

# CHRONOS



**Tanya Fleiser**

**From Victim to Victor**





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## **From Victim to Victor**



## **Introduction**

To share my entire story would take more than 1 book, so what I've done is share pertinent events. Most names have been changed. The most difficult part in me sharing my story was to share the truth without trying to make others look bad. Not an easy task. I have long forgiven every person that ever harmed me and wish them only the best that life has to offer. Through my journey I have come to understand that people do things for reasons we don't understand and ultimately our fight is against powers and principalities, not flesh. However I still share these events in their entirety, for the sole purpose of expressing both the dark places I've been and how I allowed myself to be treated. At first for the sake of pleasing others, then finally believing I deserved no better.

Know this...Forgiveness is the key to freedom and NOTHING anyone does to you defines who you are or choose to become.

My greatest hope in sharing my story is that it removes all doubts of God's very real existence. A God who knows and has seen it ALL who loves you regardless. A God who longs to give you the life you long for.

My advice is to look to God/Jesus for the love you so deeply desire, and you will never be disappointed. He is totally able to set you completely free.

As far back as I can remember, even the memories of my younger years, with my innocent, pure child's mind—there was a spark of a life of endless turmoil. A life filled with confusion and self-doubt, self-hate and pain. One that left me alone, set on a path to self-destruction and suffering, where it would either be me inflicting pain or just taking it because I didn't know better.

That pure, sweet innocence was taken from me and I have been battling to find the right path my entire life with feelings of—you're not good enough, Tanya; you're broken Tanya; nobody wants used trash, Tanya; tired of your drama, Tanya; once a junkie, always a junkie, and there's something wrong with you, Tanya.

I'm tired—so exhausted from these feelings taking over my life, destroying my happiness, robbing me of joy. I needed to find hope again, find love, find something good that gives me purpose in my life.

Boy, oh boy, was I in for an immense surprise! It has been the ride of my life—a roller-coaster ride from both heaven and hell, with highs and lows, darkness and light—a jolting, bumpy start and ultimately an ending of pure exhilaration, inspiration, love and joy!

## Foreword

I am incredibly privileged to write the foreword to this book of Tanya's life. Jean and I are privileged to have Tanya call us Dad and Mamma Jean. We have walked a journey together spanning many years of many highs and deep, deep lows.

I write of a person I would liken to a hardwood tree that has over the years sent down roots through almost impenetrable rock. Roots that always have found fissures constantly finding the source of all life – the river that flows from the heart of God. This tree has not had the fortune of being planted near the banks of the river that cause a tree to grow tall with a luxuriant canopy but then droop and die at the first onslaught of drought.

This Tanya tree has had to contend with drought and wind all of its life and so has had to send down roots deep into the rock to find the essence of life. Hardly does it send out new leaves when the wind, storm, and fire have attempted to snuff out life. Trees like these are not often pretty in the picture book sense but are scarred and gnarled but they have withstood everything life has thrown at it. Many have walked by and only saw the boughs buckled and bent, they see only the scars of the many fires and have judged its worthiness as less than God's perfect plan and have shuffled on to be among the beautiful and unscarred trees.

Tanya is perhaps one of the strongest people I have ever known in her strength and ability to overcome and this fortitude continues to this day and it continues to "blow me away". When each fire has come along, I have

thought that this could be the end only to find new shoots sprouting within a few days.

Tanya and her first husband joined our church and they became part of our extended family as more than just members of the church, they became like our children as we grew to love them and revel in their love for us. This relationship with Tanya has never wavered because it has been forged through glorious happy times and deep heart-break times. I have held her slit wrists with blood flowing between my fingers. I have held her hand in a magistrate's court and told her I had asked the prosecutor not to allow bail after she had been caught drunk while driving. Jean and I have waited in the dark in the small hours of the morning on the side of a deserted farm road to catch her hiking to town to sell herself to buy drugs. I have carried her on my shoulders out of a pub when she was too drunk to stand. We have frog marched her to the car against her will to take her to rehab.

Each time we thought the tree was too badly burned to recover and then within a space of time, with the sap stored in the roots, the tree would sprout again miraculously. Many have witnessed Tanya's fall from grace (but never God's Grace) and judged her wanting where Jean and I have experienced her rising, standing as witnesses with Christ, and sharing in His pride.

I was favoured with the task of conducting her marriage to Steven after walking with her through the heart-wrenching betrayal of divorce (as every divorce is) and seeing God's mercy revealed in Steven. God has chosen for her a soul mate of immense courage that has also experienced life's storms. This marriage was made in heaven as a support, with Kelsey, Tanya's daughter, as a

support team to carry her when she has been unable to stand.

I have alluded to the lows, but they have been only interspersed with a glorious love that flows through Tanya. On entering a room she can alter the Spiritual and emotional climate that causes everyone to feel good. For me, her defining scripture is 2 Corinthians 1:3 *Praise to the God and Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.* She carries a heart of generosity that extends to each and every needy person (or animal) she meets, whatever the need may be. Steven has had to control it to safeguard their very lives and existence. Her existence is also centred on Peter's statement to the lame beggar at the Temple gate: 'All that I have, I give to you'. I have never seen her hold back forgiveness either, and I believe this is because she loves who God loves.

I would ask all readers of Tanya's life story not to look or judge her 'falls', which is a natural response or our default mode, but to see the glorious victories of the 'rising up', and experience the indomitable spirit that flows from this incredible woman. I want you to catch the spirit within Tanya that echoes the words of that old Hymn in describing Jesus: 'Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foes, He arose a mighty Victor from the dark domain'. She has risen many times from the "grave" which bears witness to her saviour.

To this day, whether for good news or bad, when she calls me Dad, joy wells up in me. This always echoes her

closing words when she says, 'I love you Dad'. I carry that title with pride.

Chester and Jean Wilmot  
Milkwood Manor  
Kenton on Sea  
February 2020.

## Chapter 1: A Shattered Foundation

From my first memories, I can picture my mom at her dressing table as she looked at herself in the mirror putting her makeup on one step at a time. She was a master at this craft and was always elegant and perfectly presented before stepping away. Oh, how I loved to watch her. My mother was the perfect wife, hostess, businesswoman, and bore four strong, vibrant children; Michelle, Collette, me, and finally my little brother Ricky. Each child was as beautiful as the next. She kept up the family appearances to perfection.

One wonders how she did this with four children busy with activities, from sports to pageants to school. My mom lost five other children during pregnancy, one being my twin. I've suffered the loss of babies over the years as you will learn and it destroyed me to my core. I don't know how she stayed so strong. She just amazed me.

I've also learned over the years, through the many counselling sessions and the various healing courses I attended, one of the most influential of these being *Emotion Body Coding* with my dear Penny Lahanis, that at conception, your spirit is whole and whatever happens in the womb, you pick up in your spirit. I'll touch on this later on in the book.

Therefore, I was born with a sense of guilt, loss, and deep sadness at being the surviving twin.

It makes me wonder what my mother went through in the womb. She lived through a life of trauma that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy.

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My parents, Liz and Rich, were successful and the quintessential upper-middle-class Port Elizabeth couple. My father was a top financial advisor for Old Mutual, and my mother was an ex-beauty queen, owner of a successful modelling agency, and daughter of Burt Webb, former mayor of New Castle in the Kwazulu Natal province of South Africa, an upright good man, a Freemason.

And, they were the consummate country club pair; her with her lush brown hair meticulously coiffed, red lipstick, him not very handsome but charming, impeccably groomed—both dressed to perfection whether at a dinner party or casually having family over for a barbecue, or as we call it in South Africa, a braai. Other couples envied them; I adored and feared them.

Our house was always bustling with parties and family, but it was also the heart of my world. The estate was grand but not too grand with two lounges; the front lounge area had large picture windows which led onto the side/main entrance to the house and sat between the hallway and the kitchen. Off the hallway was the long passage where we used to rehearse for beauty pageants before they added the outside patio area.

Mother started me modelling around the age of five. She kept meticulous records of my primary school years with all my achievements, both in sports and the beauty industry: Miss Nivea Queen, and Miss Trend Setter competition. When I look back at my school career book, there's a photograph of me wearing this burgundy velvet

suit, pants, a jacket with a cream beret and matching shoes. I felt like a queen in that outfit. I loved it. I absolutely loved the stage. In that first year of modelling and pageants, I took part in 13 shows and won the title of Junior Summer Queen.



I was in the newspapers often and always had to keep smiling, regardless of things that had been going on at home. A lesson I learned well from my mother. Mom kept these clippings along with all the children's trophies, ribbons, awards, and photographs. As I think about it now, they were our home's foundation.

All the bedrooms to the house led off the passage with my parents' bedroom, right at the end. Their master bedroom was grand and decorated with precisely placed textures and colours from the wallpaper to the bed coverings. Mom had her dressing area, with a vanity table,

where she spent countless hours making herself up to perfection.

The other lounge or sunroom, looked onto our beautiful open garden, separated by a tar road that carried onto a large open field that was just magical to me. This piece of land gave my family and my best friend and neighbour, Joanne, some awesome times. Joanne's dad was an engineer, and he built us a go kart. We spent endless hours giggling, dashing through this field. We would also spend hours riding our bikes around between our houses, pretending our bikes were horses, posting in the saddle like you would in a good old trot. I have so many amazing memories of us practising gymnastics or different dance moves. We eventually traded our bikes in for actual horses using that same field to show off our beauties and riding skills. I can still hear our squeals of laughter as we rode together in the field, just being girls.

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Our swimming pool was the heart of the home during the summer months. All the family gatherings were at our house. It was excellent not only for all the children to play but also for the adults to relax and have a pleasant time, too. On warm summer days, I looked forward to seeing all my cousins and spending hours in the pool. We swam all day pretending we were dolphins swimming with our arms to our sides and legs as tails. We also played Marco Polo shouting back and forth, and desperately we waited those 30 excruciating minutes after eating to go back in the pool. One of my cousins always kept us entertained. She could blow bubbles through her tear ducts. We would laugh hysterically. She was never one to disappoint her

audience, so we got encores throughout the day. It was an amazing time.

But these sweet summer days with my cousins carried their own dark side.

My family was tight-knit, including aunts, uncles, grandparents, even my modelling agent and her husband. Close like a good, strong family should be, right? So, we were raised that it was custom to kiss and hug everybody hello and goodbye. And like a good little girl, I did as I was trained to do—just like my mother—just like in pageants.

I'm in my pajamas, ready to go off to bed, doing my rounds of hugs and kisses. One person I had to hug and kiss would stick his tongue deep in my mouth, wriggling it around, and then he'd squeeze my bum. The apprehension I felt approaching him to the repulsion down in my gut as he laughed—you can forgive and you understand why these things happen. It doesn't take away the memory.

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The eroding of our family started in 1978 when I was four years old.

My sister Collette and I were playing when we heard screaming. They were shouting. The chaos was frightening. We ran to see what was going on. We looked through the grand windows of the lounge to see outside the front of the house and saw my sister Michelle, her boyfriend, and my father. The men were fighting; blows were flying.

Then a car peeled away from the house. It looked as if my father was about to be run over. We held on to each other, frightened for my father and my sister, unable to do anything but watch.

The next thing—silence and our oldest sister was gone. What remained were tears and emptiness. She was gone. Our big sister—our protector was gone.

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When Michelle left, Collette was around 10 years old. She was six years older than me. Collette just became my everything. She became a light in my ever-growing darkness because Michelle wasn't there anymore, so I really latched onto her. Although my brother Ricky had been born by that time, he wasn't much of a playmate yet.

By the time she was 12, she had this boyfriend, John, who used to come and visit and jump over the wall. Anyhow, I wouldn't leave John and Collette alone and one day he just stopped coming. I asked her, where's John? She lashed out at me and retorted, 'He's not coming back because of you!'

That planted a very deep feeling of guilt that fed on what was built from the womb.

I have another recollection around the same time of my step-grandfather—he and I were sitting in the sun-room. I was lying on a red couch we had and he was sitting across from me on the other side of the room. He said, 'You are such a beautiful little girl, but I must tell

you a secret'. He leaned in to show me I was his confidant, 'Little girls, you know, when they are beautiful as children, unfortunately, they grow up to become really ugly women'. I don't know why he said that to me or why that sticks in my mind. But he was one of the men who whenever I had to kiss him goodnight, his fingers would do the walkie talkie under my nightie. There would be a kiss and fondling, just enough to leave an emotional scar.

My foundation was being laid one sand brick at a time.

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On the subject of kissing. For this reason, I told my daughter that she never, ever, ever had to hug or kiss anybody hello or goodbye unless she wanted to.

The tongue wriggling bum pincher continued to be around at most of our family events and so my daughter missed out on many family gatherings. She missed out on those connections with her cousins when all the kids would have a sleepover—I just wasn't willing to allow the slightest opportunity of anything happening to her.

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Some events happen in time, moments that you recall like a Polaroid snapshot that you keep looking back on when you remember a person or see an object—like a BMX bike. Life is full of sweetness—well, bittersweetness.

It was around June 1983 when my parents called my brother Ricky and me into the lounge. Mom and dad told

us that Collette was going away for a year to study. I was sad, but not devastated. My brother and I got up and went outside to ride our bikes.

By this age, Ricky and I spent quite a bit of time riding our bikes together. They were BMX bicycles. The real deal at that time. We rocked those bikes. I have a picture of the result of one of our bike adventures scrapes and all.

Shame, I was the mastermind of the incident since Ricky was younger than me. I took our wooden bench from our kitchen table and designed an awesome ramp out of it. All set up ready to go, 'Ok Ricky, you go first', off he goes and oh my word—he hit the tar road face first, removing most of the skin off his forehead, nose and chin. Now most people would look at that and think—forget it, not having any of it. Not me. An adrenaline junkie of note already by then, I got on my bike and said, 'Watch Ricky, ha, ha, ha!' and I flew off the ramp—big smile pigtails flying like banners. I stuck the landing with the bike's handlebar stuck in my groin. I still have a perfect circle scar in my groin to remember that daring deed. Ricky, I'll note, healed nicely.

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When Collette left to “study” in June 1983, she was 14 years old. Shortly after, her boyfriend, what shall I call him? Wayne, as in John Wayne, the cowboy, came to live with us. Although I was only nine years old, he and I were very close because Collette and I were very close.

He used to talk to me all the time.

We had this red couch—oh my gosh, it's the same couch my step-grandfather had shared with me his story about pretty little girls turning into ugly women. Crazy.

One night I was lying with Wayne on the red couch, which now looking back was aptly coloured, and we were talking. He asked me to tickle his back. He was about 19 years old and I was nine. I'm not too sure what a nine-year-old and 19-year-old talk about. It was evening, everyone else was in bed. So, I was tickling his back, and he turned over and repositioned himself. And eventually, I was tickling something that felt, well, I just remember it felt strange, smooth and kind of silky—actually disgusting.

Then he was done. Anger stood in the space that adoration once occupied. The sense of confusion and loss was so complete—I was frightened. I didn't know what to do.

Another layer laid down.

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Family time was so precious to me. I loved those times we spent together. We used to get videos often; we loved good videos. And every time, they would ask Wayne to go to the video shop. They would tell me to go with him, so he didn't have to go on his own. And I'd go. In the beginning, I didn't resist at all, but later I would try to get out of it.

This became an ongoing thing. We would get in the car and head to the video shop. Wayne would take a detour onto a little gravel road into the bush. He would tell me to undo my pants. And I would. And sometimes he would make me take my panties down and my pants down, and he would touch me and fondle me.

Even I chuckle a little when I read this. Yeah, some of you are thinking, how did he make you? No, he never held a gun to my head or anything remotely like that. I was nine-flippin-years-old. A child. An innocent child.

For those who have also been victims of this kind of abuse, you will know exactly what I'm talking about. Somehow, no matter how terrified, horrified, dirty, or disgusting you feel, there's almost a sense of obligation—a sense of going through the motions and keeping quiet so it will be quicker—better for everyone. Looking back on it now, I know this may sound nuts, but I believe without a doubt that God allows a certain part of our brain to actually just switch off, at least for a short while, anyway.

I don't remember if he touched himself or what else he did. It's a bit murky. But I remember every time after the first time when my parents asked me to go with Wayne to the video shop, I would pretend to be busy. They would insist, and I would end up going with him and it didn't stop there.

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My parents, at this time, opened up the first-ever multiracial modelling school in the country, and they would

go there often. And while they were gone, Wayne would come and take me from my bed and put me in my parents' bed and lie next to me. And I would actually pretend I was asleep until I obviously couldn't pretend, I was sleeping anymore and he would fiddle with me penetratingly. He would rub himself against me and he would take my hand and 'touch himself' with my hand. This went on for a while. I was alone. I was scared. I was quiet.

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I'm playing in my room when my mom called me into the lounge shouting at me, asking me why I was making up stories and spreading them around school that Collette was having a baby. Seriously, I was nine at the time. What the hell did I know about having babies? At this stage of my life, I wanted to be a nun. Other kids wanted to be doctors, or teachers etc., but nope—I wanted to be a nun. I loved the nuns' habit and all it seemed to represent. After all, they were married to God. Who better to be married to? When I took part in fashion shows at a school called St Dominic's Priory, a catholic school in Port Elizabeth, I loved watching these, oh man, beautiful, gentle, loving, kind women. They just had something I desperately longed for. We were a typical Methodist family who religiously attended church and Sunday school every Sunday. We didn't have any nuns.

I told my mom that I thought she said Collette was going away to study. What was she talking about? Has she really gone away to have a baby? Mom quietly replied, yes, but that I had to promise to keep it a secret for Collette's sake. She explained the best

way she could, that people could end up being really ugly to her if it didn't remain a secret.

Heck, I loved Collette with every fibre of my being, I would and was already doing anything I could to protect her—what's one more secret? At this point, the only thing that mattered to me was not to be the reason Wayne had to go away. I cost Collette her John. Nope, that wouldn't happen again. Not on my shift anyway.

So, I keep quiet.

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Eventually, Wayne started requesting that I bring friends to join us in his escapades. Clearly, my little nine-year-old fanny and boobies were not enough to feed the monster, I obliged. Why? God only knows! Maybe it was so that I wouldn't feel so alone, maybe it was—ugh, I hate saying this, but maybe it was so that I could have a break. I knew I couldn't include Joanne, no, no, no. I had to protect how perfect she was—besides, she lived next door, someone might find out. Flip, isn't it crazy, how clever a child can be?

So, I recruited Louise. She was a friend of mine from school. We shared many adventures together, henceforth the name Louise, as in Thelma and Louise.

One of my parents' vehicles was a minivan. One day, Louise and I were in the back of this minivan, naked, with a blanket over us. I was trying to show her kind of what to expect. But my mom came to the minivan and she

lifted the blanket and she saw us naked and she never said a word. She just turned around and walked away.

And I remember the shame, but she said nothing. Nothing.

Wayne wanted to include her. Honestly, I'm not sure what happened after that if she did end up being included, or not. I believe with my whole heart, God allows blocked memories for a reason. Like they are too much for us to bear, but when we are ready, if He deems necessary, He will reveal the truth. Like in my case I had to wait until I was 43, to learn—God, the most heart-shattering truth, a truth that eventually set me free. Allowed me to finally understand myself, to understand true love, mistakes and true forgiveness. Stuff, that had I known earlier, would have destroyed not just my very existence, but everyone I had ever known.

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The relevance of all this, with Louise, was Wayne wanted to include friends. This led to the family camping trip in the Van Staadens River Valley in the Eastern Cape that was the beginning of the end.

I especially loved our camping trips to this place. I would spend hours in the lush bush, which had these little alcoves. I would have one section, that would be the lounge, another, the kitchen or bedroom. It all depended on what this particular bush had on offer. This place also happened to be home to one of the biggest Sand Dunes that lead straight into the river. My father had made us sand boards that we would wax up, carefully position on

the sand, and then hop onto and ride down. One day Collette went down this dune at a rapid speed, hitting the water with such force her jaw went right through the board. I can't recall if she broke her jaw, but it was bad. It was also a brilliant fishing spot where Ricky, Collette, and I would spend hours catching fish after fish. Beautiful times. Previous times. Those innocent precious times had been tarnished for Collette and me and this was just the beginning.

On this particular camping vacation, we had another family with us, cousins who lived further away that we never got to see often. Man, they were cool.

One night we went out for Chinese at the Golden Dragon. And that song *Big in Japan* was playing. And I love that song. It was *Big in Japan* or *Safety Dance*, and I loved it. And we were all dancing. I was dancing next to Wayne in our group. He leaned over and whispered to me he really liked Jane. And could I arrange that? I did. We snuck out of the caravan through the tent to the minivan, which was parked right next to the caravan where my parents were sleeping. To this day, regardless of endless counselling, healing courses and forgiveness. When I hear these songs, within seconds, I'm right back there in my mind.

And into the famous minivan we went, me and Jane.

So, there we were, the three of us sitting in the minivan with seats flattened to create one massive bed and to my shame and horror as things get started, Jane abruptly says, 'No!'

What the heck? I had good reason to believe she would be ok with it. In my nine-year-old mind, anyway. She was older, already developed, and had boyfriends and stuff. There was this other part of me, that kind of went, How? How was she able to say no?

With her ‘no’, solidly in place, I followed further instructions from Wayne full of shame: touch here, open your legs, open your mouth—all with her quietly witnessing the whole thing.

Everyone went home, life went back to normal. Our secret normal.

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That New Year’s Eve, my parents threw one of their massive parties with family and friends. My mom was amazing. She knew how to entertain. We often had plenty of people at the house due to my father’s position, and money definitely wasn’t an issue.

So, mom would either entertain big business executives or, my favourite nationality, the coloured people, who were the instigators in her starting the agency. Man, I loved them, so alive, with good strong family bonds. This was still back in the apartheid era in South Africa. They would sneak me under blankets into the areas they lived in to spend nights with them—Indians, too. Flip it was exciting.

We had a large covered patio, about 30/40 meters wide, that ran all along the length of the bedrooms of the house. On New Year’s Eve, mom would have someone

dress up as an old lady, and someone else as a young baby. Just before the clock would strike 12, the old lady would walk out and in would come the baby. I would lie and watch this from my bedroom window in awe.

Then someone would come into my room, I can't recall exactly who, to wish me a Happy New Year. I would clench my eyes shut and pretend I was sleeping. It is still a blur of a memory even after years of therapy, as I just could never go back there to see their face but I remember their words said to me earnestly, 'No one can ever know about this because I will go to jail.' And that just scared me further. And I said, 'Yes, that's why I think you need to stop. Because I think they might know.' Then he seemed angry, 'There's no way they can know unless you've told them.' I was scared, 'No, no, no, I haven't told anybody.'

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In 1984, I made the Eastern Province swim team, and we went to East London for a massive interprovincial gala. I had qualified to represent my province in three different strokes; crawl/freestyle, backstroke and butterfly, and the 200-metre individual medley. It was really exciting. My parents were absolutely amazing when it came to us kids and sports. No matter what, they were always at every sports event we ever did. They were brilliant in that.

What stood out about this particular gala, other than the awesome fact that I had trained my butt off and was representing my province, was that my favourite and

most powerful stroke was the butterfly. Oh, I loved it. I felt like a dolphin.

At the time, I was still swimming in the under 10 age group and there was no one in my age group to compete against, or the following age group, under 12. If I wanted to compete in my stroke, it had to be in the under 14 age group. Dad, my number one fan, assured me I could win it. The scary, yet exhilarating part was, I was swimming against my greatest rival, Beverley. She was not only bigger than me; she was fantastic, and she knew it. It was plain bombastic. I stood up onto the starting block, more than an entire head smaller than her. Man, when that gun went off, I swam like my very life depended on it. I came in a very close second. I felt like a rockstar. Dad's little princess, only now without the frills. I loved it. The absolute excitement and normalcy of it all.

But it wasn't long-lived.

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It's at the end of 1984, I'm 10 years old, and we are rehearsing for a major fashion show at the Alabama Hotel. I want to get home to watch The A-Team. On our way home, I kept going on and on about wanting to get home to watch my show. My father pulled the car over on the highway, quietly got out and opened the back door of the car, and he gave me a flippin good hiding. We generally got hidings with the belt, but at times, especially when my father would lose it, he'd use whatever was available, including, hands, fists and feet.

By the time we got home, I was quite hysterical and said I didn't want to be there anymore. My dad calmly said, 'Well then, I'll take you to an orphanage.' So, continuing with my attitude, I retorted, 'fine' and packed my bags. Everything packed, I said goodbye to my little brother. I got into the car with my bags and my father drove me away to the gates of the orphanage. He stopped the car and looked over his shoulder at me, 'Come on. But realize that if you get out and you go, there's no changing your mind. You're not going to come back. So you need to decide now what you're going to do, because the moment I take you inside, you're going to stay there.' Well, I had time to calm down on the ride there and through my sniffles, muttered, 'ok, I'm sorry', and he drove me back home without another word.

That just reinforced my feeling that my parents didn't really want me. I had two other sisters that proved that theory, and unless my behaviour was perfect, there was a place in the orphanage waiting for me.

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On a family drive-in movie night, we were going to watch Tarzan Greystone. We were all ready to go; mom, dad, my brother, and myself, when my mom called me into the lounge. She told me she just got off a call with Jane's mom. She said Jane's mom told her about the camping trip in December and she asked if there was anything I wanted to tell her.

My heart was pounding. 'Mommy, if I tell you anything, will Wayne go to jail?'

She tried to reassure me, 'My darling, you don't need to worry about that.'

And I begged, 'He can't go to jail. You promise?'

I can only remember confirming the story Jane's mom told her. 'Yes, mom, yes. These things happened.'

What followed was Dr visits for vaginal examinations, which were a horror of their own clamp, stirrups and all, and endless psychologist visits. This would become the means of my very existence for years to come.

These psychologist visits were meant to help me, but they somehow ended up reiterating the fact that something was wrong with me. I ended up missing out on lots of things at school. Obviously, I noticed my peers were not going to these kinds of appointments. Heck no. They all seemed so young, fresh, and carefree. I was none of these things and probably never would be.

I recall little about Collette's return home, it's quite a blur. All I can recall was returning home one night from another show—remember, the show must go on! And there was a huge screaming match going on, lots of chaos. Collette was crying. My parents were fuming. I imagine Wayne had tried to sneak a visit.

I recall that I felt a very real, now familiar cesspool of guilt and quietly going to my room, shutting the door and crying myself to sleep. Gosh, looking back on it all now, I cry for sweet beautiful Collette. I can't begin to imagine the heartache, the betrayal on so many levels, she must have felt. All of 15 years old, having returned home from

being sent away to give up her little baby girl for adoption, to return to her love, Wayne, only to have this—this disgust. Oh, it's just terrible to bear. It's no wonder she got so sick. It was shortly after all this, my poor Collette, was diagnosed with Lupus. A true killer it was for all of us—indeed it was.

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It was September 1984 when the fateful court case happened. It clashed with an outing that we had in grade five, where the school was taking us on a train trip. I was so upset that I was going to miss out. Anyhow, I had been prepped for this court case by the lawyers and my parents over and over and over again.

Mom, at her best, dressed me up like a doll in her favourite dress. It was a dress I wore modelling to the beautiful song, 'Are you Barbara's daughter'. Beautiful because that was my amazing mother's favourite song. Beautiful because the dress I wore was one of the many beautiful dresses she had made tirelessly with her own hands. It had a little bodice, with ribbons and frills that burst into a full billowing skirt that was supported with a petticoat, of course. It ended on the knee. So precious in its design. Tarnished by betrayal and innocence gone.



We had been told that on that day I would be in a different room and behind a wall with a video camera and that I would share my testimony. However, on the day of my court appearance, we had to sit outside with my counsellor or whoever it was while my cousin Jane was sharing her testimony. Then it was my turn to go inside. I placed my hand on the Bible and swore an oath. Sitting in front of me was my sister Collette, Wayne's whole family, and members of my family and of course, Wayne. I told them everything that had happened. Oh my gosh, I remember how Collette and Wayne were smiling and winking at each other and the tremendous guilt and shame that I felt.

At one stage, Wayne's lawyers stood up and said, 'Objection, your honour, he wasn't wearing jeans, he was wearing corduroys.' It was like a full-blown court case, just like you see in the movies. That's when I lied.

The opposing counsel asked me why I hadn't said anything. I felt so embarrassed about this. I panicked.

And I think that's a question all of us get asked. There are so many reasons we don't tell besides fear of what might happen if you do. It's because you feel dirty and ashamed, or maybe because you were a nine-year-old child. But my biggest reason was I felt guilty, and I didn't want to cause trouble for Collette or my family.

But there I was, unprotected again by those who should be standing up for me. Those who should have seen. By those who also kept quiet. So, I protected myself.

And so, I lied about how I did try to let the adults know something was happening, 'Well, I did tap on the window. I tapped on the window of the minivan, hoping to catch my parents' attention.' That didn't happen. Not physically anyway. But there were so many other signs along the way someone should have seen what was going on.

I'm not certain how old I was, when I finally asked my mom, what the outcome of the court case was. I will never forget her reply; my parents were found guilty of neglect and Wayne got a three-year suspended sentence. Perhaps my lie cost my parents and saved Wayne full responsibility. But I felt responsible for what they all paid in the end.

That damn minivan.

That damn red couch.

After my testimony, I got in the car with my father for the drive up to Graaff Reinett to join the rest of my schoolmates. It was either on the way there or back, dad hit a little buck by accident. He took it home to care for. Bambi was its name.

The only person who knew what happened that day and why I was late was my teacher. We were staying in a massive dormitory. My teacher looked at me all knowingly, whispering to see if I was ok. And I just remember feeling so left out, so different. I said it's ok, I'll be fine. I put on that plastic smile that I'd learned from pageants and modelling and enjoyed the rest of the school excursion, and the trip back on the train.



## Chapter 2: You're Supposed to Be My Hero

Like most kids growing up, I, too, had a hero. This guy rocked. I mean, literally rocked the pants off Patrick Swayze in the movie *Dirty Dancing*. Strange. In this case, both names apply, so let's just call him Swayze. Anyhow, Swayze was a family member that I trusted with my entire being. I mean, literally, I trusted him with my life. We shared many hair-raising adventures.

He was a policeman and he was my sister's husband. How much more trustworthy can someone be?

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He knew my home life very well—he already rescued one sister from there, and often invited me to spend weekends or holidays with him and Michelle. We did so many things together. In fact, I recall one holiday they invited me to go with them to Hogsback—it's this little place up in the mountains. Just a peaceful piece of country. On that holiday, Swayze and I went on an outride on the horses. It was so special. It just felt like this was my year. I was soaring.

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Anyhow, we spent many amazing adventures together, and I'm not really sure what the age gap between us was, but he had a daughter who was only five years younger than me. Although I had been horse riding for most of my life this was where I developed my absolute passion for horse riding.

We spent endless hours on our rides. My favourite part of our outrides was as the horses' hooves hit the beach, they would burst into a full gallop. The adrenaline that I experienced then and until recently, three years ago, when I had to give up my horse after back surgery, it's a feeling that just wells up inside of me and fills me like nothing else can.

He had a black Arab stallion with the most amazing gait. It was like a rocking horse. This horse could canter on the spot. He was a magnificent animal. He also had a chestnut thoroughbred horse that I rode most of the time.

Swayze and I also spent hours fishing together. We would slip out in the middle of the night and fish off the rocks.

He would often tell me how, when he found Wayne, he would take care of everything. I didn't know what he meant by that, but it made me feel pretty cool. It really felt like someone had my back.

In fact, he was the only person who openly spoke about what happened to me. Everyone just kept quiet. They just passed me to multiple psychologists who never acknowledged that I was a victim of sexual abuse nor that something was wrong. No, not at all. Then, after these appointments, nothing was asked or discussed with me by my parents. Nope, Swayze got me. He understood. He was my hero.

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At some point, Swayze left the police force. It's a bit of a blur, but I know he was in charge of a large strip of camping sites all along the shoreline in the Eastern Cape near a site called Willows through the Schoenmakerskop area.

I loved this place. It was a caravan site itself and just a short walk from the house where you could enter the camping site and a tidal pool. There were little rock pools and I would spend the whole day there catching little Rock Bullies. Bullies are small rock pool fish. I never used to use a hook or sinker because one day I lost my hook, line and sinker. I would pull a thread out of the towel I used to dry myself long enough to use as a line and tie a piece of bait to it. That's how I'd catch my fish. This was something I enjoyed so much that I would spend hours there and keep them in a bucket and throw them back in the ocean at the end of the day.

Sometimes, Swayze and I would go snorkelling to collect Olly Croc, which is a type of shellfish. He would stuff my costume full of them—which in the beginning I felt a bit shy and exposed, but then relaxed, because this was my hero and it made perfect sense. And we'd take them home to Michelle, who would then make the most incredible curried bunnies out of these shellfish. They were delicious.

This was my safe place. I loved being with them so much. I don't know why I say that in the past tense. Those that remain, I still do love and always will, perhaps more than they will ever know.

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One June day during the sardine run Swayze shouted, 'Quickly, quickly go get Michelle and tell her to bring the curtains!' There was mayhem and chaos as we grabbed the curtains and we ran down to the ocean as he shouted orders. I, my sister, and Swayze manoeuvred around scooping up curtains full of sardines, which we took to various restaurants, later the same day and well into the night. I mean, seriously, Swayze in my eyes was like MacGyver.

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One day we set out on one of my favourite errands to do with him, which was to saddle up and check up on camping sites, collecting the fees owed by the visitors or just checking up on the general condition of the site. On our way back from this outing, galloping along the fence, me in front, my flippant typical thoroughbred got a fright at something. Thoroughbreds tend to get frightened at anything. I hit the ground hard. Swayze didn't have time to swerve his horse, which resulted in him galloping over my ribs. He jumped off his horse and lifted my shirt. The skin over my ribs had come off and the wind was knocked out of my lungs. It was bad. I was in agony. He sat on his haunches and looked me dead on, 'Ton, this is it. You need to get back on now. This is make or break. If you don't get back on, it could be the end of your horse riding forever.' He helped me get back on my horse. I remember desperately trying to breathe through the pain as we slowly made our way back to the house. That evening he raved about how I'd done so well and I got back on the horse. He was so proud of me and I felt, wow, really, really proud of myself.

That same evening, we were sitting watching TV late into the night. Michelle and her daughter had gone to bed. He asked me to tickle his back. So I did, and everything was cool because I trusted him. Then he started to move and shift himself into a position. I wasn't tickling his back any longer, but what I'd come to know well as a penis. I remember a feeling in my heart of; oh, God, oh, God. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I continued to tickle him for a few minutes. My brain just kicked into a kind of automatic response. I floated out of my body as I always did—I don't recall where I went in my mind but I'm sure it was a place where I felt safer than where I was at that moment. Where was I going to be safe, really? I quietly got up and went to bed. I lay there—horrified—curled up shivering in a cold sweat. My ribs bruised, aching, I cried the silent cry from my broken soul at the centre of my throat where all my tears were caught. I was 11 years old.

I don't remember waking up the next morning. Nothing was ever said about it—either this was an adult disease spread in my family or they were excellent teachers.

He didn't touch me again. My hero was back, or so I thought.

In fact, my next memory of him is when he got me my own horse at the age of 12.



### **Chapter 3: First Attempt at Suicide**

As I look through the meticulously kept records of my school career, the year 1988 stands out—middle school years—from the age of 13 and 14 when things got bad and I started seeing the school counsellor. My mom's attentive hand ended when I finished primary school. The honour school records and photos came to an abrupt halt.

All you can see was the system not working: the adults were disappointed, and didn't like my attitude. They did nothing but complain. These reports would go to my parents, who would mete out their own form of punishment or send me to more psych appointments.

I pretty much could not have cared less. I was stoned most of the time on Tippex thinners.

Clearly, this was a sad situation. They sent me to Mr Pringle, the school counsellor. I'm uncertain what dear old Mr Pringle and I discussed. I assume the normal; Wayne, what had happened with Wayne and so on.

So, one day after school, I'm busy in my bedroom, and my dad comes in. He's crying. I panic and ask him what's wrong. He says he must go away for a while because of me. Not in an ugly way, more of a defeated, heartbroken way. I'm confused. What was he talking about? My mother was standing quietly in the background. He told me the school accused him of sexually abusing me.

Yelling, screaming and crying I wondered how in the world did they come up with that accusation? I went crazy, like ballistic, smashing my fists against the wall

until they bled. The rest is a blur. I do, however, believe it was this that led to my mom, my sister Michelle and I heading out to look at the little cottage to rent on a property in Hydrangea Valley. It was on the way to the rental cottage in the car that my sister asked me, 'Ton, did dad ever do anything to you, do you not remember dad ever doing anything to you?' I was horrified at the question, absolutely horrified. And I said, 'No, not at all. Not at all.'

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The sight of the cottage brought up mixed emotions: joy and sadness. Oh, I loved my father. I had an endless, all-encompassing need to please him—to make him proud. That continued right until the day he died. By this time, my dad had already gotten ill with something called Sarcoidosis disease, part of the Lupus family. It included a surgery where his throat was cut to gain access to his lungs. Somehow, whilst he was in the hospital, a lady whom he had helped financially in the past had forged his signature and cleaned him out. I'm not sure of all the details, but I know the results were devastating. The high-flying businessman was gone. This brought my father to a place he was never able to recover from. His confidence as a man and provider was gone, shattered, irretrievable.

Dad now lived in mom's shadow, helping her in the modelling school, something he did well. I recall him often saying how people referred to him as Liz's husband, Ricky's father, never just as him. And this is how it remained. Doctors had recommended dad start playing golf for exercise. This is how it came about that Ricky started playing golf. He excelled quickly, achieving provincial colours.

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My life was a string of never-ending training; training for beauty pageants, training for sports. From age nine to age 13, my father would wake me up at the crack of dawn to go to the pool before school. Then it was off to school and after there would be club training, and then train again sometimes from seven to nine in the evening. There was obviously a physical change as well. I was no longer a tiny little queen or princess. Eventually, I stopped swimming because I just couldn't handle the pressure, so all the muscle I had turned into fat.

I felt like a failure because, at the same time, my brother was a rising golf star. He eventually won the World Junior Championships. As a way to deal with the pressure of a family-focused on success, I became the problem child. That's how I saw myself.

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My father very quickly turned into someone I feared. Not just because of horrendous hidings, but I remember once when I was about 14, maybe older, Ricky and dad were outside near the pool practising some golf. Ricky's golf balls were at the bottom of the pool. It was storming, thunder and lightning all around and my father insisted, with Ricky standing by his side, that I get in the pool and get the balls. I remember crying desperately because I knew the dangers of being in a swimming pool during a storm and why couldn't Ricky get them; they were his balls after all. I remember being clever and going to get the net to scoop them up the wall, only to be stopped in

my tracks. He wanted me in that pool. I shudder at this memory. I'm not certain what the actual outcome of this was. I blanked it out. I do know, though, that I refused.

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So every morning at the breakfast table, father greeted me with the oh-so-famous words, 'Good morning, dumpy bottle.' They cut deep, produced results, and left a scar. Life was an endless rotation of Ricky and dad winning tournaments with me on the side, causing endless chaos and havoc getting hiding after hiding. Roles and circumstances had certainly changed.

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On my 14th birthday, mum was away in a psychiatric hospital. The pressure now upon her was far too great. I'm not certain where Collette was at that stage. She would have been around 20 years old, so I assume she had moved out. On this particular birthday, there was no effort made. We had a family ritual which included breakfast in bed with all our presents stacked around us and spoils throughout the day and, of course, a party of some sorts. Not this day. Mom wasn't there. I was left alone at home with only Merlina, our nanny and housekeeper, for company, whilst Ricky and dad went out for a day of golf and adventure.

I loved Merlina. Sweet, sweet Merlina. Thinking about it now, I hear her voice calling, 'Tanya, Ricky, come on, it's bath time.' I would often hide away, oh how I used to fight bath time. She was my bosom buddy and mom of a different race. She was Xhosa, and she taught

me many words in her language. I have a deep love for the Xhosa and Zulu people of our country.

I used to love sneaking off into Merlina's room outside. She had her own room off the back side of the kitchen. I have very fond memories of her beautiful black arms cradling me as I wept often after a good hiding. Ricky and I also used to love pranking Merlina. We would add Enos to the sugar and wait with great anticipation for the next cup of tea or coffee for mom or dad. When she made it, the water would bubble over the cup, causing her to jump out of fright.

Merlina cooked all our meals, cleaned up all our mess, and looked after us. She loved us. She was one of the family. She came into our lives when I was in grade two and remained part of our lives right up until four years ago, when she attended my father's funeral.

Things for me just got too much. So many emotions. Feeling lost. Feeling alone. Mom, not there. It was awful. I felt guilty, terribly guilty. Where was this thing about my father sexually abusing me coming from? I felt such guilt and shame. I felt like the cause of everything wrong in the world. All of the bad was on me.

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Where the idea or the urge to harm myself came about, I'm not sure, but I remember taking a knife and holding it to my wrists. Closing my eyes, I would count; one, two, three. And then I wouldn't be able to do it. And again; one, two, three. I would repeat this until I managed to make a cut, except it wasn't deep enough. The pain was

excruciating, but I had to end this somehow. I had to. Again, the knife in my hand; one, two, three. Eventually, the cut was deep enough. The blood was everywhere. I don't remember how it happened, but I ended up in hospital, my own psychiatric hospital, a place called Evatt Ward in the Provincial hospital. A place that I would visit again sometime soon.

## **Chapter 4: Virgin Nun: What the Hell Was I Thinking**

By age 14, I was attending endless psychiatrist visits and on antidepressants. My behaviour was devolving with me trying to find my way to fit in, finding my way into the wrong crowd, leaving behind my old friend Joanne with all her beautiful perfection or what I perceived to be an unattainable way of life—for broken me.

I did everything to fit in with the ‘IN’ crowd, from saying I was sexually experienced to stealing. But here’s the rub—deep down, I truly believed that I was still a virgin.

My dear friend Joanne, at some stage I remember slapping her across the face. For what reason, I don’t know. I started getting into physical fights with other girls—I became a bully.

It was a shame that those that I loved were getting hurt.

Joanne, however, continued trying to reach out to me, eventually convincing me to go with her to a youth group called Youth for Christ, just down the road from us.

Although I had grown up in a church-based home environment attending Sunday school, this was my first kind of understanding of Jesus Christ and his amazing love for us. I ended up giving my life to Jesus. Oh, man, there was light. I loved going to Youth. There was just something there that made me feel warm. I loved it.

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After returning from a psych appointment where I was shown a book, it suddenly dawned on me like a massive truck hitting a solid wall at 120 kilometres per hour—you're not a virgin. Once it's gone, it's gone. It can't come back. Literally, all hell broke loose in every fibre of my entire being. Fuck you, fuck you all!

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That day before Youth, I called my boyfriend, who I had so stupidly kept at bay. I told him tonight was the night; bring condoms, vodka, and orange juice.

He pulled up in his car, which was, guess what? A minivan. We went down to the beachfront. I tried to drink as much vodka and orange as fast as I could to take the edge off, but it didn't help. I climbed into the back of the van with him. I told him to lie back and take down his pants. He helped me put a condom on. I got on top. It was excruciating. That day released a beast in me. I did not want to stop.

Understand this clearly; it was not because I enjoyed the sex. Hell no. I was 19 years old when I experienced an orgasm and when I did, I immediately stopped because I thought there was something wrong with me.

This was more like a feeling of anger; ok you bastards, if this is what you want, then this is what you will get!

Jesus? Oh, he stayed behind. At least that's what I thought.

## Chapter 5: The Day We Both Died - My Horse and I

I'm 15 years old, as you can gather now, a pretty messed up 15-year-old. I'm with my hero Swayze. We're on our way to the stables. Parona, my beautiful, nutty, chestnut thoroughbred, needs to be put down. It turns out all the crazy stunts she pulled were not purely because of being a thoroughbred, but rather a massive tumour she had on her brain. It devastated me. The Lion Park was coming out to shoot my girl in the head. After which she would be fed to the lions.

Somehow, I found some solace in this. I've always loved lions and all they represent. Such beauty, such power, such purpose. The king of the Jungle, the Lion of Judah (Jewish tribe of Israelites). Of course, having Swayze by my side made it all ok. By this stage, Swayze and I shared many more adventures. He would often meet up with me and Joanne.

Joanne and I stabled our horses at the same yard, and we would meet up with other friends on our outrides. Some of these outrides, Swayze would join up with us. We lived in a totally different time and space. A time in South Africa where it was absolutely safe and free.

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Outrides could be up to 20 kilometres long, consisting of a tar road, bush, and my all time favourite, of course, the beach. It was around this area that Swayze would meet up with us. He and Michelle had moved to another outstanding spot. A little place out past a suburb called Greenbushes, called Hydrangea Valley. The same place mom and I had looked at a cottage a while back.

This place was hidden deep in the bush. It consisted of a few cottages, some standalone, some semidetached. It had a central swimming pool and a little cafe run by one of the cottage owners.

There was plenty of space for horses and all sorts of animals. This is where Swayze taught me to ride a motorbike. It's also where he helped my new best mate, Jacqueline, and I get drunk for the first time, sneaking us beers out the back door of a party he and his family were attending. A cottage that later, at the age of around twenty-four years old, became my own home. I was crazy about this property. It was spectacular.

I remember that night so clearly; Jacqueline and I, 14 at the time, sitting on the fence drinking our beers and it started raining. I cringe now at the disrespect, but it shows even then he was on my mind. One of us commented, 'Hey, God's pissing on our heads', which led to peals of laughter. Needless to say, the night ended with our heads in the toilet puking our guts out. Jacqueline and I were really close. Sometimes my mum would drop us off at the stables for an entire day.

With lunch packed, we would take turns riding the horse. But Jacqueline was no good at this, so we would double up, go for a ride, hose Parona down, walk her until she was dry, pop her back in the stables and then torment the pigs or have horse poop fights. Shame my poor mom would fetch us and we'd be covered in poop from head to toe. The days of queens and princesses, replaced by vagabonds. Good, good times that we're about to end.

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Oh, my sweet, crazy, beautiful Parona. This was good-bye. I remember looking deeply into her eyes, breathing my breath into her nostrils. So beautiful. So unaware. The guy who would perform the fatal blow arrived. Swayze muttered under his breath, 'Please wait for us to leave the property before you do anything.' With a heavy heart, we got into the car. I got out to open the gate to let us out of the property. Bang! The gun went off.

I felt weak. My heart shattered. Swayze hugged me and said, 'Come on, I got a surprise for you. I wasn't going to tell you but I'm getting you a new horse, an Arab. Come, let's go and have a look at some stud farms.' So many emotions. I'm trying to cheer myself up with the thought of having my Arab horse and we're driving down the road and Swayze turns off onto a little gravel road. I looked around but didn't see any signs showing a stud farm or even any sign of a house. My heart pounded on a whole new level. No, no, no. I've been here before, not in this particular place, but, yes, many, many times in this situation all those years ago with Wayne, except this was different. I'm 15. Swayze is in his 30s. He parked the car. My hands clenched, one on the seat, the other held the door.

Everything stood still. He turned in his seat; he looked at me. I looked back. 'Ton', he said, 'I have something to tell you.' Oh, God no. I knew what he was going to say. Please don't say it. Make this disappear. He continued. 'Ton, I love you. I know this sounds strange, but I've loved you since you were a little girl and I've been waiting. It's not just love. I am in love with you.' I thought to myself, ok, cool, I can handle this. Frozen stiff, I prepared my reply in my head. It went kind of like', Wow, thank

you. I love you, too. But it's not right. Michelle, your child, my age, your age...' I took a deep breath and replied slowly, 'I love you, too.' With that, he moved forward and kissed me. There was no time to say anything else smothered under his weight.

At first, I didn't know what to do. It's all too much. The switch in my brain goes off. Before I knew it, it was finished. I cleaned up the mess and got dressed. He asked, 'Are you ok?'

I mean, seriously? Me? Was I ok? Are you serious? 'Yeah, sure. I'm good, thanks. I think', this was my reply. I just wanted to get home, but I never said this, not at all. In fact, I was still hoping to get to some stud farms. Well, there were no stud farms. He took me straight home.

All the way home, he explained to me how no one must know and I mustn't worry. All the stuff I knew so well. Except this was different. He loved me. When I got home, I slammed the door and sobbed my heart out. I was kind of grateful to be allowed the space to show my emotions of heartache. After all, my parents would have thought, shame, the poor child, she loved that horse.

Just like when what I had on offer before wasn't enough to feed the beast. This was a whole new kind of beast with Swayze. First, he wanted a virgin. I coped with the situation, I suppose, by believing that he loved me. After all, it isn't someone's fault if they're so deeply in love with someone that isn't the wife. Right?

In the beginning, I coped, but then I fell head over heels in love. I'd been well groomed for years by him, ready to serve in any which way I could. At the same

time, this was wrong and so confusing. I loved his wife and daughter. They were my family, my heart. My love for them continues to be immense.

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One night, Jacqueline and I spent the night at the house. She was still a virgin. We were asleep when Swayze arrived home, not too sober. I couldn't believe it. Right there, with his wife and daughter home, he took Jax first.

Goodbye purity, goodbye sweetness, goodbye all things nice. Here comes the spice. I watched horrified—my heart tearing into a million pieces with many questions flying through my mind at a million miles an hour. As he said, he loves me. Then why is he doing this? Is this love? Is Jax going to be ok? What if Michelle hears and comes downstairs? All questions were short-lived as he fed his beast and took me next.

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Jacqueline and I weren't the same after that. Close, yes, even closer in many respects. In fact, our fun times just changed from playing for hours at the stables in horse poop to smoking weed or breaking into a neighbor's house to steal their spray and cook. We used to spray the spray and cook into a packet and inhale it. Or we would sniff Typex thinners or sometimes there would be booze. Sometimes, all of the above. For whatever reason we also started to play 'Glassy, glassy' a game in which you call on spirits to ask questions. I actually played this game on 3 different occasions in my life. Each time opening doors to satan with detrimental results. Anyhow, all this would take place in my tent.

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I loved camping, still do and often my folks or Jacqueline's folks would allow us to set up camp in the yard for the night. Beautiful times. At least at the time that's what I thought. Swayze continued to profess his undying love. Calling me, me calling him. His beast grew hungrier. One night, he met up with me and Jax. His cousin accompanied him. He was also well into his 30s, also married. We ended up along my treasured coastline that had previously held such fond memories. Swayze told me to go get in the car with his cousin. I go. Woosh, goes that switch again. Before I know it, it's Swayze's turn. Yep, they've swapped.

Things on the outside must have looked bad because my parents started grounding me and preventing me from seeing Jax. We could only see each other at school.

I found two new mates, one who lived nearby and her neighbour, both female. I will call them Nat and Lin, my partners in crime. It was more than likely me who taught them how to smoke. I know for certain it was me who taught them to break into houses. Except now it wasn't for spray and cook, but rather clothing and whatever else we fancied. By this age, I'd also started teaching myself to drive and I would sneak out in the middle of the night. What an adrenaline rush!

There was a house on the nearby corner where an old man lived. I used to go there on my own, thinking the house had been abandoned, and I would jump on the trampoline in the yard. Then I discovered that there was an old man there. The old man had two Persian Grey cats that he gave me. He was harmless. One day, Nat,

Lin and I took a gap, and we went to go and jump on the trampoline. We would jump just high enough to see over the wall. As we were jumping and having a great time, we saw my parents' car go past. Oh, flip! Had they seen us? Oh, my goodness, we'd better try and sneak home. Too late! We hear their voices. I get a flippin good hiding, not once, but all the way home.

I'm not sure if this was a separate occasion. It was probably due to a lot of reasons that led to the police being called in to see me. It's a bit of a blur as to what we discussed, probably a lecture of some sort. It was a scare. This was a discipline method sometimes used by my parents. One time I stole a piece of mom's chocolate as a kid and blamed it on Ricky. We were locked into our bedrooms until one of us owned up, usually when we were threatened with a good hiding. I would own up quickly because no way would I allow Ricky to get a beating. So, this particular time, I didn't just get the belt, but I was also taken to a prison to be shown what would happen if I continued to do this kind of thing. After all the years of having been threatened with prison as a little kid, being threatened with going to an orphanage, and all the visits with the psychologists due to Wayne and his behaviour, now, they sent two policemen. It was pathetic. The biggest problem, of course, was that they were wearing police uniforms. This is how I remembered Swayze.

The only thing they achieved by their 'scared straight' tactic was to reinforce the thoughts I had of myself as a little girl believing something was wrong with me, which was reiterated in seeing endless psychologists, catapulted

now by police being called in and standing in my bedroom. It not only compounded this belief, but I began to develop a deep self-hatred that would soon implode.

## Chapter 6: Kick Me to Jesus

My parents decided it was best to move me to a new school in the middle of the school year to give me a fresh start to 'keep me out of trouble.' I had repeated run-ins with teachers and had been caught smoking on more than one occasion.

During the school holiday before the switch, I was desperately crying. I slammed the front door and shattered the glass. The noise was astounding—but it didn't match the betrayal I felt when I found out that my friend at the time was sleeping with my boyfriend, not even close. I tried to blame the door slamming on the wind—only, there wasn't any wind. Honesty with my parents and I was long gone.

My parents' patience and understanding were a thing of the past, and we were constantly at odds. They were angry, and I was going to be punished.

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Anyway, I wouldn't stop crying. And my parents screamed for me to shut up, but it was beyond my control. I had no tools to handle my emotions. I had no adults who were willing nor able to reach me emotionally.

I remember lashing out, 'well, why don't you just take me back to the orphanage?' anything to get a reaction. And my father said to me, 'You're too wild for an orphanage, you'd have to go to the SPCA. And I don't think the SPCA would want you either.' To him, I was a wild animal. With that, I cried even more.

So my mother hit me. She had big rings. She didn't slap me; she punched me.

Then my father punched me. And I fell to the ground. And then he kicked me; in my ribs.

And the dog joined in the fray and bit me.

The result—I was black and blue. Emotionally, I was more damaged than before I woke up that morning—if that was even possible. They didn't allow me to go out for the rest of the school holidays because of what people would see. Always the secrets.

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The new school year started, and the bruises were light yellow or gone. I hoped that the friends from modelling would be there to show me around. When I got there, I saw they had their own friends, so I had to find my own way. I never, ever, ever felt like I fit.

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Finally, I got a break from Swayze. After a year of secret meetings and continued contact, he called me one day to say he had to go away and didn't say why. I later found out he had been arrested. I'm not really sure what the charges were, but I know that when he was found guilty, he jumped out of the courtroom window and was shot through the shoulder before being hauled to jail.

All I knew for sure was he was in jail and I was free to be a teenager.

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I got to date and met Boom, who was a surfer. I call him Boom because our relationship was like a boomerang—on again, off again.

I also made friends with a girl who suffered from anorexia: she taught me the ins and outs, and I ended up dropping 20 kilograms. My body image problems were getting serious. I would take 30 laxatives a day and would vomit after meals.

My parents were fully aware of what I was doing. Winning and performing just seemed more important.

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By age 15, I had another suicide attempt with an overdose of medication. I woke up thinking I was in hell because a strange person who didn't seem to be cognizant was standing by my bed. The recollection of the incident is hazy. I refused to go back home, and when discharged, stayed with Boom and his mom for a while.

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By age 16, I began my own struggles with anorexia and bulimia. I was entering a lot of competitions.

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I met Star, a name I'll give her for the light she brought into my life. I modelled with her daughter. She held a Bible study at her house which I used to attend. I loved her

and loved these times of tangibly feeling God's presence. And, it was also then that I received the gift of tongues. The gift of tongues is where you speak in a foreign language that you don't understand. But it's the Holy Spirit that prays and intercedes on your behalf. This may seem like Greek to you now, but perhaps you'll understand better later.

With God and Christianity in my life at that time, all I wanted was for my friends to experience it too, which they didn't. I wanted to save the world. As the saying goes, it's a lot easier pulling someone down a ladder than it is pulling someone up a ladder.

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Even though finding God was one of the best things to happen to give me focus, my biggest concern was sex. I was a sexually active teenager, and the church teaches you that you can't have extramarital sex. Oh, and I had to stop drinking and partying—it's not the path to God. All I could think was, 'How am I going to do that?'

That was a big stumbling block in my mind, because whenever that did happen, I would fall further away. Here began the pattern of getting close to God and having doubts. It's a very real enemy from within.

## Chapter 7: Are You Blind?

By age 16, I had lost a lot of weight. Although modelling and fashion shows remained a constant, after winning the school's beauty/personality contest, my parents must have decided it was time to up the game.

The modelling school classes and all rehearsals were now happening at home. The outside patio area lent itself perfectly to a ramp. I often desperately wanted to just talk to my mom about how I was feeling about school, my friend or Boom. There just never seemed to be time for any of that. Our house always seemed full—full of beauty and perfection. The feeling of wanting to be loved and accepted was so real. However, living in a world of perfection took its toll.

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Ricky was a rising golf star, on a World Champion level. The conversation always revolved around him and his mind-blowing abilities as a young, up-and-coming golfer, who by this stage had chosen to go to the school I had left—like a bag of trash. He was the school's blue-eyed boy, the international sports hero.

Other conversations were about other models like Barbie, who had won so many titles, including the huge Miss Cabana event, or the new talents who my parents thought were excelling. These conversations were the norm.

My misbehaviour was never really discussed—it was dealt with by the belt—behind a closed door.

We would sit around the dinner table for our evening meal, where we would share our day. What could I share? My 30 laxatives, the fact that I'm still thin because I threw up my lunch, that I skipped class? No, hell no. So I would remain silent.

Dad would go off on a tangent literally retelling us of Ricky's entire golf game, from the club he used, the lay of the grass, the wind that was blowing, and of course his amazing attitude. Whilst all this was happening Ricky and I would shoot peas at each other. We were taught to eat what was on our plate.

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My parents decided to enter me into the sought-after Red Cross Debutante competition. There were various projects that we did; we held a huge raffle for a Badger Buggy that dad must have somehow got sponsored. We also organized a horse racing day where we got big corporations that would sponsor different horse races and we had a VIP room for the day. I remember that day well, exquisitely made up, circulating amongst the highfliers, champagne in hand, thanking them all for their amazing support.

My life was very full of going to school, coming home, then getting dressed up to the nines, high heels, red lips and all. I learned this from my mother, who loved red lipstick and divining the glamour of starlets from head to toe. Red was her shade every day until the day she died and she wore it well.

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For every event, dad and I would head off in the car whilst he prepped me on what to say and do. Whenever we arrived at our destination, I would practice for him, then head off on my own to seek the man in charge of whatever company it was we were going to for sponsorships. My heart would pound a bit as I explained I was a debutante for Red Cross and was hoping they would support me by paying whatever it was toward either the horse racing event, golf day event or design fashion show. It was very seldom I returned to my dad, waiting patiently in the car, without victory. It was a very different feeling of accomplishment from the old days when dad would cheer me on in the pool.

Instead of trophies as a prize, I was bringing cash.

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There was a designer showcase I did with a designer called Fazli, who was in Cape Town. We flew him up for a fashion show exhibiting his designs. One of the designs I wore was lingerie—it was an exquisite piece consisting of different fabrics and embroidery, a bra, panties and corset all in one. The bottom section was only slightly broader than a g-string with fishnet stockings and long black feather boa. The ensemble was finished off perfectly with a cigarette and long filter a la 1960s. The choreography entailed me walking amongst the audience and being flirtatious with the men. I was 17!

My father was the compère for that show. And I remember feeling very exposed coming out and doing that kind of thing in front of him wondering what he would

say. It's so strange now, looking back on it, that not one word was spoken about it. Somehow all this was ok.

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The pressure to win, to be crowned Queen was intense, it's all my father spoke of. There was no way of knowing for certain what the other girls had or hadn't raised, so it remained breathtakingly intense right until the announcement that I was indeed Queen. Not just Queen, but I had broken a long-standing record.



After they announced the Queen, a waltz with the mayor of Port Elizabeth followed. I'm sure for my parents a very proud moment, indeed.

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I was in the newspapers all the time. Either advertising an upcoming event or the result of an event. If it was a beautiful sunny day, the newspaper house would contact my parents—they would make me up—a photoshoot of me in my bikini at the pool and I would be on the front cover of the paper. If it was a cold winter's day, the same thing would apply, just a different outfit.

This was back in a time in South Africa when they didn't think about the consequences of giving out the names and addresses of minors or women to the public.

This resulted in me getting phone calls that started off first with silence, then onto heavy breathing, and finally telling me what I was wearing. It terrified me. We called in the police, and they put plans in place to catch the stalker. Whoever it was must have gotten knowledge of this because the calls stopped.

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That same year my parents wanted me to enter Miss Cabana. The Miss Cabana pageant was a very big deal in the pageantry world for Port Elizabeth. Don't get me wrong, doing these competitions gives you a kind of self-centred perspective with a lot of self-doubt mixed in. Not a good cocktail for a teenager. I definitely didn't see myself as a beauty queen.

I got through to the finals, which entailed one-on-one interviews with adjudicators. I knew the right answers. I

was Liz's daughter who herself had pageants under her belt. A woman who trained many beautiful girls. I remained true to what I believed then of myself, my tom-boy side, maybe the judges liked this, I was different, a lady on the outside; young, crazy and adventurous on the inside.

Oh my gosh, rehearsing for that final was a never-ending story of me embarrassingly revealing my body to mom and dad in my white bikini and white high heels, strutting up and down until the muscles in my legs would burn, and my feet would ache. They prepared me for every question.

The finals started and it was my turn to go on. I answered every question with just the right attitude. Then came the final question, 'Well, who's your favourite band?' I replied 'Well, I suppose I'd have to say that would be Steve Hofmeyer and Dusk.' Of course, it was the band playing at the event and at that, Steve and his whole band came and carried me off the stage.

What a finale.

We all lined up in a semicircle, hearts pounding, holding hands staring out at the thousands of people who filled the valley. Standing on that stage waiting for the winners to be announced is like cattle at an auction. The second princess was called, and it wasn't me. The first princess, again not me. When they called my name as Miss Cabana, it was surreal—I had to hold onto other contestants for support, it felt like my legs were going to give way.



They played that song, *Simply the Best* by Tina Turner, and I felt amazing. I had to, like, wave at the crowd and walk to that song and it was just a beautiful moment. Here I was the queen, beautiful and full of promise.

What I did with the rest of the evening was sad for me.

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I left. Headed to my boyfriend's and got completely drunk, in the pool, and eventually naked in his bed. You know, just like turning something beautiful into trash. And I mean, that was pretty much what I did with my life.

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It was around this time that there was another suicide attempt. I say near this time because on visiting me at the hospital my parents came along with the daily newspaper advertising me as Miss Cabana.

My parents told me my behaviour was unacceptable. Look at who I am, and this is not acceptable. I'm bringing shame on the family and this needs to stop. Standard discussions when they were talking to me.

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By the time I went into Grade 12, Boom had left school to start his trade. I found myself very lonely during break times. And by this stage had openly been called a slut. Flip it cut deep, but sure, I can't blame anyone for saying this, my actions spoke volumes. If it wasn't one boy it was the next and always giving them what I whole-heartedly believed they wanted...Sex! Each time at the expense of my soul!

By now, I had met Cez, who was also different, a bit of a nerdy rebel. We were inseparable. She lived a few houses away from our school, so we would often bunk the last period and go home early. It was a hangout spot for a select group of us.

Not long into our matric year, after a massive fight with her mom, she decided enough was enough and moved in with her boyfriend—something I found really cool—really grown up.

I didn't know this at the time, but Cez was facing an all too familiar upbringing—booze, drugs, physical and sexual abuse. All this led to her moving out of the house, stranded with no support. This, I am sure, is why we clicked right from the start, lost girls, feeding off one another's gifts as empaths for strength. We had so many good times! Some bad times too.

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My parents had bought me my own wetsuit, my own surfboard, the whole kit. Looking back, I don't recall ever wanting something as kids that we didn't get, however, there was never anyone to talk to.

I'd arrived at a stage with school and my parents, where there was absolutely no respect. If I didn't want to go to school, I wouldn't go. My parents would wake me up and I knew the worst that would happen was I would get a hiding. The hidings were pretty standard by that time, so it really didn't matter to me anymore. They would hit me and I'd stay home—mission accomplished.

At 16, my parents phoned the school and told them I was refusing to go to school. And the school said, well, she's older than 16, there's nothing you can do. And I remember with my money that I won from the Red Cross and Miss Cabana I bought my first car.

Cez, relied on me for a lift to school, although often, she would choose out of her own not to come. There were many times, now having my own car, I would listen to the wave report on the radio and if they were good, school for the day would certainly not happen. So, Cez would

come with me to the beach and I'd go surf whilst she'd sit in the car or tan or whatever. Sometimes we'd fetch Boom from the college where he was studying a trade.

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Boom and I had broken up again, and I went to this party where he arrived with his new girlfriend. He had grown his hair and both of them had their hair in like French plaits. I mean, oh, really cute. And I had quite a bit to drink. When I went to leave, I couldn't get my car started. And one of my friends, Shane, and some other guys, helped me push start my car. And I started the car and ended up reversing over Shane and broke his nose. The result of this led to me being shunned by Shane and quite a big biker crowd. I tried apologising endlessly, landing on deaf ears. My behaviour had gotten out of control, now hurting others, something to this day that un-nerves me to the core.

I'm bringing this up now because actually Shane's also in ministry at the moment. He does a lot of outreach work helping people. We've gotten into contact again. We still crack jokes about this. He has me to thank for his rugged good looks, because it's all about the angle of his nose. He laughs and teases back.

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Our matric dance arrived and my partner was going to be Boom. My parents were totally not supportive of it. When I look back at this now, as a parent, I can see why. But at the time it was all happening, I was devastated. My dress arrived at the last minute the day of the dance

and it didn't fit. It was terrible. Mom and dad weren't even there to take photos and send me off. I was angry but mostly heartbroken. This was something I'd looked forward to throughout my high school career. In my eyes, I had done everything they wanted, every photo shoot, fashion show, competition. Where were they or the cameras now for my real life moment?

The after party entailed a big get together for a bonfire at Sardinia Bay beach, Cez and I got hopelessly drunk. I woke up the next morning in Brendan's car, a dear friend, like a brother to me. There was no sign of Boom or my car. Brendan gave me a lift back to Boom's house. By the time I arrived, I had found out how he and his French plaited lady had hit it off; he left me on the beach and took my car to get her and himself home. Turns out, my parents had been right.

I passed grade 12 and I don't know how I did.

With School finished and another break-up with Boom which got physical and very manipulative, it was time for a change. At motorbike races he would deliberately wipe out or get into fights and blame me. It just got to a stage where it was toxic. Everything was toxic—even at home.



## Chapter 8: What Have I Done?

I found attempts at trying and opening up and talking to mom too difficult. It would just lead to massive arguments and often good old hidings from that. I was wild and uncontrollable, to say the least. I ended up moving in with Glendon and Danny's family in the end. Danny was a surfer friend; the first to call me a slut. We were in the same class at school. We worked out our differences and became really close. Glendon was his older brother. It was his mom, aunty Karen that I used to exercise race-horses with. They made me feel so welcome and at home. Protected. Glendon allowed me to share office space, and I opened up a modelling agency called Options in opposition to mom. Being who I was with the background of modelling behind me, I had a rather good response.

However, when the practicalities of space to give classes and all that the business entailed hit me, I realised I was in way above my head. Add to this my toxic relationship with Boom—I ended up moving home, and apologised to mom.

My mom always had a plan. She decided we would combine Options with her modelling school. Options would be the agency division of the modelling school for models who held promise with all the right height and measurements, the cream of the crop, and the other agency would remain the modelling and finishing school.

It was also decided, as a family, it was time for me to move away from Port Elizabeth. Start a new life in Cape Town where Michelle and her daughter were living. Cape Town, South Africa's mother city—very vibrant and full

of promise. I loved being back with Michelle and her amazing daughter. They lived in a cute cottage in a suburb called Muizenberg. It's a coastal suburb surrounded by mountains. I remember looking out the windows, looking at the mountains. The whole place had this warm, cosy feel about it.

Throughout grade 12, I had severe urinary infections that somehow led to me having a full DNC. The DNC had made me feel clean both inside and out. Like a virgin. Like all the past was washed away with the whole new start. Now, in Cape Town, without a motorbike or car, I would walk to the train station, catching the train to wherever I felt would be the best spot to find a job. I loved this. It was like me against the world. Such an adventure. Such a clean new start.

I found a job soon at the Spur in Fish Hoek. I also made a friend Marsia really soon. Life was good. However, word soon got out that I was in town.

Swayze happened to live there too. He and Michelle were separated at this time and he was living with his girlfriend. Michelle and Swayze had remained in contact, so it wasn't long before he found out I was there and came round to the house. I felt a lot of emotions. I loved this man. He had been my hero as a child. He had overstepped those boundaries by making me believe he truly did love me. So when I first saw him, I felt love, but I'd grown up a little.

He invited me to go out that night to show me around town. Remember, I hadn't seen or heard from Swayze since I was 16. All I knew was he'd done his time in

prison and was supposed to be working on his marriage—something which I actually took some comfort in. Anyway, here we were, beers flowing, and he started his manipulation all over again. ‘Ton, I missed you so much. You have no idea how much I love you. I’m so tired of everything’, he tells me in a wounded confidential tone. ‘You’re the only one who really gets me. Why don’t you and I just get married?’ He then added, ‘You know, this would be the ultimate revenge on your father.’

I couldn’t understand this thing he had with my father. It just made no sense to me. I got my thing with my father, but what was his? Eventually alone in the car. I got sucked into this ridiculous love story and one thing led to another—my newfound cleanliness was gone.

I woke up the next day sick to my gut thinking this has gotta stop. This has actually got to stop. It wasn’t but a matter of days when I decided that enough was enough. It was time for my sister to know the truth and for his girlfriend as well because they were being played. In fact, we were all being played, and it was time for the truth to come out.

I’m 19 now, not a kid. Michelle, who had somehow in all of this, ended up as his new girlfriend’s best friend, was desperate for a divorce he plain out refused to give. Now here he was again, declaring his undying love for me. It was sick and had to end.

I told my friend Marcia about everything and we came up with a plan. Swayze told me he was going to take me out to a place called Signal Hill in Cape Town. It’s a popular local lookout point that looks onto the whole of Cape

Town. I quickly mustered up every ounce of courage I could. I told Michelle to get hold of Swayze's girlfriend, that I had something important to tell them and suggested we go to a very well known pub. We ordered a few beers for a little Dutch courage. After a pint or two, I shared the truth, at least part of it. I told them how Swayze had been sleeping with me since I was 15, and that he had again declared his undying love, even suggesting marriage.

I told them about his plan to take me to Signal Hill. I told them I would record on my phone and get him to reveal his love and plan of marriage. This way, Michelle would have what she needed to get her divorce and his girlfriend could choose whatever path she wanted. I don't know why I decided that sharing the first time he had done something sexual was when I was 11 years old, to me being 15, was somehow better after all when I was 11, it had only been that one time. I felt ashamed and sad for sharing this information. Yet, I felt like the hero. The hero that would finally put my sister's misery to an end. That I would give her the information she needed to get her divorce. By then, she had shared some pretty hair raising situations that Swayze had put her through. We all agreed to keep this quiet and to carry on like normal with the plan in place.

Shortly after this, whilst visiting Marcia, Michelle called me in a state, 'Hurry up Ton, Swayze's on his way and he knows.' My heart was pounding in my chest. I quickly covered the distance from Muizenberg station, near Marci's place to Michelle's place. Mulling it over in my mind, over and over again, thinking Swayze

must have sensed something was up with his girlfriend and interrogated her—probably like he did back in his police days.

As we waited, Michelle and I sat shaking in fear. Swayze came in and started in. The truth, he said, was that Tanya loves sex and always has. He tried to put me up to confessing, or more like confirming his rant. 'Tell them how much you enjoyed watching me masturbate. Tell them how it turned you on.' Sure, I pretended his masturbation turned me on in all hopes that it would feed the beast and he wouldn't touch me.

I was so ashamed, petrified, his rage was so palpable that I waited for what could at any moment be the slap of his hand. There was silence. Michelle mustered, 'She's loved you all her life', while trying to comfort me which only left me sitting on the bed dirty, confused, broken and horrified. How in the hell did all of his obsessions reduce to me being in love with him and a nymphomaniac?

I could no longer feel the hero ending all the pain. Life for me continued completely changed. Swayze's relationship with his girlfriend went on as if nothing ever happened. Michelle's remained the same.

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After the whole failed coup, living with Michelle became awkward. This is when I met and moved in with a guy called Jeff—a friend of Swayze's.

Swayze would come around to the house when no one was around and he would ask me to make him coffee. I

would obey casually. He would act coy and slyly remark 'It's ok, I understand and I still love you. You know what you need? You need a good AAPK.' AAPK is an acronym for Attitude Adjusting Puss Klap and as he said this, he'd clap his hands behind my head really loud. I could feel the wind past my face. It was scary and aggressive. It chills me to this day. Somehow, I thought moving in with Jeff would keep me safe.

Jeff loved me, we loved fishing and dancing. He also smoked a lot of weed and gambled quite a lot. At first, I found it exciting having the freedom to smoke weed and living with a man I wanted. I loved living in my own flat, cleaning, doing the washing, making sure I looked and smelled good when he returned home. But things were pretty screwed up. We would often go on fishing trips with Swayze and his girlfriend. She was a real lady, always beautifully made up. One night we even went out to a pub in Cape Town with Swayze, for some or other reason he got annoyed at me demanding I get out of the car. The two of them drove off leaving me alone on the streets. I was petrified. After a short while they returned, terribly afraid I got back into the car as they laughed together.

I was pretty gobsmacked at how well Jeff and Swayze got on. He was well aware of the entire situation between me and Swayze. I remember how this would confuse me. I remember often looking at Swayze's girlfriend, wondering why or how she remained in the relationship. For that matter, how did I? Michelle had disappeared, along with her daughter. I felt like my life was under threat. Jeff was

very abusive. I was naïve and didn't put two-and-two together when it came to him being Swayze's friend and birds of a feather.

His attraction was that he was an excellent musician. One time he was playing the guitar and no one was really listening to him so he stood up and he acted out the words to a song which went like, 'I'll take this musical instrument and I'll smash it.' He said he meant to hit the wall behind my head, but all I saw was him stand up and raise the guitar and bring it down on my head and the splintering of the wood.

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One day Jeff told me that Swayze was coming to fetch me because he just wanted to talk.

I begged Jeff to somehow not let it happen. Jeff told me to go along, that maybe it would be for the best. Swayze picks me up and we end up just driving around as he explains to me his love for his wife and child, and then how I had to help somehow to get them back. I remember coming home and sobbing my heart out. They were gone. I had no idea where to go. And worst of all, it was my fault, something that Jeff reminded me of on more than one occasion.

Swayze's girlfriend did not know how to swim, and did not like the water, but she tagged along on fishing trips to hang out. We had Jeff's rubber duck with us and Swayze kept on insisting his girlfriend come along. The whole situation scared me, but somehow I found the courage to say, stop it, man, I will stay with her. You boys go and have some fun. They returned a few beers under

the belt. We made our way up through the escarpment, which consisted of a small, narrow gravel road through the bush. Swayze, probably well aware of the consequences of his action toward his girlfriend, starts belting out the song 'On the Road Again.' The louder he sings, the more he swerves the car toward the edge of the cliff. Girlfriend and I were in the back, holding on for dear life, preparing for certain death. Jeff somehow got him under control and we made it home in one piece.

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My 20th birthday rolls by like just another day. I'm sad and miss my mom and dad and the ritual of breakfast in bed. I desperately want to get a job, but Jeff was having none of it. He wants me home cooking, cleaning and far away from any other men's eyes. My days were filled with hours cleaning and smoking weed and, on the odd occasion, some Mandrax with our flatmate. I would phone home often, homesick and heartsick.

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One day, as I was sitting alone at home, there was a knock on the door. It was mom, dad, and Michelle. At first I was so excited to see them all, but something felt off. The first thing they did was walk into the house without saying a word and they locked the balcony door and took the key away. All I could get out was, 'what's going on?' as my eyes moved from one to another in absolute fear of what bomb they were about to drop.

They told me that Swayze had killed himself. That he had hung himself in his girlfriend's garage.

And there it is, folks, it was all my fault—if I just kept quiet, this would not have happened.

This is not what they said to me at all. It's just what I completely believed to the core. Had my parents not locked that balcony door, I know I would have run and jumped falling to my own death. I dropped to my knees screaming, crying, pounding my fists into the floor. It was hours before I calmed down enough to ask to see him at the morgue, but was told it was best I didn't.

I don't recall attending his memorial service. In my eyes, I was the means to the end of it all.



## Chapter 9: Meet Tessa

I was 20 and home for a holiday. I remember often doing the 10-hour bus trip to come spend some time at home plus, Collette was back home. She was going through a divorce. Her lupus has gotten bad, really bad. She's unable to keep a job and has lost custody of her children. Shame. When she was pregnant with her second child, she was told it would be better for her body to abort. She would have none of it she loved and lived for her children. She confided in me one day about her new job. A high paying serving position was what she had told my parents. Anyhow, she calls me aside one day, and tells me she's escorting at a place in town called "Playgirls". I was gobsmacked.

It's really not so bad, she explained. Most of the clients just really want the company and the pay was great. She begged me to come with her one night. Remember, in my eyes, I have caused Collette to lose first John, then Wayne. I knew how heartbroken she was over losing her kids and how sick she was, and how desperate to buy her kids anything and everything she could. Collette kept pleading desperately. I wanted to make amends in any way I could. I agreed. After all, with the life I've led, how bad could it be?

We arrived dressed accordingly, and I'm met with the warmest welcome. Collette has shared that her name is Diana, as in Lady Diana. Collette and I both loved Lady Diana. When asked my name, I simply burst out, Tessa. So, it was Tessa.

I remember feeling beyond nervous. I had heard of these kinds of places. Being in one made me very aware that I was on dangerous ground. They put the music on loud as all the other escorts gathered around. Come on Tessa, it's initiation time. Strip and show us what you got. I felt like a total dork. No, alcohol under the belt and definitely no rhythm at all. We all sat around on the couches. We weren't allowed any alcohol unless it was a client buying it for us. The girls were all amazing, some with heartbreaking stories.

I was totally out of my depth. We were all sitting, chatting, and in comes an elderly guy and they called Tessa. I panicked. Collette came to me trying her best to reassure me, 'It's going to be ok', so I took him upstairs to where the rooms were and told him to take off his clothes and get on the bed. It was a hard bed, like a massage bed. I'm shocked when I look at his private parts. There was barely anything there. I'm not too sure what to do. So I take what's there and move my hands. And just like that, it's over. I cleaned him up and went back downstairs.

It sounds so mechanical but make no mistake; it left behind another scar. Some may feel it was self-inflicted. Self-destructive behaviour is part of a life of abuse and self hatred and this piece of my life was part of the pattern.

Collette and the other girls received me back with love and open arms. I'm barely settled and in comes a group of guys. Again, they call my name. This guy took me to the bar and bought me a drink. He kept asking me, "What are you doing here? You don't belong here." He said this repeatedly. He stayed with me for the night,

talking only and holding my hand. Collette had been right; this was a piece of cake. The next day we went to the shops to spend our money. The shopping was awesome. Being able to just walk into a shop and buy myself a stunning dress and some jewelry was great, but the best part of it all was having fun with Collette. Two nights later, Collette wanted me to go again.

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Deep down inside, I knew that first night had been a fluke. I had gotten away with murder. I told Collette I didn't think it was a good idea, but her kids were coming that weekend and she would hear none of it. Off we went. The previous time I was there, the girls all warned me of a guy called Pete. How he always took out the new girl. That he had epilepsy and should he have a seizure, I mustn't worry. Sure enough, when we arrived, I was told Pete was on his way and it was an all-night appointment.

I was fuming, but hoped for the best. He lived in a place called Uitenhage, a small town just outside of Port Elizabeth. He first took me to a braai at a friend's, then back on to his house. Fortunately, alcohol was a steady flow. We got back to his house. I kept pouring drinks, trying anything to prevent the inevitable. Eventually, I did what needed to be done. He fell asleep, and I snuck off to the lounge, where I continued to nurse a bottle of brandy with no mix. I snuck a call to a friend called Daryl, an old biking friend from days with Boom, for help. A big mistake. The only help I got was judgment, and it remains so today.

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I returned to Jeff and did everything in my power to make things work. I remember phoning my mom in desperation, begging her for the truth. Begging her for the truth of what may have happened when I was a child. Please tell me what's wrong with me. Why am I like I am? I found no answers.

Deep down I knew something had happened to me as a kid, something more horrific than anything you've read thus far. There was just no way any normal human being could be the way I was without it. The all-encompassing depression continued to plague me.

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Things with Jeff and I just got more toxic.

We both had tempers, mine was more the smashing kind. He enjoyed watching me fly off. We would be in the middle of a fight and he would hand me a coffee cup, and say to me, 'Come on, smash it. I know you want to go for it. Smash it. I know you want to.' Eventually I would smash it.

In the middle of this hellish playground of ours, I picked up a shard of glass and slashed deeply into my wrists. Jeff grabbed a towel or whatever he could that was nearby and tried to stop the flow. Blood was gushing everywhere. I don't remember much. I lost consciousness. I came back home and tried to carry on.

He eventually agreed to me getting a job, but it was a job at a place that he worked at. A place where he could

keep a close eye on me. I was never allowed to go out unless he was with me.

It was really bad. On one occasion when he had joined me on a holiday in PE, Collette and I were dressed up ready to all go out, when he chillingly said to Collette, 'Look how beautiful she is, sometimes I think I should just cut her face, so no one else will look at her.' It led to terrible arguments. Finally, he suddenly became the adult in the room and approached my parents while they were in Cape Town for one of Ricky's golf tournaments. He told them how I was out of control and that he couldn't have me in his life anymore.

My parents came to the flat, packed my stuff, put me in the car and shipped me off back home. I wasn't home long when Jeff phoned and told me how sorry he was, but the damage was done.

He actually did me a favour.

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I slowly started putting the pieces back together and got a job all on my own. I worked for an engineering company. I remember being really proud of myself, earning a proper salary and putting money away. Mom and dad would certainly help me work on a budget.

The new company was located in a warehouse. I had to walk through a gauntlet of men hurling whistles and the sexy chirps and it made me feel, yeah, it made me feel like Tessa. My first job there was as the secretary of the firm then I was promoted to P.A.

I had started seeing a psychologist again, one I had known well and seen for many years. His name was Dennis.

One day in one of my appointments, Dennis said to me that in order for me to heal, I needed to forgive Wayne. I remember being flabbergasted, fuming. I thought this man had gone insane. What was he talking about? Why did I have to forgive? What was he thinking? He also told me I had a right to stand up for myself and that I didn't have to take the way I was treated at the office. Come to think of it, this is the only psychologist that ever really impacted my life in a positive way. I will never forget the one session with him when I told him this was all pointless as a leopard never changes its spots. His reply to me was, 'You're not a leopard!'

After working up the courage, I phoned the owner of the company. He then set up a meeting with the guy that I worked for and his work colleagues. They held the meeting in the boardroom. My palms were sweating, my heart was pounding, I was surrounded by men. Calmly, I told them I would not be treated with disrespect. I remember that day when I walked out of that meeting; I felt something I had never felt before. It was a feeling of elation, of victory. At least in some small way.

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With me back home Collette and I had the chance to get really close. We spoke a lot about growing up and about the tongue tickler family member. It turned out he had done more than this to her.

Sometimes we would go for a drive and smoke a joint getting so stoned that we would get completely lost, driving around as if in a foreign country, literally just around the corner from home. Merlina would know about these escapades and try to keep us in Collette's room so that my folks wouldn't realize how out of it we were. She was my sister and best friend.

One day whilst she was in hospital, the phone rang. Mom and dad were out so I took the call. The woman on the other end of the line asked how Collette was and what time it would be safe to go and visit her at the hospital without my parents' knowledge. I immediately assumed it was one of the girls from "Playgirls" and was quick to get in on assisting them with visitation. The conversation shifted—my heart pounds even now, as I recall this. 'What your parents did to Collette and Wayne was wrong, he was young and made a mistake.' My heart racing as fast as my mind, my hand started to shake—I could barely hold the receiver. 'Who am I speaking to?' Oh my word, it turns out it's Wayne's mother. Collette was still seeing him on the odd occasion and remained close to his mom. I asked her if she realised who she was speaking to. She did.

The betrayal cut deep.

I could still picture the two of them in the courtroom exchanging glances and laughing.



## **Chapter 10: The Car Accident: Death in So Many Ways**

In October 1997, 23 years old. I was involved in a near-fatal car accident. The local news reported in November after my release from hospital: 'The once Red Cross debutante queen, who raised thirty-four thousand rand for charity in Port Elizabeth, was rushed to Grahamstown Settler's Hospital, where she was treated before spending weeks at Port Elizabeth Livingston Hospital. Tanya, who suffered a fractured pelvis, spine and skull, facial injuries, two burst eardrums, and leaked brain fluid from her ears after the accident, was discharged from hospital this week. She's now recuperating at her parents' Sunday's River home.' They further reported 'The ambitious young woman who hopes to take over her mother's flourishing modelling school one day was working on the school's annual model of the year show when the accident happened. But she was able to leave her hospital bed to watch the show with a doctor.'



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So what had actually happened? Well, indeed, I was working on that year's model of the year function. It was going to be held at the Edward Hotel in Port Elizabeth and it was going to be one of the first shows ever using quadraphonic sound. And I'd even choreographed certain scenes to a live violinist. The adjudicator's panel included Amy Kleinhans, a former Miss South Africa and Karl Heunis a top model boss from G3 Models in Johannesburg. This was certainly not something I was going to miss.

And after all, I had definitely learned long, long ago that regardless of circumstances, the show must go on. However, there was more behind this accident and this is what it was.

In September, just before the accident. I'd gone through a nasty breakup with Drake, the name given for its meaning, the Dark traveller.

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Drake and I had been in a wild relationship for about two years. He had a band and I was very involved in doing styling and makeup for photo shoots and training models. I loved the photo shoots. Working with top photographers in Port Elizabeth like Mark West and Gert Coetzee, there were days that I could have up to eight models to style. I'd often leave the studio late, quickly change, meet Drake at the club, watch the band, drink whiskey and tequila until the last set, which could sometimes be as late as three or four a.m. Sometimes, I would

head straight to a location shoot to catch the early morning sun. Sometimes I would drink so much that I would blackout waking up the following day, black and blue with burst eardrums.

What drew me to Drake was that he was different. He had long dark hair, green eyes, pale almost transparent skin. He was a musician with a parrot who wore tights, a t-shirt and a leather jacket covered in parrot droppings and he drove a truck for transport. I had first been introduced to him by a school friend, Niel, who worked as a bouncer at the club where his band gigged. When we first met, his parrot walked up and sat with me. Drake swore this never happened, that his parrot hated women.

So I don't know if it was this or what it was, but something about him intrigued me. I couldn't get him out of my mind. He called me a few days later, and we got together. It was drunken and wild. He ended up delivering about 40 red roses in a vase for me one day whilst I was styling and doing makeup for a model shoot. The first time he told me he loved me, I stopped the car, told him to get out, he did. I drove off and left him there. I was not looking for a relationship.

When I got home from this, mom saw I was unnerved and asked what happened. I explained. That's when she pointed out that she believed I did love him, and should stop my nonsense. I did. We soon moved in together. Although something strong bound us together that I thought was love, it certainly was not. Other than my lack of respect toward men as a byproduct of the life I led up until this point, I had my reasons for resenting him.

Drake introduced me to poppers, Ecstasy and acid (LSD). The poppers got boring quickly, the Ecstasy, well, from the second tablet I was hooked. It gripped me badly. I was quickly taking up to three tablets a day. I even ended up getting cocaine on one occasion because my dealer never had the "E". I was home reading a novel at the time of taking the cocaine and was really shocked at how intensely I wanted more of it so quickly. It scared me. Fortunately, the whole thing scared me badly enough and somehow by the grace of God, I managed to stop this drug use on my own without the need of rehab.

But make no mistake, it wasn't easy. Coming down off ecstasy was beyond depressing, imagining a life without it was almost unbearable. Fortunately, I managed.

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I remember on one of these occasions when we were living on Acacia road in a suburb called Lorraine in Port Elizabeth which was literally within walking distance of where my parents lived.

I walked to their house sobbing all the way after a beating from Drake, only to be turned away by my father telling me that I was an adult, that I had chosen this relationship, and that I had to make it work.

Devastated, I walked back to where Drake was and we just carried on. Another severe beating from him happened after we had moved to Hydrangea Valley. It ended up with me lying on my back in the small passage of my little cottage, the one in the bush, the same one that I had first got drunk at when I was 14, along with Jax, with his

fingers tightly clasped around my neck. This time as I gasped for every little breath I was sure the next would be my last. Eventually, he stopped.

I ended the relationship. I moved home to live back with my parents and Colette. I was heartbroken and went on a two-week binge of smoking loads of weed and plenty of alcohol to numb the pain.

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One night, out with one of my models, I was sitting in a parking lot outside of a club and I was parked askew in the parking lot. I was too drunk to drive. I was sitting in the passenger seat eating food, trying to sober up and maybe sleep a little. A police officer knocked on the window and told us that I needed to move the car as we weren't properly parked. I explained, in a drunk and rather rude attitude due to my lack of respect for any authority, that my friend didn't have a driver's license and I was drunk and in no state to drive. After having a look at my I.D. and driver's license, she insisted that I get in the car and drive. I got out of the passenger side, walked to the driver's side, stumbling all the way, got in the driver's side, started the car, reversed it and found another parking bay, only to have the sirens go off and be arrested for drunk and driving. It turned out that this policewoman had actually been someone who had been banned from the club that Drake and his band played at because she and her crowd used to hit on me all the time.

This was a case that the state prosecutor told me to fight because he said I had a strong case of entrapment. This is something I refused to do because of my very real fear of courtrooms. This gave me a big enough wake up

call to start getting my act together. I went back on Prozac for depression and focused more on the modelling.

The newspaper report was wrong. I did not want to take over from my mother. I had heard from my mom that she was going to sell the modelling school to her competition, something I knew she didn't want to do, and I would have none of it. And so I rose to the occasion and offered to buy it from her for the exact same price she was going to sell it. Many, unfortunately still, believe that I landed with the business in my lap. Very untrue. I paid 30,000 rand to own the modelling school. Back in that day it was rather quite a price.

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This was also a time when I had the chance to reconnect with my sister Collette which brought me so much joy. I'd often do her makeup for the many dates she went on. Oh my awesome Collette. She, I definitely believe, was in love with the very idea of being in love—a hopeless romantic. I loved Collette. We had awesome times together.

Shame, the doctors had taught me how to give her injections at home. She had through her illness and journey, developed quite an addiction to Pethadine, something she introduced me to as well. I cringe as I remember trying to find a spot to inject her that didn't contain an abscess that were solid masses almost as hard as a rock, impossible to penetrate with a needle.

I remember when Collette lost her teeth because of her illness and treatments and she got dentures. We were sitting in the bath one day having a bath and she said to me, 'Ton, won't you please kiss me?' And I was like, sure, of course I will. And I turned around and I gave her a kiss. And she remained silent for a while and again said to me, 'No, man, I mean, will you really kiss me so I can know if it's going to be ok when I kiss another man.' We were just really close. She was hilarious.

This was a time I was really into skydiving. I loved the people in the group. We had some great times hanging out together. On one of my jumps, I took Collette with me—it was hilarious. Collette, you see, her lupus had gotten really bad. She had suffered a stroke. Although she was able to walk she had no feeling in her legs. A secret we decided to keep from the skydiving club. Anyhow, Collette in her first jump ends up flaring too late, resulting in her literally bouncing when she hits the ground. I ran to her in a panic, only to have her stand up with the brightest smile on her face wanting to go again.

Collette and I were extremely close, in fact one of our favourite things to do was whenever her or I went through a break-up, we would put the soppiest romantic music on and cry our eyes out, holding each other for hours. At the time I ended up starting a relationship with my jumpmaster, Jonathan, and things were going well, except for one minor fact; Collette and I had done a little home pregnancy test, which had come up positive. Collette was ec-static. I panicked because although Drake was more than likely the father, on my two-week

binge, I kinda really let go just for the hell of it, with a friend I'd known most of my life.

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One Friday afternoon I'd just bought myself my dream little car, a second-hand little Corsa lite. Mom and dad had gone to judge a modelling function in Somerset East, so I would be teaching classes that night and then early again on the Saturday morning. Collette got a bee in her bonnet. Come on Ton, let's go out tonight. I say no, I'm really not in the mood. I'm over drilling, and besides, I have to be up early to teach classes tomorrow morning. After which I intended to go and do my last static line jump to qualify for my first freefall skydive, something that I longed for. Collette persisted with the all-time perfect thing for me to twist my arm; guilt she said come on, Ton, you always get whatever you want. I hardly get out because I'm sick. And when was the last time we did something together?

I had worked damn hard for what I had, and was really trying to pull my life together. I eventually caved and said, cool, as long as it's an early night. I tried getting hold of my insurance broker but couldn't reach her, so I thought I would sort it out on Monday. Collette came to two modelling classes, and we went out and met up with our brother Ricky and his mate. The same friend I had an 'oopsy' with who might be the baby's father. It started out fun. I have two beers whilst Collette is nursing double rounds. I tried to convince her to leave. It's getting a bit late. Everyone is having a great time and all I'm thinking about is my new car and teaching classes the next morning.

Feeling like a bit of a brat, I agreed to have one more drink. Collette wants us to go with Ricky and his mate, but I can't because I don't have clothing, etc. for classes the next day. We eventually leave for the 45-kilometre trip back to Sunday's River, where my parents have now bought a new home to retire. We are three quarters of the way home and Collette pipes up out of the blue, Ton, tell me about Wayne and you. My heart stopped, my palms started to sweat. My breath caught in my chest, calmly, I replied, 'Collette, please leave this alone now, it's not the right time.' Way too many doubles under her belt, she persists, asking me how he touched me, what his breathing was like, what he did, when he did it, on and on it went. I was fuming, heartbroken, disgusted in torment. By the time we pulled up at home, I helped her inside to bed, going into my room, stripping and climbing deep under my blankets, desperate to somehow block out my own guilt, shame, memories, anger and confusion. It wasn't long before the door to my bedroom opened. Now, in tears, she asked me again, please just tell me how he breathed.

I lost it. I grabbed her by her throat and lifted her up against the wall. Quickly shocked at my own strength and what was happening. I ran and grabbed the phone. I called my parents. It was after midnight. I never gave them a chance to speak. I said, 'I'm sorry. I won't be able to take classes tomorrow morning. I'm leaving now for Grahamstown. If I stay here, I will end up killing Collette. She's attacking me about Wayne and I'm over it!' With that, I put the phone down and then went into auto mode, got dressed in my favourite boots and dress, packed a weekend bag and walked into the kitchen. I took a So-

da Stream bottle and filled it with Sambuca and after taking a few gulps left desperately to just get to the club where my jumpmaster was who would hold me in his arms and make it all ok. The last thing I remember is filling my car with petrol.

Something changed, though. I know well with alcohol, it really allows Satan the gap. All I recall was waking up for a moment in Grahamstown Hospital, seeing both Drake and Jonathan. Laughing at them both being there. Then I recall being in an ambulance, being transported back to Port Elizabeth. I was unconscious for several days. Collette never came to visit. I was really sad about this and eventually asked my mom to please tell her to come that it wasn't her fault. That it had been my choice to leave and I didn't blame her. My mom's reply chilled me to the bone.

You see, I left a message on the home answering machine saying goodbye and that I hoped now she will finally be happy. Through this chaos and pain, I held onto the awesome fact that the doctor said the baby I was carrying was ok, and that I was indeed six weeks pregnant.

I ended up buckling under all the beautiful promises of Drake. He was, according to this new information from Doctors, more than likely my baby's father, after all. We also had two years behind us together already. It seemed like the right thing to do. Things between us were going well. Strained in the beginning, because I'm very honest and I did share with him the slight likelihood of the baby being my friends'. Truth in the open. He loved me anyway.

I, however, was in no way ready to move back in together, so he rented a small outside room in the village.

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I remained addicted to pain medication. Denise, a friend I met while in hospital, had doctor contacts, and organized a script of Valoron for me.

It was the twenty-ninth of January 1998, 24 years old. I ended up taking quite a few of the pain killers. On the 30th of January, mom and I left for our annual top model hotel getaway at Mpekweni Sun. I'm around five-and-a-half months pregnant. It's the 31st of January, we're all at the pool, all the models want to feel the baby move. There's really not much moving and I get concerned. Drake arrives to surprise me with a birthday cake. Friends, sun and celebrations are happening. Drake leaves. By the following morning early, mom and I are in our room. I'm in tears. I hadn't felt baby move.

Drake does the drive out to Mpekweni Sun again to fetch me. We go to our GP. He doesn't say much, but he calls on my OBGYN, who agrees to meet us at his rooms, even though it is a Sunday. After a sonar, he confirms there is no heartbeat. I went numb. I went home, packed a bag, and went to hospital, opting rather to be induced than wait for my body to naturally reject the baby. My OBGYN recommends natural birth. I'm induced. 24 hours of labor followed. I was alone in my room when it felt like my waters had burst a second time. I reached down to feel what had happened only to feel his precious head. I screamed. Drake came running off his phone at last. My precious baby was

born on the 2nd of February 1998. I remember at first just holding him in my hands. So tiny, so precious. At first, not even noticing the sex when I saw it was a boy.

It's crazy, but the first thought I had was flip, dad would have been so proud. They give me Valium to try and help me get some rest. I ended up tucking Drake into bed who slept the night through. For the remainder of the night and the time I was there, I walked through the wards, looked at the other babies in the nursery, looked at the other ladies in labor, and listened to the cries of newborn babies. I wasn't even able to take my baby home. He was underweight. He was under the weight that allowed for me to take him and bury him. Did I do this? I can't allow my mind to go there. Nope, all it was, was just another crappy thing. A memory.

The show must go on.

## Chapter 11: Please Kill Me

I'm parked on the side of the highway leading out of Port Elizabeth to the Sundays River early November 2000. 26years old. I'm beaten almost beyond recognition—drinking wine from a 5 litre Box. I'm broken and ex-hausted.

A policeman pulled up and approached me. I opened my car window sobbing, and noting the state that I was in, asked me if I was ok? How many times had I heard this before? Who really cared? Tears rolling down my cheeks, barely able to breathe through the sobs, I pleaded, 'Please, I have just short of R3000 in my glove compartment, which came from the evening's Model of the Year bar takings. I will give it to you. You have a gun: all you have to do is kill me and chuck my body or cover it up any way you want to, please!' He drove me to Bulewa's home who was my chief of staff—a Xhosa girl, whose family I loved. I can't imagine what she thought.

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At the time I lived in a little rental cottage in Port Elizabeth with Drake and our planned for little girl, the light and love of my life. I still suffered from depression, sometimes when I wasn't able to hide it enough Bulewa would take classes for me.

My early pregnancy triple tests had shown a possibility of down syndrome, not once, but twice. I ended up having to go for an amniocentesis and waited three excruciating weeks for the results.

After losing my little boy, there was no way I was going to lose her. Drake felt differently and was adamant we should abort if the test came back positive. A fight he would have lost. Fortunately, God had my back, and the tests came back normal.

Her birth was not easy, with moments of fear that neither of us would make it through. They had to induce close to her due date, and after 13hrs of labour spent with a cousin because Drake was supposedly working, I had only dilated 3 cm, and her heart was in distress. Doctors decided against an epidural because of the previous injuries to my spine and pelvis from the car accident. They rushed me through for a general anaesthetic cesarean section.

When I woke, my parents were there, but Drake had disappeared again straight after her birth. Fortunately, I didn't have to wait for him too long to bring her to me. Oh man, that moment when they placed her in my arms—sheer bliss.

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Anyhow, my mom fetched me the following morning from Bulelwas house. I wonder what my poor mother had thought?

My mom told me she felt Drake would end up killing me, my child, and then perhaps himself.

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I had somehow gruellingly survived the past few days, especially the day leading up to the Model of the Year

function. It was insane. That year we held it at the Commercial High School. Being in a school hall entailed so much more than a hotel or function venue. I had gone the extra mile with the decor; managing to get sponsorship of goldfish in bowls for the tables, bridal wear for the agency models, and I had adjudicators flying up from Cape Town to look for fresh faces for their agencies, which entailed organising sponsored flights and accommodations. The debutante days had paid off.

Unfortunately, between the various fundraisers I held throughout the year, sponsors and ticket sales, I was still short of money for printing the actual program for the show. Drake assured me this would not be a problem and that he would do this for me. He was and is a complete IT computer guru. The night before the show, this still hadn't been done.

Things between us had gotten disgustingly toxic.

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He and his business partner started a business teaching school kids computer programming and IT. During this start-up period, he convinced me to refinance a car he already owned, promising to pay the instalments, this never happened. By this stage, we were engaged and had our beautiful planned for daughter. We had also just built a cosy, double story two bedroom cottage on my parents' property overlooking the Sundays River. The building happened through money that I inherited from a great uncle, some serious hard work, and some manipulation by my father. The rest of the money my dad had invested with a lady, Maureen Clifford, who ended up defrauding numerous people.

The cottage was 45 km outside of Port Elizabeth, which made it impractical and kept me isolated which is what led to us renting the little cottage in PE. Attempts at spending family time with Drake and our daughter were feeble as Drake was always busy. My daughter and I would go on outings alone driving a wedge deeper and deeper between Drake and I. Although my now sister-in-law had openly stated I should open my eyes to the fact he was having affairs, I would have none of it.

Realising that if I did nothing about a program for my function, I wouldn't have one. Being the absolute perfectionist I was, I desperately set out to make one. The sun had come up by the time I lifted my painridden body from the classroom desk where I had worked through the night. By this stage, I had been presenting all signs of chronic pain from rheumatoid arthritis—yet still had no official diagnosis. Slowly, when I turned the stairway for the last flight of stairs, I misjudged the step and fell down the entire flight. No one was there to assist me.

Drake had gone home after spending endless hours setting up the hall with a young student of his. I befriended her because I saw right through her story, which had made headlines in the local paper—how a young student was drugged at a club. I took her under my wing. I warned her desperately of how drugs and alcohol were no good. Panic stricken and knowing full well what lay ahead for the day and days to come, I slowly peeled myself off the ground, made my way to the car and drove straight to my doctor's rooms. He knew me well and understood my needs. After receiving multiple injections, a script of pain

meds to see me through, and strict instructions to get some sleep, I headed home. Drake was kind enough to offer to fetch my adjudicator from the airport for me and drop her back off at her organised accommodation. The rest of the day was a blur. I distinctly remember standing on a high block of the built-up stage behind the curtain, ready to come out under the spotlight—to start the whole event—when somehow I stepped right off the back. I hit the ground hard in front of the models.

The pain was breathtaking. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

With literally minutes to make my cue on stage, I picked myself up, got back on the block and straightened myself up. When I stepped out into the darkness of that stage with the bright spotlight on me, my nerves hit home hard and it embarrassingly shown, with the script in hand, I managed to push through. And within five minutes, that felt like an hour—the show was on. All pain, all fear, was forgotten. I fell into the rhythm and gave the audience the extravaganza that I pictured in my mind when I put the event together.

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As I write this now, I realize how poignant this analogy is. At the end of every successful show high, there is the gruelling detestable job of cleaning up and packing away—just like with every high. Anyone who thinks they can have continual highs from substances without needing to clean up, deal with and pack away—is indeed severely mistaken.

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Anyhow, whilst I worked with my committee members adding up bar takings and tying up loose ends, Drake left to take his young 15-year-old student home. She had been by Drake's side tirelessly helping get things done. My committee members eventually left exhausted. Alone, waiting for Drake to return, I decided to have some wine. I sat for hours, exhausted. By the time Drake arrived, I was fuming. We made the short drive home, and when I got out of the car, he said something that struck a chord—I threw my drink in his face. Well, all hell broke loose—the blows were hard; I did strike back the best I could.

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Anyhow, on that desperate morning, I returned home with my parents, broken, bleeding and ashamed. The money from the bar takings that had been in the glove compartment—was gone. The police officer must have felt he had somehow earned it.

Being with my parents offered some comfort and solitude, but it was extremely short-lived.

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A few months earlier, our family had heard from Collette's doctors in Cape Town that she was not doing well. Her lupus had gone rampant. I refused to accept it and reached out to specialists worldwide because I believed wholeheartedly that somewhere, somehow, someone must have a solution—none was found. I continued to

keep hope; after all, my dear Collette had pushed through many fatal longstanding hospital visits before. My folks left me and my daughter and went to Cape Town to spend some time with Collette.

I anxiously waited for the bruises to fade. I desperately needed to return the stock from various sponsors and I could not let them see me like this. As is Drake had not returned the goldfish the day after the show, resulting in many dying. I felt awful but my hands were tied. Believing life could not get worse, I got the call. You need to come; your sister isn't going to make it. Ricky, away on a golf tour in Zambia, got the same call. He excused himself and came to fetch me. Together Ricky and I hit the road for the nine-hour trip to Cape Town to join mom, dad and Michelle.



## Chapter 12: One Last Time

Nothing could have prepared Michelle, Ricky and me for the sight that beheld us on arrival at Grootte Schuur hospital in Cape Town that evening. Collette, bleeding internally, was barely breathing.

Oh, my heart—just writing this has tears pouring down my cheeks as I remember all my emotions of that time: oscillating from 'she can't go, I have to fix what happened with Wayne', to 'she can't go, she's my best friend', to 'no, she must go, she's fought so hard, she needs to know it's ok to let go.' Desperately, amidst all the Morphine, I held her hand and tried to explain, 'Collette, I'm so sorry. I'm sorry about Wayne. I get it and can only imagine what you went through. I'm so sorry. It's ok to go now, rest now, it's going to be ok, I love you so, so much.' By this age, 26, I started to grasp what she had gone through at the time of Wayne. I quietly swore to one day try and locate her daughter to let her know just how awesome her mamma had been.

I never wanted to leave her side, but at my parents' insistence, after a long drive and knowing what I too was going through personally, they insisted I go with them to Michelle's place. That night, just before midnight on 30 November 2000, we got the call—Collette was gone.

At first, I was angry. Angry at my parents because I hadn't wanted to leave. Then I was desperate. Desperate for one last time to spend time alone with her, to do her makeup for her funeral. My parents agreed and arranged it with the funeral parlour.

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On the way there, my father, very anti-piercings, sweetly stopped off for me to get my left ear pierced on the inner cartilage. I was adamant to mark and remember this moment for the rest of my life. To this day, my sister Michelle and I have the same piercing.

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At first, when they showed us where she was, and I looked at her, my breath caught in my chest. Dad left me alone with her to do my magic and have my moment. Oh, Colette! I quickly pulled myself together—on the switch went; I immediately stopped seeing her as my sister and looked at her as just another face to make-up and style. I had a job to do. It was an open casket viewing, and she looked awful—I was going to make her look like the Colette we all remembered.

The coldness took me aback. I wasn't expecting to feel her cool skin with the realization of the warmth and soul gone from the sister who once laughed, lived, and loved. I pushed past it and worked meticulously with her favourite shades. Finally, the lips—her body had decomposed rapidly because of the complications around her death. As I put the lipstick on, bits of her lips came off with it. Amazingly, it frustrated me more than it horrified me because I desperately wanted to achieve perfection for her one last time. I eventually achieved what I wanted with lip gloss and concealer. Then I moved on to style her hair. Finally happy, I told her she looked stunning and kissed her forehead. I sprayed her with *Beautiful*, by Estee

Lauder. It was a favourite scent of hers, mine, and Michelle's—a way to bind us all in perpetuity.

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I held myself together. After so many years of various traumas, learning that the show must go on, I had somehow developed a skill to numb myself, kind of detach. I lost composure only slightly at her actual funeral when I viewed her. The perfection I thought I had achieved was no longer there. Yes, she still looked peaceful and lovely, but not vibrant. It was only when they removed her coffin from the funeral parlour to go to the crematorium that the reality hit hard.

Collette was gone! I broke down—there was no more time left to say the things I wished I'd said—no more time for building more memories; she was gone.

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As fate would have it, Ricky had an important tournament in Cape Town during the funeral. Going into the last day, he had a threeshot lead on Ernie Els. The game ended in a playoff—Ricky came in second to Ernie.

It's so clear that those few weeks leading up to Collette's death were a complete replica of my childhood. My folks, fetching me drunk and beaten after being delivered by the police to my chief of staff's residence. Me, desperate to fix things with Collette regardless of the expense. Then, Ricky's levelheaded, powerful victories and glory. Something had to give.



## Chapter 13: Caught in Action

Looking back now, I realize how crazy my thoughts of working things with Drake out were.

I spent some time after Collette's funeral with Michelle in Cape Town. She holds a special place in my heart as both a mother and sister. After I was born, I screamed non-stop for the longest time. My mom had a mental breakdown shortly after my birth—this could have been postpartum depression, which they didn't know too much about back then. She ended up in the hospital, and Michelle looked after me.

I carried the very real shame and guilt of Swayze; from his abuse to his accusations to his suicide. I always wondered what Michelle thought of me, in fact sometimes I still do, but then I let it go. After a few days, I flew back to Port Elizabeth with my daughter, hoping desperately for some love and understanding from Drake after losing Collette. He was supposed to fetch us from the airport. Upon our arrival, there was no one to greet us—he was nowhere to be seen. When he eventually arrived, he was cold and offered no condolences of any kind. The time for separation was clear to both of us.

Mom met me at our little cottage, where Drake simply dropped me off as he had work to do. Something didn't seem right. The place was too clean. 'A woman's been here, mom', I said as I frantically went to the laundry basket looking for evidence.

There it was, a pair of lady's panties. My heart pounded in my chest as I tore through our home, pulling back the bedding, looking for the tell tale signs. Nothing. Not finished with my complete inspection, I looked under the bed, and there they were; empty condom wrappers. Agh, my heart just shattered along with my feeling of comfort in my home, my space where I lived with my daughter. The domestic worker who worked in the house across the way came to see how I was doing. She had heard of Collette's death. I asked her if anyone had been here and she replied, 'yes, your friend, the young girl with the motorbike. She even slept over.'

This is the young 15-year-old-girl who tirelessly worked so hard, helping me set up and take down from the Model of the Year Function. I'm shattered. I took her under my wing and allowed her to sleep over in our little cottage and when she did; she asked to wear one of my satin nighties to which I naively obliged, only wanting her to be happy and comfortable. After everything, shame. Her lie to her parents about her getting drugged had resulted in headlines and caused problems for innocent people—that's a terrible burden to bear. I understood too well not being able to speak to my parents and if I could at least be an adult, she could speak and relate to that could offer good advice after having personally lived through some seriously bad choices, then I would be there for her. Now, this!

I packed what I could carry in the car for myself and my daughter. The domestic worker told me she would inform me if 'my friend' returned. I was not acting out of jealousy at all. The situation bothered me. He was 32, and she was 15. Sound familiar?

Not long after, I received a call from the domestic worker, who informed me the girl was there, visiting Drake on her bike. My mom and I returned with my neighbour's son, a black belt in Karate, who agreed to accompany us because I knew Drake's temper. Armed with mom, a bodyguard and a video camera, we set off and arrived around 8 pm, it was dark. Slowly, we made our way to the cottage. Her bike was no longer there. With the video camera in hand, I tried to look through the bedroom window, but I couldn't see anything. Drake heard me and burst through the door, 'What are you doing here?' My heart was pounding out of my chest as I called his bluff, 'I've been here for a while and I've got you and her on camera and I'm going to report you.' With this, he picked up a nearby screwdriver and came at me. Mom boldly stepped in, 'I wouldn't do that if I were you.' She and the neighbour's son had been hiding, witnessing the whole incident. Drake had no more power.

The three of us drove back to my parents' house.

I don't know what hurt the most, the abuse, betrayal, shame, my ignorance of the situation, or loss of Collete, but the heartache was excruciating. One day, not long after, I was going through my boxes of stuff in my parents' garage when I came across my old Bible. It had a fabric zip around the cover. When I opened it, I discovered a long-lost cell phone I had searched for everywhere. Right there and then, joy and excitement welled up in me. It felt like God was saying to me, 'Call on me—I am the answer and solution to all this pain!'

I shared this with mom, and that's exactly what I did—I dove right in with every fibre of my being and I prayed

with a fervent desire to know Jesus in a real practical way. I headed back to my old church, Word of Faith Christian Centre, where I met up with my dear old friend, Star.

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Star was the one whose fellowship group I attended when I was only 16 where I received the gift of tongues. The relationship ended when I was about 17 because one night after a fight with either my parents or Boom; I arrived at her house late at night on my scooter hoping to find her in desperate need of her love and a place to stay. It turned out that she wasn't there; she had actually had their baby and was in hospital.

I was about to leave but the boyfriend told me I should stay as that's what she would've wanted. Having nowhere else to go I agreed. He made me a bed in the lounge. As I lay there trying to sleep I heard him come into the lounge and felt him lie next to me. I felt sick to my gut as I felt his penis pressing against my back. That was all it took for that switch to go back on before I knew it, he finished doing what he needed to do.

Yeah, sure some of you are saying why didn't I stop him. I don't know. Live the life I've lived up until this point and you try to say no. I left the next morning sick at the way men behaved.

My shame and guilt put a wedge between Star and me. There was no way I could break her heart with the news that the father of her child had done what he had done on the same day that their baby had been born.

I walked away.

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I joined Star's weekly Bible study group. I also arranged, through her daughter, who had been a friend for many years and was my personal assistant at the modeling school, to have deliverance done. When the deliverance minister arrived, my jaw dropped—it was the same police officer I had met back when I was 15. The immediate change in me after this was amazing.

I even quit smoking. Unfortunately, that only lasted five days until I caved in under pressure while setting up a new show.

But overall, life completely changed. I began to feel joy and freedom, unlike anything I had ever experienced.

I also had my daughter dedicated. You see christening a baby is really just a religious act, something we just do. No, I wanted to publicly dedicate her to God. On this day, at Word of Faith church. A building that seats thousands. Drake never pitched. I remember feeling so ashamed going up to the front of the church with my little girl that day. As the elderly stood around us praying, God's presence was so tangible, almost overwhelming, very clearly I heard, 'I will be her father and I will be your husband.' On hearing this I opened my eyes and there were Angel's, huge massive beings in each corner of the church. It was a day I will never forget!

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I clearly remember sitting with mom on her big king-size bed one day saying, 'Mom, I'm so happy, I never want my life to change.' The only downside now was the arthritic pain, not yet officially diagnosed had started to get debilitating. At night, feeling like every bone in my body was broken or out of the socket, I would plead with mom to please just kill me—put me out of this misery. But morning would come, my faith would grow, and I would force myself out of bed and to church, completely trusting and believing God would heal me in his time.

A pastor from overseas visited our church doing a workshop with young kids, like around 7 to 10-year-olds. He explained how we should have faith like a child. One night at a service he had these kids praying for people for healing from various ailments. I went up for prayer over my deaf ear. It opened. In fact, straight after the service I called home using my deaf ear. It was amazing, but never lasted, for reasons I would press into later in my journey.

As for Drake, and his student? I never did confront her about anything. She was a kid, and I understood the situation all too well. Drake, as it turned out when I left him with my cheque book and credit card to make the needed payments for the function, whilst I was in Cape Town, had taken full liberty almost draining my account. At first, I would contact him for visits with our daughter, which always entailed me making the call and doing the 45 minute drive there and back. Then I waited to see how long it would take him to initiate everything. It took more than a year. The truth is I was a mess going into the relationship. I also ended up having affairs openly admitting what I was doing at the time. The truth is until we are whole and healed entering any relationship is dangerous because we end up draining our partners trying to fill a void that only Jesus can.

## Chapter 14: Crazy or Just Not Listening?

I always dreamed of a beautiful peasant themed wedding with a vintage corset dress, Hessian tablecloths and wild daisies strewn about. For food, good old-fashioned fish and chips wrapped in newspaper while music is playing and people are dancing, sharing in the joy of my wonderful day.

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It's 6 July 2002, I'm 28 years old, my wedding day. Not my dream wedding—not even close.

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I met Kevin only nine months prior. The modelling school, with hard work and my vision, had reached a new level. We had a website, a character's division for TV commercials, and I had partnered up with various agencies in Cape Town. Once we advertised this, we had an influx of new talent; over a hundred had applied. They paid to have their photos taken in our new offices in a photographic studio with an infinity curve. The space wasn't large; we had funky bright green and purple bean bags, two desks for myself and Star's daughter Jolie, as in Angelina Jolie, because she is exquisite with full luscious lips and stunning olive skin tone, a coffee machine and a small freezer always stocked with Redbull. I had to acquire offices in town because my daughter needed to go to crèche and the travelling in and out to Sundays River was just too much.

These were hair-raising times for me, scarred by my past every day, fetching my daughter from crèche, when I changed her nappy I would check for any telltale signs of abuse. None to be found, I eventually relaxed into my new rhythm of life.

One day I got this call from a guy who says he is 30 and has been acting most of his life. I agreed to meet.

I realised by his appearance, he might be someone one of my agents in Cape Town was looking for, not exponentially good looking, but he had an interesting look, he looked like Kevin Bacon, henceforth the name, Kevin. Me, being me and knowing very much about what the modelling world is all about, always only having my models' best interests at heart set about asking him about his life and why modelling? He disclosed that he was in the midst of a separation. Out of nowhere, I blurted out, 'Weren't you once close to God? Quite honestly, I don't feel you should be up and running to Cape Town, but rather rekindling your relationship with God and perhaps working on your marriage.' He asked me how I knew this? I replied, 'God.'

By now, I realised I had a gift. A gift of knowledge. Sometimes in conversation or even from a distance, God would not just show me information about a person's life but He would allow me to feel their emotions too. Trust me, at certain stages later in my life, I thought it was a curse.

Anyway, that particular day I didn't have my camera with me, so he needed to return another day for me to take the necessary model head shots. Whilst doing these pics,

I became a bit shy and awkward. And I didn't like it. These feelings disturbed me a little. Why was I feeling this way? He was a married man, and I was extremely happy with my single life. The agent in Cape Town liked what they saw in the pics and they accepted him. I gave him the news.

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One Sunday morning, dressed and ready to head out to church, I got a call from Kevin asking what time the service started. Mmmm, I'm annoyed and want to lie. Church is my time—my time with God. I knew what he was going through in his separation, and honestly, what right did I have to stop him from attending church?

At church, he's nowhere to be seen. My eyes were closed, hands raised in worship, the song finished, I opened my eyes, and, Bam! There he was, right next to me. I tried hard to stay focused on God when out of the corner of my eye; I noticed his hands raised, and he appeared to be worshipping God—good for him. After the service, pastors Jimmy Crompton and Denver welcomed him with open arms stating, 'the prodigal son has returned.'

On leaving, he invited me to join his family for lunch. I declined and headed home. The following day he called me asking to please attend my cell group. A cell group is a small bunch of people part of a big church that meets once a week for Bible study and fellowship. It's your safe place. Another annoyance, but like I said, how can I stand in the way of his rekindling a relationship with God?

I got back to the mammoth task of creating a show-stopper event, while he continued calling, even popping in at my office inviting me out to lunch. Through all the back and forth, I'd gotten to know him quite well, at least that's what I believed.

Eventually, I caved. We went for lunch. He talked about his part-time game ranger job, that he loved the outdoors and adventure, something to this day I'm all for. We then went on to discuss how I felt about sex before marriage. Well, blow me over. The prodigal son?

By now, I have learnt first-hand what sex outside of marriage does to a woman, no matter how cool they act about it. I've also learnt a lot about soul ties through a deliverance course I had enrolled in with James Lottering, after having such a profound result in my own life, after my own deliverance experience. I learnt a lot about how we open doorways to Satan in our lives. It's here that I first started to learn about the curses of freemasonry. It amazes me how people worry about HIV and aids but not soul ties. Did you know that when you sleep with someone, you become one flesh? Not just with them, but anyone they have slept with, and whoever they have slept with, and whoever they have slept with, and vice-versa. Do you get what I'm saying?

And anywhere in the midst of all of this, demonic transference happens. Often leaving the person in a very different state unable to understand or even control various circumstances unless dealt with on a spiritual level.

Anyhow, he objected to this saying he felt it best to test the waters in case a couple isn't sexually compatible.

I called BS on that. If a couple is in love, they will work it out. Toward the end of lunch, which was at a place on the beachfront, he looked out at the ocean and pointed out to a yacht on the water. He went on about how he wanted that life and all it stood for. With that, he reached across the table, took my hand in his and said, 'You know how it is with dentists, how a person waits for the pain to get too bad before they go?' Yes, I say. He said, 'Well that's how I feel right now. I have to tell you something, and I'm afraid because if I don't tell you, at least I will have hope, and hope is better than nothing. But I can't take the agony anymore, I've fallen in love with you!' Taken aback I responded, 'I have feelings for you too. But the truth is if your wife were to come around this corner and see you holding my hand, I just can't deal with being involved in inflicting that kind of pain on anyone, I'm sorry.'

The calls and visits continued. My feelings for him were growing, and I didn't like it, and he wouldn't go away.

Eventually, I made it clear that I didn't believe that this situation is of God. He responded that he had been separated for months and was in the process of divorce, but if it made me feel any better, I should go and pray about it. He said he would do the same. I prayed with mom and then dived into every single scripture I could find on marriage. Mom and I tearfully came to the same conclusion. It was time to end the relationship.

When I called him with my revelation, he said he had studied the same scriptures and had somehow come to a different conclusion. I ended the relationship and told

him to try and rectify his marriage and preferably not contact me outside of work.

I was sad, but not broken. My days were filled with gym three-to-four times a week, classes, preparing for Model of the Year, quoting on other shows and loving my models very much. It wasn't long when I got the call. 'The divorce is through, please can I come and see you?' Champagne in hand he arrived at my parents' house. I was slightly disturbed at how he wanted to celebrate the end of a marriage with such young children and enter a new relationship so quickly. But I caved. After all, he was now single. There and then on the couch in my parents' lounge, he tried his luck with me, but I would have none of it.

A whirlwind romance started. He was excited to introduce me to his amazing "Christian" family. We did the long drive through to Kenton-on-Sea from the Sundays River, where his father and brothers lived. I had already met his sister, who I'll call Queenie because she acted like she was the rule of all things, who made me feel a little awkward. We would be at his place, the 'Hobbit Hole', in bed. No, not having sex, just being intimate, and she would just plop herself right there on the bed sharing her latest drama.

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I hadn't been drinking, not since that night on the highway after that Model of the Year. I'm not sure if it was drinking the champagne with Kevin or my inability to deal with all my emotions around our relationship but I somehow on that December annual trip to Cape Town,

got myself some ecstasy for the trip and drank some of my dad's whiskey he had in the kitchen cupboard which I topped up with water so he wouldn't notice.

I stayed at Michelle's place. I arranged accommodations for the models including Kevin who found a job as a waiter to see himself through whilst he waited for a good modelling job or TV commercial. He wanted to spend some time with me. I pitched a tent in Michelle's backyard where we spent the night. Kevin had his way with me. I felt dirty and disgusted at my behaviour and told him this. I was also becoming concerned about how Kevin seemed to lean on me financially.

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One day Kevin rocks up at my office and says he doesn't want to hear anything about work, he's abducting me for the day. I know what's coming and I'm not happy about it. He's going to propose. I'm not ready for this. What am I going to do? He had it all laid out; beach horses, picnic. The worst was, there was some competition going on about the most romantic proposal and he was videotaping the whole thing. His speech was manipulative and the ring! Rough white gold with smooth slanting angles on each side, holding a sapphire. The design was supposed to represent the three circles of the trinity that hadn't come out so clearly; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit/our three children and the sapphire, the colour of his eyes (not mine). Although my life had changed tremendously, I had still not learnt a thing about boundaries and how to say no.

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Two weeks before the wedding I sat down with mom in tears. 'Mom, I can't marry him, I do love him but it just doesn't feel right.' Oh, my girl it's normal to feel this way, it's called cold feet. 'No mom, I don't think so, it's more than that', I tried to explain. 'My girl, your engagement has been announced in the papers, all invitations have already been sent out, dad's spent a lot of money on material for the dress you want. It's just cold feet.' Maybe she's right. I brushed it aside.

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Things started going wrong. I wanted a beautiful peasant theme for the wedding. I'm laughing as I remember my dad's reaction to this. He would have none of it. His daughter getting married was going to be at a proper venue with a three-course meal.

I wanted nothing to do with it. I definitely didn't want my wedding to be just another function. In the end the after ceremony function venue was Wedgewood Country Club.

The week before the wedding, I got my dress, and it was awful. It didn't fit properly. Dad agreed to rent a new dress. The woman who did my make up—I hid my face because I looked ridiculous. I quickly fixed it up and got ready.



As usual, dad was rushing me even though I told him I would like to be a few minutes late. I arrived on time. I didn't feel like an excited bride at all. The Wedding March began and dad looked at me with tears in his eyes—I wanted to cry too. We headed down the aisle. No turning back. After the 'you may kiss the bride' part of the ceremony, our mothers stepped up onto the stage for the lighting of the candles. My mom lights a candle representing my life and his mom lights a candle representing his life, from there they move the candles together to a larger one lighting it, then blowing out the two separate candles signifying our lives are now one. His candle ends up going out repeatedly.

Oh God no, what have I done?

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On arriving at my parents' house, to change and pack for our honeymoon trip, Kevin takes me like a dog still with my wedding dress on. Quickly satisfied, it's over. I don't know what to feel. Is this how it's meant to be? Have

I been wrong all these years about thinking of sex as love-making, something special between a husband and wife that's meant to be beautiful and pure?

My parents arrived shortly after. Just before we leave, Kevin calls my parents and me together and presents a freaking will for me to sign. My heart starts pounding. Does he plan on killing me while we are away? I pushed these feelings aside, signing the will leaving everything to my daughter. On arriving at Scotia I ask if he has ever been there before with his wife. He admitted he had been there with her before, but not overnight. I remained quiet. On our arrival, we're greeted with a welcome basket and Champagne. Kevin pours us some and runs us a nice bubble bath by candlelight. I'm a bit confused. I had insisted on alcohol free Champagne for the wedding. There had been a cash bar for those that wished to drink. Anyhow I'm a bit shy so I quickly empty my glass, Kevin tops it up. I start to relax, trying to push all confusing thoughts out of my mind. Come on Tanya, this is awesome, it's your wedding night and you've just married a good Godly man. He takes me again awkwardly in the bath. While still half erect he asks how I feel about being urinated on. Umm, I had heard about it before back in the days of Tessa but could not relate. I'm a bit shocked, and manage to say "I don't know". With that, he starts to pee on me. I don't like it but say nothing. That night he took me seven times. I was sore. It had certainly not been the honeymoon night of love and purity I had dreamt of all my life. Whilst on the toilet which had no door, I heard the very familiar voice of his sister Queenie. I could not believe it. I came out around the corner after quickly quietly finishing off my business

to find her sitting right there. Slap bang in the middle of our honeymoon bed with Kevin. I was Gob-smacked.

It's the 7th day of the 7th month. My first day of being Mrs and I can't think of any better way than spending it with friends at church before heading off for Zambia. He disagrees.

Anyhow, we head out for the long drive to Zambia to stop off in Johannesburg overnight at my cousin's, the one who used to blow bubbles through her eyes as kids. My arthritis starts playing up badly and we end up having to stop at a doctor on the route. The Dr prescribed strong pain medication and we were able to carry on with our trip. So now I have pain medication.

In Zambia Kevin and I had our first fight. It was over a cup of tea. I was shocked at how angry he got. When he had asked if we should have some tea I had said yes, not realizing then that to him, it was a sit-down cup, saucer and teapot thing. I casually grabbed my cup and started walking back to our room. He was fuming. I was un-nerved.

The lodge was exquisite, rustic yet pristine, set on its own little island on the Zambezi river. The car was parked on the mainland and we took a little boat to get to it. The sunsets were breathtaking, and the sound of hippos close by, so exciting.

On the way home, I wanted to buy something for my daughter from my trip away. I did. 'What about my kids, Kevin says?' Mmm...Awkward.

My family paid for the wedding, my friends and money from my gran for the honeymoon, I was using my money to buy my child a gift. Quietly I think quickly and agree. 'Of course, get them something you think they will like.' I see something else I know my daughter will love and get it for her. He says it is not fair for her to get two things and his kids only get one. I'm upset but say nothing. I grab his kids something I think they will like.

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On arriving back home at my parents', I found my folks had switched the house around. They moved out of the main bedroom into the side section of the large lounge overlooking the river.

The main bedroom was now ours, with a double bed and a single bed for my daughter. It was so precious how welcome they made the newlyweds feel.

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I should have listened to and trusted my gut—it was right and it's always been right.

It hadn't been cold feet. It had been a stirring in my spirit, a warning.

But what could I do now? I made vows before God, vows I took seriously. I had entered into a holy covenant but I hadn't listened and a boy-oh-boy were my daughter and I going to pay the price.

## Chapter 15: My Precious Little Boy

Shortly after my marriage to Kevin, I bought my first home in Richmond Hill in Port Elizabeth. I loved that house; a double story with the front entrance off the road that had a passage, a lounge room to the right with a massive fireplace that I loved to light up on chilly evenings to warm up by, and an adjoining area that I used for my office. This area was my happy place that I made for myself. To the left, two bedrooms: the master and my daughter's room. At the end of the passage, there was an open doorway to a strange narrow, maybe two-metre-wide long room with large windows overlooking the small little back garden, with views of the ocean. We used this area for a library and Kevin's painting which he was brilliant at. Downstairs was a large old farm style kitchen, bathrom and 3rd bedroom for Kevin's girls. It was a splendid home for us.

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In December, his two girls came to stay with us for the long six-week holiday. Two extra children for 6 weeks whilst Kevin was at work for Old Mutual, definitely took its toll. The pressure on me by him and his sister was in-tense. She had a tendency to take over every time she came to visit which was often.

I loved the girls dearly and would do anything for them. My problem was Kevin's double standard with my daughter and his children. He was strict with Andi and indulgent with his girls and it caused a strain on our marriage.

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Shortly after celebrating my 30th birthday, my brother Ricky generously gave me his old car. Kevin still had no car and being a one-car family with three girls was difficult.

With the conflicts raging at home depression started to set in. Kevin insisted I see a psychologist, which I did. The psychologist wanted to admit me to Huntersraig private psychiatric hospital, to start me on medication and monitor me. I wasn't for this at all. They knew me in our community. What would people say if they found out? The other option was to go to a hospital in George where no one knew me. I really didn't want either. The depression compared to my past bouts was mild, and I had a business to run. But Kevin insisted.

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Kevin had long stopped working at Old Mutual, and I was the sole breadwinner. The pressure and stress were getting to be too much. I was abusing pain medication again, so I decided to nip it in the bud before it became something beyond my control and checked myself into Hunter's Craig Hospital.

After two days, my psychologist had not come to see me so I agreed to see the in house psychiatrist. An incompetent hack who apologised to me—very cleverly without Kevin present—asking him to wait in reception as he disclosed how he had given me incorrect treatment and was sorry. When his secretary called once to ask about settling his account, I asked her to check with him if indeed that was what he wanted.

The reply came back, 'No need to worry, consider the account settled.' I could have taken him and the anaesthetist to court for malpractice.

But besides my very real fear of court, how would it turn out? My word against a reputable local psychiatrist and anaesthetist, especially where psychiatry was involved? Here's what happened.

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In our first meeting, I disclosed I believed wholeheartedly the problem was addiction, not depression. However, after hearing the same old repeated freaking story of my life, here's what he prescribed; eight sessions of shock treatment and a myriad of tranquilisers and antidepressants. Besides the shock treatment, the rest of the medication was like giving a coke addict, heroin. I have an insignificant memory of that time.

But this is what I remember: I met an awesome elderly lady named Maureen. Oh my word, the heartache and loss she was going through were exponential. I loved and cared for her quickly. Imagine my surprise when I discovered her surname—it was Clifford. The same lady my dad had invested R75 000 of my inheritance and lost. I couldn't be upset. She was definitely reaping what had been sown.

The shock treatments; this is disturbing and would have been my main grounds for suing, but how would I prove it? Upfront let me tell you, I still love that feeling of slipping away into a sleep from the anaesthetic. I laugh

now as I think, it's the only upside of the many surgeries I've since faced.

Anyhow, on the day of the treatment before going under I asked the Drs, 'What happens when they shock your brain?' They looked at each other, smiled menacingly and said, 'I tell you what, we will start just before you go under so you can feel it.' True to their word, I felt my body bolt and stiffen and then I was gone.

After these sessions, Kevin would take me to his aunt, a church counsellor, who said she was trying to help. I vaguely remember pouring out my heart and soul to her about everything; Wayne, Swayze, Drake and on and on. Trusting her, and trusting him with every fibre of my being. All of us being Christian's with Jesus as our centre, what safer place could I be, right? An online diagnosis of "Borderline personality disorder".

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It turned out, whilst I was going through shock treatments, Kevin had called a family meeting to discuss my mental state and what he should do. This was on the heels of me pressuring him to get a job and help support the family.

In a nutshell, no pun intended, Kevin's family decided it best he get the heck out of the marriage ASAP. The online diagnosis turns out to be incurable! So much for Jesus, love and safety. By our first wedding anniversary, I was alone with my daughter in Port Elizabeth desperately trying to fight for my marriage whilst he had gone to Kenton-on-Sea to take a job in the building industry with his family.

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How we met, the divorce care course I had forced him to go on after we were engaged in the hopes that he would return to his first wife, was all unbeknown to his Christian family. In all of this, my dear sister-in-law had reported in full detail to his ex what was going on—a woman she had never had a decent word to speak of in the past, now her bosom friend.

Once Kevin eventually made it clear he was going to continue seeing me, she actually wanted a restraining order.

This is how I came to meet Chester, the pastor who wrote the foreword to this book. Kevin had insisted on marriage counselling if we were to be together at all. I would make the journey, an almost two-hour drive to Kenton for counselling and drive back home.

Chester later disclosed to me how he totally expected to meet this witch from hell only to be surprised by what he saw himself. The Christian family mafia tendrils ran deep. Looking back now, I see how desperately insane the entire situation was. I should have just let it go. Walked away. After all, I knew in my gut I shouldn't have married him in the first place. Make no mistake, I did love him and things had eventually, after the honeymoon, become passionate and mutually beneficial. But, most importantly, I didn't believe in divorce. I take covenant very seriously. My daughter loved him and her sisters and I wouldn't put her through that.

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In the times where Kevin would decide we're off, not on anymore, I would end up having to live at Chester's with my daughter.

And I'm very grateful for this time. I lived there for a five-week period, and in that time Chester taught me about diving into God, which I'm really grateful for because I started journaling. And this is how I got to learn God's voice in journaling.

And I know it was God because what came across often in my journaling was getting guidance for what I should do. The first thing that would come across was forgiveness—having to forgive people that were persecuting me and had been doing so throughout my life. What I did was I would say, 'Lord, your word says, I need to forgive this person. So with my mouth Lord I forgive and release them to you and I pray Lord that you will bless them and I trust you for the feelings of true forgiveness to follow. I did this continually, each time I would feel anxious or angry toward someone. God really did take away all animosity toward these people. In fact, often what he would do, especially with Kevin and I, when I would be moaning to God, He would actually show me my own manipulations and my own behaviours. In every situation in my life when I cried out to God, he would show me the part I played, not in an ugly kind of way, but just show me.

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The modelling agency had grown exponentially. I now had seven branches across the country, which left

me traveling quite a bit, but having again to try and keep up appearances. While those closest to me were persecuting me psychologically and provoking me, it was extremely difficult. Since receiving the printout of the full extent of my mental diagnosis with all its symptoms from his aunt, Kevin stopped seeing me. Whether it was consciously or subconsciously, I don't know. He literally questioned everything. It turned out Chester had also been given a copy. His response however was, "Man this covers most people on the planet." Anyhow I started abusing substances again. We were on a camp one weekend with the Church with Chester and we were told to go and spend an hour alone with God. And in that hour alone I was sitting with my puppy at the time and very clearly I heard God say, all he said was, 'Your business', and I said, 'Well, what about my business?' And he said to me, 'It's time to let it go' and I was devastated. It's the last thing I was expecting. I believed my business was my Ministry and was how I reached young people. And He said to me, 'Well, does it produce the fruit you wanted to produce?' And I had to answer 'no.' Unfortunately, when they started with me in the modelling school, they arrived very shy and withdrawn. But after a year of teaching them positive self awareness and all aspects of grooming, many ended up jumping into beds. It wasn't producing the fruit I'd hoped. But I argued with God and I said, 'But Lord, I give them confidence.' And God said to me, 'Do you give them confidence in me or in the world?' And I was just quiet. I remember saying to God, 'If this is you, then let the dog come and bite me on my ankle.' And he said, 'No, your time for signs is over. If you doubt me, go and ask your husband.' I immediately went to Kevin to find out what God had revealed to him. He said that God had revealed we would both be in Ministry one day. Now, I took this as

we would be in the Ministry together. Maybe I didn't listen very closely.

He wanted to know what God told me—I had to share in fairness. 'Well, he told me to get rid of my business, that it was time to let it go.' And he said to me, 'Well, I've never liked your business. But I didn't feel it was my place to tell you that.' Revelation? Funny how looking back that God sending me to Kevin might have been a message unto itself.

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I had actually built myself up a very false Empire. I continued throughout the year with the modelling agency. In fact, one or two of my models even gave their lives to the Lord.

Letting go of the business was my biggest act of obedience.

Throughout our marriage, I definitely showed Kevin a lot with regards to spiritual things, and I encouraged him to pray. And when he learned to pray specifically, we ended up moving to a farm where we could live rent-free.

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Kevin took me out to look at a farm where no one had lived for 15 years, which had no roof and it was full of bat guano. He looked elated and he asked me if we could move there. I didn't hesitate. Another six-week school holiday with three children in December, only this time we were living in tents.

I fell pregnant and there was a lot of excitement between Kevin and me and the kids. His family never acknowledged the pregnancy in any way or form.

Kevin started showing a militant side toward the children by making them sleep outside in the tent during a storm so he could be intimate with me. He forced the kids to eat porridge that was too disgusting for even him to eat—little things that were causing alarm bells to start going off.

It was during this time that I had a dream. And in this dream all I saw was a book and the title of the book which said *Victim to Victor*, and a large hand reaching out to a really small hand pulling it out of darkness. And as I turned the book over to read the side, I saw my name. Two nights later, I had the same dream.'

Two weeks later, I went to visit Jolie, and she said to me, 'I'm busy studying journalism and I've got a favor to ask you, please, one day, can I write your life story?' After having these dreams and then hearing this, I got goosebumps everywhere, and I started to believe that this dream had in fact been a vision.

But while I was at her house, I started to bleed.

I was four and a half months pregnant at the time, and I rushed back to Kenton-on-Sea, and we went to see the doctors and he assured us that everything was ok.

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We went back to the farm and started getting into the planning; organising some members of our youth group to come and sleep over for the weekend to help with painting and odd jobs around the house. The hustle and bustle was exciting. It wasn't long after our return when I started getting contractions. Kevin ended up rushing me to the hospital where I had to stay. Apparently the placenta was pulling away from the uterus and they gave me medication to try and stop labor.

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I met a young girl who was 17 in the bed next to mine who had just had a baby. She was really depressed and I ended up connecting with her and leading her to Jesus. To watch the transformation in her was amazing. In the hospital bed opposite me was another woman who had AIDS and tuberculosis, and she was just coughing all the time. To give her and us all some peace, I got up and put my arms around her and prayed for her. The following day she was up and eating and the doctors were trying to work out what had happened. Although I told them I had prayed for her, they still couldn't understand the change. So in the time that I was in hospital facing the threat of losing my son Caleb, I knew without a doubt that I was there for a reason.

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Kevin and Andi were visiting me when I felt the need to go to the bathroom, and as I wiped, I saw Caleb's legs in my hands and I got up from the toilet and went to tell Kevin to arrange for someone to take Andi because the baby was coming.

I gave birth to my little boy at four and a half months old. And what amazed me was just how much he looked like his father. Again underweight, I wasn't able to take him home and give him a burial.

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Another minister from Grahamstown, Justin, mine and Kevin's couple's counsellor visited me while I was in hospital. He gave me a book to read by Joyce Myers called *Battlefield of the Mind*, and I really recommend that people read this. This book helped me to face what happened. I knew that Caleb and my experiences happened for a reason.

The good Christians from the Church came to visit me, telling me I didn't have to pretend I was ok, that I should rather grieve and go through the necessary depression.

They would be there for me. I was upset at this. I wasn't pretending, I believe strongly that as a Christian; we are in this world, but not of this world, and we don't need to suffer as others because we know He is always working things out for our good regardless of how it looks.

And I felt like they had spoken death over me, and, well, sure enough, the depression did come, and it came hard.

They didn't come.

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Kevin continued his gaslighting. The only comment ever made by his family about my pregnancy was by his sister after I had lost him, 'I'm really glad things turned out the way they did because I know what that child would have been.' is what she said. I was so shocked by this. Kevin never said a word.

The depression got so bad that one day after a school sports event, I went and drove down to the beach front with a bottle of champagne and a box of sleeping tablets with every intention of going for a long swim in the ocean.

And I don't know who, but apparently, someone reported me to Chester and he found me in time. And this is how I ended up at Chester's where he put a line across the bedroom windows in case I tried to sneak out of the house, attaching it to a bell.

There were other suicide attempts; once, when Kevin left me on the farm, alone Andi was away with my mom. I slit my wrists. I don't know how Chester heard about it, but he came to the farm and found me lying outside and took me to the doctor to have my wrists stitched up.

I was crying out. No, I was screaming. I don't think anyone was really listening.

## Chapter 16: Third Time in Prison

Along with the depression came codeine pain medication abuse. Kevin and I had, through Chester, gotten involved in politics. Kevin was a candidate and I was secretary for The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP). I hated it, Kevin loved it.

Kevin had started to behave strangely. For example, if we ran out of petrol to get back to our farm or if we didn't have money for me to get what I needed for my monthly period, it was God, not that he needed to bring in any income to help provide for the family. It caused tremendous stress.

Our farm that I loved so dearly with our two horses and Andi's pony, we ended up having to leave to move closer to Kenton's small little town. Kevin had found us a three bedroom log cabin overlooking the Bushman's River and although exhausted and tired of the continual gaslighting that our relationship consisted of, I saw it as a new start.

We weren't there long when a cousin of his was getting married. It was a 60s theme. I went all out hiring costumes for myself and our girls. We looked brilliant, like a happy little family. At the wedding Queenie was her flamboyant annoying self and Kevin practically ignored me. At one stage he eventually asked me to dance, I turned him down.

Easter Sunday was coming up which was always a big thing for me. I would get up early hiding eggs for the girls. It was a holiday I enjoyed, I absolutely loved watching the joy and excitement of the kids as they hunted for their eggs.

This year Kevin had made no effort and money was scarce. I got plain marshmallow eggs and hid them on my own early for the kids. The morning was strained enough before Queenie came around and plonked herself on our bed. I was tired. The kids had been playing together and managed to remove every toy from the cupboard, when Kevin said he was going to go visit his aunt—the one who ruled the mafia—the one who had diagnosed me as a borderline personality disorder. Something in me snapped. I ended up throwing the toys around. He left with the kids in tow. He took his children back to Port Elizabeth that day and when he returned home, he packed and said he had had enough and moved in with Queenie. I was devastated. My little girl, aged six and I were alone.

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My codeine intake increased to around 30 capsules a day, sometimes more. I would drive through to pharmacies in Alexandria or Port Alfred. Both places are kind of equal distance on either side of Kenton-on-Sea, just so people wouldn't know how bad my addiction had gotten.

The following evening, I woke up in the middle of the night to a man in a cap standing next to my bed; I got frightened and screamed. The man ran out onto the bedroom balcony and jumped off. I panicked and called Chester and Kevin. I begged and pleaded like a pathetic, desperate woman for Kevin to please stay with us. He agreed to sleep on the couch.

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At the time my friend who owned the beauty salon, Noreen, was getting married and Kevin was going to be her photographer. He insisted I couldn't attend her wedding. I was fuming, and pushed back. Eventually he backed down.

All the confidence I once had, had long disappeared in this four-year yo-yo abusive relationship. It had taken me hours to choose an outfit. My nerves at seeing him were raw. I popped in at my close friend, Sandy's place before going and had a joint with Gav. It was strong—I arrived stoned.

As I watched them and heard the vows with my little girl as my companion I began to react and not in a healthy way. When I searched for our seats at the reception, I spotted ours at a table with people I barely knew. Kevin and his families table just a short distance from mine. Not a mix for keeping me stable. I should have said my well wishes and left. Instead, I drank way too much. I sent my daughter home with Kevin's brother's wife, an awesome woman I love and respect to this day. I do not know how I got home, I just remember I had to break a window to get in and tore my pants in the process.

When I woke up, I was heartbroken. I played right into Kevin's hands. Everyone could see what a saint he was and what trash I was.

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Kevin found a job through Queenie in Cape Town and told me he would be moving there. I had in the meantime voiced my desire with my church and Chester that I wished to go to rehab. The church had

decided it would be in my best interest to sell my car to pay for this, so that I could in fact feel the consequences of my actions. I had agreed to it.

My little girl was doing gymnastics at the time, she was so good at it. I would be away for three months so I took a drive through to Alexandria to go and see her gymnastics coach to inform her of our home situation and to ask her to please keep an eye on her for me.

As I was leaving, Uncle Andy, an old family friend waved me down. He was nearby at the golf course. I went and joined him for a beer, sharing his court. I then had another court and excused myself as I had to hurry to fetch my daughter. Although I had probably about eight codeine capsules under my belt and a court and a half of beer, I felt fine and headed off back to Kenton. On my way there, two police officers pulled me over for driving under the influence. They placed me under arrest. I started crying, kicking and screaming, pushing against them, pleading for them to let me go—my daughter would be waiting for me.

After taking me to Port Alfred for blood tests, they took me to Kenton holding cells. I got hold of Sandy who came through to see me. I was in one hell of a state. My boot I had been wearing had broken, the sole dragging off to the side. I screamed at Sandy for not bringing me sleeping tablets to see me through the night. To this day Sandy and I joke about it.

Alone in my cell, it was cold and dark. I cried my heart out for my little girl. As I cried, the people in the cells next to me mimicked me. It was horrific. Suddenly, in the midst of the chaos I clearly heard this

voice inside me saying, 'Write the book!' The tears faded into silence. Again, 'Write the book!'

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A while back, I had driven into Port Elizabeth on another stressful weekend with Kevin and the kids to my folks place in Sundays River. I had disappeared off to the doctors claiming I had kidney stones hoping to get a pethidine injection. It was a Sunday. I pricked my finger, put blood in my urine and sure enough kidney stones, but no injection. The appointment was expensive, and risking another doctor just didn't seem worth the effort. I ended up driving to Central; a suburb and spot that I used to get ecstasy from many years back. I sat in my car in tears, crying out to God, 'Why Lord? You know I love you, why can't I cope? Why am I like this?' I knew that if I had just one ecstasy tablet it would be the end of me. Out loud I affirmed, 'I choose God!'

I turned the ignition to my car and headed back to my folks and Kevin, stopping at a pharmacy for my normal codeine dose. On the way I clearly heard, 'Write the book.' I got annoyed and said what freaking book? Who am I to write a book? People like Joyce Meyer write books, I'm just a junkie, what must I say? Clearly I heard, 'I don't want someone's testimony, but rather a record of someone broken and how I deliver them, so that my broken can know they are not alone.' The task was mammoth and that conversation stayed on the highway heading home.

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Morning came, and they collected me from my cell. I had visitors. The shame and humiliation I felt when I saw Chester and James, my pastors' faces, was so profound. I'm sure if there was a place to run and hide I'd have bolted. Chester told me he had spoken to the prosecutor, who also was the head of the station and he informed her to keep me for the weekend, not to let me out under any circumstances.

My legs buckled under me. My back scraped against the wall as I slid down sobbing. Legs weak, I was escorted back, no, dragged back to my cell. I crawled onto the piece of foam that served as a bed and cried out to God, 'Lord, I don't think I will make it here all weekend, but I'm finished. If this is what it takes for me to learn my lesson and wake up, then so be it.' Again, 'Write the book!'

I just wanted my daughter. I learnt she had gone with another couple and their daughter, a friend from gymnastics to Hogsback, up in the mountains for the weekend. What kind of mother was I? All I wanted was to give her a father and a family and here I was with nothing, sitting in a jail cell.

Shortly after this I was called into the prosecutor's office. She disliked me from the start. She spoke very plainly about how she intended to take my child away from me if I didn't get my act together.

With that I went into court to appear before the judge. I don't know how it happened but I was released without bail and was given a date that I needed to return to court. Beyond relieved, as I left the building, Sandy and Gav

were there to meet me. My brother Gav, Sandy's husband, my weed smoking buddy that I loved so dearly had arrived with my codeine fix and a bottle of Coke.

The authorities impounded my car, so Gav and Sandy took me to their place where Gav rolled me a joint. Chester and Ma Jean arrived there shortly after, insisting I go and stay at their place. I refused, wanting desperately to go home and be in my own space.

Chester and Ma Jean took me home where I had a shower and then went into the lounge to relax and try and absorb everything that had happened over another joint that Gav made for me, when there was a knock at the door. It was Ma Jean. She had come back to spend the night.

Whilst she was marking papers I conjured up a plan to smoke my joint. I lit some incense in the lounge and stepped out onto the balcony, standing on the far side continuing our conversation, certain she would think I was just smoking a normal cigarette. I then took my last sleeping pill and headed off to bed. By the time I woke up the next morning, Ma Jean had already left.

I got myself ready for work at the DVD store. Kenton-on-Sea is an extremely small beach village where everyone knows everyone's business. My jail time by now had spread like wildfire. To say it was awkward, would indeed be an understatement.

When my boss arrived, she awkwardly informed me that Chester called her and I won't be working that afternoon. Who the hell did he think he was and where exactly

was I supposed to be going? I called my father. My dad very casually told me I should do as Chester says. What the hell? Who the hell did these people think they were? With that, Chester and Ma Jean arrived. They informed me they were taking me to Settlers hospital in Grahamstown, where I would be analysed for the weekend.

I attempted to get past Chester, and he picked me up over his shoulder to carry me across the parking lot. If anyone in the village saw this, oh my word, prison would be small talk. I agreed to walk to the car without incident. What greeted me at the car left me horrified—my in-laws were there. In fact they had even been in my home to pack a bag for me. I was too angry to speak.

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On arriving at the hospital I glimpsed Kevin's bakkie. My heart skipped a beat. I thought he was in Cape Town? Nope, he was involved in this whole charade. The plan was to have me certified and placed in Fort England, a severe psychiatric hospital for the insane, after the weekend's evaluation.

Looking back, I absolutely cringe at the patheticness of my words to Kevin. You won't believe this—I said, 'I love you, and one day you will be proud of me. I'm so sorry.'

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When I saw the doctor and psychiatrist I was at a place of total surrender. I told them, the Christian counsellor

aunt had diagnosed me with borderline personality disorder and they should start there. I was placed in a general ward. Fortunately, my mother-in-law had at least packed my Bible for me.

I tucked in to read some Psalms. Psalms means to sing in worship or to come into prayer with a fresh state of mind, which also holds great comfort and power. My mind wandered after a bit thinking about the book that I had started reading called *Captivating* by John and Stassi Eldridge that I wished I had with me and was busy thinking about exactly that, when I walked Dr Eleanor Galpin. Like I said, Kenton was really small and news spread really fast. She had somehow found out I was there. She started chatting asking how I was doing, showing genuine concern and then she gave me a book she highly recommended I read, it's *Captivating!* And trust me, her giving it to me at that time indeed had me captivated. I dove in. Oh man. What a book! A definite must read. It speaks of the female characteristics of God, the make up of a woman. It speaks of Satan's absolute hatred toward women. How we are the life bearers and life nurturers of God's perfect creation, absolutely detestable to Satan. My whole life started making perfect sense. This book truly gave me amazing strength and ability to forgive. After reading this I saw Satan behind everything, certainly making forgiveness of everyone so, so much easier.

I managed to get some sleep. The doctor did his rounds but told me he would see me later. I didn't see him again until the next morning when he told me to come with him. I went to his office where he offered me coffee. First off, he said, 'there is no way I was a borderline personality disorder case. That if I was, I would not just

openly admit this.' Secondly, he said, 'there is no way he could admit me because I was not insane. If anything, I was battling with addiction and the side effects of addiction.' He ended up prescribing something non addictive for me to sleep and discharged me.

My parents fetched me and took me straight to Chester's place. Upon arriving there, I found pastor James waiting as well. We all sat down with pen and paper and a meeting began. It's placed on record that should I be found smoking weed or purchasing codeine or any other addictive substance, that they would have full right to take my child from me. It is also, very, very much against my will, stated that I would stay with Jean and Chester.

I was honestly over the substance thing.

My intention before this whole fiasco had in fact been to stop everything on Monday anyway.

Did they not see that I got arrested just after breaking the news about going to rehab to the gymnastics coach? Ok, after I had a few pints and codeine at the club?

However, I had no doubt at all that God was in it all. From getting me out of jail without bail, to bringing me the book to read in hospital, to the doctor's diagnosis. I even believed that I could end up guilty in my court hearing, and do prison time to get the book done that He so clearly wanted me to do.

All I wanted was my daughter. I signed the agreement and we moved in with Jean and Chester.

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My folks came down for a short while and we spent some time at my house. Chester made it clear to Kevin that he was still responsible for the rent, otherwise I don't know what I would have done.

One night after attending my fellowship group, I was so full of the spirit, there was no way I could sleep. I decided to go into the study and sit in front of the computer to start this book and see what happened. It flowed. I wrote five chapters that night and eagerly showed my mom the next morning. She laughed and cried and said she couldn't wait to read more. This book started to become a reality. Chapters I lost when a friend cleared my computer drive.

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There was a lady in the village named Maureen, someone you would call a Jesus freak. She just had this glow about her, an indescribable joy and I wanted some of what she had. I asked her if she would mind coming to stay with me for a while. Ma Jean and Chester agreed to me going home eventually. Maureen moved in. It had been heavy on my heart to start fasting. Maureen joined me and we started a 21-day fruit and vegetable fast that eventually went onto a 40-day fast. Oh man, this was such an amazing time. Like a spiritual fast forward button. I prayed a lot and at night I would go to bed listening to different teachings by Allan Baggs and a favourite by Bev Sheasby called living as the bride. Oh man, I loved this teaching. It takes a relationship with God from a father figure to that of a husband and Him romancing you.

I know it sounds freaky, it did to me too, but, oh wow, did He romance me.

At night after journaling and listening to Him I would ask to see a shooting star. Within moments there would not be just one, but two shooting stars.

Maureen ended up staying for 3 months. We shared a bed and often, when the heartache of my situation with Kevin got too much, I would lie in her arms and cry.

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At first, I had no idea what to do regarding income, so I decided to get a vendor's license and every weekend my little girl and I would set up shop with old clothes and furniture. Boy oh boy, it was demoralizing, especially when Kevin's family would drive past us. But my daughter and I would take the money we made and drive to Port Alfred and rent DVDs and sometimes go into a home linen and decor shop and buy something nice for our home. Humble, precious times.

I eventually managed to get my horses off our farm that Kevin had just left there. A friend had agreed to keep them at her place not far from where we were. One day, Andi and I went on our bicycles to go and ride, when I noticed Cassidy was limping. On closer inspection I realised it was a screw worm, screwing through his knee. I ripped my shirt off and started scraping away the worms and called Johnno frantically to come help. Johnno owned the horse trails and I had gotten horses from him before. I realised after this, I really just could no longer afford them. Oh, the day Andi's pony, Annabelle and her

foal Jataan were loaded up to go to their new home, I thought my heart would rip out my chest. This was the second horse Andi was losing through Kevin. The first was Choc Chip three years earlier, when Kevin had been going through one of his 'I don't think I want you' times. We had been separated and Johnno had come to fetch the horses because they were being neglected.

Anyhow, the money from the horses didn't last long, and I eventually went and saw Noreen who owned the beauty salon for a job. She agreed to train me and pay me a small percentage of treatments once I could do them.

My heart stayed true to Kevin regardless of circumstances. I continued to pray and hold out faith that we would indeed get back together and one day serve in ministry together. We barely spoke. I would call on occasion to tell him what I was doing and how much weight I had lost. He did sound interested, after all I was speaking his language. He told me how he ended up frequenting escort agencies with work colleagues. It was heartbreaking. I forgave him and continued praying.

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Our days were full; breakfast, school, the beach, homework, dinner and some nights fellowship. I had also started coaching swimming at the school. This was awesome as the school had no pool, so lessons were done in the lagoon. Sometimes I would ride a bicycle with my daughter to school. My relationship with God had spread into my daughter. Oh, she was so precious. Whenever that song, *Come now is the time to worship* came on, she would get this glaze in her eyes and she would raise her

arms and sing. On one occasion, flat broke, she asked about us going to fellowship one evening. I told her I wouldn't have enough petrol to get there and to work the next day. I smile now as I remember her response, Mommy if you go to fellowship, God will give you petrol.' How could I say no. I sent up a prayer and we went.

The next day, sure enough I needed to go and do some massages at a game farm for which we were paid cash. This time with God was truly one of the best times I've had with Him. Often during prayer, I would smell this beautiful fragrance, something similar to Jasmine. I couldn't wait to get home from work. I would close the door behind me, immediately slip off my work pants, and say 'I'm home' walking around in just my shirt, God's presence tangible.

On the downside, I had received a letter from the modelling agency auditor. Oh, my word, I had no clue about tax and had to do my books for the past five years. It was a nightmare.

I was busy with this when I got a text message on my phone from Kevin. He made his decision and wanted a divorce.

Divorce via text.

I started sobbing, my daughter came running in to see what was wrong. I told her—she screamed. I picked her up and held her in my arms on the balcony outside the lounge and together we cried for the longest time. I couldn't even text back. I had no money left on my phone.

## Chapter 17: Kilimanjaro Faith

Although Kevin stated his intention was divorce in the most vile way, I refused to accept it. I continued praying and believing we would be in ministry together.

I still didn't get the message God sent a couple of years back; that Kevin and I would be in the ministry—just not together.

I still believed that he would come to Kenton over December and we would somehow make up.

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By this time, my walk with God had grown exponentially. On one occasion when fetching my daughter from school, I came across a woman who had lost her baby around the same time I had lost Caleb. I inquired as to how she was doing—not well at all. It turned out the doctors had told her she would never conceive again. I flat out told her, 'rubbish', and prayed for her there and then. She fell pregnant shortly after.

On another occasion, on a trip to Port Alfred, whilst talking to a stranger about directions, God showed me what was going on in their life and I prayed for them. This would happen in shopping malls, or wherever I happened to be in contact with people.

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As December approached, I went to stay with Chester and Ma Jean at the preschool grounds. Over Easter and

especially December, Kenton-on-Sea undergoes a mass invasion of tourists, mostly from Johannesburg and Cape Town—it's chaos, but great for business in the beauty salon industry. I would work from 6 a.m. and finish at around 6 p.m. booked back-to-back with various treatments from massage, which I loved, to manicures, gel nails, pedicures, facials, and then my worst, waxing.

I loved my job and was amazed at how often I got to share God with so many people. I laugh now as I recall how I could be found in the toilets praying for people even for couples to fall pregnant. It's amazing how many came across my path who desperately needed prayer.

One day, as I was doing this lady's nails, I told her I planned on writing a book and going into ministry while she tried desperately to sell me on her son: a Christian guy who's been going through a divorce. I made it very clear that I was married, only separated. The very next day, her son came in to introduce himself and book his teenage daughter a manicure. I was flattered but annoyed, as I had no interest in anyone but Kevin and fixing our marriage.

I immediately took a liking and serious concern for his daughter who was 14 years old, definitely well beyond this in street smarts and intelligence with jet black hair; so, I'll call her Jet. I saw so much of myself in her at that age and knew too well where she was headed without serious intervention.

I immediately decided to join them for a milkshake to spend some time with her. I took my friend Kriekie with

me to avoid any slander in the village of me going out with other men.

He turned out to be a nice guy and just happened to drive my favourite car—a Mini Cooper. After our meeting, he agreed for me to spend time with his daughter.

On my first day off, I took her to Port Alfred for lunch. I shared my story and how looking in the wrong places to fill a void that only God can fill could lead to trouble—we connected and began a solid, trusting relationship.

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On Christmas Eve, I drove to my folk's place to spend some time with them and my precious daughter. On the way back, on Christmas Day, after praying for Ricky and his wife to conceive and then seeing clearly in a vision straight after, that they were going to conceive a son, which they in fact did the following month. Ricky's wife actually sent me a picture of him years later, looking ex-actly how I had seen him in my vision. Anyhow I felt prompted to stop at Deanne and Duncan's place to wish them Merry Christmas. I slowed down and then changed my mind, thinking I would be better welcomed at Sandy and Gav's. The following day, I was out with a group of friends having lunch when it came out in conversation that Kevin had spent the night with Deanne and Duncan and then headed back to Cape Town. I could have cried right there and then. That prompting I had felt—he was there!

I ended up going for a walk on the beach very depressed. My phone rang. It was Jesse, Jet's father. He

could hear I was upset and met me down on the beach. I poured my heart out to him, he listened, like a gentleman.

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A new year, a new attitude, I went back to work, determined to make as much money as I could to take my daughter on holiday to Johannesburg in January.

Jesse eventually called, thanking me for what I had done for his daughter. There had been a big change. It was so good to hear because she was an awesome kid. We got to talking, and I told him about my upcoming holiday to Johannesburg. He immediately offered us accommodations. I laughed and said I would stay at a cousin's. Jesse was adamant that my daughter and I should stay at his place. He assured me he would stay at a friend's, should we choose to take him up on his offer because he knew how I felt about Kevin and our marriage. I agreed.

As the time to go grew closer to leave, I looked at car rentals but didn't have a credit card anymore to secure a rental. When Jesse heard this, he said the least he could do is hiring me a car after what I did for his daughter.

I was so excited to get away and spoil my little girl; she did not know, this was a big surprise. Mom and dad slept over at my place and we left the following morning for East London airport telling Andi we needed to fetch something there. I took her to have a milkshake and put her air ticket in her hand. Her little face as she registered we were going away, just her and I—it was radiant.

Jessie fetched us at the airport and we headed off to get my hire car. From there we went to his place. It was an awesome arty cottage upstairs from the main house where his friend, clearly a multimillionaire, lived.

We decided to put our costumes on and take a swim. It felt so good. So free.

Strangely, nothing felt strange or awkward with Jesse. I think because I believed he knew where he stood and we were just friends.

That night he took us out for dinner with his kids for delicious shawarma. It was outstanding to see Jet again and meet his younger daughter too. After we dropped the kids off we headed back to his place. It was a long day, so we said our goodnights and headed off to bed when I saw him making up the couch. I was unnerved and felt deceived. He had said he wouldn't be there. I went to bed.

The next morning I felt like a truck had hit me. It was a combination of the increase in altitude and the many sleepless nights I had had on Thinz diet capsules. It was so crazy.

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At the salon, we had all decided we were going to shed some kilos over December and so we all got Thinz. I never thought for a minute about the ephedrine in it and I was hooked from day one. I abused them as an addict would with many sleepless nights. It scared me, but I was stronger now and would not let this rule me anymore. I had had my last before coming to Johannesburg.

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Fortunately, Jesse had lots of movies and a TV in his room with a king-sized bed. He was at work, so I slept whilst Andi watched movies. That night he cooked us dinner, and after having slept most of the day, Jesse and I got to chatting. Before we knew it, it was 4 a.m. I left him in the lounge and went to bed.

The following day, I took Andi to Gold Reef City, a local theme park. We loved it. It was such fun, and the trip itself was such an adventure. Kenton-on-Sea isn't much bigger than Johannesburg airport. It's a small beach village with no traffic. Here I was, with a map book, endless highways, and bumper to bumper cars. At one point, we ended up in Johannesburg CBD. Having heard so many horror stories about the crime rate in the area I quickly panicked, closed the windows, locked the doors, and prayed up a serious storm to get out of there. It was great!

Another day was spent visiting my bubble-blowing, tear duct cousin, who had arranged for her sisters to be there so we could all catch up. Then Jesse took us to a place called Montecasino. It's breathtaking. It's a shopping centre and casino designed like an Italian Tuscan village. The ceilings are frescoed to go from day to night with the charm of walking through village streets with design purpose balconies filled with geraniums. We took Andi to the bird gardens to see the bird show where one parrot kept on trying to take my wallet out of my handbag. We went to the arcade to play games and then to the food court with blue skies overhead for some family-style

Italian food. It was wonderful. Andi was in heaven. I bought her a handmade teddy bear to keep as a memory of that day. The holiday had been a breath of fresh air to me and my little girl and Jesse had spoiled us rotten. It felt good.

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Back home I settled back into work, completing my exams to qualify as a beauty therapist. Jesse and I spoke on the phone often. I looked forward to his calls, but I wasn't ready to give up on Kevin.

Jesse's friend was getting married in March and asked if I would go with him as his plus one. I was more than flattered. He offered to fly me up the day before the wedding, take me to the hairdresser, go to the wedding, and fly back the next day. I felt like a princess, especially considering that nothing had happened between us other than a great connection.

I started stressing, my rental lease was ending in April and Kevin had made it plain he would not be renewing it. I didn't know what to do. I was not earning enough at the salon to afford rent, food, school fees—the basics. My daughter thought it was a great idea for me to go to the wedding, so I agreed.

Jesse and I spoke on the phone more and more often. On Valentine's day, a massive bunch of flowers arrived. Honestly, I was falling in love.

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This is when I called Kevin. I asked him if he still intended on getting a divorce. He did. I was relieved, but I still believed in the covenant of marriage. 'I do not believe this is what God would want and trust me, I don't have those kinds of feelings for you anymore either, but I do believe that if we decided to commit to our marriage and covenant, that God would eventually restore those feelings for each other', I explained. He made it clear it was over.

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On the flight to the wedding, I journaled: Oh, father God, is this it, is this finally restoring all the years that the locusts have stolen from me? Oh Lord, let it rain. Father if this is you and your plan for me, then please Father open the floodgates and let it rain.

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When I arrived at the airport, I searched the crowd eagerly for Jesse, with butterflies in my stomach. When I saw him it was such a relief, a confirmation perhaps that I was still worthy of love. When we reached each other, we embraced for the longest time. It felt pure. When we got to his car, he opened the door for me and kissed me for the first time. At first, it felt strange, but I soon relaxed realizing my marriage was indeed over and I had done all I could. I could let go.

As we drove to his house guess what started playing? *Let It Rain*. Such joy filled my heart that I openly giggled.

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He treated me like a princess. He took me dress shopping and even ended up taking me jeans shopping for some Levi's. This was completely, completely new to me. In every relationship I'd had up to now, I was the one to foot the bill, or we suffered financially. It was refreshing. At the wedding, he introduced me with huge smiles and they welcomed me. As per usual at weddings, there was champagne for toasts.

Jesse knew most of my history with substance abuse, and I never wanted to make an issue out of it, so I obliged the champagne on offer. The evening went well. The following day, not so well.

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Jesse had gone into work. I was alone and went to lie at the pool with a bottle of wine. It felt like I was in the movies living the luxury life. Silly. That evening when he got home, I was rather hungover and ashamed after sleeping the wine off. Nothing more was said.

I returned home to Kenton in a bubble. My divorce papers arrived at the salon a few days after my return: irreconcilable differences. All I needed to do was sign, and it was all over. It perplexed me at how promises, love, and covenant all boiled down to this one little phrase.

I signed.

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April was drawing near. Soon my little girl and I would have nowhere to live. What was I going to do? Salaries in Kenton provided for minimal basics and no future. Port Elizabeth held nothing for me now after having been so well known in the modelling industry. Cape Town scared me with the spirit of drugs that seemed to hang over it. Johannesburg? Jesse had said his boss Paula, an extremely wealthy woman, wanted to start some kind of sponsored outreach and he felt I would be the perfect candidate.

Any mention of Johannesburg to my daughter had her in squeals of delight. She loved it and said she wanted to move there. What was I going to do? With all these thoughts going through my mind one night whilst packing everything away, my Bible fell open onto a page with the title 'Breaking a 40-year habit.'

I have a daily woman's study Bible with inserts written on some pages. Oh, my word, was I about to be wrapped over the knuckles for again failing at quitting smoking? I read on, 'Some of us would have to admit that we are like the Israelites. We are behind the Divine schedule, not growing as God would have us grow! We need to move on with our Christian life. The Lord is saying to us, 'You have stayed at this mountain long enough. It is time to break camp and move on!' (Kenton-on-Sea lies in a valley of two small mountains.) Breaking camp is as hard as breaking a habit! Perhaps we have lost our vision of witnessing and winning the lost. Maybe we have given up the light and opted for sand in our sandwiches and the sun on our backs: we are meandering our years away, content to

be out of Egypt (out of old life) but uninterested in entering the new life of Canaan (the spirit-filled life). Moving on required resolve, obedience, faith, prayer and fasting, Bible study, fellowship, and discipleship. God wants you to keep growing in your Christian life. Why don't you break camp and move on? You have stayed at this mountain long enough! Wow, freaking wow!

The next day I got news out that I was selling all my stuff. Two weeks later I put what I could fit in my little car, the Mazda Midge Ricky had given me, and I moved to Johannesburg. I did not know what the future held, all I knew was I believed, without doubt, I was doing what I was meant to do. Ironically just before leaving, I had been offered the very honorary position of a Jot teacher at the Ekhurpumlani School. It certainly caused me some confusion as it was a blessed ministry position. I remember being awed at how God had completely transformed the village drunken criminal, who almost lost custody of her child, into an honorary member of society who would be in a very influential position over children. All in less than a year.

But I decided to move and begin a new life where my daughter and I would have more opportunities.

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Jesse came down to meet my parents, which included Jean and Chester and drove me and my daughter to Johannesburg. He arranged a townhouse for us in Lonehill and had registered Andi for school at Bryanston Primary. I remember being saddened by all the concrete

high walls and security surrounding all the properties. I noticed the racism quickly, and it angered me immensely.

When I wanted to introduce myself to my neighbours, Jesse laughed and said no, that people didn't do that in Johannesburg—they kept to themselves. This was all very foreign to me. I settled as best I could. I'd take Andi to school then head to the gym, come home, tidy up, do some Bible study, fetch Andi from school, do homework, and then on some nights, Jesse would come over and make us dinner. After this, prayer and Bible study.

Life was good but different, cold, and lonely. We joined Jesse's Baptist church which was great and most weekends we spent time with his kids, Jet and I got on well. His youngest daughter liked me at first but she became increasingly unhappy.

Two young women were living across the way from me who often sat outside. One morning whilst doing the washing up, God told me how one girl is severely battling depression and that I needed to reach out to her. I called Jesse and told him. I panicked because he'd made it clear that people keep to themselves. He agreed I should be obedient.

Returning from the gym one morning, my heart started pounding as I felt prompted to walk over there. I knocked on the door and introduced myself, 'Hi there! Well, I know this sounds strange, but God told me to come over here to speak to the other girl.' 'Oh wow!' Her roommate responded a little taken aback but

concerned, 'she needs to hear this but she's not here.' With this God started showing me stuff about this girl's life and I obediently responded and shared what I was seeing and hearing. She started crying and gave her life to Jesus right there. I soon met with the other girl and shortly had my little Bible study group happening at home with Kirsty and Claire.

I cashed in my endowment policies and bought salon equipment for facials, manicures, and a massage bed to start my salon in the loft section of my townhouse. I named it 'Shiloh'. I advertised during the day after cleaning, dropping little flyers all around and soon built up a nice business.

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Unfortunately, the outreach that Jesse's boss wanted to start had not happened, because she got cancer and was extremely ill, fighting for her life. Whenever Jesse spoke to me about her and why God allowed this, I would simply respond with, 'We never really understand why God allows these things and probably never will.'

Not once did I even think of praying for healing or even tell Jesse he should believe in healing until one night after an intense Bible study with Kirsty—I went to bed and fell into a peaceful sleep only to wake up at around 2 a.m. with a very vivid picture of a woman in a hospital bed and an urgency in my spirit to pray and pick up my Bible. In my mind, I would hear scripture and turn to it. Over, and over again, I was taken to different healing scriptures. I was still awake when the sun came up.

I called Jesse and told him I needed to see Paula urgently. Jesse let his church fellowship group know we were going to see Paula that evening. They all prayed for us. This would be my first meeting with Paula and her family.

When we arrived, it felt rather awkward, but the family was so friendly and excused themselves, leaving us to pray. Paula was heavily sedated on morphine. I started praying, Jesse with his hand on my shoulder praying quietly in the background.

I opened my eyes to a thick mist and incredible heat. I took off my coat and shoes and continued praying.

God showed me that although she believed in him, she had never given her life to Jesus. I spoke with her about Jesus and asked her if she would like to give her life to him. She agreed, we prayed. I asked if she believed God could heal her. She did, we prayed.

Eventually, we left and headed home. I was exhausted. Jesse was ecstatic and had called the fellowship with the news that she had given her life to Jesus and how peaceful he was now, knowing she would go to heaven. I believed without a doubt God was going to do more.

The next day she was going for further tests, I was certain they would come back improved. They didn't. My spirit was uneasy. Why had God kept me awake all night showing me Paula in her hospital bed, along with repeated healing scriptures if this was not his intention?

A few nights later, God again woke me and prompted me to pick up my Bible. Again, I was led to the scriptures. This time to scriptures on Lazarus and how he was raised from the dead three days later. I openly laughed. As I laughed, I saw myself standing in front of the church a few months earlier in Kenton-on-Sea sharing what had so desperately been on my heart. Andi and I had watched a DVD about the disciples and how they were going around healing the sick and raising the dead. I'll never forget it. She looked at me and said, 'Oh mommy, imagine if we could do this!' I was struck silent, and it brought tears to my eyes at the time. I stood up in the church that Sunday sharing this. I said, 'Church, Jesus came for us and left for us, telling us that we would do what He did and more!' I went on, 'Honestly, I don't think He is the problem here, that we don't see enough of this, I think we are!' Here I am, just a few short months later and I'm being shown this. I'm no longer laughing.

More scriptures started coming into my mind, as I look them up, it's more stories of people being raised from the dead. My journal entry ends that night with—Paula will die on a Wednesday. You will go pray for her on Friday. Right. How do I explain this one? Well, I don't. I go into overdrive praying for miraculous healing. My prayers seem to hit the roof.

We next get news that the doctors can do nothing else for her and she is being sent home to be made comfortable. I asked if I could see her. Jesse stayed with the family while I sat alone with her—she's looked bad—on high doses of morphine. I gave her a manicure and talked and prayed with her. I was desperate for a sign. 'God, please, please, if what you have shown me is true, please let me

see a yellow rose.' I finished her nails and noticed her hands weren't clean so I went into the bathroom to find something to wipe them with. I grabbed a face cloth. Busy wiping her hands, I noticed the embroidery on the cloth. There's a yellow rose. No Lord, please, I meant a real yellow rose. Oh man, as I'm recalling this, I'm shaking my head—what an idiot. When I leaned forward to kiss her goodbye, the distinct feeling that the next time I saw her would be in the morgue was indescribable. I wanted to whisper 'see ya later', but I'm not sure if I managed to.

As we were leaving, I frantically searched the house and our entire journey home for any sign of a yellow rose. I eventually shared with Jesse what God had laid on my heart. Oh, my word, I didn't know what to expect in response to this. Beyond amazed, he calmly replied that if that's what God has shown me, I had his full support. My heart swelled with love.

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Jess came around for dinner when we got the call—Paula passed away. It was Wednesday night. I felt strangely calm. Jesse simply said, 'I'll arrange with the family that we go to see her on Friday.' I just nodded my head.

On Thursday, I spent the day in prayer and consulting my Bible. I just knew I had to go to her the following day. My phone rang, it was Chester checking in to see how I was doing. I explained as best I could what was happening.

Shame at first, he was annoyed and confused, his daughter's name is also Paula, but once he understood, he was silent. Then he asked if I was abusing any substance.

I'm laughing now, but I didn't find it funny then. 'No dad, I'm not.' 'Shew my girl' obviously relieved but still concerned, 'I'm not happy with you going there tomorrow. I'm worried about what it will do to your faith if nothing ends up happening.'

Hey if nothing happened, with respect, that would be God's problem. I asked him, 'Dad, if I don't go because of listening to you as my spiritual head, then who will be held accountable before God for this one day, you or me?' He said that he would be. I gave him what was in my heart, that if indeed this should transpire, then he should not take this conversation lightly. That he should pray about it earnestly and let me know in the morning. If I did not hear from him I would follow through with what I believed I needed to do. The call ended.

My spirit niggles about this whole submission thing in spiritual authorities. I went straight to my room and desperately searched out scriptures showing me spiritual submission. I'm not referring to wives, submit to your husbands. I know all about that in its TRUE context. The only scripture I can find on spiritual authority is Luke 11v28: *Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.*

The next morning, my phone rang, it was Chester. He doesn't believe I should go. I was upset and told him this.

'Please my girl, this one's on me.' I let it go. Instead of going to the morgue, I went for a job interview.

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Unfortunately, Jesse had not received permission from the governing body of the complex for me to run a salon and I had to close my doors. Jesse's well-paying job was no longer stable, and he had already taken a pay cut from the new owners, so I desperately needed to get a job.

Kirsty and I went to a group interview, for a sales position which was pretty impressive. The appearance of wealth and success was well presented. I was sorely disappointed to find out it was for an expensive vacuum cleaner, The Kirby. But during the interview, they explained various positions available and growth potential.

A Sylvester Stallone look-alike owner interviewed me, I'll call him Stallone. I made it blatantly clear in the interview that my passion was in ministry and helping other people, pointing out there and then, if I got anywhere in the company it would be the training position. I even explained that on that very day I intended to go to the morgue to pray for someone. He knew who I was and what I stood for.

The crazy thing, if that wasn't crazy enough, was his wife knew Paula. So, when he asked if I would be able to start training on Tuesday, I explained I would be at Paula's funeral. He was very understanding and said I could join after.

Kirsty also got the job. It turned out to be a good day, I suppose.

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On Tuesday, as we headed to the funeral, I prayed quietly to God again requesting my yellow rose as a sign and if it was Him all along and what I should have done. There were hundreds of people at the funeral. As we were about to go into the church one of the family saw us and we hugged. My heart was sore. It just kind of felt like I had let them down and I couldn't shake the feeling. This is when the sister disclosed that Paula had been cremated on Friday afternoon. The voice echoed, she will die on Wednesday, you will go and pray on Friday. I shook it off.

There was almost no seating left so we ended up sitting near the back. I could not stop myself from thoughts like...Oh my word, look how many people are here, what if I had gone and she had been raised from the dead, what kind of revival would have happened through just this one act of obedience? I had a lump in my throat. With that, I lifted my head to look toward the front of the church. It was quite a distance, but I was sure what I was seeing was correct.

Simultaneously Jesse and I looked at each other, 'Jess, what are all those flowers all over in the front?' 'Yellow roses', he replied with a squeeze of his hand and a tear in his eye. A sob escaped my mouth. I sat down quietly and cried gently as I clearly heard, not in an ugly way at all, but rather in a beautiful, absolutely loving way, 'It's ok. Next time, when you hear, you will follow.' Oh, my

friends, the best way to describe what followed was it felt like a light switch went off inside me. One that let inconceivable darkness in.

## Chapter 18: Entering the Bridal Chambers

Darkness comes into your life in so many ways. It can enter when you feel abandoned, alone and desperate. My new employer was a company that was about as dark and toxic as you could get. It was a pyramid scheme wrapped in a cult-like atmosphere tied with the bow of a charismatic leader—Stallone.

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On the first day of training at Kirby, we were asked by our trainer where we saw ourselves in the company within three months. I said, in the trainer's seat. It wasn't a threat to our trainer, whose name was also Tanya, it was because we were all made to believe they were looking for people for various key positions as the company was expanding.

By Wednesday, we were led from the training class to join a sales meeting with advanced dealers and management. I will never forget how I felt that day. The room was dark, disco lights were flashing as a video played out to the song *Money Talks* by Niel Diamond. Photos featuring the big boss, Stallone, in all his muscular splendour and other dealers who had qualified for VIP trips flashed, followed by money and cars. It was like some bad parody of a rap video.

The room was packed as people clapped and danced to the music. I didn't know if I should burst out laughing or run. It made me desperately uncomfortable. Once the main lights came on, the new people quickly introduced themselves, followed by massive applause. Awkward.

Then one by one, the dealers who had just sold machines came up onto the little stage to share their secret to selling the machines. As they finished, a chant would follow, 'Well done Peter, well-done son, well done Peter go and sell us another one!' I should have walked out there and then. What held me? Brainwashing from the get-go!

I could go into the details of the scheme but as these things go you are promised a guaranteed salary after you complete a set amount of demos. Then there is the 'But wait, there's more!' moment where you can earn over and above if you jump through a few more hoops and give just a little bit more. And of course, they launched a competition on day two of training where the person who managed to secure the most practice demos with friends and family earned a prize and the one who managed to sell 5 Kirbys over the weekend of their training would earn the commission of 10k and receive a free Kirby which they could sell for 20k, making R30 000 in your first weekend on the job. Well, they had my attention. I was broke. All my money was invested and lost in my beauty salon that was closed.

In the first week of training we were given lunch each day, nothing spectacular, but it was nice. We were made to feel like we'd come home. On Friday, a bombshell was dropped. We needed to be at the office on Saturday morning for breakfast by 6 am. The competition that was launched, had us doing appointments from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and Monday 5 p.m. and 8 p.m., after training, competition ending Tuesday. No, it's not compulsory to fill each slot, but we needed to do a minimum of 10 personal appointments before we were al-

lowed in-office appointments. I was exhausted by Monday but managed to sell two machines. A really, really amazing feeling.

By the following week, we were no longer being fed and our day now consisted of being at the office by 7 a.m. for kit inspection. Our machine and cars had to be dust free and sparkling or else we wouldn't receive any office demonstrations. This was followed by a sales meeting at 8 and then door knocking, whereby we had to give out free carpet shampoos in return for a name and landline telephone number. 25 a day, or no demonstrations! I was now the one on the stage and being cheered on, 'Well done Tanya, well-done girl, well done Tanya, come on sell us another one', Honestly, it felt great! I very quickly got sucked in. My heart was breaking inside though for my daughter. Every job I had ever had, until now, had always worked around her, now I barely saw her. My plan was to qualify as a trainer in three months so that I could work normal hours, but the stress started showing via substance abuse.

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Although there had been no official proposal, our engagement was planned for the end of August. My and Jesse's relationship was strained. His materialism had really started bothering me. I should have seen it when I first relocated. Jesse had taken me shopping for a new wardrobe. Although he seemed a heck of a nice Christian guy, it started coming across as though he wanted a barbie on his arm that he could dress up. He was very much about appearances.

I sold 12 machines in my first month and qualified for a VIP all-expenses-paid trip to Cape Town with the company. Mr Fleiser was my manager, the controller. His job was to confirm all appointments with clients, distribute the appointments among the sales people and make sure we were on time for all of them. We had to call him at the beginning and end of each appointment. The call, in the beginning, would be in front of the client to register our points for our competition or promotion. A sales tactic, so the client could hear you in a competition. Points were a code system we used for the situation we were in. 50 points meant only one decision-maker was there, either just the husband or just the wife. 100 points, both decision-makers were there and 200 points, both decision-makers were there and the people seemed to be wealthy. This was so that Mr Fleiser could call us out of a 50 pointer if he had a better appointment for us. The call at the end of the demo was so that Mr Fleiser could try and close the deal on your behalf using the fact that you're in a competition and he just happened to have a certain number of machines that he could give away at a great price. Mmm... just writing about it now has me annoyed and disgusted all over again.

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That first month I sold 12 machines and never even managed to make the guaranteed basic. Of course, there was a catch; only 100 point demos counted. Mr Fleiser being our controller resulted in me being on endless calls with him, often late at night when he would check if I had finally gotten home safely. Jesse didn't approve. Quite honestly, other than the preposterous hours I was work-

ing, getting home some nights at around midnight, driving from the opposite side of town and getting lost, I have no doubt, the fact that I was selling vacuum cleaners did not gel well with him. I used to get so horribly lost. With only an address and map book to get to my appointments was a nightmare. I couldn't tell left from right and would often phone Mr Fleiser sobbing my heart out. Somehow he always got me to my appointments and home safely.

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The first week of August was 'Sell a Kirby' day around the world. Starting at 5:30 a.m. at the office ending back at the office for a party and celebration after your last appointment, compulsory to attend. I remember being so exhausted when I went home after my demo to change, I fell asleep. Jesse arrived, waking me up to get ready. I couldn't believe it, he agreed to come with me. My endless pleas of support must have worked. Jet would look after Andi.

When we arrived at the office Mr Fleiser was already pretty well into his cups. He greeted Jesse, 'I take it you must be Jesse. If you don't look after this girl, I know someone who will. Hi, I'm Mr Fleiser.' Not a good start.

Everyone was relaxed, playing darts, then the awards started to get handed out. I received great applause for my two sales that day and plenty of recognition. Jesse in the meantime asked for wine, received it, holding his wine glass up to the light, inspected its cleanliness, then pulled out his handkerchief giving it a final wipe before selecting the wine of his choice. It was embarrassing. Tanya and I decided on revenge with Mr Feiser, who was honestly not a pleasant character to work with,

always moaning, and ended up pretty much drowning him straight from the bottle. Seriously deadly stuff for most people, let alone someone that doesn't normally drink. He was wasted.

Jesse warmed up and held my hand and congratulated me. I was relieved. Maybe things would be ok after all. Now he has seen and heard for himself from Stallone just how tough this job is. Two more months and I should be a trainer and life would be good.

Just before we left, I went to the bathroom. As I walked in, Mr Fleiser walked in behind me and locked the door. What the heck? 'Get out!', I was indignant. 'No' he said, 'Not until you kiss me.' I told him I desperately need the toilet. He was adamant he's not leaving and turned his back to grant me some privacy. When he heard the toilet flush, he came up to me—I moved away. He sat on the toilet to steady himself and explained to me in his drunken state, that Jesse is not the man for me, that he is and soon he will have his own office so he can look after me and my daughter. There was a knock on the door. It was Jesse asking if I'm ok. 'I'm fine, won't be long', I replied, washing my hands. Again Fleiser persisted, I refused, annoyed.

With that he opened the door and walked out of the bathroom, straight past Jesse, leaving me to follow. Jesse asked me to explain and had me go over every detail all the way home until he eventually softened toward me and we ended up being intimate.

This was not common practice as neither of us agreed on this until marriage. I remember being uncomfortable

about it, but considering the engagement was a month away and the evening events, why not?

The next day Jesse called from work and told me to go and get some Kentucky Fried Chicken and DVDs for later. Excited to spend some quality time with my baby girl, we head off. I waited and waited. I eventually messaged him to ask where he was. He called, 'Well, you see, I don't really believe you when you say nothing happened last night and I've been thinking a lot. I think it's better that we end things. You have a month to find a new place to stay.' I felt dirty, disgusted. I felt like the wind had been kicked out of me.

Where the hell am I going to go? What am I going to do? I remember sarcastically thinking, 'Oh well at least this time it was a phone call, not just a text.'

After all my experiences so far, I was horrified by Christian men. I was equally done with doing things the right way. I swore that in the future I would run a mile from any Christian man who came my way.

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I never went to work the next day. Mr Fleiser called, to see if I was ok and find out where I was. I told him to leave me alone and hung up. Stallone called him into the office and wanted to know what was going on as he had seen him follow me into the toilets on the office cameras that were literally everywhere except the toilets.

When I returned to work on Tuesday, Mr Fleiser asked about the bathroom desperately ashamed. He offered to

call Jesse and explain. The point was moot. If there was no trust now, there was no point in pursuing any marriage.

In further conversations with Jesse, I was able to reason with him explaining it had literally cost me everything I had to move. He agreed to give me an extra month and the furniture and appliances. He had the audacity to tell me I had served my purpose. Both his daughters were now saved and serving Jesus.

Excuse me but what about me? What about my daughter? What about his promises to provide, to look after us, and protect us so that I could focus on God and write this book?

Nah, that never came up in conversation. What was the point? This entire experience just solidified my feeling of worthlessness—an underpaid whore. It was my little girl and me against the world!

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Until I managed to employ a live-in domestic worker to help with Andi and my long hours, I would pack a pillow and blanket in the car. After knocking on doors each day, I would fetch Andi from school, grab us a bite to eat at a drive-thru on the way to the office then take her with me to appointments. We even managed to get her homework done in between. At first, it was an adventure, at least I made it that way for her. But I was finished, exhausted, afraid, lonely and desperate.

As soon as she was tucked in I would bury my head in a pillow and scream at the top of my lungs. Scream at God, at Jesse, at me at the whole flipping world until I finally slept. So much for these being the years restoring what the locusts had stolen. And this was only the beginning.

Goodness, the things I experienced, learnt and witnessed in these years. I will try and keep to the point here in how it affected my life. Put your seatbelts on!

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True to my word of running a mile away from a Christian man—it turned out Fleiser was Jewish. We did end up going out together about a month later when I realised his affections were more than drunkenness. He's going to kill me when he reads this, but he was like a lovestruck teenager around me. Unfortunately, my love for God didn't allow for ongoing casual sexual relations, which presented problems considering he had no intention of ever remarrying.

There was something special about him though. He actually reminded me a lot of my father. The good side of him. He had his charm, sense of humour, and undeniable love for his son and the idea of family. Seriously good values—hard to come by. It's like I saw this amazing light deep inside surrounded by so much darkness. Every fibre of my being wanted to bring that light to the surface. I just couldn't let go.

Also true to my word. I got the training position within three months. Only to find hours did not decrease and the

pay was not what was promised. I however thrived. I was teaching again, and it felt like each week I was teaching one of my favourite classes from the modelling school years, 'Positive Self Awareness'. I was good and soon became the top trainer in the country.

One thing I've always had was grit and determination. This teamed with chronic rheumatoid arthritis, made me rather inspirational to other dealers. My rheumatoid arthritis was hell. I have clear memories of trying to do demonstrations with my shoulder literally feeling out of the socket. I would balance my arm on my hip to keep the shoulder in place. I was in breathtaking pain that continued to worsen.

The Kirby and demonstrations are physically taxing on a normal person. The fix; I would take handfuls of pain medications to get the job done followed by further medications to help me sleep because the pain meds were stimulants. I ended up going back onto the oral chemotherapy I had tried so desperately to leave behind in order to have Caleb.

The chemo was not well received by Stallone. During training, I sometimes had to run out to the bathroom to vomit, but I managed to hide it well. On one particular day, standing at my whiteboard, everything went blurry and people's voices began to echo. I went to Stallone to explain the situation. He was fuming and made it patently clear that this could not interfere with my work. I ended up taking my chemo treatment on a Saturday instead of Monday. Leaving me very little life.

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That gift I have. The gift of knowledge and literally being able to feel people's emotions as my own. It didn't go away. When I walked into classes, within minutes I would supernaturally know and feel stuff that did have its benefits. I loved and cared for the people I trained deeply. However, it presented its problems too. I had not learned yet how to control the gift and be able to switch off from other people's emotions. A gruelling situation under normal circumstances let alone these circumstances, where I had targets and a job to do. My heart broke into a million pieces as I watched people I cared for deeply get abused believing in a dream that didn't exist. I saw marriages fall apart. People pawned their TVs and furniture for petrol to get to the next appointment. My gift began to feel like a curse. The fix; drink and more tablets.

Life got ridiculous. At one stage Fleiser had openly gotten involved with a beautiful young woman in training. I was beyond myself. He had made it clear that he never intended to get married again and I had made it clear I wasn't comfortable with our relationship being hidden from Stallone and the office. Relationships weren't allowed. Our 'relationship', considering our hours, would be him coming over at around 11 pm spending the night and us seeing each other on most weekends. I was gobsmacked at how he and this young woman were so openly allowed to be a couple at work. So many insecurities came bubbling to the surface: What's wrong with me? Why did I have to be hidden? Wasn't I worthy?

Then this young woman's friend commented one day about how I had tried to buy Mr Fleiser's love. Oh, that cut deep. Is this what he thought? I had bought him an expensive suit and clothing, and cologne for a business

trip with other leaders in the company because he never had anything decent. It had since come out that the huge promised salary of people in management, was truly just a FAA's.

Fleiser worked 18-hour days and weekends for peanuts. The brainwashing and manipulation were supreme. Remember, he had qualified for his own office and Stallone had this dangling over him like a carrot. It nauseated me.

Anyhow, at this time I had a dear friend Julia, her mom was a channel and spiritualist. Two things happened: Jules managed to convince me that true love had nothing to do with being male or female. That it had to do with falling in love with the soul and asked me to please give it a try. Quite honestly at this stage of my life I truly believed she may indeed be onto something and so I tried. Oh, my sweet Jules. She spoiled me rotten, she did indeed have the most beautiful soul, but I just couldn't. It didn't feel right. I felt awful knowing how I broke her heart. In the time we were together I met her mom. A stunning, vivacious woman who picked up on my gifting and spirituality within minutes of meeting her. She ended up giving me a black stone that I could wear in my bra, to protect myself from people's emotions. I did and it worked.

Around this time Stallone's mistress gave me *The Secret* by Rhonda Rhimes on DVD and CD. She owned another Kirby Northcliff office branch. We had been close where I even spoke to her about God and initiated her to go to church. I cared about her. I also cared deeply for Stallone's very exquisite Christian wife. I had

hoped the truth of the situation would have been seen and everything re-solved but unfortunately, it wasn't. What did happen when I finally walked out on the whole sad fiasco of this company, was Christianity was judged and persecuted, make no mistake, indeed leaving a scar and resulting in consequences.

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The truth was and is, we are so quick to judge, especially Christians. Although my heart throughout my entire life, regardless of who hurt me or what drug I was on, always remained pure. Always loving, giving, forgiving, and wanting to make a difference. People would look at the outside and curse me for it. Like the fact that sometimes I would join the conversations and let a swear word slip or that I was living with a man out of wedlock. I tended to drink too much at the Kirby day parties and yeah, I was the best bullshitter in the country, I had to be, considering I was the best trainer. But what this did was make me doubt my own walk with God. Very, very much so and it did for years.

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My initial feelings around *The Secret* had been rather taboo, as a result of my Christian core and speculation of new age stuff. I decided to pray for protection and watch it anyway. Quite honestly, I found it all very much based on biblical principles. Believing and receiving. I just don't like how it referred mostly to the universe instead of God, although it does refer to God occasionally. The truth in fact is, as the law of gravity exists whether you believe in it or not, so too does believing and receiving.

Both negatively and positively. Negatively as in, why do you think the Bible repeatedly says fear not, lest your fears come upon you? I can tell you this much; every single fear I ever had indeed did come upon me.

Anyhow, listening to this sparked my belief again and in all honesty, it put believing and receiving into a really practical way. I laugh now as I remember one rare Saturday morning that I didn't need to go into the office. I thought I would give it a try. I lay there with my eyes closed imagining what it would be like if Lina, my domestic worker brought me a cup of coffee. I allowed myself to feel the joy inside. The next thing I heard was her voice. She had brought me a massive cup of coffee and breakfast. I couldn't believe it. I decided to try it out on Fleiser. So one day sitting at home I imagined him sending me a message. I imagined how I would feel hearing my phone signal there was a message and what I would feel when I saw it was from him. Within minutes my phone beeped with a message. It was from Fleiser asking how I was doing. I was sold.

I eventually decided I am sick and tired of bugging around and want to settle down forever. I decided I wanted that person to be Mr Fleiser. I asked God for it and believed it. I made enough space in my wardrobe for his clothing and started parking my car with enough room for his. I did this for a few weeks and then got fed up and forgot about it.

A month later I got a call from him telling me he's in a bit of trouble and asked if it would be ok if he moved in with me to split expenses. I couldn't believe it. We

started out as friends staying together but things progressed. We were blissfully happy. As happy as anyone can be existing on endless pain medication and sleep medication, not just to get a job done, that was literally tormenting my soul on so many levels, but now back in full-blown addiction.

I also used this principle one December whilst visiting friends in Kenton. I was desperately short of cash and busy listening to the CD of *The Secret* when I decided what the heck and imagined how I would feel receiving R3000 and then believed it would come. My phone rang. It was Megan from the office. Stallone wanted to pay me a bonus. It was for more than R3000. Although by applying these principles I had learnt to attract certain things... It didn't last. Why? Well, the simple truth is Gods plans are better. And just like any good parent He is not going to just give us anything and everything we want. If He did, why would we need Him? It goes deeper than this. Almost two years into our on-off relationship I got called out of my training class at the mistress's office from the big boss, Stallone. 'Hey boss, how you doing, I say. 'Who the hell do you think you are phoning my office, speaking to my staff about your salary?' he's giving me his chest puffed teeth-gritting voice. I'm fuming.

His mistress would often pay late. Stallone more than often would end up bailing her out of trouble. Fleiser was obviously aware of this and had gone and spoken to him about it. I waited for him to finish and then calmly informed him that Fleiser and I were living together and had been for a while. With a threatening tone, he replied, 'You can fuck whoever you want to,

but you will not fuck with my business!' My hand started shaking as I gathered up my anger and disgust, 'Who the hell do you think you are talking to? I was not, in your own language, fucking with your business, but now I will!' I grabbed my bag, stormed out of my office into the mistress's, 'Tell your boyfriend I'm not one of his idiots.' With that, I walked out.

I felt exhilarated for standing up for myself like that, but at the same time, what was I going to do?

Tanya, my original trainer, who also just happened to be Fleiser's ex-girlfriend, got word that I had walked out. She too had left and was working as a sales manager for a security company. She contacted me offering me a position. Me in security? I was so lost.

To make it worse. One day after coming home from church, a little church my daughter and I used to attend as often as possible on our own.

It was quaint and perfect for us. Andi would dance and wave her flag singing worship with the other kids. It made me so happy. Fleiser never came he was Jewish. Well, it turned out he grew up Jewish but didn't really practise it or believe much in anything. He often used to say to me, 'What do you mean God told you this and that.' It frustrated both of us I'm sure.

We were to go on a picnic with Fleiser and his son. Something Andi and I were looking forward to. We started packing and Fleiser said his son didn't want to go. This had started happening often. Andi would be so excited about him coming over sometimes telling all the

other kids that lived in different cottages on the property that her brother was coming. She would make me buy marshmallows for them all to braai and when he arrived and she called him, he would go all cold and stiff and refuse point blank to join them. He had been raised with adults, a single child, very much used to getting all the attention and his own way. Andi and I being around weren't often welcome unless it was on his terms. I tried to make the picnic sound awesome. Son wouldn't budge. I called Fleiser aside and tried to explain that it wasn't healthy to let a 10-year-old child call the shots. I had attended workshops on boundaries for kids, had studied the repercussions of this kind of thing. I had also read a brilliant book by James Dobson called *Dare to Discipline*. Truly powerful book, a must-read for anyone battling with this kind of thing. Anyhow, he ended the relationship saying he couldn't keep upsetting his son. I lost it, chucking out all his stuff. He packed and left.

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The depression came swiftly. On the outskirts of Bloubostrand township, my precious innocent little girl and I would set up shop, selling our clothing and whatever we could for food. Morally, I just couldn't do Stallone and the Kirby thing. Although I had only been doing my job and being good at my job. It was my face they saw. It was me they believed in. No, I couldn't do it. My painkillers now became my sustenance. The only light I saw. Except my body had built up such resistance I would need to take more and more, which often had me vomiting my guts out. At the time I was still on Trammal, taking up to 30 a day. This is how dear Paula found me one

day. Paula, Chester's daughter. I'm not sure who had contacted her about my state, but I was lying in my daughter's room in and out of consciousness when I woke up to her being there. She is a very well-known top child and family psychologist. She wanted me to go with her there and then. I refused but promised to see her the next day. I remember the appointment well. She told me how strong I was and how much she believed in me. That she knew I could get through this. I was so, so tired. So, so broken. So, so finished. Where did she see this strength when all I saw was trash and failure after failure after failure?

If I recall correctly I had about R500 to my name and no cell phone. I had sold it for food and meds. I needed a phone to call Tanya to take the job offer. I drove from the appointment and bought myself a cheap phone.

Again I excelled, becoming the top salesperson along with Clyde, someone either Tanya or I had trained at Kirby. Another ex Kirby colleague, Bennette, joined us too. Bennette was in his early 40s and was involved with a woman well into her 60s, but a crush he had while we were at Kirby carried over which he awkwardly brought up now and then. By this stage, Fleiser had started calling and visiting again, but I was not ready to rush into anything. Andi and I had been really shaken before and I wasn't ready to put our hearts on the line. One day, Fleiser called and asked me to please join him for a milkshake. Bennette offered to look after Andi.

Fleiser pulled out all his stops, 'Remember how I told you I would never get married again', he said. 'Well, I've been thinking about it, and I don't think that's true.' I'm

over the moon but still in no rush. This time we will do it right! I told Bennette and he tried to be a friend and be happy although I could see it was for my benefit. Within a week or so, he had a tremendous fallout with his partner. Feeling sorry for him, I told him to come over. He arrived with all his suitcases and moved himself in. I still didn't know how to set boundaries and say, 'no', so he slept on my couch.

I was doing well enough that I could start house hunting and had my eye on a three-bedroom home in need of some repair in Jukskei Park. It was part of the security company's property they were no longer using which they had agreed to rent to me at an affordable rate. Bennette would stay on at my old place and take over the lease. It seemed like a win-win for everyone with no conflict.

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One day at work I got a call from Bennete's partner. A call that sent chills down my spine. She told me she's calling because she was desperately concerned about my daughter because Bennette was a convicted paedophile. Oh my God! Living in my home! And I had left Andi alone with him!

I knew something was off. At times when he hugged me, his whole body would shake. My world started spinning. I told Tanya and she promised to do a background security check. In the meantime, I carefully broached up the subject with Bennette. He quietly smiled and shook his head. He explained how he innocently took a pee near a park and was seen by a kid, which was turned into something it wasn't. I wanted to give him the benefit of

the doubt, but it wasn't worth the risk. I contacted Paula. She told me to bring Andi and come and stay with her.

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We were meant to move into the new house in a few days. Fleiser was adamant about moving in with me—I was adamant he wasn't. This time round I desperately wanted to do things properly but in the likelihood of it happening and me being really honest and signing the lease which states how many occupants the property will have, I added him to it just in case. When the senior manager saw this he decided to up my rent by R2000 a month. I explained there is no way I would be able to afford this and that Fleiser will more than likely not even be moving in. There and then he refused me the lease.

All my stuff in boxes, literally the day before we were meant to move in, in tears I explained I had nowhere to go and that I'm staying with a friend. Like most of my Johannesburg experience, he honest to God didn't care. It was this along with the fact that one of the security guards I had placed at a client's property who had been in an armed robbery had ended up masturbating outside her bathroom window and now the knowledge that the promised response time, was in fact not happening that led me to lose respect and trust in this company and being able to sell its services.

Again, I was faced with prostituting my soul for money.

Paula said we could stay with her for the month. The stress caused my arthritis to flair, leaving me crippled

with pain, incapable of getting Andi to school. Fleiser would drive from one end of town to me to get her to school, allowing me to get to the doctors for cortisone and anti-inflammatory injections which would normally kick in, in time to fetch her.

The embarrassment of having Paula or anyone see me in this state was excruciating. Somehow, I managed to keep going and miraculously Tanya turned on her charm with the big boss and he agreed to me moving in at the end of the month. I stayed with the security company for a while, but the rheumatoid often had me cripple and in trouble with work.

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I can't really tell you exactly what it was that lead to me taking a job at Elysium. It was a culmination of things I suppose. First off, Fleiser's total disregard for me wanting to do things properly, was futile. He was there on the day I moved in along with all his stuff. When I tried enforcing boundaries and separate rooms it was met with laughter. Not that you can blame him. I hadn't exactly presented myself for who I truly was right in the beginning. Regardless, it made me feel pathetic, worthless, unheard. Does any of this sound familiar?

For a time, he actually even convinced me to come and work for his Kirby office, which was an intended fail by Stallone from the get go. It was in an Afrikaans area of Johannesburg and Fleiser couldn't speak a word of it. Endless conversations with Fleiser trying to explain the vulgarity of this company's protocols and Stallone's intentions with him were futile. The brainwashing and

charm of Stallone was indeed supernatural. It somehow ended up with both Fleiser and I working back at Stallone's office earning great cash under all my specifications of salary and hours. Although finances were great, it didn't last long.

When enough was enough, I told Stallone, 'One day we will stand before God, I'm sorry, but I can't do this.' and walked out for the last time. Physically I couldn't hold up a job anymore. There were days that the pain made it impossible to even get to the toilet without Fleiser's help. Emotionally, I believed I was worthless. What more was there for me to do other than prostitution? Deep down inside I still felt like a piece of meat and I may as well be paid for it.

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For years I had every intention of exposing the crime and fraud of this company. The only reason I didn't was quite simply, I was disgusted by the human race. At the time, I thought, this world was so full of trash, what's the point. The sick and evil thrive. The pure of heart are simply trampled.

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I remembered the days of Tessa and would feel sick to my stomach. How, how was I going to do it? Elysium is an upmarket massage parlour that offered a happy ending. Somehow in my state of mind, I believed this was not so bad. I even believed I was doing some good. Rather a man comes here for this than to have an affair. Crazy. It was awful.

All the girls would line up like cattle when the bell rang. I felt just like I had back in the days of Miss Cabana—please pick me, pick me. Pathetic and disgusting. Once you were chosen you would go off to a room where you would both undress. Me down to my underwear. The massage followed with the obvious ultimate happy ending. Shower get dressed and get paid. R300 for 40min. Easy enough.

Fleiser knew about it, hated it and begged me to stop. 'It's nothing', I would say, seriously it's nothing, just a job. Except it wasn't. I had graduated to a pain killer called Lentogesic. Something that was eventually taken off the market because people were having heart attacks from normal dosages. I was taking up to 15 just to get through a shift. It felt like I was there for a lifetime but I was there for only about two weeks when I was almost raped by a client. It shook me to my core, as this Indian guy grabbed my arm pulling me over the massage table, tearing my underwear. I could feel him on me. Fortunately, I hadn't locked the door and all the oil from the massage somehow helped me slip out of his grip. I ran naked into the passage screaming. I tried going back after this, but when I got there, I burst into tears, crying out to God and headed home.

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As always God came through. Not always how we expect or how we would like.

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First, I received a call from the security company asking about my health and asking me to return. I did. I also found a new church, in Sandton that offered short powerful services. Extremely upmarket with TVs in the bathrooms screening the service so you didn't miss a thing. Something I actually felt a bit disturbing. I don't know, just all the glitz and glamour was a bit unsettling. Some time passed. Please understand by this time I still remained addicted to the Lentogesic tablets.

One day my daughter was to have a little friend over for the day. Fleiser's son was also meant to come. I was excited about the day. I hadn't seen Fleiser's son in almost three months, not since I had gently reprimanded him. Fleiser called to say he's changed his mind and won't be coming. I was fuming and so freaking over it! I know how desperately Fleiser loved and longed for his son. I hated that I was the reason he's not coming. This brought up my whole experience with Kevin and his children and ex-wife. I started feeling guilty, setting me in a bad mood over Fleiser's son and Andi had to suffer for it. She had her friend coming over, she didn't deserve this. Feelings of anger, frustration and guilt had me in my car and on my way to the township to find a dealer. I got ecstasy and returned home. It didn't work. I had the phone number of the dealer, I got another one, it still doesn't work. Having fed the monster, I'm freaking out and the little friend will be arriving soon. I felt terrible. I hated myself for doing this. I got back in the car to find another dealer and ended up getting CAT.

Anyhow the day progressed beautifully, great mood achieved, heartache, guilt and troubles forgotten. Fleiser was not impressed. He didn't even like to take headache

tablets. Totally unable to sleep, I ran out of this pretty addictive stuff. It was around 4.30 a.m. when I left the house in my pajamas. I stopped at my daughter's bedroom watching her sleep for a long time. Oh, my sweet child, the ache in my heart for her was huge, tangible. I had to stop this. She deserved so much more. I'm going to church at 10 am, I'm going to have my last fix.

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I was a bit nervous when I arrived at the township in Bloubostrand, but not too bad. I had been very much a part of the black youth and quite honestly I didn't see colour outside of the areas we lived in. I had been in Kentons townships for different functions in the past, this was just another township. I found a guy burning wood on the outskirts and asked him to please drive with me for protection and show me where to go. He misunderstood me, taking me deep into the township to a pharmacy. Once I made myself clear we returned near the entrance. It was still dark. He showed me where to go and knock, but refused to come with me. I knocked. Within seconds I was grabbed from behind. One hit me, another kicked me, another grabbed my cellphone and car keys whilst the other started pulling my pants down, 'We are going to rape and kill you, you white bitch' they said through gnarled teeth. They didn't look human. I knew without a doubt, this was it—my end.

My life flashed before my eyes, my little girl lying in her bed, I screamed at the top of my lungs 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus', within seconds they turned and ran. I stood up pulling up my pants running as fast as I could toward the road. A car was coming. It was a police van. I couldn't

tell them why I was here. I made up a story that I was bringing my domestic worker some medicine. I told them we had to go get my car. 'We don't even go in here', they said. 'Well, you have to, my car's there.' They cocked their guns. My heart was pounding. I heard this small still voice inside me, 'Ask them if they have a torch?' They don't. They asked for my cell number in the hope of calling my cell phone to hear where they were. I can't remember my number. I'm sitting in the van panicking. The tow truck is going to cost R800, I don't have it. I can't imagine phoning Fleiser to tell him where I am or what's happened. What am I going to do? Again, the small still voice, 'Ask them to put the car lights on.' They did. My car keys shimmer under the light.

I got into my car and no, I didn't head home. I sit here shaking my head now as I remember this, but yeah, addicts will relate. I drove to a nearby garage hoping I might be able to get some weed or something from a crooked petrol attendant. None to be found, I then head home. I woke Fleiser up. My lip is bleeding and swollen. I told him what happened. He's not impressed and asks over and over again, 'You promise you weren't raped?'

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Hiding this from Andi and her little friend wasn't easy, but I did. When I got to church Bennette was there. I had given him the benefit of doubt and we had remained friends. I fell into his arms crying gently. I wish I had recorded the lyrics of the worship song that played that day, but it was spot on. Like God was speaking into my heart. When they sent the sharing basket around I slipped in a piece of paper saying'. This morning at around 5 a.m.

I was attacked by four black men in the township whilst trying to get drugs. They were going to rape and kill me. I screamed Jesus three times. They sprinted in the opposite direction. God's love and grace are beyond comprehension and indeed in the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess!' Somehow it got to the pastor and was read out in the service that was attended by at least a thousand people. A short while after this a scripture was laid on my heart whenever I prayed. Luke 6v29: To the one who strikes you on the jaw or cheek, offer the other jaw or cheek also; and from him who takes away your outer garment, do not withhold your undergarment as well.

Very, very much against Fleiser's will, I made up a box with food, old clothes and shoes. I wrote a note, 'From the woman you attacked on Sunday morning. I forgive you, God bless you, Jesus loves you.' I know this seems totally hectic, but after what happened with Paula's funeral, I would not again ignore that prompting, no matter what. Who knows what may have occurred as a result of this action of obedience? We drove there. My nerves were very on edge, I prayed in tongues under my breath the whole time.

The shack I knocked at could be seen from the street. I saw a lady and asked her if she would please just deliver the box to the cottage for me and in return I would give her R10. She agreed. I prayed. We ended up giving her a lift to fetch her child from crèche. Her child just happened to be disabled. I was able to pray with her and her child, returning home filled with joy.

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As I drew nearer to God again, my frustrations with the differences between Fleiser and I really started gnawing away at me. Do you know the scripture on being unequally yoked? 2 Corinthians 6.14: Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? I was so torn because God was pretty much my all even though I stumbled, no flat out crashed, often and had many faults. Fleiser didn't believe. He was still part of the promotional company selling Kirbys. Definitely not someone I could ever be proud to introduce as my husband to anybody near and dear to me. Yet, like I've said there was this light inside him.

Regardless, I saw no future and decided to end the relationship. He was sleeping in the spare room. I was praying in my room. Clearly I heard, 'If you leave, how will he know the truth?' How could this be? Total contradiction to God's word, but it persisted and continued, 'This man will love you and never leave you.' I responded, 'Lord, then you need to reveal the truth. I pray, Father, that the Holy Spirit will come upon him and reveal the truth.'

Over the next two weeks on arriving to do a demonstration, the following things happened: One couple just ended up speaking to him about God and Jesus, another gave him a DVD to watch and spoke to him. The DVD was of a Rabbi who had converted to Christianity. Another couple gave him a book and DVD on God and his grace, love and power. Then there was a couple who even told him to leave the machine in the car and come inside. They fed him and spoke with him about Jesus.

One evening he came home early. We were sitting in the lounge and he gave me another DVD he had received. His face was stern, and he asked me what's going on. I giggled. He was not impressed. I told him that all I did was ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth. Silence.

A day or two later, he asked the woman who worked at the office for the lentil stew recipe she made. She wrote it out for him and on the back of it, she had written a Psalm. It described exactly what he was going through at that time. Again, he came home early. He showed me the piece of paper with the Psalm on and explained what happened, followed by the words that will forever rock every fibre of my entire being, 'Tanya, I believe. What do I do now?'

Right then and there sitting on the floor in our lounge we prayed and Fleiser gave his life to Jesus. The transformation was glorious. He asked to go to church, he loved it. He asked to be baptized, he glowed. Without me saying anything further about work, he started feeling uncomfortable about it.

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You see, this is what happens when you give your life to Jesus. You are reborn! The person you are before you pray the 'sinner's prayer' it's called, and the person you are after, are absolutely not the same. You now have the spirit within you. You start to hear, see and feel and experience things you were not capable of before. When Adam took a bite of that apple in the garden of Eden, he

did indeed die. Spiritually, God departed. When you accept Jesus, He re-enters. Oh man, it's awesome. Sorry, I don't mean to preach, but I feel here is a good spot to point out a very important fact! For some there is a total, instant transformation, where habits like smoking simply fall away. For others, as in my case, it's a process. I see it like this; see your life, your being as a block of apartments. Jesus comes in—where does he start cleaning? One block at a time. Whatever he deems most necessary, as and how, in His time.

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Believe it or not, until shortly before this, I was still, somewhere deep inside, wondering if Kevin and I might reconcile and be in ministry together. Quite honestly I do not know why, but I had since had a call or two from him. The first one whilst still at the promotions company selling Kirbys. I remember my excitement at seeing his number, only to hear he wanted the camera I had bought him for the modelling agency's photoshoots. I was disgusted and fuming that after everything he would still want that. Other calls had been to come down for a wild weekend of sex, because he said we were great at this. I declined.

One December, shortly after Fleiser and I had been seeing each other, I was in Port Elizabeth. Kevin and I spoke and he invited me over to say, hi. This would be the first time I saw him since Settlers hospital when he tried to have me certified. I remember seeing some of my furniture—furniture I had grown up with as a kid. It hurt. As I was about to leave, he had the audacity to ask me to join him in the bedroom for one last time. 'I'm no longer your wife, Kevin', I responded, shaking with anger, but I

never showed it. It wasn't until I heard on another visit to Kenton-on-Sea, to visit Dee, that he had in fact gotten re-married. That was when I knew it was time to let go and move on with my life knowing that it wouldn't be ok with God for him to break another covenant.

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I have heard that Kevin followed through with joining the ministry. He went on to be an Anglican Priest. He later left the priesthood and ended up speaking against the church that had taken him in and went on to serving Jesus in Israel. I must be honest. It deeply disturbed me how someone well into their third marriage could have been accepted into the priesthood to teach on a covenant. God's covenant with us is the most likened unto the covenant of marriage. After a lot of thought and prayer God showed me that in Christ we are all a part of one body. Some are the eye, some the heart, others the hand etc... The eye will never know how the heart works and vice versa. In other words just love and accept each others differences. I believe without a doubt if the body of Christ did this instead of trying to change each other to behave like one another, rather standing in love and unity, God would really be able to move mightily. So I wished him well and let go.

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The December following Fleisers transformation, he proposed on my dad's boat with champagne with both our kids present. He had planned on a romantic, sunset trip down the river, but the weather never played its part. It was raining and cold at the jetty, but hey it's the

thought that counts. Besides, I've always seen rain as a sign of God's blessing.

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In August of 2010, 34 years old, I went to my first rehab, Sanca Horizon in Boksburg. Our wedding was to be on the 24th of September. The fellowship group I was a part of, was run by a stunning Indian girl who was once a raging heroin and crystal meth addict. She had been clean for almost two years. I would share openly my fears and frustrations around my addictions which remained a constant thorn in my side. Not recreational drugs but the Lentogesic. Pain medication. I would cry, pouring my heart out explaining the very real situation of living in chronic pain and addiction. She helped me get past my fears and into rehab.

My sister, Michelle called me on my way there in tears telling me how proud she was of me. Oh my sweet Michelle. We had shared so much heartache. My sister, my other mom. She really encouraged me to succeed.

It was so scary, but I honestly saw myself as entering the bridal chamber. 21 days of clearing, cleaning, and preparation to be an awesome bride and wife. I left Fleiser with a book to start journaling and the book *Wild At Heart*. His faith soared. Our visits were ever sweet. He resigned from the promotion company to work with me at the security company. Life was bliss.

## Chapter 19: Here We Go Again

Strange things happened in rehab. Seriously scary, movie-kind of strange. In the opposite ladies' room, they had seen one girl climbing the wall—literally climbing the wall. The girls were petrified. On the guys' side, many of them were being disturbed by an entity touching them and pulling their blankets off them. Fear was rampant, but the staff severely underplayed it.

To be honest, the whole situation was just irritating and needed to be addressed and put a stop to. I am not afraid of spirits. I have no doubt they exist, especially where addiction is present. I got anointing oil from the attending pastor and prayed with him through the girls' dorms anointing all the doors, windows and beds. The spiritual activities ceased. It was this that had two girls chatting to me and surrendering their lives to Jesus.

The beginning of my rehab was frustrating and felt as if it was a slow start. They teamed me up with the alcoholics and not the drug addicts. I was not an alcoholic; I was there for abusing morphine so I hung out with the drug addicts during breaks. Being in a circle of people I could relate to on so many levels was beautiful. There was total transparency, no hidden agendas, certainly no airs or graces, just real people facing their problems. Laughter right from the gut was often to be had as we shared past and present experiences. There were also endless discussions of how we were told we could not drink alcohol as this would lead to cross-addiction—changing one substance for another.

I thought it was ridiculous and could never imagine how anyone could drink alcohol daily. Did I even listen to myself?

The classes I attended were brilliant. One class in particular, had us draw a wheel of life. We had to show how we were in different areas of our life during and outside of addiction—physically, spiritually, in relationships, financially, general well being, etc. This to me was a stark eye-opener. The reason most people abuse substances is that we believe it helps us cope. Seeing it like this, clarified that it was indeed the opposite.

In my third week, I was allowed out for the weekend after signing a consent form and agreeing to take Antabuse. It's a medication you take that prevents you from drinking. Well, if you drink on it you can die. That weekend was so, so beautiful. We took the kids to play putt putt golf, and went out for a bite to eat. The joy, love and freedom I felt, I had never before experienced. Fleiser and I had a different kind of love. It's hard to explain, but it was a safe, secure, solid, reassuring love. The future seemed so clean and clear.

It was both of our second marriages, there was no financial support from the folks and honestly it should have been a desperately stressful time but it wasn't. I was free from all substances; I felt like I could conquer the world. God came through in every way. The venue was a beautiful little farm outside Johannesburg owned by a friend we had made at the Kirby promotion company. She was a party planner who also had a small hall on the farm for receptions. She had all the accoutrements we needed in every colour. I chose bright gerbera pink, black and

white. The food was catered for by another friend I had made through Mannatech.

My wedding dress I found marked down, everything literally just fell into place right up to my favourite perfume, given to me as a gift by my cousin the day before the wedding. I wish I could find that journal, but I actually asked God if there would be any way he could organize my favourite perfume, which he did the following day. We also had the most exquisite cake, also a gift from my cousin, made up of layers and layers of chocolate eclairs with pink gerbera around for decorations. The entire setting was preciously perfect, made up of lots of love, no doubt from above.



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Although we got married in court the day before the ceremony due to Chester not having a marriage licence,

it really didn't count. I still kicked Fleiser out for the night and spent it with my parents who came to Johannesburg through Michelle sponsoring their flights. Mom and I did the flower arrangements together. Bringing back many sweet memories of me as a little girl. Somehow amidst all she did, she taught me flower arranging, and we used to enter competitions and win.

Oh, mom, we had gotten really close through the years. Somewhere along the line in my walk with God, I stopped holding a grudge against her for all the psychologist visits, for not talking about things that had happened, for always being too busy with the models to be around for me. Instead, if anything I saw just how much she was there for me. Mom seemed to really understand depression. Through her own fight against it and inability to see psychologists growing up, having to work things out on her own. She obviously thought throwing as many shrinks at me was the solution. We would talk about depression openly. She always told me that one day she decided enough was enough, and all she did was hold on to her Bible and cry.

Come to think of it, just that story may very well be the reason I even get to write this book at all. Deep down it made me believe with absolute certainty that God was the only solution to depression. Mom was a dynamic, brilliant woman who impacted many, many lives, without medication she oozed love, peace and joy. Anyhow she promised that at 40 things somehow miraculously change and life just gets easier. I looked forward to that time.

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On the day of the actual wedding, when I walked down the short aisle. Fleiser and I were both in tears. This time tears of joy, not regret. I knew this was an honourable man.

Our honeymoon had been arranged at a massive discount by his ex who was a travel agent. It was wonderful. Completely different, absolutely not all about lust and flesh.

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December came and we desperately wanted to go to Sundays River to spend time with my folks. It was actually standard procedure. Every school holiday would be spent with my folks on the river, especially for my daughter. I would normally join on the big June/July and December break. This year we just didn't have the money to go.

I had left the security company in pursuit of writing this very book and running my own carpet cleaning company using Kirby machines. One Saturday, Fleiser pipes up that he's feeling lucky and suggests we go and gamble. I'm fuming that he's even thinking about it since he had a huge problem with this before I met him and since had himself banned from casinos. He persisted. I agreed on the condition that he understood that should we lose, we would stop at a pharmacy and we would get codeine for me.

At the casino, I had a drink or two and we lost. I was livid and insisted on stopping at the pharmacy. Seriously,

how stupid can someone be? I honestly didn't feel like anything at the time. I was doing it purely to punish Fleiser. The consequence of this, oh man, is gut-wrenching on every level.

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I started smoking weed again and got Fleiser to join me. Jumping in the bath having a joint together like two naughty kids whilst our kids were watching TV or outside became our fun thing to do. It started slowly, but soon enough it snuffed out all normal joy.

Business for Fleiser was slow, again. The Rheumatoid was flaring. Strangely, after consuming large amounts of codeine, I would end up crippling with pain. At one point I actually believed that my abuse of this originally, when I was prescribed this after my c-section having my daughter, had actually led to arthritis because it only started after this.

The carpet cleaning business had as a result slowed down immensely. The book? Although I journaled I had no idea how to start. I would like to point out here that we had also stopped attending church.

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A couple of things happened: I found myself getting deeply annoyed at services as more and more preaching was done on giving. How you can never outgive God and how you will be blessed 100 fold on whatever you give. I am a firm believer in tithing and giving to God so I'm

not going to get into a sermon here, but in a single service, the basket could be sent around three times for different offerings. Perhaps you can understand my frustration. The pastor would openly brag about being able to afford the most expensive leather jackets and on and on it went. Hey, I'm all for people in ministry having good stuff don't get me wrong, but it was all the talk, my spirit just did not feel comfortable anymore.

After promising to see me in rehab, I never saw or even heard from anyone from church until I bumped into the pastor that said he would come a while after.

The church refused to marry us or even attend our wedding because we were unable to do the premarital course because of Fleiser's work. Anyhow my point is, spiritually we started lacking.

I do not for one minute however say that relationship with God is based on church attendance. Not at all. I have met way too many self-righteous religious church attendees in my walk, who come Monday are completely different people. I do however believe that being part of a church or body of believers definitely does have its benefits. There is an undeniable anointing in the gathering of believers and sometimes that anointing is exactly what you need to see you through.

Facing difficult times is also so, so much easier when you are surrounded by the love, support and faith of fellow believers. Heck, to walk this life alone is no joke.

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As you can see, things had again started slipping. Slipping to an all-time desperate low. We had pawned and sold all the furniture that we were not using along with my engagement ring.

Fleiser's ex had gotten herself into trouble and had lost her job. So, anything remotely extra we had gone to her. Somewhere in all this mess, Fleiser's son was due to come for a weekend. There was not enough food for all of us. I got that scripture in my mind John 15.13 'Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one's life for his friends.' I mean everything in me there and then in that instant decided that prostituting was the solution. Sounds crazy? Sure, until you are in that place having lived and walked the journey I had walked. My family needed help and help I would. Fleiser freaked out at the mere mention of it.

But I suppose my sales skills and our absolute desperation led to me being dropped off one Friday evening at a house in Jukskei Park by Fleiser and his son. Something I threw constantly in his face for many years, hitting hard, breaking down every fibre of his masculinity. A story for later.

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It was an escort agency run from a house. The owner was a woman, part of another big church in Johannesburg who attended religiously every Sunday whose daughter was one of her escorts. When discovering this, I was horrified and couldn't help myself in reaching out to her in love. This led to her being in tears and disappearing into her room. Her mother took an immediate dislike to me.

It was quiet, there were no clients, so the owner had us walk around the property throwing salt over our left shoulder, some kind of spell to bring in clients. I remember praying desperately at the time for protection and believe it or not, whilst I did I noticed a cross that was lit up in a nearby tree. I know this may sound almost blasphemous to some, me being where I was and doing what I was doing, but without a doubt He was with me, always is.

Shortly after this, sure enough, a man came in and requested me. The owner called for me to offer him cocaine, a little up-sell, so I did. He asked if I wanted some. I'm an addict and there it was, presented in a stressful situation and I said, 'yes'. After he had had me once I felt sorry for the other girls, because there were still no clients. We had spent a lot of time talking earlier that evening, listening to each other's stories.

I convinced him to bring in another girl. He was high on cocaine and still had some juice in him as the owner knew when she pushed the drug. It's crazy but even in that situation, I had other's interests at heart above my own. The whole situation was like something out of a Tarantino movie. My stomach was doing flips as this bizarre scene played out. Not able to sleep a wink, I kept going back to the bar for more drinks, unable to get drunk from the cocaine.

The guy wanted me to kiss him, but I refused. He told me he would give me an extra R1000 if I did. That meant I would take home just short of R2000 for the night. I agreed. Morning came, and Fleiser arrived to collect me.

Oh my heart, as I write this. We had to wait while the client went to draw the money so Fleiser ended up coming inside out of concern, meeting the owner and eventually seeing the client and me getting paid. We left in silence. I looked out the window quickly wiping away tears, adamant to not let Fleiser feel bad about any of this.

When I saw that I had only been paid R800 I was beside myself. Ridiculously, I felt like I had been raped.

High as a kite on cocaine, I quickly bathed, got changed and went to watch our son's rugby game. The pleasure it gave me to be able to buy him a cool drink after his match will never be forgotten. That night in bed, Fleiser and I cried.

The following day, Sunday, I desperately wanted to get into a church so we went to one just down the road. A song with the lyrics jump for joy and dance before the Lord was playing. I walked out sobbing and waited in the car for the service to end.

I know I stand to be judged, so does Fleiser. I know, so why do I share it? Because dear readers the truth and far-reaching effects of sexual abuse are not pretty. I had an amazing husband, beauty, brains, faith, love, but my core belief was I was nothing more than a piece of meat.

Certainly not worthy of love.

The devastating results of this were enormous. I built up a deep resentment toward Fleiser, his son and ex-wife. One, as you will discover, that eventually completely consumed my entire being.

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I never did go back to rehab. Finances never improved. The ex continued making demands as we fell behind in our rent. By the following July, we were forced to move again, living now in a one-bedroom cottage on Fleiser's brother's property with our two dogs. It felt like they were all I had left.

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Fleiser and I had very different upbringings in that mine was pretty conservative, outside of my own behaviour. His family life was rather boisterous. The new living arrangement was a difficult adjustment. Fleiser and I both went for interviews at a different security company. I landed the job and was excited. I thought things were taking a good turn.

Within weeks of me starting I was scheduled for a visit at Johannesburg General hospital to check on my Rheumatoid status, surgery to correct my hands was agreed upon. Looking back now I realize my initial response was crazy—I felt that the timing was wrong because I didn't feel it was right to take sick leave so quickly after joining a company.

The other thing that genuinely concerned me was, I honestly believed, and kind of still do, that God allowed my fingers and hands to go askew so that He can straighten them and be glorified. This along with the fact that the team of five doctors that I met with, who were involved with the whole hand surgery, openly laughed

when I answered their question as to why I so often stopped taking my treatment. The answer was and still is, I believe God heals.

Their total disrespect and disbelief in God made me seriously question my going under anaesthetic or under their knife and I decided against the surgery.

Fleiser's family were helping us tremendously. We were only paying a minimal amount to be there and my sister-in-law and I were getting on well, but our dogs weren't. I would join my sister-in-law for walks as we both aimed at losing some weight. Unfortunately, these walks would leave me cripple and really embarrassed. I truly hated anyone seeing me in that kind of state.

My daughter was taking strain under the new living conditions. The situation between the dogs escalated causing a rift between our families. It was not easy.

Fleiser's ex was also still making demands and Fleiser's whole salary was going to her, which led to endless desperate arguments fuelled now by what I had done to feed my own family. One night Fleiser told me I needed to put Shaka in a kennel as per his brother. It was the cherry on top. I went into the main house, thanked them for everything they had done for us and started packing the next day. This time to move in with Bonnie and Clyde whom we had met at Kirby. Things spiraled quickly out of control.

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Bonnie and Clyde. My word, I wonder if they are still alive. They were out and out alcoholics, living on vodka neat. They had a double story, out in the bush, it was a very open plan loft kind of place with literally only bedding and a mattress to sleep on. They stayed at the top.

Myself, Fleiser and Andi moved into the bottom with all our furniture and doggies. In the beginning, it worked out fine. I've never been materialistic and have a deep love for the bush and toughing it a bit. We were told they were paying R3000 a month for rent, that the landlord would have no objections to us being there and so we agreed to pay half.

Fleiser and I were taking tremendous strain in our relationship. Being closer to that little church we had attended the day after I sold my soul we started re-attending. I loved it. It was small enough for everyone to know everyone. The love, warmth, support and tangible presence of God were brilliant, so much so in fact, that Fleiser's son ended up giving his life to Jesus and choosing to be baptized. Fleiser and I also started marriage counselling.

We moved in at the beginning of November, and after scraping together every cent we could along with offering a fellow colleague from work a lift to Middleburg, headed off for our December break with my folks. Just past the second toll gate, the car broke down. Bonnie and Clyde were kind enough to drive out all the way to bring us our other car, kindly promising to have the car sorted out for us whilst we were away. Clyde knew people. The break was awesome. As usual, I managed to squeeze in a day or two at my

spiritual abyss, Kenton-on-Sea to see Sandy, Gav, Jean and Chester. Whilst there Bonnie kept calling regarding a part they were able to get at a really great price to repair the car and rent that needed to be paid, also mentioning that they had no food. I was really frustrated because we had to drive from Kenton to Port Alfred, a 25km drive to sort out payments at the bank, but we got it done and thoroughly enjoyed the remainder of our holiday.

Bonnie and Clyde were awesome in calling to reassure us the car was being fixed. When we returned in the new year it was a mess. I mean a literal cesspool of gross. There is a very distinct kind of mess that exists around dark entities. They had gotten themselves puppies and there was faeces and urine everywhere. Every dish that could possibly be used in the kitchen had been used. Old food lay in the sink with mildew. Cigarette stumps littered the floor where ashtrays overflowed. It was catastrophic. Our car that was supposedly being fixed, was nowhere near fixed, in fact, it was in pieces.

After a while, we discovered that all money sent for the car had been used for their own entertainment. With nowhere left to go and grateful to at least have a roof over our head we tried our best to make the most of it. The security company I was working at was far from the bush cottage. With one car now, we could not afford the petrol for us both to get to work and to repair the car. Things were getting worse. I resigned. I decided to start up a small modelling school again and started praying about it desperately. I was very careful and hesitant in doing this because of how clearly God had taken me out of this before.

Seeing the principal of an extremely upmarket private school in Johannesburg well presented with all that was going on in my life at the time was breathtaking. But it worked. I advertised and soon had students. Some that actually paid for the whole year upfront. Again God came through. This is what fed us. All of us.

Things began to take their toll rather quickly. You see, Bonnie and Clyde, I've given these names because they were seriously up to something criminal no doubt—claimed to work for some undercover security group for people that did some pretty insane stuff.

You may be wondering how I would be friends with this? Clyde came across as a good Afrikaans man who often spoke of God. I had worked with him both at Kirby and the previous security company and he truly showed a lot of integrity. He had often come to my aid in the past, in fact, it was through him we had ended up renting the house at the previous security company.

One day on coming home we walked in on the landlord visiting. This is when we discovered that the money we had paid toward rent, had not been paid at all and that the landlord had also never agreed to us being there. The situation was intense. I could tangibly sense darkness all around us. It was eventually the raucous sex they had throughout most nights loud enough for my daughter to hear, that had me losing it.

One night I asked them to keep it down and got viciously attacked. After this, I refused to sleep in the house. Camping in the car with my daughter, I told

Fleiser this is where I would remain until we found a place.

Fleiser had now made it clear he had no intention of moving to Port Elizabeth.

I felt totally betrayed, lost, stuck and beyond angry. The thought of raising my daughter in Johannesburg through her teenage years was devastating and all-consuming.

I started to develop an absolute hatred toward Fleiser, my stepson and Fleisers ex-wife, but ultimately toward myself. I was stuck and the oppression all around was closing in.

Fortunately, Fleiser through a client had heard of an empty property on the market that had been broken into a few times. This client was the agent for the property and had suggested to the owners that someone stay there to look after it. We looked at it the next day. It was a massive 5-bedroom house that had probably been offices of some kind before as there was no kitchen. It also had a small 1-bedroom cottage on it, which had a stove, but there was no electricity. Compared to where we were, it was bliss.

By this stage, I had gotten extremely good at moving. That Sunday we went to church for the worship part of the service. I was not willing to compromise on God. God and the people's prayers in this church were the only things keeping me sane.

After worship we headed back to Bonnie and Clyde's to pack up, a truck met us later in the afternoon and we

were gone. By the end of the following day, I had us unpacked and settled in.

Again I made it an adventure. Showers were cold and cooked chicken from the shops got a bit boring, but we were free.



## Chapter 20: She's Gone

Although this chapter is about the heartbreaking loss of my amazing mother, I feel it important to explain the state of my life at the time—Hold on to your seatbelts, things start getting messy.

Diary entry: Mom passed away today just after 1 pm. What am I to feel? Anger at who, my husband, myself, my dad, my brother? What for? Mom is gone, that is that! Lord, would you allow mom to visit me tonight, to hold me and say goodbye? Please Dad, my true Father, help me to say goodbye.

Mommy, you were the best. A very hard example to follow. My sore point is that I feel I never got to make you proud and now that is what I am going to do. I will hold, love and care for my husband. I will take care of every need I possibly can with Andi and my stepson. I will aim and strive to leave the impression you have, mamma. I will miss you desperately, but I know you are with Collette, Bobby, Caleb and so many friends already. Give them all my love and ask them to put in a word for me with our Dad, God. To help me, guide me and provide me with the strength, knowledge, and wisdom to bring about our dream. The dream father that you show me tonight, preferably through mom. Night mama. Night Father, please fill dad, Michelle and Ricky with peace in Jesus name.

Thank you for my family, for Andi and Ben, for Fleiser, and friends we have. Oh Father, bless them all with health and prosperity in a way that brings you glory. Amen. Night night...you all.

I didn't journal the next day, so I don't recall what I dreamt. But looking back through them, I noticed an entry dated 3 November, in which I recorded a very vivid dream. In this dream I was invited by Joyce Meyers to come and share my testimony. Whilst sharing, a coffin was brought onto the stage. I immediately went over to it and began to pray. The body came to life. I went back to the podium to continue sharing my testimony and as I did, my fingers and hands started straightening out. It felt to me like God was saying, 'Your healing will come as you continue in obedience to what I have called you to do.'

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My sister Collette's death robbed my mother of 20 years overnight—the lustre of her hair, the brightness of her smile, the pallor of her skin seemed to have been depleted of light and life.

I was on my own journey seeking God, so I took mom with me to church, thinking that this might be just what her soul needed. She and dad had stopped attending years ago. Whilst at church, my elegant, poised, conservative mom ended up being touched by the holy spirit and couldn't stop giggling uncontrollably. It was amazing to behold and happened to me often at church, but mom swore to never go back. Although she thoroughly enjoyed it, it was against her grace and elegance.

But after this, mom and dad returned to attending Sunday service. At first, mom said she was old and had done what she needed to do. I explained to her that the only reason she still drew breath was that she still had work to

do for God. She ended up very involved in her church community. She seemed to come alive again.

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The April before her death she had come down to spend some time with us—a surprise visit for Andi. The three of us would lie in bed giggling until the early hours of the morning telling stories, talking about anything and everything. My heart fills with blessing that Andi had that time to share with my mom in that way. I believe she knew we wouldn't see each other again because she took the time to mention that when she passes one day I must not be sad because she will be at peace. After taking her to the airport to return home I called Fleiser sobbing my heart out knowing full well that I would never see her again.

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My mother died whilst I was on the phone with dad at work. I began to cry uncontrollably, screaming between the sobs, pounding my fists on any surface hard enough to take my sorrow and anger. Anger that I was not there for her in her final moments to hold her. Anger toward my husband because I was so far away. Anger toward dad, well, I don't know, it was just a general consensus. Anger towards Ricky, because he was there and I wasn't. I was just angry at everything in general.

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The plan when we got married was to move back to Port Elizabeth when my daughter got to high school. I

certainly never wanted to raise a teenager in Johannesburg. As it grew nearer the deadline, it became very evident that Fleiser had no intention of sticking to our agreement. His son Ben was 13 at the time of the decision, and he later changed his mind, unilaterally.

My previous concerns of marrying again where children were involved had indeed been more than validated. Having attended several workshops on boundaries for kids, studied books on the subject including discipline and its importance in children from a young age, certainly wreaked havoc in our marriage. As in the case with most divorce. When a child comes only for a weekend, the last thing you want to do is discipline. The result; two sets of rules, seen and felt by the child in permanent residence. Having had my daughter go through this before in my previous marriage, I would have none of it. Oh my word. I prayed my backside off. I'm a firm avid believer in boundaries and ex-spouses not breaking each other down. And on one occasion overhearing Fleiser say something negative about his ex in front of his son I stepped right in and put an end to it right there and then in front of his son. I made it very clear that under my roof his mother would always be respected.

At times Ben's behaviour was really not acceptable so only when desperately needed—like when my daughter had witnessed shocking behaviour and Fleiser doing nothing about it, I would sit and quietly speak to Ben, and explain how certain behaviours were not acceptable and should he feel in a certain kind of mood, he was more than welcome to excuse himself until he felt better, then return to us, instead of imploding the way he did. Just a

conversation like this would result in Fleiser and I not seeing him for months.

Fleiser's ex, also like in most marriages, would capitalise on this. She used to badly slander Fleiser, I mean badly. Saying what a loser he was and he really didn't care whether Ben lived or died. This was said in front of me one night when I had been called to their house to intervene. Ben had disclosed to me how his mom was having an affair with a married man and their intimacy was often heard by him and he didn't like it and what could he do? Man, it was difficult. He had started attending church with us, learning about morals and values. I very carefully responded that he had a right to stand up for himself in anything that made him uncomfortable. That he should speak to her and tell her how he feels. This is what he did. On this particular night I gave Ben some tuckshop money for school the next day, gave him a hug, told him everything would be fine, and asked him to please excuse us. I called her aside and tried explaining how damaging this was to him, that we lived just down the road and would have Ben anytime. I tried explaining how she really shouldn't keep breaking Fleiser down by saying these kinds of things either. The truth was Fleiser was paying maintenance, and more. The ex had got herself into trouble, so at one stage I was even selling her stuff for her in the townships so she wouldn't have to face the humiliation. It was never enough. We eventually had our church involved counselling Fleiser it had to stop. The result, lies and deceit. I was made an absolute mockery of. But, the truth always comes out.

Through visiting a mutual friend with cancer, it came out how Fleiser had hand delivered R1200 cash on more

than one occasion openly stating, in front of his son, 'If my wife finds out about this, it will be the end of our marriage.' Well, if we had been in a financial position to do this, I would have done it myself. But we weren't.

But the crux of his statement was, what did this show his son about me? That I was somehow the reason they couldn't have more? What kind of example of marriage was he setting for his son in the future, and what must his ex have thought of me?

Most importantly, if he realised I really felt that seriously about it, that it indeed could end our marriage, then why do it? Oh man, these things ate at me, like cancer, bothering me immensely? Anyhow my point is. This life was by no means what I had signed up for when we got married.

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Mom was my rock. I could talk to her about anything. She always gave good solid, non-emotional advice.

It took so long for us to get here. I had no clue how I would cope moving forward.

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As a teenager I tried talking to mom, flip looking back now it was pretty insane. I was 14. It was just after I had decided to give myself away to men. We were lying on her bed and I told her I was no longer a virgin. I was desperate to talk to someone other than a shrink. She simply responded with I don't think I need to hear this. My heart

hurts now, because this may well have been a part of her landing in the psych hospital.

Mom never spoke. Secrets in our family were rampant and well kept. I was already around 12 years old when I, by chance, found out my sister Michelle had another father. I was paging through a photo album when she pointed out her dad. No man I said, that's not Dad. Oh mom, looking back now I realize just how much she carried, quietly on her own. A powerful woman, indeed.

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Ricky, aware of our financial crisis, arranged a hire car and we drove up to Port Elizabeth for the funeral.

Even though Ricky was my little brother, he came through like a big brother. On visits he would leave me a couple of hundred rands hidden in the refrigerator or wherever he knew I would find it. These acts of love often came at a time when it was desperately, desperately needed. Our financial struggles were never discussed in depth. As for asking Ricky for help in the past, Dad always made it very clear to me that Ricky was facing very difficult times even though he was a successful golfer. So I never asked. To get to Ricky I had to go through Dad.

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At the time I had two people staying with me; Cindy, a raging alcoholic who I met back in my days as a sales trainer selling Kirby's. I agreed to her staying with us for a maximum of two months to get her life back on track. And Shelly. Oh, my sweet little Shelly. She had been

dumped at my house, lock stock and barrel. I met her one night when I invited Pacino, a name given for Al Pacino's role in *The Devil's Advocate*, to come for dinner. Having the gift, I sensed immediately she was afraid of Pacino so I gave her my number and told her to call if she ever wanted to chat.

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Pacino at the time was in his late 50's, she was 23 and a prostitute. This guy was a legend. He had a power and energy about him unlike anything I had ever seen or experienced before. He could honestly pick up the youngest most gorgeous woman within minutes of being in a pub. We actually watched him in action one day at the Shark Tank at Northcliff Country Club, where we had gone to watch a rugby game. Right there in front of our eyes, the best-looking girl there ended up sitting with him having a drink. When it came time to leave, he stayed there, going home with her that night.

I met him shortly after starting a new career in Real Estate. At first, he came across as gay. We hit it off immediately and became close friends. As I said, he was charismatic so he rocked the real estate and pretty much taught me most of what I know. I will never forget my first deal. Brand new in the real estate my partner Vic was out of town. The deal was between an Indian buyer and seller. Indians in South Africa are well known for their negotiating prowess. My hands indeed were full. After presenting the original offer, in which profanities were thrown at me nearly driving me to embarrassing tears in front of my client, Pacino and I headed back to the office. He suggested we sit down with a bottle of wine and work

it out. Pacino grabbed a calculator, worked out the price per square meter showing me how my client had over capitalised. From there, with wine flowing, I grabbed one phone, he grabbed another and we role-played. Happy at last. I called my client and recommended a counter offer. The deal is done. Oh, what a night.

Pacino didn't have a car at the time and was living pretty far from the office with his folks. He went from a few dinners and spending the odd night on the couch, as I lived literally down the road from the office, to moving in. In the beginning it was cool. He and Fleiser got on well. Then it just wasn't cool anymore.

This is how wine came into my home. Never, ever, before this, did I drink outside of a function. He took over. Literally he would come and sit on the side of the bed next to me in the mornings wearing just his work shirt and jocks, talking about a deal or our day.

One day at the office, he tells me, 'Hurry up, you need to finish early, I'm dropping you at home because I have a client and I need your car.' I was too shocked to even respond and I packed up and went home. At the time I had no idea he was using cocaine. He never did it in front of me or spoke of it. I was naive. He just had this brilliant positive, unconquerable energy about him. Eventually, after he bugged off with my car more than once for more than a night at a time, leaving me to have to make my own lift arrangements for work, Fleiser and I put an end to him living with us and using my car.

He had a crazy hold on me. Oh man, I loved him like crazy. My Greek brother from another mother.

One day at the office, he walked past me and stated, 'I've dropped Shelly at your place.' I was fuming. But God's honest truth, he was a psychopath so there was no reasoning with him. I went home and found Shelly a mess. I couldn't put her on the street so I agreed to let her stay for two months. She would continue prostituting only until we found her another job and had enough money for a deposit and one month's rent. She was a recovering heroin addict with a beautiful little two-year-old daughter, living with the father. A beautiful soul. We had good plans in place.

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Fleiser, myself, Ben and Andi left for Port Elizabeth for mom's funeral. Michelle had given me some of her tranquilizers to cope.

We weren't there long when dad and I started fighting. It was about Merlina coming to mom's funeral, my nanny growing up, who had still been working for them part time until shortly before that because of health reasons and finances. Since the apartheid era had changed everything in South Africa, so had my dad's relationship with Merlina. I couldn't stand it and would have none of it. I think I went as far as saying if she's not there, I won't be either.

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In the middle of this, I got a message from Cindy stating Shelly had been found dead at a bar up the road from

my house on that Sunday morning. She had gone out the day after we left. I was devastated.

To get out of the house I took Fleiser to meet Boom's mom who had reached out to me when she heard mom had died.

Whilst we were out we stopped and had a beer.

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By the time we got back to the house, Chester had arrived to come and pay his respects. In the short time of him being there my dad had informed him of my behaviour regarding Merlina. I was livid, but kept my composure. Chester smelt the beer.

It turned into a total fiasco of me and my drinking behaviour again.

Which it certainly wasn't. It had honestly just been a matter of getting out of the house and one beer.

I wanted Merlina, my mom of another race, whom my mother loved and who loved my mother dearly, at her funeral. As for me having a beer; it was exactly just that.

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One of my teeth ended up crumbling exposing nerves and I needed to have an urgent extraction on the morning of mom's funeral.

Her funeral was a total blur.

I took two tranquilizers on the way to her funeral.

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When they wheeled mom's coffin out and were putting it in the hearse to take to cremation, I clung desperately to her coffin with my family having to peel me off. Definitely not proper behaviour by any standard of my father's. The whole trip was an absolute nightmare.

I ended up feeling sorry for myself—so sick of being the outcast and the false accusations, I decided to give them some merit. My mom had just died, could my father just love me?

Anyhow I ended up heading to the local little pub on my own. Having a drink or two too many, I bumped the front of the hired car that Ricky had paid for when parking. Oh goodness. Another awesome Ricky, shocking Tanya parade. I sobbed most of the way home—well, to Johannesburg anyway. Definitely not the place I called home, but rather my hell hole. A hell hole I would now face alone. Mom was gone. No longer just a call away.

## Chapter 21: When Rock Bottom Isn't Far Enough

Diary entry 8/11/22: Had a dream on Tuesday night about my daughter! A snake entered her and killed/broke the baby's neck she was carrying. She was still 13 in the dream. I ended up back being depressed again. Like I was before Sunday's prayer. I felt it was a warning of some kind and told Fleiser. His reaction was as it usually was at the time regarding me believing in healing and spiritual things. 'It's nothing, it's just a dream'.

Well, it never took long for something to materialise, that's for sure. Andi was in a foul mood, waking up. By the time she went to school, she was sobbing and in a pit of depression! I prayed for her and sent her off to school.

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I thought this was the materialisation of the dream. I was wrong; it came later.

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It's January 2013, a new year filled with promise. Fleiser had been at a new company for some time with a better salary—a company with good values and work ethics and a lot more stability. My real estate work was going well, really well. Selling sometimes up to four properties a month. They partnered me with a young guy, Trent, who was a recovering addict. I was not too happy about it. He had been open and honest with me stating he's still doing CAT (cheap cocaine). I did however make it crystal clear where I stood on drugs and how if it affected our work the partnership would be over. Sadly, I

had slipped and tried some out for myself, but nipped it in the bud quickly knowing for certain this was not what I wanted for my life.

Our kids finally seemed to get on well. In fact, Ben even offered to spend the night and go with Andi to her first day of high school so she wouldn't have to face it alone.

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I was home cleaning up with joy and hope when I came across Andi's phone. There was a message, and I read it. My heart was beating so fast, my body trembled and my world spun out of control. It felt like I was on the outside looking in. This can't be happening!

What happened from that point will be about my reaction. I cannot and will never disclose what it was all about, as that is not my story to tell. I can and will, however, share my reaction, which was not healthy. It affected and almost destroyed our lives. Because of my past trauma, my addiction, and the fact I was not yet healed.

Luckily, I had a second of clarity and called Fleiser, but it ended there. From that point on, it was attack mode. As the day progressed, it was like something dark and grotesquely impossible to overcome enveloped me in its entirety. My feelings of fear and guilt, though not rational, were strong. I had no tools to cope and instead of reaching out to a therapist; I confided in Trent. I didn't just confide; I sought solace in snorting up his white powder line after line to end the all-engulfing pain of a heart

ripped open, gushing blood with no end in sight. My reactions were heightened to match the drug, which was a deadly mix for our family.

And so my friends began my intense CAT addiction.

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As I look back through my journals, the tormented soul is sadly so clear. Yet through it all. I continued to cry out for God, for His will, for His plan and purpose for my life. Yes, amidst drinking wine, messaging my dealer, snorting lines and sleeping tablets, I journaled, crying out desperately for divine intervention.

He even answered. Below are quotes from 31 January 2013, 23.47p.m.:

My 39th Birthday. Titled: Absolute Incomprehensible Torment. Shattered, broken, disgusted at myself, so afraid, so alone, so desperate... It records the morning ritual of cake in bed, my heartache intense, tears cannot be stopped. My daughter interprets them due to there being no physical gift and that she's a stuff up of a daughter. How far from the truth. If only she knew how I blamed myself and believed I had failed her on every imaginable level. I quietly explained it as my first birthday without mom.

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I had spent that night sleeping under mom's gown. Throughout the day I expected her to call. Dad did eventually, apologising for calling late, saying mom was no

longer there to remind him. Before going to work and a hair appointment, I went past my dealer and got myself a gram of CAT. I went to the office and couldn't bear it so went back to the dealer for another gram.

Andi and I watched a DVD enjoying some special time. I drank beer and some wine.

After, she headed off to bed, and I headed off back to the dealer for another gram. I decided to get some marijuana in the hopes it would help me sleep.

On returning home whilst smoking the marijuana, I saw a police checkpoint up ahead of me. Adamant to not waste, I stubbed the joint I'm smoking out on the side of the car and put the remaining bit under my leg. I prayed. My car licence had just expired. Should the police smell the alcohol and ask me to get out for a test or search my car, as you've already read, there would be no court case, just an imminent prison sentence. I quickly lit a cigarette puffing on it desperately in the hope it would mask the smell. Praying all the while, I got pulled over.

Fortunately, we just made idle chitchat, and he let me go. I lit the rest of the joint in celebration.

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Home at last, alone with my journal. My true emotions and thoughts are captured.

Journal entry: Oh how I long to hear mom's voice, her Godly unbiased council. So much pain every time I look at my baby girl, such fear, fear of CAT, fear of work, fear

of my loss of physical abilities, fear of where are you God? Forgive me Lord please... Total and utter confusion about the book. How can I put pen to paper about the last month & how do I leave it out? What about the victor part, will that ever happen? Beliefs of going insane, all consuming, frustration, desperation and suicide! My theory... 39 years old. 39 generally very sore years. Plenty of reasons. Drugs, alcohol, desire to be loved etc. Give the next year. Choice to thought (renew mind) Be clean. Andy... be with more. Love and love without expecting in return. Do it all... Pray like hell and hope to heck there is a God... forgive me Lord! To just get clean and face my whole life in general clean, oh the fear! But hey... Theory do it all & tomorrow will start the beginning of a new era. Even telling Fleiser I will not allow anyone or anything to make me feel or act the way I have over the past while. After all, only I can give anyone power or ability to hurt me this way. Grow strong, hang on to the cliff edge... Hoping, craving the true living God is indeed there, that He does see me. Lord please help me... Help me to forgive myself for the pain my decisions and heart have caused my child. Help me to forgive all concerned. Please set me free, Lord. Please, please, please. Oh, how my heart aches to be loved, understood, free, successful (meaning happy). Oh God, Father... I am sick of this circle. Please, please in Jesus' name for my birthday Lord, please set me free. Heal my heart, help me to love as you love. Oh father please, please, please. Father, you know how the evening ended. Help me to be a good, no, awesome wife, mother, friend and person... Please set me free. I have just finished my last gram of CAT. I'm finishing my beer and going to lie in my bed next to Fleiser with mom's gown.

I prayed and opened my Bible on the heading 'Peace, Gift of a good night's rest' it spoke of pressure of wealth, sickness, pain, sorrow etc then quoted Psalm 4:8 *I will lie down in peace and sleep, for you alone oh Lord will keep me safe.* New year, new start, choosing thoughts. I believe You have heard my prayer... Thank you Lord, forgive a bit of doubt. I will go to sleep. Call on and trust in you. Thank you for another year Lord. Thank you for keeping me safe tonight. Night night. Love me...

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As I read this entry, what stands out to me the most was how far I've come in such a short space of time. I'm now 48. How time has flown, yet it often seemed to stand still. Looking back, would I have what happened after this entry any other way? Put it this way...if you offered me a hundred million rand to go through it all again, I would say keep the money, but ultimately I would have to say no, because it brought me to where and who I am today in my relationship with God and others. And that my friends. I wouldn't trade for the world. Anyhow back to the story.

This event opened up the pandora's box of my life. It was like someone found a little thread and started to pull at it and everything I had done up to this point to keep my life held together came undone with that one tug. Every hurt, every trauma burst from every seam. Dreams were filled with horrific twisted nightmares. I woke up crying in beads of sweat. Visions of past traumas played over and over in my mind stuck on a never-ending rewind. I tried to hold the seams together to keep them from bursting going about my daily life like everything was normal.

I continued to go to work. I put an end to my partnership with Trent, but the addiction had spiralled out of control. I couldn't concentrate, let alone breathe without it. I would slip into the toilets at work, have my fix and carry on. Concentration on CAT was erratic, all over the show. Physically, my body from all the toxicity of the substance, the very real trauma and stress was caving in while the rheumatoid left me crippled over in pain. I needed to keep going. So I popped the painkillers and carried on.

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Amidst all this, we were told the property we were staying on had been sold. We had to find a new place to stay. Fleiser, oh man, this event ripped us both to the core. He had voiced that perhaps it was better for us to go our separate ways. I couldn't do it again and deep down I believed without doubt divorce was not something he believed in either. He was crippled emotionally.

As the day drew nearer that we needed to move I saw he was making no effort to assist. I panicked. I was working hard, I could have at the time up to four show houses on a Sunday. I would come home, make dinner, take care of Fleiser, Andi and my cousin's husband who was living with us. I was ridiculous with this.

From friends I was trying desperately to help out of alcoholism and abusive relationships to Shelly, the prostitute I've already mentioned, now family. Looking back now, I have absolutely no doubt at all, each carried dark entities onto my property and into my life and my family's lives. I may have had the best intentions, but

look at the facts; I wasn't drinking when I offered the help. I wasn't drugging when I allowed Pacino, a full-blown cocaine sex addict into my home. I can literally pinpoint my meeting these persons and the events that seeped into every area of my life.

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Anyhow I would go back to the office to finish work, being there sometimes until 3 in the morning. People at work saw I was unraveling, but I kept the sales coming in, so they left me alone. One Sunday, after a showing, I managed to get hold of the rental agent advertising a small cottage nearby. I met up with Andi at my office, she had been at a friend's. We went through and had a look. She hated it. We had run out of time. 'Come on, it's cute. Yeah it's tiny, but it's cosy, a fresh start, come on we will make it work.' I obviously had to break the news to my cousin's husband that we couldn't keep him, but I couldn't. He moved with us and stayed on the couch for a few nights before we all spoke realizing the obvious. There was no space. The one day I dropped him off at my cousin rushing to get to my show houses. He was too uncomfortable to ask them to come fetch him. I heard later how they were disgusted they were that I hadn't taken the time to come in and say hello. Nothing I did was enough.

I mention this for a reason.

By then I had lived in Johannesburg for about 10 years, attending all family invites given to me even though I would be facing the tongue tickling groper from my childhood each time. Hearing endless stories of my

family and how I never contacted them, knowing all too well why. And boy if I couldn't make it, or needed to leave early the guilt was laid on thick. For my daughter's 13th birthday, the whole family had been invited. The only one who arrived was the tear duct blower and her daughter. Visits outside of a function visit or visit to me ever—None. However when they wanted hair, makeup, styling and a full-blown family shoot done free of charge—yes, then I saw them. This was a hurt that grew, festered and would finally one day blow. Little did I know, it would be a final release of amazing freedom.

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The move cost me dearly. I had to let go of furniture because our new place couldn't accommodate it. Then there were movers, rent and deposit. Fleiser was just nowhere, coping in his own way. This added to my ache, my void. A little while after this, I was head hunted by a real estate agency. It felt good. Fleiser and I were dead. I tried and cried endlessly explaining the enormity of our current situation and the very far reaching consequence of whatever we chose to do. My total understanding of every single situation was totally insanely supernatural. I would sit for hours explaining calmly. I would write letters through the night putting pen to paper in the hope of reaching those I didn't have access to. Sharing this, in the hope Fleiser would see my heart and understand. It was pointless. He could not be reached.

It was on the way to my interview when he looked into my eyes uttering the heart stopping words, 'I want a divorce'.



## Chapter 22: The Separation

I spent endless nights lying outside on the grass. As I gazed up at a sky full of stars, hot tears streamed down my face. I was looking for solace in Orion's belt which the locals call the Bush Pigs or the Milky Way, where I hoped God was sitting and listening. But not my daughter. I would come out here to cry so my sweet girl would be spared from my pain.

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By June 2014, my marriage had disintegrated into a pile of toxicity. We literally fed off each other's toxins. Fleiser started to find solace from a previous addiction, gambling. Obviously, this added immense strain to our already crumbling situation. He had gone from wanting a divorce to not being sure. It was a constant rollercoaster of emotions too much for my soul to bear. Previous animosity with his ex and Ben spiralled out of control.

On one occasion, desperate to get away from the constant emotional abuse of I want you, no I don't, I packed a blanket and pillow and my daughter and I spent the night in the office of the real estate company in the little storeroom away from the cameras. Unfortunately, the boss got wind of this and I was called in.

I had on numerous occasions called my father in tears pleading to come home to my cottage, explaining without the details of our situation and what had brought us to this point, because the ramifications of that were just too intense, that Fleiser wanted a divorce. Dad flat out refused telling me, I had chosen to move to Johannesburg and that

I had to live with that choice. He said honestly me living there with him would not work due to our differences. I was stuck, angry and frustrated, realizing all too well that he relied heavily on the cottage rental for his survival as a state pensioner. I only took a small portion of the rental.

The drinking got intense and I would end up getting physically violent with Fleiser. It wasn't me. I hated him, I hated myself, I didn't know what to do. I tried reaching out to his family which drove the wedge further between us.

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It was Mother's Day and his mom was visiting, drinking some wine. I was about to go off to show a house. Fleiser had gone to the shops. With tears in my eyes I said, 'Mom, please help me, I don't know what to do.' Coldly, she looked at me and said flatly, 'I never gave my blessing for this marriage in the first place, not with all your baggage. And besides this, my girl, blood is thicker than water.' I started trembling. I managed to mutter, that had I known we did not have her blessing, I would certainly not have gotten married. I was heartbroken. My daughter was just a mere two feet away and heard everything. This was not the first time she had heard that she was not blood or part of the family.

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One year when Rosh Hashanah was approaching, I asked Fleiser what I could do to make it special for him. It turned out, he had forgotten, but ended up joining his brother and his family with his son leaving us at home.

The same brother I had reached out to in desperation regarding our marriage and Fleiser's gambling. He had told me to simply put him out on the street.

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These incidents were cutting deep. Not just for me, but for my daughter. I had to do something. I was about to receive a decent paycheck so I looked at a little cottage nearby. I decided to take it. The night before we were to go, the lady said she never realised we had pets and wanted to cancel. It threw me off course mentally. When I told Fleiser I was leaving the next day he actually asked why. It was insane. Not sure whether to leave or not the next morning I asked Andi what she thought we should do, 'Go mom.' I called Pacino, he called his friend who had a decent sized bakkie that could haul our stuff, and by the evening I was in the cottage. Pacino, being the well-connected devil he was, also organized us some CAT for the day, so sleeping was not on the radar for me. By the time the sun came up I was unpacked and properly settled in.

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When the July school holidays approached Andi went, as per usual, to spend time with my dad on the river. Alone with nothing but the horrific thoughts of the past and current situation, my inability to cope without substance, the desperate ache in my heart, I decided to end it all again. Drinking wine, taking sleeping tablets and slitting my wrists with a minor blade I had gone and bought for the deed. I have no memory of what happened, I only

woke up the next morning sick and in agony with Fleiser next to me and my arms wrapped.

I was angry, ashamed, and desperately confused. I knew without doubt of someone else who had taken less of the particular sleeping tablets I took that night, who never did wake up again.

Apparently, the owner's teenage daughter had come over and wrapped my wrists. I went to the Dr and received stitches. I explained to all at work and my daughter that I had fallen down the stairs to our little cottage putting my hand through the glass door. She knew better and it broke my heart. My body. I was breaking.

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My eyes started playing up. It looked like I had pink eye and after endless treatment they got worse. Another doctor took one look and sent me to Helen Joseph Government hospital. It was ridiculous. At the time I was drinking. I shake my head as I remember that day. I took a litre of wine with me. At the time Fleiser and I had only one car, so unfortunately, we relied on each other. It was toxic. Anyhow my eyesight was shocking, I relied on total strangers to lead me to where I needed to be. My daughter was at school and obviously Fleiser at the time had no interest in helping me. I was there most of the day, actually falling asleep across a table when I was taken in by a nurse. The ophthalmologist looked at my eyes, then put some stain drops on. He then called other ophthalmologists to come and look. I was horrified when they told me, 'You will more than likely be blind by Monday'.

They gave me four different drops which I had to put in hourly over the weekend.

The rheumatoid arthritis had gone systemic, creating ulcers on my corneas, which were melting the cornea of my eyes. I will never forget that weekend. Alone in that cottage. Fleiser had the car, my daughter had gone out with the owner of the property's children for milkshakes. Oh my heart. The tears just didn't stop. How, how had I got here? How was I going to live blind? Who would look after my daughter? No God no! I held the phone right up to my face, managing only just to make out the screen and keys. I sent out a 911 prayer request to anyone and everyone I knew telling them about my diagnosis. I set my alarm for every two hours and I prayed. Monday, back at the hospital, the ophthalmologist looked at my eyes, he was quiet. He called the other three to come in. He says, we can't understand how, but there is a massive improvement in your eyes. I'm elated. Carry on doing whatever you are doing and come back on Wednesday. This is what got my attention. My attitude changed. I went and saw my boss and confided in him about the CAT. I took a day off and allowed my daughter to bunk the day taking her to spend the day with me at a nearby public swimming pool. I also booked a doctor's appointment in which I confided in the doctor about my substance abuse. She advised about the dangers of going cold turkey without medical assistance. She put me on an antidepressant and a non-addictive anti-anxiety med. I felt positive.

The next day Fleiser had come around for lunch. Andi felt like a chocolate cake, so we went to get her one. On our way back my jaw started pulling and my tongue

started to swell. It got bad quickly. It was scary, it looked as though I was having a stroke. Fleiser drove me to Flora Clinic, a nearby hospital. Hysterically, I interrupted his casual explanation of our situation by removing my hands from in front of my face and trying to talk, which by this stage I couldn't. They quickly rushed me into casualty where an IV drip containing Valium was administered. It felt amazing. The situation in the ER was hilarious. Fleiser had befriended the doctors and nurses who had made him coffee. It turned out I had an allergic reaction to the meds the Dr had prescribed to me. He was cracking jokes, 'Flip, do you still have some of this? Imagine if we put you at the main traffic lights during peak traffic with a sign around your neck. With those hands and that face, you could make a fortune.' It was so shocking it was indeed hilarious. No one would have thought we were separated. The light and joy was short-lived.

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Shortly after arriving back at my cottage, Fleiser received a call from his son and all plans for the evening were immediately dropped. The then normal scenario resulted in deep scars resurfacing. I tried hard to remain sober, my heart and soul were in such torment. I would drop my daughter at school and sometimes end up with my heart pounding at my dealer. I'd head back home, clean up, do some washing and end up lying on the floor naked, sobbing for hours when trying to get ready to go to work which I now did on a bicycle because Fleiser had the car. People at work commended me on my determination and started calling me Mary Poppins. One day in the middle of one of these moments my phone rang. It was Chester. My hand shaking, I calmed my breathing and took the

call. 'Hey my girl, you've really been on my heart, I was praying for you this morning and I just want to know, how are you holding up?' 'Oh dad', I sobbed. 'I'm not.' He wanted me to get on a bus there and then to come and spend a few months with him. I couldn't. How could I leave my daughter alone with Fleiser, with the way things were now? I couldn't explain this. By this stage my small church had got involved with a group focused on reaching satanists. Services became all about satan. We were told not to hug each other at church due to demonic transference. Sadly what you focus on becomes your reality, if you want to look for satan behind every bush you will indeed find him, but if you focus on the bush and its awesome creator who is far greater than any power or principality, that is what you will know. Today this church no longer exists. Anyhow, a friend I made who left at the same time as me after being accused of being a witch, was calling often wanting to come visit in the evenings. I felt awful, cancelling all the time with some or other excuse. The real reason was by the evenings, I was no longer sober. She eventually got angry and confronted me, 'What is the problem, why don't you want me to come see you?' I had hidden the truth from everyone. I confided, 'Because I have a drinking problem.' This allowed some light into my darkness. Now with someone to talk to I could pour my heart out. It seemed to help. She brought me CD's to listen to with worship and teachings on. I hung on to these desperately. My three-month rental was up for renewal when I got the letter stating it would not be extended. I was infuriated, more at myself than anyone else. Honestly, who in their right mind would have extended a lease with a suicidal drunk maniac living on their property. Fleiser and I spoke and decided it was best for us to live together.

My funds had run out and I was kind of out of options so that is what I did. On the day we moved, it was a total disaster. Fleiser arrived early, we ended up being intimate, then I ended up drinking throughout the move. By the following day we were right back where we were before I had moved out. Being intimate, then hearing he still felt divorce was the better option and solution, I felt degraded. Like a pathetic underpaid whore. Something had to give. Chester called again. He was getting me a bus ticket to Kenton-on-Sea. There was a guy there offering some amazing course on inner healing so I went. On arriving at their home at around six in the morning, Chester tucked me into bed between him and his wife. Safe at last, surrounded with love, I slept. Unlike the Chester of the past who used to bombard me with getting up early and seeking God, this Chester would have none of it. In fact, I was instructed to read a normal book like "The Elephant Whisperer" and rest. I did. Except I couldn't sleep. My mind used to run at a million miles a second with endless visuals of unpleasant memories or thoughts of past, present, future, and back again. On and on they would go. When I explained this, Chester explained to me, I should choose my thoughts. I was amazed at even the idea of this, but the following night I tried hard. It was impossible. By the third night, I had still not slept. Ma Jean eventually asked her sister for something herbal, which did indeed help.

The course blew my mind. It was amazing. It all worked around the concept that the cells in our bodies remember everything and can and will manifest itself in the flesh through various illnesses and symptoms. There was a group of about 12 of us. A lot of prayer was done; prayer for the presence and assistance of the holy spirit as we were slowly led through our entire lives, right up to our birth and womb experience.

Man oh man, I remember so clearly being in the womb, I was petrified. I never wanted to be born. I remember the blood, fear and loss I felt when my twin died. The experience was as real as the bed I'm lying on now, whilst I type this.

I sobbed, gut wrenching sobs as I went through trauma, after trauma in my life, this time not alone, but with the definite presence of love and a perspective of seeing things through God's eyes.

I found out a lot more about freemasonry and its curses as well. Curses that ran so evidently through my life that this was what actually raised the subject. Both my grandparents had been high up freemasons. Herewith I list some of the consequences of the curses. Strange illnesses, miscarriage, sexual abuse...The list goes on and on.

I felt exhilarated. Ready to take on the world! Chester took a moment the day before I left to ask about my marriage. Without hesitating, I told him I was going to give Fleiser his divorce. I was over it. I had no more feelings of love or respect for him. I felt ready to give it to him and move on.

When Chester responded with sarcasm about how seriously I took covenant and my vows, my hands balled into fists and my jaw tightened. Even more so when he asked me if I knew what love really was, 'What? Dad, of course I know what love is. You know what I've been through, has that not been love?'

Chester and I definitely have had our intense disagreements in the past but our love for God and each other far

outweighs any of these. The truth, don't tell him, is that I actually do listen to everything he says. I always end up mulling it over and over again and yeah, he's normally right. Anyhow, he continued. 'My girl, love is not an emotion, it's a choice. There comes a time when emotion and nice feelings can totally dry up. That my girl is when you choose to love, love regardless without expecting anything in return. That my girl is true love.'

This was just pushing my buttons. I wanted this divorce now. I was over it and wanted to move on. 'I hear you dad, but he wants the divorce.' I replied. 'Ja, my girl' he responded.

Shortly after this I met my friend Noreen. Who by this stage had lost all her salons through her addictions. My alcoholic twin friend, we share the same birthday. I'm excited to see her and share everything I've just learnt from the course. She stops at the bottle store for some beers. I joined her for a beer, not wanting her to feel uncomfortable in front of me. I see it now, but didn't at the time.

We got to her boyfriend's place and she shared with me what's been going on in her life. The beers flowed. On leaving, she realised she had left something behind. Knowing how long she would take and desperately wanting to get back to Chester, I offered to go and get it for her. I quickly ran down the many stairs that lead to the house and "dah" my knee just popped. I fell down. I can't understand what's happened. I'm not drunk, by this stage I've had three beers. My knee just gave way. I tried to stand, again, I heard the bones pop. It's excruciating. I tried again and again, the same thing. What the heck have

I done? Better yet, how the heck do I explain this to Chester and Ma Jean? It's obvious how it's going to look.

Miserable, we head off to Gavin and Sandy's to say hi. In agony and seriously upset with myself I drink more. I was carried into Chester and ma Jean's. I woke up crying, both in excruciating pain, anguish and frustration toward myself. How the heck could I go and do this to them after all they had done for me? No words can describe what I felt when ma Jean came through to check on me bringing me something for the pain. She had a nurse friend come over to look at my leg. She suggested I see a doctor. As for Chester, I waited with bated breath for him to come downstairs and deliver his full wrath.

He came into the room, I managed to stand on one leg. He looked at me with those deep blue eyes. I saw no anger, only love. He put his arms around me and told me he loved me. I was not prepared for this. I sobbed. He explained how he had been in prayer asking God what to do. God showed him to love me. I apologised and the words just seemed to fall flat in the light of everything.

Shortly after this my father arrived to fetch me. I would be spending two nights with him before heading back to Johannesburg. This was to be the first time I had ever in my entire life spent alone time with my father. To say it was awkward, would be putting it mildly. After mom had died, I had made a definite point of trying to work things out with my dad. I actually even told him I was sorry that I had always pushed him away physically. Explaining that it was because of my grandfather, Wayne and the tongue tickler etc. Never sharing about Swayze with him.

I was more affectionate giving hugs and kisses, I even watched movies with him late into the night falling asleep on his massive king size bed. Things were better. Much better.

I went back to Johannesburg feeling positive, but with a heavy heart. I had decided to do as Chester had advised; honour my covenant and marriage. Love without expecting anything in return and pray more than moan.

My knee... I have no idea what I did to it, but it took over a year to be able to walk without a crutch and to this day at a certain angle it still pops out.

## Chapter 23: Valley of the Bones

To say I was spiritually and emotionally spent by the time I was 41—understatement.

My daughter was witness to much more than any child should see; hearing a thud on the floor, then seeing what the sound was, only to find me lying in a pool of blood, having cracked my head open. She called Fleiser who was at an appointment, he rushed home and when he saw me lying in a pool of blood he called an ambulance to have me rushed to a casualty center to receive staples in my head. I'd wake up the next day to find staples in my head, but have no recollection of what had happened before.

And there were other times where I would take my sleeping tablet at night then wake up the next morning ready to take my daughter to school only to see that there was no car there and to be told that I'd actually gone out in the middle of the night and had an accident. The security company that my husband worked for had found me and called the tow truck, they told the towing company to please call my husband instead of the police so fortunately Fleiser was able to come fetch me.

These were the kind of things that sent shivers down my spine. It was scary. I was afraid of myself. I had lost all control.

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Physically, my Rheumatoid arthritis was unbearable. I was on high doses of oral chemotherapy, with the very real possibility of intravenous chemo looming in the near

future. The melting of my corneas was a very real threat. I found myself whilst being a part of the Helen Joseph Government Hospital, reaching out to the psychiatric side of the hospital, desperate for help. I was there from seven o'clock in the morning only to get my appointment at four thirty that afternoon having a 15-minute consult that led to me being prescribed numerous psychiatric medications from big doses of antidepressants to mood stabilisers to calming medications. In a nutshell, I would have packets and packets of medication that I was taking just to survive.

I was just an absolute mess. I was tired. I was very tired of having places of sobriety and serenity be snatched away.

Whether it was by injustice or a system of ineptitude I don't know.

Having been someone that so badly needed to be in control, and have it completely ripped away from me... I was desperate.

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My morning routine started with vodka, neat, from the bottle followed by that moment when I started feeling better, and able to breathe. I was trapped in a lot of emotion. The biggest emotion was a feeling of wanting so badly to fix things, of wanting so badly for people to see my pain and understand me.

The truth is, unfortunately, that people can't see you, they cannot see what goes on in the heart. They can only

see your actions. This is the problem that addicts have. Because our sin, if you want to give it that terminology—our sin, is quite clear for others to see. It's judged and persecuted.

In all of this, I had a heart that was crying out for love and also crying out desperately for God. I was lost.

There was such anguish and self-hatred because of the things that Andi was witnessing. Everything in me just wanted to give her the perfect life. I was finding myself just totally incapable of breathing. Trying to sometimes hide the truth of the severity of my illness from her. Crying when I found out about the melting of my cornea and that it could go systemic, and if it went systemic, the consequences of that could be death. The reality of it all. I used to sit on the couch crying with Fleiser telling him; Andi must never know. And still crying out for God and believing that I'm going to write a book one day and just total, just total confusion because I wasn't able to function. The addiction was in control. I would pass out in my own urine or vomit. The shame and humiliation was all consuming.

Due to the amount of treatment that I was on, I'd gotten a gum disease and lost my teeth. This whole experience was so traumatic, my hair too had started falling out. The physical side that people, even I relied on as part of who I was, was gone. When I looked at myself in the mirror, I was revolted by what I saw looking back at me. It was a detestable self hatred. Oh how I yearned to be an excellent mother—to be a good wife. My body just wasn't responding, my spirit wasn't responding.

My soul wasn't responding. Nothing was responding.

I got fearful, very fearful of myself. I realised I needed help.

I had by this time only been to the one rehab. There were moments of sobriety, but now I was on my way down, only deeper—again.

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I started attending a little church called Grace Life Church, run by Pastor Bentry Hastings. He is an awesome man of God, an absolutely beautiful guy. He comes from Zambia, and he had actually been doing some marriage counselling with Fleiser and me. Although we had decided to work on our marriage and I decided to honor my covenant with God and chose to love, our relationship was very strained in that our circumstances were still the same since the event that set into motion my real and final descent to rock bottom which was very real and still very much a part of my life. I personally could see no way of our marriage existing within that kind of foundation.

Eventually, what happened was I got to a place only by the grace of God, where I decided to seek help. It got real and it got bad.

I tried to live for Andi. I would force myself out of bed, in all encompassing pain, physically from the rheumatoid, emotionally from the pain of the past, and the pain of the current—totally repulsed by what I had become.

Yet drinking continued. Thinking I could control it to just get me to a state if being chirpy and cheerful when I collected her from school, trying desperately to hide my true state. On one occasion I fetched her from school and we went to a shopping centre after and I was seen by some people who ended up driving us home because I was so drunk. My God, it chills me to the bone that I put my child through this.

I was drinking, taking pills, afraid to leave the house.

Sitting in my own urine. All confidence was gone. All humanity was gone.

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We reached out to Pastor Bentry. I had always been very open and honest and wore my emotions on my sleeve and was very much judged accordingly. I told him that I wanted to go into rehab and I'd heard about this place called Phoenix House which had a five-week program. What I'd heard about it was that it was rather stringent. From what I'd heard from other addicts that had been there, they had a very good success rate. Pastor Bentry's church paid for me to go and have my assessment done. Before going in there, I had prayed and cried out to God in desperation and said, Lord, please just show me a sign that this is where I'm meant to go, that this is a part of my journey.

On the day that we went in for the assessment, I had asked God to show me a white dove. I remember waking up that day looking around everywhere for a white dove,

but not seeing one. As we walked into the reception area of Phoenix House, there on the wall, was a picture of a white dove in hands being set free. And so, my dear readers, this is how I knew without a doubt that this was where God wanted me to be. This was indeed part of the path that he had for me. I went through my assessment and we discussed I was definitely not an outpatient case, that my case was severe and that I needed to be an inpatient. But there were no beds available at the time and there'd probably be about a two-week waiting period.

I had a feeling that there might be a waiting period, but the fear I had of myself was very real. I was too scared to go home from that appointment. For months I had been staring at the beams on the ceiling working out how I would throw the rope over, work the loop around my neck and hang myself with my arthritic hands. All the while the voices in my head telling me how pathetic I was, worthless—I only destroyed lives and they would all be better off without me.

I'd packed a bag in the event that I may get a bed, but should I not get one, that we would go to Helen Joseph Government Hospital and I would book myself in suicidal with depression. So that's what we did.

I went through the whole psychiatric evaluation, and they booked me. It was through the extensive questions asked in the evaluation that I realised for the first time in my life that my depression had started after I had begun drinking at 14. Deep down a seed was planted. Maybe all this depression and chaos was indeed just a spin off to alcohol and substance abuse. I was there for a few days hoping that I would be there for the full two-week

period before I went into Phoenix House. But that didn't work out as planned. I was there a few days and a nurse came through and said, you can tell your husband to come and take you home. I really lost it. I told her there's no way my husband can come get me now. No, no. I got really angry walking into the passage, throwing my phone and packing my bags and trying to walk past security. Security, holding me down. It was crazy. I was petrified of going home. I don't know what I was packing my bags for or where I was going to go because I wasn't leaving. They eventually called my doctors and agreed to move me from the wards to the psychiatric department. In the back of my mind, I was wondering why they hadn't done this in the first place.

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When I got to a psychiatric department, my gosh, I realised why they hadn't done this originally. There were people, just rocking out on the spot, others were talking to themselves. There was this one lady that just exercised the whole time and then took her pulse. There were no doors to the toilets or the bathroom. The smoking area was very crowded. And I remember sitting there in the smoking area and people were like on top of you saying skafe, skafe, skafe, in other words, share your cigarette, share your cigarette. And it was crazy and I was there. And whilst I was there, a gift came for me, a bunch of flowers were sent to me by Pastor Bentry, and they were in a metal vase, a beautiful bouquet of flowers. And I was called to come and have a look at them and they were summarily taken away. I was rather upset. But they explained to me that I couldn't have the flowers because someone could use

the vase to hurt themselves. By this stage, I had realized the very real threat of this.

I remember phoning Fleiser from the women's ward hallway too scared to sleep in my room, crying and begging him to please come and get me out of there—the poor guy—there was nothing he could do. He couldn't just come and fetch me and take me out of there. There were protocols that had to be followed.

I had been in a maximum of 3 days when the psychiatrist called me in and suggested I go home with medication. This happens on the heels of Andi losing her dog to a vicious attack. The guilt engulfs me as I completely overreact, screaming, punching walls, yelling at God, yelling at myself stomping through the halls and packing my belongings for Fleiser to come get me. After my discharge we headed home where I tried to console my daughter the only way I saw I could; stopping at the bottle store so I had something to down my meds with.

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I spent every moment I was able with Andi. How was I going to leave her for 5 weeks? I have to for her own good. Somehow I was going to become the momma she needed.

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The night before going into Phoenix House I had a good binge, which led to me having another fall with black and big blue eyes and a cut above my eye. I remember after I said goodbye to Fleiser and Andi, I

went into my room, and just sobbed my heart out. Here I was again at another rehab. I was tired of the whole process. Would this finally be the answer?

Upon entering Phoenix house, they made everyone go through the House Rules. There were quite a lot but I'm going to highlight one in particular because it will have significance about my experience there later on. We were not allowed to have any kind of relationship with the opposite sex during our stay in rehab. If we became aware of our fellows having relations we were to report it immediately. If we did not follow this rule it would lead to immediate expulsion.

Another thing they give you when you enter Phoenix House, as they do in most rehabs, is a couple of A4 pages of medications that you can never, ever, ever touch again because you are an addict. When I looked at these pages, they were filled with medications that I had been on since the age of 16, from antidepressants to anxiety medication it was the pain medication that felt like they just passed down a death sentence. Having chronic rheumatoid arthritis, which is a crippling, debilitating disease, is difficult enough to live with. By handing these pieces of paper out on arrival stating that you can never touch another pain medication again was like they may as well have put a gun to my head. It sure as hell would have been a lot quicker. So, yeah, that struck me hard and caused many arguments between me and God about our deal and who got the raw end. I mean, how could I be an addict and have rheumatoid arthritis and still survive?

We had about 24 hours to settle in and then fall into the regiment of the program, which was up by 6:00 in the morning. They served breakfast at 7:00. If you were on breakfast duty, that meant you had to be showered and have cooked breakfast for the house of 15,16 people by 7:00.

This was followed by meetings and then classes and then meals. After meals, there would be writing time. The first two weeks and in my assessment, they had looked at my hands and the state of my disability and had voiced concern that I might not make it through the program. The first two weeks were around step one of the 12 step program where you admit that you're powerless over your addiction and that your life has become unmanageable.

Phoenix House also had yoga classes. It's not that I have a problem with yoga, the exercise, it's just when it comes to the whole chanting portion where I have a problem because of my experience with the spiritual realm and understanding the spiritual realm. Calling on things that you're not aware of just doesn't get well with me. So, I was adamant from day one that I would not do yoga. The one instructor took a serious dislike to me and she insisted on me going to yoga, fortunately I was called down for my medical examination, so I managed to get out of that. When my counsellor heard about it, she excused me from that class because of my religious beliefs.

The other problem I had in the whole rehab setting, and I still have to this day was, having to introduce yourself by saying, 'Hi, my name is Tanya and I'm an addict'.

I could not do this. Not from my very first rehab. Everything inside of me just rejected this because I wholeheartedly believe that life and death lie in your tongue and your tongue is like a rudder on a ship.

I do believe that we are created in the image of God, not in that we look like God, but that we are also able to create. My way around it was to introduce myself as 'Hi, I'm Tanya. I'm a recovering addict.' This also didn't sit well with them at all.

Once there had been an AA meeting at Phoenix House that was open to the public geared toward families with alcoholic youth. There they were, these young kids—when I say young kids they were probably around the age of 11 to 13 years old. I looked at them and recognized the total disrespect for their parents. They were addicts. I re-member my heart going out to the parents and to the kids with the feeling of love, frustration, and desperation. I tried to let them know that I know where an attitude like theirs will take them.

I stood up to share in that meeting and introduced myself as, 'Hi, my name's Tanya and I'm a recovering addict. All I want to share with you today is I have chronic rheumatoid arthritis—I'm showing them my hands—and I'm also an addict. If I were to have a choice between the two illnesses, I would definitely choose rheumatoid arthritis because addiction is from the pit of hell and it is very, very real.' Looking back, I stand in awe at what God has done in my life.

Phoenix House was really starting to make sense—the whole program. I was embracing the positive aspects of

it. I was learning about character flaws, learning where I was manipulating, learning where I was allowing people to walk all over me, and learning how to stand up to that. I was really embracing the whole journey.

In one of the classes, I learnt a very powerful exercise to help a person deal with anxiety or negative emotions. Oh my word. It was kind of tragic at the time because we needed to close our eyes and remember a happy time. I for the life of me could not remember a single happy moment in my life that did not have an intense heartache attached to it. After scrambling desperately through the recesses of my mind however I remembered one. Only one. It was of me as a little girl of 8yrs old, snorkeling with my father in Mauritius. Holding onto his weight belt as we made our way through the bright exquisite sights of corals, tropical fish and moray eels for hours on end.

Try this exercise—close your eyes and remember something that made you angry. Remember every little detail, from the sounds you heard, the textures you felt, the ground under your feet, the smells you experienced, etc. Be in that moment. Stay there for a few minutes. Then open your eyes. Scary hey? You feel extreme anger. Now, do the same exercise, but now with a happy memory. Powerful, isn't it? Well for me it was. It felt like I had discovered gold and I quickly found myself using this tool often, with great success.

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Another thing we had to do was write our life story. And, you know, the fact that there had been a picture of that dove at the entrance, which was a sign for me from God, that it was part of my journey to be there.

I really embraced this writing of your life story because I believed that this was it, I was now being forced into a position where I would really write my life story and I would finally have done what I believe God had called me to do.

A large majority of the people that entered the Phoenix House program had their lives really radically transformed on every level. The program included counselling with their families and with partners. If they were in vulnerable situations at home, they went into a halfway house or another place. The rehab counsellor made it clear that returning to their old toxic situation was not acceptable and would undo all the work and that the entire situation had to be addressed. This was something that I found solace in being in Phoenix House—my entire situation, home, my addiction, disease, every area of my life would be looked at as a whole.

On the day that Fleiser came in for our first counselling session, I had been told to go up to my class that attendance was mandatory. I told them I had a joint counselling session with Fleiser and they told me to go to class and they'll let me know when he arrives. Eventually they called me in and I was given a warning for not attending the counselling, apparently Fleiser had been there waiting. It devastated me. I thought he hadn't bothered to arrive with all those feelings that come with that. Then the disappointment that I missed him. He had been there. No one told me. I told them I had this appointment, and they ignored me. Even in rehab they look at addicts in a certain way, very much classing addicts as all the same and this annoyed me intensely because, yeah, this just wasn't the case and isn't the case.

Let's just say I was not a star resident. I was there for four weeks—one week short of the time that I should have stayed. With all this knowledge in my head going back into my same home situation and still having rheumatoid arthritis it was just like, well, I might as well blow my brains out.

The reason I was sent home a week early was because my roommate had an affair with another rehab inmate and was concerned she was pregnant, she confided in me for comfort. I didn't report it before it was found out. As a result I was expelled and I had to go upstairs immediately and pack my stuff.

I was devastated. I was fuming and I begged and pleaded, I tried to explain the trust situation, but they would hear none of it. I went to my room and my roommate came with me. She was very quiet and I was sobbing. I said to her, how flippin' dare you? You are 23 years old. You have your whole life ahead of you. I am 41 years old. This is going to kill me. I will die, my family will be ruined because you chose to go and tell them. Looking back and sharing the story I was blaming instead of taking responsibility, my responsibility for my part in it.

So I went downstairs to wait in the reception for Fleiser, but I was in a state. I begged the head counsellor to please not let this happen—to keep me in the program. All she said was, it's out of my hands.

My addict brain kicked into preservation mode. I thought quickly and realised that I still had money in the tuckshop and Robin just happened to be in charge of that.

So I asked her to please give me the balance of my tuck money, which she did without hesitation. There was a bottle store a short distance from the rehab and my plan was to quickly get to the bottle store, buy myself some vodka and disappear before Fleiser arrived. Yeah, I would put myself in a harmful situation where I would hopefully be killed, and that was my plan.

I had my vodka with me and came back to reception just to grab my jacket as Fleiser arrived. So I ran out of the reception area and through the gates and went hiding in between bushes while he looked for me. He eventually found me, drinking. I felt like a loser. Like a failure. Like I let everyone down.

It's not the first rehab centre nor was it the last.

Whilst I was in Phoenix House, my daughter had started playing hockey. I was so proud of her and sad because my addiction had me miss her first match. So, yeah, the self-pity began anew. And she was playing a hockey match that day. And now because of my situation, Fleiser was missing her match. I convinced him to take me to a drug spot to get CAT to sober me up. Needless to say, it didn't sober me up.

Obviously, Phoenix House did a great job with family counselling and how to handle the manipulations of addicts.

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I was too ashamed to go back to Pastor Bentry's church. I'd let him down and things just really catapulted after that to total soul destruction.

My daughter ended up leaving the house and staying at a friend's house. I was alone at home. I couldn't get her back. I couldn't force her to come back, not with how I still was.

My drinking escalated. I was up to three litres of wine a day amidst my medication.

Obviously, my health was deteriorating and I would end up sitting on the chair in the lounge, rocking myself silently while the tears would just pour down my face. Even breathing was painful.

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One day I was in the bath when I got a phone call from Chester. He said that Mike, a prophet in Kenton-on-Sea, had a word for me and it was about that scripture in the Bible where you speak to the Valley of the dry bones. He said to me, please, my girl, please, I'm not there. There's nothing I can do. But I'm asking you today. I'm begging you today, just for today, don't have anything to drink. There was a church service happening that night, and I told him that I would like to get there, but my problem was that I couldn't stay sober. And he prayed for me and he asked me just to stay sober that day and to get out of the house and go and take a walk.

I have no doubt his prayer had definitely worked because there's no way I would have been able to do it otherwise. I managed to take myself out of the house and take a short walk about a kilometer-and-a-half, two kilometers to a dam down the road from the little cottage we were staying in called St. Alberts Dam. It's a big open field area where I used to go in the past and sit there under a tree with my vodka and my dogs just to get out of the house.

This time though, while walking across the field, there was a white cross. It was a simple makeshift cross made of two white sticks. I walked past this, not paying too much attention to a tree which I sat under to rest. I looked at the cross and I noticed that there were a bunch of keys hanging off of it. At first I thought I was seeing things so I just sat there until I felt this small still voice. I was really just taking a moment to talk to God about the enormity of my situation; in my home, with my daughter now being away, rehab not working, having rheumatoid, and having to take medication, but believing that he can heal. Where was he?

I felt him say, look at the cross.

Again, I looked and noticed the keys.

He said to me, I hold the key.

I just felt this peace come over me.

I got up and walked home managing to get dressed makeup and all which was a miracle on its own because I had become rather agoraphobic. I was too scared to go

out of the house, if I were to go out of the house, even to go to a psychologist appointment at the government hospital I would actually go there with vodka in a cold drink bottle. Drinking vodka at my psychologist appointment. I just could not face the world or people at all. So I managed to get dressed and put makeup on and we went to where the church service was going to be held.

We were sitting outside and it didn't look like anything was going on. I said to Fleiser, 'I'm telling you now if God does not show up tonight, it's over. I can't do this anymore.' We didn't notice anything really happening so we walked into this little church and there must have been a maximum of 15 people in the building. I remember thinking, flip, 15 people in the building really? Is God really going to show up?

As I walked in, a coloured woman came and put her arms around me and I just sobbed. I just sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. That day, while I'd been sitting at the dam, looking at the cross and the keys, I'd said to God, I do not have the strength to pull myself out of this. You are going to have to send someone to literally pull me out because I can't do it.

We were sitting there and the next thing this guy started preaching. He's preaching in French with a translator—French just happens to be my favourite language. So my ears were pricked and paying attention. He starts preaching about the Valley of the Dry Bones which Chester had phoned me about, so I was definitely paying attention.

It came to the time in the service where I wasn't sure what he was preaching about, maybe Jesus, but he said, 'It's time for you to rise up and take what is yours, because God has it and he wants to give it to you!' And I was just sitting there and he actually came walking right up to where I sat and he took me by my arm and he pulled me off the bench and he said, 'Raise your hands to the Lord.'

It was just so amazing. I lifted my hands, and he began to pray. Often in churches, you'll see people fall to the ground in the spirit and some people think that it's a load of rubbish. I used to think that people get pushed down. But trust me, I know there are places that push people over. But I have fallen to the ground under the power of the Holy spirit many, many, many times. But on this occasion, I had my hands raised. And he prayed for me and I didn't fall back. I flew back. Probably about a metre and a half in the air before I hit the ground.

As I lay there, he told me, 'Rise up. Rise up! Get up and come to me!' I got on my hands and knees and started crawling toward him in the church's front—except it wasn't him anymore. All I could see was Jesus, those beautiful eyes literally oozing unbelievable love, so beautiful. Man oh man it was powerful!

The rest is a bit of a blur, but I went home, changed. I was on a high like I had never been except for when I've been in the spirit and close to God.

It was a very, very powerful, powerful time and experience. All desire for alcohol and substance totally disappeared.

It didn't last longer than a few months. Unseen entities still completely controlled my life. I finally picked up the book *My Crack Addiction Broken* written by Jonathan Basden given to me by Chester. The author, it turns out ironically, was Trent's father.

There were still battles to fight. I was determined to win.

It was around this time that I met Penny Lahanis.

## Chapter 24: Oh Daddy, Daddy, Daddy

I'm 44 years old. We took the train, my daughter and me, to visit my dad for Easter break in 2017. I felt in my spirit, we needed to be there. The train was late and dad didn't do late—he'd called repeatedly to check our whereabouts. Although I was stressed as usual when it came to dad, feeling guilty at him being so inconvenienced, I was instantly shocked by his appearance and sent up a grateful prayer that I made the journey. He had lost a lot of weight. His skin had an unhealthy pallor and it looked like it would tear like paper.

Since mom had passed I had made a tremendous effort to get to know my father and looked greatly forward to the holiday breaks spent with him. Outside of these breaks, we spoke to each other on the phone a couple of times a week.

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My father's love for my mother was immense. It was a love I believe any woman would long for, I know for certain it was what I wanted in a marriage. Undoubtedly, dad made it very difficult for any man in my life because I expected to be loved the same. They did everything together. At night he would turn the bed down for her ready for her to climb into. If we gave him chocolate or biltong or some other treat, even if mom was in the bath, he would go straight to her to share some. It was a special bond and he took her loss hard. By this stage my relationship with Fleiser through endless prayer, often praying over him in tounques throughout the night. Tounques be-

cause it felt like my own prayers of moaning and groaning seemed to go nowhere so I left it to the holy spirit to pray on my behalf... the change was remarkable, all desire for gambling disappeared and he certainly began to exceed all expectations of me being loved unconditionally.

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While visiting, we would attend his fellowship groups and church, accompany him on his endless trips to the shops. Oh, he loved to spoil us. I don't recall a single trip to the shops without at least one treat for myself and my daughter, well mostly for my daughter. She was really his everything. Because I had been living at home at the time of her birth and quickly returned to work, mom and dad felt like they had a really late child. There were moments that they would undermine my authority for sure, but I respected it and truly valued the part they played in her life. They had offered her a sense of stability that for reasons thus far unbeknown to me, I just somehow could not attain. The spoils were endless. Most nights we were with him, we would be given a steri stumpie milkshake and a sweetie of some kind.

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Looking back, throughout my life, dad had always spoiled me. He often bailed me out of trouble and was always there. Yet, he wasn't. Ricky was unmistakably the superstar and I was the constant pain in the backside. Dad and Ricky travelled around the world together with dad as his caddy. The bond they had was special.

Dad and I, oh, man, there was just something there, difficult to describe but I'll try. Always underlying our relationship was the story around him sexually abusing Michelle. Something Michelle had shared with me as true. In fact, the reason mom never divorced dad was because she was trying to protect Collette and me from suffering the same fate as Michelle through a step-father. This is something I had in fact brought up on more than one occasion in heated arguments, especially when I had alcohol in me, only to have him reply that I would only ever know what happened once he was dead. It was too unbearable for my soul to fathom and a place I would not allow my mind to go, but it niggled often just under the surface.

Looking back now, knowing what I know about the subconscious mind and its far-reaching capacity to control our every action, whether we're aware of things that have happened or not. Our relationship now makes perfect sense. I was a trapped, frightened little girl, daddy's little girl, for reasons I was about to discover. Something so horrific that kept a part of me forever frozen, incapacitated with fear in every area of my life.

Dad also had a very aggressive streak. When and if he lost his temper, you didn't want to be nearby. Let's just say, if one of the dogs were nearby, they would feel it and boy oh boy, if this happened with me around all hell would break loose. I had been on the receiving end of this anger snap on many occasions. Deep down inside, at my very core I feared him. It was crazy actually.

Simply asking to use his car to go to town with Andi would have my heart pounding and my palms sweating.

As for using his boat, oh my word, that was just a no go, but for Ricky, Collette, and even Fleiser this had been allowed. It just wasn't normal.

Even though I had this absolute desperation in my soul to please him—to make him proud—but nothing, absolutely nothing did it.

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Although I always looked forward to these trips, it really wouldn't take long for dad and me to start getting in each other's hair. I feared him, but I also pushed back.

On arriving, I would always set out cleaning. Dad hoarded, and for a time didn't have someone helping him clean, so whenever I arrived I would get stuck in. In the beginning, I used to check with him what I could throw away, it annoyed him immensely and I realised he actually didn't notice or mind, so I eventually got courageous and even started throwing some of the endless trophies away. Mine at least, not Ricky's.

My dad's dog Mia ended up having puppies and I couldn't leave my 73-year-old father with 6 puppies for 8 weeks, especially now after seeing how weak he had gotten? When Fleiser arrived for a short weekend after which we would all head back home together and saw dad's condition he agreed and it was decided upon between Andi, Fleiser and I that I stay on until the puppies were ready to go. It was a strange feeling. I desperately wanted to enjoy quality time alone with my dad, perhaps healing our tethered relationship, but this would be the first time in my life I would be alone with him for so long.

Yet at the same time, I had serious restlessness in my spirit, deep in my soul, it was uncomfortable.

It started out ok. I cooked, cleaned, would bring dad breakfast in bed and make sure he was eating enough and getting enough fluids. We would go to church and fellowship, watch movies together. But oh, my word he was grumpy, negative and aggressive. I quickly found myself totally tiptoeing on eggshells. He had nothing positive to say about anything or anyone and although I entertained it in the beginning it got plain exhausting. When I started to defend what anyone was trying to say or do for him, I was met with silence and banging things, so I tried keep-ing my distance, but with no car and too afraid to ask to use the car I was pretty stuck. The uneasiness I felt inside was all-consuming.

I would call Ricky, his wife and Michelle asking for advice. It was really bad how grumpy he had gotten and it actually saddened me because people in the village were starting to see him that way too and I didn't know how to stop it.

Literally out of nowhere, we were at the Spar one day, dad was in the car, and before I even realised what I was doing I had slipped into the bottle store and bought myself a half jack of vodka to try and dull the pounding of my heart as I felt the kaleidoscope of emotions closing in on me. This happened often when I was with my father.

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I would go through long stages of sobriety, and this particular time I had been doing great. I found that the

Emotion Body Code sessions I had been having over the years with Penny were indeed paying off. Just like an onion, each session seemed to peel away another layer, slowly but surely allowing me to be truly me—without the inherited curses, self-made curses, trapped personal emotions from past traumas as well as inherited trapped emotions.

Again through my sessions with Penny covered in prayer and God's undeniable presence having scripture proven correct again in this ...*You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the parents' sins into the laps of their children after them. Great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord Almighty (Jeremiah 32:17-18 and Numbers 14:18, 'The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons to the third and fourth generation')*. These are just two scriptures that mention the impact of our ancestor's actions.

Hear me now. God is the same God today, yesterday and tomorrow! His word does not change, it remains the same! Jesus coming, does not wipe all this away. Jesus coming however does this... His blood in the spiritual realm covers us, washing away our sin, allowing God to see only Jesus' blood when he looks at us. Jesus' blood restores a relationship with God. A relationship is impossible without it because sin separates us from God. The Bible tells us it is through a lack of knowledge that God's people perish, and it tells us over and over again that if we ask forgiveness and repent we will be forgiven.

Through my sessions, I had gained unbelievable knowledge of my father and his family, my mother and her family. Emotions they had felt so intensely, they had not just gotten trapped but passed down to me. This certainly helped me genuinely love and understand my parents on a deeper level, allowing forgiveness so much easier. So many of us are actually born with some seriously messed up stuff already existing in our DNA. Through Emotion Body Code Therapy, Penny was able to recognise various trapped emotions, their source, whether from self, inherited or demonic oppression and thereby release them through prayer and drawing a magnet over my head. I totally get how some of you may be thinking this sounds like Hocus Pocus, and I have no doubt many Christians have their crosses out going, 'Oh, this is pure evil.' But it totally isn't either. It was and is real, revealing and liberating and most certainly a method brought across my path/ journey that was proving to have positive results.

So health-wise I was also doing better, having included large amounts of turmeric and ginger in my diet. But somehow in all of this, I just snapped.

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In the past, a year or so when this had happened previously at dad's, I had woken up with a black eye. I didn't remember anything, but I knew too well the sting of dad's fist. It had happened on a day before Ricky and his wife were coming to visit.

On their arrival, I was in bed hungover and dad had filled them in with the details, 'Your sisters at it again'

kind of thing. They would see me, a black eye and all, and I would get the lecture. I hated myself for these times, but even more so, I couldn't understand how it kept happening around him. Looking back now, knowing what I now know. I kind of get it.

Actually, outside of what I will later disclose, it may well have had something to do with spiritual entities I was susceptible to coming from the people on the property renting my cottage. Out and out drug addicts, who had a beautiful little girl. People for whom I cared deeply. Anyhow, I drank the vodka, thinking, totally believing I would be fine, take it slow, just take the edge off. I woke up the next day. Flip, I lay there desperately racking my brain, trying to remember the evening's events. I recalled making dad dinner, taking him something to drink in bed. Yeah, sure everything had gone ok, except inside I knew it hadn't. I went through to say hi. I noticed the small hallway cupboard that the phone was on, was askew and then I felt a bruise on my leg. Dad was in bed pretending to be asleep.

Oh, man, I had done it again. After literally psyching myself up for what felt like hours I went through and apologised profusely for my behaviour.

Fortunately, my daughter's 18th birthday was coming up so I would be returning home for her party. It would have been great if I had managed to just have that one stint with the vodka, but that stint just unleashed something uncontrollable. I had to have it. I could not be around him sober. It was too much.

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Although I managed to hide it most of the time, the night I was to catch the flight to get to Johannesburg for my daughter's party, I ended up missing the flight and almost getting arrested at the airport. Yip, Tanya in all her gracious splendour was doing a truly superb job once again. The shame, humiliation, total anger and frustration toward myself for doing this to my father and my family again was enormous. Ricky's wife had managed to book me another flight for the next day.

I sat with Fleiser in tears as I explained how scared I was that I had again opened a door to drinking and didn't know how I was going to control it. We decided on a code word for the party if Fleiser noticed I had had too much.

Oh, my sweetheart—her party. I missed the code word and got so drunk hanging out with the kids. Fortunately, my daughter had a true 18th celebration herself and actually enjoyed having me around.

The next day we were at the flea market having our nails done when I got a desperate call from dad's friend. It seemed dad had had a stroke. Ricky was still away on tour, so in an absolute state of fear—fear of losing dad, fear of dad, fear of myself and my total inability to look after dad, I boarded the earliest flight I could.

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On arrival, I again was shocked at dad's appearance and arranged immediately to see our family Dr. Tests

were done and they weren't good. It seemed dad was severely anaemic, perhaps bleeding internally and may well have had a stroke. I created a family group sharing the information and requesting any possible financial assistance possible to cover meds and tests. Michelle was able to put some money in and when I told dad, the tears poured freely.

Dad dearly loved his little village of the Sundays River. His health and general ageing had been a great concern to us for a while. He really couldn't be alone anymore. Ricky was always touring, married with two young children, living now outside of the Eastern Cape. For him to uproot his entire family to come to look after dad, was simply just not an option. Michelle and dad had never been close, so this wasn't an option.

There were really only two choices. One, dad would have to sell the house and move in with Ricky and his family or two, I would move in with him and Fleiser and I would see each other as often as possible. Andi was in her final year of school, she needed me to, but as usual what I wanted or Andi's needs were just pushed a side. Torn and desperate I comforted myself with thoughts of her joining me after school.

A retirement home—hell no, that never even came up in conversation. Outside of the cost, it truly would have been the end of dad. Fleiser, Andi and I discussed it at length. To say dad was stubborn would be an understatement of note. Dad made it extremely clear that he had no intentions of ever leaving his home. I started seriously considering moving and discussed it with him.

There were times that he actually seemed to warm to the idea, I'm not sure, but here's what happened.

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Somehow by the grace of God, I managed to stay sober most of this visit. Well sober enough that he didn't notice. I got him to church, fellowship, Dr's appointments, cooked his meals, did his washing, employed someone to help clean, looked after the puppies and saw to it that they all found homes. Although I managed to get a breather every now and again by using his car once or twice to visit one or two people in the village and to sneak a private call to Ricky or Michelle, the situation again got unbearable. He insisted on driving even though he couldn't see properly, one day missing a pedestrian by millimetres to which I screamed first out of fear and then at him. Something you just didn't do.

When I was out he would call wanting to know how long I was going to be, when I returned he would complain about petrol or that he had needed something and I hadn't been there to help. Guilt, guilt, guilt.

The DSTV not working and him speaking to Ricky on the phone and shouting to me what to do after I had repeatedly already done everything as Ricky instructed him was the final straw. I drank too much too fast and woke up the next morning to the sound of my dad discussing me with his friend.

Yeah, I had stuffed up again, right near the finish line. Ricky had a break in his tour and would be coming to stay

with dad for a while. I would return again for the June/July school break along with Andi.

Anyhow, Dad was saying how he's tired of me and my drinking and that quite honestly he didn't know how I would manage to get back to Johannesburg in one piece on the train. I was fuming. Please hear me now, I completely totally and utterly understand his concern, but dammit, could he truly not see what he was doing to me?

The suffocation, the rejection, and now discussing me with his friend after literally serving him for the last almost two months, could he not know how ashamed I would feel at someone else knowing of my recent fall and protect me?

I said good morning, interrupting the conversation. After his friend left I went through to him and broke down in tears asking him why. Why could he never say he was proud of me? Why did he have to talk about me like he did? His response surprised me.

He told me to come and sit with him at the kitchen table. He took my hand in his and with tears in his eyes, he told me how much he loved me and that he was really proud of who I was. Proud of taking me to church, proud of how much I loved God and people, proud of the mother I was, proud of how well I cope regardless of my illness, disability and whatever life throws at me. We held each other and cried really, really hard. There was a bridge that had divided us for so long, one I just couldn't seem to cross and I knew I was running out of time.

Oh, daddy...

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The train trip back was without event, dad was not there and there was no need to drink or escape anything. I started making plans to move down to stay with dad. Ricky intended to try and convince dad to move to him. Personally, I wouldn't have it. Dad and I spoke on the phone every day.

One night Ricky called and—I brought up moving to dad and Ricky broke the news, 'Ton, dad doesn't want you here, I'm sorry.' 'What, what do you mean he doesn't want me there?' my voice cracking, the pain showing through. 'Ton, something happens when you drink, it's evil, you don't even sound like yourself and he just doesn't want you back here, I'm sorry.' 'What do you mean, like ever?' 'Yes, I'm sorry Ton.'

Oh my God, as I write this I am sobbing, as I recall that conversation. He didn't want me. And there it was again, me wanting to come home only to be chased away, only this time hearing this hit hard. 'No, Ricky, let me speak to him, I plead knowing full well how much dad wanted to stay in his house with his little dogs in his little village and the only alternative outside of me going there was him moving in with Ricky which he had made crystal clear would happen over his dead body.

Dad came to the phone. 'Daddy, is this true, you don't want me there?' 'My girl please, I'm tired and I don't want or need any of your nonsense now please.' 'Dad, please just think carefully now and then just tell me, be honest, do you not want me there again?' 'No, my girl I don't. It's

your drinking, I cannot handle it. If you were to guarantee that you won't ever drink again, then yes you can come.' Well, there it was. I will have you on condition.

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Well stuff you, stuff both of you. The very real constant desire to eliminate my very existence surfaced again. I knew without a doubt I could never promise to not ever drink again. Especially since it so often seemed to happen literally out of the blue, when with him. For the next few days I was hurt, defeated, tearful, but not drinking at all. Thankfully I was due for a session with Penny. At this session as usual she asked how I was doing. I shared focusing mainly on not understanding how I ended up drinking again. Here is the exact record of the session:

#### TRAPPED ENERGIES AND EMOTIONS RELEASED:

1. Inherited Heart Wall Sorrow from fathers mothers mothers father
2. Resonating at 0/10 due to; Emotional Resonance Lack of control affecting your stomach age 43 – 3/10 Bone marrow is imbalanced due to Trapped Emotion
3. Forlorn age 43 - 5/10 Heart Wall Love Unreceived age 43 – now resonating at 10/10
4. Unhealthy cording age 3 from you to your father connected by the genitals – released and broken from your Heart Wall Disgust – released
5. Unhealthy cording age 3 you to your father heart to heart connection from your Heart Wall Fear -released and broken

6. Unhealthy cording age 3 from you to your father a gut to gut connection from your Heart Wall Worthless – released and broken
7. Block preventing you from clearing more due to; Heart Wall Forlorn age 8
8. Heart Wall Failure age 42
9. Broadcast message age 3 (absorbed from your father) ‘stop crying baby’ -released Heart Wall Pride age 27 (absorbed from father)
10. Intolerance to your father age 6 due to; Trapped Emotion Conflict affecting your left kidney
11. Emotional Resonance Panic age 4 affecting your heart -released and now cleared the intolerance to your father
12. Heart Wall Sadness age 4
13. Heart Wall Horror age 3 affecting your heart
14. Emotional Resonance Love Unreceived @ pre-conception due to;
15. Emotional Resonance Love Unreceived @ pre-conception caused by; Physical allergy to yourself due to feeling Emotional Resonance Worthless also due to; Heart Wall Sadness @ preconcep-tion...

During the session, lying on the bed, I felt warmth, peace and a loving presence as tears gently slipped down my cheeks.

Afterwards, I felt rather lightheaded. Silence hung in the air. 'Penny, did my dad sexually abuse me?' Her face said it all as she gently looked at me, 'Yes', came the reply. I knew it, deep down inside I had always known. A quiet sob, caught under my breath, stored for later as I quietly left.

I drove straight to the nearest bottle store again choosing vodka as the source to numb this new pain. I sat in the parking lot for what felt like the longest time. Too lost to drive. Too lost to speak to anyone. My knuckles were white as I gripped the steering wheel to steady my convulsing body. Memories started to return, memories so deeply suppressed, suppressed for so many reasons. You see, through all the years of psychologist visits as a kid and all the different sexual abuse from so many in different forms, I had vague memories of someone coming through, at night doing stuff to me that I do not feel necessary to disclose.

Throughout all these years I had questioned my sanity because I was certain the tongue tickler, my grandfather, Wayne, Swayze, Swayze's cousin, none of them had done what this person did and yeah, I suppose my mind just wouldn't go there.

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I drove a short distance to gain some privacy pulling over onto the side of the road. I called Michelle. At first, I couldn't even get the words out. I just sobbed until I blurted out, 'I've just come from a session with Penny, dad did it to me too, I'm so sorry.' We spoke and cried together for a while. I then called Ricky and dad, doing the best I could to keep my composure. I told Ricky to put dad on the one phone and to listen in carefully on the other phone, apologising for what he was about to hear. When I heard dad come on the phone I cannot begin to describe what I felt inside as I heard his voice, 'What's wrong Ton, what's going on?' I took a deep breath, the

anger welling up inside me like a tidal wave. This ultimate betrayal, all these years desperately trying to be normal, to please him, living in guilt because I had pushed him away for so many years thinking other sexual abuse had been the reason behind it. All the hidings and guilt laid upon me by him ever since I could remember...How dare he...All I managed to get out was...

'Oh daddy, why?'

'... I've just come from Penny and oh dad, dad, you know what you did to Michelle?' He starts interrupting, 'I really don't need this' I hear him mumbling to Ricky I've been drinking again. I feel all hell breaking loose inside of me, my voice is raised. 'You listen to me! I know, I know, I know, it wasn't just Michelle, it was me too daddy, me, me, me, why, why, why? You, you opened the door for everyone else, how could you?' I cry, there is silence and then the response. 'There is nothing I can do about the past, all we have is now.'

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I returned home in a trance state and remained that way, unable to speak outside of head gestures and absolutely necessary conversation for almost a week. I didn't touch a drink either. I was finished. My daughter would come and lie with me quietly holding me as I lay in bed just staring at the ceiling. I recall letting Michelle know I had confronted dad only to hear that Ricky had actually called her already to check if I had made the whole story up.

Yeah, that cut deep too, but I couldn't blame him. You see Ricky didn't truly know me, he only knew what dad had made me out to be all these years. Ricky had been touring, we had lived separate lives—his very protected—mine not. Somewhere in this state, I got hysterical as it dawned on me he may well have done this to my daughter. She was adamant he hadn't and was deeply shocked to hear her grampy had done any of this.

As I lay there everything started making perfect sense.

My entire life started making perfect sense at last.

All those years as a kid believing something was wrong with me, that led to every event of my life. Always being afraid, walking on eggshells, drowning in guilt, deeply depressed and disturbed but not knowing why. Oh, my heart. I held my Bible in my arms, in a permanent state of prayer. It dawned on me that dad loved me immensely without any doubt.

Oh my heart, I remember hurting so badly for him. Then again for me as I recalled my memory of him and I snorkelling in Mauritius as having been the only happy memory I could record of my entire life, this too now shattered. Then again aching at the thought of what he must be going through on his side. Which then got me thinking about our relationship. Suddenly that too started making perfect sense. He had probably felt his own guilt, shame and fear. Fear of wondering what I remembered. Maybe this was why he had constantly lashed out at me.

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Eventually, I was able to get up, start talking and move around. Dad was right, there was nothing we could do about the past, we only had now and the future. And yes it was wrong on so, so many levels, but dammit on so, so many levels he was an incredible man, deeply loved and respected by MANY who now served God and he undoubtedly loved his family. It dawned on me, if God was able to forgive me for so many implorable sins of my own, what right did I have to withhold this from my own father?

It was finished, complete, I knew what I would do. I would live and cherish each and every moment I possibly still could with my amazing, yes, amazing father.

Somehow in the midst of all of this, I had again pushed Fleiser away. I suppose it was always just a deep subconscious reaction in a kind of dislike, mistrust toward men. That whenever something tough came up, especially sexual, Fleiser most certainly would bear the brunt of it.

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This is how it came to be that on the 23rd of June my daughter and I were heading out to celebrate the end of exams over some sushi. I called dad just before we left. He sounded awful. I told him it was ok, that everything was ok and would be ok. I told him how much I loved him and what he meant to me. I told him also of my plans to join Andi in a week or so in coming to spend some time together for the holidays.

Dad quietly said, 'My girl, we only have today and the future, the past we can do nothing about. I don't think I

will make it until you get here.' I replied. 'I agree dad, but I will see you soon, stop your nonsense, I love you.' and hung up. Andi and I had a beautiful evening. The next morning, I woke up feeling uneasy, not able to put my finger on why; I started to pray.

The phone rang, it was Ricky. He was in tears. Oh no, no. 'Ton, dad isn't good, I don't think he's going to make it, he's here at home, he told me he doesn't want to go to the hospital, you need to come.' Ricky booked me the earliest flight he could and collected me from the airport. I was frantic that he would go before I could arrive. Frantic that our entire relationship had boiled down to this moment. He needed to know how much I loved him, that I truly forgave him. On the flight, I couldn't help myself. I ordered two beers when the drinks trolley came and I drank them swiftly. Ricky was waiting for me at the airport. Conversation between us was beautiful, peaceful, comforting banter. Ricky tried to warn me of dad's state, explaining he thought dad had suffered another stroke, that dad was unable to hold a coherent conversation. On arrival, there were people there, dad's faithful friends. I hesitated. This being the 1st time seeing him since discovering the truth, I honestly didn't know how I would react. I took a moment alone in the bathroom. I breathed slowly and really deep as I entered his bedroom. Oh man, the love I felt instantly on seeing him was almost breathtaking. I crawled onto his bed and placed my head on his stomach, Ricky on his chest.

The people left. Dad was repeatedly, border lining on hysterical muttering over and over again, 'I wuv you, I wuv you I wuv you.' Oh my daddy, I love you, I love you, I love you too, I love you so, so freaking much. Ssh it's,

ok daddy, it's ok. Oh, dad, thank you, thank you for everything you ever did for me, for always being there. Oh daddy, go to mommy now, she's waiting for you. I quickly read him a letter Andi had written him, then said, 'I'm going to call Andi quickly, so you can say goodbye. Hold on.' I called Fleiser and Andi. They said their good-byes. We hung up. Dad quietened down. He then seemed to be mumbling mom's name. Ricky and I held him crying softly in silence. His chest stopped moving. Ricky and I held desperately onto each other over dad's lifeless body, he was gone.

The next thing he gasped. Oh goodness, I'm giggling now as I recall. Ricky exclaimed, 'Shit, you bastard.' We got such a fright. It was his last breath and typical to dad, the last laugh. He loved to scare us. Pranking us often, especially after watching a scary movie. And there we were, drenched in tears, giggling. Ricky commented how he was so stubborn, he had to fight even this. Oh man, this may sound strange, but it was the most beautiful, wonderful moment shared between Ricky and me. One I will treasure for eternity. Dad passed at exactly 7 pm on the 24th of June, on Michelle's birthday. The number 7, representative of God's perfection.

Looking back, I have no doubt it was indeed perfect and that God was in each and every second of it, right up to the date and time of his passing. We called and broke the news.

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Before I move on, I must just share this. We let the neighbours and some close friends know. They came

quickly to pay their respects before the undertakers arrived. Oh, my goodness, I'm laughing out loud at the moment. Dad's dear neighbour was standing at the base of the bed. I'm still on dad's stomach I think, Ricky lying on his side leaning upon his elbow at dad's chest, when Mia, who unbeknown to us, had been lying under the blankets by dad's legs, stood up. Oh my gosh... His friend in slow motion took a massive step backwards with eyes as big as saucers banging into the cupboard. Again, dad had done the trick. We laughed so hard it hurt.

The undertakers arrived and reality began to hit home, poor Mia ran frantically through the house, totally lost. I was eventually able to catch her and calm her down. Ricky, Mia and I spent the night in dad's bed trying desperately to sleep, filled with thoughts of a future without a mom and dad.

Nothing however could ever have prepared me for what happened the day of dad's viewing at the funeral home.

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Literally within minutes of driving away from the parlour still trying to deal with all my own emotions around seeing dad and being there for my daughter in what she must have been feeling. My phone rang. It was again the same cousin. 'Oh my gosh, have you seen, it's all over Facebook, 'Shimmer' has found you guys, she's found her family.' I was certain she knew of me and Wayne and surely she must have some kind of idea how this may affect me—especially now with all that was going on. She

knew I was at the funeral parlour, could this not have waited, was she insane?

Shimmer is the name I've given Collette's daughter—the one she was forced to give away all those years ago when she was just a girl of 15. Given for the reason that that was what her presence was in my life. Just a shimmer, both of light, time and sadness. All this was too much. I couldn't breathe. On the call, I remained calm and said something like, wow, this is awesome, thank you for telling me. But once I was off the call I believe I screamed, a guttural scream that came from a place deep within. Animal-like. Fleiser and Andi grabbed me, 'What's wrong, what's wrong?' 'It's Wayne, Collette and Wayne's daughter, she found us.'

Oh man...so, so many feelings, leaving me again in a state of silent confusion. Secretly I had always sworn to find her myself, to tell her about her amazing beautiful mother. How much her mother loved her and that if she had a choice, most certainly would have kept her. So here she was, what was my problem? What would I tell her about Wayne, how was I going to face him? No, no, no...it was too much. I needed to bury this one for later.

We got home and I went straight to dad's bed and closed the door, pulling the blanket over my head, desperate for some kind of silence. Everything seemed so surreal. In the distance, I heard Michelle return home asking, 'Where is she?' She too had heard. She came to me, put her arms tightly around me and whispered 'Oh Ton, are you ok? I'm so sorry.'

Poor Ricky, he had no idea what was going on. Like I've said, he was super protected. He knew none of the family secrets. He had no idea about me and Wayne, Collete and Wayne and who Shimmer was. Goodness, between the revelation of what had happened between my dad, Michelle and I, to this...Yeah, I'm pretty certain Ricky's own world didn't seem so certain anymore either.

The time we spent together that week, brought the three of us closer than we had ever been before. It was special. Michelle and I were able to talk alone, sharing our hurt over what dad had done to us, drawing comfort from each other. Ricky, oh man he was great, taking care of all arrangements to have whatever furniture or stuff we wanted to be collected and delivered for us.

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Ironically, with dad gone the alcohol flowed freely, but somehow I just ended up knowing when to stop and throughout the entire time remained the soberest.

Michelle leaving seems to come too quickly. Straight after dad's funeral. As they left, a part of me went with them. Fleiser was able to stay for a day or two, but also needed to head back home to get back to work. Ricky and his family remained for a few days helping to pack up and soon they were gone. Leaving Andi and me alone to face the reality of it all. This was goodbye, goodbye to such a major part of us. I arranged for us to go through to Kenton to spend a night with Chester and Ma Jean and to again hit the beach on horseback with Andi allowing us some kind of joy and release from all the heartache.

As for me, my healing and finding something to replace this all for me, well that never ever did take precedence in my life. I just carried on keeping on, doing my best to make sure everyone else was happy. Something it still took a while to realize was pretty stupid.

Chester's concerns around everything happening too quickly, along with the soon approaching meeting with Shimmer and all that that entailed, proved to be true.

For a while, I managed to keep it together mostly, but God still had so much in store.

Fleiser, what a man. Bless his soul. He did the almost 1800km drive there and back again to come and fetch us. Not wanting either of us to have to face leaving our home alone.

What a day that was, driving away, dad's village in the distance getting smaller and smaller until it was gone.



## Chapter 25: Be Careful What You Ask For

Once back in Johannesburg, the enormity of everything really hit home, especially when the truck arrived with my dad's things that we had wanted to keep. The truth behind my relationship with my father, which impacted everything I ever believed about myself and others, was very unsettling.

I also started texting Shimmer, which brought about a lot of emotions—excited about finding her and hopeful of building a relationship with her. Yet I was having vivid flashbacks of when I was a little girl.

Shimmer was also gruelling and relentless about knowing everything about her mother and father and why they had broken up. I had initially decided to not tell her anything about her father—he was still alive. Upon discovering she intended on seeing Wayne and finding out she had young children of her own, however, left me in absolute turmoil.

I called my cousin Jane, the one who had almost been abused by him. Shimmer had drilled her with similar questions. I eventually told her the truth for the future safety of her children. All the lies told to protect the family—well, just look at my own life. How different would my life have been if just the situation with my dad and Michelle hadn't been covered up originally?

She was obviously shocked at this news. At first, I did my level best to explain that they were both young, that hormones were raging, and that people do indeed change. She eventually started insisting on details. Instead, I put

together a package for her which I sent to New Zealand that I knew Collette would have loved: an old photo album I had found when packing up dad's place with photos of her mom and dad together, photos of the entire family, and the last purse Collette had used, which still had most of the contents in it.

In the end, after many video calls, which were unnerving because she looked and sounded just like Collette—she attacked me for having told her. Asking me what right I thought I had to destroy her memory of her only living biological parent. It felt like I had lost Collette all over again. Throughout this time, Shimmer was in conversations with my other cousins, the tongue tickler side of the family, and she remains close to them.

Over the year that Shimmer and I spoke, I had a constant nagging feeling that some rather nasty info was being shared about our family through these cousins. Shimmer had pointed out that the one cousin had also gotten pregnant at age 15, but got married and kept the baby. Never mind that he was a pervert who also tried pursuing me as a kid. This story made Shimmer's situation more heartsore. I explained how dad had seen it and that he had just been trying to protect Collette. I tried sharing that we cannot change the past, that we only have today and the future, but she blocked me out of her life. I found it devastating.

But it amazed me at how well I dealt with it, I didn't just dive into the bottle!

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With dads added furniture two things happened. The reality of it all, the fact that I would never return home, now stuck in Johannesburg caused the very familiar depression to slowly engulf me like a thick fog, drowning out all light and hope. Our cottage also got too small. We ended up moving again by November. What are the most traumatic things to deal with? Death, divorce and moving.

How did I deal with it?

Drinking alcohol throughout the day, smoking weed, and prescription medication. I finally surrendered that there was indeed something mentally wrong with me—very much so.

After four bottles of Old Brown Sherry, I booked myself back into rehab. But first, a trip to the Psychiatric hospital, Akeeso Clinic for an extensive psychiatric evaluation. I genuinely believed that there was no way on this good green earth that I could be normal after the life I had lived.

I had little strobe things stuck all over my head for 24 hrs to monitor brain activity. My psychiatrist thought I may have frontal lobe epilepsy. I was so excited to find out the truth of why I couldn't fit into this world. Why I battled so desperately with depression and instability. The results came back as normal.

Perplexed, I agreed to start on a new treatment and after the 21-day stay was over, on to Changes, another rehab facility, fortunately still covered by medical aid.

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Whilst in Changes, I got really sick. Apparently, I lost consciousness and spoke incoherently. An ambulance came to collect me, and I spent two days in the hospital with an infection. Like past rehabs, I faced the same real challenges. Debilitating rheumatoid pain and the fact that my body, after 20 years of abusing pain medications, had built up serious resistance to anything mild that would work for most people. It was the confusion around the prescribed pain medication by their in house Dr, and the anti-inflammatory meds that landed me in bed, crippled.

One reason I went to Changes was that it was on the property right next door to where my life had totally unravelled. A place that would make me go cold every time we drove past it because of what happened there. The place where I had failed to protect my little girl, not seeing what was happening right under my nose. I believed that somehow by forcing myself to be there, I would face it finally and deal with it, with the backup of professionals. Climbing on the toilets to look out the bathroom window to get a glimpse of the house and Andi's bedroom window, I would sob from my soul and howl. Everyone could hear me nightly, like a serenade, as I worked through my pain.

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It was time to come out of hiding and re-enter the world. For many years, I had stayed hidden, too afraid and ashamed to face the world. I had finally gotten Andi's horse that had been given to her by Johnno whilst visiting Chester after my father's death. I found a stable yard close

to home and got a dappled grey Boerperd for myself, Moscow.



I was desperate to make up for so many lost years of me being intoxicated and really keen to share some of the more sweet moments I had experienced in my youth with her. Oh man, we shared fun adventures together. Some days we spent the whole day at the paddock. Although I found the equestrian life in Johannesburg rather suffocating, we still created special memories of our own.

It was on one of these adventures we discovered an open field. I couldn't help myself. As we hit the field I shouted to Andi, 'Let's race', and with that, I broke into a flat-out gallop. It was exhilarating. The next thing out of the corner of my eye, I see my daughter flying past me off to the right. I turned my head to watch. Shocked at how her little Arab could fly, my heart swelled with pride. Everything started spinning. Probably a combination of being deaf in one ear and my horrendous eyesight. I hit the ground hard. When I stood up to walk, the pain was excruciating.

Not wanting Andi to know how bad it was, I smiled, then giggled and pushed through. Although there were riders nearby who witnessed the whole thing. No one offered any help, they merely blasted my daughter because unbeknownst to us we weren't allowed to ride across that piece of land. Fortunately, a groom was walking nearby, and he helped us catch Moscow and get back on. We made it back to the yard. I even got to the yard a week later to ride again, but after that, the pain was too much to bear.

Fleiser insisted I go into casualty. I did. It turned out I had fractured my spine in the same place I had fractured it in 1997 in the car accident. They also discovered that I had Stenosis (Severe spinal degeneration). I went in for surgery, in which a fusion, laminectomy and discectomy were performed.



It was scary and excruciating, but God again made His unmistakable presence known. I made a friend, Annie, who also had extensive back surgery. She introduced me

to Immanuel Life church in Fairland, literally down the road from my house—the church I had searched and longed for since arriving in Johannesburg. A small church with a solid doctrine, exuding love, grace, light and God's tangible presence. This little church has covered me in prayer many times over and continues to be my home. The family I have always longed for.

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I had not worked for almost 6 years. Not since the real estate days. With the extent of my addictions, rheumatoid and constant chaos, holding down a job was pretty much impossible. I felt terrible, so guilty. Outside of this remained the constant nagging of this book and the dream I had, had all those years ago. The problem now was not only did I still not know how to write, but my hands were too crippled and deformed to write and my eyes—I could barely see the screen.

Stuck on my bed for 8 weeks, I prayed. And this came to me, Proverbs 3:5-6: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your path*. I remembered God had told me he didn't just want another testimony, but rather someone in the situation and how he delivered them.

So there and then I said ok. I'll do it! And I started 'v2v-Outreach', which initially started out as a YouTube channel. Then, at the advice of Shane, who heads up the Window of Light ministry in Port Elizabeth, I added a Facebook page. At first, I did pre-recorded videos, but I hated watching them, so I started doing lives. Literally just sharing who I was and what I was going through.

Oh, my goodness, I cringe when I look back on them, but at the same time, I am proud of myself for doing them. Star advised me to clean them up a bit. I haven't for the simple reason that life is messy and if anything, the videos show true miracles of God's handiwork.

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Beginning to truly enjoy life and sobriety, I again naively reached out, extending a hand to Paul, a drug counsellor at a rehab, now suffering from stage 4 throat cancer. He had introduced me to intravenous ozone therapy, explaining how it had once put his cancer in remission. I decided it would be a win-win situation in allowing him to stay in our outside room, coming down from Port Alfred, so that he, too, could have a chance at life. We could support each other and go for intravenous ozone therapy together. I still held out hope and continue to believe that somewhere out there lies something natural that will bring about full healing. It was soon revealed that he was still a raging addict who ended up stealing from us. Fleiser had to remove him physically from our property.

Unfortunately, the damage was done when I opened the door of my home to the spiritual entities, along with addiction. I started drinking on the odd occasion.

I also took a part-time job with a talent agency owned by Moscow's previous owner. At first, I was ecstatic, but on discovering my pay would be only R200 a week gross, R50 a week net. Instead of just saying no, I was still operating from a place of guilt and obligation. I thought I owed it to Moscow's previous owner for giving me my horse. Never mind that I, to

this day, am still paying off the loan taken to build him a stable to keep him in the yard.

This people-pleasing had gnawed at my soul, always leaving me feeling worthless. Around this time, my dear friend Jacques Venter also passed away from a heart attack at 30 years old. I tried desperately to hold on to some kind of life and existence—I still lacked the safety net and the tools to be safe. And with years of escaping emotions through substance, the cracks became fissures.

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After recovering from the surgery a series of events caused me to again deal with things like I had in the past. Drinking. Not all the time like in the past, but enough to cause damage to myself and others.

The specialists had informed me it was time to pack up my riding boots. I sat quietly with my boy in the stable drinking some Old Brown Sherry. Unfortunately, on leaving the yard I kind of took the gate with me. After that, I don't remember. I buggered my car up; it ended up being towed from there. As the saying goes, 'Good news travels fast, bad news even faster.' When I called into work on Monday to see what the plans for the day were, I was met with, 'Do you want to tell me what happened at the yard this weekend?' This from a business partner who hadn't been near the yard at the time.

Judged and persecuted by the smaller minds of the equestrian social group, the entire yard had also heard of my incident and I was ostracized, mocked and laughed at. The end result was that I had to relinquish my horse,

Moscow. There was a payment of R500 for a supposed transference of energy between Moscow's previous owner and the girl I had asked and allowed to exercise him whilst I dealt with my deteriorating health. It was done without my knowledge. I had sadly, amidst many tears, decided to give her Moscow anyway, but how it was done cut deep. She promised I would always be welcome to ride and visit him any time. This turned out to be a lie. They chased me away from the paddock and my Moscow like a dog once I transferred the horse. It truly devastated me. So much for me trying to get back into the world—accepted and loved by people.

It took a while, but miraculously, I realised I had a pathetic victim mentality. Through repeated choices of putting others' needs above my own because of the insatiable desire of 'Please, just like me', I had again lost myself. I was to blame.

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I went to see a doctor for an anti-booze prescription before drinking got too bad. These continued sessions with Penny and prayer were helping tremendously on the addiction side of my life but I was fed up with the rest of it. My eyes started worsening. Fearful of the very real possibility of my cornea melting, caused by rheumatoid arthritis, the new specialist explained to me nicely and desperately that I needed to go back to a Rheumatologist and get back onto autoimmune treatment. I had ended up on both intravenous chemo and oral chemo for 3 months before eventually deciding

it was just not worth it. I hate chemo. He stated that he was only treating the symptoms and how serious the situation was; I could go blind at any moment.

Sure it frightened me, but I know how I felt about treatment, and, yes, I still believe that God heals. Some pretty miraculous things were and had happened to my eyes, both then and in the past.



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One night, really and truly depressed at the constant chaos going on in my life, I got really annoyed at God. I was over it. I was doing what I believed God wanted me to do, which entailed recording everything I was going through while giving God glory. I got really angry screaming at God, 'Take everything, take my child, take my husband take my car, my house, hell why not you've taken everything else I'm done! Not even 24 hours later I received a call from Star, my spiritual friend whom I had

not spoken to in over 20 years. I was all ears and volunteered no information about myself, opting to rather listen to her news. She mentioned having started an online business. It's so difficult to explain but the moment she said 'Online business's my entire being resonated. The words 'Yes I'm in please do what you need to do to get me involved burst out of my mouth'. It turned out to be something I felt God had been preparing me for my whole life. Very sheepishly I apologised to God.

But God still had a lot planned for the next few weeks that would change the course of my life—for good.

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It started a few days before Fleiser and I headed to Port Alfred to spend time with Noreen for our 9th wedding anniversary in September 2019.

This was a difficult time, but it shows my love and respect for my husband for his strength and how much I truly am grateful for my own powerful belief in God.

This all took place over two weeks. I was completely sober and had been for some time.

A few days before we were to leave for Port Alfred, Fleiser and I were sitting in the lounge just talking, when suddenly, I was overcome by the most incredible fear. The small still voice I knew as God urged me to get us safely into the passage. At first, it was just an urge that I tried to ignore, but it became instinctual as the need to run overtook me when we heard a noise outside. It seemed like gunmen ready to gain entry at any moment

surrounded the property. Fleiser and I got the dogs into the passage with us, locked all the doors, and switched off all the lights. I prayed, as our very lives depended on it. Fleiser's fear gripped him so intently he opened the door to the bathroom to vomit over the toilet. As I prayed, I noticed I was praying with intense passion in a tongue I had never heard. I felt strangely overwhelmed with immense heartache; for my friends and family who never knew God. Then for the entire planet. The heartache was real, so, so sore. I felt compelled to go back in time, right to the beginning, claiming every person who had ever come across my path, or ever did, as disciples for Jesus. I sensed myself with God before coming to this Earth. Everything was happening so fast I never bothered trying to make sense of anything. I just prayed endlessly until there was total peace. Quietly Fleiser and I went through to our bedroom, lay on the bed holding hands and closed our eyes. The presence that came over both of us was magical. A warmth of intense love. We then both started seeing memories of our own lives.

The next day I asked Fleiser what he thought had happened. He said he didn't know and kind of shrugged it off, but I couldn't—I felt deep down in my soul that chaos was coming into our lives.

I launched my new online business on social media and naively friended every Tom, Dick and Harry. The niggling feeling wouldn't go away. I prayed alone in my room for hours, seeking answers to what I was feeling. I opened up an old journal and it fell to an entry I made back in 2005. I was calling out to God, desperately asking for more of his tangible presence. God responded with this: 'My Kingdom is like climbing a mountain', He said,

'At the base of the mountain, everything appears really large—likewise, all your troubles seem too big to bear. The higher up the mountain', He continued, 'The smaller things become. Just like climbing a mountain, if you ascend too quickly, the altitude will kill you. So too is my Kingdom. My child, the higher up a mountain you go, the more uncomfortable it gets and the less company you will find, but it will not distract from its beauty. My child, do not expect people to understand you.'

Mmm... My word. This had certainly come to pass. My biggest problem had always been trying to convince others to see what I could see—see me. Sincerely, I again received and accepted this, but asked God to please allow my husband to know and understand what I saw and what God had called me to do. I shared this journal entry with Fleiser, and we prayed together. I journaled asking God to please erase any doubts I still had of the spiritual realm and His existence. We packed and headed off on our 9-hour road trip to celebrate our anniversary.

On arriving, Noreen was at a friend's house, drunk. I wanted us to stay in our car for the night—not in the mood for alcohol and drama, but Fleiser insisted we find her. When we pulled up at her friend's house the first thing, I noticed was the house number; 5 - 5, which biblically stands for grace. As we entered the house, it filled me with God's presence. In a moment, I saw Noreen's friend's whole life and knew I needed to pray with her. Noreen, seriously plonked wanted to head out to the bottle store to buy more beers. Fleiser offered to take her, allowing me time alone with her friend. The anointing was so intense; I needed to sit down as I continued praying. Noreen and Fleiser returned amidst this anointing

and, in her drunken state, Noreen joined in fervently walking up and down, rebuking satan. Fleiser, as per usual, whenever I prayed for someone, gently put his hand on my shoulder and prayed quietly. As the anointing lifted, we headed out to Noreen's. Her house was in a total state of disarray. Ashtrays overflowing, unwashed dishes everywhere, bathroom—well, let's just say I'd rather go outside in the bush. A sad, sad state. The telltale signs of life out of control, being run by demons, stuck in the grips of addiction.

My heart ached for Noreen and her daughter, who was also an addict but to crystal meth. Her daughter seemed of sober mind and was really pleased to see me, quietly explaining just how bad things had got. She openly told me she was still using but how desperately she wanted to stop. I believed her. The entire situation was devastating.

We decided to stay despite the situation because it was Noreen—she was family. A friend of Noreen's daughter, also an addict, came strolling in. To say this home was a revolving door of addicts and darkness would be an understatement. The daughter introduced me as her mom's friend, the one who had an awesome relationship with God. We spoke and as we did, the strangest awareness totally overcame me. This girl was me. I don't know how to explain it. She spoke the same as I did at her age using even the same jargon. It was unnerving. I prayed silently, seeking answers to what was going on. I was here for a far greater reason than a breakaway.

Cleaning took it out of me, so I went to bed. My phone had started acting up doing the strangest things. What

was going on? I honestly believed that an ex-dealer somehow hacked my phone and was controlling it.

The next day Fleiser and I decided to get out for some alone time. I desperately wanted to celebrate our wedding anniversary together. Finally, I was drug-free and sober and wanted no part of Noreen's drama, but I loved these people very much and understood what they were going through on so many levels.

While we were at the marina eating and watching rugby, I would witness time shifts—just odd things, like people in one place then another. The clock/timer of the rugby game we were watching stood still, but the game continued. All the while I had a voice inside me tell me to keep it to myself, so I did.

Later that day, Andi called. It was a video call. When I saw her, I screamed in horror. It looked like she was dead. Her lips were purple, and her skin that terrible grey colour. I was frantic and prayed out loud. Her complexion returned to normal. What the hell was going on?

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The next day, Noreen wanted to go to the shops, dragging me with her leaving Fleiser behind to catch up on very much needed sleep. She was very spiritual herself, so I tried explaining what was going on. We giggled hysterically. She insisted on a detour to show me her favourite pub. There was live music playing. She ordered herself a beer and me the coke much to her chagrin.

I started to relax and enjoy the music when I noticed the singer had an amazing likeness to Jesus, which I pointed out to Noreen. As I lifted my head to look back, his entire face distorted into a grotesque snarl. Visibly shaken, I went off to find Noreen in the bathroom to tell her I wanted to leave immediately, that something was wrong. She was fine with that, she wanted to take me next door to a betting place, to introduce me to her awesome friend, she called 'Papa Charlie.' As we stepped inside it was dark and dingy. The air smelled of stale smoke and beer. The men were drunk playing pool barely registering that we came in the door. Again, the faces around me became distorted. I could see the demons inside people or the demonic forces controlling them and again, I kept this to myself. But we had to get out of there. I had to believe there was a reason God was showing me these things, and I tried to be patient.

We returned to the pub where Noreen insisted on having another drink. Without my phone on me, I couldn't call Fleiser to come to fetch me. I felt like I was suffocating, so I went and sat outside to wait for her to finish up. After a while, I went back inside to drag her out, but she was gone. I asked if anyone had seen her. It was horrific. I felt like I was in a movie. No one claimed to have seen her at all. My heart started pounding harder and harder as I asked around everywhere. I went next door again to see if Noreen had gone back to 'Papa Charlie.' As I stepped inside, I freaked. The place looked completely different. I asked after Noreen and 'Papa Charlie.' No one had heard of either of them. I returned to the pub almost in tears. I asked a lady if I could please use her phone to call my husband. She teased and mimicked me. 'Aagh shame, it's

the girl who lost her friend.' I was now losing my patience, but somehow keeping calm I explained that I was from out of town and very concerned for my friend. She gave me her phone amidst giggles.

I called Fleiser praying earnestly that he would wake up to my call and I could explain to him how to get where I was. The call went something like this, 'Love, you've got to come quickly, please. I'm afraid. I can't explain what's happening, but you got to come now!' By some miracle, haha, there was plenty of that happening, he found me. I didn't want to leave Noreen who appeared out of nowhere. She wouldn't leave. My heart broke. People there knew her well and clearly didn't like her. Judged her. A feeling I knew well.

Back at Noreen's, I tried to explain to Fleiser what I had been experiencing when one of the drug users walked in, headed to the back rooms and never returned. I went looking for him in the room. There was no sign of him. Well, THAT WAS IT!!! There was no other exit to the house. Like in the passage at home, I sensed an overwhelming fear. I prayed fervently and told Fleiser to get Star on the phone. He did. I grabbed the phone, 'Star, I don't have time to explain. Remember when I called you when Andi was 2yrs old and we were going to Durban with Drake and I knew like I knew I was going to die on that trip. Remember, you prayed for me until the feeling disappeared? I need you to do that now, please.' Having walked a close spiritual journey over the years, she knew this was serious. She made me do breathing exercises to calm me down. Poor Fleiser, way out of his depth, was now also fearful. She prayed. It struck like a bolt of lightning that we needed to get out of there fast. We put her

on speaker to continue praying whilst we frantically packed. We threw everything in the blanket we had brought with us and hightailed for the car. We had no idea where to go.

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Chester would only be back in Kenton the following week. We went back to the marina to have a hot chocolate, calm down and make plans. As if things were not bad enough, I now went completely mute. No matter how hard I tried, I could not talk. Fleiser's annoyance grew. 'Oh God, oh Lord, what is going on?' Tears stuck in my throat, ready to burst forth. Fleiser understood enough from me to place our order, pay, and go. I remained mute. Fleiser had only ever been to Port Alfred once before, and it was now dark. We communicated that we should spend a night at a guesthouse. He found one and put it on his phone's GPS. I had a sense of Mary and Joseph looking for a place to have baby Jesus. Lost in my own world of silence and confusion, we pulled up at the guesthouse. Fleiser went in and got the keys for us whilst I remained in the car.

Weakened, I lent on Fleiser for support whilst he opened the door to the guesthouse, which thankfully was private because now I couldn't move. It was insane. When Fleiser tried to pull me, I dropped to the floor on all fours, sobbing in total silence. I prayed quietly to myself until I could eventually move to the bed. It was jerky movements that were simian like.

As I tried to rest, different Bible stories flickered through my mind as if I were there. By now I felt paralyzed and ended up wetting the bed. I got ice cold and started shivering uncontrollably. Fleiser helped me to get to the shower to warm me up. I kept falling.

I felt a sharp sting across my face and terror.

Driven way past human capacity, my beautiful, gentle, caring husband struck me hard across the face. It terrified me. He didn't look like himself. In the shower I burnt under the boiling water, unable to move or say anything I prayed. The burning immediately stopped and felt warm, and soothing. It felt like Shadrak, Meshak and Abednego in the Bible when they were placed in the fiery furnace for standing up for their faith. How God was with them and they came out of it without a mark or blemish.

Fleiser had gone back into the room to calm himself down. He came back after a while and joined me, burning himself, apologising profusely for not realizing he had forgotten to put on the cold tap. As I looked at him, I was totally overwhelmed by his love. I wondered what he must be thinking or feeling.

Morning eventually came. With no sleep at all, praying throughout the night, I could speak again very slowly. It was 24 September, our wedding anniversary. I longed to erase everything that had happened up to this point and enjoy the rest of our needed well-deserved break.

We decided to go back to Noreen's place—to see if she was ok and clean out the cottage and stay there like we

planned. We wanted to make the most of our time here before we joined up with Chester in a few days.

Back at Noreen's, I went crazy. Oh, man. I had this incredible sense of this all being arranged, that the house was full of people. It was my kitchen tea, bachelorette party before my wedding. I could even smell the smell of freshly baked cake. But what wedding? Oh, my word it hit me like a ton of bricks, I was about to meet the groom as the bride of Christ. He was coming. I wasn't ready. Panic overcame me. At first, I got stuck again at the entrance to her house. I could not move forward, only backwards toward the car. Flip, I was so embarrassed as I felt unseen things close by almost on top of me. I screamed at the top of my lungs like a madwoman. Fleiser quickly got Star back on the phone. Who flew to me like an angel. She prayed to ask me repeatedly what was happening. I couldn't speak. She prayed and ask me to just groan if I understood. I somehow managed that. Soon through her prayer I joined her in praying in tongues. She started casting demons out of me. As she did my body would contort, and I would grunt like an animal. It was so surreal. Like I was on the outside looking in.

In the middle of all this Ricky called, he wanted to know what was going on. I did my utmost to reassure him I was ok, that everything would be fine. Fleiser made up a story of me not having had my psych meds. Seriously? My meds at that time comprised of an antidepressant, a mood stabiliser, Dopaquil at night to calm me and help me sleep and anti-booze just in case I was tempted by Noreen to drink. Ironically, I found even the smell of it repulsive. There was no freaking way even missing one could have this effect.

It got to the point where we just had to leave Noreen's. We drove around aimlessly, not knowing quite what to do. I saw a hibiscus plant on the side of the road and shouted for Fleiser to stop! I got out of the car and started walking toward the tree. I was a little girl again in our garden in Port Elizabeth. I picked a hibiscus flower, peeling back the petals to get to its core to break the inside centrepiece off to stick on my nose. By now, Fleiser at his wit's end admonished me, 'I don't know what is going on with you. I brought you here to spend an awesome anniversary together and look at you.' I shrunk under his scolding, but I didn't know what to say.

We didn't have enough money to stay in a guesthouse until Chester returned, so we headed home. I now had the ultimate experience where there was no more hiding—no more keeping to myself everything I was experiencing. I felt God with me, telling me He was going to show me times when He had been right by my side and when he had saved me.

That's when it happened.

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I began to relive every physical pain as if it were happening for the first time—I was in labour giving birth to my children, the pain excruciating all the while crying out to God and praying in tongues. I heard God say, it's going to be ok, I am with you. Fleiser thought I was going mad. I was speaking in strange languages. I was screaming in agony, yelling, Fleiser was at his wit's end. Fleiser again got Star on the phone, on speaker phone to help me pray

through the pain and experiences. It would help, but then the next one would come. The next wave of agony.

God then showed me the car accident I had in '97. I may not have had lucid memories, but God was letting me experience them again, and it was horrifying. Fleiser started praying because he didn't know how to help or what was going on. As I sensed the impact of the accident I screamed 'It's about to happen! Brace! Brace! Fleiser, just brace!' Then I felt the impact—my body flying. Something hit our windscreen—wham! It was like two dimensions coming at me at once—Earth and the spiritual were happening at the same time on the same plane. I felt my body break, the ground under me with little stones under my face. I cried out to God, please make it stop, I can't anymore, but not my will, yours be done. He responded, 'You're nearly there, just a little more.' I started making ape-like guttural sounds as I tried to communicate with Fleiser, who was now sobbing, crying out to God to please not let me die and to help us get home. We were on a potholed road in the middle of nowhere, with no idea of how to get back home.

We eventually made it home in the early hours of the morning after getting horribly lost. Both our phones had just stopped working. On arrival, I felt fine. Completely normal, like nothing had happened. Andi was home with her friend, which was such a relief to see her there and safe. I called Ricky the next day to let him know we got home safely.

I felt unbelievably well, almost euphoric, and was adamant to try to make up to Fleiser this lost time. I looked up a nearby camping and fishing spot, a place I could take my dogs. We called his son to see if he could

join us for a night or two. It was all set. We would leave early the next day. Pottering around the house that day whilst my daughter was at college, I again felt the overwhelming oppression of evil. I grabbed olive oil and started praying in tongues, with Fleiser joining me, as I went through the entire house anointing anything and everything that could be giving access to anything demonic. Whilst doing this, I felt exhausted and fell to the floor. Fleiser called Star again. She prayed for me again until I could pick myself off the floor. For the remainder of the day, every now and again, I would sense a demon acting through Fleiser. I would rebuke it, which obviously annoyed him intensely. I didn't feel safe. The only time I had any sense of peace was when I covered my head with a blanket.

I tried to get up when Fleiser's son arrived the next day, but every time I sat up, it felt like I was going to pass out. Eventually, I managed to get myself into the bath. Alone, I cried and prayed— I ripped my false nails off and scrubbed myself raw. I got dressed. The boys had loaded up the car. My turn—as I was putting my three dogs in the car, I got confused. Why wasn't Andi coming with us? Whilst reversing out of the driveway, I shouted for her. She came out of the house storming toward me, Fleiser got angrier, and I noticed his face distorting. I shockingly spat in his face and prayed in tongues. He got out of the car and we all argued and Ben leaves. I'm in tears, I don't know what's going on. As I make my way back into the house, I fall to the ground too weak to move. Fleiser gets Star on the phone again. She and Fleiser continue praying. The next day I have this incredible sense that we are wealthy, that we can literally have whatever

we want. I forgot to mention, Star, and other colleagues Tania and her husband Dylan were running my business for me whilst we were away. Well throughout all these goings on business calls did come through. Whenever I was on the video calls with them and an old school friend, Michael, I had this complete total and utter sense of peace.

It was almost as though they were angels...it felt like God was showing me who I could trust and the way of the future. At the time, our bond had been approved, and we needed to sign papers at the attorneys. Star advised me to get out of the house a bit. We went to Cresta Shopping Centre to get what we needed from the bank. It was on a day that people were unable to draw any cash at the ATMs for some reason. To me, it felt completely normal, like God was showing me what was to come. The mall to me looked almost empty, everything shining, impeccably clean. In my mind, money no longer existed, everything was on coupons, and people could have whatever they wanted. Because of this greed and lust no longer existed, instead, there was peace, joy, love and tranquility. Fleiser and I enjoyed a breakfast at the Wimpy before I headed off to enjoy this new world. Much to Fleiser 's extreme frustration, I started loading up my trolley with a whole new bedroom suite. He was fuming, telling me I was behaving the same way I was when I was drunk. It felt as though all the staff, who literally seemed to glow with love and enlightenment, knew. We knew that this was a new world and that we could have whatever we wanted, but Fleiser didn't know yet.

We went to the bank and the visions continued. While Fleiser was busy somewhere else, I was sitting in the cue,

when a black African gentleman came and sat next to me. 'How are you coping?' he asked. 'I'm actually great but really confused.' He continued, 'Listen to me carefully, don't stop fighting because if you do, it means you are dying.' I felt complete peace and love, and simply answered, 'Ok, I will do that, thank you.' With that, he was gone.

We returned home and made up our new bedroom. Delighted with the result, I lit the fragrance candle I had bought and crawled into bed to continue shopping online. In this new world... Fleiser again got Star on the line, who said there seemed to be something wrong with me, even though I claimed to feel fine. She suggested I go to a nearby psych hospital, even if it was just to give Fleiser some peace of mind.

I wasn't keen, but promised should I feel different I would go. That night exhausted, I was in deep conversation with God, asking what was going on. He showed me Tania and Dylan and told me to follow them as this was the way of the future. He showed me Fleiser's love for me and revealed the angels he had sent to watch and speak to me that day. I felt so blessed. I will never forget his next question to me. 'If you could have anything in the world right now, what would that be? Be honest, absolutely an-ything.' I cringed as I responded, 'An anaesthetic, yip an injection just to make me sleep.' 'If that is what you want, you can really have it.' 'But God, isn't this bad to want this, considering my history with addiction?' No reply, just peace. Except now I'm expecting that Fleiser actually has the injection and is withholding it from me.

I keep calling my daughter from her room to please give me the injection. Andi and Fleiser are concerned and decided it was time for me to go to a psychiatric hospital. I agreed. I didn't know what was going on, but I knew God was trying to tell me something, and it was pretty loud now. Clearly, I couldn't hold it together.

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At the psychiatric hospital during the entrance examination, they said I didn't belong there but, in the hospital, to be looked at by a medical doctor—it was urgent.

They called the paramedics, and they took me straight to Olivedale Hospital.

Fleiser got a phone call at half-past 11 that night saying that he mustn't panic, but I'm in ICU for emergency surgery. I had an aortic aneurysm. If I didn't have the surgery, I might not live another week. The risks of surgery were heart failure or paralysis. He gave permission for the surgery. I vaguely remember the tongue tickler and other family standing by my bedside. Fleiser had contacted everybody to let them know that they should perhaps come and say their goodbyes.

All I remember of that hospital stay was ending up in isolation because of picking up a hospital bug—and wanting a cigarette.

Clearly, God still has some more work to do. I was totally oblivious to the severity of the infection and everything else that had happened and how close I had come to death.

For me, my focus was my new business adventure, and there was no way I was going to miss the upcoming function. Star was coming down by bus to stay with us. I insisted on being allowed to go home to clean and sort out my home for her arrival. It had been almost 20 years since we last saw each other. Much to my doctors' frustration, I signed an RHT (Refusing hospital treatment) form and agreed to be back in time for my evening dose of intravenous antibiotics. By the next day, all traces of the infection were gone. My doctors could not understand how. I was discharged and allowed to go home. My entire case and presence at the hospital certainly did leave an impression.

These feelings were warnings that something was wrong, very wrong. He was telling me to pay attention and until I was delivered by pain and went to the hospital from the sheer avalanche of it all and the questioning of my own sanity, I would not be writing these words, celebrating another anniversary with my husband, or holding my daughter close.

I still do not completely understand what exactly happened during this time. But somewhere in all of this, I believe I died. I was with God. We were sitting together on the edge of what seemed to be a beautiful cliff. The time with Him was so beautiful, majestic, I didn't want to leave. I wanted to stay right there with Him, that's when he responded with, 'Oh my child soon, it is going to feel like just a pinprick compared to what you have already endured and we will be together again. Just a pinprick.' Then He was gone and I was back here.

## Chapter 26: The Final Release

Having all doubts of God/Jesus's existence totally swept away, certainly makes life and all it presents completely different.

I continued with live videos on v2v-outreach with passion. I also jumped full throttle into the online business opportunity. Life got pretty crazy.

Through v2v-outreach I managed to help two guys, both drug addicts, off the street and into rehab. The business took off like a bolt of lightning. I found myself working until after 10 p.m. most nights as I tried desperately to balance the two passions. Also now knowing without any doubts that God wanted me to do this book, I tried fitting this in too. The plan was for Star to write the book. Through the business, I ended up reconnecting with long-lost friends like Joanne and Jacqueline. Jacqueline helped me design a temporary website. The plan was to do a short pre-launch to my book in the hope of covering the cost of marketing and publishing it.

What I loved most about the business was the phenomenal training, love, support, and being around extremely motivated people. Part of the training entailed writing down exactly where you saw yourself in a year's time. In this, you include your financial, physical, relational and spiritual goals, but be specific. You are also encouraged to do a vision board. Then daily you read this to yourself out loud, both in the mornings and evenings. Followed by this success formula:

FIRST I know that I can achieve the object of my definite purpose in life, therefore, I DEMAND of myself persistent continuous action toward its achievement, and I here and now continue to render such action.

SECOND I realize the dominating thoughts of my mind will eventually reproduce themselves in outward physical action and gradually transform themselves into physical reality. Therefore, I concentrate my thoughts for 30 minutes daily upon the task of thinking of the person I intend to become, thereby creating in my mind a clear mental picture of that person.

THIRD I know through the principle of auto-suggestion (The power of the tongue), any suggestion that I persistently hold in my mind will eventually seek expression through some practical means of attaining the object. Therefore I devote 10 minutes daily to demanding of myself the development of SELF-CONFIDENCE (by doing self-growth webinars or reading these kinds of books)

FOURTH I have clearly written down a description of my DEFINITE PURPOSE in life and I will never stop until I have developed sufficient self-confidence for its attainment.

FIFTH I fully realize that no wealth or position can long endure, unless built upon truth and justice, therefore I will not engage in any transaction which does not benefit all whom it affects. I succeed by attracting to myself the forces I wish to use, and the cooperation of other people. I induce others

to serve me because of my willingness to serve others. I eliminate hatred, envy, jealousy, selfishness and cynicism. I know that a negative attitude toward others can never bring me success. I cause others to believe in me because I believe in them and in myself.

I sign my name to this formula, commit it to memory and repeat it aloud twice daily with FULL FAITH that it is continually influencing my THOUGHTS and ACTIONS affirming my commitment to become a self-reliant, and successful person, in Jesus's name.

I added the Jesus name.

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The thing that struck me most about this was that this is all based on biblical principles. Habakuk 2:2-3: *Then the Lord answered me and said: "Write down the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. (3) For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Though it may tarry (take some time) it will surely come to pass!*

The Bible also repeatedly warns us of the power of our tongues; James 3 likens our tongues to that of a rudder on a ship. Proverbs 18:21: *Death and life are in the tongue.* John 14: *Whatever you ask in my name you shall have if you believe.* I could go on and on, but I think you get my point. The truth is, the more I did this, the more things changed. One of my biggest stumbling blocks was always intending good and intending to do things, but just somehow never getting there. So, I wrote and declared

daily, 'I am loving life. I can achieve everything I set out to do. The book has been published and is changing lives. I've been invited to speak at various places to share testimony.'

At the time, I had no freaking clue as to how it would happen. I still battled to get going a lot of the time and yip, through my endless desire to help people, and my own major personal breakthroughs especially with regards to addiction, I again found myself trying to save the world and reaching out to addicts all that time. I would find myself again sucked in and drunk on the odd occasion. But something had changed. I really couldn't drink much anymore. I seriously just didn't like the feeling. Literally, thank God! I quickly found myself getting annoyed with people I was introducing to the business. There just seemed to be endless excuses as to why something couldn't get done. Which seriously didn't gel well with me.

Crippled literally, often in pain at a 12/10, with seriously failing eyesight and having gone through a second back surgery, I had still managed to do what needed to be done.



No, I am no superhero, just totally dependent on God, the true superhero. And an avid believer in there is no such word as can't—rather find 1000 reasons why you can! Philippians 4:13: *I can do ALL things through CHRIST who strengthens me.* Easy? No! Possible? Yes!

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As I used the products I was marketing, something else changed. Forced now to take care of my skin and also try out some supplements. Why forced? Because I would not be a part of something I didn't totally believe in. I really started to feel good. The wrinkles that had been bothering me to the extent of wanting botox around the same time the business was introduced to me, had gone. Introducing powerful antioxidants to my diet gave me the energy I hadn't felt for years. The weight started falling off. Most meetings and calls were done on video. So, I again started wearing makeup and getting dressed up. Slowly my confidence started to return.



So much so, I actually ended up doing a live video on my personal Facebook page. You see, I had been hiding. Desperately ashamed of what I had become since the days of being a successful model boss, I started to see light at the end of the tunnel, but I still had a way to go.

Life was flying full throttle. Substance abuse outside of weed was now a thing of the past. Not through any strength of my own. Heck no! Like I've already said, I can say in all honesty, God took it away. I had no more desire for the thing that had literally ruled my life for most of my life. In fact, it repulsed me. The reason I continued with weed was that at the time I honestly couldn't see anything wrong with it because it had been made legal and it helped me with pain and relaxation.

Along with this newfound freedom that sounds all amazing, there were very real fears. First up, now feeling emotions properly for the first time in years without escaping them was quite a process. It was crazy. I learnt that excitement and extreme joy felt kind of like getting a fright. It was a challenge learning to differentiate between all the different emotions. Yeah, add my menopause to that and it was intense. Unable to explain what I was experiencing with anyone, I placed a teddy bear on the chair next to my desk to remind me of Jesus' presence with me all the time. Who better to speak to than your creator? The one who's seen it all and totally understands what you are experiencing without having to explain. I find it liberating.

Do you know that someone can actually be afraid of being happy? Afraid of success? Yeah, I often felt petrified, reduced to tears because I was afraid this joy and

zest for life wouldn't last. Then I would have moments of panic around being successful because that would mean I would have more responsibilities and was I really capable of that? Would I be able to maintain these responsibilities without letting people down, myself down? I suppose like anything unknown, the unventured territory has its fears. I had been so lost and isolated for so many years it felt scary and exhilarating all at the same time. I continually surrendered all to God and continued to push through.

I was still very much concerned about what people thought of me though, something God was about to deal with once and for all! Considering I was sharing my personal journey, warts and all on v2v-outreach amidst building an online business, now in a leadership position, seriously placed me in the firing line. Many judged me. Tania Adam's had warned me about doing the two simultaneously. Suggesting, rather that I focus my energy on the business for now and once that was properly established, turn my attention back on the outreach. I just couldn't do this, because for too many years I felt I had not been obedient to what God had called me to do, which was to share my story as it unfolded.

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I decided to invest in life coaching with 'Crazy always wins', Tania's other business and 'Bang' there it was! Everything I had been looking for in all the wrong places. Rehabs, psych wards, shrinks etc. Accountability to myself, practical ways of achieving what I set out to achieve. How to handle various relationships, like what was and

wasn't my responsibility. I realised just how much baggage I was dragging around with me, that seriously didn't belong to me. I also started to see people in a different light. Instead of so desperately wanting to change people. Only because I wanted the best for them. I started to look at people in the light of realizing that each person is in fact right now doing the very best that they can do, being the best version of themselves. I discovered different personality types and the strengths that each personality holds. I also learnt about time management and time blocking. Literally just blocking out certain times for certain things. Like preparing and having a meal with my husband, etc. This exercise showed me very clearly just how much time we actually have and how much we waste. I laugh as I write this because this remains a bit of a pain in my backside. I'll call it a learning process.

Anyhow, I was learning so much as well as doing so much it kind of eventually all blew up in my face.

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At the time I was still on antidepressants and mood stabilisers, also using cannabis with THC to try and control my pain instead of pain medication and smoking the occasional joint to help me sleep or quite honestly out of pure habit I suppose. This is what happened.

A month-end deadline was fast approaching. Still not having grasped the concept of me literally carrying others. I had a group of dynamic people in my team who had set themselves certain goals. As their leader, I felt a very unhealthy obsession to help them achieve them. Feeling that if they didn't, it was somehow my fault, like I would

be letting them down. My mind went into overdrive, managing a maximum of 5 hours of sleep in 4 days. I ended up taking triple doses of my psych meds because I never realised I had already taken them and I flipped out. Like completely. I came up with a plan of integrating v2v-outreach with the business and my team. In my mind, totally believing I had set them all up to exceed their goals. Believing also in my very altered state of mind that I had left a legacy behind for my family and everyone I knew. I somehow believed that my work was done and I was going to die. Yip. I cringe at the memory. Somewhere along the line I even did a live video of which I have no recollection. Very, very ashamedly, when I didn't die, I booked myself back into Akeeso, now totally convinced I had gone insane. I saw a new psychiatrist when I was there. He explained that I had experienced a seizure from what he believed was frontal lobe epilepsy. Assuring me I was not insane. He said that although previous tests had concluded nothing was wrong with my brain, he was certain I had frontal lobe epilepsy. He prescribed a whole stack of extra medication. I found myself having the most intense panic attacks. At the time I was on stem cell eye drops for my failing eyesight which needed to remain refrigerated at all times. On the 3rd occasion of discovering the nurses at the hospital had not done this, I booked myself out to go and see my ophthalmologist for him to check my eyes and get some more drops with every intention of returning to the hospital after having done this. Through a miscommunication, I was not allowed back and my psychiatrist was refusing to speak to me. I was devastated. On all this new medication I was not even able to get my script for continued use. I was livid and in fact filmed a name and shame live video about the whole situation. After two days back home I

felt the very real all familiar darkness of depression totally overcome me. I ended up going to the nearest hospital. After a few days there I was transferred to Rand Clinic now amidst people who were very clearly not sane. The doctor there could not understand why I had been placed on all the medication I was on or why I was there. He again changed the medication and discharged me after almost two weeks.

Back home I had to face the shame and horror of whatever the heck had happened to me. I contacted all that I believed had been affected and apologised profusely stating I had suffered a seizure as a result of frontal lobe epilepsy. Some people were very loving and understanding. My team, however, not so much. Star had been helping me out with my business working with my team whilst I was away. When I tried to pick things up again, they no longer wished to work with me, preferring to work with her. She is awesome, a lot more gentle than I am. I was going to say more of a listener, but this isn't true. I do listen and empathise, I just don't sympathise. It also came out that Star had somehow seemed it necessary to share her beliefs of me and the father of her child all those years ago when I was 17. Again proving the Bible verse of anything left in the dark can and will be used against you. All these years she had believed his lie of us having exchanged numbers and planning to meet on that fateful night. It was totally devastating for me. Having poured my heart and soul into every person to now be judged the way I was by people that I loved and trusted—it hit hard.

All confidence in myself was shattered and although I tried for a while, I just couldn't pick up the pieces. Looking back on this time, I completely see God's hand in it.

Stripping me of pride and showing me that His ways are not our ways. I distanced myself from the business and everyone else. Again, alone to seek God's face.

Why Lord, why can't I be normal? Why all this medication, why? What is this, 'By his stripes, I'm healed'? In my heart, I felt enough was enough. Deciding that one day when I die, I will rather stand before God believing that than stand before Him having doubted and taking loads of medication. The whole psych med situation was bothering me the most. I did a live on v2v-outreach about my decision to wean myself off all medication and stand firmly on God's word alone.

That was over two years ago and I believe without a doubt it was the best decision I could've made. I started to feel more alive. I no longer need to take sleeping tablets to sleep, antidepressants to feel happy, mood stabilisers to keep me supposedly stable. I looked at all the side effects of the different meds, especially the ones prescribed for the supposed frontal lobe epilepsy, that previous testing, had in fact shown I didn't have. As I looked at this I realised why I had been feeling like I had for all these years.

Certain depressions can be brought on by alcohol. Before I drank at the age of 14 for the first time I had not suffered from depression in any way or form. Now free of alcohol and free of all the side effects of everything I felt elated—finally free.

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I was at a total loss as to what to do about this book since Star was supposed to be writing it and we had now

gone our separate ways. With the truth of things now in the light, God could do His work. We eventually reconciled, and I could message the abuser in this case, stating the obvious truth, forgiving and releasing him and myself. I had, however, through helping another addict, met an amazing elderly man who had written five books and published three. He came to meet me at my home and I discussed in length my story and what God had laid on my heart. We prayed together. He was excited. Voicing that maybe I could join him at the women's prisons sharing my testimony and ministering to them. This excited me too. He started sending me some guidelines on getting started. It still confused the heck out of me. Every time I attempted anything I would feel too overwhelmed, so I kind of put it on the back burner again whilst I focused on rebuilding my business.

The whole thing that inspired me—I mean really rocked my world about the business—was helping people not just to make money, but literally, change every aspect of their lives.

I eventually continued reaching out, even including my cousins. It started out awesomely, I was excited to finally be able to connect with them in a real way. My desperate longing for family, finally being fulfilled. It never lasted long and this is why: Again anything unresolved or brought into the light will most certainly trip you up.

You have already read of the underlying feelings toward these particular cousins that I constantly tried to suppress. But outside of this lay the horrible truth of 'The tongue tickler's' advances on myself and

Collette as youngsters. The main reason for a horrible rift in the family was never discussed—just brewing under the surface. Through the years of forgiving, accepting and being present with him at family functions, he continued sending me ongoing messages of love, God, hugs and kisses. Each time I got a message I would cringe. Eventually, Fleiser told me to block him. When I did, I very quickly got a call from the 'tear duct' blowing cousin asking me why he had been blocked. Still insecure in myself and very much still a people pleaser, I lied saying it must have been an error and unblocked him.

Again, the messages continued, up to eight a day. I felt violated and desperate so I eventually reached out to Chester for his advice. He was horrified and told me to block him immediately. He explained that I never owed anybody an explanation. It's crazy how nervous I was doing just that. But once I did, the silence was well worth it. It wasn't long however until he found me on Facebook and discovered how messenger worked. Endless messages again streamed at me, more than ever. Again Chester advised to block him. I felt awful—typical victim mentality, about just blocking him. So one day after a lot of prayer, I phoned him.

This is how the conversation went: 'Do you remember what you did to me when I was a kid?' He responds, 'What exactly are you referring to?' With my hands and voice shaking I continued...'How every time I had to kiss you hello or goodbye, you would stick your tongue in my mouth and squeeze under my bum brushing against my private parts?' 'Yes, I do remember vaguely, it was nothing, I was just teasing you, playing with you.' My heart now pounding in my chest I

continued, 'Well I didn't find it amusing at all and in fact with everything else that was happening in my life at the time it repulsed me and has affected me for many many years, so I would actually really appreciate you leaving me alone. Stop sending me these inappropriate messages. I have forgiven you and wish you always only the best but please leave me alone.' As soon as the call ended I sobbed as though someone had died, but afterwards, I felt good. Empowered.

Fleiser was proud of me. I continued to keep it secret. Until one day exhausted and pretty much at my wits end around the general frustration of seeing so many people seriously struggling in life, but with endless excuses as to why they couldn't be any different, I finally lost it and pretty much voiced exactly this with one of my cousins. I wasn't ready at all for the response, 'You and your family have always thought you were better than anyone else.' That's when I exploded, finally sharing with her the truth about her father.

You should know by now having read most of my story that this is very far from the truth. My heart broke. For so many years I had so desperately tried and longed for my big happy family—remaining silent at my own expense for the sake of peace.

The vitriol and angry words that they spoke about me don't need to be shared here. I was truly devastated by the whole situation, having nightmares for weeks. But God was doing something pretty amazing. He was pruning me, setting me truly free of people's ideas or opinions of me. Now blocked by my family, the ones I had hung on to so desperately for ages, I end up getting a message from the tongue tickler requesting an adult

conversation with me since I had accused him of rape. I was horrified at his audacity to contact me again. I responded clearly to him that we had already had our adult conversation a few months back and that Collette was no longer here to validate what she had shared with me. I requested again to be left alone. I then forwarded this to the tear duct blower's husband. I have not heard from them since. And quite honestly I believe this was the final release! No more living a lie and being true to myself left me feeling free for the first time in my life.

In April of last year, I ended up totally crippled with pain. Fleiser was not even able to touch me to help take me to the bathroom. He instead brought me a bucket. Excruciating pain shot through my body as I would sit up and slide to the edge of the bed to use the bucket. I fought desperately not to go to the hospital because I didn't want to be on medication but eventually, I agreed to the paramedics fetching me. It turned out I had a staphylococcus infection in my blood. The first question my specialists asked is if I was still taking the chemo because if I was, it needed to stop immediately so that my body would fight the infection. You see, I had indeed again heard from God when I stopped all the meds. Had I continued on with the underlying infection which had come about by an untreated abscess under my arm months before, who knows what would have happened? I was put on high doses of cortisone and antibiotics intravenously. Oh, my word I was so sick. Unable to sleep, vomiting my lungs out with a headache that had my head feeling like it was in a vice grip. At one stage I really felt that this could be it. I was filled with a sense of deep sadness as I

thought of everything I still wanted to do, at how much time I had wasted.

Prayer requests were sent far and wide and I recovered. I more than recovered. Having felt so close to death again I had this overwhelming sense of no more time wasting, living to the max, not waiting for the right time or money to do things instead of just doing them.

I had reconnected with Cez through the business so I decided with this new attitude to head off to the coast to spend some time with Ricky, taking Cez with me for the road trip. I booked a deep sea fishing trip for all of us. Something I had always wanted to do but always felt we couldn't afford to do in the past. I chose to swim in the ocean even though the water was probably only 11°C just in case I never got the chance to do it again. We had the most amazing time and guess what? Somehow, we managed to afford it. I now have no doubt that we limit what we have and experience because of unbelief.

Ironically after coming out of hospital, I had such a zest for living life to the fullest and making the most of any time I had left, I started spoiling myself for the first time ever. Truth be told, I was on such a natural high for life, that if I even touched weed it seemed to shift this joy quickly, so yeah this also just fell away, quickly being replaced by repulsion again instead of desire. Really putting myself first for a change so much so that I completely forgot about ever being able to achieve this book. The publisher I had met, had died of COVID and along with that all ideas of this book. One day while scrolling through Facebook I came across a post talking about writing your life story. Describe your life in one sentence. I

thought, why not? And put in a long sentence with lots of commas. I then Googled the company then decided on actually sending a short video clip of my life story. I was then contacted and the interview actually took place whilst I was at the coast with Ricky. I explained all the abuse as a child, the drugs and alcohol, the time I spent with God when I had the aortic aneurysm and the pathetic need I had had to please people all my life and what it had cost me. I spoke of my now sad state of health and finally living for myself and living to the max. I was told that my story would be presented to a board of people and that I would hear back from them in two weeks.

More than two weeks passed. I started wondering if I had made it clear that I was no longer on any drugs and that I was in fact sober. I wanted desperately to call and ask, but whenever I did, I would feel God say simply 'I am, in all things I am.'

It was a Friday after prayer group, after finally deciding to let go of my driving days and selling my car very sadly in the hope of using the money to make the most of the time I had left on this earth with a trip to Zanzibar, I got the call. My interview was successful. I received a 2-year publishing contract with my own editor. The same publishing house that had published books by my favourite author, Ken Follet, Barack Obama and Pope Francis. The contract included TV and radio interviews with the book and my own press team at book fairs in the UK, Spain, Rome, Germany and the USA. The launch in South Africa is to be discussed with the publishers. Well, I was completely blown away. This was way bigger than anything I would have been able to do with Star, the other publisher or me.

It taught me this: the moment I decided to let go and just live, stop striving and trying, just putting myself first and living to the max in each moment, God very miraculously showed up in a far greater way than I could ever have imagined. It taught me that absolutely nothing is impossible and that the ultimate secret to this life and success is very simply choosing to enjoy it, truly embrace it. To be grateful for the gift of life and every little thing you have because it is ALL a gift from God.

Make no mistake. From this time up until now, things have by no means been easy. I have undergone life-threatening surgery again to put in two stents and do angioplasties on my left side where my artery just disappeared. I've been told by my specialists that I am at an exponentially high risk of having either a stroke or heart attack at any moment. I have lost two people very near and dear to my heart, one of which Cez and I actually ended up performing CPR on to try and resuscitate. Yeah, it's been kind of hectic, but different. Peaceful actually, regardless of circumstance because, yeah I just know like I know that God's got this. All I need to do is enjoy the ride and share the love, light and joy along the way. That's it!

Psychologically I have never ever felt better in my entire life. I remain off all psych medication but unfortunately, I needed to go back on chemo and other meds for my arteries. I still have a desire to see people set free from addiction and bondage, but no longer at my expense. I now carefully watch the company I keep. Making sure to include in my close circle, people that I admire and aspire to be like. There's that saying that goes something like

this, 'You become like the top 5 people you spend the most time with.' Well, I think my story, if anything, totally proves that fact.

I have absolutely no doubt that throughout my journey, God has provided me with all the solutions anyone needs to be able to live a life of freedom and abundance. Something I intend to share with anyone and everyone who wants it until the day I die. How to go from a victim to a victor. What is a victor? A victor I believe is someone who keeps on getting up after life's knocks. Someone who chooses joy over misery, because it is a choice. Someone that believes all things are good and possible, who shares that sense with others, emitting light, truth, and joy wherever they go.

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What does the future hold for me now? Mmm...who knows? At the time I started this book, I had a small salon I was running from home. No one really knows how much time they have left but my desire is to get to Zanzibar.

I've since used that money for the publishing of this book. And I would absolutely love to get a motorhome equipped with WiFi so I can stay connected with people sharing my story and touching lives, whilst I travel Africa with Fleiser and my doggies.

I've always wanted to set up a small shelter for abused women or serious recovering addicts training and equipping them with the many tools I've learnt along the way to achieve the freedom I now live in.

I don't know, but I do know the one who does know. And I know He wants me to enjoy this life, so ultimately that will be my focus.

Live, love, laugh and run as fast as you can from anyone that cannot do that with you because ultimately not everyone is going to like you. Pretending to be someone you aren't just for the sake of peace—no, it is exhausting.

There is only one you, created perfectly, uniquely for this specific moment in time.

My advice is whether you believe it or not, Jesus is real and the sooner you surrender to that fact, the better.

Once you've done that, find you, embrace you, learn to love and forgive yourself, then just be you. Walk away from those that don't value you. Yeah, it hurts in the beginning, but it is the most liberating thing you can do for yourself. I am in the process of setting up a website for people to find me. On the site, I plan to have links to the following; All the life changing books I've spoken of in this book. Links to Penny for her emotional body code work she does, to various rehabs I attended, to workshops by Star where you can learn about setting boundaries and other amazing life skills, to Tanya Adam's life coaching at Crazy Always Wins, because it does! As well as links for prayer and deliverance. There will even be a link there for anyone who wants to join the online business I am still involved in. In a nutshell, my hope and prayers are that it will be a site where you will find an honest solution to whatever it is you are facing.

I want to leave you with this: don't wait for a better day to start believing in yourself. Whatever you do, don't lean on your own understanding because the ultimate truth is, when you acknowledge God in all His ways all things become possible and He will make clear your path. Yip, I'm still trusting God for full healing, so keep watching this spot.

Then finally, fellow Christians, Love! This is all you are called to do. Don't judge! Speak life, not death over people. If you find you are not able to love then rather walk away and do some introspection instead of making people feel less than good enough. Jesus came for the broken after all.



## Final thoughts...

In closing I would like to thank each and every person I have ever known, both mentioned in this book or not...both good and bad...without all of you, I would not be who I am today.

Thank you Europe Books for affording me the opportunity to give victims a voice, to share light and hope.

Lynn Cole, my awesome, hilarious editor...you are amazing! I have no doubt I would not have been able to do this with anyone else. You encouraged me endlessly through the many tears...I will be forever grateful to you...I will love and pray for you until the day I pass on. Then to my second editor, Andrea Grazioli, you are awesome, I have absolutely loved what you did with the work Lynn and I did. You really added your magic... Thank you so much. Immanuel Church...Pete, Gilly, Eric, Sandy and all the ladies in my prayer group...thank you for your continued love, prayer and support. I love you guys.

Dad Chester and Ma Jean...I did it! Thank you for the integral part you've played in my life. To the entire Wilmot family, thank you for sharing your mom and dad with me, I love you all so, so much.

To my remaining family...Thank you for allowing me to share my truth, for loving me for who I am. Fleiser...my hubby, you are 1 in a million, my eyes, my hands and my heart...your love and support is endless, thank you. My son Ben...I am so proud of the man you have become, thank you for always sharing love and concern.

Then to my phenomenal, amazing daughter...Oh my sunshine, I stand in awe of the grounded powerful woman you have become. You could so easily have turned out a wreck...another victim, instead you chose to be a victor. I am super, super proud.

Mom...You always said you one day wanted to write a book... you did, through me. A woman of grace, beauty and strength forever cherished in so many hearts. Dad...You taught me so, so much. I am a stronger person because of you for which I will be eternally grateful. I definitely have your stubbornness and I will continue to use it wisely...never compromising on what I believe in.

Finally, God...Jesus, sweet holy spirit. I have no words...Alive today only because of you. I love you. I pray this book is indeed what you desired all along. I am finally at peace, totally ready to see you again, whenever you are.

It's not about how often you fall, it's about how often you choose to get up, dust yourself off and carry on. Each time you do this you move a little closer to whatever your goal may be. Yeah, people are going to talk. Let them...if you keep getting up, in time, they too will believe in you. Walk away quickly from those that don't see your worth. And finally, please KNOW this... Whatever has happened to you or how many bad choices you have made... They DO NOT define you... Learn from them, get to know you, then love you, protect you, embrace you...don't try to be like others just to fit in. You are you, perfectly created for this time, be the best you and share love.



