS kept watch in the street below, and crouched quietly under 3rd bridge in Moremi Game Reserve where she bathed in the river while a pride of lions padded across the bridge overhead.

As her husband and guide in California, I took Jan to many of the places I had traveled to as a child. Transferring Jan's timeshare here from Jeffreys Bay, we spent a week with my father in Yosemite, visited my daughter at San Luis Bay, spent a week in San Francisco, walked in the snow at the Grand Tetons, hiked the Pacific Coast Trails along the Oregon coast and climbed Bachelor Mountain in Central Oregon, traveling in our 1961 Ford Ranchero. We saw the desert spring flowers in the canyons of the Hays Mountains, drove over snowy Fandango Pass in the Warner Mountains, went through blinding sand storms at Pyramid Lake, stayed at a sleazy hotel in Lake Tahoe and had a wonderful time dancing to an even sleazier blues band; we ate pancakes with loggers at the Whistle Stop Café at the base of Mount Shasta.

We drove up the scenic California coastal Highway 1 from Los Osos to Brookings, Oregon and crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains at 8,050-foot Pacific Grade Summit on Highway 4 from Markleeville to the Calaveras Sequoia Big trees, where my mother was raised. Through 8,573-foot Carson Pass along the Kit Carson Trail we explored, and down Iron Mountain road to my family's pioneer home in

Coloma, CA. We traveled over Echo Summit into Tahoe Valley, over historic Donner summit into Truckee, CA, and over Yuba pass to the north end of the California gold country at Downeyville. We climbed Mt. Lassen, circled Lake Almanor and Lake Shasta, crossed the three forks of the American River, as well as the Yuba, the Feather, Stanislaus, Carson and Sacramento Rivers, all flowing into San Francisco bay. Standing at the base of a giant Redwood along the Eel River, we heard Redwoods sing, and also along the Smith River in Jedediah Smith State Park. Up and down the Cascade Mountains we cruised, and into their belly through volcanic lava tubes. Oregon was crisscrossed through the Willamette Valley, and up the coast to the four-mile-wide Columbia River at Astoria, then back to the home of friends at Looking Glass along the Umpqua River.

Jan taught me what she had learned about business in the movie industry, and how the black people now move through all aspects of their shared South African world. I taught her about living from our garden and the ways of the high altitude wilderness. I learned how to keep my mouth shut when making a deal, and she learned how to grow tomatoes in the snow. Between the two of us we learned how to focus on our love for each other while solving issues flung at us by the odd behaviors of jealous individuals on both sides of the world.

## **52. A Life Of Their Own**



It takes years to go through the process of moving one's life from one country to another, no matter how much you apply yourself to the process. Through the first year Jan and I were together we moved her house full of furniture with various degrees of frustrations, successes and loss from Johannesburg through the hoops of the new homeland security regulations in and out of ports of entry until a partial collection of her life arrived at our door. The process for a permanent residency is complicated enough to justify legal counsel, further rearranged by restructuring of the INS after 9-11.

Between letters to many of my government agencies and public servants, while paying at each door we entered, one hurdle after another was waded through at as many as four different locations, hundreds of miles apart. We had no idea how families on a more limited income can cope, or how the Scott couple thought they had done it all with a Reno wedding. During that time I kept after my first movie, now guided by Jan, and stayed in contact with the Chief either directly or through one of his daughters, eventually speaking with each of them by phone. The Chief and I drew apart, though the Chief remained consistent in his willingness to work with me right through mid year 2003.

May 19, 2003, I reached his daughter Oshie at their home. The Chief was at his parliamentary office and had left a message for me, asking that I be introduced to a man named Duncan, who would take my calls for now. Duncan, a friend of the family, was there when I called, and I met him over the phone. His manner was businesslike and

somewhat detached. He directed me to be in contact with an agent in Hollywood who would now handle any movie about the Chief and his efforts with the international court. To be respectful of the Chief's request, I took the contact information for this new Hollywood connection and placed a call, only to find that no one knew about me, or about my communications with the Chief, and had no interest in finding out. After more than a year I had hit a brick wall.

With a full plate of my own, and not knowing why the Chief had set up this dead end road, I had to pursue the things I could handle myself.

I stayed in contact with those I met in South Africa, and moved back into a pushy attitude toward my first movie project. I set up a new website dedicated to a pitch with pictures and details. I found out Marilyn Partridge had passed away. Lou and Jeremy went their separate ways after "Mr. Bones" was completed. It became increasingly difficult to stay in touch with Lou as he was now traveling internationally to places like Dubai. Jeremy was all over South Africa, but I was able to reach him from time to time. I had asked Jeremy to put me in touch with the woman I had seen on location but was not introduced to, and when he was unable to by July of 2003, I went on line, researched, and found her myself.

Because of my new exposure on the internet, and more direct efforts to be in touch with producers and production companies, my client and I moved from an honored handshake agreement to a formal option agreement where I had

the film rights in order to safely walk through doors. Eventually, by the end of September and the beginning of October, I had reached two production companies and was attempting to share my presentation. One company accepted my information, looked it over, and politely came back to me saying that though the material was interesting, it was not a project they wanted at this time. With one turndown under my belt I steamed and stewed for an hour and went back to my notes.

By mid morning I had pushed ahead with my contact information for the next production company and was on the phone with the production assistant, asking for her boss. Thinking that I was part of the production team for the movie they had just finished that day, she put me through to her boss on his cell phone as he left the building. The head of the production company was gracious and busy. With a quick listen he agreed to accept my information, and asked me to contact him by email, as he was on his way for a much-needed vacation in a remote location and would look at my information when he returned in a month. I contacted my client with the possible good news, and set out again to focus on my other project, letting Jan's explanation of Africa affect my researching of history.

The Herero war against the Germans was futile in spite of being heroic, as they disappeared from the world and history almost completely. Europe heard about the atrocities after nearly a six-month delay due to the slow methods of communication, causing the lack of a timely reaction to be viewed as some type of acceptance by the Germans on the ground in Namibia, while the Herero went through the most

horrific event in their cultural life.

Still haunted by my dream memory of an African coastal island, I was shattered to read about Namibian concentration camps. Names of places in operation between 1905 and 1907, like Shark Island in Luderitz and Swakopmund concentration camp, came up in my research.

A new problem for the growing European population arose after the effects of killing so many of the natives. Newly confiscated lands could not be properly operated without an inexpensive labor force. The Herero in exile or still hiding had to be lured back into German territory and forced to labor.

Herero were promised they had nothing to fear on their return to the area. German officer Von Estorff explained, "I do not lie, I will issue letters to you so that nothing will happen to you." Believing this, many Herero returned from hiding in the outlying areas and were directed toward "peaceful" collection points being run by missionaries at Otjihanena and Omburo. One Herero elder was supposedly quoted by a missionary of Omaruru as having said, "We know our Omuhonge, they will not try to trick us." Instead, the collected starved and demoralized natives were put under military escort and taken to thorn-bushes or barbed wire fenced concentration camps in Swakopmund, Karibib, Windhoek, Okahandja, and Luderitz where thousands of people were compressed into small areas.

Uncontrolled disease swept unhygienic camps where minimal rations were uncooked rice, salt and water. A hell

of beatings and maltreatment followed as prisoners were forced to work. Looking like a vision of the World War II Holocaust to come, mortality figures soared to over 45% as statistics collected by German High Command in 1907 showed that, of some 17,000 prisoners-of-war, 7,682, died. These camps continued for another two and three years as morbid official figures went even higher.

Jan pointed out to me that between 1904 and 1908 during the Boer War, her grandmother lost children in British-introduced concentration camps where Afrikaner women and children were rounded up and kept captive in order to demoralize the Boer guerrilla fighters in the veldt who gave their lives in battle against the oppressing British soldiers as the Boers (farmers) gave the British a bloody nose. During that same time, on February 16, 1907, Namibian guerilla leader Cornelius Fredericks died in such a camp at windswept "Haifisch" (Shark) Island off the coast of Luderitz .

Captured survivors of Herero guerrilla fighters being kept at the horrific Shark Island were forced to construct railways. Death pervaded these camps of thousands of people, which by 1906 held guerrilla leaders Cornelius Fredericks and Hendrik Witbooi. Suffering from malnutrition, and crowded into tents on the cold and barren inhospitable Shark Island, the prisoners died like flies, taking a toll of as many as 80% of the incarcerated population.

Son of Joseph Fredericks, Edward Fredericks stated in 1917: "In 1906 the Germans took me a prisoner after we had made peace, and sent me with about a thousand other

Hottentots to Aus, thence to Luderitzbucht, and finally to Shark Island. We were placed on the island, men, women, and children. We were beaten daily by the Germans, who used sjamboks. They were most cruel to us. We lived in tents on the island; food, blankets, and lashes were given to us in plenty, and the young girls were violated at night by the guards. Six months later we went by boat to Swakopmund, and thence by train to Karibib. Lots of my people died on Shark Island. I put in a list of those who died, (Note. This list comprises 168 males, including the chief, Cornelius Fredericks, 97 females, 66 children, and also 18 Bushman women and children) but it is not complete. I gave up compiling it, as I was afraid we were all going to die. We remained at Karibib for six months, and were returned to Shark Island for a further six months, when we were again removed by sea to Karibib and thence to Okawayo, where we remained till 1915, when the British sent us back by train to Bethany."

Soon after the closure of the Shark Island concentration camp, British diamond prospector Fred Cornell wrote while visiting Luderiz: "Cold - for the nights are often bitterly cold there - hunger, thirst, exposure, disease, and madness claimed scores of victims every day, and cart loads of their bodies were every day carted over to the back beach, buried in a few inches of sand at low tide, and as the tide came in the bodies went out, food for the sharks."

Heads and other body parts of victims of Shark Island were taken to Europe where they were in demand to prove the racial "sciences" of Eurocentric theories. In 1912 the racial anatomy study of 17 decapitated Hottentot skulls from

Shark Island prisoners, from two-year-old children to a forty-five-year-old woman, were studied and discussed in morbid German morphological and anthropological journals, comparing the skulls to those of apes.

Speculation abounds as to whether any graves from Shark Island camp still exist in or around Luderitz. By now I was sure that the dream I had come to dread at night was about Shark Island. I wondered if this was the place the Chief had wanted to show me. Would I ever go there with him? Could I stand it if I did?

### **53. Details But No Dignity**

It is April 21, 2007, and I have just finished reading the last entry of my account to Jan while fighting back tears of pain and rage. When I last spoke to the Chief on April 4, 2007, I found out about his run for president of Namibia, perhaps starting when I had been asked to deal with Duncan. My own drama from my adventures in South Africa, and the fight Jan and I endured when we first got married, didn't carry as much weight now in light of the pain and suffering so many have encountered at the hands of other humans. The Chief's attempts at reparations are ongoing, with more meetings planned in Europe as we spoke. Somehow the day will come when he and I meet, as remote as that seems from the comfort of my farm in northern California. I can only hope that the world will offer the burial with dignity that the man in my dreams has requested.

I may only bring personal closure to this, and perhaps end

my haunted dreams, when I meet this Chief on his home ground.

© 2000 by Russell Winje --- Last updated on **August 24, 2007**.