





**THE  
INCREDIBLE  
JOURNEY**

**KUNDAI  
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## **THE INCREDIBLE-STORY SYNOPOSIS**

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**The story is about this guy called Tinashe who is the main protagonist who embarks on a journey in pursuit of happiness. Along his quest in search of happiness he finds the answer to two questions which are also the backdrop of the storyline which have always been lingering in his mind which are. Number 1 - What is happiness and Number 2 How to achieve happiness. In Tinashe's pursuit of happiness he faces several ups and downs. The greater part of the storyline of the book is set in South Africa. The book is written in first person narrative, Tinashe taking the role of the narrator. The story tries to show the adversities faced by a person in a foreign land. From losing loved ones, working without remuneration in return, fighting for life in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, fighting an alcohol problem and getting involved in illicit drugs. Tinashe traverses through the curve balls thrown at him with the help of his best friend Bongani.**

**A SPECIAL DEDICATION GOES TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE. MY UNCLE J. PFUMA WITHOUT HIS HELP I WOULD NOT HAVE FINISHED THIS NOVEL, HE GAVE ME THE LAPTOP I MANAGED TO TELL MY STORY. MY ELDER SISTER SHAMI AND ELDER BROTHER TAWANDA FOR CHIPPING IN WITH THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES I NEEDED TO FINISH MY NOVEL. MY ELDER BROTHER CUTHAZ WHO PROVIDED ME WITH THE USE OF HIS LAPTOP WHERE I WROTE THE FIRST HALF OF THE DRAFT OF THE NOVEL. AND NOT FORGETTING NAMATAI, THE PERSON WHO FIRST READ MY MANUSCRIPT**

**AND MOTIVATED ME TO FINISH IT. I WILL FOREVER BE INDEBTED TO  
THESE PEOPLE**

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**LOVE YOU MUM AND DAD**

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**THIS BOOK IS A WORK OF FICTION. NAMES, CHARACTERS AND INCIDENTS ARE EITHER THE PRODUCT OF THE AUTHOR'S IMAGINATION OR ARE USED FICTITIOUSLY, AND ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ACTUAL PERSONS, LIVING OR DEAD, EVENTS, OR LOCALES IS ENTIRELY COINCIDENTAL.**

**THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY**

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## CHAPTER 1-THE CONCRETE STUB

A half-clad middle aged guy rushes out of a modest looking four roomed house he chases after his wife who is dressed in a faded jean skirt. The lady enters the house which is opposite to the four roomed house, the middle aged man stops pursuing her and rants out “I will deal with you when you come back home.” At the other end of the road “Mutsvairo, Mutsvairo.” rants a man holding sweeping materials made from dry grass, clad in a blue trousers which is torn off on both knees, a creased greyish checked shirt which was once white in its heydays and some black sandals with soles made from worn out car tires. His outlook coupled up with his messy uncombed kinky brownish hair, suggests an unwavering apathy to water. He is doing his daily door to door sales of sweeping materials. Whilst at the other end of the road young boys who seem as if they are in unison with the ground are rushing up and down the road. The boy’s bodies are tainted by dust all over them, as they indulge in the good old game of street football. A game that I had enjoyed growing up. At that moment the game of street football is prematurely halted as the young boys hurriedly scramble out of the way to the side of the road as a rundown Honda car which has gone past its use by date rushes through the road leaving a trail of dust. The car produces grating sounds as it negotiates the uneven surface. The driver who is adorning dark shades is hooting as if he is a maniac. He has no regard for human life as he speeds along in a street filled with people, a greater proportion of that young children. The general view of the hugely worn-out car looks as if the bonnet may just plummet off the car or the driver’s door might just fly off. The paint work on the car is a distant reminder that the car once had a blue shade on it during its heydays. A model esque young lady smartly dressed in a blue skinny jean, matching blouses and white pumps who seems a bit oblivious to her surroundings, saunters along the edges of the road at a leisurely pace. She walks as if she is performing a catwalk on a runway at some fancy fashion show in Milan or Paris. Her eyes are firmly stuck on her mobile phone. She is given a rude awakening when the speeding ram shackled Honda car hits a pothole which is simmering with water. The young lady is left resembling a mud house. Muddy water is strewn all over her from head to toe. Screaming on top of her voice the young lady who is now seconds from

boiling point. "Hey wait, look what you have done to me. Idiot. You will pay for this." A group of young men walking in the opposite direction of the young lady fall into raptures of laughter. The rundown Honda car continues on with its trail of mayhem. One of the laughing young men with a black cap with the front to the back, points at the young lady after which he says, "You deserve what you got. Next time eyes on the road, it's not your father's road." The young lady turns her back and walks away, without saying anything. She is unquestionably heading back home. Judging by the way she is dressed she was meeting up with her boyfriend. Unfortunately that date has to be postponed, there was no way she was meeting up with him in such a state. A thick cloud of exhaust fumes cloud the entire space and for some time visibility in the direction in which the car is heading towards is partially reduced. On the other end of the road 3 women, sporting sarongs popularly known as *Zambias* in the local lingo, are standing on the edges of the hugely depleted pot hole riddled road under the cooling shade of a huge musasa tree. By the looks of things it appears like they are caught up in a heated bout of gossiping. They clap their hands these gestures are indicative that they are enjoying every bit of gossip they are sharing. There is no need to guess or be a prophet to decipher what they are prattling about. I am willing to bet my last penny that they are discussing about the married woman who lives in our road who was caught pants down with a married man at the man's matrimonial home. As the women continue on with their gossiping, a group of 7 school students emerge from the house which is adjacent to where the women are standing. One of the women's, husband is an A-Level Mathematics teacher. The students had come for some private tutoring. A group of about five young men are sitting underneath a makeshift tuck-shop, with four wooden poles supporting a corrugated iron sheet. At the rear end of the tuck-shop there is a black plastic paper sheet acting as a wall. The owner of the tuck-shop is a man named Jerry commonly known in the streets as *paindi*, a bit of a distortion from *pint* because of his physical stature. His tuck-shop has some tomatoes, onions and some food stuffs which are lined up on a wooden board which is duly suspended in air as it buttressed by four stones placed on either corner of the wooden table. The five young men pin their ears attentively to the chanting of a young man. The chanting dreadlocked young man is a wannabe dancehall artist. He is just one of tens of thousands of Zimbabwean youths who are trying to make it onto the scene of the rapidly increasing and popular genre of *Zim Dancehall* a sub-genre of *Jamaican Dancehall*. Most youths in low density areas who can neither further their studies because of financial constraints nor can find work



have resorted to doing music as a way to economically emancipate themselves. The downside of things is that a greater proportion of those who make it onto the national Zim dancehall scene don't enjoy the fruits of their efforts mostly due to piracy. I constantly question myself the rationale of buying an original copy when I can get the same copy for a fraction, by simply buying a pirated one. But in the end I am nailing a coffin to an individual's musical career. Then there is the select few who make it in spite of the piracy and then just blow it away. Take for instance that lanky bold haired, dark toned guy, with a lion tattoo on his left arm, who is standing with the five guys I have mentioned earlier. His left hand is holding a see through water bottle. Taking a quick glimpse a person will be hoodwinked to believe that the bottle contains mineral water. But a closer inspection will reveal that it's in fact an alcoholic drink. This specific alcoholic drink, is Zed. Zed has a high alcoholic content. It's popular mostly because it's cheap and the other reason is that it quickly gets one drunk. This tall and thin guy goes by the stage name of Darky S, the S, standing for Stuart and darky is derived from his skin tone. A few years back Darky S had a huge breakthrough when his debut album was released, commuter omnibuses, radio stations had his songs playing all day long. He was signing endorsement deal after endorsement deal during this golden period. Darky S was literally rolling in cash. He had copious cars and women were queuing up for his attention. When I say women I don't mean thirty something ladies with children, but beautiful young singles. At his peak he was renting a full house in Highlands one of Harare's well-to-do suburbs. But all of that fell through when Darky S indulged in one too many drugs. He fell of the pedestal in a dramatic fashion. He didn't show up for gigs, show promoters had to drag him to court. He was left penniless and now it seems his better days are past him. All the songs he is currently churning out are an ear sore. I once tried flexing my vocal chords. It was disastrous. I realised that I lacked the musical aptitude. At a particular point after graduating from university I even tried to start a music production studio in my room but my mother didn't entertain the idea. Coming from a rather conservative family my parents harbour a pre conceived mentality that people who do music in specific Zim dancehall are misfits. But who can blame their notion of thought with the likes of Darky S who go the extra mile to smear Zim dancehall artist's image. By the way that middle aged guy who was chasing after his wife is Tony, he usually beats up his wife. Most of the time he is drunk, he constantly accuses her of sleeping with other men and uses this as an excuse to bash her up. Contrary he is the one who is the serial cheater. Tony is well known in the hood for

chasing after ladies of the night. He beats up his wife almost on a daily basis and residents of my neighbourhood have got used to the scene. This is just a part of the on goings in the street that I live in one of Harare's most famous residential areas of Highfield or simply Fio to the younger generation like me who prefer to be called ghetto-youths. Highfield holds a special place in the history of pre independence Zimbabwe, it was the soul of the nationalist movement which led to Zimbabwe's independence. I was born and bred in Highfield. The house I stay in was my paternal grandparents' house that my father had inherited after the death of my grandfather in 1985. After the death of my paternal grandfather, my paternal grandmother decided to return to our ancestral home in Chivi, she later died in 2007. I never knew my maternal grandparents, both of them died when my mother was still young. Where are my manners I have been blathering all this time without any formal introduction, I am Tinashe Mushayabasa. I am sitting on a concrete stub with my best friend and partner in crime Bongani Nkosi who also resides in Mukute Street. Since the day Bongani hit me on the head with a ball when we were 4 years old we became inseparable and a budding bromance blossomed. We went to the same pre-school, same primary school in the same class, same high school and same class and at the same university but we did different degrees he did an accounting one I did an economics one. Bongani has a light skin tone and is a tall a guy and he always maintains a well shaven beard. Relative to him I stand at 1,75m and I am dark in complexion and he is 1,91m in height. Their house is 4 houses from where I live. Bongani's father is Ndebele and his mother a Sotho from South Africa. The Nkosi family, were originally from Plumtree in the southern region of Zimbabwe. Bongani once told me of how his father, meet up with his mother. So here goes the love story. His father was a student at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg studying for a bachelors' degree in History and Anthropological studies. He was awestruck by a girl who worked in a Spaza. It was located in the high density suburb of Alexander. Bongani's father sometimes accompanied a fellow student at Wits who had become a great friend of his to Alex a shortened form of Alexander to visit his parents. The Spaza was located next to the house of Bongani's father friend's family home. So his friend ended up setting him up with the Spaza girl with whom he later married and is Bongani mother. I wish I could get just get hitched up in some foreign land and come back home with my own imported wife just like what Bongani's father did, because honestly speaking Zimbabwean girls are just hard to please. They ask for cigarettes and you oblige and give them cigarettes,

after that they ask you to hand them over a lighter, and don't think the requests will end there, they will ask you to light them the cigarette. Zimbabwean girls are naggy, not only do they want your attention they want your money. They are avaricious. Mr Nkosi or might say Professor Nkosi as he is now known by was once my history teacher in junior high at Elis Robins. By the time we reached O-level, Professor Nkosi was a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe's History department. He is a distinguished academic and historian. He has written several historical publications of which some are now recommended for reading texts for both O-Level and A-level History. "Let us make a bet if you manage to get the phone number of that girl wearing that black dress with cornrows in her head. I will buy you a pint of beer of your choice." said Bongani. "Make it two" "Okay it's a deal." replied Bongani as he stood up. In my mind set I knew I was entering a potential warzone unarmed. This girl had grown a reputation amongst the neighbourhood guys that she had blown away every single guy trying to court her. My information on her was sketchy and limited I knew she was named Chido and that she and her family had recently moved into the street. It was a rarity to see a black girl with aquamarine eyes but Chido had them. Her aquamarine eyes together with her light brown skin made her look a bit exotic. She has huge breasts and those appealingly long fleshy and slickly hairless legs. She has this body structure, which just makes me numb in my whole body, especially in my lower abdomen, don't ask why but it is just nature taking its course. I am attracted more to her in a sexual manner than in an emotional way. Chido had this long face and a straight sharpish nose which was most probably attributable to her Caucasian lineage. Her mother was the daughter of a white male Zimbabwean and a coloured female Zimbabwean. As I was approaching her I smelled the choking fragrance she had on. It was one of those cheap imitated versions of Chinese made cologne. I started to crack my knuckles on my left hand a thing that I always did when I was about to court a girl, but only 3 of knuckles sounded out. Whenever I didn't hear sounds from all of my knuckles I failed to court the girl but when all my knuckles sounded I was always successful in the courtship. Personally I do not know if it is psychological or just a happenstance that I fail to court a girl when all of knuckles do not sound. Pick up lines start rushing through my head. "Hello can you give me some directions?" I asked as I scratched my beardless chin. "Where to." replied Chido. "To your heart, I seem to have lost myself in those beautiful eyes of yours." I replied still scratching my beardless chin. "Are you mentally disturbed or are you in some state of confusion? Because I believe you are suffering from a rare case of

hyperactive dementia.” I had being seriously hurt emotionally about what she said I needed a comeback line and it had to come in a split second. “Yes I think I am crazy because I was arguing with my friend that you are an angel sent to rescue me from my misery.” “What kind of parents raise, a person like you. You are so annoying. Some of us have better things to do than to speak to riff-ruff and low lives like you. I have lost 3 minutes that I will never get back. I am like high up here I don’t date scums like you or any guy in this neighbourhood.” said Chido as she looked increasingly frustrated.

“Don’t insult my parents. Either way you are not beautiful, fake Brazilian hair.” “Now leave me before, I scream.” said Chido as she started to walk away. At that moment I left her. I knew pretty much that, if she screamed the 3 ladies whom Bongani and I dubbed The Co Ministers of Information and Publicity. Would lurch on to the story and pretty much distort it. I inaudibly made my way back to where I was sitting with a bruised ego. Feeling ashamed, like a dog with its tail in between its legs. I had officially joined the long list of guys who had failed to impress Chido. Yes Chido was beautiful most girls would envy to have looks like hers but at the same time she was haughty. This pretty much sum up my point Zimbabwean girls are just materialistic except for a few who realistically speaking I might never meet in my life. “Why the long face my dear friend?” asked Bongani. “No pints for me I failed horribly in my attempt. She is worse than I heard. She totally blew me off. That chick had the audacity to call me a scum.” I said as I took a brief break after which I continued “She told me she wouldn’t date guys in this hood. She needs a reality check she is living in Highfield, that girl is deluded in her mind she thinks she lives in The Brooke or The Grange.” I replied as I sat on the concrete stub. “That’s what happens when you go looking for food in a lion’s Den.” said Bongani as he burst in to laughter. “You are laughing your head off but I am willing to bet my last dollar that you won’t be able to get her number. So stop laughing” I said looking down too ashamed to put my head up. “Chido that’s child’s play I can get her number with ease, I have the irresistible Nkosi charm.” I don’t how he does it Bongani is a chick magnet, maybe because he has the good looks, tall, light skinned. Since high school he always had beautiful girls and most of the times he would be dating two girls at the same time and usually at times like those I would be single. In true honesty I have not been around many girls. In my entire life I had dated two girls and I had just recently turned twenty five years a few days back. “Most probably she will be going out of the house for some evening prayers. That’s when I will paunch on her. I hope you didn’t use that angel pickup line because that’s so 19<sup>th</sup> century.” said Bongani. “How

did you know?" "Because it's like the only pickup line you have in your repertoire." "Hello guys." said the familiar husky voice of my younger sister who is dressed in her black and white chessboard inspired uniform, which we jokingly teased that people could play a game of chess on. "How was school Ruvarashe?" Bongani asked. "Fine, and how has been your day, bridge boys?" replied my younger sister as she walked past us. "Bridge boy's today, tomorrow rich boys, watch the space." I said. "Keep on dreaming." said Ruru as she opened the gate. Just as the gate was closed Bongani scratched my left arm after which he uttered, looking with great assiduity at Ruvarashe's backside. "Your sister is really one hot number." "I will break each and every bone in your body if you ever try anything funny. Can't you see she is still at school" I said as I opened up my owl like eyes wide open. "So it means I can get down with her after she finishes school." "Be careful, you are playing with fire. Over my dead body, I will never marry off Ruvarashe to you." "What's wrong with me?" "You are a womaniser. I don't want to see my sister heartbroken." "I am no womaniser, girls just love." "I don't want this good friendship of ours to be wrecked, I value this friendship greatly. You are like a brother to me." I said with my eyes stuck out. At school I was nicknamed bulbs which had evolved from my earlier nickname of nunzi which is Shona for housefly. My classmates said my eyes stuck out like a housefly's eyes. Ruvarashe is doing O-Level at Princess Anna Girls High School. She is a talkative and an outgoing person. Everyone in our family is outgoing except for my elder brother Tinotenda who is a bit reserved. Ruru and I have a good sibling rivalry. Ruru is the shortcut for Ruvarashe. My siblings and I are distinguishable we have the trademark big eyes we inherited from our father. One thing which makes me stand out from my siblings is my complexion, my other siblings are light skinned and I am dark skinned. I took my Father's traits he is dark in complexion whilst my siblings took after my mother who is light skinned. A few minutes after Ruvarashe closed the gate one of the 3 gossiping ladies who was nicknamed by the youngsters of the street including, Bongani and I, Mrs Nguruve walks past us. Nguruve is the local vernacular word for pig. She was given this name because she is fat and her skin is light in complexion "Do you still remember that time her husband slapped you for talking with his daughter?" asked Bongani looking sternly into my eyes. "How could I forget, the only thing I saw were equations and algebra rushing past my eyes. It took me almost 2 years to speak to Yemurai again." "We were in form 3 when it happened. Where is Yemurai by the way?" asked Bongani. "She is working in Mhangura as a manager. I have forgotten the name of the mine

though. I last spoke to her, saying she was on the verge of being paid lobola for.” “But where is Mrs Ngurube headed for. Her house is in that direction?” asked Bongani as he pointed his index finger in a northerly direction. “She is scavenging for information. Are you forgetting she is part of the, terrible trio.” “Ye murai’s father is busying working his head off trying by all means to make ends meet. Having extra lessons and she is busy walking up and down the street. That’s why I always say to you I will think painstakingly before I marry. I messed up my life when I got hitched up with Leona.” said Bongani. Bongani had impregnated Leona when we were in our second year in varsity. Leona is beautiful she has this flawless skin. Leona has that supermodel body, tall, skinny and an attractive face. Leona is all about the finer things in life the Prada the Gucci, Armani those sort of things. Leona always makes sure that she wears designer labels and not some phoney Chinese manufactured clothes or some second hand clothes. She would sacrifice her entire university allowance on expensive items some of which seemed a bit over the board. Take for instance this one time her parents gave her allowance for the month and used all of the allowance money to buy an Armani handbag because it was the same as the one Naomi Campbell had. That month Bongani and I had to buy her lunch since she had blown away all her money. I had consistently told Bongani to leave her but it all fell on deaf ears. He would always say I was jealous that he was dating the envy of most man. In true essence I was not attracted to Leona, she was just not what I wanted in a lady, she ticked no on all of my boxes she was not humble, I was not even attracted to her in a physical manner. Yes she is tall, a beautiful face and a light toned skin a yellow bone for that matter. In real truth Leona fits the European aesthetic definition of beauty, thin and beautiful but as for me I have always been attracted to thick beautiful African women. Bongani ended up marrying Leona in a customary traditional marriage. Leona’s quest for the finer things in life was hereditary. I say so because when I and Bongani’s uncles went to pay lobola for Leona we were shocked the amount of dowry her father demanded. It was a bit over the edge to say the least, \$2000 was the amount we had to pay for depriving his daughter of her virginity. Plus another \$7000, which brought the total bride price to 9000 US dollars. In addition we had to present him with ten live cows. Out of all of his demands we paid \$2000 and two months later we presented him with two live cows. Where was Bongani going to find \$9000 from, we were university students for crying out loud. The dowry money Bongani paid as well as the money used to buy the two cattle presented to Leona’s parents were raised from the sale of the Nissan Hardbody truck which was

given to him as part of his inheritance from his deceased elder brother's estate. Who had died 7 months before Bongani impregnated Leona. Bongani's brother, Andrew, died in a heart-breaking event which not only sent shock waves to Bongani's family but to the Zimbabwean public, after he was run over by a commuter omnibus evading the police. The guy who run over Andrew was caught and was found guilty of culpable homicide, neglect driving, driving without a license and evading arrest. Andrew was like an older brother to me. His death affected me significantly. It affected my psyche. For weeks on end I even suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. The incident occurred on a Saturday, the day started off in typical fashion like any of my Saturday's at varsity. I woke up, and as was my tradition, some couple of guys who also resided at the halls of residence, Bongani and I played a FIFA tourney. FIFA is a football simulation video game, which is very popular amongst video gamers in Zimbabwean colleges. Bongani did not finish the tournament as he received a call from Leona to escort her to a birthday party of her best friend, whom Bongani had tried to set me up with on numerous blind dates. I had zilch feelings for her. I knew that being Leona's friend they shared the same interest as the good old saying "Birds of the same plumage perambulate in same the proximity." Leona was a materialistic girl. So she was also most probably going to be materialistic in nature. Bongani asked me to go with him to the party but knowing that Leona's bestie would be there I decided to avoid any awkward blind dates that Bongani and his snotty girlfriend would try to conjure up. After the premature end to the video game tournament I retreated to my room to sleep. I heard a knock on the door of my room and went to check who it was. On opening the door I saw it was Andrew. Andrew was holding three shopping bags, he had bought Bongani some groceries. He told me that he had been to Bongani's room but there was no response, he even tried getting hold of Bongani on his phone but there was no answer. So he decided to come to my room and leave the groceries and money he wanted to give to Bongani to me, so that I could pass them over to Bongani when he came back. Andrew was a telecoms engineer he worked at the biggest mobile network company in Zimbabwe Ethernet Telecoms. On the fateful day Andrew left his car at his personal mechanic where it was receiving monthly service. So he used public transport to come here. Andrew knew I drank beer so he gave me \$20 to buy a few beers. So I accompanied him to the place where we boarded commuter omnibuses from. As we stood on the edges of the road a commuter omnibus coming from the opposite direction was caught up in a high speed pursuit with a police car a BMW 3 series. The commuter

omnibus changed lanes abruptly as the driver of the commuter omnibus tried to take a quick right turn so as to escape the police car which was fast gaining ground on the commuter omnibus. The commuter omnibus charges like a Spanish bull towards where Andrew and I are standing. I quickly jump out of the way. In horror I see Andrew as he is gouged underneath the commuter omnibus. The commuter omnibus driver continues on not deterred by the fact that he had killed a person. It's a bitter pill to swallow for me. I can't believe what's happening before me, it all feels like I am hallucinating. There is blood everywhere, and Andrew's body is dismembered. After the accident I couldn't eat properly for weeks and I had nightmares of the accident for months. During this time of great despair for Bongani, Leona did not show her face that much, giving up lame excuses so that she could just avoid attending the funeral. That's when I knew that my assertion that Leona was no wife material was spot-on. "Personally I thought you had found your soul mate." I said before taking a pause after which I continued. "You two were inseparable, you were like literally joined at the hip." "She was beautiful we could spend hours on end talking." said Bongani. Leona and Bongani were like two love birds. It seemed like nothing could separate them. "But two things I learnt from the whole Leona debacle are that outside beauty isn't everything and that money changes people's character." said Bongani looking progressively emotional. Leona had left Bongani for her divorcee chief executive officer, who was almost twice her age a year and a half ago. "I have to agree with you on the first part of your statement outer beauty isn't everything, but have to disagree with you on the second part I still believe money doesn't change people." I said as I took a brief break before continuing. "Money is just an object, because how can something that can't think, move or breathe change a person's character." "We are inclined to different opinions. I will always believe money changes people. No amount of convincing will make me change my line of thought on that issue." "Is Leona still a personal assistant?" I asked as I dipped my hands into my moneyless pockets. "Quite obvious you get married to the boss you get a promotion you can't go against the laws of preferential treatment. The last time I heard was that she was the F Manager at one of the company's branches here in Harare." Moving my head sideways I said. "She is rolling in money now I saw her getting into a new Audi A4 in the CBD she acted like she didn't see me. You would say she has the memory of a goldfish." "She is forgetting that at varsity we would constantly bail her out financially when she needed transport and food money." I said. At least Bongani got one beautiful thing out of Leona, Candice his beautiful adorable



daughter. Candice is the three year old daughter of Bongani sired with Leona and their only offspring together. “What hates me the most is the time I wasted on her, what kind of mother abandons a young child barely able to walk.” said Bongani as he adjusted his seating position. “Does she ever come to see Candice?” I asked. “She swore to me that she doesn’t want anything to do with me or Candice whom she referred to as “the mistake”. Her parents aren’t interested in Candice either.” replied Bongani. “They hate you because you impregnated their daughter and almost made her quit varsity, plus remember you didn’t finish paying off her lobola.” “That’s not the case they just loathed me from the very beginning. A pauper marrying their daughter was too much for them to bear.” said Bongani. What Bongani was saying about Leona’s parents and their undying love for money was true. Leona’s parents are that type of people that will sell their own children for money. They have already severed all ties with their granddaughter so that they can please their daughter and in turn receive money from her. “They bought a house in Newlands courtesy of the money from Leona.” said Bongani. Leona’s parents had moved from abject poverty to riches, they moved from their rural homestead in Seke to the low density suburb of Newlands. “For sure the love of money is the root of all evil.” I said. “I just hope Leona sees the light and tries to forge a relationship with her daughter.” said Bongani. “Man we should be looking for work instead of discussing about Leona sitting on this stub here in Mukute Street, soon Candice will be going to school.” I said “It’s not as if we haven’t tried looking for work, how many interviews have we being to.” I for one had lost count of the number of interviews I had been too. It has been almost 2 years since we graduated and we were still to find work. “It’s a global issue many people are unemployed the recession affected a lot of countries. Think of countries like Greece and Cyprus, the economic quagmire there are in.” said Bongani. “It’s good to see that you are thinking about the future.” said Bongani. “Maybe we can combine your accounting know how with my economics knowledge and start an enterprise.” I said. “Maybe the many interviews will make us stronger. Let us take solace knowing that it took Thomas Edison over 1500 tries to make an electric light bulb.” said Bongani. “We just have to keep trying to find work but in the meantime we have to find a reliable legitimate source of earning money.” I said taking a pause before continuing. “Let me go and sleep, I will see you tonight at the bar, I will buy you two pints and see how we can strategise how to earn a decent living.” I said as I stood up dusting the backside of my trousers. “As for me let me go and take a bath, after which I will try and set up a date with the so called untouchable Chido.”

**“Let the girl do her prayers in peace, don’t disturb her.” I said “Don’t you worry.”**  
**replied Bongani. “We must change our lifestyle because this concrete stub is becoming**  
**acquainted to us sitting here. If it could talk it would complain about the amount of time**  
**we spend sitting on it without giving it a rest.” I said “See you when I see you. Phone**  
**me when you are ready to go the bar.” said Bongani as he stood up. The day was fast**  
**approaching sunset, we had spent close up to 5 hours sitting on the concrete stub.**  
**Mukute Street is that kind of street that at any given time of the day you are rest**  
**assured to see someone passing by. As for Highfield it is always a place filled with a host**  
**of activities. I like to believe it’s at the epicentre of on-goings in Harare. This has**  
**somewhat become a routine, I wake up, eat breakfast and bath and then walk out of the**  
**house and spend the rest of the day sitting on the concrete stub. As the sun moved back**  
**to its hatchet a group of big white migratory birds in V like formation flew past, the**  
**concrete stub.**

## CHAPTER 2 THE BAR

Soon after leaving the concrete stub. I opened the black and white iron-gate which is at the entrance to our family house. Our family house has a small black and white iron-gate and the bigger brown iron-gate which usually is used by my father, when he drives his car into the homestead. A face brick Dura wall surrounds the homestead marking the parameter of the homestead. My father is a person who likes his privacy and had the Dura wall erected replacing the fence which had stood since the early 60s only to the dismay of my mother who preferred the fence. In my mother's mind erecting a Dura wall was sending out a message to the neighbours that we wanted to be left alone which was not a good thing for her. It took time for the Dura wall to be put up, because my parents were at constant loggerheads on the issue. It was through the intervention of my elder brother Tinotenda that the Dura wall was erected after explaining to my mother the importance of privacy and how it would also help prevent robbers. Funny enough to note is that since the Dura wall was put up we had suffered two breakings which we had never suffered before the erection of the fence. At the front of the stand a person is greeted by the towering avocado tree which is in close proximity with the gate. This particular avocado tree was more than a just a tree for me. I had an emotional attachment with it. Growing up me and Bongani would always climb the tree and pretend as if we were flying a space shuttle. Ever since we read the short story of the Yuri Gagarin the Russian cosmonaut and Neil Armstrong the American astronaut, the first man in space and the first man to walk on the moon respectively in primary school at Mbizi Primary School. I always wanted to be an astronaut a dream I shared with Bongani. But then reality occurred, we grow up. I realised I was not that great in chemistry or physics which are pre requisites to do pure science subjects at A-Level. Which would form a basis for a person aspiring to be an astronaut. In the end I ended up doing Mathematics, Economics and Business Studies, in place of Economics Bongani did Accounting. Yellow lilies are lined perpendicular to the garage wall. A vegetable garden takes up most of the front space, inside the garden is a well which not only served our family needs but is also used by our neighbours whenever there is no running water on the tap. A small part in the backyard accommodates the maize crop. The residential stands in this area are quite small. As I approached the front door I hear the unmistakable high toned voice of my mother calling me emanating from the garden. "Tinashe, Tinashe come and take these vegetables." I walk lackadaisically to the garden as I prepare for one of my mother's long lectures on how I should not fall for

the evils of this world. "Good Evening. I didn't see you were in the garden." I said. "Good evening. Were you sitting on that stub all this time?" asked my mother as she handed me the bundle of vegetables. "Yes." I replied. "Hope you and your friend are planning about your lives wisely, because you know you are grown-ups now. You need to make wise decisions." said my mother. "We are. It's only that it's getting more frustrating staying at home doing nothing." I replied. "I know but don't get mixed up in any get rich quick scheme, it's better to remain poor and remain true to your God than to rob people and forget your religion." said my mother as she pulled out a weed. "I understand you I promise you I will never get mixed up such business. Is Ruvarashe cooking for us today?" I asked, trying to change the subject matter. "Yes, why do you ask." replied my mother. "So I have to prepare myself for some half cooked or over cooked food." I said. "Don't say that of my daughter, I know her cooking skills are not up to scratch but give her a chance." "Whoever is going to marry her better be prepared to cook most of the time." I said as I walked away. That statement left my mother laughing. I wasn't over exaggerating about my sister's cooking skills. She just can't prepare a decent meal. She had her moments when she would cook something truly delicious but most of the time the meat was either burnt or under done to the point that blood would be exuding out. My mother is on a study leave for the rest of the month as she is studying for a Master's degree in Development Studies from the Women's University in Africa. She is a primary school teacher. She teaches at Mbizi Primary school here in Highfield. She was my grade 3 teacher. As I opened the door the alluring smell of lavender floor polish applied on the tiles rushed past my nostrils. The front door opened up into the lounge. Directly opposite the front door lay a wooden cupboard and a steel television stand. The wooden cupboard was a gift presented to my mother by my maternal grandmother on her wedding day in 1978. On top of the cupboard were family portraits. One of the pictures is of me with my parents in my graduation gown. There are some memorabilia including an award that was given to my elder brother Tinotenda, for having the best A-level results at St Ignatius College Chishawasha when he scooped 30 points. Tinotenda is what I would refer to as a brainiac, back at St Ignatius he was nicknamed Newton. No normal person is nicknamed Newton. Growing up as children he would make these mechanical apparatus from old disused parts of electrical appliances. When he was fourteen he was awarded the Zimbabwean Award for Science, which is more commonly known as ZAS, for a lawn mower he built which worked solely on solar power. He was offered an undergraduate scholarship. Tinotenda studied for a degree in Bachelors of Science in Aerospace Engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States of America. He currently works as a research engineer for NASA, National Aeronautics Space Administration, (NASA) at the Neil A. Armstrong Flight Research Centre in California. A few months back he had received his PhD from Stanford University. His thesis was titled "A critical look at the four forces of flight." I downloaded it from the internet and I tried to read it but I could not make head from tail from any of the staff Tinotenda wrote. His thesis was not written in simple layman's language. I only managed to read three pages after that I saw no reason to try and read things I did not understand. Tinotenda was a book worm when most children of his age were playing in

the streets he would be immersed in some book. We were quite the opposite I hated school I just did it because my parents told me to do so, School for me was just like a Hobson choice, one way or the other I had to go. Some blue coloured sofas which match with the blue painted walls and a dinner table take up most of the floor space. On the walls are two pictures of Jesus and a big banner which reads out Proud Christian Proud to Be a Member of The Anglican Church "With God Everything Is Possible", my parents are both devout Christians and are members of the Anglican Church to which I am also affiliated to. I am member of Z.A.Y.A, Zimbabwe Anglican Youth Association. I am not really an exemplary Z.A.Y.A member quite contrary I am a drunkard which is pretty much against what we are taught not to be at church. A small table which has a desktop computer on it is situated near the door which, leads to the kitchen the other door in the lounge leads to the passage. A display which has water glasses in it lays directly opposite the door which leads to the kitchen pretty much summoned up the living room which was a bit crammed up and relatively small in size. On entering the kitchen one would instantly note out the difference in the tiles in the lounge, the ones in the lounge were grey in colour whilst the ones in the kitchen were black. There went much additions to the original house built in the 60s except for the tiles which were a recent addition. A white four plate stove, a silver upright Capri fridge, four green kitchen chairs and a wooden kitchen table occupied the floor space. On top of the kitchen counters were a dysfunctional microwave and a reliable 60s toaster which used to belong to my maternal grandmother. The toaster was nicknamed Erica, after the white lady my grandmother worked for as a maid who had given it to her. "What are you preparing for dinner?" I asked "Sadza, vegetables and beef." replied Ruvarashe. "Mum told me to give you this." I said as I placed the vegetables on the kitchen sink. "I heard what you said about my cooking." Ruvarashe said as she placed a pot on the stove. "You have spies now." "Tinashe, I was in my room and you know my room is near the garden." "I am still very sceptical about your cooking." I said "Okay Mister know it all why don't you cook, then I will see if you are good." "It's a piece of cake. Just give me the food items and I will prepare a cuisine that will leave you biting your tongue." "Okay here is what's for dinner." said Ruvarashe as she gave me the beef. In my own opinion I believed only one person could cook better than me and that was my mother. So taking up the challenge was going to be easy for me. To date I hadn't prepared dinner for the whole family before. I became so interested in cooking when I was staying in Gweru where I lived as a bachelor working there during my attachment period at university. Firstly I prepared the beef boiling it for 2 hours. After which I added some oil and tomatoes to the beef, I heard a knock on the kitchen door. I peeped out on the window and saw it was my father in his green work-suite. My father is a mechanic at Millers Motors or simply MM, where he has been working for the last 25 years. I unhinged the door. My old man has a visible facial scare on his left cheek which he said he got when he was fighting off a robber. The incident occurred before he married my mother. I always asked him who got the better of whom. He always said he got the better of the robber. Through his narration he knocked the robber unconscious even though he got a permanent scare. Many people who see me and my father together always exclaim how I am a spitting image of his. "Good evening." I said "Evening,

Tinashe.” replied my father. “I didn’t hear the gate been opened, did you leave the car at work?” I asked as I mixed the meat. “I left it at Sando Garage for some spray painting. It needs some repainting.” He has a 1999 hatchback Opel Astra which he meticulously takes care off. “I knocked on the front door, I even knocked on the window of the front door aren’t there any people in the lounge?” said my father. “Ruru and mum are in there but you know how they get caught up in all of that nonsensical soap opera drama. It’s like there are bewitched and they can’t get their eyes or ears off that stuff.” I replied as I mixed the vegetables with the beef. My sister and my mother were so obsessed with soapies, it’s like if you were to arrive during the time my mother and sister were watching a soap opera, a person could theoretically come into the house steal things from the house without them noticing. “How far is dinner? I could eat for two. I have never seen you cooking.” said my father as he took water out of the fridge. “It will be ready in 15 minutes tops.” I replied. “Any replies to your job applications yet?” asked my father before gulping a glass of cold water. “I am still waiting.” “Just remain patient, good things come to those who wait, pray and work hard.” said my old man as he entered the lounge. After preparing the relish I cooked the Sadza. “Ruru, prepare the table. Dinner is ready.” I said as I stood leaning on the door frame. Putting on her slippers Ruru said “At least no disturbances.” “What do you mean?” I asked. “I have finished watching Cruel Love and Park Street, so no fuss when I prepare the table. I can do it slowly and neatly.” “Not so slowly, I am hungry I could eat an elephant.” protested my father. My mother and Ruru are not soap opera fans but fanatics there are addicted to them. I for one do not see the interesting thing about them. For me soap operas represent illusory lives where the plot is more or less the same an evil villain who dishes out melancholy and some blameless main actor or actress always at the receiving end and some romantic relationship which can best be described as totally dreamlike. The plot of a soap is usually predictable, some rich guy or girl falls in love with guy or girl from the purlieu. They may face difficulties but in the end their love conquers all. In reality I don’t believe there is a thing like true love it’s all about the sex, money and the fame. You see, Zimbabwean girls have eroded my concept of an ideal relationship. I could be wrong about most Zimbabwean girls being materialistic but I don’t think so, because one of the two girls I had once dated left me for a richer guy. Sandra is her name. She is beautiful, she just had all the things I wanted in a girl, the structure the brains were all there. We met during my first year first semester in varsity she was also doing her first year. She was doing chemical technology. This is how I met her. I was in the library doing some research on an assignment, I was busy scribbling down some points in my note book when I just pooped up my head to try to get to grips with the point I was writing, just right across where I was sitting was this stunning and gorgeous girl with braids adorning Malcom-X kind of eye glasses. Just there and then I decided I would approach her. As customary I did my pre courtship ritual of knuckle cracking, and all knuckles sounded which was a good sign. I wrote down my name and number on a piece of paper, I rolled the piece of paper and threw it towards her. It landed on the textbook she was reading, and I winked at her, and she smiled back. At that moment she opened up the paper. Then afterwards she started writing something on the back part of the paper and she threw it back to me. I instantly opened up the

paper, she had written her name and phone number. It was surreal, more like a scene out of a Hollywood chick flick. A week after this I called her and we met up, I choose not to call her immediately because I did not want her to have the impression that I was desperate. It was a tactic a mind game to make her more nervous and to make her more susceptible to my advances. And that's how we started dating until one day I received a message from her saying that she needed time out, and that she wasn't in the correct frame of mind to be in a relationship. She told me she was suffering from a nervous breakdown and needed time alone. I tried all I could to alter her mind but it was over. I was left heart broken. Then two weeks after Sandra had dumped me I received the shock of my life. There I was with Bongani as we strolled past the car park. A black Range Rover Sport with black tinted glasses and mag wheels whooshes past us and parks in a vacant place just in front of where we are. The driver a guy who is casually dressed in blue jeans, whom I estimate to be my age walks over to the front passenger side and opens up the door, after which a girl dressed in a seductively looking yellow miniskirt which is showing much of her thighs, this is the type of miniskirt that if one were to bend down you could easily see her undergarment. She had flip-flops with big oval dark sunglasses. She disembarks from the car with the guy who was driving the car holding her left hand. The guy hugs the girl and the girl reacts by giving the guy a passionate and lengthy French kiss. As Bongani and I walk closer to the Range Rover Sport it dawns to me that the girl is not just any other girl but it is Sandra. I learnt first-hand that sometimes reality seems more like fiction, and that sometimes it's easier to believe in fiction than it is to believe in the truth. If anyone had told me that Sandra had left me for a richer a guy I would had laughed them off, because until this point I never viewed Sandra as a materialistic girl. Sandra had this innocence about her. University had changed her, whilst we were dating she never wore anything which was below her knees or did she wear anything that showed her cleavage. I did not forbid her to wear such clothes, but it was part of her upbringing. She told me she was not a fan of short things which showed a greater part of her flesh. She was no longer that innocent girl I fell head over heels for. I had this nostalgic feelings when I saw Sandra's dressing, it reminded me of the thigh vendors at the shopping centre in Highfield. At first glance it seems like a mirage but the closer I get to her the more I realise it is no illusion. I was shell shocked. It was like I had seen a phantom. As the car pulled out of the car park I was confronted eye to eye with the figure of Sandra. As if everything was normal she waved at me and greeted me. I was so much in shock I could not even open my mouth, Bongani had to pitch me in the hand. To think that I had lost my virginity to her was just unbearable I was prepared to marry her, I had been deceived, and all this time I thought she was marriage material. She had left me for a richer guy and there was never a nervous breakdown it was rather a financial breakdown. Maybe I have just being with wrong type of girls that's why I find soap operas portrayal of true love as a fantasy, a fairy-tale of sorts. And above all soap operas are never ending what's the use of watching a soap opera which has been running for more than 10 years, for me it will be just a waste of time. Lowering the tray Ruru said. "I hate to admit it but your cooking was good." "I hope you learnt a thing or two from the greatest chef in the world" I said boastfully. "I really enjoyed your cooking too" said my mother. "Me too."

said my father. "Thank you very much." I said as I wiped my hands dry with a dish towel. "Let me go and sleep I am very tired." said my father as he stood up. Lowering her glasses my mother said "Ruru don't forget to clean the dishes before you go to your room and Tinashe if you are going out remember to lock the door and the gate. Let me also go and sleep." A few moments after finishing eating I phoned Bongani to notify him that I was going to the bar. Like my mother had instructed me I made sure that I locked the gate and the back door. I didn't want a thief entering the house at my invitation. By the time I arrived at the gate Bongani was standing outside. "Are we using the shorter way or the longer way?" I asked as I put my hood on. "The shorter way." replied Bongani as he outstretched his arms. "In that case let us take our weapons." I said as I pulled two wooden cricket bats underneath the drainage canal. The longer way to, the shopping centre, where Club Zero Bar is located, is via the road, whilst the shorter way which we also called the bundu road is via the maize fields. Whenever we use the bundu road at night we walk with our bats because many people are mugged during the night along this path. Especially during this time robbers use the maize plants as cover. Mukute Street is clear as daylight as tower-lights light up the road. "Let us be vigilant" said Bongani as we entered the bundu road. "You are right." I said as I clasped the cricket bat strongly. "I hope you didn't forget your identification card." I said. "I have it." replied Bongani as he showed me his wallet. At night we have to travel with our identification cards because if our paths cross with the police officers patrolling the area and you fail to present your national identification card you would be arrested for loitering. "Crimes committed in the high density suburb are loitering and public drinking whilst in the low density areas embezzlement and misappropriation of funds." said Bongani as we walked to the bar. "Misappropriation just want to make it less criminal. Stealing is stealing." Bongani and I walked along the stone and pebble strewn foot path in the maize field. The maize field was pitch-black and we had to use a torch. The maize crops were just above our shoulders. We arrived at the shopping centre unscarred. The shopping centre is beaming with revellers. By the time we arrive at the shopping centre it is 9.20 pm and all the shops are closed except for the 5 bars. The shopping centre has a pavement which covers its entire floor area but the night club we are going to has no pavement it is a recent addition to the shopping centre, having been opened two and half years ago. Some of the revellers are braaing, others are soliciting for sex from thigh vendors or simply the ladies of the night who are scantily dressed and other revellers are simply enjoying their beer. Under the cover of the moonlight we traverse through the brothel alley a nickname given to a dingy alley which leads to Club Zero. The alley has an unsavoury smell produced by the decomposing leftover food, most of which is disposed by a fast food outlet at the shopping centre. Disused condoms are littered all over the alley. It is a notoriously infamous place known for sexual activities which occur there in the wee hours of the night. Most recently a guy and a prostitute were arrested for indecent behaviour after police officers patrolling the shopping centre found them in an uncompromising position in the alley. We enter the door which leads into Club Zero we climb the stairs as we make our way to the top where Club Zero is located. On entering Club Zero one is immediately greeted by the deafening sound produced by the speakers which are a few meters from the entrance.



Circulating disco lights illuminate the club. Like outside there is also presence of thigh vendors who are entertaining the patrons. To say there are dressed is a complete lie. Tiny items not worth to be called clothes cover their private regions. I buy two pints of Zambezi lager. Bongani and I go to sit on the balcony. A place we knew we wouldn't be disturbed by the ladies of the night. As we sit down a ruckus erupts at the entrance to the bar. A light skinned tall and bulky guy wearing a tight fitting muscle top is at the centre of the havoc. One would be forgiven for thinking that the tall guy has stolen the muscle top from a toddler. Whilst a diminutive guy in stature is threatening to break a pint he is holding in his right hand on the head of the tall guy. That's when I realise that the short guy is Jerry. It is like a modern re-enactment of Jack squaring off with the Giant. The tall guy swings his pumpkin sized fist towards Jerry who instinctively dodges the blow, if which had connected would have been lights out for Jerry. Without hesitation Jerry slams the bottle on the tall guy's head. The sound produced by the breaking pint of bottle steals everyone's attention in the bar. It is like a small firecracker has been lit on. Blood oozes out of the tall guy's head as he staggers to his feet before falling down heavily on to the floor like a sack of bricks. Jerry runs out of the bar fearing that he might have killed the tall guy. People are hot on his heels. The friends of the tall guy help him to his feet before they escort him to the hospital. The tall guy and Jerry were fighting over the services of certain lady of the night, in which the former was alleging only he could lay claim to her since he was a regular customer of the lady whilst the latter was saying he had already paid her services in advance. "Men will always fight for women." said Bongani. "I will never fight for any person of the fairer sex." "Size is not really a factor in fights." said Bongani as he prepared to drink the beer. "Jerry used an unfair advantage he had a weapon, without that he would have been beaten to a pulp." I said. Putting his bottle down on the table Bongani said "I agree with you on that sentiment, the playing ground wasn't level at all." "Tell me were you able to speak with Chido?" I questioned. "Clock-work orange as they say hook line and sinker, I saw where you and the other guys were failing you lacked a game plan." "What game-plan?" "Chido is that kind of girl that is very much into the high life. So I simply swept her off her feet with my charm. I clearly stated to her that I just wanted to be friends with her." said Bongani as he lifted his bottle. "Charm sounds more like harm, either ways you have taken the cowards way out you didn't not state you true mission." "Listen here my friend, my plan is to first become friends with Chido and then with time win her over." "In my experience the ghetto never wins over the suburban love. Dream on you will never get her." I said as I cracked my knuckles. "Only fools can doubt my courtship abilities. Watch the space." said Bongani. "Only time will tell if I am fool." I replied before taking a sip of the cool beer. "Enough about Chido, I have something I want to tell you. I saw this programme on TV about cougars and ben tens" said Bongani. "So you were watching cartoons." I said looking more and more interested in the subject matter. "You got it all wrong, not ben ten the cartoon. It's a term used to describe a younger guy who is dating an older lady." "That's like a male prostitute" I injected. "No it's not. A male prostitute is called a gigolo." "But you are getting paid for having sex with someone." "Not really it's more than that. You see this older women are lonely so the relationship will be more than physical. You will be

like filling that emotional void in her.” “Bongani, my dear friend you could be up to something good.” “You are catching my drift now.” “But where can we find these cougars. I am sick and tired of having to wait for hand outs from my parents.” “See, Tinashe there are places where we can find these type of ladies.” “For example, where?” “Classy food outlets, up market bars.” “But where will we find the money to buy food or even alcohol in such a place. Mind you beer is three times as much in such places.” “Worry not. We will find a plan.” As we about to go dipper with our discussion a croaky and familiar voice sounded “Gents.” “A-argh Joe.” Bongani and I uttered simultaneously looking surprised. Joe was shortened form for Joseph, He once resided in our street but is now living in Gunhill at the house his older sister had built for her parents. His sister is an internationally acclaimed human rights lawyer who is currently working for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and is currently working in Taiwan. Although Joe was my junior at school and was 5 streams behind, we became best friends because we protected him from bullies when he arrived at Elis Robins. There is a lot of bullying especially at boys only schools. In some instances a junior has to pay a protection allowance to a senior to protect him from bullying but with Joe we took him under our wings as seniors without any protection allowance. We were both borders at Elis Robins. Joe was under our protection at school, whilst we were at Elis Robins Joe was immune to fagging, No one dared to lay a hand on the headboy’s younger brother. Bongani was the headboy during our last year at Elis Robins, and Joe was more of our younger brother. “I knew I would find you lot here.” said Joe as he sat down stretching his rather unusual long hands. Being a headboy at a boy’s only school has its perks, since I was Bongani’s right hand man I would also enjoy the benefits, like not queuing up in the dining hall, having bigger food rations than the other students. “How is everyone back home?” questioned Bongani. “Everyone is fine.” replied Joe. Removing my hood I asked “What do we owe this visit.” “I want to invite you to a house warming party. There will be a barbeque and free drinks. Party starts at 12 noon sharp.” replied Joe as he handed us two invitational cards which were blue. I couldn’t clearly make out what was written on the card because of the poor lighting on the balcony. “What is a barbeque?” I asked. “A barbeque is a braai.” replied Joe. “So I can see suburban life has changed your vocabulary.” I said. Joe bought 7 rounds of beer in that time we walked down memory lane, as we spoke of our escapades and we also discussed about our difficulties to find work. In our conversation it came out that Joe was going to attend tertiary education in New Zealand. He had taken a gap year after finishing high school. After consuming 9 pints of beer which I didn’t normally do because of financial reasons. I, Bongani and Joe left the bar, after which Joe escorted us home in a red 5 series BMW which belonged to his father. We arrived home way past midnight whilst everyone was fast asleep. I unclothed and remained with my boxer short and I quietly crept into the blankets where I was soon in the hands of Morpheus.

## CHAPTER 3 OPPORTUNITIES COME KNOCKING

I lay in a deep slumber as I snored away. I am in a deep sleep so much that a robber could hypothetically steal the bed I am sleeping on without noticing it. As I am sleeping I see Chido entering into my room whilst I am sitting on my bed. At this point I am totally powerless and can't do anything. She advances towards me dressed in a red long dress with blood stains all over it. In her hands she has a machete in her left hand whilst her right hand is holding a towel. What scares, me to death is, her fiery eyes. Her aquamarine eyes glowing in the badly lit room. Opening her blood tainted mouth she says, "Choose between these two a machete or a towel. Remember what you choose is what I am going to kill you with." I grow more petrified when I hear the words kill you, I try to give her my pleas but I can't move my mouth it is as if it is glued. At that moment she drops the machete, for a moment I thought she is going to leave me alone but she then wraps the towel around my neck. When she is about to choke me to death with the towel I hear a faint knock and a voice which sounds like someone is calling my name, the call and the knock grows louder that is when my conscious state of awareness kicks in, as I awake from my nightmare. "Tinashe, Tinashe, Tinashe. Are you in there." sounds the voice. I rub my eyes as I yawn. In a sleepy tone I reply "Yes, you may come in." The door is opened as I try to brush aside the hangover I have. "Where you still sleeping, it's almost 9.30?" asked my mother. "Yes, I was." I reply as I stretch my hands. "I want you to run an errand for me I want you to go and give Amai Louisa some maize." said my mother as she stood holding the door handle. Amai Louisa as she is affectionally known by is my elder brother, Tinotenda's wife. My brother and Amai Louisa had known each other as teens from their days in the youth choir at church. Soon after my brother returned from College in the USA he married Annabel whom we call Amai Louisa. On his return from States soon after completing his first degree, Tinotenda worked for the government owned national air passage carrier company Air-Zimbabwe as an aircraft engineer for a year and a half before he left for California where he is currently working. In the time my brother was here he and Annabel had 2 children a girl named Louisa and a boy named Leroy, both born a year apart. Leroy was actually born 7 months after Tinotenda had returned to the States. "Okay, by the way good morning." I reply. "Morning." says my mother as she closes the door. I wake up and make my bed before I go to have a cold shower. It is always a ritual of mine to bath in a cold shower whenever I have a hangover the following morning. As I am brushing my teeth I pause for some moments and stare in the mirror as thoughts rush forwards and backwards in my head, I am beginning to think hard about where I am going, questioning myself if I could ever make it in life. As I stare deeper and deeper

into my reflection, realisations became to confront me head on. Maybe searching for money isn't going to be the panacea of my tribulations. I remember the words said by the legendary Jamaican Singer Robert Nesta Marley that I came across in my high school days which say "Money is numbers and numbers never end. If it takes money to be happy, your search for happiness will never end." Growing up especially in my late teens I wanted to make money as much as humanly possible. In my mind money is going to be my key to bliss but what I realise staring in the mirror and in those words said by Bob Marley was that a certain part of me needs happiness which money can't buy. In my heart I believe I would soon find it. Whilst I am in a deep trance of thought my younger sister starts knocking and shouting at the bathroom door. "Tinashe hurry up, I also need to use the bathroom. You have been in there forever. I have to go for extra lessons and I am already behind schedule." "I am already finished. Anyways Saturdays are meant for rest, why are you going to school?" I say as I place my toothbrush in the bathroom drawer. "Some of us have to write exams." replied my sister. After wearing a fresh pair of clothes that's when I realised that Joe had invited me for a party. Knowing I first had to deliver the maize corn before going to the party, I decided to set off first to Mount Pleasant where Mai Louisa resides before I proceeding to Gunhill where the party is been hosted. I phone Bongani and tell him that we will meet up at the party. Before I leave the house I hear my message tone, I quickly check the message. It is a message from Dan-Op Bank informing me that there is going to be an interview on Tuesday. I am a bit mystified that they are sending their message on a Saturday. Commuter omnibus operators have just hiked their fares because it is month end and people have just been paid and they are looking to capitalise on this. The commuter omnibus which I board is particularly interesting because a group of guys sitting in front of me are debating the title chances of Manchester United which is the team I support. I had supported Manchester United since the days of Eric Cantona in the mid-90s. I become involved in the heated debate as I argue with the two guys who are both Chelsea fans. The debate becomes so heated that I almost forgot my drop of point. "Hey, conductor, after the robots." I say "See you around." One of the two guys says "Manchester United is not winning this one." utters the other guy. "Glory Glory-Glory Man United. Glory, Glory, Glory Man United. As the reds go marching through." I sing loudly as I disembark from the commuter omnibus. Two middle aged ladies sitting in front of me just stare at me looking a bit perplexed as I sing the Manchester United anthem. Their stares tell a story of its own, it is quite evident that they think I am nutcase. I walk a few meters from where the commuter omnibus has left me. There isn't any gate or fence at my brother house it is a small four roomed cottage. The stands here are huge in contrast to the ones in Highfield, this one in particular was 1 and half acres. It felt there was massive land under-utilisation at my brother place. The small cottage barely covered the stand. Just as I enter the yard I see Mai Louisa. "How are you Mai Louisa?" I asked as I extended my hand to greet Mai Louisa. "Fine, and you babamunini." replied Mai Louisa as she reciprocates by extending her right hand. Babamunini is a Shona word for uncle. "I am fine, how is Louisa and Leroy?" "There are all well, how is everyone back home?" "Everyone is fine. Mum gave me this parcel to pass on to you." I say as I hand Amai Louisa the paper bag. "How thoughtful of

Mum, I was having a craving for maize. Come inside and I will prepare something for you.” says Amai Louisa as she opens the paper bag. “Where is, Louisa and Leroy?” I ask as we enter the unfinished house. The house is still under construction. “They went to their grandparents for the weekend.” Amai Louisa’s parents also live in Highfield, in Mangwende Street near Machipisa Shopping Centre. I entered into the living room which was a bit dull since Amai Louisa had sold some of the furniture to pay for Louisa’s grade one fees and Leroy’s kindergarten fees. My brother had gone AWOL, he was almost turning into an absent father. I believe my brother was lucky to find a humble, faithful and beautiful wife, because with all the negative signs my brother was giving towards her. She should have walked away and found another man or a boyfriend. The huge 51 inch Samsung television set was the only thing which seemed to give life to the almost empty living room. “When last did you speak to Tinotenda?” I asked. “About 3 weeks ago, and when did you last speak to him?” she replied as she sat down. “Almost a month has elapsed since I last spoke to him.” I replied. In all complete honesty the communication between my family including Amai Louisa and my brother was a bit strained. Since returning to States my brother had lost all perspective with the family he no longer called or nor did he send money either to us or to his wife Amai Louisa. Which had led my father to insinuate that he had fallen into, the arms of another lady in the States who was leading him astray and away from his family. “How is work?” I asked. “Work is fine.” She worked as a sales representative at Rhinos a local shoe manufacturing company. Amai Louisa is a quiet person so there was n’t much talking going on around. My brother was also quiet and reserved so the two were a good match for each other. After enjoying a scrumptious and luscious meal Amai Louisa had prepared. I gave my thanks before I left for the party. I hire a taxi which takes me directly to Gunhill. Gunhill is the opposite to Highfield, it’s quite you rarely see people walking in the roads unlike in Highfield even at 2 am you are sure to find people walking up and down the roads. Upon arrival in Gunhill my well-being is further pacified by the tranquillity and serenity of the area, the only noise that can be heard of is that of weaver birds which are singing in harmonious and melodious voices. As I disembark from the taxi a cool westerly wind wisps past me as it cools me down as I wipe of the sweat from my forehead. It is a hot summer day. A huge Dura wall and blue electric gate over 2 meters high and a bouncer greet me at the entrance. The bouncer requests my invitation card which I duly present. On entering the gate as I walk on the drive way I notice the well maintained and cut lawn and the immaculately built house. The house a neo-modern double story building located on a picturesque site overlooking a kopje. Eight street lamps, with four on either side, cover the length of the brick paved drive way. The house is a bit quiet for a place hosting a party I was expecting to hear some music since I am almost an hour late from the stipulated starting time. As I approach the huge sliding glass front door I notice Bongani coming out of one of the double lock up garage doors and he is holding two speakers. “So the party hasn’t started.” I said on top of my voice as I waved at Bongani. “It’s now starting.” replied Bongani. “Where are you coming from?” I asked as I touch one of the speakers. “I had accompanied Joe to collect the P.A system.” “I received a message calling me for an interview at Dan-Op Bank.” “Me too.” I replied. “So maybe something will come out of

It.” replied Bongani. “You look like a mad man, green shorts, red t-shirt, blue shoes and a brown hat.” “Its colour blocking.” replied Bongani. “This is not colour blocking its colour boring.” At that moment Joe emerges from the garage holding a turntable. “Tinashe come and help me carry this speakers.” said Joe. “Okay.” I replied as I walked towards the garage. We hastily, then set up the P.A system. “You should have told us Joe that it was a swimwear party. I would have come with my swimming truck.” I said as I turned over a piece of pork I was braaing. “It was written on the invitation-card.” replies Joe as he takes a sip of the cider he is drinking. “I didn’t see it.” said Bongani. People started to trickle in and by the time the clock struck 4pm the house was buzzing with activity as people were merry making, dancing and drinking especially at the backyard were most of the action was. Joe had left us to concentrate on selecting the music. Bongani and I decided to move the braai stand near the swimming pool so that we could have a good panoramic view of the girls who were swimming in the pool. You still remember that tall guy that was hit by Jerry at the bar with the bottle. He is Chido’s older brother.” said Bongani. “I wouldn’t shade a tear for him. He deserves it.” I replied. “I spoke to Chido today and she told me her brother had been hit by someone with a bottle at Club Zero” uttered Bongani as he chucked out a huge piece of the meat. “You shouldn’t speak to Chido I had a nightmare and she was in there.” “You are joking.” said Bongani. I narrated my dream as we enjoyed the panoramic view and the meat. It struck my head that we hadn’t finished our conversation on our business idea. “You remember the conversation we had yesterday about that business venture.” I said as I placed down a glass of orange juice. If only my mother knew what I was calling a business venture. “Now you are calling it a business venture.” “Yes. Why not. After all it’s all about money.” “We could just take a stroll out in the road and there is chance we could meet up with some rich, older, beautiful and lonely lady.” said Bongani. Just as I was about to respond to Bongani, Joe arrived with a chubby guy with a bold hair and a colossal beard wearing a jean and a yellow polo shirt cut into our conversation. This guy had a funny look about him. His physical appearance resembled that of an, over weight Santa Clause experiencing a bad hair day. “Boys, this is Mr Ian Guru. His my cousin. He is the son of my uncle, the elder brother of my father.” said Joe. “Nice to, meet you.” I said. “Mr Guru that’s Tinashe Mushayabasa to the left and the other guy is Bongani Nkosi” said Joe. “Joe told me you are looking for jobs.” said MR Guru. “Yes.” Bongani and I simultaneously replied. “I will leave you guys to iron out your things.” said Joe as he walked away. So we began to explain our predicament on how we were facing difficulties in finding jobs. Through the discussion it also came to light that Ian was a chairman of a housing co- operative and also an owner of some boutiques and butcheries. Guru then said he would give us jobs as he needed help to manage both the boutique and butchery. He could no longer manage them on his own because of other growing business interests which occupied most of his time. We had a verbal agreement and we agreed that I would manage his two boutiques and Bongani managed his two butcheries. MR Guru gave us his contact details and we sent up a meeting on Thursday where we would sign our contracts. I decided not to drink any alcoholic beverage at the party after the hangover I had suffered in the morning in contrast to what I was doing Bongani was binge drinking. He was drinking like a fish in the water. The party grew

more and more, lively as the day faded away, by the time it was 7pm some guys were fast asleep on the lawn after indulging in one too many drinks. This other guy was so drunk that he started haranguing obscenities and removing his clothes. By this time the party animals had hit their stride as they got into their groove. Bongani and I weren't networking as we usually do at parties. We saw that the girls here were way out of our league, there was a huge gulf in class. "Bongani, I think it's time we hit the road now." I said as I looked at the time on my mobile phone. "I am tired, that's a good idea. Let us look for Joe and wish him a safe flight before we go." replied Bongani. We managed to find Joe who took it upon himself to escort us home. So we drove off and were dropped at our respective houses by Joe.

## CHAPTER 4 UNTIMELY MISFORTUNES

The weekend swiftly went past as a Sunday turned into a Monday morning. I woke up early so that I could bath without disturbances from my sister. I wore my slim-fit black tuxedo and brown formal lace-less shoes. Bongani and I had decided to go to the interview despite the fact that we had been offered jobs by Mr Guru. We decided to go to Dan-Op Bank because it was a big international firm and if we could impress the interviewers and find jobs there it would be better working there than working for a small time business man like Guru. I met up with Bongani at his home before we left for town in Bongani's father's car. We were dropped off in town as Mr Nkosi continued his journey to work. We arrived at the towering and immaculately constructed Joina City building which breathes life into the skyline of Harare. This is where Dan-Op Bank was situated. We made our way to the 15<sup>th</sup> floor via the transparent elevator. "Just imagine walking 15 floors." "That will be a marathon on itself." replied Bongani. "Let us ask the receptionist about where the prospective employees are being interviewed." I said. "Dan-Op Bank. Good morning. What can I do for you." said the female receptionist as she took a pause. "You are going through to Mr Samba." said the receptionist as she placed the phone receiver back. "Good morning where are the interviewees going." I asked. "Morning sir, you can sit on those chairs over there someone will notify you when the interviews will be held." So we went and sat on the chairs where we were joined by 5 more people, four women and one guy. "Saw your ex today." said Bongani. "My ex!" "Tinashe don't act like a fool." "Who?" I asked. "Courtney." replied Bongani. Courtney was the first girl I had ever dated. Me and Courtney started dating when I was 17 and still in high school. I was a bit of a late bloomer I had my first girlfriend at that age when most of my friends had already been in the dating game three years earlier and my first kiss was not until I was 18 and Courtney was the first girl I kissed by that time most of my friends had lost their virginity and I didn't lose mine until I was in varsity. I thought I was in love but in reality it was just puppy love. Our love fell through when Courtney left for the United Kingdom just after finishing high school, where her mother lived. We could not maintain a long distance relationship. Her mother had left when she was still in primary school, her father had died a few years after her mother's departure for the United Kingdom. She grew up a few houses from where I stay at her paternal grandparents' house. After Courtney left for the UK our communication at first was strong but grew weaker as time went on. The long distance relationship was just not feasible and Courtney ended up calling it quits. I knew she was coming back to Zimbabwe for a short period because she had sent me a message. "I saw her with this white dude." said Bongani. "Has to be her painter lover." Courtney had told me that she was dating some painter but I never thought it was that serious. "You lost out to a painter." said Bongani. "That's pathetic she left me for some uneducated punk. I have a degree at least that shows I am not dumb." "Not all painters are dumb, Da Vinci was a genius." said Bongani. "This guy is no Da Vinci, he is some dumb Aussie guy, who can't even spell the word painter" "So he is from Australia." "Yep, I prefer we find something else to talk about. Talking about my ex is just making me more stressed." We waited for the interviewer to come but to no avail. Whilst we waited we



struck off a conversation with this guy who also had come for the interview. The guy's name is Aaron and he told us how he was retrenched. Aaron had a limp in his step a thing he attributed to an accident. So Aaron's life story goes on like this, one day after work as he walked to the commuter omnibus terminus, on the sidewalks a commuter omnibus driver, Aaron described as psychopathic, hit him on his left side with the right side of the commuter omnibus he was driving. As Aaron narrated his story that feeling of de javu struck me as I recalled the disfigured body of Bongani's brother, Andrew, after he had being struck by a speeding commuter omnibus. The psychopathic driver was running away from the local municipal police. As if the driver had struck a pile of tissues he continued on with his journey. It was a hit and run. Aaron had to sale some household furniture to foot his medical bills because his medical aid insurance plan had a hidden clause that did not cover negligent accidental injury. Which in truth was not the real case Aaron wasn't negligent he was walking on the sidewalks and not on the road. My old man always tells me insurance companies are just a batch of thugs and crooks dressed in fancy suits, they do not use a gun to steal from you but rather a simple ballpoint pen. Most insurance companies are good examples of white collar criminals. To add insult to injury, Aaron was made redundant whilst he was in hospital. His employer's used the FIFO method first in first out method of retrenchment. When things looked like there were going to get better for Aaron all of his pension lump sum which he had invested in a house amounted to nothing. His parents should had named him misfortune or unlucky because it would had better suited him after all the misfortune which besieged him in the past five years. So Aaron bought a house which had being sold also to another person by the same person who sold him the house. Aaron had an agreement with the guy who sold him the house that the title deeds would be transferred after a week. So after a week had passed without any communication, Aaron then started to become fretful and a bit wary about the whole deal, by the time he discovered he had been duped the guy had left Zimbabwe for Luxemburg. More misery was to be fall Aaron, for the 20 years he had worked for the same company which retrenched him, a certain fixed amount of money was taken from his salary each month by Tin Insurance Company. As Aaron continued on with his story of misfortune. I started now to believe my old man and his assertion that most not if all insurance companies are wolfs dressed in sheep's clothing. The agreement with Tin Insurance Company was that upon retirement, Aaron was entitled to be paid 60% of the salary he got from his work every month until he died. It came to light that Tin Insurance Company was just another get rich scheme, an original archetypal tale of a Ponzi scheme. The owner of the Insurance had used money gained from other people who were part of the insurance scheme to pay other members who were also part of the Insurance scheme. He had done this for the past 20 years undetected and had made millions of dollars in the process. By the time it was discovered he was bankrupt and it so happened that it was the same time that Aaron had been retrenched. His fall like most African man who become rich had been accelerated by the inability to keep his zipper close. One of his many unofficial side wives happened to be mentally sharp and conniving and she ran him clean of his wealth. The guy was arrested the few assets he had where repossessed by the bank he owned money. Aaron told us that even though

the guy was arrested he was still not satisfied, in his opinion Justice does not give him food. He told us he had being unemployed for the past three years. Aaron has three children, the youngest a boy in form 1, the second born a girl doing Ordinary- level and his eldest a girl in varsity who is at university in her first year doing a Bachelors of Science Honours degree in Agricultural Economics. He told us how he was not taking any pleasure in having to rely on hand outs from his wife for financial assistance since she was the one at work and was the sole provider. He told us, he felt even though his wife was providing for the family it felt like he was been bossed around. His wife was the Principal at Belvedere Technical Teacher's college, she was a teacher by profession. He complained how he was been tormented by his in-laws for being a lazy man who relies on his wife. I could see it in his eyes that his ego had been severely bruised. It felt like his in-laws were being a bit hard on him. In the first place he was the one who paid for their daughter's tertiary education his wife. He also told us he had also paid for the younger brother of his wife from primary school right up to university. But all of that as it seems they had forgotten about it. I dared to ask Aaron if he felt happiness in spite of what was happening in his life. What he replied was not the answer I was expecting to hear. Aaron told me in spite of all misery that had fallen upon him, he said he always felt happiness whenever he woke up to the sight of his children. For him he said happiness wasn't something you could quantify like to say today I am feeling 200 grams of happiness, but rather happiness was a feeling which could be felt even if most of the things in your life are tipsy turvy. I thought I had problems in my life, I was wrong the problems I am currently facing compared to what Aaron is facing are not comparable. Aaron was facing great adversities but still remained steadfast and hopeful of better things to come. Just when we thought all hope had been lost. We heard the distinctive kokokoko sound produced by stilettos. We had been sitting for close to three hours and a half hours. A lady came where we were sitting. The lady had drowsy eyes and droopy lips. Her lips looked like they had been beaten by an army of bees. She had protruding canine teeth analogous to a vampire's teeth. She was dressed in an unflattering burgundy dress which seemed like it was sawn using paperclips and glue. She was a bit snobbish in the way she carried herself and the way she looked underneath her glasses. If there was ever a maximum prison for bad dressing she definitely would have been the first person to be arrested by the fashion police. She is not fashion savvy to say the least. "I am the human resource manager and I am sorry to inform you that there was a mix up. The positions you were going to be interviewed for, have being filled internally, sorry for any inconvenience caused." said the lady with droopy eyes in an over exaggerated brogue. She was trying by all means possible to sound Americanish. Her voice sounded like a cat was scratching her voice box. "Sorry won't get me the time you have wasted for me" said Aaron looking all perturbed in an angry tone as he stood up. My gut feeling told me there was no internal recruitment but it was rather nepotism at play. They had just employed their relatives, and saying the positions were filled internally was just a polite way to say it. "She could be a suitable candidate to be a cougar." Said Bongani as we entered the lift. "You, joking right." "I am serious as death. No ring on her it means she is single." "Are we speaking of the same lady. That lady is a vampire." "Tinashe, my friend. It's all about the money." "Seriously speaking

would you date Bongani?" "As long as she gives me the green bag, I will date her. "That's ludicrous no amount of money will make me date her." After the disappointment we both went straight home. Upon arrival I ate before I had a siesta. When I woke up I went to the living room where I was I amazed to see my father sitting with my mother. "Afternoon, you came early today." I said as I sat down on the sofa. "Yes I did. How did the interview go" replied my old man. "It was a dead end. They didn't even interview us we were told the positions were already filled internally." I replied as I scrolled the remote up and down looking for channels to watch. "You just have to be strong." said my mother. "But there is the guy Guru who promised Bongani and I jobs." "What kind of jobs?" quizzed my old man. "A manager at one of his two boutiques shops in town." "I sold the Opel and I am happy to say we have a new house. You know that co-operative that I was paying each and every month. I used the proceeds from the sale of the Opel to finish of the payments. Now I am just waiting for the finalization of the paper works." said my father looking happy. "Come to think of it Guru was also the surname of the chairman of the co-operative is he the same with your Guru or is it just a namesake." said my mother. Before I could answer Ruru entered the living room. "Good Afternoon." said Ruru dressed in her uniform. "Afternoon, how were the exams?" asked my father. "You are writing!" I exclaimed. "Yes, the exams were a bit challenging but I believe I passed." "We have a new house." said my mother. "That's nice." said Ruru. "The Guru who promised me a job is a chubby guy." I said "I think he is the same person, he has a bold head, Ian is his first name" said my old man. "That's him, the guy with the beard." I replied. We continued talking about the prospect of moving into a larger house. Today my sister was the one preparing supper and for a change she cooked a decent meal. I slept feeling happy. For me it was just another day to forget, my only hope lay in the promised job I had been offered by Guru. In my deepest thought I knew I had to find something worthwhile. I knew very much that staying at home was making me more and stressed out. Night came and went as another day was ushered in. At high school Tuesdays were called Terrific Tuesdays but lately for me they had become Troublesome Tuesday. For a moment I wish I could go back in time and relive my high school days. Being a grownup has brought its own share of headaches. I no longer feel comfortable eating food at my parent's house. All I am is a parasite that is reliant on its hosts in this case my parents are the host and I am the parasite. Staring at the ceiling I just see myself like a lost cause a person without any prospects what so ever. As I stare deep into the ceiling I start fantasizing about making it in life buying my own house, living in a posh area, driving a fast Germany or Italian car, assisting my family financially. My fantasy grows deeper I see myself being the envy of other guys. Whilst I am in that deep reverie of imagination, that seem thought comes to me maybe my search for money isn't going to be the solution to my problems. As I reflect I feel this part of me that is yawning to be happy devoid of all stress. Yesterday in the living room I could sense the ecstasy that was radiating from my parents they had found happiness the same happiness I am looking for. My father had to sacrifice his beloved car to find that euphoria. To my father that house represented a form of security not only to him but to his off-springs. As for me I don't know what it's going to take to be happy. At this point in my life I am low in morale with all of my hope

resting solely in Guru offering me a place to kick start my life. Over an hour elapses whilst I am staring on the ceiling. Removing my sheets I sit on my bed before I kneel down. Looking across the room, I close my eyes. For a few moments it feels like my brain has shut down. I remain motionless as I hold my hands closely together, before I pray silently to my creator to give me and my family members, happiness. I open my eyes. I stand up and walk out of my room in my pyjamas. The morning passes without incident. I feel a bit drowsy and sleepy as I am sitting on the sofa watching TV, I decide to go and sleep. I quickly fall asleep. Sleeping in the afternoon has become norm it's no longer a taboo as it used to be many moons ago for me. I sleep in the afternoon because I don't have anything to do. Whilst I am enjoying my afternoon catnap I hear my phone buzzing I remove my colourful sheets which are sure to blind anyone who lays their eyes on them. Staggering to my feet I walk across the room to the table where my vibrating phone is. I pick and answer the phone. "Hello." says the familiar voice of Bongani. But what boggles me is that my phone has indicated the number as unknown and I quickly ask him why he is hiding his caller id. "Bongani, why are hiding your number?" "My younger brother was playing with my phone, I think he is the one who changed the settings." "How is everything on that side?" I asked as I walked to my bed. "It's, all good can you come to my place. I have some movies that might interest you." "I will be there in a jiffy" I replied as I sat on my bed. "Okay, bye." said Bongani as he hung up the phone. I made my bed for the second time that day before I set for Bongani's place. Bongani was home with his younger brother Themba who was doing form 4 at Elis Robbins and his older sister Veolia who worked at the Grasslands Research Office in Marondera as a researcher. She stays in Marondera but is on maternity leave expecting her second child. Veolia's husband also works at Grasslands Research Office as a researcher. I knocked on the kitchen door. I once had a crush on Veolia growing up, when I was in primary and she was in university I would spend hours on end thinking of her. Come to think of it she was like my own cougar crush. But nowadays I was no longer attracted to her that love I had for her has become more of a brotherly-sisterly kind of live. I don't think I loved her because at that young age what would I had known of love. It was more of lust I felt for Veolia. "Hello, Tinashe, how is everyone at home?" asked Veolia as she opened the door. Her baby bump had grown larger since the last time I saw her. Every child in the Nkosi family has a light skin complexion. "Everyone is fine. How is the baby coming along?" I asked. "Pregnancy is something else, eating for two always. You can come in, Bongani is in his room." replied Veolia. "Do you have any cravings?" I asked as I removed my slippers before entering the house. "I really want some chocolate ice cream." "I will see what I can I do, I think I have some money at home I will give it to Bongani and he will buy one for you." I said as I entered the passage. "That will be great. I just hope it's not an empty promise." The Nkosi house had the similar layout as ours the only difference was the layout of the outside. Unlike back home their garden was at the back of the yard. "Bongani." I said as entered his room which he shared with his younger brother. "Come in and sit here on this chair." said Bongani. The bedroom had a bunk bed a table with some books on top and another table which had a TV set and a DVD on top. Unlike my room it had a fitted in wardrobe. "Chido phoned earlier she wants me to help her carry a few things from

town tomorrow. In a month's time she will be mine. So in the friend zone now." said Bongani. "More of a slave zone to me." "Anyways this is the movie I was talking about, it is called In Pursuit of Happiness. Someone give it to me and said it was good." said Bongani as he placed the disc into the DVD. "Have you seen it?" I asked. "No, I was watching another movie." I felt like I could relate to the main actor in the movie, like me he was searching for joy. Also like me the actor wasn't content about where he was in life and wanted to improve his personal well-being. The movie about this single father and his son who were facing great challenges somewhat related to my situation. What really gave me the Goosebumps was the movie was based on a true life story of Chris Gardener. Just as we were enjoying the movie, I received a call. "It's my mother calling." I said as I answered the phone. "Hello, Tinashe your father has been taken to the hospital he had a stroke." "What, but he was so bubbly today before he left for work. Which hospital is he admitted to?" I asked as my face turned red. "At Harare Hospital that's where I am going now with Ruru." I could sense it in her tone that she was shaken up with the whole thing. "Wait for me. I will be home very soon." I replied. "Okay, bye" said my mother as she hang up. "Bongani, my old man has had a stroke. I have to rush the hospital." I said as I stood up. "I will accompany you." I managed to catch my mother and sister before they left and we went to the hospital together. My mother didn't know how or what had caused my old man to have a stroke. We arrived at the hospital where we were told that my father was in a critical but stable condition. After half hour an hour of waiting at the hospital, Mr Huku a good friend of my father and also a workmate arrived with a gangly looking man dressed neatly in a formal manner. The guy dressed formally had this swagger about. "How are you holding up, Mrs Mushayabasa, Tinashe, Ruvarashe? Your husband collapsed today at work after hearing he had been duped by the housing co-operative. This man to my right is a detective he will explain everything." said Mr Huku. "Good afternoon, I am detective inspector Denis Gondo and I am with the Criminal Investigation Department Serious Fraud Unit." said detective Gondo after which he takes a pause to adjust his tie before continuing with his narration. "The chairman of the housing scheme your husband is affiliated to Mr Ian Guru was duping people and is currently on the run. The last thing we heard about Mr Guru's whereabouts is that he had fled to Bolivia." said Detective Gondo in what best can be described as a sombre tone. "How can that be, we had finished the construction of our house." quizzed my mother looking all stressed up. "Actually what occurred is that Mr Guru sold land to people in places which had been listed as wet lands." replied Detective Gondo. Construction of anything of any sort in wetlands is strictly prohibited by law in Zimbabwe. So what happened is that my Dad was called from work that houses were being struck down by council bulldozers in the place where he had just finished building a house. After receiving this call my father quickly made his way to the residential area of Ridge mond Park, where our house just been completed. Upon arrival all he could see was a complete level field all the houses in the area had been struck down what remained were mounds which were strewn all over the place. He could not fully come to terms that his investment had gone up in flames which led to his stroke. In my mind I knew that the job I had been offered was no more since the person who had offered it to me was on the run. Adjusting his tie, detective

Gondo said "One of the more unfortunate parts of this case is that Zimbabwe doesn't have an extradition treaty with Bolivia so it's almost impossible to catch Guru. To date 7000 people have been swindled by Guru." said detective Gondo. It never rains but it pours for the ordinary man. I stood in the hospital corridor totally devastated. Everything my old man had laboured for had been smashed to smithereens by one cruel act of greed. The detective told us that all of Guru's assets were frozen including his local Zimbabwean bank account. Guru had opened several oversea bank accounts, that's where most of his money was. After almost 3 days in the hospital my old man passed on. As I stood at his graveside I started to wonder my father had been killed in search of security, that house would provide security to the family. I asked myself if my pursuit of happiness would kill me or if I would live, to tell the tale. As my dad's coffin was lowered I felt weak in the bones right to the marrow, standing there with my mother holding my left hand and my sister my right hand. My father was buried at our rural area in Chivi in the family graveyard amongst his departed siblings and parents. Flashbacks of the happy moments I shared with my father started to pass through my thoughts those late nights we sat watching football dissecting the game. The mood in the house was always high whenever Manchester United played with Liverpool. My father was an avid Liverpool fan. He had fallen in love with it during the seventies and eighties were Liverpool were the undisputed champions of England. The atmosphere in the house during these games were electric as we sat down sharing our insight, after the game as tradition the loser would congratulate the winner. As I looked towards a, Musasa tree I remembered fondly the first time I fell from the tree, I was 4 years old and we had visited my paternal grandmother. My father had several times told me never to try to attempt climbing the tree. But as usually boys will be boys I went against his words and I climbed the tree. The branch I was sitting on snapped and I fell to the ground hard like a hardened bag of cement been through out from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. My father simply said "All that goes up must come down." I still remember that day like it was yesterday. Two important things my father told me I will always keep close to my heart are that in everything you do put God first and always to remain in touch with where one comes from. My elder brother didn't even help in the funeral expenditure, my father had a funeral policy but it couldn't cater for all the food costs at least the church members chipped in which helped a lot. My father was a popular man from his days as a menacing centre forward for Dynamos in the late seventies, before his career was cut short in its infancy by a freak injury sustained in an auto-motive crash right up to now where he was an effervescent church deacon. Maybe one thing I let down my father was my constant drunkenness. In spite of my drunkenness I would say my father did a great thing in raising me up in spite of the challenges he faced. Tinotenda didn't even bother to call to see how the funeral had gone. Things went from bad to worse in a space of days as my uncle the elder brother of my father and my aunt his younger sister had us evicted from the house just two days after the burial of my father. It was like a scene out of a Nigerian movie as all our property was left outside. I felt like our family had been dehumanised. In my father's family there were two boys and three girls, two girls were deceased and one boy was deceased who was my father. Legally there was nothing we could do my uncle and aunt's argument was that their father, my paternal

grandfather never signed over the house to my father and as his surviving children they were the rightful owners. What hurt me the most was that my uncle and aunt were doing this to the children of a person they shared the same DNA with and another thing that hurt me was that they had houses of their own. We were swiftly evacuated. I was left questioning myself if I could find that happiness I so much yearned for. If there was a time in my life I had to lift my head high it was now. Amai Louisa agreed to give us a place to stay. My mother sold some of the furniture and some of it she sent it to her younger sister who lived in Chitungwiza.

## CHAPTER 5 WENERA

It was almost a month since the untimely death of my father. I had gone to a couple of interviews since then but nothing had come up. I was sitting in Bongani's room as we discussed the different alternatives we could take to make ends meet. We never really followed up on the cougar business we had earlier to do, because we just decided it wasn't worth it. We saw that we were going to be some play thing or puppet of some lonely lady and most of this rich older women have issues with men. In their mind set they believe man are too controlling and as result if you end in a relationship with them you end up been a door mat, they just step over you and there is nothing you can do. There are the breadwinners. Another factor was that it was just not feasible, what if we were to fall in love with an older women, because sometimes there is more to it than the physical contact. Just imagine myself coming with this rich, older lady to my mum and I will be like "Mum, this is my girlfriend, and I intend to marry her." That would surely send my mother to her grave. The other thing which made us rethink the cougar alternative as a way to economically emancipate ourselves was the issue of diseases. Surely with all of this in mind we decided not to become ben 10s "Tinashe, I have finally decided to go down South." said Bongani. "Do you know how dangerous it is in S.A" I said. "The bigger the risk the bigger the reward. I have a cousin of mine who I will be staying with as I look for work" "So you are ready to take the route." I said whilst I rubbed my nose. "I am more ready more than the word ready. Do you have a passport?" "Yes. Why do you ask?" I said. "You can come with me, I could ask my cousin if he could stay at his house" replied Bongani. "If you could twist his arm, maybe I could change my stanza about S.A." "We have to try." said Bongani. "I feel like I won't make it. I will remain like this. I don't feel like trying." I said as I became emotional. "Remember that saying. Giving up on your goal because of one setback is like slashing your other three tires because you got one flat." "But, Bongani I have faced more than one setback." "We just have to keep trying until we make it my dear friend." If my trip to South Africa was going to happen then it would be de-javu. My paternal grandfather had once made the trip down to South Africa over 4 decades ago. He worked in Wenera the name given by Zimbabweans to South Africa. He worked in the gold mines as a miner. He left whilst my father was still a young boy attending primary school in Chivi. The money my grandfather used to buy the house in Highfield was from the salaries he received in the mines. I do not know if my journey down South is going to yield anything. "You could just become a Ben 10 if you don't want to go to S.A." said Bongani. "Are you, still in contact with Chido?" I asked, trying to change the conversation. "Yes, yesterday she asked if I could give her some mathematics textbooks." replied Bongani. "So in the slave zone" I said before continuing "She is re writing mathe matics." "Yes, she is supple menting O-Level mathematics." said Bongani as he opened the window. I sighed "A-aaaaaargh. Some fresh air." as I took a pause before saying "I hope you won't date Chido. What I saw in my dream, that girl is a witch." I said. "I don't think I will be involved with her romantically, I will keep her as a friend, because I thought I could match her standards but after engaging with her in



some deep conversation I saw that she is high maintenance.” replied Bongani. “It’s best I discuss with my mother about the S.A trip. I could use the money I received from my father’s pension for transport and other costs.” I said. I had received my portion of my father’s pension after it had been partitioned between me, my mother, Ruru and my nephews Louisa and Leroy as per my father’s wishes in his will. I left soon after the arrival of Mr Nkosi from work. I told my mother about my plans to go to South Africa which as expected were meant with some objections. My mother thought going to South Africa was dangerous and she feared for my life but I reassured that nothing would happen to me even if something occurred to me it was worth taking the risk. After reaching a compromise with my mother I waited for the response from Bongani, if his cousin was cool with me staying with them. I wasn’t seeing Bongani as frequent as I used to because of the distance as I no longer lived in Highfield. Two days after we had discussed about going down south I received a call from Bongani. In which he told me his cousin had given him the green light and I could stay with them in Johannesburg. We bought two tickets at Road-port in Harare where buses going to South Africa are boarded. We sat in the luxury blue Chinese made U-Tong bus as we prepared to take the trip down south. Time would tell if the pastures were greener on the other side. Bongani was going to reconnect with his maternal roots I was taking the same trip taken by my paternal grandfather almost half a century ago. We talked whilst the bus travelled but by the time we reached Masvingo we were both fast asleep. As the bus grinded to a halt we realised we had reached Beitbridge border post the most southerly border post in Zimbabwe. “Wake up Bongani we are at the border.” “Another 400 or so kilometres to cover.” said Bongani in a sleepy tone. We went through the immigration process which was moving at snail’s pace we had to go through immigration at the Zimbabwean side after which we had to through immigration on the South African side. It was a long process taking into account that Beitbridge is this busiest port of entry both on the South African and Zimbabwean side. We finally finished the process and were now officially in South Africa, passing through those towns I had heard from cross boarder travellers back home like the towns of Musina and Polokwane. Not in my distant thoughts did I ever think I would make the journey to South Africa. As the bus cruised along the N1 highway one of the busiest roads in South Africa, I could see the glittering lights of the sky scrapers which lay in the midst. We were a stone throw away from Igoli as the locals call it, loosely translated to the place of gold, or simply as Jo-burg the name used by most Zimbabweans. I didn’t know if I was going to make it in the big metropolis of Johannesburg the financial hub not only of South Africa but of Africa. Jo-burg is twice as big as Harare. I am going to try to make it in Jo-burg a city with one of the biggest margins between rich and poor, some of its rich people walking about the pavements and streets of Sandton and some of its less privileged inking out a living in the notoriously infamous area of Hilbrow. We disembarked from the Pioneer U-tong bus and we were greeted with a short and slim light skinned fella dressed in a faded blue skinny jean and a plain white t-shirt. This fella is Bongani’s cousin Dumisani. Dumisani is the son of the elder brother of Bongani’s mother. This is n’t Bongani’s first time in South Africa he came here regularly for holidays and has a good understanding with Dumisani who is of the same age. Dumisani and Bongani hugged

each other and greeted each other in Sotho. Bongani could fluently speak Sotho as a result of his trips here and also his mother who also spoke with him in Sotho back home in Zimbabwe, he could also speak Ndebele a thing his father made sure he did. "Long time." said Bongani. "Almost 2 years since I last saw you. I believe this is your friend Tinashe." said Dumisani as he took some of the bags Bongani was holding. "Yes" replied Bongani. "Welcome to South Africa." said Dumisani as he put down one of the bags he was holding before he extended his right hand to me. "Thank you." I said as I gave him a firm handshake. "I have parked my car there, so we can make away there." said Dumisani as he took the lead. The bus terminus was a hype of activity and also heard stories of unsuspecting Zimbabweans who had been victims of the many pickpockets who roamed around the terminus. We had arrived in Johannesburg after almost 14 hours on the road, a great chunk of that time was spent at Beitbridge border post. As we embarked into the Volks wagen GTI, I noticed a guy wearing a hat stabbing another guy in full view of the people before running away from the scene. The culprit was apprehended by two guys who were able to dislodge him of his knife. I became so afraid I wanted to return on the next bus going to Zimbabwe. At the same time as the stabber was caught there was a scuffle as people were inflicting a, would be pickpocket with an unforgiving session of instant mob justice. The pickpocket was covering his head as he lay down blood gashing all over his body as people shouted "Tsotsi, Tsotsi" clambering him with bare hands and anything they could lay their hands on. It was quite obvious that if the people kept beating the alleged pickpocket, he would die sooner than later. As we listened to the radio as the car made its way on the freeway a conversation based on the scenes which occurred at the terminus erupted. "That was a good hiding that guy got." said Dumisani. "I am not a believer in mob justice. Personally I think it's barbaric and so uncivilized." said Bongani. "I think it's the best way to deal with criminals like that guy." I said as I chipped into the conversation with my own point of view. "Totally agree with you Tinashe. I believe it's of no use reporting a person to the police. That same person will be arrested and few months he is back wreaking havoc." said Dumisani as he lowered the radio volume. "What if the mob kills a person worse off if that person is killed for a trivial item like a pack of bubble gums, Is that justice." said Bongani. "It is justice for me, because it will teach anyone attempting to steal that's it is a bad idea." said Dumisani. The conversation wedged on and on as it was two against one. We arrived at an apartment block where the electric gate opened up automatically. Dumisani lived in Killarney in the suburb of Rosebank. The, apartment block a modern 5 story building. We had to climb the stairs since the elevator was currently undergoing repairs. Dumisani told us the repair work which had started in the morning was halted a few minutes into the job, after a squabble between the owners of the building and the company contracted to do the repairs over payment issues. The climb was made more tiring because we had luggage. "Welcome to my humble quarters." said Dumisani as he opened the door. Nothing seemed humble about the place which was beaming with modern accessories. A set of black leather sofas was at the centre of the sunken lounge which had an adjoining dining room. A huge plasma Sony 42 inch high definition television set was mounted on to the walls, in front of the television set was a striking and beautiful wooden cupboard with glass doors which had

a decoder and a Sony home theatre with two tall speakers positioned on either side of the cupboard. Inside the glass doors were pictures of Dumisani, an old radio and eight bottles of premium wine including a 750ml bottle of Johnnie-Walker Red Label. The house had a suited carpet which covered all the rooms in exception to the kitchen, the bathroom and toilet which had tiles. Dumisani turned on the air conditioning system. A cool air started to circulate around the room. The dining room had a dining table which had 8 sets of red dining chairs “Bongani you can come with me to the bedroom we will share the room and Tinashe you can sleep in the patio I tried to make it a conducive, place for sleeping. There is a sleeping bag in the re.” said Dumisani. The flat was a one bed roomed and had an enclosed patio. “Thanks for letting me stay here.” I said. “You are welcome. If you up to it I can take you to some hot and happening night spots here in Rosebank.” said Dumisani. “I am a bit tired, but a drink or two won’t hate.” said Bongani. “I would love to see the spots.” I said. “Okay, you can freshen up if you want, the bathroom is on the first door to your right.” said Dumisani. Bongani had a quick shower after which I also showered. We left for the Design district a popular recreational place in Rosebank. Dumisani took us to a popular up market bar called the Hush bar and lounge. It had a huge sign written HUSH imprinted on to the walls. The bar was a slick and sophisticated bar. It was the first time I was in an up-market bar it was a far cry from my favourite hideout Club Zero back home. The counter tops in the bar were made from top of the range wood it had this glistening look. The bartenders were well dressed. Youths were dancing to some electro house music. All of the ladies were elegantly dressed and had high heels. A big number of the ladies had tight fitting and short clothes. On entering the bar for the first time one would assume that it was a must for all the ladies to hold a glass in their hands, since most the ladies had wine glasses. A white lady most probably in her early twenties dressed in a very short, dress, which left nothing out of the imagination and matching pink nude pumps and a pink top which showed a great part of her breasts. Half of her hair was dyed red and the other part ginger. She had earrings right round her right ear and also had a piercing on her tongue, nose and belly bottom. What was most striking about her was her body art. Her left hand resembled a scale of a python with tattoos all over it whilst on her left thigh she had a huge butterfly shaped tattoo and on her right thigh she had a bow and arrow tattoo. Some people back home do have tattoos but it was the first time I had ever seen live and direct a person with so much body art. The lights illuminated an almost reddish light. The tempo and the vibe was something that I hadn’t experienced before. A coloured disc jockey who had small fashionable headphones was sampling the mostly electro house songs on a virtual turntable. The sound produced by the speakers wasn’t deafening nor was it too low to hear but it was audible enough to be heard. The sound was a notch perfect. “Bartender, A martini.” said Dumisani as he took a pause. “What would you like?” asked Dumisani. “I will stick to the lagers, give me a Hansa Pilsener.” replied Bongani. “What about you Tinashe?” asked Dumisani. “A Pilsener will do.” I replied. “Okay, one martini and two extra cold Hansa Pilsners.” said Dumisani. I watch with great amazement as one of the, bartender’s threw an aluminium bottle shaker behind his head and catches it with ease as he concocts a cocktail. I have never been a fan of cocktails or wines I prefer the lagers. We sat on the cushy and comfy chairs as we

enjoyed our drinks. "This is a great place." I said. "Yes. It's a great place to sit, drink and unwind on a wearisome day." said Dumisani. Through our conversations we had as we drank I could see that Dumisani was an open minded and laid back guy. We had 3 rounds of drinks before we left the bar and returned home. After placing the sleeping bag I slept like a log. I don't know if it was the ghastly event of watching a person been stabbed or the nightlife of Rosebank that had made forget to contact my mother on the safe trip I had.

## CHAPTER 6 WHAT A BEAUTY

I woke up way after ten in the morning after which I went to the sitting room where I saw Bongani watching some news. “I was waiting for you to wake up. Dumisani went to work, he gave me these two tickets.” said Bongani as he adjusted the volume of the television. “Morning, tickets for what.” I asked looking all confused. “To the cricket game Zimbabwe against South Africa. There were complementary tickets.” replied Bongani. Absa were the main sponsors of the South African cricket team and Dumisani worked there as a marketing officer, so through Absa’s connection with the Cricket South Africa some of the marketing team were given tickets for the one of twenty-twenty match between Zimbabwe and South Africa. “Do you know how to get to the ground, anyways what time is this match?” I asked “It’s starting at 5 pm today. Dumisani left me some money and also instructed me on how to get to the ground.” “Did you call home yet?” I asked. “I just spoke to my mother and told her we arrived safely. Dumisani said you are free to use the landline.” So I phoned my mother and informed her of my safe journey I could tell by the tone of her voice that she was a bit worried about me. We sat and watched the television. We left for the Wanderers Cricket Ground at around 2 pm were the match was been played. It was a hot summer’s day so we dressed to the weather we both wore shorts and sandals. Even in the night temperatures did not deep that much. The match was a day and night game. Dumisani had called Bongani that he was going to drive straight to the cricket ground after work. We were one of the first people to enter into the ground as time passed on people began to fill the ground. The match was sold off two days earlier. We sat on the grass embankments as we enjoyed our quarts of South African brewed Castle Lager beer. Zimbabwe came out to bat first after 8 overs and were sitting on 78 runs for the loss of three wickets. Dale Steyn, the Phalaborwa Express as he is nicknamed by the fans, came running down the track as he delivered a 145km/hr delivery to the hard hitting Zimbabwean all-rounder Elton Chigumbura. The Zimbabwean batsman lashed onto the ball and produced a strong straight drive. The ball went high into the sky and I kept my attention on the ball which landed in the hands of a fan, standing about 4 meters away from where I was. I quickly turned my attention from the fan to a lady standing near the guy who had caught the ball. The lady was wearing a bikini top, sandals and had a sarong wrapped around her from the waist downwards. I couldn’t remove my eyes from the lady who had silky dark hair tied in a ponytail, a nice tanned brown skin, a drop dead body structure with a face to die for. She was the epitome and true embodiment of beauty. This lady was a revelation and living testimony to the infinity artistic capabilities of nature. Everything on her seemed to be in perfect alignment and symmetry from head to the toes. She had alluring beauty. This lady was that type that would tell a man to jump in a bed full of scorpions and one would jump without hesitation. For about a minute I wasn’t concentrating on the match as I was rather spellbound and engrossed in the beauty specimen. I then moved my attention back to the game, a few minutes later I decided to tell Bongani about the stunning lady I

had seen. “Bongani, look there,” I said pointing in the direction the lady was in. “What’s special about those guys?” asked Bongani. “But I am sure that there was a girl there.” I replied. “Was, is a past tense. There is no girl there.” “You should have seen. That girl is.” I said as I took a pause trying to figure a word that would best describe the sheer splendour and gorgeousness of the lady. “You are even out of words. She sure is something special.” Just as I was about to say something, Bongani’s phone began to ring. After a few minutes Bongani hang up the call. “That was Dumisani, he says he has arrived at the ground.” “You told him we are sitting at?” I asked. “Yes, I told him.” “Where did you get a line from?” I asked. “I am still using my line from Zimbabwe it’s on roaming, I am moving with technology.” The atmosphere in the ground was exhilarating. Over twenty thousand fans were crammed into the ground. When people say sports unites people that’s no fallacy because I witnessed it first hand, white, coloured, Indian and blacks all were singing in harmony. I really got all emotionally during the Mexican wave. It was just a huge cluster of people from different creeds, social status and races holding each other. The wave was just perfect for a moment I forgot my troubles I had that joy, that happiness that I had been lingering for. Even if the happiness was going to last for a few hours it was worth it. I was so caught in the moment I began to sing along to some of the Afrikaans and Zulu songs I didn’t even understand. The ground was filled with jubilation. The ground was filled to the rafters with well over 30000 people in attendance. We were now watching the match with Dumisani. The match on itself was riveting and the match went right to the wire as it had to be decided by the last ball. Needing 6 runs to win from the last ball with a wicket in hand South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis smashed the ball for 6 and South Africa won the match by a wicket. It could only best be described as a cruel defeat for a Zimbabwean team that had played their hearts out. I was heartbroken that my team had lost but I was on cloud nine, I was just in a rapture of delight. This was the first time I was truly happy since the death of my father. Dumisani then took us for supper at a restaurant in the Design District of Rosebank. The name of the restaurant was Matisse. It specialises in French inspired culinary. Matisse is situated at the periphery of Design District. We entered into the restaurant which was just over half full. A nice aroma swept through the restaurant which was lit by beautiful golden chandeliers, with glossy ceramic tiles covering the walls and a stunning Pegasus tiled floor which created an exquisite outlook. The tables were glistening and were made out of pure Mukwa wood. We sat 3 tables away from the entrance. The restaurant which was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor had a 270 degree view of the Design District. You could see the bright lights of the houses which lay in the near vicinity which made the view more awe-inspiring. In the background laid back jazz tunes were being played which had a soothing effect on the mind. So we ordered our meals. Out of inquisitiveness, I ate a meal delightfully named a canard. I didn’t know that a canard is a duck, but I enjoyed the meal. The last time I had eat a three meal course was in high school when as a prefect I was part of the prefects, who went to training at a local lodge. The difference between that experience and now was that the food at Matisse was exotic. “Merci.” I said. “You are welcome.” replied Dumisani. “Eating French food has made you to speak French.” said Bongani as he wiped his mouth with a servant. “That’s the only word of

French I know.” I said. At that particular moment a white guy clad in black tuxedo knelt on his knees and proposed to a white lady who was dressed in a shiny silk strapless red dress and red strappy high heels. The way the lady reacted showed she was astounded and at the same time happy. It was a straight yes from the lady who started to shed tears. “Are you going to get married?” I asked. “Not anytime soon.” replied Dumisani. “As for me no, marriage is a huge leap and I just want to make sure the girl I marry is the right one. What about you?” asked Bongani. “I agree with Bongani, I will take my time.” I said. We started discussing about marriage how it turned it something which resembled child’s play. Marriage nowadays was comical and people divorced each other within months of marriage which was just preposterous. People divorcing each other were usually involved in gory fights for children. At one point in time in our discussion Dumisani changed his stanza about marrying anyone. He argued that marrying someone whom he would divorce and have to share things with was just ludicrous. Dumisani told us he would rather co habit with a girl without paying lobola or asking for her hand in marriage because he thought it was easier to cohabit. He told us co habitation was less stressful than going through the whole divorce procedure. So the discussion soon turned into a religious debate, Bongani and I advocating for marriage whilst Dumisani stuck to his guns about cohabitation. We decided to go the bar which adjoined the Matisse to play some darts. The debate cooled of as we concentrated on the darts. We played two rounds of darts all of which I received the wooden spoon and both Dumisani and Bongani had a win each. Maybe I had found that happiness I was searching for or maybe it was just a passing phase.

## CHAPTER 7 FALSE HOPE

After the two rounds of darts we went home. Where we each retreated to our respective sleeping areas, Bongani and I had decided to go the Home Affairs Offices in Pretoria to apply for work permits. So we had to wake up early in the morning so that we could be served at the Home Affairs offices. We left at 5.30 am for Pretoria which was not far from Johannesburg. As the sun rose steadily a new day was beginning. There was a long line as many people were also seeking work permits not only from Zimbabwe but from other countries. At first the line was a bit slow but it began to gather pace and started to move much faster. I saw a group of Somalis who told us they had walked from their country to South Africa. Most of these guys were pale looking, one of the guys told us a chilling account of how they had encountered a lion in the Kruger National Park and how one of his friend lost his life to the lion. The Somalis were seeking asylums. Finally after hours in the line our turn came. The process on itself was a bit cumbersome and there was a lot of red tape. We had to move from one room to the other I didn't like the response from some of the workers at the offices. Some of the workers at the Home Affairs Offices were polite but most of them were just rough, especially this short and bold guy who spoke rudely. His voice will forever be in my mind even if I have amnesia I would recognise his voice. In huge contrast to this guy a lady in her middle ages always with a smile who was polite seemed to be enjoying her work in spite of the pile of paperwork that was on her desk. My mother had told it was going to be difficult trying to ink out a living in a foreign land. So after submitting our papers the waiting game ensued. Whilst we waited for our work permits, Bongani was employed as a clerk by his Brother's mother at his supermarket in Johannesburg. I was able to find work at a construction company owned by a man by the name of Francois de Wit. You could hear by de Wit's accent that he was a pure Afrikaner. His English had that Afrikaner corruption evident to this was when he pronounced the word there as threh. Workers nicknamed him fatty boom-boom because he had a big belly and was a bit overweight. His belly had this wobbling effect where it covered a great deal of lower abdomen. My job at the construction site was to unload and carry cement, bricks and other building materials to the building area. I have to admit the work was tiring. Although the job was hard I kept working harder and harder each day because I knew the remuneration was good. I had agreed with Francois de Wit on my salary and I was pleased with the offer. Each day brought its own fair of obstacles. At least no dime was spent on breakfast and lunch because it was prepared for us at work. One day whilst I was at work I received a call from Bongani, who sounded chuffed and ecstatic. He told me that his work permit had been approved. I am so happy for my best friend. My permit on the other hand has yet to be approved. All the construction was being done in Johannesburg and I was still staying with Dumisani. Bongani and I had planned to



move out after the month end when we received our pay cheques. We had agreed that we would find a one room to rent, and we would share the costs. We did want to overstay our welcome at Dumisani's place that's why we wanted to move out. After the month end had come I waited for my salary but nothing showed, four days after the day my paycheque should had been paid, me and nine other undocumented foreigners who were also in the same predicament as me, converged at de Wit's office. The other workers who had the proper documents received their pay in time. We aired our grievances to de Wit but it seemed to fall on deaf ears. Unbeknown to us, was that de Wit had called SAPS the South African Police Services to notify them of illegal migrates who were besieging his office. When we saw the SAPS pickup truck coming we ran as fast and far as our legs could do. The whole experience left totally distraught. This experience taught me that some people only care about maximising profits they don't care about other human beings. A month had been wasted working for nothing. All that sweat shaded for zilch. Day in day out I laboured and slaved in the hope that, in the end I could repatriate back home some money for my mother's medical expenses. With all the things happening in my life I just saw no way out. De Wit didn't even have a conscience to think that the undocumented workers he took advantage of also have families to support like him. No words can best describe a person like de Wit. In short I will just say inhuman. After running tired without pay I went home. I didn't know the whereabouts of the other nine guys, because when we fled we ran in different directions. Arriving at the flat looking all tired and weary I head straight to sleep. Three days earlier Bongani had gone for interviews at Absa for a position in the accounts department. Dumisani had his set of keys to the house, I had mine and Bongani had his own. I sat on the sofa as I contemplated about going back to Zimbabwe. I had worked my socks off only to receive nothing. As I sat watching the television thoughts of happiness started to flood my line of thought. To me happiness was a foreign concept something that I could only dream about. Questioning myself if ever things are going to good in my life. Manifestation of calamity after calamity have curtailed me from accomplishing my potential. Maybe instead of mourning about missed opportunities I should focus on what I have and how I can use it to my advantage. As my thoughts grow deeper and deeper I hear the door been opened. "Today you arrived early from work." said Bongani as he closed the door. "I was chased from work." I replied. "What for?" asked Bongani as he sat down. So I explained to him about how de Wit had exploited me and the other undocumented foreign workers and how he had called the police to arrest us. "That's rough." said Bongani. "So how was work?" I asked. "Work was fine." "People back home are expecting me to send them money but now, it's impossible." "Don't despair, something will come up soon, just wait and see." said Bongani. "It better happen sooner rather than later, because if doesn't happen It will push me to do things I didn't intend doing." "Well I have good news, remember the interview I went to." said Bongani. "The Absa one." I replied. "Yes that one." "What about it?" I asked. "I got the job. The first 3 months will be on trial bases. If I impress then there will give a permanent position." "That's great news. Praise be to the almighty." I said as I stood up and embraced Bongani. "It will be great if I can get the job on a permanent position. The packs include a company car and a good salary." said Bongani. "What about a

company wife?" "I didn't see that clause." replied Bongani. "Which Absa branch will you be working at?" I asked "In Pretoria, when last did you call home?" "Two days ago and I promised I would send something." I replied. "Don't worry I will give you some of my salary." said Bongani. "I can't accept, I think it will be best if I returned home." "You have in numerous way. You have to accept. I think you should just wait a bit and I assure something will turn up." Bongani kept giving me that hope that it would all turn up good. He was going to start working at Absa the following week and today was his last official day working at his uncle's supermarket. "So are going to commit or are you going to stay in Pretoria?" I asked. "I am going to stay in Pretoria, The pay I received for this month will be enough for rent, food and transport." replied Bongani. "I think I will be returning home in the following days with the money left." I said. "You can come and stay with me in Pretoria, I know you are not comfortable staying here any longer." "I will think about it." "Whilst you stay with me you can look for work in Pretoria." said Bongani. Looking for a place to work in a big corporations was a difficult thing especially if you don't have a work permit. Whilst we were chatting Dumisani arrived. I told him my ordeal and he was very sympathetic he even offered to find work for me. Today drinks were on Bongani as he was celebrating his new found employment. There was no need to go to the bar since Bongani had bought two six packs of Amstel long tom beer on his way home. So we drank 4 long tons each. Days came and went. After some days of extensive and rigorous periods of pondering and meditating on Bongani's suggestion I decided to move to Pretoria with Bongani. Dumisani then gave Bongani some money to buy kitchen utensils, he also gave us two sleeping bags and the radio which he didn't use. The radio was in good shape. Dumisani not only opened his door to his cousin but also to a complete stranger a thing that I would always be grateful for. He had the spirit of humanity, that ability to share with others. I didn't know if the hope I was holding on to was true or was just a figment of my imagination.

## CHAPTER 8 AN OPENING

Bongani and I rented out a one roomed cottage in the high density suburb of Mamelodi in Pretoria, the administrative capital of South Africa. It was a small house but it had all the essentials we needed, electricity, a toilet and running water on a tap which was located outside the cottage at the back. We didn't have the luxuries of a bathroom or shower but we had to make do with what was there. Whenever a person needed to bath, one would simply go outside fill the bucket with water depending on the prevailing weather condition, if it was cold we would boil the water and if it was hot we would bath in the cold water. The cottage is located behind the main house. The main house is a nine roomed house. The owner of the house MR Zulu is a widower and a retired camera man who once worked for the South African Broadcasting Commission. The state-run television service. MR Zulu has what can be best described as a bevy of beautiful girls. He has seven children all of them girls and of the seven two of them are married. The youngest of the seven children is currently doing Matric the equivalent of Upper six or Advanced level in Zimbabwe. My challenge hasn't been of living in a small space but it has been of bumping into the daughters of MR Zulu. "So you are sure you won't make a move on any of those beauties?" asked Bongani in reference to MR Zulu's daughters. "I came to find work and not to merry make." "That's the spirit." said Bongani. "What about you. Will you make a move?" "There all beautiful but there aren't my type." replied Bongani. "I am amazed you have a type." "But what was MR Zulu thinking renting out his cottage to two bachelors." said Bongani. "Maybe he was smoking weed or something." "Well I have to be on time, this is my first day at work." said Bongani as he polished his shoes. As we left the house one of MR Zulu's daughter's Andile waved at us. She was the 5<sup>th</sup> daughter of Mr Zulu. "Did you see the way she looked at you?" I said. "What about it?" asked Bongani. "I think she has the hots for you." I said as I opened the gate. "I think you are mad. Man I would have known if she fancied." said Bongani. "Don't say I didn't tell you bro." "All the best in your search for work, hope something comes up." said Bongani. "I hope so." We boarded a commuter omnibus popularly known as a taxi by South Africans back home in Zimbabwe we simply call them combis. After some hours of inquiring about open places to work, I finally found a job in Pretoria. I found the job at a shop near the central business district. The shop sold different type of things from electronics to clothing and the owner was an Indian man by the name of Singh. In the background of the shop some Hindu songs will be playing. Early in the morning MR Singh would burn some incense. It was something he did to chase away bad influences. His wife who also worked at the shop always adorned colourful saris. His son who was somewhat of a rebel also worked at the store. His son Rajesh drank alcohol and smoked cigarettes. The shop always had some Hindu tune playing in the background. I worked from Monday to Friday for two weeks and the other two weeks on weekends. I alternated shifts with a Geraldine a lady in middle ages, when I worked on Saturdays and Sundays on the weekend shift she worked during the week from Monday up to Friday. Geraldine is a South Africa Sotho lady. During month ends we don't alternate and we would work together because the work load would have

increased significantly. The shop was always filled with cross border traders, the merchandise sold was cheaper to buy as compared to the other shops in the region. On some occasions I would sell goods to Zimbabweans and the feeling you get when you meet someone from home is priceless. I would conversant with them in Shona which really got on the nerves of Mr Singh who in his fickle mind thought we were joking about him. The job was less trying than at the construction site. Personally I don't know if Singh is paranoid or just a control freak because he never leaves me alone with the cash register and the way he keeps movements of his only daughter Priyanka. It's like he has a log book about her movements. On this particular day I was minding my own business, behind the counter, when Priyanka entered the shop with her coloured friend from university. Her friend was beautiful to say the least but when Mr Singh saw I was staring at her I felt the full wrath of a jealous father. He questioned me if I was being paid to watch her daughter or to sell goods. If only he knew I wasn't interested in his daughter. In comparison working for an over protective Singh was far much better than working for a cunning and ethic less de Wit. The only drawback working at Singh's was the way remuneration was given. Some month ends I was given three quarters of my full payment some months half. Since I started working for Singh I have never been paid my salary in full. The way Singh is stingy with money one would think his hands were super-glued to it. In my Shona culture we say as stingy as a butler eagle, because one really sees the feathers of a butler eagle on the ground. That's why I nicknamed him butler. Every month I made sure I sent home a part of my salary and some groceries. Even though the money I repatriated back home wasn't much I knew it would be useful. One thing that bothered me was the way my elder brother was acting towards us as family, the silent treatment was hurting everyone. His wife would make up excuses to my nephew and niece why their father wasn't calling. I tried calling him on several occasions but it was a futile attempt because every time the phone just said "Number is no longer in use." I knew pretty much that my brother had scratched us from his life. As days passed I felt homesick more than ever. I missed the cooking of mother my rivalry with Ruru but I kept the faith that one day I would be back home. All those fears of been stabbed had slowly drifted away as I settled to the South African way of life. Each and every day I would wake up and go to work I would feel a certain emptiness in me. I felt a part of me yawning for happiness. That sort of happiness that can't be expressed in words like that joy my old man had when he mistakenly thought he had bought a house the same joy that filled that lady who cried when she was asked for her hand in marriage, those were not tears of sadness like the ones I usually have but tears of joy. That type happiness right now in the state of mind I am feels like it's a million of light years away. All the zest I have about finding it, is slowly fading away like the sun moving towards the sunset. But one thing keeps that burning passion to find it, is that fact that when the sun sets it rises again the following day. Maybe I am not going to get my happiness today but deep inside, I have this inkling that tomorrow will be my day to rejoice, but only time will tell. It's not as if I am jealous of my best friend but it feels like I am exactly the opposite with King Midas everything I touch seems to turn to ashes. My best friend is already making in-roads in to one of South Africa's biggest banks but I am in disparity I am wailing away at the bottom of the South African job

pyramid. With every deep thought I take I also take a step closer to insanity. Almost all of my peers have something to show for their work, I have nothing. I know if I remain around guys like de Wit and Singh who take the advantage that I don't have the correct documents to seek employment I will surely forever be miserable. I was wrong to believe that I had found a breakthrough an opening when I started working for Singh because, it has been like playing the entire ninety minutes of a football match whole heartedly but losing out to a dubiously awarded penalty kick in injury time.

## CHAPTER 9 SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

The day followed the usual pattern, going to work having to deal with the ever prying eyes of Singh. It was Tuesday and I had arrived back home and as usual Bongani was already at home. I was always the last one in having to work overtime without any overtime payment. I opened the front door which was the only door which led into the small one roomed house. In a week's time we would be moving away to Centurion another residential suburb in Pretoria. Bongani had finished his probation period at Absa and had been offered a permanent position and, accompanying the position was a good salary which was more than enough to rent a two bedroom garden flat. Bongani had invited me to stay with him, I offered some objections saying that I was happy staying alone here in Mamelodi and I could afford the rent. Truth of the matter was I wasn't going to be able to pay the rent alone and also send money back home on my meagre salary. We had already notified Mr Zulu on our move. Bongani had bought a double bed, a 32 inch television set and a 4 plate stove which were crammed into the room leaving little space for walking. A month ago Bongani got his driver's license, as for me I did not see any reason for getting one it is not like I am expecting to buy a car soon. "How, was work?" asked Bongani. "The usual." I replied. "Time flies it has been almost eight months since you started working for that Indian." said Bongani. "Sure it does. What did you have for supper?" I said as I sat down on the bed which also acted as our sofa. "I ate rice and some of that leftover soup from yesterday. The rice is in the pot on the stove but you will have to cook the soup because I ate it all." "No need I am too tired to cook I will just have the rice." I said as I stood up. "You still remember Reneilwe?" asked Bongani. "How could I forget her!" Reneilwe is the girlfriend of Dumisani what struck me about their relationship was their longevity. They had been dating each other for the last six and a half years. "They are getting married in six months' time and we have been invited to the engagement party on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this month." said Bongani as he showed me the engagement party card. "The 23<sup>rd</sup> is this following Saturday. We have to go because Dumisani came through for us big time." I said as I opened the pot of rice. I still could not believe that it was the same Dumisani who objected to marriage a few months back but who in the near future would be saying vows at his marriage. "Guess what happened to Me." said Bongani. "You were given a handshake by the president of the United States of America." I said jokingly. "Andile came here. I won't even start with what she was wearing." "Here at the cottage." I said. "Yes, and she was acting all strange. At first she wanted help in downloading an application which I did effortlessly but she became all." "Seductive." I injected. "Correct, she just started caressing me on my hands. At that moment I politely told her to leave my room." "What happened next?" I asked. "She came out right there and told me she had a crush on me." "Told you that she fancied you." "She has loss morals, even when I rejected her moves she kept on trying to seduce me. I finally told her that I was going to smack her." "Did you smack her?" I asked looking all edgy as I ate the rice. "No, but she threatened to report me to the police if I didn't sleep with her for attempted rape." "I hope you didn't take her to bed." I said. "Not in a million years."

replied Bongani. "Then how did you avert the danger?" I asked. "I don't know if it was fate or luck but before Andile entered the room I was singing some of the lyrics I wrote yesterday and my mobile phone was on voice record." replied Bongani. I knew Bongani wrote musical lyrics back home in Zimbabwe but what I didn't know was that he still was writing. To be partisan enough his lyrical content was amazing but his vocal ability was far from being the best. His singing voice sounded like a hungry barking dog "So you had your conversation on record." I said. "So I played back our conversation and she was ashamed. She asked forgiveness and left there and there." replied Bongani. We were supposed to move out in a week's time but because of what happened we decided to live the following day to avoid the awkwardness that would follow. Of all of Mr Zulu's daughters Andile was the odd one. She was the wolf amongst the sheep. His other daughters were well manned. I had even forged a friendship with Katlego his 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter who I usually spoke to when we met. She was doing her last year in medicine at the University of Johannesburg. She was chatty and down to earth. Bongani thought I would end up dating her but as I had earlier said to him I wasn't going to date her because there was no attraction between us, it was like trying to put two north poles together, simple science would tell you that repulsion would occur. Though Katlego and I could quickly strike a conversation we didn't agree on a lot of things especially when it came to gender roles. I have a post modernistic notion with a dash of traditional values on gender roles. I still believe women should always be below their husbands at home, but at the workplace if the lady is the boss then as a man working below her you should respect her. On the other hand Katlego is a pro feminist. She believes women should be at equals with men at home and even insisting that if the man is incompetent the women should be the head of the household. Maybe if Katlego wasn't a pro feminist I think the attraction between us would grow because her gender view was a complete turn off for me. Katlego is beauty with brains it is visible from the way she articulates her points whenever we were arguing about something. To me marriage at this point and time in my life remains an alien concept. The day of moving out came and we thanked Mr Zulu for allowing us to rent his cottage. The garden flat was neat and nice it wasn't furnished though, all of the rooms looked deserted because we had very little furniture to fill it with. Bongani told me not to worry about the rent, rates or electricity bills because he said he would take care of them. The sitting room was detached from the dining room and all the rooms had wooden tiles except for the toilet, bathroom and kitchen which had blue ceramic tiles. There were eight other garden flats in the complex. The complex had a Dura wall an electric fence and 24\7 around the clock Security Company equipped with state of the art surveillance cameras. It was a quiet area in which the flats were situated a walk-able distance from Centurion Cricket Ground. I liked the privacy in the area. Bongani was now driving a Kia Seranto. The day of the engagement party came I had bought perfume for the bride to be and corduroy jean for Dumisani. The engagement party was been held in Soweto at Dumisani's parents home. I wore my dark blue slim fit jeans, suede formal shoes, a dark blue golf and I coupled it off with a blue beret hat. Bongani took the formal route he was wearing a tight fitting black trousers, a lace-less pair of black formal shoes and a white neatly tucked in Armani formal shirt. We drove off to Soweto from Pretoria. I marvel at the big stadium which is

been built in Soweto, the FNB stadium which is going to host the opening match of the 2010 world cup and upon completion it is going to be Africa's largest stadium. Huge cranes and large host of workers are doing their jobs as the stadium takes shape. I had never being to Soweto. Soweto was almost the equivalent of Highfield, like Highfield it was host to a lot of anti-apartheid struggle icons, like the likes of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the least goes on. So we arrived at Dumisani's parent's house. Originally it was a 6 room house but Dumisani had extended the house and modernized it to an 8 room house. Bongani parked the car outside. As we entered the yard I heard local South African house music being played. As we went past the disc jockey we saw Dumisani and Reneilwe standing at the foot of the opened front French door. Reneilwe was stylishly dressed in a tight dark brown long sleeved midi dress which showed a lot of cleavage and golden sandals and had a cerulean necklace. The dress shaped her body showing all the tight spots. Her kind of dressing would have sent the tongues wagging back home in Zimbabwe, a bride to be, dressed like that at her in-laws place. Here the people are more open minded and more westernised. On the other spectrum, Dumisani was dressed sophisticatedly in a dark brown jean which complimented Reneilwe's dress. Bongani and I both congratulated the soon to be married couple. The engagement party was invigorating I could feel the great sense of happiness even the smallness of the yard hosting the event didn't dampen the mood. The event was flawless and well organized. The speeches made by both set of in-laws were short and precise. I thought there was going to be a shortage of alcohol and food because there was a large turnout but it turned out the alcohol and food were more than the people. That same thought of happiness that had been terrorising me for some time came back. For a few seconds I was teleported into a world of my own as I mused over what could make me happy. Was it going to be lots money and all of the things it brings like power, an unlimited source of gorgeous ladies or the many accessories I can have or was I going to find it in marriage or maybe the key to my happiness lay in my religion? "Tinashe, Tinashe. The meat is burning what I you thinking?" said Bongani as he shook my left shoulder. "Nothing much." I replied as I turned over the meet, which was clearly burnt. "We have to see Dumisani, before we head back home." said Bongani. "There he is." I said. So we waved to Dumisani who walked towards us. "Gents." said Dumisani. "I guess you are feeling the wedding jitters." said Bongani. "Not yet." replied Dumisani. "You still remember that conversation we had at Matisse. You remember what you said Dumisani?" I asked. "Yes." replied Dumisani. "Dumisani you clearly said you weren't going to get married anytime soon." said Bongani. "You can't control feelings. I just woke up one morning and felt the urge to have someone next to me every time I wake up." replied Dumisani. "I know I have said this before but congrats man." I said as I gave Dumisani a hug. "Thanks." replied Dumisani. As we were speaking Reneilwe walked towards where we were. "Can I steal my man for a moment." said Reneilwe as she caught hold of Dumisani's hand. "So no more boys' nights for you." said Bongani. "Don't say that Bongani, yes Dumisani can go out on boys' night but he should be back home by 8pm." replied Reneilwe as she started chuckling. The party went right in to the early hours of the next day. We left in the early hours of the morning, and we were able to get some sleep before the emergence of



the sun. I was slowing becoming a non- practicing Christian, the last time I was in church was when my old man passed on nearly a year ago. The day was uneventful. I had asked for a day off at work so that I could check on the progress of my work permit. I arrived in at the Home Affairs Office early in the morning. It was a sunny and warm Monday. I was over the moon when I saw I had been granted a work permit. In my deepest thought I thought my troubles were now coming to a halt, now I could find work without fear of been reported to the police. My stay in South Africa was now official. I had a grin smile something at least was going my way. Without delay I phoned my mother and Bongani to notify them that I had been granted a work permit. A man from the Democratic Republic of Congo told me he was still waiting for a work permit after almost three and half years since he first applied. It made me appreciate the time it had taken for my work permit request to be approved. Just maybe I had a guardian angel leading me.

As a celebratory way I took Bongani for drinks at a local bar. Two days after my work permit had been approved I got a call from Dumisani who informed me to bring my curriculum vitae to his offices. So I went with my curriculum vitae to his office in Johannesburg. Dumisani informed me of an opening in Absa bank which matched my qualifications but first I had to leave my curriculum vitae at the Human Resources Department, where my curriculum vitae would be scrutinised and if it meet their standards I would be called in for interview. Dumisani also told me of a former work colleague Pieter Joubert. Who had opened his own Financial Solutions Company which provided financial advice to other firms. His company was also looking for a person with the same qualifications I had. So I was given the address to Joubert's company which was located in Pretoria. The company's name is Accredited Financial Solution Private Limited Company or simply AFS. I dropped off my curriculum vitae at AFS offices which were located on the outside edges of the central business district. I met up with Bongani at a bistro in the CBD after he had clocked off at work. "Things are starting to fall it place for me" I said as I sat down. "So how did you con yourself from not attending work?" asked Bongani. "I told Singh that I had come down with a cold." I replied. "Did he buy it?" asked Bongani. "He granted me the day off but said it would come of my salary." I had already been given a day off and extending it made my weekend longer. After we had both finished eating we left for home were we soon both retreated to sleep after a long and wearisome day. A week after I had dropped my curriculum vitae at ABSA I received a phone call from the human resources department informing me that my application had been considered I was to come for an interview. Finally the ducks were falling into place. The day of the interview came and I had earlier asked to be excused at work. I wore my blue suit and formal shoes, which my mother jokingly said they would bite me one day because the shoes had a long and pointed top which swirled back just like a cobra. I tried by all means possible to look as dashing as I could. As I entered the lift in the ABSA building in Pretoria I felt a bit nervous. It was n't going to be my first interview but for the first time before an interview I was feeling a bit jittery. I sat on a sofa in the reception area as I waited for my turn. A few minutes after I arrived a white man dressed in matching green tie and oversized trousers called out my name, finding great difficulty in trying to pronounce it. "Tina-shhh-e, MushayaBhasa." Instead of pronouncing my surname as MushayaBasa he pronounced it as MushayaBhasa. "That's me, morning how are?" I said as I stood up. "Morning, follow me." This man had this imposing thing about him, even the way he carried himself showed he possessed a great deal of power in the company. As I entered the room where I was going to be interviewed five sets of eyes were cast upon me. This made me feel a bit uneasy. They were sitting in a cow horn like formation. It was as if there were circling in an enemy "Take a sit there." said a white lady who was

also part of the interviewing panel as she removed her eyes from her laptop. "Thank you." I replied. The interviewing panel was made up of 3 women and 2 men including the white man who had led me to the room. "I am Manuela Ferrara. What's your name and can you give us a brief background about your education from primary right up to tertiary?" said one of the ladies' as she looked directly into my eyes. "My name is Tinashe Mushayabasa. I attended Mbizi Primary School in Highfield in Zimbabwe after which I went to Elis Robins High in Harare. I then graduated from the National University of Science and Technology in Zimbabwe with a Bachelors Honours degree in Economics almost three years ago." I replied. It was smooth sailing as I answered the questions of each of the interviewers until I stammered when the white man who welcomed me, asked me. "With the prevailing economic condition in Spain what would you recommend to a person who intends to open a chain of grocery shops around Spain?" asked the white man who addressed himself as Mr Fannie Le Roux. I was totally lost I knew nothing about the Spanish economy the only thing I knew immensely about Spain was about Real Madrid and Barcelona football club. I wish he asked me who the current top goal scorer in La-liga was. I had to think hard and fast and whatever my answer was going to be it was going to be a complete bag of hogwash. "A-aaaaaargh, e-eeerh. The Spanish economy is influenced by a great deal of factors." I said as I took a brief break before I opened up my mouth. "Like I have said the Spanish economy has many factors but it is largely influenced by the performance of the Euro and as it stands the Euro is increasing in value when measured against the dollar." I said as I took another brief break. "With this in mind I would advise the person to open high end grocery stores to tap into the increasing buying power of the Euro." I replied. "When last did you hear the world economic news?" asked Mr Le Roux. "Honestly speaking I don't know when." I replied. "I could see that in your answer contrary to your answer about the Euro's value increasing, it is actually losing value and Spain as we speak is in an Economic downturn." replied Mr Le Roux. "Thank you for your time. We will inform you in due course if you have found the job." said one of the ladies' whom had introduced herself as Ms Abigail Gumedde. True to the words of my old man who always said one must be abreast with the current affairs and there is no better way to do that than to watch the news. I knew I had lost a lot of points because of my ignorance. It is a bit ironic that I want to work in the financial department of a big company like ABSA yet I didn't know the prevailing economic conditions in huge economies like Spain whose performance would also affect other countries. I felt defeated right to the core for I had just blown my ticket to happiness. Days came and pass but there is no reply. I finally had something to smile about and I received an e-mail informing me that I had been invited for an interview at Accredited Financial Solutions Private Limited. Fortunately for me the interview fell on my official off day and there was no need to beg Singh for an off. The day of the interview arrived. In my Shona culture there is saying that says "A poor man never gets its easy." The saying was a summary of what was to unfold on this day. I woke up feeling weak and I had a terrible headache and in addition to that I was vomiting. I knew there was no way I was going to go to for the interview. It was another chance gone begging. "You have to go to the hospital before it worsens. I can take you there." said Bongani. "I don't think it's

necessary but if it worsens I will go the hospital.” I replied. “You can call me if you need any help. I have to rush off to work.” said Bongani as he picked his laptop bag. I took some headache pills and I slept for over three hours when I woke up I was feeling better. The headache had significantly reduced the vomiting had stopped but I was still feeling weak. I only managed to eat a slice of bread since I had no appetite. The time I should have arrived for the interview was fast approaching. I tried to phone Accredited Financial Solutions so that I could inform them that I was a bit under the weather and if it was possible to postpone the interview date. I could not even get hold of the people at Accredited Financial Solution because the number kept on saying “The number you have dialled is not reachable.” As the day wore on I felt better and better. I heard the front door open and I knew it was Bongani. “How are feeling?” asked Bongani. “Much better, it seems something or someone didn’t want me to go for that interview.” I replied. “Did you try calling them to inform them of your ill health?” asked Bongani as he sat on the black recliner leather sofas. “Yes I tried but I couldn’t get hold of them.” I replied. “I have no words my dear friend. All I can say you have to pray intensely.” said Bongani. We chatted for a while before I went to sleep. I slept soon after the sun had set. I slept peacefully and woke up early in the morning feeling refreshed and the sickness had gone. I had a conversation with Bongani before leaving for work. “I don’t know what I did wrong, or where I went wrong or who I offended to deserve such bad luck.” I said. “You shouldn’t worry things will fall into place for you.” said Bongani. “This is too much, tragedy after tragedy, nothing to smile about.” I said. “There is an African Proverb which says, don’t blame God for creating the lion thank him for not giving it wings.” said Bongani. “In short what are trying to say?” “Be thankful you are healthy and well don’t concentrate on the bad things in your life. You have something, someone out there has nothing.” The way Bongani said it to me was a bit different and it showed a lot of maturity. It got me thinking about my spirituality where I stood in relation to my faith. The last time I was in a church or a place of worship was when my father died over a year ago. The funeral service for my father was the last time I was in church. Maybe all the misfortunes happening to me was God trying to communicate with me. One thing I knew for sure I was doubting my own faith. I felt like I had been let down on countless occasions. It was dwelling on me that happiness was almost impossible for me with all the bad things happening. In my mind I could feel that I was reaching that point in my life where one more misfortune would definitely send me into massive hysteria. Perhaps I am searching for happiness in the wrong places. All my peers seem to be doing something good with their lives and I seem to be wailing away. I arrived at Singh’s shop five minutes late of my starting time and Singh had a field day with me. “I don’t know what it is with people of your kind, you try to help them but you end up disrespecting the person who helped you.” said Singh looking all fired up. I felt mortified when he said “people of your kind.” It was quite obvious that he was referring to black people. He was telling me of how I was ungrateful but he was forgetting how he was cruel, some month ends he would pay me, days after the pay day, even when the salary was paid in full it was tantamount to peanuts of which it was a rarity for that to happen. He was making bag loads of money but he never gave a thought of giving me a pay rise or even performance related bonus. Just, because one day I am late and I am

**not even scandalously late he almost bites my head off. Singh didn't have the spirit of Ubuntu he was only driven by money. "You are fired, I will pay you all the salary I owe you." said Singh. I felt weak right to the bone marrow. I knew it was an unfair dismissal and I could go and report him to the labour court as I had the necessary papers that allowed me to work in South Africa but I decided that it wasn't worth fighting for. At the other end my mother was forced to take early retirement because of her persistent health problems. To add insult to injury my younger sister's fees had been hiked up significantly. How ironic it is my surname is Mushayabasa which loosely translates to English to "not finding work."**

## CHAPTER 11 LANDSCAPER

It never rains but pours for me everything was going wrong it seems like I am destined to fail nothing is coming together. Every time I think I have found a breakthrough fate has other ideas for me. In a space of a month I had blown away two good well-paying jobs one out of my incompetence and lack of respect of global news and the other one due to reasons beyond my human control. I no longer eat well, I suffer a lot of insomnia all I can do is think and think, my blood pressure by now has sprawled way out of hand. I have a roof over me and a friend who is always encouraging me not to lose hope and a family back home who frequently phone me to give me hope. Unknown to me is that I am suffering a mental breakdown and one more misgiving can lead me on a one way path to self-destruction. After all the Shakespearean tragedy that has descended upon me I still harbour a thought that I can be well again. The only substance I can take into my body is alcohol I have become a dipsomaniac. My old man surely wouldn't be proud to be associated with me in any way. I have turned into a drunkard. I love alcohol because it's something I turn to for solace it doesn't tell flimsy statements like, it's going to be okay and that everything is a passing phase like a person would tell me. It gives me a place where everything is stress free a Utopia of my own where I don't have to worry about tomorrow. Right now alcohol feels like it is my ticket to that happiness I have been searching for desperately because whenever I drink I forget all my problems even the inevitable hangover is not enough to deter me from drinking it feels like I am fast growing a resistance to hangovers. Almost not if all, of my so called "package" from Singh has been spent on alcohol. Alcohol, alcohol what would I be without you my dear and faithful friend I am out of words and expressions to show my gratitude towards you. Almost a month has elapsed since my sacking. I have a headache, an after effect of my binge drinking. I am laying with my shirtless torso head first on the floor in my room, I have fallen off the bed and I am too drunk to get up and go back onto the bed. The door opens up. "You have to stop this, my friend. I beg of you." said Bongani as he took away the half empty bottle of Smirnoff Vodka in my right hand. Miraculous the bottle had not broken off when I fell off the bed. "What do you intend to do." I said. "This is bad." said Bongani as he tried to lift me off the floor. "I don't care anymore you could be the president of the USA telling me to quit alcohol I wouldn't care." I said as I staggered to my feet with the help of Bongani. "Alcohol doesn't solve anything. Look at yourself. I know things have gone miserably awful for you, but you are better than this." said Bongani. "Then what can I do, I am sick and tired of everyone telling me it's going to be alright." I replied as I sat on the bed. "Look at me, remember what your old man said to us, we live not for ourselves but for the glory of God. Do you think the Lord is happy of how you have become." said Bongani as he took a sat after which he said, "I know I am no saint but please my friend remember every action has a consequence." replied Bongani as he stood up before leaving the room. Even though my line of thought was a bit clouded by alcohol I knew what Bongani was saying was true. I had to change my lifestyle because currently I was headed for doom. A week passes by and I am proud to say I have been alcohol free the whole week. Those words said by Bongani really helped me a lot. He was surely a friend indeed and he showed it in my

time of need. I am trying to puzzle back the pieces of my life I had neglected during my alcoholic spree feast. I now call home as much frequent as possible. The last time I spoke to my mother she told me that electricity and the water had been cut off because of unpaid bills. My brother's wife salary and my mother's pension combined together wasn't enough to pay for everything because there were other commitments. For example my younger sister had just started university education add to that the school fees of my nephews and also the mortgage of the house had to be paid. Dumisani had found job for me a friend of his had a relative of his who wanted a gardener. Though the job didn't look fashionable I needed a job to do which would provide money for me to repatriate back home. I had to swallow the little pride I had left. The job was definitely not going to be some walk in the park. I met up with Dumisani's friend. His is called Pieter Rossouw. I met up with Pieter whom then drove me in his Toyota Corolla to where I was going to work. Not much was said between us in the car. We arrived in a low density suburb which had magnificently built houses the streets were lined with jacaranda trees. I later discovered that the residential area was called Waterkloof a wealthy luxuriant area of Pretoria where the who's who of Pretoria resided. We drove through Victoria street one of the most expensive streets to buy a house in South Africa. Most of the people who live in Waterkloof are of Dutch ancestry. We arrived at the place where Richard Miller the man I was going to work for resides. At the entrance to the Miller residence, stands a 2 meter electric gate and an electrified steel palisade fence with spikes on top of it. Pieter pressed the intercom after which he exchanged a few words with the person at the other end of the line in Afrikaans. The gate automatically opened up as Pieter pulled up the car into the yard. As the car drove along the brick paved driveway up to the hilltop where the house was, my attention was fixated on the well-manicured lawn. Along, the driveway stood ten lampposts, five on each side. The house stood impressively on the hilltop with a good view of the Union Buildings in the horizon. The house is a huge two story house which resembles a rustic gothic architectural influence. Near the house there is a roundabout on which stands a statue of a half clothed man looking towards the sky which is mounted inside a water fountain. I am taken aback by that sight as water flows from the mouth of the statue and up into the sky and back into the granite circular fountain. It's something that I had once only seen in movies and American hip hop songs. The car is parked near the front door. As the engine grinds to a halt we are greeted by the sound of a barking dog. The sight of it frightens me, it's huge and its sharp teeth are exposed as Pieter and I remain rooted to our seats in the car. A middle aged white man emerges from the front of the door, and the dog runs to him after which he pats it gently in the back as he walks towards the car. The man has a rugged look about him. He is dressed in a grey Bermuda short and his bulgy stomach is visible from the loose fitting white polo shirt he is wearing. "Pieter, how are you?" said the white middle aged man. "Fine, I was just worried that the dog of yours would rip us into pieces." replied Pieter as he disembarked from the car. Fearing that the dog would attack me I remain sitting in the car. Pieter stands outside the car as he speaks to the white middle aged man for a few minutes. "You can come out of the car, Tinashe." said Pieter. I climb out of the car and walk towards where Pieter and the white middle aged man are standing. "Tinashe this is Mr Miller and Richie this is

Tinashe.” said Pieter. “Good Afternoon, Mr Miller.” I said. “Good Afternoon, You can just call me Richie. How are you Tinashe.” said Mr Miller. “I am fine.” I replied. “By the way you may be wondering, Richie is a shortcut of my first name Richard.” “Out of inquisitiveness what breed of dog is this.” I said as I pointed to the dog. “It’s a Boerboel, a South African bred mastiff.” replied Mr Miller. “I never liked dogs.” said Pieter. “I am the opposite of that.” said Mr Miller as he took a pause to light a cigarette before he continued. “So you have all the necessary papers, work permit and all, with you?” asked Mr Miller. “Yes I have them here with me.” I replied. “Okay, follow me into the house, and we can discuss everything in there.” As the huge hardwood front door opened up I was rendered speechless by the sight of the hallway. Five sized lounge rooms of where I had grown up in Highfield could easily be fitted in and still leave a huge enough space to walk through. Big chandeliers were mounted on top of the ceiling which had Sistine inspired paintings. On the walls are porcelain tiles and two Renaissance enthused female portraits. A convoluted marble floor which runs the length of the hallway welcomes you as you step into the hallway. We sat in the spacious lounge where we discussed my remuneration and working conditions. After all was sorted I was shown a three roomed cottage where I was going to stay in. Though the job wasn’t something I was expecting it was way better than working for Singh, the pay here was higher even the working conditions were flexible unlike at Singh’s. So I was going to start my job tomorrow. I hope it is going to be a fresh start in life for me just like the fresh yellow lilies I am going to take care of. Basically the job encompasses taking care of the fruit trees in the orchard, feeding the dog, sweeping the yard of all leaves, maintaining and cutting the grass and hedge. After the trip around the yard, Pieter and I left the Miller residence. I arrived home before Bongani and set about preparing supper. I heard my phone ringing in the lounge and dashed over to answer it before it stopped ringing. “Hello, Bongani. How is work?” I said as I answered the phone. “Work is fine. Did everything run out well on that side?” replied Bongani. “It was all good, the man I will be working for seems like a good guy.” I said. “That’s nice. Sorry man if you had cooked including my portion.” “You are eating out with a special someone.” I said as I sat on the sofa. Bongani had been going out with this mysterious girl for the past week. I hadn’t seen her yet, but from Bongani’s words she is a beautiful in and out. “Yes.” replied Bongani. “So you are going to keep up with the secrecy and not show me her picture or even her tell me her name.” “All in good time. Rest assured you will meet her soon.” said Bongani. “I will hold you to that.” I replied. “Okay, see you when I see you. Bye.” said Bongani as he hung up the phone. I had already included Bongani’s portion in the food I was cooking so I was going to refrigerate the remaining food. I don’t know the exact time Bongani arrived home because I was fast asleep. I woke up early in the morning so that I could pack my clothes into my travelling bag after which I bathed. As I sat in the dining devouring my breakfast I heard someone yawning as they entered the room. For a moment I thought it was an intruder before I realised it was Bongani. “Morning, you got me a startled there.” I said. “Good morning. You are up early.” said Bongani as outstretched his hands. “I had to pack my clothes. I will be staying at the Millers place.” “That’s cool. You know my door is always open you can come here anytime. You can keep the spare keys.” said Bongani as he entered



the kitchen. I arrived at the Miller's residence before 8 am. I was escorted from the gate to the house by Abigail the Miller's domestic worker. "Right on time. That's what I like a person who sticks to the time." said Mr Miller. "Good morning sir." I said. "Morning, don't be frightened by the dog it won't bite, It knows you are with Me." said Mr Miller. I left my travelling bag in the cottage. I was given a single bed to sleep on and some blankets. I wore the blue work suite I had been given by Mr Miller. The yard covers an area of three and half acres. In the morning I raked all of the, leafs which had fallen off. I spent a great deal of time because there were many trees because we were in August when trees shed their leaves on this part of the equator. A month passes by working at the Miller's without any incident. My first pay cheque came on time plus the money was not that bad. In the few month I have been working at Millers my knowledge about their family has increased. They have a daughter name d Liandri a recent graduate from the University of Stellenbosch, she was studying medicine. Mr Miller's wife from what I gathered is a house wife she is always at home and to date I didn't know where Mr Miller made his money from, he too is always at home except for Tuesdays where he goes golfing at the Pretoria Country club and Sundays when he goes to church with the family. The Miller family are devout Dutch Reformed Church congregates. I had grown fond of Liandri, I didn't have any sexual attraction to her but I liked her attitude. Sometimes she would start talking to me whilst I did my chores. She was friendly and chatty. I didn't know if they had other children so I assumed Liandri was their only child. Liandri came with a folding chair which she placed in the shed of the Musasa tree. She sat on the chair as I raked the leaves. "How are you?" said Liandri. "Fine, and you?" I replied. "I am fine." said Liandri as she applied some avocado onto her face. "You know that's a delicacy from I come from." I said as I raked the leaves on the pathway which led into the house. "Food you say. It's very good for you skin you should try It." replied Liandri. "In my stomach, not on my face though." We kept on talking until I finished raking the leaves after which I left to eat lunch. The arrangement was that breakfast and lunch were provided for by the Miller's and supper I prepared for myself.

## CHAPTER 12 A SMALL WORLD

I was planting some flowers on the east facing patio adjoined to the house when I heard a feminine voice calling out my name. It was a sunny Saturday and it was my off day I didn't work on Saturdays and Sundays, but Mrs Miller had politely asked me to plant some roses for her. "Tinashe, Tinashe." "Hie, it's you." I said. It was Liandri calling me. She was carrying a huge handbag and from the look of things she was facing great difficulty in carrying it. Liandri was dressed in a midi polka dot skirt and blue court shoes and a navy blue t shirt and had noticeably overdone lipstick and face powder. This made her look like a doll displaying clothes at Edgars. "I have to ask you this. Do I look presentable?" She asked. "You are more than presentable." I replied. "Please the honest truth." said Liandri. "What about your mother's or father's view." I said as I stood with the garden trowel in my right hand. "My mother will always say it's beautiful she is too afraid to hurt my feelings and my Dad is no fashion expert and Abigail is not around. She is on her off day." "Okay you want the truth I am going to be blunt. You look like a scarecrow. Take a look at the mirror you will see that you over did your face powder and lipstick. Your t-shirt I don't think it's the best to suit what you are dressing." "Go on I can see you have something to add." said Liandri. "If you wear a white blouse it will match with your skirt and that bag of yours seems like you are carrying a great deal of artillery." I said. "You are such a darling. Thanks for the insight. I have a date so I have to look the best I can." said Liandri as she gave me a friendly kiss on my right cheek before leaving. I remember once saying I wasn't attracted to her I think that's now changing that brotherly passion is turning into something else. The sun sets as I lay on my bed and the only thing I could think of was Liandri. I was falling for her but it was a bit implausible that she could fall in love with me and if that happened I am sure her parents wouldn't be happy. Their gardener marrying their daughter. Maybe I was getting ahead of myself maybe it was just a friendly kiss if there is a thing like a friendly kiss between unrelated people of the opposite sex. Just as I fantasised about Liandri I had my phone ringing. "Hello, Bongani. How are you?" I said. "I am fine, and you? Long-time no see." replied Bongani. "I am fine." "Can you come to my house tomorrow, I want to take you out for lunch. For old times' sake." said Bongani. "You know I never say no to a free meal. Maybe we can catch up a bit" "Okay see you tomorrow. Bye." said Bongani as he hung up the phone. It was a Sunday morning and as usually the Miller family had left for church. I also went out. The only person left at the house was the guard who had recently been employed. I arrived at Bongani's place at around 10 pm. We talked for a long time before Bongani told me we were going for lunch at Blue crane a restaurant in Pretoria. What makes the restaurant more appealing is the setting, it's situated on a waterfront and the view of the lake is awe-inspiring. I could smell the tantalising smell of the gastronomy which was been prepared. The restaurant was large in comparison its floor area belittled the famous restaurant back home in Highfield popularly known

as kwaMama. Even the level of hygiene was miles ahead of kwaMama. Unlike at KwaMama where you would constantly come across guys with greasy looking hands and with skunky smells, here it was quite the opposite smartly dressed and well groomed people where the type of crowd that were regulars at the Blue Crane. On arrival I became a bit confused because I was sure the champagne Volkswagen Touareg I had just seen parked in front of the restaurant belonged to the Millers. The number plate on it is the same as the Miller's. Could have they come here from church for lunch or is my memory failing me but when they left for church there were in the Audi S7. I could be wrong that the number plates are similar but it has the same dent on the right side of the bonnet. We enter into the dirt free and glossy looking restaurant. "Let us go and sit at that table." said Bongani. "But there is a person at that table." I said. "Not to worry I know that person." The person was sitting with their back to us. I can tell I know this person as we walk nearer it dawns to me who it is. "Hey." said Bongani. As the person turns around their head I see the familiar sight, the green eyes, the feisty face and the tied up platinum blonde ponytail. "Hey, you." I said. "Tinashe." she replied. "You know each other." said Bongani. "Yes I work for her parents." I replied. "How do you know each other." said Liandri. "Best friends since pre-school." replied Bongani. "What a small world it is." I said. "No need for introduction. Since everyone here is acquainted." said Bongani as he sat down on the pure leather chair. "So tell me dude is she like that girl you were talking about?" I asked as I sat down. "Yes." replied Bongani. I had fallen in love with my best friend's girlfriend. Do I feel jealous yes but I have to put it aside. There are many fish in the river, and this in particular one has already been caught. I try as much as I can to avoid eye contact. "So Tinashe tell more about yourself?" asked Liandri. I then started telling her a brief account of my upbringing and how my friendship between me and Bongani had evolved and stood the test of time. "I almost did economics at varsity." said Liandri. "Why didn't you pursue it?" asked Bongani. "I had this sudden change of heart and I ended up doing medicine." replied Liandri. So as the conversation grew deeper I discovered that Liandri's mother is of Nordic ancestry, her mother's parents were born in Sweden and had moved to South Africa during the late 1950s. Trying to eat the food and at the same time trying to suppress the feelings I have for Liandri is proving to be difficult. "Hey, Tinashe you look like you are not enjoying your food." asked Liandri as she sliced a piece of the marinated chicken. "I am eating, it's only that I am doing it at a leisurely pace." "Probably the first time I have seen you eating at a leisurely pace you always do it with great gusto." said Bongani. "How long have you been together?" I asked as I tried to divert the subject matter. "Almost 6 months." replied Liandri. "To think of it you never bothered to tell me, Bongani. How did you meet?" I said as I drank a sip of fine cast matured amarula wine. "An accident. I bumped into her and she split a glass of Coca-Cola she was holding. I offered to buy her a drink and one thing led to another, as they the rest is history." "To tell the truth I was happy you split that drink because when I saw you from a distance I was like who is that tall and fine looking guy." replied Liandri. "So you planned it." I said. "The particular bump no, it was just fate." replied Liandri. Just before dessert was served a young short black guy and a tall white lady entered the restaurant. The black guy was playing a guitar and the white lady played the cello. They came in the

direction we were sitting. They were playing a romantic tune. I sat there asking myself what was going on. Bongani stood up from his chair and reached out into his right trousers' pocket and knelt on one leg. That's when I realised what was going on. "Liandri, I fell in love with you the first time I saw you. I know it sounds cliché but I didn't rehearse it. Will you be the mother of my child." said Bongani as the music toned off a bit. "No." replied Liandri. The restaurant which was half filled was reduced to silence as everyone was shocked by Liandri's reply. I could see Bongani put his face down in misery and shame. I wasn't celebrating at all that it was a no from Liandri, I wanted my best friend to be happy. It was at this moment Liandri opened up her mouth. "I haven't finished saying what I want to say. I won't be the mother of your child but I want to be the mother of your children. I want more than one child." Everyone in the restaurant just clapped their hands. Liandri and Bongani embraced each other as they both shed tears of joy as the music increased tempo. It was something reminiscent of a blockbuster Hollywood romantic film. I was just bowled over as I stood up and congratulated my best friend irrespective of the feelings I was harbouring for Liandri. It seems I can see happiness but it feels like I will never personally feel it. Deep inside me I know Bongani has found his soul mate. I have known Liandri for roughly 8 months but in that short space I have known her, I know she is for keeps unlike Leona Bongani's ex who is just the devil's reincarnate. She is true wife material. You ask me about happiness I will tell nothing you ask me about sorrow I would write volumes of books on it. I put a wide smile it's not a fake one it's a genuine one, I feel glad for my best friend. After all the frenzy has sputtered down we go back to our seats. "Congrats man, but I have to say this you were anti marriage a while back. What happened?" I said. "Matters of the heart I can't explain, but what I can tell you is that when you meet the one, nothing matters. I am so in love and I want to start a family like yesterday." replied Bongani. We both had another glass of amarula wine as a celebratory toast was done. "Not much you know your problem." said Bongani in reference to the wine. "I won't take another one." I replied as I placed the empty wine glass on the table.

## CHAPTER 13 THREE SHOTS

Three months have passed since Liandri and Bongani's engagement party and all is set for the wedding which is going to take place in a fortnight's time. Bongani was welcomed with open arms by the Miller family with open ups. Liandri also was welcomed by the Nkosi family except for Bongani's father who was a bit cynical of a white makoti. His opinion was that Bongani was going to starve to death because Liandri can't cook traditional food but I believe with the passing of time Mr Nkosi will change his opinion on Liandri and see that she is as good as any other black makoti he would wish his son to marry. I am going to be Bongani's best man. A bus is going to ferry people from Zimbabwe to South Africa for the wedding and my mother and sister who by now was doing her first year at varsity will be in attendance. It is going to be the first time I see them since I left home just over three years back. It's a weekend and it's my off day I am sitting in my room watching news so I remain abreast with what is happening just in case I go to another interview. In the afternoon I am going to meet up with Bongani so that we can fetch the clothes we are going to wear at the wedding and also to take Candice from the airport. Bongani had arranged for Candice to come and stay with him in South Africa. Candice was been accompanied by Bongani's elder sister Viola. We had done all the fittings and measurements prior to this date. But as the day progresses there is sudden change of events Mr Miller asks me to help him carry some paint buckets which were needed by the painters. The house was undergoing a facelift since it was going to host the reception of the wedding. Liandri and Bongani had reached a compromise to wed in the Anglican Church the Church which Bongani was baptized from. So I phoned Bongani informing him that I couldn't make it. So Mr Miller and I left the house in the double cab Nissan Navara to buy the paint. As I stood in the hardware I received a phone call from a number that I didn't know. "Hello. Is this Mr Tinashe Mushayabasa?" sounded the unfamiliar feminine voice. "Yes, how can I help you?" I replied as I grow a bit mystified. "Do you know a Mr Bongani Nkosi?" asked the feminine voice. "Yes, he is my friend." I replied. "I am sorry to say this but Mr Nkosi was involved in car hijacking, he was shot three times and he is in critical condition." said the feminine voice. I relieved the moments when my old man had a stroke it felt like it was just a bad dream a nightmare and I would soon hear the calls of my mother and wake up. Sooner rather later I discovered it was reality unfolding before my eyes. It felt unreal. "Which hospital is he in." I said as I stammer in disbelief. "Pretoria Medical Centre." replied the feminine voice. "Bye." I said as I hung the call. I didn't want to ask which part of his body had been shot because I couldn't speak I was just speechless. I start to think I should have been in that car with Bongani, I could have fought the hijackers but with what. I know there is nothing I can do except to be at my friend's side at this time. I know he would also be at my side if a thing like this happened to me. "What, happened it looks like you have been hit by a hammer?" asked Mr Miller looking more serious. "Bongani has been shot." I replied. "My son in

law, is he alive?" asked a pale looking Mr Miller. "Yes but he is in critical position." I replied. We left the hardware before we bought the paint, on our way to the hospital I made phone calls to Bongani's family back home in Zimbabwe to notify them of the tragic event. We decided not to tell Liandri on the phone but we decided to tell Mrs Miller who in turn would tell Liandri about the shooting since they were both at home together. I walk into the hospital hallway all confused as I and Mr Miller rush to the maternity ward instead of the intensive care unit. On arrival at the intensive care unit we are greeted by a medical doctor. "Hello doctor I just need to see my friend." I said looking tense and unsettled. "Who is your friend?" asked the doctor. "Bongani Nkosi." "I am Dr Sanders. We performed an emergency operation. We were able to remove two of the bullets but the other bullet is still stuck on the spinal cord." "Can't remove it." asked Mr Miller. "At this stage it's not a good thing to do because if we are to try and remove it. Mr Nkosi's condition can worsen." replied the Dr Sanders. "What are his chances of survival?" I asked. "It's a fifty-fifty chance. There is nothing as a medical doctor that I can do. We tried to reduce the internal haemorrhage but there is still swelling on the brain." said Dr Sanders. "What is a haemorrhage?" asked Mr Miller. "It is internal bleeding." replied Dr Sanders. Bongani was shot three times once in the upper torso just missing the vena cava another bullet was fired just above his chin and the other one was still lodged in his spinal cord. Even if he woke up he would never walk and there was a great chance he would lose his speech. All I can see is the movement of Dr Sanders' mouth as he continues his narration on the extent of Bongani's injuries, I no longer bother to listen to what he is saying as I am light years away from the Milky Way galaxy. I feel helpless as I open the door in which Bongani is in. It is not a good sight. He is bandaged all up and drips running all over his body an oxygen mask on his face. I walk towards where Bongani lies unconscious. I reach for his right hand. I stand there clasping his right hand with my right hand as I bow my head down and tears start to trickle from my eyes. The feeling is one of poignancy, the same I felt when my old man had a stroke. Mr Miller stands on my right side patting me on the back all he says is "Why, why my Liandri?" first Leon now Bhongani." I didn't understand what he meant when he said Leon. All I could guess was that Leon was probably Liandri's fiancé who died. Mr Miller always pronounces the first part of Bongani's name as Bho instead of Bo. My eyes start to blink uncontrollably as I start to shiver. More Goosebumps start to show as I notice the decrease in Bongani's heart rate on the heart monitor. Almost thirty minutes pass and Bongani remains motionless a middle aged nurse enters the room. "Gentleman I am sorry you have to leave the room this is not the official visiting time you can come back when visiting starts." "But Mrs Mrs" I say as I try to read out the name of the nurse on her badge. "Mrs Khumalo, just a few moments please." I plead. "I am sorry sir, rules are rules. You can wait in hallway." replied Mrs Khumalo. As we emerged from the room, there came Liandri running and shouting. "Where is he, I need to see him. Someone please tell me it's a dream. Tinashe where is Bongani." "He is in there, I know Bongani he is fighter." I said as I embraced her. "Where is mum?" asked Mr Miller. "I don't know and I don't care." replied Liandri. As she finished saying those words Mrs Miller arrived to where we were standing. Right behind Mrs Miller, Viola and Candice have arrived. I had told Viola on the phone about

the shooting and had instructed her to hire a taxi to ferry her and Candice to the hospital. "I want to see him, don't tell me I can't see him, because if it means breaking down that door to see him I will do it." said an emotion filled Liandri. "Calm down my dear daughter. That won't help him all he needs is rest now." said Mrs Miller. We had to calm Liandri down as we tried to make provisions with hospital administration so that Liandri could be allowed to see Bongani before visiting time. Finally Liandri, Viola and Candice were allowed. They entered into the room looking distraught. Two hours later Dumisani and Reneilwe and other family members arrived. I explained to them the extent of the injuries as I narrated his injuries two police officers from the South African Police Services arrived. "I am Sergeant Gaxa and this is Constable Bhebhe." Sergeant Gaxa then narrated how Bongani had been hijacked. According to the Sergeant and from information gathered from a witness who saw it happen as he hid under the cover of hedge which was near the intersection of the road where Bongani was hijacked from. Bongani was hijacked by two men. He was cut off and was ordered to come out of the car, when he offered some resistance that's when he was shot and according to the witness who saw it all happened. The hijackers were driving a black unregistered Subaru Impreza hatchback. One of the hijackers who was sitting at front passenger seat disembarked from the car wilding a gun, a pistol to be exact, the witness went on to say that the other hijacker remained in the car at the driver's end. The witness also noted that even though he did not get look of the hijacker's face because he was afraid that the hijackers would see him and shot, he pointed out that the robber who shot Bongani had a visibly large laceration on his left arm. The witness saw Bongani shot once before he was dragged out of the car where he was shot twice laying face downwards on the tarred road, after which the hijacker jumped into Bongani's BMW 3 series coupe he had recently bought just a few days back. The whole hijacking operation was a swift operation since the witness said it took less than 40 seconds. "Can't you contact the insurance company? The car has a tracking device." I said. "Unfortunately it won't help we already tried contacting the insurance company it proved futile. The car hijackers disabled the tracker." replied Sergeant Gaxa who was doing all the talking. I started receiving phone calls from Bongani's family back home in Zimbabwe. All I could do was to reassure them that everything was stable. A week passes by and still Bongani remains in a comatose state and there are no signs of improvement. His family, are also at his bed side they have come from Zimbabwe. I arrive just before visiting starts and I head to the ward where Bongani is that is when I meet Mr Nkosi "Tinashe." said Mr Nkosi as he took a pause before continuing. "Life is a journey, it is sometimes difficult and sometimes a joyful experience but what you have to remember is that through the happiness and pain, the Lord is always around." I stood there wondering why Mr Nkosi was saying this. "Tinashe, your friend's journey here on earth has ended." "I don't understand what you are saying Mr Nkosi." I said. "Bongani is no more. He passed on a few minutes ago." said Mr Nkosi in a low red voice. "That can't be, a week ago we were talking about the wedding and now this." I felt powerless. I sat on the bench in the hallway with Mr Nkosi standing in front of me holding my hands. First it was my old man who was duped to the extent that he had a stroke and died and now my best friend was shot and is now dead. Both of the

criminals, the conman Guru and now the hijackers are walking scot free and most probably waiting to pounce on another unsuspecting person. They say crime doesn't pay but it seems to be paying the bills for others albeit the fact they might be haunted by a guilty conscience. Burial arrangements are already been made. Bongani's body is going to be flown to Bulawayo after which the body will be transported by road to Plumtree where Bongani will be laid to rest at the Nkosi ancestral home. Liandri and both her parents also come with us to Plumtree. We make our way to the Nkosi rural homestead, along the road stands countless marula trees. When I see the marula tree I remember the day Bongani proposed to Liandri. On that day we drank amarula wine, a wine which is derived from the marula tree. This is the first time I am stepping on Zimbabwean soil since I left home over 3 and half years ago. The last time I was in Zimbabwe wasn't a joyful time for me I had just lost my old man and this time around was again not a joyful time. I start to relive all those moments I shared with Bongani. We shared a special kind of bond a bromance, we were not blood brothers but we bound not by blood but by love. Some family members make their speeches. We arrive at the Nkosi homestead, a mixture of modern architecture and yesteryear's. A neatly built Cape Dutch influenced architectural eight roomed blue painted house stands a few meters from the wire and marsh gate at the entrance. Inside are four neatly thatched round huts. The homestead is home to a lot of marula trees. In the middle of homestead is a water tank mounted high up in the air which stores water drawn from an aquifer. The water is pumped by a solar powered generator. The water pump and Dutch style house were some of the improvements that Bongani had added to his rural home. His grandparents and relatives no longer had to walk a long distance to get water. I am one of the pole burier's as we walk the short distance from the homestead to the family gravesite. Relatives gave their speeches and Liandri gave an emotional one which surely touched everyone's heart I included. "Bongani was prepared to give up a lot for me. I didn't know him that long but it was enough to know that he was kind and loving." said Liandri as she took a brief break before continuing "He told me, true happiness is more rewarding than fame and wealth. Bongani showed me what it means to be happy. It might be a day of mourning but I am happy I met you Bongani Jeremy Nkosi." said a tearful Liandri as she concluded her speech. Mr Nkosi then approached me to make a speech at the gravesite. I hadn't prepared to say anything it was going to be impromptu. "You were not only a friend but a brother. You gave me advice and when the going got tough for me you were there. I say go well Nyoni." I said as I gave the brief speech at the gravesite. Nyoni is the family totem for the Nkosi family. Nyoni is isiNdebele for bird. I lift my head and look up to the sky, and I feel the light drizzle which has started to fall as Bongani's coffin is lowered. The drizzle washes away the tears I have. It feels like it's a sign from above to tell me not to weep. To me it was a sign that my best friend was well wherever he was. We had not anticipated rainfall. Luckily the rainfall was very light and lasted for a few minutes. Under the shade of the marula tree I drink some water sitting on a wooden stool as the clouds disperse and the sun starts to emerge I start to think long and hard about life and how things can shift in the blink of an eye. Candice, Bongani's six year old daughter is sitting with me on the wooden stool and she asks me a question which gets me to think more of where I am headed for. "Uncle



Tinashe, can you be my father now, since mine is gone.” said a sad looking Candice. “Hold my hand, I make this promise to you I will always protect you. Your father would have wanted you to excel in life and so do I.” I replied. “But uncle Tinashe will I ever see my father?” asked Candice. “It’s like when the sun sets. Does it mean it will not rise again?” I said as I took a pause as I gaped into Candice’s eyes, before continuing “Your father might be gone but there is day, I don’t when it will be but we will be reunited.” I said. I really feel great sorrow for Candice, her father the person that cared the most for her is gone and she is left with a mother who is ever absent from her life and doesn’t want anything to do with her. When everything was falling into place for Bongani, the unexpected happened. Bongani was now the backbone of the Nkosi family he was contributing a lot financially to the upkeep of his family. Liandri had once seen Candice when she came to Zimbabwe with Bongani to meet the Nkosi family in Highfield and she instantly feel in love with her. I am happy that Candice’s character seems to have taken after her father’s. She is well mannered and friendly, one thing for sure she took after her mother’s looks. My hope is that she grows up to have a good blend of outer beauty and inner beauty unlike her mother who is beautiful on the outside and scary on the inside.

## CHAPTER 14 SALTY WATER

I sit on a chair in the dining room of the Miller's house as I wait for Mr Miller, yesterday was my last day working for the Miller's. It's been a month to the date since Bongani was buried. Liandri applied to formally adopt Candice but the adoption has yet to be finalised but in the meantime she is now working for Doctors without Borders in Liberia on a one year contract after her contract expires Liandri decided that she was going to stay in Walvis Bay in Namibia. Mr Miller and his wife will be leaving for Australia in a week's time to live there permanently. Mr Miller told me that it was a decision he and his wife decided upon because of the increasing crime rate in South Africa. He explained to me what he meant when he said it was Leon first and now Bongani in the hospital. Leon was Liandri's twin brother. Who like Bongani fell to hijackers unlike Bongani, Leon died on the spot he was shot more than ten times. He died a day before his eighteenth birthday. The Miller's felt there were living in great uncertainty and felt like the more they stayed in South Africa the more they endangered themselves and the people they cared for. Mr Miller had already deposited my salary for the month and also three months' pay in advance as a consolation for premature termination of the contract. It is quite unusual for a gardener to have a contract but I had one. Mr Miller entered the dining room holding a satchel. "Tinashe, you have been honest in your work. You haven't stolen from us or tried to cause any trouble for that I am very grateful. Here is a small parcel." said Mr Miller as he handed me the satchel. "Thank you, Miller. God bless you." I replied as I took hold of the satchel. "You know you shouldn't lose hope." said Mr Miller as he pulled a chair from the table, before continuing "My great-great -great maternal grandfather Gus Van Dyke came from Holland a poor man, it took him years, thirty years to be exact to strike gold. In those thirty years he survived by hand outs. The money from the gold he used to start Dyke Minerals." Dyke Minerals is now a huge company multi-national company and to think of it started off with one stubborn Dutchman who refused to quit. With a few set of tools a pick and a shovel, Van Dyke went from rags to riches. What I learnt from all of this is that one doesn't necessarily have to have it all to make it but should always be determined. From the conversation, it came out that Mr Miller inherited 8% of the shares of Dyke Minerals from his mother. "I have your phone number, if anything comes up I will call, but my hope is that by then you would have found work" said Mr Miller as he stood up. "Words can't explain the manner you have acted towards me. You gave me a job and a place to stay. Even though I was a worker I felt like part of the family." I said as I stood up. Mr Miller drove me to the bus terminus where I was going to board a bus for Durban. Since I had been notified a week earlier by Mr Miller of their intended plan to go to Australia, I had contacted a friend of mine named Jason Gonzo who lives in Durban. Jason told me that I could find work in Durban. Jason and I had gone to the same high school. Before I board the bus I decide to buy some clothes on my way I see someone who I last saw in high school. "Tinashe, Tinashe." sounds the

voice in a high tone. "I turn my head backward and forward trying to see who it is. "Over here." "I look to my right side that's when I see a guy coming out the driver's seat of a black Maserati GranTourismo MC Stradale. "Jeffery Hove. Am I dreaming is that you." I said as I walked in his direction. "It's me. You certainly are not dreaming." Jeffery replied as we embraced each other. "I can see you have made it, a genuine Italian sports car. You don't get this cheap." I said as I touched the bonnet of the car. "Business is brisk for me." "What line of business are you into?" I asked. "Are you in a rush?" "I am headed for Durban." "If it's not urgent you can stay with me at my house and I will tell you everything about my business." "Anyways I haven't bought the ticket, I can come." I replied. "Hop in." So we discussed about what we had done after high school, I told him of the death of Bongani. Which I could see was tear-jerking news to him. Most guys knew Bongani at school because he was the head boy at that time. I could feel all the 450 horses let loose as Jeffery stepped on the gas as the Maserati weaved past other cars on the freeway. My stomach tickled as adrenaline pumped at greater speed. The sound produced by the V8 powered car is pretty much capable of making a person deaf. We arrived at a house where the black gate automatically opened up. At the entrance gate two close circuit surveillance cameras are mounted. The house is a majestically built 2 story house with four huge glass facades. The house is located in one of Pretoria's most well off suburb of Brooklyn. A young man dressed in a green overall picking up leaves, who seems like the gardener waves his hand towards us and Jeffery waves back. As we drove off on the tarred driveway, it almost seems like we are driving on the driveway for eternity until I could see one of the gates to the triple lock up garage automatically open up vertically. Jeffery parks the Maserati in an open space on the left side, beside a silver Land Rover Discovery 3 which is parked in the middle between the black Maserati and a red Lamborghini Aventador. The garage door closes up as the engine grinds to a halt. We make our way into the lounge through the door which connects the garage and the lounge. The house is very much quiet and unruffled and the only noise that can be heard of is that of a sprinkler which is spraying water on the ever green grass. The moment Jeffery opens up the door leading into the lounge my mind is blown away as I lay my eyes on the biggest Plasma television set, I have ever seen before. It's a staggering 85-inch TV set and it is mounted into the wall. Directly in front of the 85-inch plasma screen are two sets of pure Italian leather coffee coloured recliner sofas. At the front of the lounge stands a big one-way mirror in which one can see everything going on outside but a person standing on the outside can't see anything inside. Right in the middle of the one-way glass is glass door which opens up to the veranda. A few meters from the kitchen door is a 2 meter pillar into which a see through elevator is positioned. The lounge is spacious. "Tinashe, what do you drink?" asked Jeffery. "Some orange juice will do." I replied. "No beer." said Tinashe. "I don't feel like drinking beer today." I replied. "You can sit on the sofa. Let me get the drinks and we will talk." said Jeffery. "Okay." as I sat down on the sofa. A few minutes later Jeffery came back with a tray which had a glass of orange juice and a pint bottle of Hansa Pilsener. "Take your juice." said Jeffery as he placed the tray on the table. "Thanks, dude. Where is the queen of the house?" I said as I took the glass of orange juice. "I haven't yet found the woman to hold me down, and you." replied Jeffery as he

sat down. "No lady in my life also. So tell me is this your house." I said. "Yes." replied Jeffery as he pressed the switch on button on the remote control. "What line of work has brought these big dividends?" I asked. "I am in the medical fraternity." replied Jeffery. I am bit confused, because Jeffery wasn't the smartest guy at school and the thought that he become a doctor was very much unimaginable. "A, medical doctor." I said. "No." replied Jeffery. My thoughts were proved correct he wasn't a doctor. "So what do you do?" I asked. "I like to call it Jeff's pharmaceutical company." replied Jeffery. "So you studied pharmacy?" I said. "No." replied Jeffery. "What's the name of the company?" I asked "Do you know Pablo Escobar?" asked Jeffery. "You have just answered me with another question." I said as I seeped some orange juice. "Yes or no, do you know him." "Pablo, Pablo, Pablo Escobar that name seems familiar." I said as I scratched my head before continuing. "He is Colombian that I am sure of." as I took a pause to think. "The Colombian drug lord." I said. "You are right." replied Jeffery. "So what has Pablo Escobar have to do with what you do?" I asked. "I am the Black Pablo Escobar." "You mean you are part of a drug cartel." I injected. "Not part of but I run it." said Jeffery. "It's not even April the first, so you can forget your lame joke. So tell me seriously what do you, do." I asked looking a bit confused. "It's no joke, see everything here it came from money from selling drugs. I have a condo in New York, houses in Malibu, London, Monaco, Dubai and other countless properties in Zimbabwe, Zambia and SA." said Jeffery after which he took a sip of the beer. "You really are serious." I said. "I can cut you into this line of work. I have the contacts." said Jeffery. "So you use drugs?" I asked. "One mustn't cross the line between selling and using. I sell and that's all I don't use." replied Jeffery. "No ways I am getting myself into that staff. I will rather die poor than this." I said. "You are still a mister goody two shoes. I see. Let me tell you this, the world is full of evil. I am trying to rid of that evil." said Jeffery. "But you are encouraging evil by selling drugs which in turn influence people to do evil." I said. "The evil I speak of is of the stressful nature of this world, these drugs provide a place for people to forget their worries." said Jeffery. So the conversation raged on and was mostly centred on drugs. I had lost my appetite and didn't eat any supper. As soon as dinner time arrived I asked Jeffery to show me the place I was going to sleep in. We took the elevator and I was shown the guest room. As I stepped onto the Persian inspired carpet all I could think of was what Jeffery did for a living. The room has an ensuite. A person could easily get lost in the huge house. As the night moved along, I kept tossing and turning as I thought to myself I could have just myself into a boiling pot. What if the police raided the house at night and find drugs, and I will be arrested as an accomplice. That thought kept coming back until I finally fell asleep. I heard the familiar sound of my alarm that I had set for 5:30 am. I wake up and make up the bed before I bath. Jeffery had offered to drop at the bus terminus after I told him I didn't want in the drug business. I sat in the front of the Land Rover Discovery 3, as Jeffery drove the car out of the garage. It was total silence in the car as no one spoke to another. On arrival at the Terminus Jeffery gave me his number which I unwillingly saved. "Take this, you might need It." said Jeffery as he gave a thousand rands. "I can't accept this money." I said. "Take it." said Jeffery as he forced the money into my pocket. "Thanks for the hospitality but I hope you quit what you are doing." I said as I

disembarked from the Sports utility vehicle. I bought my ticket to Durban. The bus rolled out of the terminus, hours later I arrived in EThekweni the local name for Durban. After arriving in Durban I boarded a taxi which was headed for Umlazi residential area the place I was meeting up with Jason. As the taxi pulled up to its last drop off point I prepared to get off. Jason had instructed me to wait at for him at this particular spot. A few minutes later as I stood on the street pavement with my suitcase in front of me, I heard my name been called out "Tinashe, Tinashe." I turned my head to where the sound was coming from and I saw it was the lanky figure of Jason. "How are you?" I said as Jason and I embraced. "I am fine." replied Jason. "Still looking the same Jas." I said. "Heard about Bongz." said Jason. Bongz was the shortcut of Bongani and that was how most guys referred to him at school. "It was tragic." I replied. "Let me carry that for you, I live in that house." said Jason as he pointed towards an unfinished 2 roomed house before taking my suitcase. So Jason told me of a guy he knew who said there were jobs available for people who wanted to be fisherman at one of the fishing boats at the dock. True to his word the guy Jason knew got me a job the following week for a small commercial trawler boat which is owned by a man named Gerhand Potigier. Gerhand Potigier has been a fisherman for over twenty years and for him it's more than a way of life, he has an affection for the ocean. Gerhand Potigier has this stern look about him even the way he carries himself shows that he is a man that is into his job, he pays special attention to detail, for instance the first time I meet him he told me if it means working at three in the morning to catch fish so be it. Even the way he dresses he always wears clean and well ironed out clothes. One thing that he does that is a bit unusual is the daily ritual he does. Before we head into the ocean he always walks around the boat 5 times whilst clapping his hands and after that he throws a coin into the ocean. A thing he says has always worked wonders when he started doing it. The coin he says is to ask for guidance from Poseidon the Greek God of the Oceans and the five times he goes around the boat is to ask for a good catch from all the five ocean Gods who exist in all the five oceans. Personally I am not into such stuff and I don't believe such rituals help in any way. Working as a fisherman there is no holiday every day is a workday. From Gerhand's words one can easily make out that he is rather an eccentric superstitious guy. On the boat are three other guys both of them are native Zulu South Africans. So every day I wake up at 4 in the morning so that I can be able to arrive at the harbour by 4:30 am. Time is flying past so fast and just over eight months have elapsed by since starting work as fisherman. In the eight months I have worked I have only managed to get a total of 4 days of rest. During one of those four days I was on a hiatus I went to the beach. For some hours I forgot my all my problems as I relaxed on the sands as the sight of the endless ocean before me opened up my cloaked up line of thought. If only I could be like those surfers, and just ride away my problems. I felt the calming atmosphere at the beach, it was just filled with happiness, young children making sand castles, some just sun basking and others playing a whole host of games like beach soccer and beach volleyball. It wasn't only the young people enjoying themselves some old people were also engaged in the fun and activities. The sight at the beach just made to think a little more about myself and if one day I would find true happiness that kind of happiness that money can't buy. By the way things have being in

my life I guess I won't get it I will just remain that guy who never knew how to smile. At work it's a different ball game all together, no smiles or jokes are shared it is just work I can't complain much because the salary is good and I always make sure that each month end I send back home some money. My remuneration is based on how much we catch, the more we catch the more I will get paid, so each day we strive to catch as many fish as we can. As usual I wake up at four and in half an hour's time I am at work. This particular day is sunny and there are no clouds in sight. As I clean up the boat Gerhand walks up to me. "Tinashe a good day we have today, I am sensing a big catch today." said Gerhand as he walks past me. "You think so Mr Potigier." I said as I swept the upper deck. "I have never felt like this before. Today we are going to hit the jackpot." said Gerhand. Gerhand, me and the other three guys set up for sail. We are almost forty kilometres away from the shoreline as we set up our trawler nets. As we prepare to lower the trawler the weather starts to change, clouds starts to build up and the ocean floor becomes a bit rough. At first we thought it was just one of those flash storms that would go away but it became clearer that it was a huge storm. Gerhand ran into the cockpit so that he could send out a distress signal but the radio was not working at the same time the boat engine had stopped and the storm had picked up more power. There wasn't any huge ship in sight. The small trawler boat begin to swing from side to side more as I was thrown to the back of the boat. Everyone on board was wearing a raincoat. I could hear the roar of the thunder right in my ears. More water was making its way into the boat through an indent which had been caused when the boat hit a rock. To make matters worse there were no life jackets and the prospect of swimming forty kilometres in a rough ocean to land in this kind of weather made it a more scaring and daunting prospect. The boat then fell to the right side as it capsized as all that could be heard were screams and loud shouts for help. My whole body was immersed in the ocean as slowly drowned. I started paddling with all the strength I had. I had learnt to swim at high school but I never took up swimming because I was too slow to compete. As I struggled to swim, I could see Gerhand sink down to the ocean bed as he had been knocked unconscious when the boat capsized? I thought of trying to swim towards him but I knew if I did that I would run out of oxygen. I finally managed to breathe, my head surfacing above the water. It was now a fight to keep myself afloat as I paddled rigorously. Getting hold of the wooden case we kept the raincoats in. With the strength left in me I climbed above the case. As, I lay on top of the wooden case with both my hands clinched tightly on the side handles of the wooden case. I couldn't bear the situation so I closed my eyes and prayed. It was all lights out as I lost consciousness as I prayed. Praying was the last thing I remembered doing. I woke up on the sandy bank, coughing up water. Miraculously I had been swept up to shore. I could feel the cold waters of the ocean as it washed up on my feet. The wooden case was laying a few meters from where I was. At that point I heard a dog barking and then saw a man running towards were I was. The dog a German shepherd dog started to lick my face. The man was dressed in a red short and had trainers on showing that he was taken a morning jog. As I opened my eyes I could see the glare of the rising sun in the midst. The man unplugged his earphones as he knelt towards me, after which he said "What are doing here?" I had little strength in me and I was finding great difficulty in opening

my mouth. The only thing I said was “Shi- shi-shi-shipwrecked.” After which I fell unconscious. I woke in a hospital bed a few hours later. The doctor informed me that if the man had found me later I would have died of hypothermia. The man said he had been alerted by his dog. That is when he saw something which looked like a person. Of all the people on board I was the only survivor. Only two of the bodies were retrieved, Gerhand’s body wasn’t one of them. The missing people were declared deceased. My life is a great example of dystopia everything seems to be going bad. I just have to accept my fate that I am destined never to be happy because it has been calamity after calamity. One can say calamity is now my second name. With all the things that have happened I think its best I return home. After reaching this consensus I decided to sell everything I had bought whilst I was working in Durban. The latest I would leave for Johannesburg is tomorrow in the morning. I sold everything I had and some of the stuff I sold it at giveaway price because I just wanted to leave. Without even saying good bye to Jason I boarded a bus for Johannesburg. I withdraw all the money I have in my savings account with it I am going to start afresh in Zimbabwe.

## CHAPTER 15 DRUG MULE

En route to Johannesburg I decided that I would stay over at Norman's place. Norman is a guy who I have known for some time since we both lived in the same area but I had last seen him almost a year ago at Bongani's funeral. Although Norman is 10 years older than me, I and him, have a lot in common. He came to work in South Africa about a year and half ago. He once stayed for a few months at Bongani's place whilst looking for a job. Upon arrival in Johannesburg I then headed for the taxi rank so that I could board a taxi for Alexandra where Norman lives. Norman was going to wait for me at the bus stop which he had instructed me to get off at. As I disembarked from the taxi I was greeted by the ever smiling face of Norman who was clad in blue work-suit and black safety shoes. "Nomara, how's the going?" I asked as I was greeted with Norman. Nomara is the sobriquet for Norman. That's how most people refer to him, except of course for his mother and father who call him Norman. "I am fine. How was life in Durban?" replied Norman "Life in Durban was good until the accident." I said. "Let me carry you bags to the car." said Norman. "You bought a car!" I exclaimed. "It's nothing much just a modest second hand Toyota tazz." replied Norman. "I can see it's in good condition." I said. We embarked into the red Toyota tazz. A few minutes into the journey we arrive at the house Norman is staying. Norman is living in area where there is a large cluster of closely packed shanks. The houses are either made from plastics, cardboard, zinc or wood but from the outlook of things plastic seem to be the most preferred housing material. In the years I had lived in South Africa I had never been to the slums, I just saw them from a distance whilst in a taxi or a car. Norman's shank is a wooden one with two rooms. Electrical wires cress-crossed the house. All of the houses here had illegal electrical connections. Norman's bathroom which also serves as his toilet is assembled from cardboard boxes. It is detached to the shank and it does not have a roof covering it. People in this area live hand to mouth. A greater percentage of them don't have tertiary education. We sit on the bed which also serves as the couch as we watch some football as we conversant. The other room is the kitchen and it is very small. The stove, fridge and a kitchen table are squeezed into the room. The bedroom is slightly larger but still it is a small room. As I spoke to Norman I found out that he was working at construction site. What I got from Norman was a great sense of optimism that soon rather than later he would soon have his work permit. For now he had to watch his back and avoid been caught by the law enforcement agents. The optimism he has is one I no longer have. I have just become a pessimist to the core. We continue our conversation late into the night before we both retreated for bed. A large chunk of the money I had on me I placed it in the travelling bag before I slept and the remainder in the satchel which had my personal documents and certificates. I had something of a shout as I was awoken from my pre mature sleep. Norman also got up as we both approached the door and saw some people a few meters from we were standing holding knobkerries and huge pangas shouting on top of their voices "Sifuni Makwere-kwere."



This people were lighting up houses that belonged to foreigners they didn't care if there was someone in or not. I quickly took my satchel in the confusion that has engulfed me I forget to wear any shoes, as I run for dear life. Norman also followed behind me as we both took to our heel. We ran as fast as we could, I could see Norman's house burn up as we ran. There was no time to even start the car because these people were on a path of destruction. Whilst we were fleeing from the whole fracas I saw a man who was burning right in front of in the road. That graphic image of a person burning, will forever be enshrined in my memory. The screams of the man as he burns away make my heart skip a beat. What had the man done to deserve such dehumanising treatment? It was all done because he was a foreigner but at that point as I ran I thought to myself, South African people are the great pioneers of the spirit of Ubuntu but where is it when they behave like rabid people. I finally stopped when I saw that I was safe from the mob. Along my escape I had gone different ways with Norman I didn't know if he was well or not. As I sat down on the ground to rest. It dwelled upon me that I had left a huge amount of money in the travelling bag in the house which had burnt down. As they say in my culture a poor man never ceases to run into misfortune. Sweat pours down my head as I struggle to breathe properly. As I gain my, breathe back I think again of happiness. Come to think of it my only key to joy is through money all those thoughts that I could be happy without money were just wishful thoughts. My answer in finding happiness lays solely on my ability to have as much money as humanly as possible. First I have to carry myself out of this mess I am in and then find a way to make money I don't care if it's legit or not as long as I have money in my hands. All those principles and moral teachings I had, were burnt down just like that shank. I thought if one makes money through illegal dealings it does not mean that there will be doomed for eternity, but what would I be If I continue living this way, a life of a common beggar always scrabbling for left overs. The consequences of an honest straight forward life are just unbearable, nothing you can have to show off your efforts except for those permanent physical scares. I have reached this point in my life that I am prepared to jump into the deep unforgiving waters of criminal life. I have tried this honest route and I have failed miserably if it was a test it would have been a straight F. One thing I know for sure is that with money I can do virtually anything I want, but one thing I am not sure about is if I can put a price tag on happiness. Do I have to cry out loud for this misery to end? I just sit there beside the road on the grassy ground as I ponder my next move. Now I don't even have enough money to return home, the only thing I managed to escape with was the trousers and shirt I slept with, my mobile phone and a few rands in the satchel on my back. I get to my feet and I continue walking as far as I can from the marauding group. Walking bare footed it feels like I have been robbed of all the dignity I had. What now, where am I going to go from here I am walking aimlessly in a foreign land. As I walk I remember what Jeffery said to me. I swallow my pride and put aside my morality as I call Jeffery with the little air time left in my phone. Jeffery's phone rings for a long time without an answer, when I am about to hang up that's when I hear the horsy voice of Jeffery "Tinashe, what's up this hour?" asked Jeffery in a sleepy tone. I remain silent as I think about hanging up. "Yoo, Tinashe are you there?" "I-I" as I mumble my words before I continue. "I ran into some trouble. I want in." I said.

**“Change of mind. Do you have a place to sleep?” replied Jeffery. “No.” I said. “Okay can you meet me in town like in thirty minutes time.” said Jeffery. “I will be there.” I replied. “Okay let me dress up.” said Jeffery as he hang up. So I was going to meet Jeffery a few blocks from the taxi rank. I boarded into a taxi, headed for the town. All of the occupants in the taxi just kept their eyes glued on my shoeless feet. The taxi was less than half filled. After disembarking the taxi I made my way to Queen’s Café by now it was closed. It was where I was meeting up with Jeffery. Just as I arrived I saw Jeffery’s Lamborghini aventador arriving. “Jump in.” said Jeffery. “Thanks.” I replied as I entered into the car. As we drove to Jeffery’s place I told him why I wanted to join him in the drug business. The Lamborghini pulled into the garage and we then made our way to the lounge. “We can discuss more in depth later. Now I think you need to rest” said Jeffery. “Okay.” I replied. “You can sleep in the room you slept in. Let me go and continue my love affair with my bed.” said Jeffery. “Let me also hit the sheets.” I replied as we made our way into the elevator. Unlike the last time I was here I slept like a motionless log without any fear of a police raid. Morning was soon upon us. I woke up and cleaned my face in the bathroom ensuite after which I went to the lounge where I saw Jeffery still dressed in his pyjamas eating cereals as he saw news. “Morning.” said Jeffery. “Good morning.” I replied as my eyes were transfixed by the visuals on the television. I saw houses of foreign nationals’ burn down to smithereens and some Spazas belonging to foreign nationals looted right to the bottom. All of this sent shivers right up my spine. I could feel the tingling sensation in my heart that piercing pain just as if a sharpened up knife had been lodged into my abdomen. As I sat on the recliner chair I had the news anchor saying that the number of foreigners who had died in the Alexandra attack had risen to seven. The recent spate of xenophobic attacks had sent shock waves amongst the foreign nationals especially those living in the shanty areas and high density areas who were more prone to these attacks. “I could have been one of those seven” I said. “What were you doing there in the first place?” asked Jeffery. “I was visiting a friend of mine.” “So where is he?” “I don’t where he is. We went separate ways when we ran off.” “So tell me are you sure you want to do this line of work, because once you start there is no turning back.” said Jeffery looking deep into my eyes. “I am more than sure.” “Okay here is a deal today I am going down to the warehouse. That’s where the merchandise is stored.” “What type of drugs do you sell?” I asked. “Cocaine, heroin and some hestolics. Do you have your passport with you?” “Yes, why do you ask?” “I want you to deliver some drugs to Bangkok.” “But isn’t it a bit risky, should you have someone who is tried and tested and has done it before.” “This is something you have to do so that I can see if you are trustworthy.” “What about the visa. It needs time to get through.” I said. “Don’t worry about that I have contacts at the embassy and you visa will fast tracked.” replied Jeffery after which he ate a spoonful of the cereal. “So if I am successful how much do I pocket?” I asked. “You get 15 % of the merchandise sell.” “It’s a deal I am all in.” I replied. “Let me tell something the greatest drug lord is not one who relies on a lot of guns to evade arrest but is one who uses his wits to outsmart the police. I don’t murder I ponder. Remember that.” said Jeffery. I don’t know why he told me this maybe he thinks I have what it takes to be a drug lord someday. Jeffery told me the key to be a successful drug trafficker was**

always to stick to what he termed as the 3Cs, being calm, collected and cool when never delivering the goods. What I learned from Jeffery is that to survive and evade arrest one must always act in a stealth like manner and never to sell themselves short. I also learned that Jeffery had shops which sold household appliances and furniture dotted across the country. His shops were his cover. So people thought that, that's where he was getting his fortune from. He told me that his businesses exclusive of takings from the drug industry accounted to 1% of his personal income of the past year. We arrived at a warehouse located just a few kilometres out of Johannesburg. The warehouse a large building constructed in the late seventies is also where Jeffery's company manufactures furniture including beds and wardrobes. A group of men are briskly doing their jobs some cutting wood, some measuring and a few who seem lost in their own thoughts as they sit on chairs idly. All the guys working in the factory are foreign nationals. What I discovered is that Jeffery had warned them that if anyone of them tried some funny business by reporting to police the illegal stuff they were doing, he would sort them out. The way Jeffery smuggled drugs out of South Africa was astute. Behind the curtains what seemed like a normal furniture making warehouse lay a covert operation. "Aren't you afraid that one of them is going to sell you out?" I asked as I stood near the entrance. "I am not. They are well paid. They know the consequences of being a sell-out." replied Jeffery. As the beds were assembled drugs were fitted inside them. "This particular bunch of beds you see here are headed for Maputo I have a few shops there." said Jeffery as he lit a cigarette before continuing. "Once the beds arrive in Maputo there are disassembled and all the drugs are removed before there are reassembled back." said Jeffery as smoke puffed out of his mouth and nose just like steam train. This is the same trick he uses to smuggle a large amount of drugs into Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana. All of the furniture is transported via the road. I know what I am about to do is risky. Living on the edge always trying to be a step ahead of the law enforcement agency. I sit on the sofa in the supervisor's office on the second floor as I peep through the see through glass I see men doing their jobs most of them with high levels of efficiency and proficiency. The supervisor is also a foreign national hailing from Zambia. He has been working for Jeffery for over 4 years and started as a carpenter before he was promoted by Jeffery to his current position. "Follow me. There is something I want to show you." said Jeffery as he stood up from the chair which lay adjacent to where I was sitting. I followed him to the ground floor where we walked towards the western wing of the warehouse. At the end of the western wing lays a door which leads into a disused room which has three chairs and a table in it. Jeffery removed a carpet on the floor before he opened a door which led to the basement. We then made our way into the basement as we descended down into the well-lit basement. Jeffery then opened up a dark brown door in the basement which led into another room on the same level. As the door opened up I was astonished by what lay before my eyes. The room was a state of the art laboratory and there were three guys adorning white dust coats and goggles. One of the three guys stood out from the rest his hair resembled that of the hairs of an electrocuted cat, he had this Einstein look about him a bit of messed up hair dangling all over his head. The Einstein looking guy was scribbling down on, a chalkboard chemical reactions which all seemed like ancient

Egyptian hieroglyphics to me. Recollections of my physical science lessons and science lab forgettable experiences started to trickle in, back in high school I never understood any of the stuff I was taught during this lesson. I still remember this other particular day in high school my Physical science teacher Mr Rokwe who was a living specimen of a walking brewery. Some students had even gone as far as suggesting that if Mr Rokwe was in an accident alcohol and not blood would come out of his body. He had this sleepy kind of look coupled up with his red eyes and his usually un-ironed clothes which appeared as if they had been spit out of a cow's stomach created that sight that he was not a person who was much into personal grooming and hygiene. Mr Rokwe was what you would describe as a no worries type of person. A person who doesn't listen to what people say. Now I believe you have a bit of an idea of the type of person Mr Rokwe was so let me get back to my story. So on this particular day Mr Rokwe picked me to finish a chemical equation on the board. I can still precisely remember his words, how could I forgot with his stand out horsy voice which many attributed to the high intake of opaque beers he took. Legend had it that his larynx had cloaked up by the opaque beers he took. "Mr Mushayabasa can you come upfront and write up the proper chemical processes that occur in the blast furnace." As if I did not hear what he had said I kept rooted to my chair. "Mr Mushayabasa please can you come upfront and write up the proper chemical processes." Against my own will I stood up because I didn't want to test the full wrath of the "Drunken Master" the alias we had given to Mr Rokwe. Mr Rokwe was known for his legendary double clap slap. If I remained sitting I was going to be slapped and if I went in front and failed I was going to be slapped either ways I was going to be slapped by Mr Rokwe. With my shorts hanging way below my buttocks I started writing with my hand shaking uncontrollably. I could smell the smell of stale beer which was emanating from Mr Rokwe, a smell he always had. I knew what I was doing was wrong. "I have finished sir." "These are the consequences of daydreaming in class." said Mr Rokwe as he folded his long sleeved shirt. This was his pre-beating ritual. Mr Rokwe signalled for me to come where he was sitting with his pointing finger stretched out towards me. Dragging my feet in a bid to delay the inevitable I made my way towards where Mr Rokwe was sitting. I looked him directly in his ever red eyes as I tried to amass enough courage to deal with his punishment. Mr Rokwe then started playful moving his right leg with his black and grey socks clearly showing. "Mr Mushayabasa I will let you off this one but before that take this cup and get me some water to drink." said Mr Rokwe as he sat on top of the teacher's desk. The feeling I felt at that moment was one of happiness I had been let off but I was about to get a rude awakening. Just as I was about make contact with the cup with my head facing downwards I felt the hardest contact I had ever felt on my chinks. It felt like I had been hit by two bricks, my cranium felt like it was going to explode. The sound produced by the double clap was enough to overshadow the sound produced by a Concorde on take-off. Utter silence swept through the classroom, everyone was dumb folded. I could hear ringing sounds in my head as I saw the proverbial stars moving around me. I made my way back to where I was sitting, with my cheeks simmering with the white chalk dust which had made its way on to my face after the double clap I had received from Mr Rokwe's hands which had chalk dust all over them. It was never Mr Rokwe's intention

to send me to fetch water he was more interested in giving me a beating. This was no daydream it was rather a daymare. So let's flip back to the present moment now that you have a rough idea of my bad experiences with science labs and chemical equations. Inside the lab, at the other end of the room one of two guys was typing on a laptop whilst the other one was cleaning some apparatus. I shake Jeffery's right shoulder blade "What is happening here?" I asked. "We are building a nuclear weapon." replied Jeffery. "You are not serious." I replied looking more incredulous. "I am pulling your leg. This is where I manufacture the high end drugs." "So you prepare your own drugs?" I asked. "Not all the drugs are manufactured here only the high end stuff." "Can you tell me who, are those guys?" I asked. Jeffery then narrated to me the background of the guys who were in the lab. So it turned out that the guy who resembled Einstein was the one who was making the high end drugs which Jeffery referred to as the magic powder. The guy's name is Itai most of the guys here call him Nikola because they say he is just magnificently mad like the American-Polish scientist Nikola Tesla. Itai is a genius, wrote his A-level at fifteen passed with five straight before been awarded a scholarship to study at Harvard. Itai was then awarded another scholarship at Harvard where he did his postgraduate degrees including his doctorate all before he was twenty three years old. He and Jeffery grow up in the same neighbourhood. Itai left the States because he could not get funding to do his own projects. Jeffery was then able to persuade him to work for him, in producing a new drug string at the same time Jeffery and Itai's working agreement was quid pro quo because Jeffery agreed to give Itai funding for his other research projects and in return Itai mixed up the magic powder. The other three guys were lab assistance who had been employed by Itai to help him in his work. "Itai." said Jeffery as he waved his hand to get Itai's attention. "Hey." replied Itai as he waved back. We walked towards where Itai and his lab assistance were working at. "How are you today?" asked Jeffery. "Fine and you." said Itai as he removed his goggles. "This is Tinashe he is friend of mine. Tinashe this is Itai and the guy to his right is Patrick and the other one is Norman." said Jeffery as he made the formal introductions. "Nice to know." said Itai and the two guys simultaneously. "Same here." I replied. "How far with the gaudium." asked Jeffery as he sat on a lab chair. "Two bunches done, one to go." replied Itai. "What is gaudium?" I asked. "Gaudium is the name of the drug been manufactured here, it is Latin for happiness." replied Jeffery. Jeffery had named it gaudium because he said it teleported a person to a place of endless happiness, a place of pure bliss. "Who buys this stuff?" I asked. "Mostly rich people, already we have pre orders from famous actors and singers in the States." replied Jeffery. "The states!" I exclaimed. "Yep the states." coolly replied Jeffery before he continued. "This stuff is worth millions. The people who use it say it's different from the other stuff. Gives them a high state of euphoria and great sense of control." said Jeffery. "So how do you make this stuff?" I asked "I use leaves from the cannabis plant I add different components. The end product usually affects how you portray yourself." said Itai before continuing. "It alters one's sense of awareness, for example if one has low self-esteem and uses the drug. The drug will change their esteem." said Itai. "But doesn't it have any side effects?" I asked. "All drugs if used in excess of bodily requirements will affect you." said Itai as he removed his white gloves

before placing them in a bin which lay behind him. “Even your normal cough syrup can be abused by a drug addict take for instance the cough syrup Broncleer. Many addicts in Zimbabwe use it.” said Itai. “So what are you preparing now?” asked Jeffery. “I am trying to concoct a fluid which can be used as a spray.” replied Itai as he took a break before continuing. “The purpose of the fluid is to confuse sniffer dogs to throw them off one’s trail. Take for instance if you spray the fluid on a person carrying drugs. The dogs sense of smell will be confused.” said Itai. “Can you elucidate further when you say confused.” asked Jeffery. “As you know dogs have a keen sense of smell, so what the fluid does it covers the smell of the drugs and instead of picking up the drug’s smell the dogs pick up the fluid’s smell. “So have you finished?” I asked. “Yes I have, and one thing to note the fluid has an aloe-vira smell.” replied Itai. After a few more minutes discussing in the lab we left Itai and his assistance to do their after which we left for Jeffery’s place. Three weeks later and the day for my assignment to Bangkok arrived. I was feeling a bit nervous as I prepared to smuggle the drugs. Some of the drugs were sawn into the soles of my shoes, some into the hat I was wearing and the remainder were packed into the two laptops I had on me. I had stated the reason of my visit to Bangkok as pleasure. As I walked along the corridors at O.R Tambo international my heart rate started to increase. Jeffery had accompanied me to the airport but I was going alone to Bangkok. With a small suitcase in my right hand and a laptop bag strapped across my shoulder I made my way to the check in booth. I could see the police as they patrolled the airport, this made me a lot jittery. As I lay in wait sitting on a bench in the international terminal section I hear on the loud speaker a feminine voice sounding out, “Flight H320 to Thailand Bangkok has being delayed. We are sorry for any inconvenience caused.” The reason for the delay was that it had being earlier grounded at Heathrow because of a volcano which had erupted in Iceland. The fumes, produced by the erupting volcano reduced visibility and flying in such conditions was suicidal. The waiting increased my anxiety levels. Four hours after the initial fly off time flight H320 arrived. I had to wait a further hour as the plane got refuelled and had some engine checks. As I made my way into the business class of the Fly Emirates Airbus A380, I started to feel a bit jumpy. For years I had always had a phobia of heights. After almost 15 hours the plane arrived in Bangkok at the Suvarnabhumi Airport. This is the first time I have been on an airplane and it was courtesy of under hand dealings. I strode along over the ever gleaming floor as I made my way out of the airport. With only Itai’s fluid which I sprayed to evade the sniffer dogs as my only cover I felt more insecure mostly because I was the first person using it. Theoretically it had been proven to work but there was no practical use of it. I was taking a huge leap of faith. Maintaining my cool I glided past four German shepherd police dogs. Just as I walk past the sniffer dogs I see them tag down a black lady. The lady was in the same plane as I was and was sitting a few rows back. Just at looking at the lady’s skin who I estimate is in her early twenties one would be forgiven to think that she was adorning camouflage. Her skin is reminiscent of the side effects of skin lighting creams. Some patches of her skin are lighter some are darker. She is dressed in a yellow miniskirt, and from her knees to the top part of her skirt she is light as an orange, but from her knees downwards her skin is dark as ebony. Her face is very light in complexion and I could

see clearly her dark skin tone on her backside since she was wearing a green blouse which reveals the backside. I can hear her scream and plead, "I didn't know, It was on me, please, please let me go" said the lady as the police officers carried her up. Personally I couldn't make out what the lady was pleading for or what she had done wrong. I walk out of the airport and I then hire a taxi which ferries me to the house address where I am meeting up with the buyer of the merchandise. I have travelled during the wrong time it's rush hour and the traffic is just unbearable. The traffic jam looks like a network of unending sprawling cars. Finally after almost 3 hours I arrive in the subtle location I am supposed to make the drop a few kilometres out of the CBD. I knock on the bell. An oriental guy opens up the door, he is the one I am supposed to meet and he is dressed in a blue jean and a red polo shirt. Jeffery had earlier shown me the picture of this guy so I knew him. I don't say anything I just give him a paddle lock and he passes me the matching key and I unlock the paddle lock after which he gives me a sign to follow him. The paddle lock and key thing was just to make sure he was the right guy. I follow the guy into door which is directly opposite the entrance door. The door is opened up and leads into the kitchen where the exchange is made. Very few words are said between us. The oriental guy sniffs the cocaine, "Good stuff." said the oriental guy in an Americanish accent. Who is quite short in height, before he dials up a number. After few moments the phone is answered and he places it on his right ear side. "I have got the stuff I will make the transfer right now." said the oriental guy. I receive a conformation message from Jeffery that the money has successfully being wired into his Swish account. "Thanks." says the oriental guy as he opens up the entrance door. "You are welcome." I replied as I made my way out of the restaurant. I hire a taxi as I make my way to Gem hotel where I will stay for two days before I return to South Africa. I arrive at the hotel and take an elevator to the 10<sup>th</sup> floor where my room is. The hotel room is just beautiful with an almost penthouse feel. I can see clearly the skyscrapers which dominate the skyline of Bangkok as I stood outside on the balcony as I sipped a wine glass full of Johnnie Walker whiskey, as the light breeze swept past my face I felt completeness. After finishing my wine glass full of whiskey I entered my bedroom as I lay on the big queen sized bed with the bright lights of Bangkok quite visible through the huge French sliding door which opened up to the balcony. As I lay on the bed which ranks as the most comfortable bed I had ever slept on. I watch the news. The bed is big enough to accommodate five guys of my weight and height ratio. As I scroll up and down the channels I stop on this particular news channel on which I see the black camouflaged skinned lady who I had earlier encountered been handcuffed by police officers. I learnt that the black lady was a Namibian national and was found in possession of 1000 grams of cocaine which was stuffed under her clothes in her suitcase. The fact that the lady was facing up to thirty years at least in prison made me realise how easily I could have ruined my life for good. The spray that Itai made really worked like a charm, it threw the dogs off my trail. For the next two days I spent most of my time in the hotel enjoying the room service the only time I go out during my stay at the hotel is when I left for the shopping mall where I bought some clothes. The two days were up and for the first time in a long time I felt extremely happy. If crime makes me happy then so be it I am going to dedicate my life to crime. A day's pay is

equivalent of 4 years pay at Singh's. I have been searching for happiness now I think I have found it. Now I can relax and enjoy the good life. All of my life I have worked like a slave so as to live like a king but I never succeeded but for once I have worked like an outlaw and I am living like a king. I enjoy the top of the range wine as I lay on the bed in my red coloured robe. This kind of feeling is the one I have been yawning for. I am headed for the top and with fame and fortune accompanying me I will forever be happy. All these years I had been looking for happiness and security in the wrong places now, I have found the fountain of happiness. Why should I worry the money I have earned is not blood stained. I am doing a good thing for society selling drugs to rid of sadness in people. I am now in a line of work where I am giving euphoria to the people who buy my merchandise. I walk out of the luxury hotel as I make my way back to South Africa. I board a tri-cycle better known in this part of the world as a tuk-tuk. Sitting at the back of tuk-tuk I just visualize sitting at the back of my Royce-Rolls being chauffeur driven. I can feel I am just within touching distance of achieving it. The tuk-tuk steams away as I walk into the airport. I phone Jeffery as I sit waiting in the departure area, for my flight back to South Africa. As I walk out of O.R Tambo International I can see the ever radiant face of Jeffery. "Hook line and sinker. Nice job." said Jeffery, patting me on the back. "It was a piece of cake." I reply. We heard for Jeffery's Land Rover Discovery 3 in the parking bay of the O.R Tambo and I am quickly whisked out of the airport.



## CHAPTER 16 RELAPSE

I have been staying with Jeffery for the past 2 months in his house. I always make sure to call back home as regular as possible. With the money I am earning from the drug business I have being able to pay for my younger sister university fees in full and also sending home groceries. I feel a certain sense of entitlement I can provide for my family. Jeffery has given me the chance to go it alone in the drug industry. I made some contacts, and I will be moving out soon, I have decided to stay in Hilbrow where I will be closer to my clients. I will be selling merchandise from Jeffery and I will pocket 35% and the rest Jeffery will take. I don't care what they say about Hilbrow even if it has one of the highest murder rates in Johannesburg I am going what only matters is that I have my money at the end of the day. The day has come I move into my flat in Hilbrow. From my flat I can see the iconic Vodacom tower. I am sitting in front of television in the evening and I am watching the news. My heart stops for a moment when the news anchor opens up his mouth on the news bulletin, "A gun struggle insured between a suspected drug lord and the police resulting in the death of four officers and the drug lord." What made my heart stop was the fact that the drug lord in question was Jeffery. There couldn't show the gruesome pictures of his dead body which had been drilled all over by bullets because it was prime time news. My bad luck was back again when I thought I was making it, I was back to square one. My supplier is dead where am I going to find the merchandise. I sit there looking more like a zombie I feel like I am cursed and never meant to be happy. Maybe I can try the gaudium I have, what have I to loss. I take a paper and place it on a table. On top of the paper I put a few of the whitey stuff. I take a pen barrel and I start snorting it. After half an hour I start to feel like I have been teleported to a whole new galaxy I can feel my head feeling a bit funny. It's like I am working in suspended air the feeling is unexplainable. Maybe it was a bit inhumane worrying where I would find my supplies instead of feeling sorrow on the death of Jeffery. The more gaudium I take the more I feel empowered. I feel ecstasy and every little worry I have is put to rest. For a moment I pause to think and I come to the conclusion that if I smoke drugs every day I am always going to feel ecstasy. Finally I have found my panacea to my problem of ever longing for happiness. The air around me is calm and serene and all I can hear the little vibrations playing in my head. Jeffery warned me never to cross the line between using and selling and I have crossed it and I am loving it. I lay on the sofa, with the television set on. Weeks pass by after Jeffery's death and I have become a drugie. I am now a full time drug addict I can't go a day without snorting coke. The police search at Jeffery's warehouse yields nothing, prior to the shootout with the police Jeffery had moved all the merchandise to a safe house in Mozambique. He also had the lab removed and all the apparatus in it were incinerated. As for Itai he left for Bermuda were he opened up his laboratory from the money he had earned whilst working for Jeffery. He also took his two assistances. From what I heard he is no longer manufacturing any of the magic powder on any narcotics. He is pulling all his resources in research in other more moral places. The state tries all legal routes but it can't confiscate any of Jeffery's South African properties or freeze any of his cash in South African banks because of insufficient evidence to link Jeffery to any

illegal drug trading. I have become a shadow of myself I remain indoors always have the windows closed, the darkness just makes it more intimate for me. I have reached a point where I have sold the car I had to sustain my drug addiction. I no longer pay my rentals in time I always have a lame excuse for the landlady. I can see it in her eyes one more, late rental payment and she will throw me out. Months have gone by since I last called home or sent money. I have put all of my family member's numbers on blacklist. None of their calls can get through. I don't need to hear their constant calls and ever un-wearing message to send them some money, I know they fed me when I was young but that was back then, they shouldn't expect me to fend for them. I am my own man and that's the way I want it to be. I am slowly running out of things to sell and the flat has become a replica of an empty and deserted area. Its two weeks after month end but I haven't paid any rent, I hear the knock on my door as I open the door my landlady a ball like looking lady because of her short height and chubby looking structure. My landlady Ms Wilmese a coloured lady starts shouting all sorts of obscenities. I stand there just like a zombie. Beside her are two beefy looking guys. At her accord the two guys come in the house and carry me and throw me out. As I lay in the corridor a satchel hits my face. It's the satchel I keep my documents. Ms Wilmese takes my stove, blankets and a few clothes I have remaining as compensation for the outstanding rentals. I walk out of the flat a broke guy, I am also in need of a fix. The only things I have worth selling is my mobile phone and the jacket I am wearing. I sell the jacket I have for a few hundred rands at a pawn shop. The money is all channelled out at buying some drugs. I go to my usually place where I buy the merchandise. It's a small dingy room in Hilbrow where the exchange is been made, Just as I am about to get the package. Two gun wielding guys enter the room and open fire. As I am standing near the window I jump out of the window and land awkwardly on my legs. The jump is an agonising fall from the second floor. I stand up to my feet and run down an alley after which I reach a brick wall which I climb over. I finally stop after I know I am safe and that's when I realise I have been grazed by a bullet on my right hand. With my satchel strapped to my back I start shacking and sweating I need a quick fix but where can I get. It's fast approaching night and I am feeling cold I have sold my jacket. I take some cardboard boxes and some newspapers and make my bed in a small alley on the outer margins of Hilbrow. I am soon asleep but once I am awake the urgency to take drugs comes back again. I am sweating and trembling and my head is aching. The only thing of real monetary value left on me is my mobile phone and it has no airtime left in it.

## CHAPTER 17 REDEMPTION

I start walking aimlessly in the streets of Johannesburg and I fall asleep in the afternoon at the entrance to a Roman Catholic Church. "Hey you there what are you doing." said the elderly looking man in an Irish accent. I open my eyes slowly. "I, I, I" Is the only thing I said. "What's your name." said the man wearing a priest's collar. This man has this type of bold hair were the upper part is completely hairless and patches of hair on both sides. He also has a huge white beard. "Tinashe, I need some water sir." I said. I was dirty and had not had a bath in three days. My white jean had turned to cream and the blue t shirt I was wearing had some blood stains on it, my kinky hair was all coiled up, and my mouth was all white "I am Father O'Brien. Follow me." said the priest as he helped me to my feet. I followed him into the church yard. The church yard was pristine and its environs were quiet. We entered a small gate which led to the rectory. Upon entering the rectory I was led to the kitchen where Father O'Brien gave me a meal suitable for royalty. "Eat up my son. So tell me how you ended up like this?" said Father O'Brien. So I narrated my story how I had ended up in South Africa and how I became a drug dealer and subsequently a drug addict. "My son you should always pray day and night. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, put your life in his hands." "But, Father I don't understand what have, I done to deserve such misfortune." I said with my hands shaking. "There is a time for everything. There is a reason for all what has happened to you. All I can say to you remain steadfast and always pray." "I don't know how I am going to get over this addiction." "You can get over it. First you have to believe in the power of Jesus Christ to heal and then it will all fall it place." "I wish it was as easy as you say." "Listen to yourself you are quitting before you have even tried." said father McCain as he took a pause before continuing, "I can offer you a place to stay given that you help me around the church since the concierge who worked here retired a few weeks back." "Father, I will help you but first I need to say a pray." "Let's go to the church you can pray there." We went to the church a short distance from the rectory. The church building is a titanic early 20<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance enthused building. As I walk along the passageway I grow more and more, numb in my body. I sit in the first row bench. "I will leave you to pray." said Father O'Brien as he entered the Sacristy. I sat there for a few minutes I didn't know what to say or do as I kept my head down. I then moved from a sitting position to a kneeling one as I knelt down to pray. With my head bent down I started praying in my heart. "Dear Lord I know I have done some bad things but I now ask for your forgiveness. I want to start afresh. Jesus Christ please lead me on this path of Christianity." I say as I lift my head with tears pouring slowly out of my eyes as I stare at the glass Crucifix. A spectrum of light is beaming through the glass Crucifix. For a moment I feel rejuvenated. Slowly opening my mouth I look towards the glass Crucifix which is stationed behind the altar. "Praise be to Jesus Christ." After which I stand up. It was like I had received a revelation from Jesus it felt like he was there with me offering me a chance of redemption, the light beaming

through the glass crucifix somewhat opened up my eyes. There right in front of me I saw my life unravel before me from the death of my old man right through to all the misfortunes that followed including the death of Bongani to my addiction. "I can see you have finished your pray my son." "Thank, you father." "Let me show you where you will be staying." I was shown the three roomed cottage, and Father McCain gave me some blankets, clean clothes, soap and a towel. I took a shower and then I was invited for supper by Father O'Brien. After which I went to sleep. I worked at the church for the next two months and also my time there helped my spirituality. My Christian believe was further strengthened whilst staying at the Roman Catholic Church of All Saints the name of the parish. Each Sunday the Church was always full to the rafters with people from different races. Although Father O'Brien is in his early seventies his sermons are always energetic and full of charisma. So I had decided to go back home and I was going to be accompanied to the bus terminus by Father O'Brien. "I don't know how to thank you Father. I pray that the Lord will help you spread his Gospel across the world." I said. "You know my son I want you to prosper and grow your faith in Jesus Christ." "You took me in when I was down and showed me the light and for that I will forever be grateful." "Remember to call me when you arrive in Zimbabwe." said Father O'Brien as he started the car as he took a pause before continuing. I was accompanied by Father O'Brien in his Toyota Hilux single cab to the Bus Terminus. Along the road Father O'Brien told me to remain hopeful that something good would happen in my life. Father O'Brien gave me eight hundred rands before he left. As I waited in line at Park Station to buy my bus ticket to Zimbabwe I received a Phone call I didn't know who it was but from the first two digits +63 I knew it was an international call. "Hello." I said. "Hello, is this Tinashe." said the voice which seemed very much familiar. "Yes, but whom am I speaking to?" I replied. "It's, Mr Miller." said the person at the other end of the phone call. "O-ooooh Mr Miller how is Australia and how is Liandri and Mrs Miller." "There are all fine. Are you still in the hunt for a job?" said Mr Miller. "Yes, but I am returning to Zimbabwe Today." I replied. "I saw an advertisement for an economic advisor at Old Mutual on the internet and I think you can get." said Mr Miller. "Was the advertisement for Old Mutual South Africa?" I asked. "Yes." replied Mr Miller before he continued, "Are you on the bus yet?" asked Mr Miller. "Not yet." I replied. "Okay if you can just extend your time in South Africa for a few weeks and try out the Old Mutual job and see if you can get it." said Mr Miller. "But I don't have anywhere to stay in Johannesburg. "Don't worry about that I am going to send you some money and you can use to stay in a bed and breakfast but in the meantime use the money you intended to buy the ticket to pay for a place to sleep" "Okay sir, Thank you for looking up for me." "All the best Tinashe. I will send you the details for the money withdrawal in an hours' time by then I would have made the transfer." "Okay, Bye." I said. "Bye." said Mr Miller as he hung up the phone. I then moved out of the line and I went to sit on the bench as I waited for details for the money transfer. Just over an hour later a message with the details for the transfer arrived. So I made my way to Standard Chartered bank and withdraw \$1000 Australian dollars which at that point was equivalent to 9500 rands. I made the exchange for the rands and proceed to open an account since I knew walking around with a large sum of money

would prove troublesome. I kept 2000 rands with me and the remainder I deposited in the bank. With the sun quickly fading away I made my way out of the bank and I went to an Internet Café where I searched for the nearest bed and breakfast place and also the place with the lowest prices. Finally I found a place to, stay at. It wasn't the cheapest nor the nearest but it was fairly priced and was located near my proximity. So I walked out of the café and I hired a taxi which ferried me to the bed and breakfast place. I paid for five days. For the first time in over six months I phoned home. I was happy when I heard the voices of my family members. I applied for the job at Old Mutual but now I had to wait for the response. Three days later I received a phone call informing that I had been selected for the job interview. I was happy but I knew I still had to pass the interview to land the job. I bought a new suite and shoes for the interview with the money Mr Miller had given to me. The day of the interview came and I was beaming with confidence I felt like it was my time. The interview was without incident, the following day I received a phone call that I had being offered the job. I was so happy. I can't describe how I felt at that moment. I phoned home to tell them of the good news. The job has some good perks, including a company car and a house unfortunately no company wife. So I was going to start work the following Monday. I also phoned Mr Miller to inform him that I had landed the job. The Saturday before I was going to start my work I went to All Saints Church. I waved towards Father McCain who was removing weeds in the flowers which ran along the drive way. "Hello Father, I have great news." I said. "So you are already back." said Father O'Brien looking all astonished. "I never left." I said. "How come?" asked Father O'Brien as he left the garden fork inserted in ground. "The most amazing thing happened." I said. After which I narrated how I had ended getting the job from the phone call I received from Mr Miller to finally getting the job. "The Lord works in mysterious ways and I am happy you got your breakthrough." said Father O'Brien. "Father can, I use the church to pray I need to make a prayer." I said. "You can, let me finish up and I will open it up for you." said Father McCain. "Let me help you." I said. So I helped Father O'Brien remove the weeds. I went into the church and made my prayer. "Lord Jesus I just want to thank you for what you have done. You gave me hope when I thought I was all but over." I said as knelt down with my head bent downwards and my hands clasped together. I left the Church and went to the company house I had been shown to that same day. The car I was going to get on Monday. I was presented a Toyota Yaris as my car by the company. So it was going to be two months of probation before I could sign a contract as a permanent worker. Five months have gone by and I am enjoying my stay at the company so far everything has been alright. Each Sunday I go All Saints Church there isn't a Sunday I have missed so far. The Easter holiday is upon us and with it presents a time where I can have four days of rest and I have already planned to go back home to see everyone, arriving in Mount Pleasant, at my brother's home to my mother's warm filled embrace. "Tinashe I thought you would never come back. Thank God you are back and in good health." said my mother who is wearing a blue Zambia with a drawing of the holy Bible on it, wrapped around her and a matching doek. It had been 5 long years since I last saw my mother, during that time my sister had finished high school and started varsity but had dropped out because of failure to pay school

fees. She still had that radiant looking about her. The house was the same as when I left no addition had been done, the main house was still to be built and my mother, my sister, Mai Louisa and her two children lived in the cottage. My brother was also coming from the United States for the Easter holiday. I was back home after a long time away. It might not be the house where I grew up but I certainly had missed it. I enter into the lounge which I had been told by my mother was very much empty eight months ago as they had to sell everything in the lounge to pay off debts. The lounge was now slowly filling up now with a new 42 inch plasma television I had sent home and some leather sofas my elder had bought. As I opened the door which led into the lounge I was very surprised to see the sight of my elder brother Tinotenda whom I had last seen almost seven and half years back. Without hesitation I ran for my brother whom I warmly embraced. For five long minutes I was engaged in the brotherly hug, tears started to flow on both our faces as we could not contain the emotion we had. I was looking like the elder brother, Tinotenda with his baby face didn't look a day older. "Still the same, skinny looking guy I last saw." said Tinotenda as he removed his glasses and wiped tears of his left cheek. "Still the baby faced guy I last saw." I replied. The only time I saw my brother was on social interactive sites like Facebook and Twitter, and he didn't post that many pictures. The last time I had spoken to Tinotenda was a year and half ago. "Time flies, I can't believe it has been almost 8 years since I last saw you." said Tinotenda as he sat down on the sofa. "A lot has happened in those six and half years that I could write a novel." I said as I remained standing. "Babamunini, thought you would never come back." said Mai Louisa as she gave me a hug. "Where are my niece and nephew?" I asked. "They went for some shopping with Auntie Ruru." replied Mai Louisa. "I guess there are now taller than me now." I said as I sat down. "Soon enough there will be taller than you." replied Mai Louisa as she sat down. "I am happy that my two sons are back from the diaspora." said my mother as she took her seat. So I told them the whole of my escapades from drug dealing to my recovery, the untimely death of Bongani and my struggles. We sat there chatting for nearly two hours, and that's when Ruvarashe arrived with Leroy and Louisa. "Uncle Tinashe." shouted Leroy and Louisa simultaneously. "Tinashe is that you!" exclaimed Ruvarashe. "It's me in flesh and blood." I said taking a pause before continuing, "How are my favourite niece and nephew?" "I am fine, Uncle Tinashe where have you been." asked Louisa who is the more inquisitive of the two. "I was always here didn't you see me." I replied. "Uncle Tinashe, we are no longer in pre-school." said Leroy. "I am just pulling your leg. How are you baby sister?" I said. "I am fit as a fiddle. Boy had I missed you." said Ruvarashe as she embraced me as I stood up. On the other end Leroy and Louisa also gave me a hug. We stood there four people engaged in affectionate group hug. "Yo Unces, I have a lot of things to tell you." said Leroy. Leroy always referred to me as Unces, a shortened form of uncle. "I can see by the look on your face that you have a catalogue of things to discuss." I said. "Me too, Uncle Tinashe." injected Louisa. So we sat down and I had a nice chat with my nephew, niece and younger sister. Before Ruvarashe arrived with Leroy and Louisa, Tinotenda had earlier asked for forgiveness from everyone and pleaded greatly for forgiveness from Mai Louisa about his absence and lack of commitment. Tinotenda told us he had been driven away from us, his

family, by poor decision making which he said had happened when he fell into the arms of another woman. The woman he says had caused him to turn his back on his religion and family. I asked if he had sired any children with the woman. His answer was no. He told us since he cut ties with her almost a year ago, he had returned to his normal reasoning self. Mai Louisa said she had already forgiven him even before he had asked for forgiveness. Everything seems to be falling into place. I am happy and I am with my family although it's just for a few days before I return To South Africa but it's worth it. The feeling is priceless.

## CHAPTER 18 HER AGAIN

As I sit in the restaurant called La Veleldrome, the name clearly showing its Marseille connections. The owner of the restaurant is a guy called Francois a French expatriate whom I had grown to know a bit personal. Francois is a very friendly guy and usually takes time to speak with his usual customers. With passing of time I had entered into Francois inner circle of his loyal customers, as a result I grow to know him a bit personal. Situated in the heart of uptown Johannesburg the restaurant creates this vibe of a Franco-Afrocentric urban environment, with its safari inspired ceiling which had paintings of savannah animals and some of the French inspired food on the menu. A warm stream of air passes through the room from the air conditioning system, the warmth inside is in stark contrast to the prevailing cold weather outside. The cold weather seems to have gone into overdrive since the turn of June, light showers start to trickle down as I enter into the restaurant. Inside the restaurant I sit on comfy genuine leather chair. There is this cosiness and laid back nature about the La Veleldrome I like about. I am reminiscent about the love filled and joyful Easter I had back home with my family, Tinotenda is now processing travel documents for his wife, his son Leroy and daughter Louisa. He wants to have his family close with him back in the States as for Ruvarashe she is back at university and my mother with some financial help from me and Tinotenda has opened a boutique in the CBD of Harare. The restaurant has this intimate feeling about it, since I started working at Old Mutual I always come here for lunch. Just as I take a sip of my coffee I almost get choked after laying my eyes on something I thought I would never see. Maybe the glare of the sunlight rays penetrating through the window is messing with my sight and it's just an optical illusion. But as I stare profoundly at the moving figure I discover it's no chimer. Right there before my two eyes walks past the beautiful and vivacious looking lady I had seen at the cricket match over five years ago who had mysteriously disappeared when I wanted Bongani to see her, dressed in a green pencil skirt, matching blouse, green wedge heels, blue earrings and a neatly tied ponytail. The wedge heels accentuated her tall legs. The only things not green on her, were her nice fair skin tone and her silky dark hair even her nails had green polish on them. I kept my eyes on her as she walked towards a table which lay directly opposite to me. Avoiding direct eye contact with her I steal glances at her. I was taken aback as she majestically turned her head towards the window as she took a deep stare at the people who were walking past the restaurant, through the north facing glass wall which runs the entire course of the northern side of the restaurant. Right in the middle of the northern glass wall there is a sliding glass which acts as the entrance and exit to and fro the restaurant. My attention quickly moved from her head to her hands as I tried to see if she had a ring on her left finger. I blew a sigh of relief when I saw she had no ring on. My only worry was that she was waiting for someone and by the way she was staring at the window it seemed so, my only hope was that it was not going to be her boyfriend. I sat there as I marvelled at nature's sample of



beauty. I knew it was now or never. I was going to ask her out now. I could hear my heart shouting go for it. As I gathered the courage to walk up to her I took one last look at her before I stood up. As I usually do, I engage in my pre courtship ritual of knuckle cracking and a good sign for me as all my knuckles sounded. This time I am not going to use any pickup line I am just going to be spontaneous and original. I am going to say whatever comes to mind. My heart is beating at an alarmingly high rate. The more I get closer to her, the more increasing my heart beats. Without further thought I open my mouth. "Is this sit taken?" I asked pointing at the vacant sit which was opposite to where she was sitting. "As you can see there is no one." said the beautiful lady in a sweet soft voice. I am immersed by the beautiful lady's tantalising and voluptuous lips and can't remove my eyes from the m. "Can I take this sit?" I asked. "At you own peril." "Why do you say so, are you dangerous?" I asked as I sat down. "Only if you push the wrong button." "Tinashe Mushayabasa, at your disposal." I said as I looked deep into her beautiful almond shaped hazel coloured eyes. I am a bit dumbstruck that she replied me so politely. In the back of my head I am thinking what has a simple guy like me have to offer such a classy and gorgeous lady. "I hope I haven't pushed the wrong button yet." "Not yet." she replied. "Out of inquisitiveness, what is your name?" I asked. "Take a guess." "Beauty." I replied. "A bit corky ehe!" she replied with an almost raised voice. "Because it's the only name I think you should have." I injected. Looking a bit teasing as she seductively winked at me, she replied "Flattery, you sure trying to rub me the right way." "Is it working?" "No it's not." she replied. "You just hurt my ego?" I said as I put a wide smile. "For trying to impress me I will tell you my name." as she took a pause before continuing, "I am Thandiwe." "Thandie I shall call you then." I said. For the next thirty five minutes we spoke and I could see by the glow in her eyes that she was enjoying my company. Bending her head to look at the time on her wrist watch, she says "Lunch is almost over. I have to return to work." "What's your number so that we can have this talk again?" I asked. Standing up and taking her handbag from the table, she says "Unfortunately I can't give it to you but if you come here same time tomorrow, maybe I will change my mind." "It' a big maybe, so don't hoist your hopes up to much." said added. "Okay, that's fair at least let me walk you out." As I walked her out I discover that she is driving a Porsche Cayenne S.U.V. In our conversation we hadn't spoken about our line of work, we discussed mostly on the cold winter weather and what we did during the winter periods as young children. She vehemently refused to give me her surname for now I only know that she is called Thandiwe, tomorrow can't just arrive any faster. All I want is to speak to Thandie again. From the chic clothing she is wearing and the top of the range car she is driving my best assumption is that she is from a well to do family or that she is an executive at one of the big companies. Seconds evolved into minutes and minutes into hours as time went past. All I could think of as I tried to get sleep in my bed was the sight of Thandie which had been enshrined in my mind. This is the girl who I had seen five years back at the cricket match she hadn't changed. Maybe it was fate, that our paths would cross each other again. My alarm rang out as I woke up. The day had arrived. I paced through my normal routine, where I would wake up at 5 am, bath, dress up eat before leaving for work. Lunch time arrived, and without further delay I left for the

restaurant, in the hope that I would meet Thandie. As I sat there eating my lunch two hot cross buns and a cup of cappuccino, I crossed my fingers in the hope that Thandie would walk into the room at any time. I start to become a bit anxious, it seems that Thandie might not come. Maybe she is not having lunch today. Just as I am about to lose hope I see Thandie entering the restaurant. As soon as she gets sight of me, I wave towards her from where I am sitting, she smiles and wicks back at me, as she starts to walk towards where I am sitting. I feel like I have won the national lottery at that moment. As she walks towards me thoughts start to race forward and backwards of my mind if she didn't like me she wouldn't be entertaining the idea of having lunch with me and then as I reassure myself of this another thought races past my mind. Thandie might not be interested in me, she could be one of those girls who are just friendly and do not just blow off every guy that approaches them. Maybe to her I am just a potential friend. Fingers crossed I hope she sees me as potential husband, I do not need any friend zone problems. Thandie is smartly dressed in a blue floral inspired demure pale d strapless top and matching tube skirt. The tube skirt nicely shows off her hourglass figure, as the tightly fitting tube skirt showed off her hips. Her eyelashes nicely styled, with red lipstick which matched the nail polish on her nails both of which had been applied with due care, providing that look of sheer splendour and beauty. From her dressing and nicely applied make up I could fully tell that she was a fashionista. I smile towards her as I get hold of the chair that is directly opposite to me on the table I am sitting on. "I thought you would never come." I said showing a bit of chivalry as I moved the chair for her to sit in "No greetings." replies Thandie as she sits down placing her leather purse on to the table. "Where are my manners, How has been your day so far?" I said as I moved back to where I was sitting. "Hectic." she replied in her seductively hot voice which surely melts even the hardest ice blocks in the Arctic sea. "Hectic, what were you doing" "It was paperwork after paperwork." "Thandie, you never told me where you work." "Take a wild guess, then." "Lawyer" "You are wrong, I work at a brothel." "You kidding right." I replied. "No jokes." "I can tell you are lying. Your eyes are not moving that much." "Seriously, you think I am lying." "I can prove that you are lying" I said as I take a pause before continuing "Its proven that if a person doesn't move his or her eyes, there is a 90% chance they are lying. By doing so a person will be trying to make their lies seem true." "You caught me, but just out of curiosity where did you get that information on how to tell if a person is lying to you." as she waved her hands towards the waitress. "That was just simple fabrication, I made that up." I replied. Just as Thandie was about to say something the waitress she had signalled to, greeted us "Good day too you. May I take your order" "Can you give me some pork ribs and some French fries." said Thandie to the waitress who jotted down the order in a small notepad. As we were sitting whilst Thandie ate her food and I drank my second cup of cappuccino, we had a good conversation. Through the conversation I learnt that Thandie was Xhosa a native of Port Elizabeth. Her father a successful businessman of his own ran a couple of hardware stores in the Nelson Mandela Bay area and her mother had a catering company also located in Port Elizabeth. She was the Regional Chief Financial Officer for Murray and Crusoe, the largest cement company in South Africa and the second largest cement company

trading in Africa. She is the head of Southern Region Financial department, which stretches from South Africa up to, Tanzania. With the few minutes I had spent with Thandie I could tell that she was down to earth, and did not use her position at work to override other people. Before she left I was able to take her mobile phone number. With time I get to know more about Thandie and her family. She is the first child in a family of three, her younger siblings namely Irene a girl who is the second is currently at the University of Cape Town studying towards a degree in electrical engineering and Thabo the last child, a boy who is currently in grade 10. As they say in the good old schooled movies the rest is history, after this we had another date, but this time it was less formal and that's how I started dated Thandie. Fast forward eighteen months after our first date I am standing in my double breast, single vent blue slim-fit suit, a matching blue bow-tie, black lace less crocodile skinned shoes a sliver wrist watch, a clean shaven beard and short cut hair at the altar. Right in front of me stands the shout and stout figure of, Father O'Brien. Dressed in his St Patrick's priestly robes. A few years ago I had walked into this church feeling worthless and I had reached that point in my life that I felt like it was not worth living, the feeling I was feeling on this particular day was contrary to that one, I was exuberant, I was feeling that happiness that I was lingering for. It was not brought upon by money but it was rather fulfilled by the love not only that I was receiving from Thandie but from my family and those closest to me. Finally after years of searching I can finally say I am happy. If it could be quantified the happiness I had on this particular day could not even fill the oceans of this world. Just like Chris Gardener in the movie in Pursuit of Happiness I had finally found myself in a refreshing and invigorating place. Even though I grew up going to the Anglican Church I decided to wed at All Saints Parish which was a Catholic Church, this parish in particular was where I got my redemption and I saw it befitting to wed here. Thandie was a Catholic, she had grew up as one. I received conditional baptism from Father O'Brien since I had not been baptised as per Catholic traditions, so that I could marry Thandie. For Thandie there was no need for conditional baptism, she had grown up going to the Catholic Church, she was baptised, received her first communion in the Catholic Church as well as receiving the sacrament of confirmation. Thandie walks down the aisle accompanied by her father who is smartly dressed in a grey double vested Calvin Klein suit. I could hear my heart, beat faster, not because I was afraid some scorned and rejected woman was going to walk into the church and cause mayhem, but rather because It felt surreal. My entire immediate family is here as well as the Nkosi family. I had managed to buy air tickets for my family to come to South Africa. My elder brother and his family had also made the trip to South Africa. Thandie was dressed in a white sleeveless white gown with sapphires on it. As Thandie walked down the aisle accompanied by her father who had this unmistakable hobble like step. I could see her hazel eyes piercing through, the white veil which covered her face. I do not know but I have always dreaded this point in the marriage ceremony, this stage when the priest asks if there are reasons which might make people not to be joined in holy matrimony. Some jaded ex-lover may get to know of the marriage make it their business to cause anarchy. Crossing my fingers in the hope that no one ruins what has up until this point has been a day of joy and pure bliss. I could see the smile on

Thandie's mother, whom when I first met her I thought was Thandie's older sister. Thandie's mother is almost like a matured body double version of Thandie. Just by taking a look at her it can clearly be seen where Thandie's beauty came from. Ma Thandie as Thandie's mother is affectionally known by is elegantly dressed in velvet midi dress with crystal stones intertwined onto the side of the dress, and a matching velvet hat. Not to be outdone my lovely mother is adorning a purple skirt, a white blouse. Never had I seen my mother with braids nor had I seen her with makeup, she always did the natural look. My mother had pulled all the stops to brighten up my day, she had mascara, manicured and well-polished nails. Everything is falling into place on my big day even my brother from the States and his entire family are here. One thought almost makes me to cry I think of two important people who I wanted to be present on my wedding to be present were not there, Bongani and my old man, both of them separated from me by death. But what I know is that both of them would want me to happy and I know that even if there are not here in the flesh I can feel their spiritual presence. I look up at the ceiling and blink my eyes before I look down smiling in memory of Bongani and my old man. A bald haired guy standing adjacent to where I am plays the acoustic guitar as he strings out the harmony of John Legend's all of me as Thandie walks down the aisle. "Do you Tinashe Bruce Mushayabasa, take Thandiwe Mikaela Ngema, to be your lawfully wedded wife, to love and to cherish, in times of sickness and health, for richer or for poor until death do you apart" said Father O'Brien, Bruce was my second name my father had given me this name after the legendary and eccentric Zimbabwean and Liverpool goal minder Bruce Grobbelaar. Without hesitation I replied because in my heart and in my soul I knew Thandie was my life soul-mate. "Yes I do." I said. I could see my mother shedding tears not of sadness but of joy. "And Thandiwe Mikaela Ngema do you take, Tinashe Bruce Mushayabasa to be your lawfully wedded husband to love and to cherish, in times of sickness and health, for richer or for poor until death do you apart." "Yes, I do" said Thandie smiling as her two dimples showed. "By the power vested in me by the Church, and by the State, I now pronounce you, husband and wife, and let what God has put together let no man but asunder. For what has been tied together here on earth has also been tied together in heaven. You may kiss the bride. I unbuttoned my suit as I stretched my hands, removing with sheer vigour the veil which covered Thandie's face, before engaging in a long and passionate kiss. I felt like standing on top of, Mount Everest shouting out aloud my happiness to the world. This was the happiness I was lingering for that not even money could buy. It was time for the wedding vows. "I don't want to sound cheesy, so I will make my vow as original as I can, it's a small poem for you my beautiful Thandie." I say after which I took a small paper on which I had written my poem. "I am no Shakespeare, but I wrote this poem for you." So the poem I had written for Thandie on that particular day was as follows.

I was attracted by those almond shaped eyes, their colour hazel.

Your hour glass shape coupled with that flawless skin makes you to dazzle.

You Thandiwe were that missing part in my puzzle.

By my calculations it would take up to infinite to describe your beauty.

You are not just a pretty face, you are beauty with brains.

**I promise to love you and to protect you up until death does us apart.**

**Let all these people bare witness for my undying love for you, which radiates inside my heart.**

**I love you Thandie.**

**After finishing my poem Thandie starts to cry as she embraces me, I fill this instant surge of blood as I hug Thandie intensely. “I love you Tinashe, and you will forever be in my heart, my vows are short and simple. Out of all the girls you could have you chose me and I am happy about that and I make a vow to you that no matter what curve balls life will throw at us I will always love you and will not devout myself to another man. Tinashe you are my one and only my hero. My love.” Everything ran smoothly it was clockwork orange as everything we had planned for our marriage surpassed even our maximum expectations, the reception of the wedding was held on lush green grass of the Church’s half an acre park. This is the same park I used to cut grass when Father O’Brien took me in, now I was having the time of my life with my family, workmates, friends and most importantly the most beautiful woman, Thandie. We had our honeymoon in Victoria Falls, one moment that will forever be engraved in my mind is when we crossed the falls in a helicopter as we made the famous flight of angels which might sound a bit blasphemous. Right beside me was the woman of my dreams as I saw a sight, which made me have this feeling, which felt as if it was an out of body experience. That sight of the water gashing thunderously downhill producing this spectacular after effect which left an almost mist like cloud.**

## CHAPTER 19: DÉJÀ VU-DOUBLE JUSTICE-HAPPINESS FUFILLED.

Like in the fairy tales I found my snow white in Thandie and she found her prince charming in me and to cap it off like in the fairy tales we lived happily ever after but alas life is not a fairy-tale. A few months after our wedding Thandie is pregnant and we are expecting twins, a boy and a girl. Even with a huge baby bump Thandie is still beautiful. “Tina baby, I think my water has broken.” Shouted Thandie. Tina is how Thandie refers to me. The day is rather a laid back Saturday afternoon as I am sipping some Amstel lager, whilst watching the highly charged up and emotionally filled North London derby between Arsenal and Tottenham. I instantly jump up from where I am sitting as I run to the kitchen where Thandie is. “Relax, Thandie. I will rush you to the hospital.” I said as I entered the kitchen. Okay let me spare you all the gory details of the labour room, that’s a story for another day. The only thing I can say about the whole labour and hospital trip, is the feeling I felt as I held my son and daughter in my hands, the feeling I had on that day was just priceless, no amount of money can buy it. We named the boy Jabulani, and the girl Mufaro, Jabulani is a Zulu word which means happiness, and Mufaro on the hand is a Shona word meaning happiness. Thandie has just being promoted as the new Chief Financial Officer of Murray and Crusoe Construction plc. I was also climbing the corporate ladder, I had been appointed the as the head of department for the Business Economics section. In a weeks’ time I will be graduating from the University of Johannesburg with a Master’s degree in Business Administration. As part of Thandie’s improved work benefits we are relocating to a double storey house in Sandton, not even in my wildest dreams did I dream that I would be calling a place like this home. My story is the original rags to riches story. Maybe if I was in control of the things that occur in my life I would conclude my story here and say this is the end of the story but there is still more to tell. As the months passed the twins were growing up quickly, by the time there were 8 months old there could both walk. As I entered the lounge I could see something was bothering my better half. “You look all stressed up. What is bothering the mother of my children?” “Just some work staff.” “I hope it does not affect your mental well-being.” I said as kissed Thandie on the forehead. “You don’t have to worry my love.” “You know if you continue stressing about work you will have a heart attack before you are forty.” “I am stronger than you think, no amount of workload will get me down.” “I suggest a weekend getaway with the twins to relive your work stress, and also to celebrate the twins’ first steps.” “That would be great my love, Time flies in a few months’ time there will talking non- stop.” replied Thandie as she removed her reading glasses. “The twins are fast asleep. I am so tired I never knew raising up children is this hard.” I said as cuddled Thandie. Drawing her face closer to me, Thandie ran a warm hands on my face after which she took a deep gaze at my eyes. Like swimmers in synchronised swimming we engaged in a full on tongue kiss. I could feel my heart beat increase as my eyes lit up, I could feel all that tiredness been lift of me. Without a second invitation I started unbuckling her floral

beige blouse, with my right leg folded on the sofa and my left leg firmly placed on the carpet I adjusted my sitting posture as I raised my left leg before I knelt on the sofa, by now I had removed Thandie's blouse exposing her brown bra. Thandie started unbuttoning my shirt, as she rushed her fingers on my chest, looking teasingly at me with those seductive hazel eyes, I could feel a certain part of my body growing numb and numb. The worst thing that could happen occurred, the twins started crying. "We have to check on the twins, something could be wrong" said Thandie. "Well parenting comes first before anything I guess." I replied looking all frustrated. For the next two and half hours we struggled to get the twins to sleep when they finally went to sleep, we were both tired. The twins lay fast asleep in their crib as Thandie and I retreated to sleep. The twins' room was next to our bedroom so as to minimise the distance covered for up and down trips to see if all was okay with the twins. We had recently installed baby monitors into the twins' room. The irritating sound of my alarm abruptly cut short my dreams as I reluctantly got out of bed. I kiss Thandie's forehead after which I creep quietly out of the sheets. I check on the twins first before I go to bath. I was the first one to bath all the time, Thandie was a firm believer in long undisturbed beauty sleeps, so most of the times when the twins started to cry I was the one who would wake up and try to make the twins quiet. In most cases they cried simultaneously it was quite rare for one of the twins to be quiet whilst the other was crying especially during night time. As I emerge from the bathroom, with my drying towel wrapped around me from waist height downwards, I see Thandie slowly opening her eyes. The door to the bedroom ensuite lay direct in front of our bed. "Morning, sleepy head." I said as I closed the ensuite door. "Morning my love. How are the twin?" "The last I checked there were sleeping peacefully." "Let me check up on them before I bath." Whilst I change into clean and fresh clothes, Thandie checks up on the twins. Beeping sounds emanate from my phone, I has forgotten to put my phone on the charger before going to bath. Picking up my phone which lay next to an opened container of Vaseline lotion both which are on top of a small wooden cupboard. Picking up my phone I walk out of the closet which housed mine and Thandie's clothes, barefooted, wearing a blue formal trousers and white formal short sleeved shirt. The closet is huge enough to house two double sized beds. After placing my phone on the charger, I walk back to the closet so that I can finish wearing my clothes. After finishing dressing up I head to the kitchen where I eat a warm breakfast that had been prepared by Thandie before she went to bath, she had prepared scrambled eggs, bacon and a salami sandwich. I pour tea into my favourite cup after which I Place my food in the microwave to warm it up. I hear the sound of the intercom as I am eating. Standing up from where I am sitting in the dining room I attend to the intercom receiver. As I press the button I see that it's Jessica the nanny who had come to look after the twins. Jessica is 37 year old divorced mother of four who currently resides in Newton in Johannesburg. Our current agreement with her is that she looks after the twins from 7 in the morning until seven in the evening. This was a temporary arrangement since at the end of the month Jessica would moving into the 3 bedroomed cottage which was part of the house we were staying on. The house Thandie and I lived was a company house which was part of Thandie's fringe benefits, the money for the nanny was paid for by Thandie's company as part of her

non cash benefits. The cottage was currently under renovations and the renovations were scheduled to finish a week before the end of the month. Jessica has been our nanny since Thandie returned to work after her maternity leave. I press the button to open up the gate, as Jessica enters the premises I walk up to the front wooden sliding door to open up the door for Jessica. "Morning Jessica." I said as I opened up the door. "Morning Mr Mushayabasa, how's the Mrs?" "She is fine. Right on time as usual." "Like my late mother always said, it's always best to be always on time." "How far are you coming with the moving preparations?" "I really can't wait to move into my own space because my children and I, are currently leaving under a cramped environment at my sisters who already has a large family of her own." "As I earlier said you don't have to worry about costs of movement, I will pay for the full fee of transportation cost of your property." "God bless you, I don't know how to thank you." "You don't have to think me." "Let me go and start my work, Sir." "Okay, Jessica, I am in the dining room, the Mrs is currently bathing, shout if you need anything." Jessica showed a great sign of maturity not only in looks but by the way she carried herself. As per my usual routine I read the newspaper via the internet on my laptop after I had finished eating. My eyes I stuck on my laptop as I immerse myself in a sports article I am reading about, I feel the warm hands of Thandie as she closes my eyes, after which she releases them, I quickly grab her right hand drawing her closer to me and then engaging in a passionate kiss. "I love you Tinashe." said Thandie sitting on my lap. "I love you too. I have to say with your dressing today, you have killed it." "Don't I usually dress to kill?" "Yes you do but today, how can I say it. I am even running out of superlatives to describe how you are looking." "Thank you my love." said Thandie as she stood up from my lap. "You are welcome." "Tinashe there is something I would like to talk to you about." "You can say it right now before I leave for work." "I have to say these, you are the first person I am telling you this." "You are now getting me worried, Thandie. What's bothering the mother of my children?" "Yesterday you noted that there was something that was bothering me." "So I was correct." "Yes, you were." "Then spit out." "Its work related." "Are they thinking of retrenching you." "No. no it's far from that, my job secure." "So then what is it?" "I don't know how I can say this." said Thandie as she took a deep breath before continuing. "I heard you speaking, with Jessica. I think it will more appropriate if we discussed this in the bedroom, the information I want to tell you is a bit confidential." "Okay if you say so let us go and talk in privacy." As we entered our bedroom my mood changed from one of great delight to a one of confusion and anxiety. "I am going to be blunt with you my love. Ever since I was promoted at work I discovered something which seemed amiss." "Amis!" I said looking worried, as wrinkles appeared on my faces. "As I was reconciling financial statements I discovered that someone in the company was reaping of the company millions of rands." said Thandie before taking a break to breathe in deeply, after which she continued. "I discovered that they were inflating the actual cost of sales figure so as to pay lower tax, then the money saved from this strategy is then transferred to international accounts which are hard to trace." "Then how did you manage to connect the missing money to these international accounts?" "I enlisted the services of an IT expert, who was able to trace the paths through which the money



moved through.” replied Thandie. “I don’t see any problem you have the evidence. You can trace the movement of the money which means you trace it back to point of origin and find the person who is defrauding the business.” “I already know who it is.” replied Thandie. “Then report the issue to your superior.” “That’s where the problem is.” “Your, superior, what’s wrong with him.” “Mr Khumalo, is my superior, he is the managing director and he is the one defrauding the company.” “Then report to the board.” “The, problem is I received a message on my phone. The person who sent the message was hiding their number. The message wasn’t that cryptic, let me show you my phone.” said Thandie as she opened up her message folder. So the message read as follows

“Wise words from the wise, the deeper you dig the more likely you are to drown inside the whole. Don’t act foolish, leave things as there are, or you will get burnt.”

“From this message as you can see my love, it’s a warning from Khumalo, he knows I know about his shoddy dealings.” “You should report this to the police, can’t you see your life is in danger.” “Don’t worry I have set up a private meeting with chairman of the board today in Pretoria at his office.” “You are running late my love, its best you go to work now, I am sorry for delaying you.” said Thandie as she kissed me on the right cheek. “Not to worry, your safety is more important than my work. I will call in sick today I think it will be safer if I drive you to work.” “There is no need for that my love. Today there justice will be made and Khumalo will be behind bars. I just have to transfer this evidence that I have in my PC to this flash drive” “Are going to present your flash drive to the chairman of the board.” “No I am taking my PC and I am leaving this flash drive here in case my computer is somewhat hacked into by Khumalo’s goons and crashes deleting all its memory.” “Wise move.” I said. “I guess that since he knows I know he has covered his tracks and I have to safeguard this evidence.” “I hope you keep yourself safe.” “Don’t worry I will keep safe.” “If you say so then I will see when I come back.” I said as walked out of the room waving Thandie goodbye. By the time I left home I was 10 minutes behind schedule and I was bracing myself for the morning traffic jams into town. I left the twins still sleeping as Jessica did her household chores and Thandie was tying up some loss ends before heading out to work some of the loss ends included transferring the evidence into the flash drive. I arrive at work 15 minutes late, as I head to the office I receive a message from my personal assistant that there is going to be an emergency meeting to discuss the way forward for the company by the ever falling of value of the rand against US dollar which had grossly affected the company profits. The emergency meeting was going to be held at 4:30 pm, with my knowledge of how sometimes these meetings run for marathon lengths, I know today I will be late for dinner. I decide to call Thandie to tell her that I will be late for dinner. “Hello, Thandie.” “Hello” for a moment I am surprised to her Jessica’s voice on Thandie’s phone. “Jessica, where is the Mrs?” “She left for work about 30 minutes ago and she forgot her phone in the kitchen.” “Okay, I will try to contact her on her work number, if I fail tell her when she comes back from work that I am coming in a bit late, I have an emergency meeting to attend to.” “I will pass on the

message, Sir.” “Thanks, Jessica, have a blessed day. Bye.” I replied as I hung up the phone. An hour after this phone call I decided to get in touch with Thandie via her work number. “Hello may I speak, to Mrs Mushayabasa.” “Good morning sir, Mrs Mushayabasa has not yet arrived. She is coming in late today. Is there a message you would like delivered to Mrs Mushayabasa.” “Just tell her, her husband called.” I then remembered that Thandie had told me she was going to Pretoria to meet up with the chairman of the board. A few minutes before 10 am my phone starts to ring. I flip it up to see who it is but the number is not put of known contacts, I answer the phone. “Hello.” “Hello, am speaking to Mr Tinashe Mushayabasa?” “Yes, Tinashe speaking, who am I speaking to?” “This is Sergeant Mpho Kekana and I have some bad news for you. Your wife Mrs Thandiwe Mushayabasa was hijacked in Pretoria.” “What, is she fine?” I said as I rose from my chair like an irrupting Icelandic volcano. “She was shot several times, she is currently at Pretoria Medical Centre, fighting for her life.” I instantly slam my phone into the wall before dramatically falling down like a deck of cards. Tears start to trickle down my cheeks. “Not again” I say to myself. Without further wasting time I leave my office I notify my personal assistant about what has happened as I rush out. I have to buy a new phone now after breaking the one I had in fits of rage that had descended upon me. Before I leave I call Thandie’s parents as well as my mother to inform them of what had happened. I sped along the N1 highway upon arrival at Pretoria Medical Centre I slam the door of my car as I run almost outpacing my own shadow. I am almost ran over by an ambulance but that doesn’t deter me from running. Huffing and puffing I arrive at the reception. “I, I, I” I say as I try to catch a breath. “I am looking for the room Mrs Thandiwe Mushayabasa’s is admitted to. She is my wife.” I said as sweat dripped off my body as my face exhibited exasperation. “She is currently in Intensive Care Unit, and there are preparing her for emergency operation. There is Dr Smits, he will fully explain, to you the extent of the injuries.” Just from looking at Dr Smits I estimate his age to be around the late forties early fifties. So Dr Smits explains to me the extent of the injuries, Thandiwe was shot five times, four bullets were lodged in her lower abdomen and the other bullet was lodged in her right leg. She had lost a lot of blood as result. So I signed consent forms so that the surgery could be performed before I signed the forms, Dr Smits told me it the surgery that there were to carry to try and save Thandie’s life is a high risk one, with minimal chances that Thandie would survive, not undertaking the surgery meant that Thandie was surely going to die in a matter of minutes. So it was worth taking the risk of carrying out the surgery. “Doc, can I see my wife for a few seconds before you start the operation?” “Okay, just a few seconds, because we need to start operating as soon as possible.” replied Doctor Smits. It was like de javu, it seemed what was happening had happened before. It just felt like I was relieving the moments that occurred when Bongani was shot. To make it all worse this was the same hospital that Bongani was admitted to and subsequently lost his life after the tragic shooting, to make my life more miserable Thandie was admitted in the intensive care unit in the same room that Bongani was admitted to, just like when I came to see Bongani, Thandie was laying almost lifeless, with drips pipes lodged to her body as the heart monitor made its distinct sound, at least its sound gave me hope knowing that Thandie’s heart was still

beating. I kiss her on the forehead before leaving the room looking more hysterical than ever with my shirt three upper buttons unbuttoned and my tie loosely tied hanging way below my waists. I sit alone in the waiting room, waiting for the Doctor Smits to come out of the Two hours later the Doctor Smits still wearing his white surgeon's jacket emerges from the operation. He tells me that Thandie is in a medically induced coma and that they had removed all of the bullets. Her condition is stabilising and I can see in the next two hours. Doctor Smits tells me that Thandie is not out of the dark, he tells me there is chance, like he had earlier told me that Thandie may not make it. I wait patiently for the hours to pass, for me the time seems not to be moving fast enough. I just want to see how Thandie is doing, I am really a mess inside out, and will Thandie make it. All of my hopes are hanging by a thread, Thandie please don't leave me alone, and I know you are a fighter. Maybe I am destined never to be really happy, for how long will this misfortune strike me. What have I done to deserve such? Why me, why is it always me? Sadness, sorrow shadow me like a vultures in-circling around a dead caucus. Dear lord for how long will people that I love continuing getting hurt. I know I have failed you numerous countless times but, please, please hear my pleas, don't take Thandie away from me. Why give her to me for a few moments and then take her away. I plead with all my heart Dear Lord, don't take her away from. Tears start to trickle down, as my left hand start to shake uncontrollably, it feels like someone is choking me, I start to pant heavily, my eyes which are now red are now firmly stuck out, and more veins become visible on my fore head. As I struggle to breath, I fall from where I am sitting, head first. Some nurses who are walking through the waiting room, attend to me. "Sir, are you okay?" one of the nurses, who is wearing glasses ask me as the three female nurses help me to my feet. "Where am I?" I ask looking all lost. "You are at Pretoria Medical Centre." replies the older looking of the three nurses. "What am doing here? I think I am dreaming." I say as stagger to stand up, with the three nurses acting as my balancing sticks. "Take a sit, Sir. Laura this man needs help." says the older looking nurse in reference to the nerdish nurse. "No, no, I remembe r know what's happening. I don't need any help." "But sir, you look." says the nerdish looking nurse, before she can finish speaking, I cut in, with all the anger inside I shout at the nurses "I said I don't need your help, no one can help me, leave me alone." "Lower your voice sir." "She laying in there I don't even know if she will make it and someone is asking if I need help. How are you going to help me?" I say as I take a sit. Rubbing my right hand gently the older looking nurse, who is now sitting next to me, with Laura and the other nurse standing in front of me, Speaks to me in soft and calming tone "Sir calm down, if there is anything I could do to help your loved one I would do but there isn't. Look at yourself what you are doing to yourself, won't make your loved one better or worse." Her voice is full of this motherly love. Her words seem to have a calming effect on me. "I am sorry for raising my voice at you. I am just going through a rough patch in my life. My wife's life is hanging by a thread." "Don't overthink, it's not good for your health. It won't be a good sight for you to also be admitted here." said the older looking nurse before taking a break after which she continued "I guess you have children, and those children still need you, so please sir don't stress yourself to the grave. Your wife is still alive, have hope in knowing that." Her words hit me hard, what she is saying is true.

The fight is far from over. Why should I give up now? Thandie is still breathing albeit even though she has to rely on artificial means but at least she is still here. I see that the older looking nurse's name tag is written. Her name is L. Zungu. "Thanks for calming me down Mrs Zungu, I now have to go and see my wife." I say as I stand up. "Don't despair sir, everything works out in God's time." replied nurse Zungu. When I open the door to the room in which Thandie is in my heart, almost stops, I can't control my emotions, I am overwhelmed by the sight of seeing Thandie lying in that bed. It still feels like a bad dream, I just need someone to pinch, this is not happening. I hold Thandie's right hand as I sat on the chair lying next to the bed. Today just hours ago, she kissed me on the cheek, she assured me that she would be safe. Why Thandie do you go and try be heroine, look now you are lying here. The person who did this to you will pay. If it means turning vigilante and going against the law, I will do it. "I don't know if you can hear me, but I want to tell you that I love you. You are a fighter, you can fight this and together we can bring to book the person who did this." "Thandie, I have this gut feeling, I think I know who is behind this. Khumalo did tis hired some goons to kill you and he made sure it looked like a hijacking gone wrong." I close my eyes as I lose consciousness only to be awoken an hour later as I feel a tight squeeze on my hand. Thandie seems to be regaining consciousness as right hand is firmly squeezing my hand. All I can hope for is that it's not an involuntary action a person does when there are in a coma. Thandie's eyes blinker slowly, as the heart monitor starts to beat at a more increased rate. Slowly opening her eyelids, I adjust my sitting position. "Thandie, I am here." I say looking all fired up. Her mouth slowly moves, "Ti, Ti, Ti, Ti." Mumbles Thandie in sedated voice. "Tinashe, take care of the twins for me, tell the m mommy loves them. I will always be there for the m." "Don't speak, like you are dying today. You are a fighter, you made this far it shows how strong your will power is" "No Tinashe, I am hearing other voices calling me, I don't believe I will be with you today in flesh." "No, don't say that." "Tinashe Mushayabasa, I love you." "I love you too Thandie, the mother of my children." "We shall meet again. I love you my love." said Thandie as her hand slipped from hand, "Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooo, don't leave me, Nurse, nurse, nurse, nurse, nurse, help." I shout on top of my voice. "To-to-to-to-to-to-to-to-to" sounded the heart monitor as Thandie's heart beat falls dramatically, until that point when it stopped. My Thandie is gone, why Lord, why is it always me? Doctor Smits and a nurse come rushing into the room, Dr Smits checks Thandie's vital signs to see if there is life, I see the Doctor shake his head sideways, I am sorry sir. She is gone." "She can't leave, like this, Thandie, why Thandie." I say as I fall to my feet, tears pouring down my checks at that moment Thandie's parents come rushing into the room. Thandie's parents had flown from Port Elizabeth to Pretoria, they had bought airplane tickets for the earliest flight leaving for Pretoria, when I told them that Thandie had been shot and was fighting for her life. Thandie's father comes to console, me as he sits down on the floor before embracing me. "Don't despair, I know it hurts and as father I am hurting inside, but don't let yourself go like this." "I don't know what to do, now Thandie is gone. I just don't know what to do Father." is gone I "My son, don't be like that. With time you will recover from this heartache." said Thandie's father. I can see tears trickle down Thandie's mother's cheeks as she stands beside the

lifeless body of Thandie. “Just take my soul dear Lord, I don’t deserve to live” “Don’t say that Tinashe, If you die, who will take care of the twins.” said Thandie’s father. I had only be married with Thandie for exactly twenty months. It felt like death had handed me a knockout blow this time around. It seems everyone who tries to get near me dies in a tragic manner, from Andrew’s horrific death, to the untimely death of my old man, to Bongani dying in the most heart stopping manner now to the love of my life losing her life in a similar way to Bongani, maybe I should never get near people, because they will get hurt which in the end will also leave me aching inside. As the day wears on, I get in touch with reality, the denial is gone that Thandie is gone. I know immediately that I have to present the evidence that Thandie had gathered to the police, I had to rush back and find that flash drive that Thandie had transferred the evidence to as backup. I only tell Thandie’s parents that I have an import errand that I have to run before day end. Arriving at home I check on the twins, who are playing in the lounge under the watchful eye of Jessica, who I tell the sad news about Thandie’s death. The bedroom, resembles a pigsty as I have turned everything upside down in search of that flash drive, after almost twenty minutes of searching I find it in the cupboard which houses Thandie’s jewellery. Without further delay, I leave the house, I ask Jessica if she stay a bit longer with the twins and she agrees. I make my way to the local police station in Sandton where I get in contact with the officer in charge, who identifies herself as Assistant Inspector Fiona Daniels. I tell her everything I had being told by Thandie and I hand the officer in charge the evidence. I also Assistant Inspector Daniels, the threatening message Thandie received. I leave Thandie’s mobile phone with the Assistant Inspector Daniels who tells me that there are going to try and trace the person who sent the message. She assures me that if Khumalo is guilty then justice would take its course. Four days later as I prepare to lay to rest Thandie, I hear the intercom sounding, and I respond to and I see that it is Assistant Inspector Daniels in VW golf police car. I open the gate for them, after which I meet up with her in the parking lot adjacent the quad lock up garage. As I approach the parking lot I notice that Assistant Inspector Daniels is disembarking out of the car with three other male police officers. Two of the police officers who were sitting at the back of the car look a bit familiar. The VW golf car almost instantly regains its normal position as the front body which was almost touching the wheels. Both of these police officers are not fat there are way over weight, and there is no thief that there are going to run after in such physical conditions. “Good morning Mr Mushayabasa. To my right are Detective Inspectors Gaxa and Bhebhe and to my left is Sergeant Mpho Kekana who works in Pretoria, he is the one investigating your wife’s hijacking.” “I know you, guys, Gaxa and Bhebhe went you the officers who were investigating the death of my friend Bongani Nkosi?” “Yes there are.” replied Assistant Inspector Daniels. Bhebhe and Gaxa had been promoted from ranks of constables to know Detective Inspectors. Not only had these guys got promoted they had gained weight substantially since the last time our paths crossed. “Yes there is good news for you Mr Mushayabasa.” said Assistant Inspector Daniels. What I was about to be told was going to shake my life, there was a twist of fate. So I thought to myself, what is the relationship between the deaths of Thandie and that of Bongani, to think of it they did not know each other as far

as I am concerned? “We had a ballistic test which showed that the bullets which were removed from your wife’s body were of the same calibre as those which shot Bongani.” said Detective Inspector Bhebhe. “There is link, so in shot my friend and my wife where shot with same person.” “Unfortunately, it’s not only your wife and friend who lost their lives. About fifteen people were shot with this same gun. What we are not sure of though is if the person who killed your wife, your friend and the other fifteen victim is same.” said Detective Inspector Gaxa. “We managed to trace the origin of the threatening message sent to your wife.” said Assistant Inspector Daniels. “So who wrote it?” I asked. “We traced the phone to number and found out the sim card was registered to a Mr Smith.” replied Assistant Inspector Daniels. “So who is this Smith guy?” “Mr Smith also happened to be the owner of the phone, however, two days prior to the message been sent, Mr Smith filed a police report stating that his phone as well as his wallet had been stolen.” said Assistant Inspector Daniels. “So where is this Mr Smith?” “Be patient Mr Mushayabasa. There is a twist to the story.” chipped in the cool looking Sergeant Kekana. “What’s the twist?” “We managed to trace the phone and it was wrapped in paper bag and it had been disposed of at dump site South of Rustenburg.” “So Sergeant Kekana, how sure are you that this Smith guy is not involved in these murders?” The story was getting more complicated, Sergeant Kekana then told me that they ran fingerprints on the mobile phone, and there was high probability they could not pick up any prints due to the condition of the phone. But in the end there were able to establish a positive id of two sets of fingerprints one of the set of fingerprints was that of Errol Smith and the other set was Wayne Ndaba. The story still had a twist, Wayne Ndaba, matched the description of the person who shot Bongani, the witness who saw Bongani shot noted that the guy had visible laceration on his right hand, and was tall, both of these physical appearances matched the physical appearance of Wayne, the police then made a raid at Wayne’s home in Pretoria, where they a gun in his home, and its bullets matched the calibre of bullets which killed Thandie, Bongani and the other fifteen people. The gun was showing signs that it had been recently used it had, five bullets missing. Wayne admitted had killed Thandie, Bongani and the other fifteen people but he said he was acting under instruction to kill, since he was a hired assassin. He entered into a plea agreement with the state where he would provide the names of the people who had hired him in return he would have a reduced sentence. According to Wayne Khumalo ordered the hit on Bongani. It turned out that Khumalo used to be the Chief Financial Officer at ABSA where Bongani worked as a senior accountant, Bongani had also discovered that Khumalo was defrauding ABSA of millions but before he could blow the whistle, he was killed. Khumalo cleaned his tracks and retired from ABSA with a hefty package. After this he joined Murray and Crusoe Construction plc. Where he was appointed the Managing Director. Wayne said that the hit on Thandie was from Khumalo. Wayne had the evidence to link him with Khumalo, he still had the message he had received from Khumalo to kill Thandie. As for the other fifteen people he also admitted to killing them and he provided the names of the people who had ordered the hits, and among them the name of Khumalo was not mentioned. I felt a whole inside my heart, even though I had found justice. I just felt like fate had played a cruel game with me, it took the death of

the one girl I truly loved with all my heart, the person I shared romance with, to discover the person who killed my best friend whom I shared a bromance with. At the burial I was too grieve stricken to give a eulogy. Khumalo was arrested as well as Wayne there are currently awaiting trial. With the amount of evidence against them there is no coming back from this. Five years have passed since the death of Thandie, today we should have been celebrating our 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary together. I am with the twins at Thandie's gravesite. Kneeling down holding Mufaro to my right and Jabulani to my left, I hold my head facing downwards towards Thandie's tombstone, I say "My love, today I have come today with twins. The twins are growing fast, Mufaro is a clone of you, and she is growing beautiful with each day as for Jabulani it's just a matter of time before he gets taller than me. I just wanted to say even though physically you are not here, you will always be loved." "Mufaro, Jabulani this is where your mother is buried." "Mum, I never got to know I am son, Jabulani and I just want to tell you I love you." "I am Mufaro. I promise you that I will take care of daddy and Jabulani. I love you mum." A week after visiting Thandie's gravesite I relocated back home to Zimbabwe, there is no place like home. I wanted the twins to know where they came from. I am now working at Old Mutual Zimbabwe. One day I take the twins to the street I grew up, Mukute Street. I sit on the same concrete slab I sat on with Bongani over a decade ago, a place where my story began. As I sit on the concrete slab flanked by my children. I remember that ideal of bliss that set me up on an excursion to find happiness. There is something I want to tell you about my journey in pursuit of happiness. Is that as humans we differ in the way we think and the definition of happiness will differ with each individual, what may make me happy may not make another person happy. Even though this statement bears meaning for me there is an exception to it. There is something called true happiness. It's that happiness that comes over you after you have attained it in a morally acceptable manner, it doesn't leave you with a bad conscience, and it leaves you rejuvenated. The truth about true happiness is that true happiness doesn't come from having everything but making the best out of what you have, it's all about how you see yourself, true happiness is not all about having what you like it's about liking what you have and being content. The fact of the matter is that I may not be the richest guy in the world and on top of that I am a widower, but I have my family and more specifically I have the twins there are my bundles of joy. The journey I made down South was one filled with highs and lows from working for no pay, to losing my friend, fighting for my life against a tide, to being a drug mule, falling in love, having children, losing my lover and discovering what true happiness is. If I were to be asked if I have lived a happy life, I would definitely say "Yes." in spite of my shortcomings. This is my story of how I embarked on this incredible journey to try to make ends meet and along that journey I discovered the meaning of true happiness.

**THE END**

**In all I do inside lays one far greater than me. #MWARI**